

The Role of the State and Community Participation in the Development of Buddhist-Oriented Tourism in the Lum Nam Suay Area, Nong Khai Province, Thailand

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Abstract

Background and Aims: Nong Khai Province's Lum Nam Suay area in Thailand offers unique cultural and natural attractions for Buddhist tourism. Development in this region represents a strategy to boost community economic growth through the protection of cultural and spiritual traditions. The government establishes essential policies and infrastructure while locals sustain their cultural identity and engage in tourism practices. The research objectives included examining community management conditions and tourism development challenges, along with readiness for Buddhist-oriented integrated tourism development and government support analysis with a model for collaboration between state and community in sustainable tourism efforts.

Methodology: A qualitative R&D approach was used across three phases: Community readiness assessments were conducted through detailed interviews with 20 key informants and document examination, along with government strategy evaluations conducted via focus groups with 12 experts, and participatory model implementations evaluated through exhibitions and academic seminars with descriptive and statistical result analyses.

Results: Research demonstrated that Buddhist practices have developed abundant natural and cultural resources within the community through active engagement from monks, along with local leaders and families. The government provides support by creating policies and allocating budgets, as well as developing infrastructure, but faces issues with coordination. The applied model strengthened knowledge sharing and teamwork, which resulted in improved post-training knowledge scores from 4.35 to 4.60 and proved successful knowledge transfer alongside community empowerment.

Conclusion: The Lum Nam Suay region possesses significant potential to develop sustainable tourism based on Buddhism through its local cultural assets and religious devotion. While challenges persist, especially in human resources and publicity, government strategic support combined with active community engagement can foster balanced development under the theme: "Mindful Tourism, Buddhist Way, Community Way."

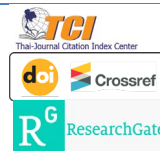
Keywords: Buddhist Tourism; Community Participation; Government Role; Beautiful River Basin; Sustainable Development

Introduction

Thai society today has many problems and cannot find peace, even though it is a land of Buddhism. When considering the real cause, it will be found that the root cause of the problem originates from the mental deterioration of people in society, which is due to the lack of morality in their hearts. Therefore, the most correct solution is to make people in society have morality in their hearts. To instill morality in the minds, there are many factors, the most important of which is "having a good role model in society." Having a good role model in society means the goodness that all Thai people should use as a model in their lives. It is already in "the principles of Buddhist teachings" (Phuengthian and Suyaprom, 2000: 46).

Buddhism is a guiding principle for development. It is interesting that at present, it is generally accepted that to develop a country successfully and achieve its desired goals, material development alone is not enough. Experience in development over a long period has taught us to realize that focusing on external material development alone, even with a lot of investment, will not allow society to achieve true prosperity and peace as intended. Instead, it creates many problems, such as (Phra Dhammapitok





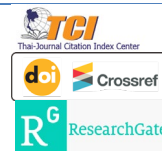
(P.A. Payutto) (2000) (1) Poverty problems. It appears that poor people are spreading throughout both cities and rural areas. The distribution of income among the population is not going well. The economic status of the people is getting further apart. (2) Health problems. The population lacks even basic public health. There are serious epidemics. In addition to poor physical health, mental health is deteriorating. The lives of people in so-called developed areas are chaotic. People are more distressed and have more psychotic disorders. (3) Educational problems: Equality of educational opportunities is still difficult to achieve. There are failures in educational management, causing many problems in society, such as corruption and dishonesty. (4) Political problems. Democracy development can only progress, more than regress. (5) Ethical and moral problems: People are not disciplined, such as road discipline. Accident statistics are extremely high. There is insecurity of life and property, causing most people to be afraid. Crime is still widespread. Serious robbery, murder, and rape cases occur frequently. (6) Cultural problems: Cultural deterioration. Undesirable values and development are common, such as widespread consumerism and extravagance. (7) Sexual and vice problems: Sexual problems are increasing. Rape rates are high. Divorce rates are high. Vices are prevalent, both in the city and in the countryside. People place their hopes in various forms of gambling and are obsessed with it, making it difficult to solve. Many young people are destroying their futures and causing problems for society as a result of drug addiction. (8) Environmental problems: Environmental problems are increasing. Forests are being destroyed. Headwaters are depleted. Rain does not fall in season. The land is arid, making farming more difficult. This leads to even more poverty. There are market problems. There is a lot of exploitation. Pollution in the soil, water, and sky threatens the life and health of all citizens.

Lessons from development teach us that development must proceed in all aspects and comprehensively, not just focusing on material development. In particular, people who are participants in the development process and directly benefit from development must be well-developed. In human development, the most important part is the mind. Therefore, in the present era, development work has turned to pay more attention to mental development. Mental development includes the development of morality, ethics, and general mental health. Mental development, as well as human development, are the primary duties of Buddhism, and monks have played an important role in national development throughout.

The Huai Nam Suay community is located around the basin, which is a small river about 80 kilometers long. The watershed originates from the watershed between Ban Phue District and Kut Chap District, Udon Thani Province, flowing northeast through the plains of Phen District and Mueang District, Nong Khai Province, and then flows into the Mekong River in Mueang District, Nong Khai Province. The total basin area is 1,737.67 square kilometers. Huai Nam Suay is a plain with an elevation of 160-220 meters, which is higher than the average sea level. Most of the area is agricultural land with scattered forests. The economy of farmers who use the Huai Nam Suay basin depends on agriculture. The average income per capita is 40,484 baht. Having a long river suitable for various agricultural activities and also making it an environmentally friendly water tourism attraction and an agricultural tourism attraction is an important landmark based on the local wisdom of each area where the river flows through. Including the development of an integrated Buddhist tourism community in the Huai Nam Suay basin, Nong Khai Province, which will generate more income for local people and be a source of learning about Buddhism. When problems and opportunities arise, integration is important. Both government and private agencies are trying to accelerate and promote the development of an integrated Buddhist tourism community in the beautiful river basin of Nong Khai Province to reduce social inequality, but there is still a lack of appropriate tools and innovations/formats for use in development.

