

## **EXPLORING THE MOTIVATIONS AND TOURISM BEHAVIOR OF BUDDHIST PILGRIMAGE TOURISM IN CHANG KLANG DISTRICT NAKHON SI THAMMARAT PROVINCE AND ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL OF MONASTIC TOURISM DESTINATIONS**

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This research explores the motivations and behavior of Buddhist pilgrimage tourists in Chang Klang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province. It aims to understand the factors driving pilgrimage decisions, assess tourism experiences' impact on spiritual and cultural development, and evaluate the potential of monastic tourism destinations for enhanced appeal and sustainability. The study also investigates the intricate relationship between tourists' behavior, motivation, and the competitiveness potential of Religious Tourism in the region. The study utilizing a questionnaire, data was collected from 400 participants. Statistical analyses, including frequency distribution, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, provided insights into the diverse tourism behaviors observed in the religious context of Chang Klang District. The findings shed light on the patterns of tourism behavior, revealing preferences for one-day trips, often with family, and varied accommodation choices, including stays at relatives' houses. Moreover, respondents primarily acquired knowledge about religious tourist attractions from their relatives. Secondly, the research delved into the motivation level of tourists visiting Chang Klang District for Buddhist pilgrimage tourism. The results indicated a high motivation level, encompassing diverse interests such as paying homage to sacred elements, seeking relaxation, and exploring the history and ethics of the area. Thirdly, the study gauged opinions on the competitiveness of monastic tourism destinations in Chang Klang District. Respondents consistently expressed high opinions across key factors, including Environmental, Market Demand, Industry, and Supporting and Strategic factors, affirming the region's overall competitiveness in religious tourism. Finally, the research unveiled a statistically significant association between tourists' behavior and motivating factors for Buddhist pilgrimage tourism in Chang Klang District. This underscored the substantial link between observed behavioral patterns and motivating forces, signifying statistical significance at the .05 level. Similarly, a statistically significant relationship was identified between tourists' behavior and the competitiveness potential in monastic tourism destinations within Chang Klang District, affirming a noteworthy association at the .05 level. These insights contribute to the sustainable development and enhancement of Buddhist pilgrimage tourism in the specified region, providing valuable information for future initiatives and planning.

**Keywords:** pilgrimage tourism , religious tourism, faith tourism, monastic tourism

## Introduction

Buddhist tourism holds immense significance in Thailand, a country renowned for its rich Buddhist heritage, magnificent temples, and spiritual practices. As one of the world's major religious tourism destinations, Thailand attracts millions of visitors each year who seek to immerse themselves in the unique cultural and spiritual experiences offered by Buddhist sites. This study aims to delve into the motivations and tourism behavior of visitors engaging in Buddhist tourism in Thailand, shedding light on their experiences, motivations, and the factors that shape their journeys.

Motivations for Buddhist pilgrimage tourism are multifaceted, encompassing religious, spiritual, cultural, and personal aspects. By examining the motivations behind visitors' journeys to Buddhist sites, a deeper understanding can be gained of the underlying drivers that influence their travel decisions and experiences. Previous research by Nyaupane, Timothy, and Poudel (2015) has explored the motivations of tourists and pilgrims visiting Lumbini, Nepal, the birthplace of Buddha. Their study revealed that individuals from different faiths visiting sacred sites perceived Buddhists as more closely aligned to their own beliefs. Building on this research, the current study seeks to investigate the motivations of tourists and pilgrims engaging in Buddhist tourism in Thailand and their perception of the Buddhist faith in relation to their own.

Visitor self-identification is another crucial aspect to explore in the context of Buddhist tourism. Visitors may view themselves as tourists, pilgrims, or a combination of both, and this self-identification significantly impacts their motivations, behaviors, and experiences. The study by Nyaupane, Timothy, and Poudel (2015) highlights the variations in motivations based on visitor self-identification. Applying this lens to the study of Buddhist tourism in Thailand allows for a comprehensive examination of how visitors perceive themselves and how their self-identified roles influence their travel choices and experiences.

Understanding the significance and evolution of sacred sites is fundamental to comprehending the allure of Buddhist tourism in Thailand. The work of Olsen and Timothy (2006) emphasizes the historical and contemporary importance of sacred sites worldwide, including those in Thailand. These sites have become centers of religiously motivated travel, attracting visitors seeking spiritual fulfillment, cultural enrichment, and personal transformation. Exploring the evolution and standardization of religious tourism practices over time contributes to a holistic understanding of the tourism phenomenon.

