

The Network Learning Model of Buddhist Tourist Temples in Thailand

Ven. Dr. Phramaha Suthit Aphakaro
Director of the Buddhist Research Institute
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University
Thailand

Abstract

This research aims to study the process of network learning model of tourists temples in Thailand, to study the values of media develop tourists' mind and to study the reinforcement process of network learning.

It has found from this research that temples and Dhamma retreats have emphasized promoting the learning and meditation practice to make the understanding of life. The teaching of the Buddha has shown that the happiness coming from inside that relate with mental feeling according to Buddhist principles. It is different from activities of others places that emphasized the rejoiced happiness; form, sound, smell, taste which are subject to changed. So there are many tourists especially the old people, workers and young generations who are interested in meditation practice come to study and visit temples in Thailand. Each temple has set the activity up which concern with the development of mind and wisdom.

Three models of network learning model tourist temples in Thailand were especially found namely 1) Learning by seeing, it is aiming for tourist to get knowledge and understanding about the Buddhist principles correctly by studying from the environment 2) Learning by doing practice, the aim is to instruct tourists to follow Buddhist practicing like Four Foundations of Mindfulness which lead to get calmness and wisdom 3) Learning by networking, it is to create the benefit to community and society. The result of procedure of each temple is found that there are many people from more than 75 countries interested in coming to practice meditation from the past up to now.

The related institutes such as the Tourism Authority of Thailand, the National Buddhism Office; Fine Arts Department should launched learning activities to develop the mind and wisdom. There should have valuable activities to promote the quality of tourism.

Keyword: Tourism, Buddhist-Cultural Tourism, Buddhist Learning, Development of Mind and Wisdom, Development Model of Buddhist Tourists

Preface

This research originated from the interest to study the system and process of studying at the temples which are tourist places, the method of communicating values and progress of education for mind development of tourists. And also the process of developing networks of learning of temples which are tourist places that connects people and tourists with knowledge, activities and programs which pave the way develop the knowledge in tourism and way of practice according to the Buddhism with the purpose to realize the value of everything , developing the mind and the wisdom of people in the society. The aims of the research are to study the method of studying tourists places which are temples in Thailand, to study the method of communicating values and development of mind for tourists at tourists places which are

temples in Thailand, and to study the methods of encouraging networks of learning at tourist places which are temples.

Tools and method of study

This research is conducted by combination of various methods which are gathering facts and analyzing them in quantity and quality in order to get the needed resource for the study. The method of study will be 1. Documentary study to find out information about method and process of learning, the method of communication, mind development, and other related issues of tourist places which are temples. 2. Field study by focus group meetings with monks, tourists, and tour agents and related organizations to find out information about method and process of learning, the method of communication, mind development, and other related issues of tourist places which are temples. 3. focusing opinions of tourists, and tour agents and related organizations to understand a way to develop tourism related to Buddhism.

The focus group of this study consists of 1. Monks and other organizations which are related with tourism in temples. 2. Tourists and tour companies by focusing 200 Thai and 200 foreign tourists who are tourists or who have practiced in temples.

The outcome of the research

It was found out that all those four temples and meditation centers are places which are focusing on advocating learning and practicing meditation to understand the life more than entertaining knowledge. The teaching at those places are to focus on happiness that arises through mind and heart accordingly with the Buddhist principles. This is different from other tourism related activities which rely on pleasure arises from form, sound, smell, or taste. Or through activities that bag for luck. There are people who are old, working people, or younger generation who are interested in practice coming to these places which encourage to practice for the development of mind and knowledge. The activities which encourage learning and tourism are as follow:

1. Object related learning and tourism activities is letting the tourist learn by observing the nature and portraits in temples which pave the way to understand the nature and life. The Suwanmokh temple is an example of that kind.
2. Cultural and lifestyle related learning and tourism activities such as praying, chanting, alms giving, considering before eating, sitting meditation, walking meditation are Buddhist activities which are simple and not complicated will give the chance for tourists to participate
3. Mind and wisdom development related learning and tourism activities are activities which are practiced in order to deeply understand oneself and the life such as Dhamma discussions, mind development, and wisdom development through meditation and four fold insight meditation. Suan Dok temple, and Buddhism Study Center, and International Meditation Center in Chiang Mai had tourists who were interested in practicing more than 10,000 people from more than 75 countries.
4. Life and social beneficiary learning and tourism activities are activities which comes after the tourists were trained according to above stated methods that made practitioner to understand oneself and benefitting others. They were tend to teach English to the novices and tribal students. They did many social welfare activities such as donation, establishing

foundations for education, propagating Buddhism, involving in Buddhist activities, publishing Buddhist books.