Therefore, the research project "Development of Integrated Buddhist Tourism Community in the Beautiful River Basin of Nong Khai Province" is an important strategy/strategy in developing the river basin into a Buddhist tourism destination, using cooperation from many sectors integrated with Buddhism to support sustainable conservation tourism to the grassroots economy, reduce economic inequality, and create income distribution to a variety of people. In addition, Mahamakut Buddhist University is a university that is intellectual and religious, and the research team has experience working in the area. Therefore, this research is interesting in studying and synthesizing Buddhist principles and studying the development guidelines for Buddhist learning resources, including government policies in developing them into Buddhist tourism destinations, to be used as guidelines for economic development, mental and social development, including academic benefits, community and social





benefits, economic benefits, and policy benefits, which will result in benefits for the development of a stable, prosperous, and sustainable Buddhist community for the people of the nation, as well as spreading Buddhism to be stable and stable forever.

Objectives

This research has the following main objectives:

- 1) To study the management conditions, problems, obstacles, and readiness of the community for the development of integrated Buddhist tourism communities in the beautiful river basin area of Nong Khai Province
- 2) To analyze the government's approach to developing integrated Buddhist tourism communities in the beautiful river basin area of Nong Khai Province
- 3) To convey the government's model and community participation in developing integrated Buddhist tourism in the beautiful river basin area of Nong Khai Province

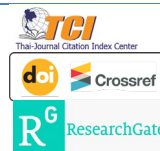
Literature Review

Buddhist tourism is one way that harmoniously combines religious values, culture, and community lifestyles, especially in the beautiful river basin area of Nong Khai Province, which is an area with abundant landscapes and strong local culture. Therefore, the development of this type of tourism requires both the government's role in policy-making, infrastructure support, and knowledge promotion, along with community participation in preserving local identity and creating tourism activities that reflect Buddhist ways, leading to balanced and sustainable development at the local level. Each concept and theory will be a supporting factor leading to the crystallization of conclusions and creating a conceptual framework for research, divided into 4 parts:

1. The concept of community development. The term "development" was first used in the 19th century by economists to solve problems arising from the industrial revolution in Europe, which changed the use of human and animal labor to energy from technology. Phonsri (2002: 49) further defined community development as the process of developing people and groups of people in a community to have sufficient potential and cooperate to improve their own lives and well-being and the community according to the plans and projects that have been set, both using the power of the community and support from outside the community. Therefore, community development operations must follow the steps and must be thorough, correct according to academic principles, with project monitoring, inspection, and evaluation to ensure that community development operations are as efficient and effective as possible. Furthermore, Bunyaratphan (2006: 2) explained that community development is a belief in social justice, aiming to eliminate conflicts and clear inequalities among the masses, which is something that a civilized society should adhere to.

2. The concept of community tourism for the concept of current tourism, in addition to economic and social value, tourists must take into account the importance of conserving resources and the environment, as well as the changing cultures in the community, which may change the form and activities of tourism, resulting in new forms of tourism. From the trend of conservation and the need to restore the completeness of nature along with participation in tourism development, tourism developers from the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) have devised a service model that is consistent with the management of tourism resources in each locality to develop sustainable tourism (Sustainable Tourism Development) by using the concept of sustainable tourism development according to the Action Plan 21 or Agenda 21, which plays a part in promoting sustainable tourism development, which means development that focuses on the economy, society, culture, and the environment. At the same time, the community participates and receives economic benefits from tourism equally (Chanket, 2017: 10-11). As for the research, Chinsomboon, M. (2019) conducted a research study on "Community Participation in Developing Tourism Attractions in Watthana Nakhon, Sa Kaeo, Thailand." The results found that most of the area of Watthana Nakhon Sub-district community is lowland, most of the population is involved in agriculture, and the community is famous for producing roasted sticky rice in bamboo joints, wickerwork, and jasmine. Rice. In terms of the community's capacity for developing tourism attractions, the researchers found that the community is located on the main road of Sa Kaeo province, where there are many tourists passing by.





There are many important religious and historical sites. The local leaders can be developed as tourism attractions with the participation of the corporate network and people in the community. In terms of the format for developing the community's tourism attractions, the researchers found that tourism attractions in the community can be developed by using the community's products, which are developed from social capital and local wisdom, to create tourist attractions and connecting tourism routes with important sites in the Watthana Nakhon Sub-district community.

3. The concept of the Buddhist way is to live a life as a person who knows according to the principles of the Lord Buddha. The good and excellent way is called the Eightfold Path, which is the teaching of the Lord Buddha. It is something that gives unlimited results. We should embrace it and put it into our lives. Therefore, we can conclude that the true Buddhist way does not need to receive orders from any organization to be the Buddhist way. If Buddhism is embedded in the soul, speech and actions must be good and have reason. Buddhism entered Thailand in 218 B.E. King Ashoka the Great sent Phra Sona and Phra Uttara to establish Buddhism to be established in the Suvannabhumi Kingdom. During the reign of King Mingti of China, he sent a goodwill ambassador to Khun Luang Mau, the king who ruled the Ai Lao Kingdom. The ambassadors brought Buddhism with them, causing the people to convert to Buddhism (Weerawan, 2012: 53). Buddhism has been the national religion of Thailand since ancient times, more than 1,000 years ago. Every Thai king was a Buddhist and preserved Buddhism to flourish throughout. Buddhism is the center of the mind, creating love and unity among Thai people. Importantly, about 90 percent of Thai people are Buddhists and have Buddhism as their spiritual support. Buddhism has created good identity and virtues for Thai people, such as kindness, gratitude, gentleness, and compromise. Furthermore, Buddhism is the core and important foundation of Thai arts, culture, and traditions. The principles of Buddhism, such as the Ten Royal Virtues, are used as the principles for governing the country by the king and the ruler. The principles of the Five Precepts, the Four Sanghavatthu, and the Four Lay Virtues are used as the principles for the conduct of Thai Buddhists, making our society peaceful and orderly, and the country stable and progressive (Thepsittha, 1999).

