

Model and Process of Buddhism-based Tourism Management in Southern Thailand: Value-oriented Communication and Integrated Development

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Abstract

The result shows that the Buddhist tourism routes in the southern part of Thailand can be separated in to three main types: 1) "Integration of Buddhist Moral Code" route: follow in footsteps of Sri Vichai's history inscription and visit "The Buddha's relics of the south"; 2) Dharma traveling route; 3) Route of life and moral: morality path, tourist location of the community. Each of the routes has it own uniqueness and contains Buddhist's values that can express the Dharmic principle. Moreover, all these routes have interesting local cultures and architectural beauties that would take one's breath away, so if the government(both national and local) gives enough attention to develop these unique beauties of the temples on the southern routes to another level, where our knowledge is developed and we already have the proper administrative method to cope with Thailand's economic and cultural transition of these days, the touring of this kind will be another option of Thailand tourism business's future. For the evaluation of Buddhist touring resources of temples in the southern region of Thailand, the study shows that most of Buddhist tourist locations in the south are capable to subtend a national tourism, however, among all these on-going changes of Thailand(as a preparation for AEC and future international society), The standard of long-term tourism planning, public relations, environmental management and privilege matters are still the issue to discuss. And because that our targeted locations are religious places, they have their own legal particularities. Also, they contain important social history, culture and way of life, beliefs of each localities, so developing and upgrading to the universal standard is a very delicate. Matter that government (national and local) has to work together with civil society to push the strategy forward.

Researchers see that the guideline of developing process for Buddhist touring in the southern region of Thailand should encourage government's organizations, for example: Ministry of Tourism and Sports, ministry of education, ministry of interior and ministry of culture, to establish a Buddhist and cultural touring development strategy at the same time. This is because Thailand needs to improve the tourism standard of each religious tourist locations to fit in with the local tourism development strategy. Buddhist tourism locations in Thailand have potentials to be promoted as multi-cultural (and multi-ethnicity) touring routes, which will be an advantages when we enter Asian Economic Community in years to come.

Keyword: *Buddhism-based Tourism Management, Value-oriented Communication, Integrated Development.*

Introduction

The study of “Model and Process of Buddhist-based Tourism Management in Southern Thailand: Value-oriented Communication and Integrated Development” emphasizes Buddhism-based tourism in the southern provinces of Thailand with activities involving learning and integrated development, travel to study Buddhism and Islam in each province, resulting in value-oriented communications promoting mental calm and an appreciative life-style achieved through these activities. The study of Buddhist-based tourism in Southern Thailand is achieved utilizing the model and process analyses of temples, churches or mosques which are identified as tourist attractions. The analysis of participation by involved communities and organizations in communications to improve the mind and increase knowledge through integrated development as well as the analysis of the effects of tourism on the Buddhist culture, can help identify the ways to develop Buddhist-tourism appropriate to the cultural environment. This can lead the way to the sustainable development of tourism and create understanding throughout the society.

Objectives

The objectives of this thesis are: 1) to study styles, activities, identity and processes of Buddhist Touring in the Southern region of Thailand; 2) to study behavior of tourists and the process of expressing values of each religious tourist location (temples) that is related to the development of integration in aspect of tourism and creating the society of harmonious; 3) to study the possible routes and to evaluate remaining resources of Buddhist touring in the southern region of Thailand; 4) to establish a network of Buddhist touring in the southern region of Thailand; 5) to analyze effects of tourism on Buddhist way of life and culture, including the possible guideline to develop the religious tourist location (temples) in the southern part of Thailand

Scope of the Research

1. To study the model and process of the tourist attractions (temples) focusing on the model and process that is appropriate both in concrete object (Buddhist Art), activities, civilization of Buddhism and abstract art(Buddhist principle).
2. To study the communicative process of encouraging tourist mind development by focusing on Buddhist morality and the ways of mind improvement according to Buddhist ideals, such as meditation.
3. To study the tourist temples focusing on people connections(monks, involved people, tourism entrepreneurs and government officials), knowledge (knowledge and worth) and the process that consists of co-operating activities in order to encourage Buddhist tourist activities or learning for the mind and knowledge improvement.

