



A Study on the Design of Buddhist Cultural Tourism Routes in Thailand Aimed at Chinese Tourists

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Abstract. This study is based on the research of Buddhist cultural resources in Thailand and the survey and analysis of the intention of Chinese tourists to carry out Buddhist cultural tourism in Thailand. Through qualitative and quantitative mixed research methods, a Buddhist cultural tourism route in Thailand that meets the tourism needs and intentions of Chinese tourists is proposed. And carry on the SWOT analysis of the route design to demonstrate the feasibility of the route.

Keywords: Buddhist cultural in Thailand, tourism routes, Chinese tourists

1 Introduction

Thailand's tourism industry has always been one of the important industries that Thailand's economy depends on for survival. And the tourism industry's output value accounts for about 10% of the national total output value. The number of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand has increased exponentially after the implementation of the mutual visa-free policy for tourists from the two countries on March 1, 2024.

According to data from the Thai Ministry of Tourism and Sports[1], there were 3,519,735 Chinese tourists in 2023, accounting for 12.5% of foreign tourists. As of July 1, 2024, the number of Chinese tourists has reached 3.5 million, sequential growth an increase of 11.58%.

This agency has another investigation on July 4, 2024, 205 Chinese citizens were surveyed, The ranking of tourist destinations is: Bangkok (100%), Chiang Mai (20%), Phuket (18%), Pattaya (16%), Koh Samui and Koh Phangan (14%), Krabi (12%), Ayutthaya (10%), Chiang Rai (6%), Cha Am (6%), Hua Hin (6%), Koh Lipe (5%) and (3%). From this data can be seen that there are two kinds of tourist destinations for Chinese tourists to Thailand: ocean tourism and city tourism. The main purposes of city Tours are visiting temples, shopping and massages.

According to the data of China Tourism Network, the projects in Thailand that attract Chinese tourists are islands, Buddhism, fruits and massage. Although the number of Chinese tourists to Thailand is superior, and Thailand also has good resources for Buddhist culture, there is a lack of representative Buddhist cultural tourism route design and guidance.

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In August 2024, the author randomly interviewed 40 Chinese tourists in Ayutthaya, and they all said that they did not know much about Ayutthaya before the trip and recommended to go there through the APP, and they were very satisfied with the Buddhist cultural sites in the area. When author asked about the theme of the Sukhothai Buddhist Heritage Park, only 2 people said that they knew about this cultural site, accounting for 5% of the respondents.

Thus, Chinese tourists to participate in the heat of the Buddhism cultural tourism with the Thai Buddhist culture tourism route design and promotion way, contradiction between this contradiction directly affect the Thai Buddhist culture as the resource of tourism marketing. The lack of good Buddhist cultural tourism routes and unsuccessful promotion methods have become the main problems of Buddhist cultural tourism in Thailand.

2 Research Content

2.1 Buddhist Tourism Resources in Thailand with Buddha Statues as the Core

Thai Buddhist culture is closely related to the development of Thai history. Buddhism entered Thailand in the 3rd century BC and has become an important culture in Thailand today. since the establishment of the Thai Kingdom in the thirteenth century AD, the prime role of traditional Thai art had been to show devotion to Buddhism [2]. Buddhist culture as a tourism resource includes Buddha statues, temples and heritage parks. And Buddha statues is the main body. Thai Buddha Image art is influenced by ancient Indian Buddha Image and natural beliefs. The Thai Buddha images have unique characteristics which vary according to times and regions [3]. As shown in Figure 1, author combines the timeline of Thai history and conducts fieldwork to show the stage characteristics of Thai Buddha image.

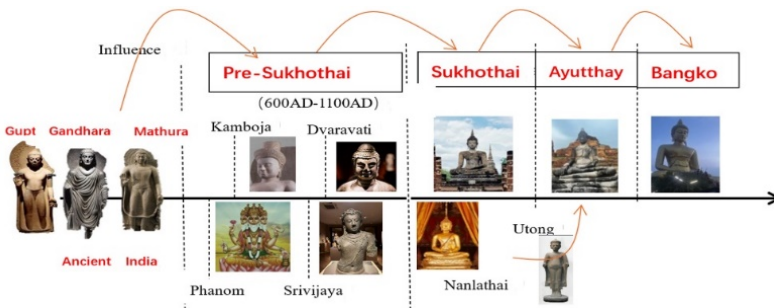


Fig. 1. Timeline of the Development of Thai Buddha Image

Belief is the core of the development of Thai Buddhist culture. Buddha Image is not only a form of Thai Buddhist art, but also the core of Thai people's belief in Buddhism. Buddha images bear traits that are indicative of the ethnicity of their creators.