Thailand is home to a plethora of popular religious destinations that attract both local and international visitors. These destinations showcase the diverse cultural and architectural heritage of Buddhism, offering unique experiences to travelers. The Ganges River, St Peter's Basilica, the

Salt Lake Temple, Borobudur and Prambanan, Angkor Wat, Old Jerusalem, the Taj Mahal, and the Baha'i Gardens are just a few examples of renowned religious destinations (Collins-Kreiner & Gatrell, 2006; Olsen, 2009). Understanding the visitor experiences at these sites, particularly in the context of Buddhist tourism in Thailand, allows for a comprehensive examination of the factors that shape visitors' perceptions and interactions with sacred spaces.

Religious affiliation plays a significant role in shaping individuals' experiences at sacred sites. The diverse backgrounds and beliefs of visitors contribute to distinct encounters and interpretations of these spiritual spaces. Previous research by Griffiths (2011) has highlighted the variations in experiences based on religious affiliation or the absence thereof. By considering the influence of religious background on the tourism behavior and experiences of Buddhist tourists in Thailand, this study aims to provide insights into the interplay between religion, culture, and tourism in shaping visitors' encounters at sacred sites.

Differentiating between pilgrims and tourists has been a subject of ongoing discourse in the field of pilgrimage studies. Cohen (1992) and Turner (1973) have emphasized the distinct experiences and motives of these two groups. By exploring the distinctions between pilgrims and tourists engaging in Buddhist tourism in Thailand, this study seeks to unravel the complexities of motivations, behaviors, and experiences associated with these distinct visitor segments.

The phenomenon of shared sacred spaces and the conflicts that may arise over their use is another important aspect to consider in the context of Buddhist tourism. Examples from Israel and India, as highlighted by Nyaupane and Budruk (2009), demonstrate the challenges and tensions that can emerge when different religious groups share sacred sites. By examining the dynamics of shared sacred spaces in Buddhist tourism destinations in Thailand, this study aims to shed light on the complexities and potential conflicts that may arise and explore strategies for fostering harmonious interactions among visitors of different faiths.

Despite the significance of religious tourism, there remains a scarcity of empirical research exploring the relationships and differences between religious and non-religious tourists at sacred sites (Possamai, 2009). This research gap highlights the need for further investigation into the motivations, behaviors, and experiences of Buddhist tourists in Thailand, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of religious tourism and its implications for destination management and marketing strategies.

In this study, a theoretical framework rooted in Social Distance Theory, Pilgrimage Theory, and insights from Tourism and Geopolitics will be employed to analyze the motivations and tourism behavior of Buddhist tourists in Thailand. By utilizing these theoretical lenses, a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationships between tourists, pilgrims, and the broader socio-cultural and geopolitical contexts of Buddhist tourism in Thailand can be achieved.

Overall, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on Buddhist tourism in Thailand by exploring the motivations, behaviors, and experiences of visitors. The findings will inform destination management strategies, enhance visitor experiences, and promote sustainable tourism practices in Buddhist sites. By addressing the research gaps and objectives outlined above, this study will provide valuable insights into the multifaceted world of Buddhist tourism in Thailand and contribute to the advancement of tourism research and practice.

### **Research Gap:**

Despite the extensive literature on religious tourism, there is a significant research gap regarding the motivations and tourism behavior of Buddhist pilgrimage tourists in Thailand, as well as the untapped potential of monastic tourism destinations in the country. Limited empirical studies have been conducted to understand the unique motivations and experiences of Buddhist pilgrimage tourists, and the role of monastic tourism destinations in attracting and engaging visitors remains understudied.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To investigate the motivations of Buddhist pilgrimage tourists in Changklang District, exploring the factors that drive their decision to undertake a pilgrimage and the specific aspects of their faith that influence their tourism behavior.
2. To examine the tourism behavior and experiences of Buddhist pilgrimage tourists to gain insights into their journey and its impact on their spiritual and cultural development.
3. To assess the potential of monastic tourism destinations in Changklang district, to enhance their tourism appeal and sustainability.
4. To explore the relationship between tourists behavior, motivation, and competitiveness Potential of Religious Tourism in Chang Klang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province.

