

Examining Tourists' Attitude Towards the Religious Tourism in Thailand

Jirawat Anuwichanont*
Suan Dusit University

Sirivan Serirat
Suan Dusit University

Panisa Mechinda
Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi

Paiboon Archarunroj
Srinakharinwirot University

— *Review of* —
**Integrative
Business &
Economics**
— *Research* —

ABSTRACT

To date, the religious tourism, one of the fastest emerging modes of tourism in Thailand, not only boosts domestic travel but also contributes significantly to the promotion of Dhamma practice to visitors according to Buddhist principles. Consequently, the examination of the factors as well as tourists' underlying expectation and perception influencing the religious tourism, including merit-making and Dhamma-practicing tourism, is vital for the sustainable development of this mode of tourism. Thus, this study was aimed to: (1) explore the influence of the activities related to precepts, meditation and wisdom on meritorious actions and defilements of merit-making tourists and Dhamma practitioners; (2) explore the factors influencing overall satisfaction and future behavioral trends of merit-making tourists and Dhamma practitioners; and (3) compare the differences between expectations and perceptions towards tourism activities. The empirical findings supported the activities related to precepts, meditation and wisdom as the determinants of meritorious actions and defilements as hypothesized. It was noted that the attitudes towards merit-making innovations and Dhamma learning and practicing innovations were found to be the most powerful determinants of overall satisfaction and future behavioral trends. Lastly, expectation and perception towards tourism activities were significantly different. Marketing implications were discussed.

Keywords: Expectation, Perception, Dhamma Practice, Religious Tourism.

Received 30 January 2019 | Revised 16 June 2019 | Accepted 20 July 2019.

1. INTRODUCTION

At present, religious tourism is regarded as the fastest emerging tourism among merit-making tourists and Dhamma practitioners, especially in Ayutthaya Province, which is the world heritage city. Ayutthaya Historical Park has been registered as a world heritage site by the UNESCO. Other than having numerous archaeological sites and antiques mostly situated in temples, there are also as many as 504 temples in Ayutthaya (Ayutthaya Provincial Office of Buddhism, 2012).

The religious tourists who visit temples in Ayutthaya province can be classified into two types. The first type is regarded as merit-making tourists who visit temples to make merit and pay homage to Buddha images along with learning about historical and cultural attractions, archaeological sites and antiques as well as having local food and buying souvenirs from temples. The temples where they commonly visit are Wat Phananchong, Wat Yai Chaimongkol, Wat Na Phra Men, Wat Tha Ka Rong, Wat Mahathat, Wat Kasattrathirat, and Wat Chaiwatthanaram. The second type is Dhamma practitioners who aim to practice Dhamma to find peace in life at the important temples such as Wat Maheyong, Wat Tarn Ain, and Wat Kai Tia in Ayutthaya Province. This group of tourists truly has the intention to learn Dhamma practice according to Buddhist principles.

As attempts have been made to promote and revive the religious tourism by many related tourism organizations in Thailand, an essentially Buddhist country. The promotion of religious tourism is aimed to attract both domestic and international travelers and at the same time cultivate the Buddhism principles as the life guidance to visitors. According to the Threefold Learning consisting of precepts, meditation, and wisdom, these Buddhist principles focus on propagating tourists to refrain from evil deeds, cultivate virtuous deeds and purify the mind through meditation, which will lead to merit making and defilement (Phra Dharmasinghaburajarn, 2010, p. 34-35). Thus, the activities related to precepts, meditation, and wisdom should be examined as the precursors of meritorious actions and defilement which are the main objective of Dhamma practice. The emphasis of this study is also placed on examining the determinants of tourists' overall satisfaction and future behavioral trends which will contribute to better understanding the process by which tourists develop favorable attitude towards religious tourism.