The same belief has formed different Buddha Image in different regions. Thai Buddha Image has a unique historicity, just as Hegel theory holds that: the formation of any art is inseparable from the local nature and culture [4]. The shape of each Buddha Image represents the local historical memory, story and core belief. In Figure 2, author organizes the Buddha image of different artistic styles. For example, the Buddha Image in Ayutthaya show the glorious history of the Ayutthaya Dynasty, the Buddha Image in Sukhothai show the special pursuit of artistic aesthetics during that period and so on. Adam Smith said that religion is an important social force that affects economic development. So, developing Buddhist culture as a tourism project can bring economic benefits and promotion of Buddhist culture.



Fig. 2. Thai Buddha statues in different historical stages

2.2 Discussion on the Buddhist Tourism Resources Cities

The research conclusions of scholars such as DuanLisheng[5]and Charuwan Chareonla[6] have pointed out that Thai Buddhist culture and art are closely related to Thai historical society. Bangkok, Ayutthaya, Phitsanulok, Sukhothai, Chiang Mai five urban areas as the core of Thailand's historical dynasties correspond to the Lanathai dynasty, Sukhothai dynasty, Ayutthaya dynasty and Bangkok dynasty.

In addition to Phitsanulok, the other four cities are very rich in Buddha statues, temples and Buddhist sites. Phitsanulok is a new online celebrity Buddhist tourism city, is popular among young people with several temples dedicated to the "success Buddha".

Buddhism has been a symbol of Thailand since the Sukhothai period when King Phya Lithai wrote Traibhumikath to promote Buddhist culture. This work is meant to help govern the country and teach the Thai people good behavior so that society is peaceful. Although the dynasties changed, the relocation of the capital did not affect the development of Buddhist culture but formed different characteristics of The Times.

Table 1. The most visited temples or ruins by foreign tourists.

	Bangkok	Ayutthaya	Sukhothai	Phitsanulok	Chiang Mai
1	WatPhra Kaew	WatYaiChaiya-mongkhon	Historical Park	WatPhraSi RatanaMahatha	Wat Umong
2	Wat Pho	Wat Mahathat	Wat Mahathat	Wat Yai	WatPhar-ThatDoisuthep
3	Wat Arum	WatRatcha Burana	WatSi Sawai	WatChanTawan Tok	WatPhrasingh

4	WatBud-dhaisawan	Wat Chaiwatthana-ram	Wat Si Chun	Wat Nang Phaya	Wat Suhndok
5	Wat Suthat	WatLokayasutha-ram	Wat Sasi		Chedi Luang

Table 1 shows the most visited temples or sites in Bangkok and other cities by foreign tourists based on the analysis of the popularity of satellite map visits in July-August 2024.

2.3 Survey and Analysis of Chinese Tourists' Willingness to Travel Buddhist Culture in Thailand

By benchmarking the research core and narrowing down the research population, the author conducted a survey on the cultural intention of Chinese tourists to Thailand for Buddhist tourism. The respondents were divided into two groups: a total of 300 people were surveyed who are traveling in Thailand, and a total of 300 people were surveyed who are planning to travel. The survey asked questions about related research on Buddhist cultural tourism routes in Thailand. Among the overseas tourists in Thailand, 227 people have Buddhist cultural tourism experience plans, accounting for 75.6% of the total number. Among the 300 domestic tourists, 179 people have Buddhist cultural tourism in the expected travel routes, accounting for only 59.6% of the total. This set of data shows that the design and development of Buddhist tourism routes in Thailand has a market for Chinese tourists, but it is necessary to pay attention to the promotion methods in China.

As can be seen from Figure 3, the two lines basically overlap, indicating that the two groups have the same tourism purpose. Among the three kinds of tourism resources, temples, Buddha statues and ruins parks, temple tourism resources occupy an absolute advantage. Three tourism items: worship, visit and both of the people who choose both of them are the most, which can provide reference value for the choice of tourism resources in the route design. Respondents ranked the five cities in the design in order of popularity of visiting: Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Ayutthaya, Sukhothai and Phuthelok.