4. To study the participation of temples and related organizations that are the case studies in terms of learning-management, communicative process, mind improvement and the learning process connection with other terms.

5. To study situation problems, barriers, effects of tourism on tourist temples as well as the method of tourism development in application to the tourist temples.

Research Methodology

According to the study of “Model and Process of Buddhism-based Tourism Management in Southern Thailand: Value-oriented Communication and Integrated Development”, the researchers have focused on action research using both quantitative and qualitative research in order to get the all-around data that is useful in data analysis and routing for Buddhist southern-tourism. In order to qualify for economic, social and cultural changes, the study has been classified into 3 types:

1) Documentary research: to search for data about forms, activities, identities, management processes for tourism, theories and idea about tourism resource evaluation, and the main points of the learning source in the temples, as well as involved ideas.

2) Field study with in-depth interviews and minor-conferences with monks, tourists, attraction administrators and tourist organization representatives in order to determine method of tourism management and the communicative process. In addition, the conference is also for improving the tourist attractions in the South, the vision of tourism-integration between Buddhism and tourism, as well as culture and learning connective creation.

3) Quantitative surveys about tourists’ and tourism administrators’ opinions and other related people’s opinions: this survey is to determine a method of tourist activities improvement according to Buddhist principles regarding the relations and effects of tourism on Buddhist culture.

Tools to be employed

1) Tourist surveys asking for basic information, knowledge, impressions, results of traveling, knowledge and understanding from traveling, mind improvement through practice in the temples and Buddhist Art, value of Buddhist learning and Buddhist practice including situation problems, barriers and other tourist information such as convenience and the route of transportation.

2) Surveys with interviews of the monks and related people by asking for the main points such as form, tourist route, identity of tourist attractions, and learning and managing tourist attractions and other managing processes.

3) Focus-groups, minor conferences, and academic seminars to analyze knowledge management in tourist temples, effects, relationship to social development, local economy, communicative process, Buddhist practice and tourism management.

4) Using photographic techniques and graphic creations in the presentations and charts/diagrams to study ways of managing situations suitable for learning, mind improvement and learning-networking in temple tourism.

Conclusions:

Part 1: Basic data according to the survey

According to the study, tourists say there should be an organization to integrate and encourage Buddhist attraction connections in order to provide tourists with relevant Buddhist-tourism information. Tourist information is important but so far, public relations regarding Buddhist-tourism hasn't been providing useful information, and there is a need for an organization supporting the Buddhist tourist attractions and providing tourist information. It is not only useful for the tourist, but it is also beneficial for the attractions because increases in public relation will grow the popularity and face of these attractions. The second most popular suggestion by tourists is to develop the Buddhist tourist attractions through the integration of governmental departments such as the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Ministry of Culture and the National Office of Buddhist Tourist Attractions, especially in the area of public relations. However, each government sections still needs to know the development strategy as well as the economic planning for the private sector in order to make a more effective tourist system, particularly in the planning and development of the Buddhist tourist attractions in the South

Part 2: Buddhist tourist route

1) Integrated-Buddhist teaching: this tourism that follows Srivijaya historical records and the relics in the South. This area of tourism focuses on integrated social science knowledge in the region. Mostly, the tourist searches for knowledge in travelling to experience various aspects such as Chaiya Buddha's Relics, Sri Surat Buddha's Relics in Suratthani province, or Wat Phra Mahathad, Pra Buddha Sihing Hall, in Nakorn Si Thammarat province. Moreover, other attractions reflect religious knowledge, philosophy and the teachings of moral living, e.g. Wat Tharn Nam Lai (Suan Moak), Soratthano. According to tourism that follows Srivijaya historical records, it has been found that the majority of tourists are educated people who spend their free time at religious places in order to relax and improve their minds before returning to their regular lives.