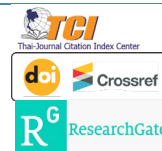
From all that has been said, it can be seen that the concept of Buddhist tourism in the beautiful river basin, Nong Khai Province, is a community with cultural capital and deep faith in Buddhism. Therefore, the development of tourism in this manner requires cooperation between the government and the community. The government plays a role in policy-making, resource allocation, and knowledge support, while the community is the one who preserves the local identity and drives tourism activities to be alive, have spirit, and truly reflect the Thai way of life. This cooperation will lead to sustainable development and balance in economics, society, culture, and the environment. The research framework can be synthesized from 4 important parts: the concept of community development, which emphasizes the development of people and groups of people to be self-reliant and have a plan that has steps and can be verified; the concept of community tourism, which emphasizes participation, income distribution, and resource conservation for sustainability according to the principles of the World Tourism Organization (WTO); the concept of Buddhist ways, which adheres to the principles of the Eightfold Path and morality in determining the way of life, which has been the foundation of community ways in Thailand for a long time; and finally, the role of the government and community participation in integrating local policies, strategies, and activities to move in the same direction. Therefore, it can be said that Buddhist tourism in the context of the beautiful river basin is not just a journey, but a process of creating learning and restoring spiritual values. And systematically strengthening community identity under a clear and holistic conceptual framework.

Methodology

This research is qualitative in the form of R&D (Research and Development) by studying documents (Documentary Research), in-depth interviews (In-depth Interview) with key informants (Key Informants), focus group discussions (Focus Group Discussion), brainstorming (Brainstorming), and seminars broadcast in every community. Then, all content was analyzed and summarized. The researcher conducted the research in 3 phases as follows:

Phase 1: Study the management conditions, problems, obstacles, and readiness of the community for the development of integrated Buddhist tourism communities. Data were collected from document





analysis, in-depth interviews with 20 key informants, using content analysis techniques, and presented descriptively.

Phase 2: Analyze the government's approach to the development of integrated Buddhist tourism communities. The target sample group was 12 qualified persons selected by purposive sampling. Data was collected through group discussions, using content analysis techniques, and presented descriptively.

Phase 3: Translating the government's model and community participation in the development of integrated Buddhist tourism. The researcher conducted the research in a research format called "action research", which consisted of 2 main activities: 1) Organizing an exhibition to open tourism "Development of integrated Buddhist tourism communities in the beautiful river basin area of Nong Khai Province" 2) Organizing an academic seminar on "Integrated Buddhist tourism routes in the beautiful river basin area of Nong Khai Province" Data were analyzed by evaluating training participation using statistics, percentages, and medians.

Results

From the analysis of the research data on “The role of the government and community participation in the development of Buddhist tourism in the beautiful river basin area of Nong Khai Province”, the research results can be summarized as follows:

1. The results of the research phase 1 studied the management conditions, problems, obstacles, and readiness of the community to develop an integrated Buddhist tourism community.

The study of management conditions, problems, and obstacles found that (1) The general condition of the Lum Nam Suay community has a fertile landscape, consisting of natural water sources such as streams, swamps, and agricultural areas suitable for growing rice, vegetables, and fruits. The community in this area is small to medium in size, has a traditional family structure, and is an important cultural center, which is the center of the community's mind and activities. (2) The way of life of the people in the Lum Nam Suay community is simple and adheres strongly to Buddhism. Daily activities are often related to religion, such as giving alms, participating in merit-making ceremonies, and making merit at the temple. In addition, the people have skills in local handicrafts, local food, and organic farming, which can be further developed into valuable cultural and lifestyle tourism activities. (3) Support for tourism from relevant agencies Local government agencies, such as the Subdistrict Administrative Organization, the Provincial Cultural Office and the Nong Khai Provincial Tourism and Sports Office, have played a role in promoting tourism through budget allocation for infrastructure development, organizing training to provide knowledge to the community and organizing cultural activities with temples and schools. However, coordination between agencies is still limited in terms of continuity and unity of policy. (4) The results of the development of the integrated Buddhist tourism community in the Lum Nam Suay area of Nong Khai Province have initiated cultural tourism activities, such as organizing meditation activities, demonstrating local food preparation, and weaving in the villagers' way of life. Agricultural tourism, with tourists from both inside and outside the province continuously participating, results in income circulation in the community and an increased awareness of preserving the local identity of the villagers. (5) Problems, obstacles, weaknesses, and strengths of the development of integrated Buddhist tourism communities. Problems and obstacles include a lack of personnel with knowledge in tourism management, a lack of long-term promotion plans, and limited access to funding sources. Weaknesses include a lack of continuous public relations, incomplete information, and a lack of readiness in the transportation system. Strengths include the strength of local culture, faith in Buddhism, and cooperation among community members who are conscious of preserving traditional resources and culture. (6) Development of integrated Buddhist tourism communities. The current development focuses on the participation of the public sector, especially monks, community leaders, and housewives' groups. The government provides structural and knowledge support, such as organizing training, planning cultural tourism, and linking with provincial tourism networks under the concept of “Mindful Tourism, Buddhist Way, Community Way”, which emphasizes sustainability in terms of economy, mind, and environment.