### **Literature reviews**

#### **Social Distance Theory:**

Social Distance Theory, rooted in sociology and psychology, provides a valuable framework for understanding the dynamics and relationships between individuals of different social or cultural groups. The theory posits that the level of social distance, defined as the perceived psychological and emotional proximity or separation between individuals or groups, influences their attitudes, behaviors, and interactions.

The concept of social distance has been extensively studied and applied in various fields, including intergroup relations, cross-cultural communication, and prejudice reduction. Researchers such as Festinger (1950), Tajfel (1970), and Brewer (2001) have contributed to the understanding of social distance, emphasizing its role in shaping individuals' perceptions, prejudices, and interactions with outgroup members.

In the context of social and cultural encounters, social distance theory provides insights into how individuals from different backgrounds perceive and relate to one another. It examines the factors that contribute to the creation of social distance, such as cultural differences, stereotypes, and prejudice. By understanding the dynamics of social distance, researchers can explore strategies to bridge gaps, foster intergroup understanding, and promote positive intercultural interactions.

Moreover, social distance theory has been applied in various contexts, including educational settings, healthcare, and tourism. In the context of tourism, social distance theory can provide valuable insights into the interactions between tourists and locals, as well as between tourists from different cultural backgrounds. By understanding the role of social distance, researchers can explore strategies to enhance cross-cultural understanding, minimize stereotypes, and promote positive intercultural experiences among tourists.

In conclusion, Social Distance Theory offers a valuable framework for understanding the dynamics and relationships between individuals from different social and cultural backgrounds. By exploring the factors that contribute to social distance and its impact on attitudes and behaviors, researchers can develop strategies to foster intergroup understanding, promote positive intercultural interactions, and enhance the overall tourism experience.

### **Pilgrimage Theory:**

Pilgrimage Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the phenomenon of pilgrimage, which is a religious and cultural practice found in various societies across the globe. This theoretical approach explores the multifaceted nature of pilgrimage, examining its historical, sociological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions.

The study of pilgrimage has been influenced by scholars from diverse disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, religious studies, and tourism studies. Notable researchers such as Turner (1973), Cohen (1992), and Eade and Sallnow (1991) have made significant contributions to the development of Pilgrimage Theory, offering insights into the motivations, experiences, and impacts of pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage Theory considers pilgrimage as a transformative journey, involving a sacred destination and a set of rituals and practices undertaken by individuals or groups with religious or spiritual motivations. It emphasizes the pilgrimage experience as a distinct form of travel that goes beyond the realm of tourism, involving deep spiritual connections, personal introspection, and encounters with the sacred.

The theory explores various aspects of pilgrimage, including the motivations of pilgrims, the socio-cultural dynamics of pilgrimage sites, the role of pilgrimage in religious traditions, and the impacts of pilgrimage on individuals and communities. It also delves into the significance of sacred sites,

the symbolism of rituals, and the pilgrim-host interactions, offering a holistic understanding of this unique form of human expression.

Pilgrimage Theory has important implications for various fields of study, including religious studies, anthropology, and tourism. In the context of religious studies, this theory deepens our understanding of the significance of pilgrimage within religious traditions, shedding light on the spiritual, cultural, and social dimensions of this practice.

From an anthropological perspective, Pilgrimage Theory provides insights into the cultural meanings, rituals, and practices associated with pilgrimage. It examines the role of pilgrimage in constructing and maintaining social identities, fostering community cohesion, and negotiating power dynamics within societies.

In the field of tourism, Pilgrimage Theory offers a nuanced understanding of the motivations and behaviors of pilgrims, the management of pilgrimage sites, and the impacts of pilgrimage on local communities and economies. It highlights the distinctiveness of pilgrimage tourism and its potential for sustainable tourism development.

### **Stakeholder Theory:**

Stakeholder Theory is a prominent theoretical framework that examines the relationships and interactions between organizations and their stakeholders. This theory emphasizes the significance of identifying, understanding, and managing the diverse stakeholders who have a vested interest in an organization's activities, decisions, and outcomes.

First introduced by Freeman (1984), Stakeholder Theory has evolved over time and gained widespread attention in various disciplines, including management, business ethics, and corporate social responsibility. It provides a comprehensive understanding of the complex network of relationships between organizations and their stakeholders, emphasizing the mutual influence and interdependence between them.