In addition, it is highly crucial to examine what merit-making tourists/Dhamma practitioners demand and expect to receive from religious tourism in Ayutthaya. The expectation towards the religious tourism can be divided into 2 categories as follows: (1) tourists' need/expectation in terms of merit making, learning about historical and cultural attractions, archaeological sites and antiques as well as having local foods and buying souvenirs, (2) Dhamma practitioners' expectation to learn from Dhamma practice according to Buddhist principles. At the same time, perceptions towards the above-mentioned tourism activities and experience are measured, which is the process that consumers select, organize, and interpret the stimuli (Solomon, 2018, p.49). The comparison between tourists' expectation and perception towards the religious tourism will lead to the determination of satisfaction or dissatisfaction towards tourism activities. According to Kotler & Keller (2016), satisfaction is regarded as the result from comparing between their perceptions from the performance of the product/ service and their expectations. Thus, the examination of tourists' underlying expectation and perception as well as the determinants of meritorious actions and defilements, tourists' satisfaction and future behavioral trend will provide marketing practitioners more insight of the directions in developing the innovation of merit-making and Dhamma tourism along with event marketing to boost religious tourism. Nonetheless, less attention was paid to empirically examine these mentioned relationships in the context of religious tourism of Buddhism. Consequently, this study will be another extension of knowledge in promoting Dhamma and merit-making tourism.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the influence of activities related to precepts, meditation, and wisdom on meritorious actions and defilements of merit-making tourists and Dhamma practitioners in Ayutthaya province.

2. To investigate the influence of merit making or Dhamma practice, Buddhist principles, motivation for temple tourism, expectations, perceptions, merit-making innovations, and Dhamma learning and practicing innovations on overall satisfaction and future behavioral trends of merit-making tourists and Dhamma practitioners in Ayutthaya province.

3. To compare the difference between expectation and perception towards tourism activities of merit-making tourists and Dhamma practitioners in Ayutthaya province.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Buddhist principles: Percepts, Meditation, Wisdom, Meritorious Actions, and Defilement

Buddhism is the teaching of the Lord Buddha to help human from suffering by following the three principles; (1) refraining from evil deeds (2) cultivating virtuous deeds and (3) purifying the mind. Moreover, these three main Buddhist principles include the following concepts: (Phra Dharmasinghaburajarn, 2010, p. 34-35) (1) Not to do any evil (10 actions of a dishonest man) (2) To cultivate the good (10 bases of meritorious action) (3) Mental actions (defilement) can be divided into three levels (3.1) Greed: coarse defilement which can be defeated with precepts (3.2) Anger: moderate defilement which can be defeated with meditation (3.3) Delusion : refined defilement which can be defeated with wisdom (4) Purifying the mind requires meditation, which can be divided into two types: (4.1) concentration meditation, which is the trick to make the mind momentarily peaceful and (4.2) insight meditation, which is the trick to enlighten and eternally purify the mind.

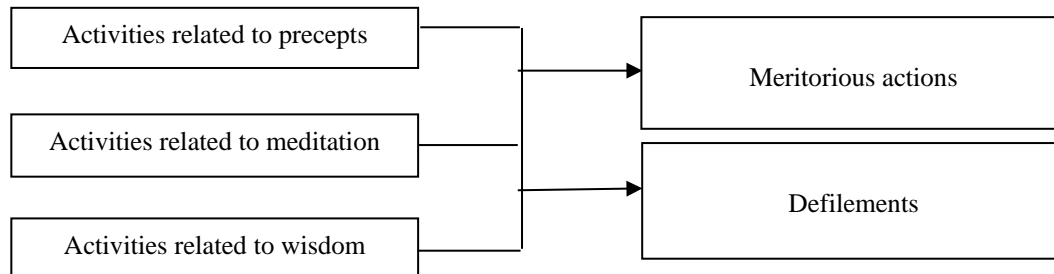
Sikkhattaya or the Threefold Learning consists of (1) precepts (refraining from evil deeds/cultivating virtuous deeds (2) meditation (having determination and perseverance for work) (3) wisdom (thoroughly understanding causes and effects, being aware of sins and merits, and realizing what should or should not be done). The way to be free from suffering depends on the principle of the Four Noble Truths or *Ariyasacca 4* consisting of (1) *Dukkha* (suffering from many problems in life) (2) *Samudaya* (the cause of suffering) (3) *Nirodha* (the cessation of suffering) (4) *Magga* (the path leading to the cessation of suffering).