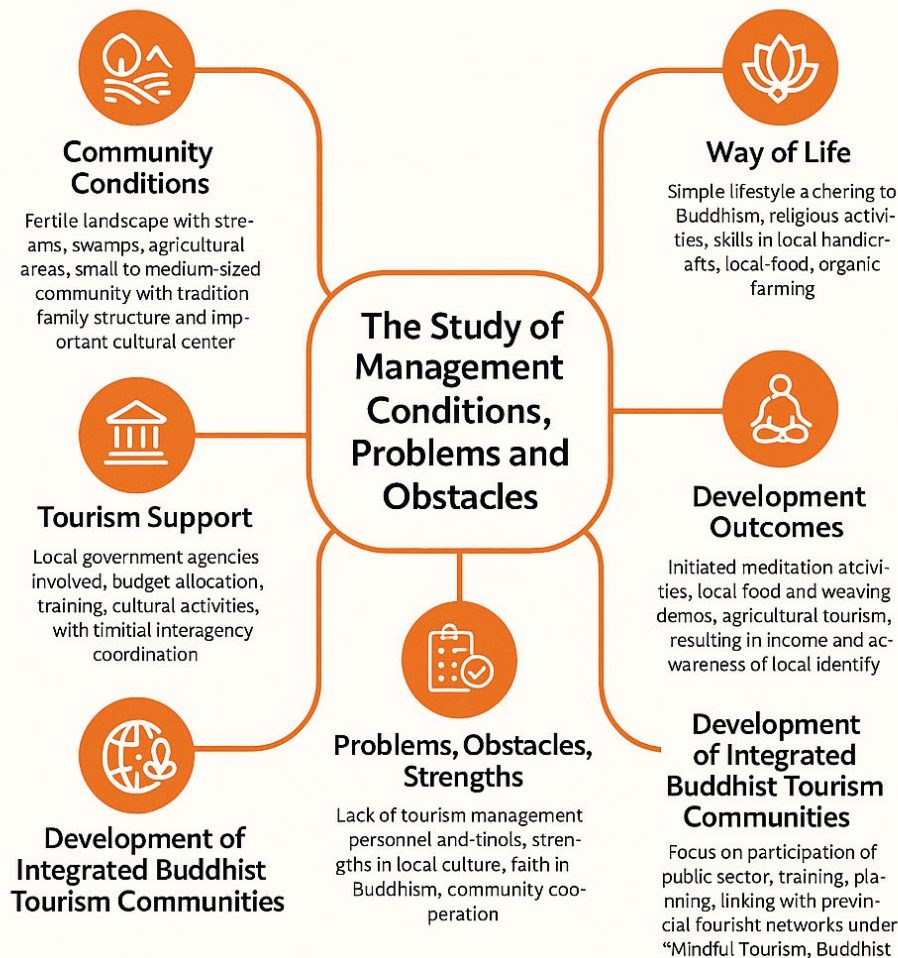


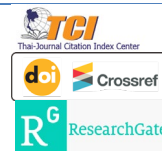
Figure 1 shows the study of the management situation, problems, obstacles, and readiness of the community for the development of integrated Buddhist tourism communities.

The model “The Study of Management Conditions, Problems and Obstacles” provides an all-encompassing view of how Lum Nam Suay evolved into a Buddhist tourism hub through community integration. The model integrates the community’s natural and cultural resources at its fundamental level. Lum Nam Suay functions as a small to medium-sized community with fertile terrain and numerous natural water sources, including streams and swamps, which provide ideal conditions for growing rice and various fruits and vegetables. The community’s physical wealth combines with traditional family systems and a strong cultural hub that functions as both the spiritual and social core of the community.

Residents of Lum Nam Suay live simply while practicing Buddhism deeply. Residents follow daily schedules that focus on religious practices, including almsgiving and merit-making activities at temples. The community members have developed specialized abilities in handicrafts and traditional culinary arts along with organic farming techniques, which represent cultural assets that can be developed into appealing tourist attractions.

The Subdistrict Administrative Organization, along with provincial offices, represents local government bodies that have delivered tourism support. These agencies functioned as key partners by distributing financial resources and organizing both educational programs and cultural activities in cooperation with schools and temples. These agencies suffer from poor coordination, which appears unpredictable and divided.

The positive outcomes of development initiatives have become apparent as a result of coordinated efforts. The Subdistrict and provincial offices organized meditation sessions and demonstrations of



local food and weaving alongside agricultural tourism, which attracted visitors from both inside and outside the province. The community development initiatives have generated economic benefits while enhancing local identity and cultural preservation pride.

The community continues to struggle with significant problems despite its achievements. The community encounters major difficulties regarding insufficient tourism management staff, along with missing long-term promotion plans and restricted access to financial resources. The development of tourism faces additional obstacles due to poor public relations, incomplete tourist information, and inadequate transportation systems. The community possesses fundamental strengths through its rich cultural heritage and deep Buddhist faith, combined with its cooperative spirit, which establishes a strong basis for development.

Community participation forms the core of the present integrated Buddhist tourism development model while engaging monks, local leaders, and women's groups. Government assistance includes structural support and educational programs to advance this approach. The principle "Mindful Tourism, Buddhist Way, Community Way" steers this development toward a sustainable tourism model that harmonizes economic gains with spiritual principles and environmental protection.

2. The results of the second phase of research: Analysis of government approaches to the integrated development of Buddhist tourism communities

2.1 Integrated policy and strategy formulation, the government should set tourism strategies that are linked to Buddhist principles and community lifestyles, in line with the National Economic and Social Development Plan and the 20-year National Strategy, to set a solid framework for development.

2.2 Budget and resource support Allocate budgets to develop infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, cultural sites, and tourist service centers, and promote access to funding sources for communities to develop tourism products or activities that are in line with the Buddhist way of life.

2.3 Community knowledge and potential development: Promote training for community leaders, monks, youth, and tourism entrepreneurs in services, organizing spiritual tourism activities, and communicating local culture correctly.

2.4 Develop a network of cooperation between the government, religious sectors, and the public sector. Support the establishment of local tourism development committees with representatives from all sectors to jointly plan, manage, and systematically monitor and evaluate operations.

2.5 Promote marketing and public relations to develop Buddhist tourism brands in each area to be outstanding through digital media, tourism platforms, and public activities both domestically and internationally.

2.6 Conservation of resources and the environment, along with moral consciousness, uses Buddhist principles in designing tourism activities that emphasize learning, practicing Dhamma, and living simply, including setting measures to conserve temples, natural resources, and traditional community lifestyles.





Figure 2 shows an analysis of the government's approach to developing integrated Buddhist tourism communities

The model “Government Approaches to the Integrated Development of Buddhist Tourism Communities” details six strategic elements that governments need to adopt to promote and advance Buddhist tourism at the village level. A key aspect of the model combines governmental initiatives with Buddhist teachings and community traditions.