Information regarding the opinion of tourists about management of tourism activities and at temples and the result of mind and wisdom development learning found that both Thai and foreign tourists have interest to learn and Buddhism especially to develop mind and wisdom. The focus group mostly consists of women aged 21-30 who hold bachelor degree and had interest in praying and chanting. Most of the focus group were content with the learning and practice process of temples. The difference between Thai and foreign tourists is that Thai tourists were interested in praying and chanting whereas foreigners were more interested in meditation practice for mind and wisdom development.

The learning process of temples which were tourist places can be categorized into 3 methods.

1. Learning by seeing is the model of learning for tourists to understand Buddhism by seeing nature and culture of Buddhism at temples. Natural media and Doctrinal media will be used to let the tourist to awaken mind and to know the things around oneself. It is found that the medium which the temples or meditation used are natural or doctrinal media which doesn't let negative worldly feeling to arise. The boards portraying teachings catch the attention of tourists mostly. These learning places which are not like entertaining or other cultural sites will pave way for 1. Behaving of tourists not to harm nature, 2. Respect for the place and people at the place, 3. Acceptance of difference of practice styles. 4. Tuning of one's mind with the nature and the doctrine. 5. Put one's mind into learning process.
2. Learning by doing is the model of learning for tourist to participate in Buddhist practice activities such as meditation, Four fold insight meditation both of which will pave way for mind and wisdom development. A significant factor of this model is that the tourist will create a bond with the temple and community which will further involve the tourist to learn other aspects of Buddhism and Thai culture. The practicing methods that are commonly used are Satipatthana 4, Anapanassati Meditation, and Yonisomanasikara , all of which will lead to calmness of the mind and understanding the life and happiness that arises in the mind. The steps of advocating learning and practice are as follow: 1. Learning basic Buddhist doctrine 2. Adapting the mind through prayers and chanting. 3. Mind development. 4. Temperament examination. 5. Doing daily activities with mindfulness. 6. Spreading loving kindness to all beings. The medium of teaching this method is done by persons who are meditation masters, next medium is tradition such as Alms round, and medium of doctrine which is explaining principles of practice. All of the communication models are conducted in natural convenient environments.
3. Learning by networking is the model which creates a community of good people and a network of welfare workers after the tourists have participated in activities and practiced according to Buddhism. Some practitioners participate in welfare works in temples, communities and societies such as teaching languages , engaging in social welfare works, establishing foundations, donating. Poor people and nearby communities benefit from these activities which will pave the way for social networks

involving more discussion and planning and putting into action. This model of learning let 4 dimensions of long term sustainability to arise. They are: 1. Continuous development of mind of practitioner or tourist in participating creative benefitting activities for oneself and society. 2. Learning Buddhism and Thai culture which is the foundation of cultural exchange. 3. Sustainable cultural tourism as these practitioners are tend to come back for the second and third time. 4. A social network which will benefit practitioner will originate. Learning by networking consists of 5 steps they are: 1. Creating volunteering mind. 2. Creativity in beneficiary activities. 3. Conducting beneficiary activities. 4. Social networking 5. Developing networks.

The learning process of those tourist temples which have programs to communicate values and mind development can be considered in 2 dimensions.

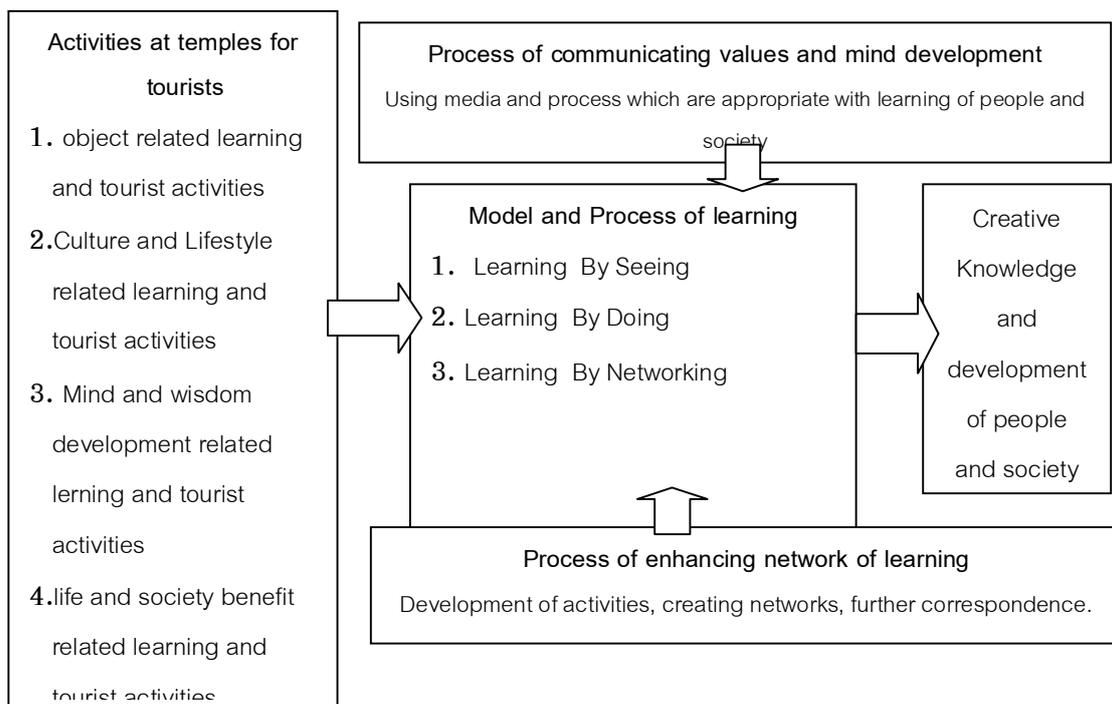
1. Dimension of teaching following the methods of the Buddha and Buddha's Disciples. The aim of this kind is to teach the listener to understand what should be understood, to let the listener practice accordingly, to understand principles of Buddhism and principles of living in the society. The medium of teaching are of 4 kinds, 1. Medium of persons especially eligible monks. 2. Natural medium 3. Traditional and other activities held in order to understand the phenomena. 4. Mass media which consists of newspaper, radio, TV, and other reachable media.
2. Communication dimension of David K. Berlo which emphasis on communication in SMCR dimension. S= Sender who has influence over the practice in Buddhism monks are the people who open the door for people to come and learn the truth . so that the temples which have eminent monks such as Buddhadasa Bhikkhu are considered having good senders. 2. M= Message of the communication which is the heart of this process. If the monks are able to communicate the Doctrine correctly the learning process can arise at any moment. 3.C=Channel of communication which will attract more and more followers. 4. R= Receiver of the communication is easy to be communicated as most of the people who come into temples are intended to learn.