Using the principles of precepts, meditation, and wisdom to learn and practice Dhamma can be done by recognizing the interrelationship between these three principles. That is, when observing the precepts and cultivating virtuous deeds, the precepts will lead to meditation and wisdom since the precepts is the foundation of meditation leading to wisdom. Thus, observing the precepts by refraining from all kinds of evil deeds will result in merit making and the abandonment of defilements in accordance with Buddhist principles (Thongkambunjong, 2015, p. 86). According to the Buddhist principles, wisdom is regarded as knowing what is happening and being able to eliminate greed, anger, and delusion, which leads to merit making by refraining from evil deeds of the body, speech, and mind. Moreover, wisdom is related to practicing meditation by remaining calm in the mind, which can lead to merit making (Phra Dharmasinghaburajarn, 2010, p. 34-35). In light of the preceding discussion and findings, we propose that:

H₁: The activities related to precepts, meditation and wisdom significantly influence meritorious actions of merit-making tourists and Dhamma practitioners.

H₂: The activities related to precepts, meditation and wisdom significantly influence defilements of merit-making tourists and Dhamma practitioners.

Conceptual Model 1 (Precepts, Meditation, and Wisdom)



3.2 Attitude and Motivation

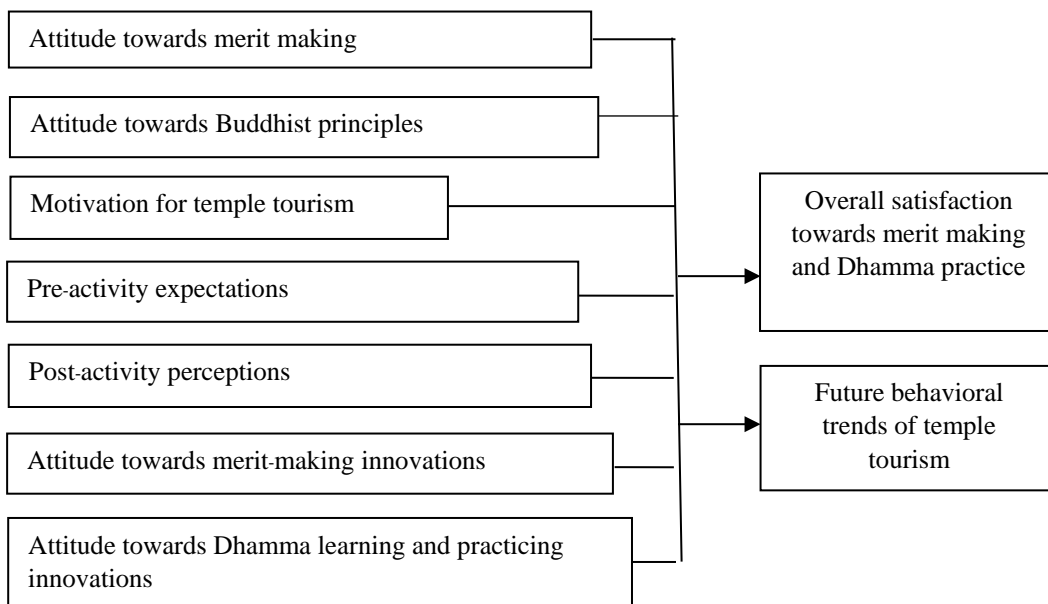
Attitude was defined as the evaluation of whether an individual likes or dislikes something, emotional feeling, and practice trend (Kotler & Keller, 2016, p. G1). On the other hand, a belief is an ideological detail that an individual adheres to, for instance, praying to solve life problems, to cure illnesses, to prevent dangers, to reverse past karma, to turn bad situations into good ones, or to have enough knowledge to call oneself a good person, but all of these cannot cease suffering.