The first, the initial vital approach, requires governments to create policies that merge tourism planning with Buddhist values while ensuring alignment with national development frameworks, including the National Economic and Social Development Plan and the 20-year National Strategy.

The second is vital to allocate budget and resources for developing essential infrastructure such as roads and electricity, and to provide communities with funding opportunities for tourism initiatives that showcase their spiritual traditions.

The third, community knowledge development and potential growth, forms the third element which underscores the need to train community leaders together with monks and youth, as well as tourism entrepreneurs for hospitality and spiritual tourism activities, and effective cultural communication.

The fourth approach builds cooperative networks through local tourism committees that consist of government representatives, religious institutions, and public sector members. The responsibility of these committees includes coordinated planning together with management functions and regular assessments of tourism activities.

The fifth area focuses on marketing, along with public relations, by urging digital platform usage to develop public campaigns that establish unique Buddhist tourism identities that draw visitors from both national and international markets.

The model requires environmental resource preservation based on Buddhist principles. Tourism activities must facilitate learning and Dhamma practice while ensuring the protection of temples and natural resources and upholding traditional community lifestyles. This integrated model strives for economic growth combined with spiritual growth alongside environmental preservation through principles of Buddhism and community involvement.

Phase 3 research results convey the model of state and community participation in the development of integrated Buddhist tourism.

The transfer of the state and community model for integrated Buddhist tourism development is the application of concepts and lessons learned from the research process to practical application at the local level, using the participatory process as the core, especially organizing activities that allow all sectors to play a joint role, such as organizing an exhibition on “Integrated Buddhist Tourism Community Development in the Beautiful River Basin, Nong Khai Province”, which allowed communities to showcase their work, present their local identities, and exchange knowledge with relevant agencies, including organizing an academic seminar on “Integrated Buddhist Tourism Routes”, which created a joint learning space among academics, community leaders, monks, and the government sector, resulting in participants having significantly increased knowledge and understanding of Buddhist tourism development. The evaluation results showed that the average understanding after the training was higher than before the training, reflecting that the transfer of the model is not only about providing information, but also about creating awareness and empowering people to truly drive it together. The transfer of the model also emphasizes the creation of continuous mechanisms, such as establishing a joint working group, planning annual tourism, and linking it with provincial policies to create sustainable development in the long term, in terms of the economy, culture, and spirit of the community. In terms of satisfaction/knowledge/application of knowledge, the participants’ knowledge and understanding were generally at a high level. If considering each aspect by ranking from highest to lowest average, it is as follows: having knowledge and understanding in this matter before attending the training, with an average of 4.35; having knowledge and understanding in this matter after attending the training, with an average of 4.60.

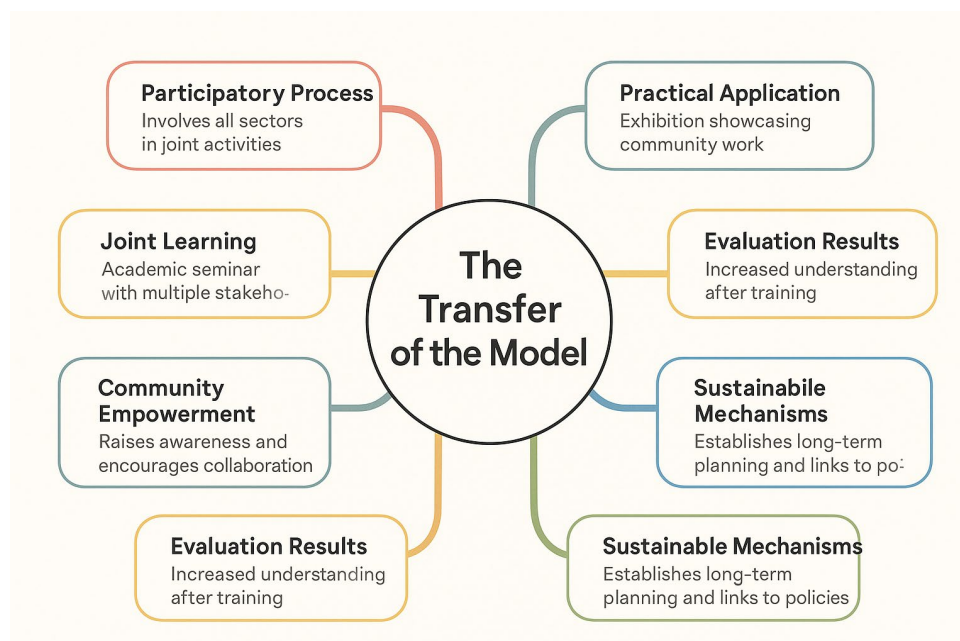
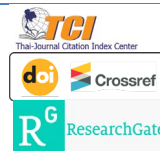


Figure 3 shows the transmission of state models and community participation in the development of integrated Buddhist tourism.



The model designed for integrated Buddhist tourism development approaches combines research-based knowledge with practical community applications through active stakeholder participation. The fundamental principle of this model involves collaborative participation from government officials, monks, academics, and local communities in tourism development. The participatory approach creates public forums through exhibitions that enable communities to showcase their work and cultural identities alongside academic seminars like the “Integrated Buddhist Tourism Routes,” which function as spaces for knowledge exchange and mutual understanding of Buddhist tourism principles.

By emphasizing empowerment and awareness instead of simple information distribution, this model helps participants fully grasp the objectives of Buddhist tourism development. The program evaluation confirmed substantial knowledge advancement, as average comprehension scores showed improvement from 4.35 before training to 4.60 following the training. The model proves effective at producing genuine learning experiences and preparedness in its participants.

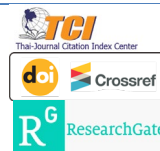
The core element of the model involves developing enduring systems to maintain continuity over time. The model establishes joint working groups and maintains regular tourism planning efforts while aligning local initiatives with provincial policies. Development should be economically sustainable while also delivering spiritual and cultural benefits to ensure sustainable growth through local wisdom and Buddhist principles.