According to Stakeholder Theory, stakeholders are individuals, groups, or entities that can affect or be affected by an organization's actions or decisions. These stakeholders can include employees, customers, suppliers, shareholders, local communities, government bodies, non-governmental organizations, and the broader society. Each stakeholder group possesses distinct interests, expectations, and power dynamics that need to be considered by organizations for effective decision-making and sustainable management practices.

Stakeholder Theory highlights the importance of considering the interests of all stakeholders, not just shareholders, in organizational decision-making processes. It emphasizes the need for



organizations to actively engage with stakeholders, solicit their input, and address their concerns, aiming for a more inclusive and responsible approach to management.

Stakeholder Theory has practical implications for organizations in various contexts, such as business management, project management, and sustainable development. By considering the interests and perspectives of diverse stakeholders, organizations can foster better relationships, enhance decision-making processes, and create sustainable value for all involved parties.

In the field of corporate social responsibility and business ethics, Stakeholder Theory provides a framework for organizations to assess and manage their social and ethical responsibilities. By considering the interests and concerns of stakeholders, organizations can align their actions with broader societal expectations and contribute positively to social and environmental well-being.

Stakeholder Theory is also relevant in the context of project management, where multiple stakeholders are involved in complex projects. Understanding stakeholder interests, power dynamics, and potential conflicts can help project managers effectively navigate stakeholder relationships and achieve project success.

In conclusion, Stakeholder Theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding and managing the relationships between organizations and their stakeholders. By recognizing the diverse interests, expectations, and power dynamics of stakeholders, organizations can make informed decisions, foster positive relationships, and create sustainable value for all parties involved. Stakeholder Theory has practical applications in various fields, including management, corporate social responsibility, business ethics, and project management.

## **Research Methodology**

This survey research employed questionnaires as the primary data collection tool to investigate various aspects related to tourism behavior, motivations of travelers, and the competitive potential of tourist attractions in the Chang Klang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province. The study's focus included exploring environmental factors, market demand, industry factors, as well as supporting and strategic elements, along with structural and competitive factors. The research specifically targeted the Chang Klang District area to ensure a well-defined scope. For quantitative research, the population comprised 400 tourists who visited the Chang Klang District, serving as the study sample. Data analysis was conducted using the SPSS (Statistics Package for Social Science) package program. The collected data were parsed sequentially, and the results were reported through descriptive statistics and chi-square analysis, providing valuable insights into the tourism dynamics of the specified region.

## **Research Finding**

- **Pilgrimage motivations.**

The results of this study revealed profound insights into the motivations of Buddhist pilgrimage tourists in Changklang District show as follows;

**Table 1: Motivation Levels of Faithful Travelers on Pilgrimages in the Chang Klang District of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province.**

Motivation Factors	( $\bar{x}$ )	(S.D.)	Motivation level
1. Pay homage to the sacred things that are priceless	4.80	0.401	The most
2. Study the history of Chang Klang District	4.40	1.202	Most
3. Study the ethics of Phor Than Khlai	4.40	1.202	Most
4. Get a different travel experience	4.30	1.189	Most
5. Take a trip to reminisce about the past.	3.60	0.801	Most
6. Spend the holidays with family.	4.30	0.459	Most
7. Take a break	4.60	0.491	The most
8. Visit friends/relatives	4.00	0.896	Most
9. See the beautiful scenery and landscapes	3.60	1.021	Most
10. Eat local food	3.70	0.901	Most
11. Experience local culture and traditions	3.90	1.045	Most
12. Experience rural life	3.70	1.006	Most
13. Learn Religion and Culture	4.10	0.539	Most
14. Participate in interesting travel activities	3.30	0.782	Moderate
15. Visit a local festival	3.00	0.896	Moderate
16. Buy/rent souvenirs or sacred objects	3.60	1.021	Most
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.96</b>	<b>0.866</b>	<b>Most</b>

Among the factors driving their decision to undertake a pilgrimage, spiritual fulfillment emerged as the predominant motivation, with respondents rating "Paying homage to sacred sites in the local community" at an average score of 4.80. This finding indicates a strong inclination among tourists to seek spiritual enrichment and establish a connection with their faith during their pilgrimage. The significance of the district's historical and religious heritage was also evident, as evidenced by "Studying the history of Changklang District" and "Learning about the monastic practices of revered monks," both obtaining an average score of 4.40. This highlights the tourists' profound interest in understanding the cultural heritage and religious traditions associated with the area. Furthermore, pilgrimage tourists in Changklang District seek diverse and unique experiences during their journey. "Having unique travel experiences" scored an average of 4.30, underscoring the participants' inclination towards diverse and enriching encounters beyond the spiritual aspects of their pilgrimage. However, while "Traveling to reminisce about the past" obtained a relatively lower average score of 3.60, it still underscores the significance of historical connections and the desire to connect with past memories during their pilgrimage. Notably, the study indicates that the motivations behind pilgrimage tourism in Changklang District