Motivation was regarded as an internal desire that triggers the need to attain that desire (Hoyer, MacInnis & Pieters, 2013, p. G-5). In addition, motivation was also regarded as internal impulses from each individual's mind to practice and drive the behavior to reach the aspiring result which is satisfaction (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015, p.65). In the context of job performance, public service motivation was found to have a strong impact on job satisfaction of employees (Sunaryo and Suyono, 2013). According to the Buddhist principles, the motivation process has the following procedures: (1) having unfulfilled needs, wants, and desires such as greed, anger, and delusion (2) the previously mentioned unfulfillment leads to tension which is unhappiness known as *Dukkha* according to the Four Noble Truths, and this will then lead to the finding of the cause of suffering (*Samudaya*) and the way to cease that suffering in the next step (3) a drive which is an internal impulse that can trigger behaviors (4) behaviors that individual expresses to respond to his needs, which depends on the individual's personality, perceptions, learning, and attitudes; this process is known as *Nirodha*, the cessation of suffering (5) the objective is to attain the goal which is to fulfill the needs (6) tension is reduced (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015, p.84). It can be seen that this concept is consistent with the principle of the Four Noble Truths which are *Dukkha*, *Samudaya*, *Nirodha*, and *Magga*. The use of Buddhist principles such as doing good deeds, refraining from evil deeds, and purifying the mind for good fortunes also influenced tourists' behavior of making merit (Jirapat and Boonlert, 2006, p. 78; Amornwiwat, Sumon, 1987, p. 29). When they learned by themselves, peace in life occurred, and that satisfaction had a continuing effect on the future behavioral trends (Krom Phrayavajirayanavarorasa, 2017, p. 11). Consistently, Buddhism is the religion that aims to cease suffering and leads to peace in life or satisfaction, which has a continuing effect on the future behavioral trends in Dhamma practice (Thongkambunjong, 2015, p. 15-16, 27). Based on the above discussion, the hypotheses are developed as follows:

H₃: The attitude towards merit making or Dhamma practice, Buddhist principles, motivation for temple tourism, pre- activity expectations, post- activity perceptions, merit-making innovations, Dhamma learning and practicing innovations influence overall satisfaction towards merit making and Dhamma practice of merit- making tourists and Dhamma practitioners.

H₄: The attitude towards merit making or Dhamma practice, Buddhist principles, motivation for temple tourism, pre- activity expectations, post- activity perceptions, merit-making innovations, Dhamma learning and practicing innovations influence future behavioral trends of merit-making tourists and Dhamma practitioners.

Conceptual Model 2 (Attitude towards the Merit-Making and Dhamma Practice Tourism)



3.3 Expectation, Perception, Satisfaction and Future Behavioral Trends

Generally, before consumers/tourists begin any activities, they typically have consumer expectation, which is what consumers want and expect to receive from those activities, depending on their past experience and psychological needs, and perception in which the consumers perceive, select, organize, and interpret information to produce important images (Belch & Belch, 2015, p.775). The consumers will compare between their perceptions and expectations, which is an evaluation of whether they feel satisfied or dissatisfied. The result from comparing between consumers’ perceptions of the product performance and their expectations (Kotler & Keller, 2016, p. G8) can be concluded as follows: (1) If expectation is higher than perception, it can be interpreted as dissatisfaction. (2) If expectation is equal to perception, it can be interpreted as satisfaction. (3) If expectation is lower than perception, it can be interpreted as delight. Behavioral trends are behaviors occurring after being triggered by the thinking process and consumption, which has a continuing effect on post-purchase behavior. Behavioral trends consist of (1) overall satisfaction meaning a positive feeling occurring from customers’ perceptions that exceed their expectations towards a new product and is evaluated as happiness (Keller, 2008, pp. 75-76, Hoyer, MacInnis & Pieters, 2013, G.6) (2) future behavioral intention (3) word-of-mouth meaning the communication to

acquaintances by spoken words, written words, media, and social media about businesses, products, services, or activities (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015, p.470) (4) adoption which is the process leading to the purchasing of product or services. According to the Buddhist principles, it claims that when the practitioners have practiced Dhamma, they will find peace in life and satisfaction in life which means that their perception exceeds expectation (Krom Phrayavajirayanavarorasa, 2017, p. 11). In contrary, the majority of previous researches supported the notion that consumers usually have higher expectations than perceptions, which can lead to dissatisfaction (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015, pp.84, 123). Based on the above discussion, we hypothesize that

H₅: Pre-activity expectations and post-activity perceptions of merit-making tourists and Dhamma practitioners are different.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The samples were recruited by using quota sampling of merit-making tourists from 4 temples (Wat Yai Chaimongkol, Wat Phananchong, Wat Tha Ka Rong, and Wat Na Phra Men). One hundred merit-making tourists were selected from each temple, resulting in the total of 400 samples. In addition, the number of Dhamma practitioners included 260 samples from Wat Mahaeyong and 227 samples from Wat Tarn Ain, resulting in the total of 487 samples. Thus, the total samples comprised 887 respondents including both merit-making tourists and Dhamma practitioners. Questionnaires were used as the research tool for data collection from the above-mentioned samples of Thai tourists. The statistical analysis for hypothesis testing included Stepwise regression analysis and Paired t-test.