Discussion

From the research on the role of the government and community participation in the development of Buddhist tourism in the beautiful watershed area of Nong Khai Province, there are 3 issues for discussion as follows:

1. From the study of management conditions and obstacles in the development of Buddhist tourism in the beautiful river basin, Nong Khai Province, the results of the study indicate that the beautiful river basin has a landscape that is conducive to community life. It is rich in natural resources, especially water sources and agricultural areas, which are important foundations for creating ecotourism and Buddhist agricultural activities. These strengths reflect the potential of the area to be developed as a sustainable tourist attraction. The villagers have a way of life that is closely connected to Buddhism, which is reflected in religious activities such as giving alms, participating in merit-making, and living a simple life. This information is consistent with the concept of "spiritual tourism", which emphasizes valuable experiences in the mind more than physical entertainment. And can be developed into a tourist activity that is different from general commercial tourist attractions, which is consistent with the research of Wiyaporn and Chaiyasirinrot (2023), who studied the management model of religious and cultural tourism in temples in Phetchabun Province. The research results found that Phetchabun Province has special tourism characteristics. Tourists choose to travel to participate in Buddhist activities and relax, especially at temples in Phetchabun Province. There are natural tourist attractions, ancient sites, and antiques. Therefore, tourists like to visit Phetchabun in large numbers, especially during the tourist season. As for the satisfaction of tourists in visiting temples in Phetchabun Province, it was found that Tourists were satisfied with the tourist attractions and tourism management, ranked from most to least as follows: tourism resources, followed by tourism strategies, facilities, public relations, and personnel. In addition, tourists thought that the temple should improve in order of most to least as follows: providing enough trash cans, organizing activities to encourage tourists to feel part of the tourist attractions, and having a map showing tourist attractions in the temple. Although the government plays a role in organizing training, developing infrastructure, and supporting cultural activities, the lack of unity among agencies, the work of individuals, and the lack of a clear master plan resulted in inconsistent development, reflecting structural problems in integrated management at the local level. Past tourism activities, such as meditation, local cooking, and weaving, have been well-received by tourists, generating income and encouraging community awareness of local culture conservation. This result confirms that the use of cultural and religious capital to develop the grassroots economy can yield tangible results if managed directionally. Development in the area still faces major obstacles, including a lack of tourism personnel, a lack of long-term planning, and an inability to access funding sources. Additional weaknesses include a lack of systematic public relations and tourism

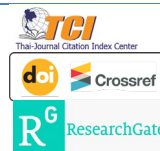




information. However, the area's strengths are its faith in Buddhism, cooperation among local people, and its still strong cultural capital. These are "social capital" that should be systematically developed into "tourism capital". The current development trend is driven by "community participation" as the core, especially groups of monks, community leaders, and housewives in the area who have joined in thinking, planning, and carrying out activities with the government. The concept of "mindful tourism, Buddhist way, community way" that has been applied is a framework that connects culture, economy, and environment in a balanced way. However, it requires continuous support from the government in terms of policies, funding sources, and connecting tourism networks at a wider level. As the concept of Chongwutthiwet (2007) explains, community development is a process of the government and private sectors to improve the well-being of people in the community. In the development, people will jointly plan and implement the plan by themselves, using the resources available in the community as much as possible. If it exceeds the community's capacity, they will ask for external assistance, both from the government and private organizations. The summary of the discussion above reflects that the development of Buddhist tourism in the Nam Suay Basin area has a strong foundation from social and cultural capital, but still requires empowerment from the government, especially long-term planning, human development, and the creation of a systematic mechanism for working together to make tourism a tool for sustainable local development.

2. From the research results studying the government's approach to developing integrated Buddhist tourism communities, it was found that an effective approach requires systematic planning and linking it to Buddhist principles, community lifestyles, and the national development strategy framework, which can be discussed as follows: Buddhist tourism development should be based on a clear strategic framework, linked to the National Economic and Social Development Plan and the 20-year national strategy, so that operations are continuous and consistent with national policies. Integrating Buddhist principles into development approaches emphasizes development with awareness, sustainability, and respect for local values, which helps create a unique identity and spatial differences. The government plays an important role in allocating budgets to develop necessary infrastructure and facilities, such as roads, electricity, tourist service centers, and cultural sites, which are basic conditions for supporting tourists. It should also promote communities to have easy access to development funding sources, so that villagers have the opportunity to create local products or organize tourism activities that are truly Buddhist. Human capital development is a key factor in sustainable development. The government should promote both academic and practical training for community leaders, monks, youth, and local entrepreneurs, focusing on providing spiritual services, organizing spiritual tourism activities, and presenting community stories with accuracy and respect for cultural roots, which is consistent with the research of Charoenying (2022), who conducted a study on Buddhist tourism model of Wat Rai Khing. The research results found that 1) Wat Rai Khing plays a role in promoting tourism. The location and decoration, which are mostly antiques and valuable historical sites, promote beliefs and faith in the sacredness of Luang Por Wat Rai Khing. There are religious ceremonies throughout the year in many festivals, and it is a place for those interested to practice Dhamma. 2) Tourists' opinions on the management of Buddhist tourism found that tourists have a view of Wat Rai Khing in terms of historical significance, such as an antique museum, beliefs and faith in the sacredness of Luang Por Wat Rai Khing, traveling to perform religious ceremonies during festivals and practicing Dhamma during temple festivals. 3) Suggestions for Buddhist tourism models of Wat Rai Khing can be divided into 2 models: 1) Wat Rai Khing's community-based tourism model in terms of viewing Buddhist art, making merit, worshipping Buddha, and asking for blessings. 2) Wat Rai Khing's Buddhist activity tourism model in terms of practicing Dhamma and creating a Dhamma practice network. In this regard, a sustainable approach requires a participatory working mechanism from all sectors. The establishment of a local committee with representatives from the government sector, temples, and villagers is a tool that helps make planning, management, and monitoring transparent, collaborative, and reduces the problem of duplication of policies or activities. Effective public relations does not only focus on the number of tourists. However, it must emphasize quality and appropriateness with the context of the area. The government should support the development of local brands that are consistent with Buddhist identity, such as "Wit Boon, Wit Tham, Lum Nam Suay" by using digital tools, online tourism platforms, and promotional activities that demonstrate the spiritual and cultural values of the area. Buddhist principles





can be used as guidelines for designing tourism activities that promote learning, practicing Dhamma, and living a simple life. They also help instill awareness of environmental conservation, preserving temples, forests, and water sources, which are natural and spiritual capitals that are important in the Buddhist tourism process. In summary, the government's proposed guidelines in all six areas reflect the necessity of laying the foundation for the systematic development of Buddhist tourism and integrating structural elements (infrastructure) with value elements to be consistent. Promoting the role of the government, therefore, is not just about allocating a budget, but also includes driving policies, being a thought leader, and creating a genuine participation mechanism so that Buddhist tourism can become a force for community economic development along with preserving the cultural and spiritual identity of Thai society in the long term.

