

**MUTELU'S PHENOMENON: IS THE TRAVEL MOTIVATION
OF THAIS INFLUENCED BY THEIR BELIEFS AND FAITH?**



**A THEMATIC PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF MANAGEMENT
COLLEGE OF MANAGEMENT
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY
2023**

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Thematic paper
entitled
**MUTELU'S PHENOMENON: IS THE TRAVEL MOTIVATION OF
THAIS INFLUENCED BY THEIR BELIEFS AND FAITH?**

was submitted to the College of Management, Mahidol University
for the degree of Master of Management

on
April 29, 2023



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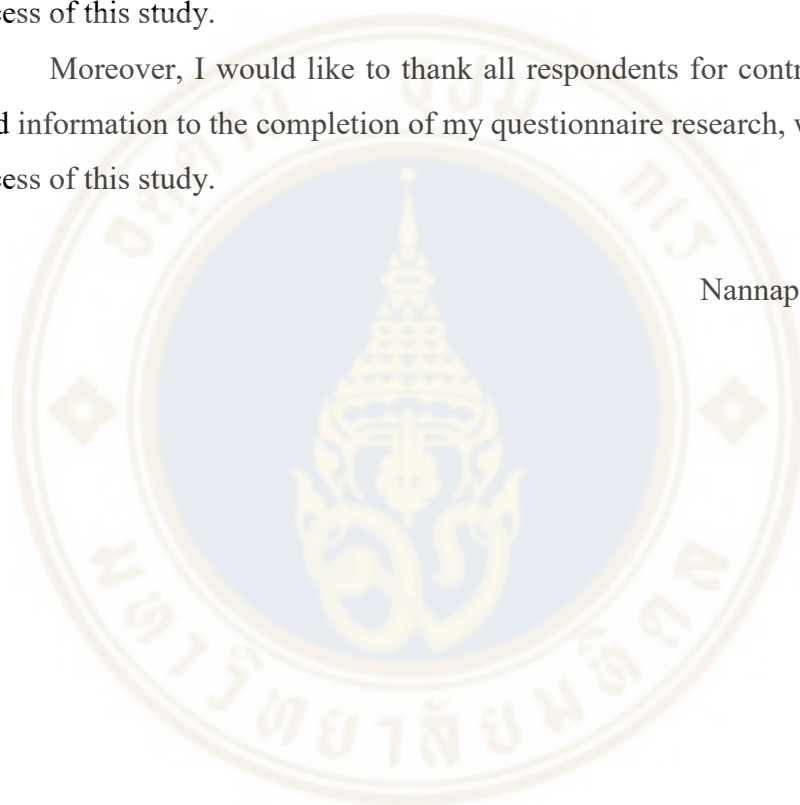
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to sincerely express my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Simon Zaby, the advisor of this research. This research would not have been possible without his assistance. With very helpful feedback and guidance that contributes significantly to the success of this study.

Moreover, I would like to thank all respondents for contributing valuable time and information to the completion of my questionnaire research, which resulted in the success of this study.

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to study the key factors that influence Thai travelers' decision to make trips to religious, sacred, holy, or Mutelu sites. The reason for choosing this topic stems primarily from my experience in the travel industry and the challenges that travel companies faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Besides that, Mutelu is a phenomenon trend that has grown rapidly year after year since 2020, with travel programs dealing with beliefs and faith selling the best. This study will focus on Thai travelers who believe in religious, sacred, holy or Mutelu sites. Research methodology is data collection via an online questionnaire survey with 125 target respondents. The result of this research shows that the three most significant internal factors that influence travelers to visit such sites are needs and wants, personal belief and faith, and travel experience. For the three most significant external factors that influence travelers to visit such sites are family or friend, famous persons, and attractive programs.

The benefit of this research is to help travel agents and destination management companies in better comprehending the variables that affect travelers' motivation. Companies must adjust their programs in order to obtain advantages over competitors, particularly in the future's highly competitive travel industry.

KEY WORDS: Mutelu / Religious Tourism / Travel Motivation

41 pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been one of the main drivers of the Thai economy from the past until the COVID-19 outbreak. It is a rapidly growing industry as a result of increased traveler purchasing power. Thailand's tourism sector accounted for 11.5% of GDP in 2019, more than doubling from 5.2% in 2009 (Udomkerdmongkol, 2020). However, COVID-19 resulted in a decrease in the number of international tourists, which fell dramatically from 39.8 million in 2019 to 6.7 million in 2020, representing an 83% decrease (Figure 1.1; Statista, 2022). This is because Thai government regulations prohibit foreigners from entering Thailand during the pandemic. Consequently, more than a third of the country's tourism-related businesses or 34.7% were forced to close, while the remaining 65.3% made an effort to adapt in order to survive (Worrachaddejchai, 2021).