5. RESULTS OF HYPOTHESES TESTING

The relationships hypothesized in H₁ to H₄ were tested by using stepwise regression analysis to investigate the determinants influencing meritorious actions and defilement as well as overall satisfaction and future behavioral trends of merit-making tourists and Dhamma practitioners. The paired t-test analysis was implemented to examine the difference between expectation and perception towards tourism activities hypothesized in H₅.

5.1 The Determinants of Meritorious Actions and Defilement

Hypotheses H₁ and H₂ predicted the positive impact of the activities related to precepts, meditation and wisdom on meritorious actions and defilements of merit-making tourists and Dhamma practitioners. For merit-making tourist group, the results revealed that the activities related to precepts ($\beta = .143$, $p < 0.01$), meditation ($\beta = .120$, $p < 0.01$) and wisdom ($\beta = .492$, $p < 0.001$) influenced meritorious actions as hypothesized. But only the activities related to precepts ($\beta = .243$, $p < 0.001$) and wisdom ($\beta = .364$, $p < 0.001$) were found to significantly influence defilements. For Dhamma practitioners, the finding of hypotheses testing revealed that the activities related to precepts ($\beta = .109$, $p < 0.05$), meditation ($\beta = .111$, $p < 0.05$) and wisdom ($\beta = .428$, $p < 0.001$) positively influenced meritorious actions while only the activities related to wisdom ($\beta = .477$, $p < 0.001$) was found to significantly influence defilements. The details of the above-mentioned findings were shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of Hypotheses Testing (H₁ and H₂)

	Merit-making tourists						Dhamma practitioners					
	Meritorious actions			Defilements			Meritorious actions			Defilements		
	Beta	t	Sig.	Beta	t	Sig.	Beta	t	Sig.	Beta	t	Sig.
Activities related to precepts	.143	3.171**	.002	.243	5.043**	.000	.109	2.381*	.018	-	-	-
Activities related to meditation	.120	2.756**	.006	-	-	-	.111	2.452*	.015	-	-	-
Activities related to wisdom	.492	10.834**	.000	.364	7.544**	.000	.428	9.337**	.000	.477	12.040**	.000
R ²	39.5%			27.2%			31.1%			22.8%		
Adj.R ²	39.0%			26.9%			30.6%			22.6%		
F-value	85.094**			73.570**			73.011**			144.964**		

* significance level at .05, ** significance level at .01

5.2 The Determinants of Overall Satisfaction and Future Behavioral Trends

Regarding the hypothesized relationships proposed in Hypotheses H₃ and H₄, the findings of merit-making tourist group showed that the attitudes towards Buddhist principles ($\beta = .169$, $p < 0.001$), pre-activity expectations ($\beta = .167$, $p < 0.001$), merit-making innovations ($\beta = .227$, $p < 0.001$), Dhamma learning and practicing innovations ($\beta = .348$, $p < 0.001$) were positively associated with overall satisfaction. In addition, Buddhist principles ($\beta = .133$, $p < 0.01$), motivation for temple tourism ($\beta = .104$, $p < 0.05$), post-activity perceptions ($\beta = .154$, $p < 0.001$), merit-making innovations ($\beta = .186$, $p < 0.001$), Dhamma learning and practicing innovations ($\beta = .309$, $p < 0.001$) significantly influenced future behavioral trends. It should be noted that the attitudes towards merit-making innovations and Dhamma learning and practicing innovations were found to be the two most powerful predictors of overall satisfaction and future behavioral trends.