3. The transfer of state and community models in the development of integrated Buddhist tourism in the beautiful river basin, Nong Khai Province, is a process of transition from "academic knowledge" to "practice in the area", with the core being the participatory process that allows all sectors to think, act, and learn together. The results of the academic exhibition and seminar have proven that opening up diverse and intellectually democratic learning spaces can stimulate local people's awareness, understanding, and confidence in their role in driving targeted Buddhist tourism, which is consistent with the research of Singtanasarn and Panpairojn (2022) who conducted a study on the development of Buddhist and cultural tourism along the learning path of Luang Por Derm to promote lifelong learning. The research results found that 1) 3 more Buddhist and cultural learning resources were obtained; 2) 3 e-books on tourism resources along Luang Por Derm's learning path were obtained; 3) 96 knowledgeable and capable young tour guides were obtained, with post-training knowledge test scores higher than pre-training knowledge test scores. At a statistical significance level of 0.05, there is also a good overall assessment of the tour guides in terms of tourist service by qualified persons. 4) Some teachers can pass on knowledge to the next generation of students.

In addition, organizing activities that allow communities to showcase their work and present their identities is an important tool for empowering them to be proud of their locality and see the value of their cultural capital. Meanwhile, academic seminars help create an exchange of knowledge between academics, monks, community leaders, and government officials, leading to the creation of "shared understanding" that is the foundation for long-term integrated planning.

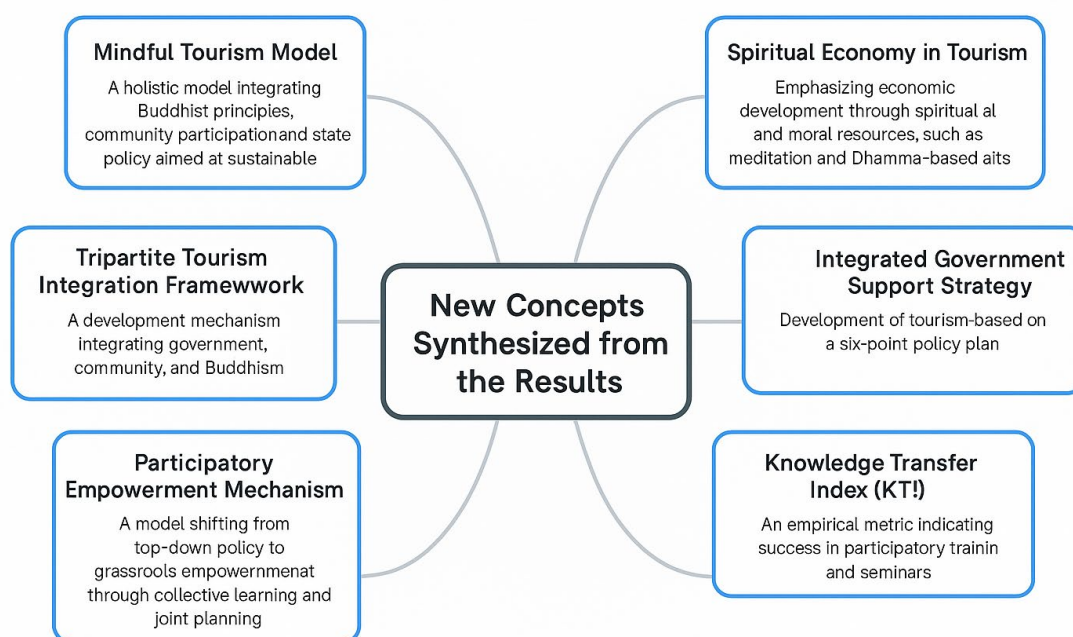
The evaluation results indicate that participants' knowledge and understanding levels after the training increased from an average of 4.35 to 4.60, reflecting that knowledge transfer that emphasizes cooperation and mutual learning is effective in changing positive attitudes and behaviors of those involved. The development does not stop at organizing activities, but also expands to establishing a working group, creating an annual tourism plan, and linking it to provincial policies, reflecting the creation of a tangible "continuous development mechanism", as Aiyarat Aphasin (2020) conducted a study on the management guidelines for religious tourism for Thai tourists in Phutthamonthon, Suphan Buri Province. The research results found that 1. The level of Thai tourists' opinions on organizing tourism activities found that the results of the analysis of the variable model indicating the confirming components of the religious tourism management model for Thai tourists at the Buddha Monthon in Suphan Buri Province in terms of organizing tourism activities consisted of 3 latent variables: activities organized on important religious days, activities organized on Buddhist holy days, and specific group activities. The test results found that they were consistent with the empirical data at a good level. 2. The results of the analysis of the confirming components of organizing tourism activities, spatial management, and tourism management at the Buddha Monthon in Suphan Buri Province found that the results of the analysis of the variable model indicating the confirming components of the religious tourism management model for Thai tourists at the Buddha Monthon in Suphan Buri Province in terms of spatial management consisted of 5 latent variables: tourist attractions, access to tourist attractions, tourist activities, tourist facilities, and tourist resting areas. The test results were consistent with the empirical data at a good level. 3. The results of the structural equation analysis of the religious tourism management model for Thai tourists visiting the Buddha Monthon in Suphan Buri Province found that the results of the analysis of the variable model indicating the confirming components of the religious tourism management model for Thai tourists at the Buddha Monthon in Suphan Buri Province in terms of tourism management consisted of 4 latent variables: space management, tourism public relations,