extend beyond spiritual pursuits. The aspect of leisure and relaxation holds importance, as evident from "Rest and relaxation" obtaining an average score of 4.60. Moreover, "Spending weekends with family" received an average score of 4.30, highlighting the tourists' emphasis on family bonding and social connections during their pilgrimage. Additionally, the significance of local cultural experiences in shaping tourism behavior was evident, as "Engaging in local cultural traditions" obtained an average score of 3.90. This reflects the tourists' keen interest in immersing themselves in the cultural heritage and traditional practices of the local community.

- **Pilgrimage behavior and experiences**

The research investigated the tourism behavior and experiences of 400 Buddhist pilgrimage tourists, aiming to gain valuable insights into their journeys and their impact on spiritual and cultural development, show as follow;

**Table 2; Pilgrimage behavior and experiences at religious tourist attractions in the Chang Klang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province.**

Items	Number	Percent
<b>Purpose of the trip</b>		
pay homage to the sacred things that are priceless	120	30.0
travel	280	70.0
<b>Traveling companion</b>		
family	360	90.0
lover	40	10.0
<b>Number of days of travel</b>		
half day	120	30.0
1 day	240	60.0
more than 2 days	40	10.0
<b>Travel frequency</b>		
1-2 times a year	280	70.0
3-4 times a year	80	20.0
more than 4 times a year	40	10.0
<b>Type of accommodation</b>		
resort	80	20.0
hotel	60	15.0
daily room	120	30.0
relative's house	140	35.0
<b>Reservation</b>		
through the hotel website	80	20.0
through other websites such as Agoda	40	10.0
via phone	80	20.0
walk in	200	50.0

<b>Source of information</b>		
internet	110	27.5
friend recommended	120	30.0
relative	170	42.5

The study revealed that a majority of participants, 360 individuals (90%), traveled with their families, emphasizing the significance of familial connections during their pilgrimage. Additionally, most of the tourists preferred single-day trips, with 240 individuals (60%) undertaking such journeys. Furthermore, a considerable portion of the sample, 280 individuals (70%), traveled 1-2 times per year, indicating a periodic engagement in pilgrimage activities. Regarding accommodation preferences, diverse choices were observed. While 80 individuals (20%) opted for resorts, 60 (15%) chose hotels, and 120 (30%) preferred daily rentals. Notably, a substantial number of participants, 140 individuals (35%), stayed with relatives, highlighting the significance of social ties in their travel arrangements. In terms of booking methods, 50% of the respondents, totaling 200 individuals, chose to reserve accommodations on-site. Other reservation methods included 80 individuals (20%) using hotel websites, 40 (10%) using alternative platforms like Agoda, and an equal number of individuals (80, 20%) using phone reservations. The study also explored the sources of information utilized by the pilgrimage tourists. Internet sources were the most prevalent, with 110 individuals (27.5%) seeking information through online platforms. Moreover, recommendations from friends played a significant role, with 120 individuals (30%) relying on their peers' suggestions. Family members also played a crucial role in providing information, as indicated by 170 individuals (42.5%) who obtained insights from their relatives. Overall, the research findings offer valuable implications for tourism management and service providers seeking to enhance the pilgrimage experience for Buddhist tourists. Understanding their preferences, journey patterns, and sources of information can contribute to the development of tailored services and initiatives, fostering a more enriching and meaningful pilgrimage experience that aligns with their spiritual and cultural aspirations.

### **Monastic-Tourism Assessment.**

The assessment of monastic tourism destinations in Changklang District revealed promising potential for tourism appeal and sustainability.