For the group of Dhamma practitioners, the attitudes towards Buddhist principles ($\beta = .186$, $p < 0.001$), post-activity perceptions ($\beta = .149$, $p < 0.001$) and Dhamma learning and practicing innovations ($\beta = .371$, $p < 0.001$) were found to significantly affect overall satisfaction. Moreover, the factors influencing future behavioral trends included the attitudes towards Buddhist principles ($\beta = .195$, $p < 0.001$), post-activity perceptions ($\beta = .160$, $p < 0.001$) and Dhamma learning and practicing innovations ($\beta = .283$, $p < 0.001$). In summary, the attitudes towards Dhamma learning and practicing innovations was found to be the most powerful factor influencing both overall satisfaction and future behavioral trends.

Table 2: Results of Hypotheses Testing (H₃ and H₄)

Attitude towards	Merit-making tourists						Dhamma practitioners					
	Overall satisfaction			Future behavioral trends			Overall satisfaction			Future behavioral trends		
	Beta	t	Sig.	Beta	t	Sig.	Beta	t	Sig.	Beta	t	Sig.
Merit making or Dhamma practice	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Buddhist principles	.169	3.942**	.000	.133	2.895**	.004	.186	.497**	.000	.195	4.309**	.000
Motivation for temple tourism	-	-	-	.104	2.251*	.025	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pre-activity expectations	.167	4.280**	.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Post-activity perceptions	-	-	-	.154	3.538**	.000	.149	3.630**	.000	.160	3.661**	.000
Merit-making innovations	.227	4.298**	.000	.186	3.313**	.001	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dhamma learning and practicing innovations	.348	6.407**	.000	.309	5.251**	.000	.371	.511**	.000	.283	6.264**	.000
R ²	50.2%			44.9%			28.6%			23.5%		
Adj.R ²	49.7%			44.2%			28.1%			22.9%		
F-value	94.238**			60.625**			63.550**			36.425**		

* significance level at .05, ** significance level at .01

5.3 The Comparison between Expectation and Perception

According to the findings of the comparison between expectation and perception towards tourism activities, it was found that overall expectation and perception were significantly different at the significance level of .01 for the group of merit-making tourists ($t = 2.727$, $\text{Sig} = .007$). The significant difference was found in the cultural and history conservation activities of this temple ($t = 2.448$, $\text{Sig} = .015$), recreation and sport activities of this temple ($t = 2.926$, $\text{Sig} = .004$) and the competition of Dhamma activities of this temple ($t = 2.842$, $\text{Sig} = .005$). In summary, the expectation was found to be higher than perception indicating that merit-making tourists were dissatisfied with tourism activities of temples in Ayutthaya province.

For the Dhamma practitioner group, the overall expectation and perception towards tourism activities were significantly different ($t = -3.261$, $\text{Sig} = .001$). The cultural and history conservation activities of this temple ($t = -1.984$, $\text{Sig} = .048$), the attraction of local handicrafts, foods and beverages of this temple ($t = -3.325$, $\text{Sig} = .001$), the environment and hygiene of this temple ($t = -3.902$, $\text{Sig} = .000$) and recreation and sport activities of this temple ($t = -2.666$, $\text{Sig} = .005$) were found to be significantly different. In general, the findings revealed that the perception exceeded expectation indicating that Dhamma practitioners were satisfied with tourism activities. The details of hypotheses testing were shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of Hypotheses Testing (H₅)

Expectation and perception towards tourism activities		Paired t-test for Equality of Means							
		Merit-making tourists				Dhamma practitioners			
		\bar{X}	SD	t	Sig	\bar{X}	SD	t	Sig
Merit-making activities of this temple	Expectation	3.69	.769	.654	.513	3.98	.771	-1.585	.114
	Perception	3.67	.790			4.03	.854		
Dhamma practice activities of this temple	Expectation	3.23	.947	.486	.627	4.13	.796	-1.204	.229
	Perception	3.21	.929			4.18	.842		
Cultural and history conservation activities of this temple	Expectation	3.59	.926	2.448*	.015	3.71	.937	-1.984*	.048
	Perception	3.49	.919			3.77	.926		
The attraction of local handicrafts, foods and beverages of this temple	Expectation	3.16	.943	1.341	.181	3.07	1.062	-3.325**	.001
	Perception	3.11	.932			3.18	1.109		
The environment and hygiene of this temple	Expectation	3.70	.860	1.556	.120	4.05	.882	-3.902**	.000
	Perception	3.64	.852			4.18	.845		
Recreation and sport activities of this temple	Expectation	3.34	.990	2.926**	.004	3.17	1.125	-2.666**	.008
	Perception	3.23	1.003			3.26	1.152		
The competition of Dhamma activities of this temple	Expectation	3.11	1.042	2.842**	.005	3.06	1.186	.124	.901
	Perception	3.00	.992			3.06	1.229		
Overall expectation and perception	Expectation	3.40	.718	2.727**	.007	3.60	.682	-3.261**	.001
	Perception	3.34	.685			3.67	.690		