and tourism environment management. And in terms of tourism perception, the test results are consistent with empirical data at a good level. 4. The results of the test of the influence of factors in terms of organizing tourism activities, factors in terms of area management, and factors in terms of tourism management on the return to visit of Thai tourists found that the results of the analysis of the model of indicator variables confirming the religious tourism management model for Thai tourists in the Buddha Monthon of Suphan Buri Province, the variables of overall religious tourism management, aspects of organizing tourism activities, aspects of area management, aspects of tourism management, and the dependent variable or outcome variable, which is the return to visit, were found to be consistent with the empirical data at a good level. In summary, the transfer of the state and community models in this case study is not just a process of knowledge transfer, but is the creation of “social power” that drives Buddhist tourism in economic, cultural, and spiritual dimensions sustainably, based on the acceptance of the potential of the community and appropriate support from the state as a promoter and facilitator of the conditions of cooperation.

New Knowledge

Based on the results of studying "The Role of the State and Community Participation in the Development of Buddhist-Oriented Tourism in the Lum Nam Suay Area, Nong Khai Province, Thailand," it can be synthesized as the new concepts:

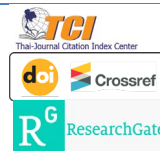


New Concepts Synthesized from the Results

The "Mindful Tourism, Buddhist Way, Community Way" model develops sustainable Buddhist-oriented tourism in Thailand's Lum Nam Suay area through the combined efforts of the state, local communities, and Buddhism.

1. The State enables sustainable tourism development by constructing essential infrastructure while offering financial assistance and creating policy guidelines. Government bodies focus on building roads and public utilities and establishing internet access while simultaneously advancing tourism with national branding and financial backing. The state runs training programs and capacity-building activities to aid local tourism organizations and Buddhist leaders.

2. The Community serves as both the main executor of plans and the guardian of cultural heritage. Residents share their traditional expertise through crafts like weaving and herbal medicine while teaching organic farming principles and providing temple hospitality services. Community members



play a key role in tourism management and cultural site maintenance while participating voluntarily in decision-making processes. Residents participate in tourism development through joint planning committees and public forums, which align tourism initiatives with community values.

3. The model relies on Buddhism to provide both ethical guidelines and spiritual direction. Temples, alongside rituals and sacred sites, form the core of the tourism experience by providing visitors with activities like meditation and almsgiving as well as opportunities for Dhamma learning. This spiritual element draws mindful travelers while simultaneously strengthening moral and environmental awareness in both residents and visitors.

4. The operational structure consists of exhibitions and academic forums as well as participatory committees to enable knowledge sharing and collaborative learning. The Knowledge Transfer Index (KTI) represents a significant innovation that quantifies community learning advancements following educational sessions by illustrating the connection between training efforts and real-world results.

5. Ultimately, the model produces holistic benefits: The model generates comprehensive advantages by boosting local economic growth and protecting cultural heritage while promoting ethical tourism standards and supporting national soft-power tourism objectives. This tourism model that merges digital promotion strategies with community empowerment and Buddhist values establishes Thailand as a foremost international authority in spiritual and sustainable tourism development.

Recommendation

To drive the development of Buddhist tourism in the beautiful river basin of Nong Khai Province, which can be applied in the area sustainably, the following additional guidelines are proposed:

1. Practical recommendations

1.1 The community should prepare an annual tourism plan that emphasizes Buddhist activities, using its cultural capital, such as merit-making, meditation, local handicrafts, and self-sufficient agriculture.

1.2 Temples in the community should play a role as a center for Buddhist tourism activities by promoting the establishment of temple networks with schools, government agencies, and tourist groups.

1.3 A local knowledge set or curriculum on local lifestyles, cultures, and religions should be developed as a learning medium for tourists and youth.

1.4 A participatory monitoring and evaluation system should be established to ensure that development meets the goals and that guidelines can be adjusted flexibly and appropriately to the context of the area.

1.5 The organization of exhibitions, seminars, and knowledge exchange forums at the local and provincial levels should be continuously promoted to maintain the momentum and expand the development results more widely.

2. Policy recommendations

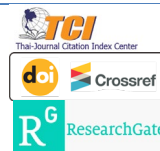
2.1 The government should establish a clear policy and strategy for Buddhist tourism that is linked to the community lifestyle, in line with the 20-year national strategy and the National Economic and Social Development Plan. With an emphasis on economic, spiritual, and environmental sustainability

2.2 Promotion of the establishment of a working group or committee for tourism development at the local level, consisting of representatives from the government sector, religious sector, and the public sector, to jointly plan, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of the project with continuous and participatory efforts

2.3 Allocate appropriate and comprehensive budgets and resources to support infrastructure, knowledge, and cultural activities, including supporting communities to conveniently access sources of funding

2.4 Promote the development of the potential of people in the community by organizing training appropriate to the context, such as spiritual tourism, local storytelling, and organizing activities reflecting the Buddhist way of life





2.5 Public relations plans should be developed, and the image of Buddhist tourism should be promoted to stand out through the systematic use of digital media and the communication of the identity of the area to reach quality target groups

3. Recommendations for further research

3.1 A comparative study of Buddhist tourism models in other areas with similar characteristics should be conducted to compile good practices and apply them in the context of the Suay River Basin

3.2 A study should be conducted on the social and spiritual impacts of tourists who participate in Buddhist tourism activities to identify their spiritual value.

3.3 Research should be conducted to develop a system for evaluating the performance of Buddhist tourism at the community level by developing specific indicators for morality, culture, and participation.

3.4 The role of monks and temples as “spiritual leaders for tourism” should be studied, and appropriate training courses/guidelines should be designed for that role.

3.5 Action research should be conducted to create and evaluate integrated tourism management models that are appropriate for each community with different contexts.

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