The study showed that the network of learning at all four temples, that work on developing tourism, preserving art and culture, education, developing society most importantly meditation practice and propagation of Buddhism, which were taken for case study had not much difference from one another as they all focus on developing people and creating serene society. They all have a systematic working process and had many network partners such as 1. Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya University, 2. Meditation center of the province and National Office of Buddhism, 3. The center for advocating values and morals and sustainability of Nation, Religion, and Monarchy, 4. Foundations of Temples and other organizations. 5. Holding co-operative activities with famous tourist temples such as Grand Palace Temple, Wat Pho, Wat Arun to make sure the tourists get the correct guidance.

The problems and obstacles faced by temples which are tourist places as found by the study are: 1. The lack of people who are efficient to communicate well, especially in English language. 2. Communication and information dissemination problems 3. Management inside temples problems i.e. food, garbage. 4. Language and cultural barriers. 5. Inter related networking problems. Problems from the tourist or practitioner are not much other than commuter related problems, information finding problems, support from related organizations such as Tourism Authority of Thailand related problems.

Presentation of the Result of the Study

The study found that the result obtained by tourists and practitioners are realizing the value of human life, realizing the value of developing mind and wisdom, realizing the value of Triple Gems, realizing the value of observing moral precepts, realizing value of Buddhist culture and tradition, ability to apply teaching of Buddhism such as Four Noble Truths into the life, this will enable them to lead a life that will benefit oneself and others and accepting the impermanence in life. It can be said that organizing appropriate activities at temples which are tourist places can lead to development of mind and wisdom along with the development of people and society that have understanding of itself and nature. This can be portrait as follow:



The study found that model and network of learning at temples which are tourist places will lead to appropriate development of people and society. This is a learning which is able to develop mind and wisdom of people according to Buddhist and Natural principles. Recommendation for appropriate management of process of communicating and activities which are able to develop people and society are as follow:

1. Related authorities such as Tourism Authority of Thailand, National Office of Buddhism should support learning tourism activities at temples
2. It is found that there is an increasing number of tourists who are interested in practicing Buddhism. So that there should be efficient information dissemination ways. Related authorities and temples should hold short time meditation courses for foreign tourists.

3. Most of the temples which are meditation centers of the provinces have efficiency in teaching Thai language but still lack of efficiency in teaching in foreign languages. So that, the related authorities should educate in managing these things.
4. Tourism Authority of Thailand and other related authorities should go to get information by observing tourist places and giving information and controlling activities to be in accordance with rules of temples, Buddhism, Historical places, and tourism.
5. Tourism Authority of Thailand and other related authorities should concern about advocating tourism activities about preserving temple environments and historical and cultural sites. Concerning only about making profit out of tourism will effect temples, communities and historical places in negative ways.
6. It is found from this study that temples and communities are able to organize appropriate learning and networking process but still lack modern equipment for management. There should be cooperation from all related parties to manage and enhance tourism activities. Appropriate measures should be taken to receive tourists in order to avoid negative effect on temples and communities.
7. Temples which have meditation centers and historical monuments should receive cooperation from educated individuals to manage the places appropriately.

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