* significance level at .05, ** significance level at .01

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Merit-making tourists (Wat Phananchong, Wat Yai Chaimongkol, Wat Na Phra Men and Wat Tha Ka Rong)

The activities related to precepts, meditation, and wisdom were found to influence meritorious actions and defilements, which was consistent with Buddhist principles claiming that wisdom is knowing what is happening and being able to eliminate greed, anger, and delusion. This wisdom will lead to merit making by refraining from evil deeds of the body, speech, and mind and practicing meditation by remaining calm in the mind, which can lead to merit making (Phra Dharmasingshaburajarn, 2010, p. 34-35).

The attitude towards Dhamma learning and practicing innovations, merit-making innovation, Buddhist principles, and expectations influenced overall satisfaction which was consistent with the notion that satisfaction occurs when perception exceeds expectation, creating pleasure that results in revisiting (Kotler & Keller, 2016, pp. 200-201). Moreover, satisfaction in this research was the ability to cease suffering (Phra Dharmkosajarn, 2015, p. 3-5). In addition, the attitude towards Dhamma learning and practicing innovations, merit-making innovation, perceptions, Buddhist principles, and motivation for temple tourism influenced merit-making tourists' future behavioral trends. Dhamma learning and practicing

innovations included the innovation of media such as digital media which greatly influenced individuals' behavior in the digital age (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2016, pp. 28-29). Moreover, the use of Buddhist principles such as doing good deeds, refraining from evil deeds, and purifying the mind for good fortunes also influenced tourists' behavior of making merit (Jirapat and Boonlert, 2006, p. 78; Amornwiwat, Sumon, 1987, p. 29).

The overall expectation was higher than the overall perception towards tourism activities. That is, the tourists were highly dissatisfied towards the overall temple tourism, which was consistent with the majority of research claiming that consumers usually have higher expectations than perceptions, which can lead to dissatisfaction (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015, pp.84, 123)

6.2 Dhamma practitioners (Wat Maheyong and Wat Tarn Ain)

For the group of Dhamma practitioners, the activities related to precepts, meditation, and wisdom influenced meritorious actions and defilements. This finding was consistent with Buddhist principles stating that observing the precepts by refraining from all kinds of evil deeds will result in merit making and the abandonment of defilements in accordance with Buddhist principles (Thongkambunjong, 2015, p. 86).

The attitude towards Dhamma learning and practicing innovations, Buddhist principles, and perceptions influenced satisfaction and behavioral trends of Dhamma practitioners. These results were consistent with Buddhist principles claiming that Buddhism is the religion that aims to cease suffering and leads to peace in life or satisfaction, which has a continuing effect on the future behavioral trends in Dhamma practice (Thongkambunjong, 2015, p. 15-16, 27). When they learned by themselves, peace in life occurred, and that satisfaction had a continuing effect on the future behavioral trends (Krom Phrayavajirayanavarorasa, 2017, p. 11).

Dhamma practitioners' perception towards tourism activities exceeded the expectation. That is, the Dhamma practitioners were highly satisfied towards the overall Dhamma practice, which was consistent with previous empirical researches stating that satisfaction results from perception (from Dhamma practice) that is higher than expectation (Kotler & Keller, 2016, pp. 200-201). It was also consistent with Buddhist principles claiming that when the practitioners have practiced Dhamma, they will find peace in life, which is satisfaction in life (Krom Phrayavajirayanavarorasa, 2017, p. 11).