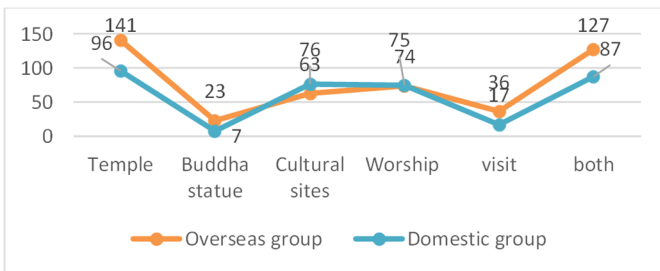


Fig. 3. Analysis of types and purposes of tourist participation in Buddhist tourism

The survey of willingness to participate in Buddhist cultural tourism routes involves three questions: whether they are willing to participate in the routes (necessary for

construction), whether they are willing to learn about Thai Buddhist culture and whether there is a need to promote Buddhist cities. Respondents were asked to use a 4-level degree evaluation. Comparative analysis of the Figure 4, bar chart shows that the number of people who are traveling in Thailand who support the three questions shows a step decline, and the characteristics of the peak and valley line of the domestic population. This reflects from the side that the people who are traveling in Thailand have improved their cognition of Thai culture to a certain extent, and they believe that it is very necessary to improve the three problems. People who have travel plans in China have a lower urgency value, which can be tried or strengthened.

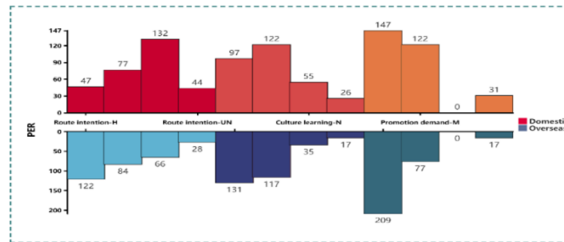


Fig. 4. Subgroup data analysis of Buddhist cultural tourism route intention survey

2.4 Route Design and Analysis

Based on the research data and the distribution characteristics of Buddhist cultural tourism resources in Thailand, the Buddhist tourism route designed runs through five cities: Bangkok, Ayutthaya, Phuthelok (Sukhothai) and Chiang Mai.

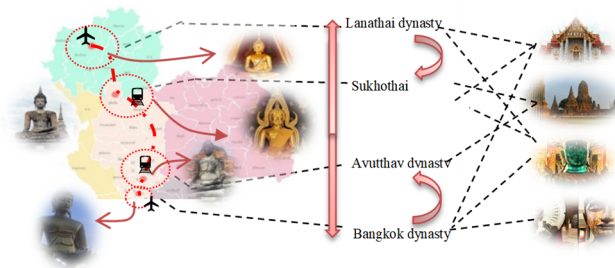


Fig. 5. Thailand Buddhist cultural tourism route design

As can be seen from Figure 5, The route starts from Bangkok or Chiang Mai, which is the main entry point for Chinese tourists. The routes formed by the Bangkok-to-Chiang Mai Railway and major highways guarantee full travel from south to north or from north to south. It can also form close-range radiation tourism centered on Bangkok and Chiang Mai. The five urban Buddha statues, temples and heritage parks in the route design are unique and cover a variety of tourism elements such as Buddha statues, temples and museums, allowing visitors to experience the diversity of Thai Buddhist art in a multi-dimensional manner.

Analyzed by SOWT. Strengths: Thailand's own Buddhist cultural tourism resources and large number of Chinese tourists are potential advantages of this route design and development. Weaknesses: Thailand's domestic transportation infrastructure is poor, although there are planes and trains between Bangkok and Chiang Mai, but the train speed is low, the train condition is poor, and the time is long. Opportunity: It has a large market space and can drive other tourism economy. More importantly, it can promote cultural exchanges between the two countries. Threat: Control variables present in Thai government and society.

Therefore, based on this situation, in the future development of the route, it is necessary to seize the characteristics of the five cities to build city business cards, and form an effective promotion and publicity system through China's domestic APP and the Internet. The problem of infrastructure can be solved by a complex form of transportation. Uncontrollable variables targeting local governments and society can be gradually resolved through win-win cooperation.

3 Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from this study:

1. The survey data prove that Chinese tourists have a demand for clear guidance on Buddhist cultural tourism routes in Thailand.

2. The historical epochal nature of Thai Buddhist culture has resulted in differences in Buddhist culture and artistic styles among different cities, which are the prerequisites for route design.

3. SOWT analysis points out that the major influencing parameters of the route design are the control variables of the design, the way of publicity and the infrastructure such as internal traffic. If the route is put into actual construction, we must pay attention to these three points.

4. The Thai Buddhist cultural tourism route designed for Chinese tourists meets the realistic needs of the current tourism and cultural development of China and Thailand. Through the design and promotion of this route, Chinese tourists can have a deeper understanding of Thai Buddhist culture and achieve the purpose of promoting cultural exchanges between the two countries and promoting Thai culture.

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