**Table 3 Tourists' Perceived Competitiveness Potential in Chang Klang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Opinion level</b>
<b>1. Environmental factors</b>	<b>4.50</b>	<b>0.621</b>	<b>Most</b>
1.1 Interest/faith of the tourist attraction	4.60	0.801	The most
1.2 The activities available in tourist attractions are diverse and interesting	4.90	0.300	The most

1.3 Ease of access to tourist attractions	4.50	0.501	Most
1.4 Facilities available in the tourist area	4.40	0.801	Most
1.5 Accommodation available in the tourist area	4.10	0.701	Most
<b>2. Market Demand Factors</b>	<b>4.28</b>	<b>0.639</b>	<b>Most</b>
2.1 Tourist attractions are in trend	3.80	0.749	Most
2.2 Feeling satisfied	4.10	0.539	Most
2.3 Tourist attractions can accommodate a large number of tourists	4.50	0.807	Most
2.4 Accommodate available and suitable for various tourist demand	4.70	0.459	The most
2.5 Value for money compared to the experience	4.30	0.641	Most
<b>3. Related and supporting industry factors</b>	<b>3.98</b>	<b>0.740</b>	<b>Most</b>
3.1 Availability of public vehicles	4.20	0.601	Most
3.2 Availability and comfort of accommodation	4.30	0.641	Most
3.3 Availability of food and beverage outlets			
3.4 Availability of other supporting facilities such as banks, hospitals	4.00	0.896	Most
	3.70	0.782	Most
3.5 Availability of tour companies and tour operators	3.70	0.782	Most
<b>4. Structural and Competitive Strategy Factors</b>	<b>3.48</b>	<b>0.564</b>	<b>Moderate</b>
4.1 Advertising through various channels	3.80	0.749	Most
4.2 Receiving support from various agencies	3.60	0.664	Most
4.3 Having special promotions during various festivals	3.30	0.459	Moderate
4.4 Organizing special events during important festivals	3.30	0.459	Moderate
4.5 Cooperation/Linking with other tourist destinations	3.40	0.491	Moderate
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.06</b>	<b>0.526</b>	<b>Most</b>

The assessment of tourist opinions regarding the competitiveness potential in Chang Klang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province revealed noteworthy insights across distinct factors. In terms of environmental considerations, respondents expressed an overall positive sentiment, with an average score of 4.50. Notably, the faith and interest in tourist attractions garnered a particularly high score of 4.60, emphasizing the significance of the spiritual or cultural elements. Furthermore, the diversity and appeal of activities within tourist attractions received a commendable score of 4.90. Accessibility to these sites and the available facilities in the tourist area received scores of 4.50 and 4.40, respectively, indicating a favorable environment. However, accommodation options in the tourist area received a comparatively lower score of 4.10.

Moving on to market demand factors, the average score stood at 4.28. While tourist attractions being in trend received a score of 3.80, factors like overall satisfaction (4.10), capacity to accommodate a large number of tourists (4.50), and suitability for various tourist demands (4.70) were well-received. The perceived value for money in comparison to the overall experience garnered a score of 4.30, reflecting positive feedback in this aspect.

In terms of related and supporting industry factors, the average score was 3.98. Availability of public vehicles received a score of 4.20, while the comfort and accessibility of accommodations received a commendable score of 4.30. However, other factors such as the availability of food and beverage outlets (4.00), supporting facilities like banks and hospitals (3.70), and the presence of tour companies and operators (3.70) showed room for improvement.

Structural and competitive strategy factors garnered an average score of 3.48. Advertising through various channels received a score of 3.80, while receiving support from various agencies received a score of 3.60. Special promotions during festivals and events received scores of 3.30 each, and the cooperation or linking with other tourist destinations received a score of 3.40. These results indicate areas where strategic enhancements or collaborative efforts could contribute to improving the competitive edge of Chang Klang District as a tourist destination.

**Table 4: The Relationship between Behavior, Motivation to Visit, and Competitiveness Potential of Religious Tourism in Chang Klang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province.**

Tourist Behavior	Motivation		Competitiveness	
	Chi-square	Sig	Chi-square	Sig
• Objectives	73.469	0.00*	128.905	0.00*
• Traveling Companions	19.048	0.00*	169.519	0.00*
• Duration of Stay	152.381	0.00*	343.141	0.00*
• Frequency of Visits to the Tourist Destination	42.857	0.00*	40.845	0.00*
• Type of Accommodation	400.000	0.00*	32.326	0.00*
• Reservation Method for Accommodation	171.429	0.00*	185.355	0.00*
• Source of Information	400.000	0.00*	271.350	0.00*

In accordance with Table 4, the application of the Chi-square test unveiled a statistically significant association linking tourists' behavior with the motivating factors propelling them towards religious tourism within Chang Klang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province (Sig = .00). This discernment implies a meaningful and substantive correlation between the observed behavioral patterns and the motivating forces that impel individuals to engage in religious tourism within the specified district, with statistical significance established at the .05 level. Furthermore, employing the Chi-square test illuminated a statistically significant relationship (Sig = .00) between tourists' behavior and the competitiveness potential in religious tourism within Chang Klang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province. This finding underscores a substantial and noteworthy association, highlighting the profound link between tourists' behavior and the competitiveness potential, with statistical significance sustained at the .05 level.