7. MARKETING IMPLICATIONS FOR MERIT- MAKING AND DHAMMA PRACTICE TOURISM

Based on the findings discussed above, they highlight the importance of the activities related to precepts, meditation, and wisdom in influencing meritorious actions and defilements. As a result, marketing practitioners are recommended to arrange merit-making and alms-giving activities with the five-precept observation, complemented with meditation activities such as praying, listening to Dhamma music in the temples, and organizing winter meditation retreat and other religious holiday activities in various festivals by using the social media such as Facebook, LINE, etc.

Moreover, the results confirm the critical role of merit-making and Dhamma learning and practicing innovations in influencing overall satisfaction and future behavioral trends. To maximize these two favorable outcomes, marketing practitioners are recommended to complement merit-making and Dhamma practice activities with cultural conservation, art, and history learning by using digital media to demonstrate the temples' history and Dhamma practice. In addition, Dhamma music and yoga along with Dhamma-

related contests/competitions such as *Sarabhanna* (recitation) competitions should be accompanied with these innovations with an aim to propagate Dhamma and convince visitors to practice Dhamma. The Dhamma practice should be emphasized as the greatest merit above other kinds of merit making. For Dhamma practitioners, marketers may consider strategies focusing on the instructional media and digital media such as e-books and multimedia book for the learning of Buddhist principles as well as Dhamma practice and insight meditation at the Dhamma practice locations. The peaceful environment, relaxing atmosphere and cleanliness of meditation landscape should also be emphasized to enhance and facilitate the Dhamma learning and practice. Lastly, honorable awards should be designated for projects under the cooperation between temples, educational institutions, public sectors, and communities that have outstanding Dhamma practice to dedicate the merit to the late beloved King Rama IX.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors wish to thank the Thailand Research Fund for sponsoring this research project.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ayutthaya Provincial Office of Buddhism, (2012). *Summary report of monks and novices in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province*. Retrieved October 21, 2016, from http://aya.onab.go.th/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=175&Itemid=123
- [2] Amornwiwat, Sumon, (1987). *Teaching by Creating Faith and Yogyakarta*. Bangkok: Odeon Brook Boutique.
- [3] Belch, G. E. & Belch, M. A. (2015). *Advertising and Promotion*. (10th ed). Singapore: McGraw-Hill.
- [4] Boonlert Jeerapat, Chaiyapitak Thanakom, Teerayuth Puengtri and Suttipong Srivichai. (2006). *The Three Sikh Teachings for Students in Secondary Education. (Research Report)*. Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.
- [5] Chaffey & Chadwick. (2016). *Digital Marketing*. (6th ed). London : Pearson Education.
- [6] Dave Chaffey, Fiona Ellis-Chadwick. (2016). *Digital marketing: strategy, implementation and practice*. (6th ed). Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education.
- [7] Hoyer, D., MacInnis, J. & Pieters, P. (2013). *Consumer Behavior*. (6th ed). South-Western: Rik
- [8] Kotler & Keller. (2016). *Marketing Management*. (15th ed). New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- [9] Krom Phrayavajirayanavarorasa, (2017). *Teaching of Somdej Pramahasmanachao (People Version) 18th Edition*. Bangkok. Mahamakut Buddhist University.
- [10] Pieters.Keller, K. L. (2008). *Strategic Brand Management*. (3rd ed). New Jersey : Prentice-Hall.
- [11] Schiffman, L., & Wisenblit, J. (2015). *Consumer Behavior*. New York City: Pearson Education Limited.
- [12] Solomon, M. R. (2018). *Consumer Behavior : Buying, Having, and Being*. (12th ed). Malaysia : Pearson Education.

- [13] Phra Dharmasinghaburajarn. (2010). *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness* .Bangkok: S.P.N. Limited.
- [14] Phra Dharmasinghaburajarn. (2015). *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness* .Bangkok: S.P.N. Limited.
- [15] Phra Dharmasinghaburajarn. (2017). *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness* .Bangkok: S.P.N. Limited.
- [16] Sunaryo, Sinto., and Suyono, Joko. (2013). "A Test of Model of the Relationship between Public Service Motivation, Job Satisfaction and Organizational Citizenship Behavior", *Review of Integrative Business & Economics Research*, 2 (1), 384-398.
- [17] Thongkambunjong, 2015, Human Handbook. *What Buddhism Teaches Us*. Chonburi. A Think Book Publication. 15-16, 27.