According to the initial study, however, it is found that the dissemination of knowledge to tourists is not yet integrated in a manner that may be applied directly to the tourism to a large degree. As a result, the creation of Buddhist art knowledge management, dharma ideas, and Buddhist philosophy in order to provide tourists with appropriate information is planned. Attractions will be created to respond to the demand of the tourists. In addition, the government sectors and other private sectors will consider the improvement of Buddhist attractions as an attraction that should be supported.

2) Dharma Tourist Routes: Dharma tourism focuses on Buddhist attractions along with other famous attraction in the region. As the result, famous Buddhist attraction, especially

those in natural environments, have a positive effect to create fame for other nearby Buddhist attractions, such as Wat Som Paen and Wat Ta Po Tha Ram, Ranong province and Wat Chai Thara Ram and Wat Suvarna Kiri Ket, Phuket province. By understanding a region's beautiful natural resources, tourism in that region will be affected in a positive way.

The well-traveled routes involved with natural attractions or places of ancient civilization are usually affected by the tourism. Buddhist attractions in the tourism industry need too much money to be spent to repair or renovate for the seasonal tourism. According to recent data, there is no official support to develop Buddhist attractions in accordance with tourist demand. Consideration should be given to these attractions in order to be able to serve the tourist demand by applying it into more-commercial tourism, as well add more ways to publicize this tourism.

3) Life style with dharma style routes: Dharma is the spiritual center. This style of tourism is about those Buddhist attractions reflecting lifestyle and local culture. These attractions show the local history, culture and some signs of specific ethnicity, beliefs or relationships with another communities. This type of tourism is most remarkable at temples having applied arts of Buddhist culture with Mahayana belief, called "Chinese temples". It is very popular for Buddhist tourists from Malaysia and Singapore because these attractions show of connection of ethnicity as well as race.

According to the initial study, these attractions are very popular such as Kwan-Yin Bodhisattva, Songkhla province and Chao Chui Tui Tao Bo Keng Shrine. These are not only famous among Thai and foreign tourists and the spiritual center of the community, they are also places where people coming to pay respect. In the past, these were also places for immigrants to gather and spiritual centers for families or communities to come and make merit.

Part 3: Southern Tourist Resources Evaluation

According to the study, it is found that most of the Buddhist attractions are able to serve the tourists' demand on the national level. However, with the social change of the country's entry into the ASEAN community, the standard of sustainable attractions development, public relations, environmental management, including benefit management, are still issues to be standardized. Moreover, the Buddhist attractions are legal characteristics, so it is a sensitive matter for the government sectors, local sectors, and social sectors to cooperate in developing a strategy.

Suggestions:

1) Involved organizations such as Tourism Authority of Thailand and National Office of Buddhism are to support the learning activities of the temples by managing the tourist form to be appropriate in accordance with Buddhist practices, for example, insights and meditation exercises for tourists. The organization can also participate as the supporter of acknowledgement, process, and involved budget, for example, to create a website to be the center of idea exchanges about dharma practice in the country.

2) Government sectors Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Interior, and Ministry of Culture are to manage the Buddhist tourism and culture strategy in order to improve the standard of tourism. The strategy is to encourage the attractions to be one of the regional tourist developmental strategies, since the attractions are supposed to be improved to participate in ASEAN tourism, such as Wat Cha Long, Phuket province and Wat Phra That, Nakorn Si Thammarat.

3) The Thailand Research Fund, Office of the Higher Education Commission, National Office of Buddhism, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and Mahamakut Buddhist University are to create the learning sets regarding Buddhism and history, as well as Buddhist Art and remarkable integrated tourism, to carry on seminars to express and apply the use in any exhibitions or religious and cultural local museums. This can then become one of the attractions for tourists in the future.

4) Government sections provincial offices and Tourism Authority of Thailand are to improve the basic structure of transportation and communication to enhance convenience and safety, such as setting up bigger and cleaner road stops and more safety checkpoints.

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