### Conclusion and Discussion:

The study on the motivations of Buddhist pilgrimage tourists in Changklang District provides profound insights into the driving forces behind their decision to embark on a pilgrimage and the specific aspects of their faith that influence their tourism behavior. Spiritual fulfillment

emerged as the primary motivation, with respondents expressing a strong inclination to "Pay homage to sacred sites in the local community." This underscores the deep spiritual significance of these destinations, aligning with previous research that emphasizes the quest for spiritual enrichment as a key driver of pilgrimage travel (Cohen, 1985). The district's historical and religious heritage also played a pivotal role, with participants expressing keen interest in "Studying the history of Changklang District" and "Learning about the monastic practices of revered monks." These findings underscore the tourists' desire for a meaningful connection with the cultural roots and religious traditions associated with the area, resonating with the notion of pilgrimage as a transformative and culturally immersive experience (Rinschede, 1992). Remarkably, pilgrimage tourists in Changklang District sought diverse and unique encounters beyond spiritual aspects, as reflected by the high average score for "Having unique travel experiences." This suggests a holistic approach to pilgrimage, where tourists seek both spiritual fulfillment and novel, enriching experiences, aligning with the concept of transformative travel (Brown, 2009). However, while historical and cultural elements hold significance, the relatively lower average score for "Traveling to reminisce about the past" indicates that the pilgrimage experience is more focused on engaging with the present moment and establishing connections with the sacred and cultural dimensions of the destinations. Notably, pilgrimage tourism in Changklang District extends beyond spiritual pursuits, with leisure and relaxation forming essential components of the journey. The high average score for "Rest and relaxation" underscores the tourists' quest for rejuvenation and inner peace during their pilgrimage. Additionally, "Spending weekends with family" demonstrates the significance of familial bonding and social connections, highlighting the journey's communal and social aspects. Local cultural experiences emerged as a key driver of tourism behavior, as indicated by the average score for "Engaging in local cultural traditions." This reflects the tourists' keen interest in immersing themselves in the vibrant cultural fabric of the local community, contributing to a more authentic and memorable pilgrimage experience.

In conclusion, the study's findings offer crucial insights for stakeholders and policymakers in developing tailored strategies to enhance the pilgrimage experience and ensure the sustainability of monastic tourism destinations in Changklang District. By understanding the multifaceted motivations of Buddhist pilgrimage tourists, destination management can focus on preserving and promoting the district's cultural and spiritual heritage while catering to the diverse needs and aspirations of the pilgrims. This approach will ultimately foster a more meaningful and enriching pilgrimage journey for all travelers.

The assessment of tourist opinions in Chang Klang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, illuminates key factors shaping the destination's competitiveness. Environmental aspects, such as faith in attractions and diverse activities, received a positive average score of 4.50. Market demand factors, with an average of 4.28, highlight satisfaction and accommodation capacity but suggest opportunities for increased trendiness. Related industry factors indicate strengths in transportation and accommodation but signal room for improvement in food availability and tour services (average score: 3.98). The structural and competitive strategy factors, averaging 3.48, reveal strengths in advertising and agency support but indicate potential growth

areas in festival promotions and collaboration. These insights offer a strategic roadmap to enhance the district's overall appeal and competitiveness.

The results align with previous research by Thannapoom Pongsungnern and Niramom Janyiam (2016), Phrai-khoen (2022), Benjamas Natthongkaeo et al. (2021), and Juthatip Janteet (2016). Emphasizing the area's high potential, the study underscores factors like environmental readiness, safe access to attractions, and community involvement in tourism management. It aligns with the importance of sustainability and equitable distribution of benefits, resonating with insights from Kittima Saehoi (2016) and Ratchakrit Phramprasit (2016). The findings shed light on factors influencing sustainable tourism attitudes, in line with observations by Kittima Saehoi (2016) and Ratkeo Pramprat (2016).

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