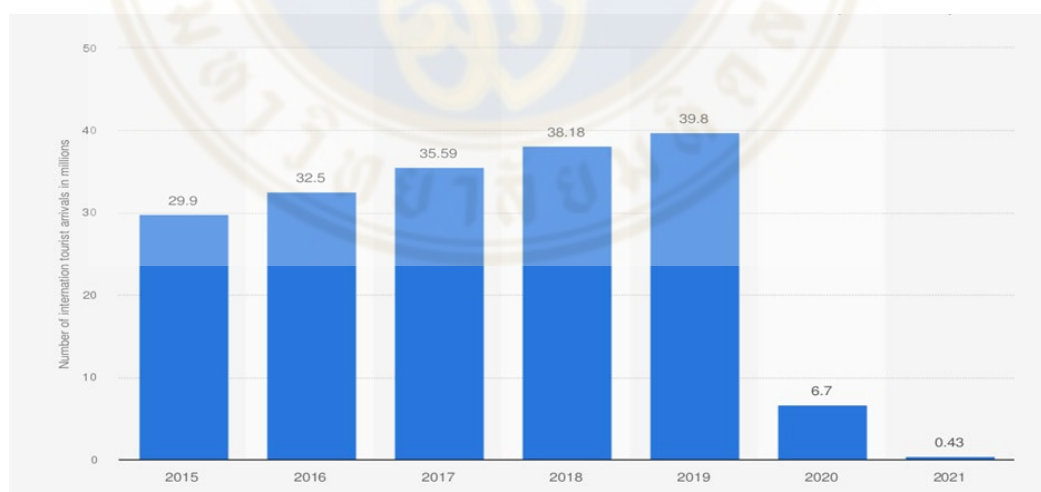


Figure 1.1 Number of international tourist arrivals in Thailand from 2015 to 2021

Source: Statista Research Department, 2022

Surprisingly, Thailand's tourism industry is not solely dependent on foreign travelers. Domestic tourists may outnumber foreign tourists. The number of domestic

travelers is much higher, reaching nearly 167 million in 2019 (Figure 1.2; ThaiWebsites, 2022). Hence, the Thai government decided to cooperate with Thailand's Tourism sector to create a new plan for domestic travel in order to boost GDP and stimulate the domestic tourism sector. Many campaigns launched concerned with people's beliefs and faith in order to match with the current target market which is Thai people. For example campaigns; WAT: Worship Activities Tradition, Power up your life and sightseeing, Merit trip, Lucky Trips for the Year of Tiger, Enhance Travel Luck in 5 local provinces, Mutelu day & night, and Naga tourism.



Figure 1.2 Number of international and domestic travelers in Thailand from 2017 to 2019

Source: ThaiWebsites, 2022

Beliefs and faith have long existed in Thai society. When people feel hopeless about something in their lives, they will look for a miraculous location where they might be blessed and given good luck. Thai people believe in religion, talismans, and spirits for a variety of reasons, including requesting help, mind healing, fortune, love, career advancement, money, etc. Many people have a successful life because of what they worship. In contrast, someone who disparages these things may have bad luck. These incidents engendered a great deal of respect, and these beliefs have become ingrained in Thai people and culture. For example; Many Thai people, and organizations across the country have been praying for Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha Narendiradebyavati's recovery and sending their best wishes. Another case in point is the economic concern. During the COVID-19 pandemic's recession, Thais were

concerned and uncertain. Thais are attempting to increase their psychological reliance as a result. They decide to go to pay their respects and worship the sanctity.

Mutelu is a phenomenon that has skyrocketed year after year since 2020, and travel programs that concern with beliefs and faith are the best sellers among Thai people who believe in this phenomenon. For example, Wat Chedi Ai Khai (The sanctity of the boy ghost), Naka Cave (Serpent or giant snake believed), Wat Phra That Doi Kham (The belief in praying for good luck), New Year Celebrations Flight by Thai Airways (The belief of a famous fortune teller and seven well-known temples) and etc. These are the best-selling programs, with tickets and seats selling out in a short period of time.

In Thailand, there has not been enough research on the relationship between Thai belief, faith, and tourism besides Chongbut (2016), Choe et al. (2020), Sritalalai (2020), Ruengmak & Tipsrinimit (2021), and Chanistha (2022). As a result, this paper will help travel agents and destination management companies understand the travel trends, such as better understanding travel motivation and being able to adjust travel programs to be more suitable with target travelers, gain a competitive advantage and survive in the new normal.

To achieve the goal of the thematic paper, the following questions about THAI travel motivation are constructed as follows:

1. Why are Mutelu programs so popular among Thai people?
2. What factors influence Thai people to choose Mutelu programs?
3. How are Thai people's beliefs related to people's motivation to travel?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter includes literature reviews relevant to the research topic. History since the beginning of tourism is included (2.1). There are different factors that have caused the tourist trend to change. The tourism trend in Thailand shifted about 2-3 years ago as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has significantly reduced the number of foreign travelers. Hence, tourism sectors must adapt in order to meet the needs of today's travelers and thrive in the new normal, prompting the Thai government to launch belief-related campaigns. Particularly Mutelu, to increase domestic travelers and Gross Domestic Profit (GDP). The phenomenon of Mutelu (2.2) has become a popular trend in recent years. Crowds of people with faith and belief visit holy places to worship amulets and talismans, contributing to the Mutelu phenomenon. This also includes religious activities at worshipping places, which are then categorized as religious tourism (2.3). Religions and beliefs are inherent in every society including Thailand, which will be mentioned in Beliefs and Tourism (2.4). They serve as a tool to influence behavior, actions, thoughts, and decisions. Travel Motivation (2.5) refers to the factors that influence travelers' decisions to visit religious, holy, sacred or Mutelu sites. There are pull or external factors that draw people to their final destinations, like attractive programs and social media. The demands and preferences of the individual are considered as push or internal factors. To gain a better understanding of travelers' motivations that are related to belief and faith, the researcher develops a travel motivation framework (2.6) to examine whether external/pull factors or internal/push factors have a greater impact on travel motivations and influence Thai people's considerations to visit holy destinations.

2.1 Trend of Tourism

“Tourism is a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that involves people traveling to locations outside of their typical environments for leisure, business, or professional reasons” (UNWTO, 2008). People have traveled for a variety of reasons. Since the beginning of humanity, war and the territorial expansion of countries were the primary reasons for ancient travelers to travel. Travel during the Middle Ages is for religious reasons. It was a major motivator for pilgrims. In the 1840s, the reason was to study about different cultures and bring back fresh perspectives on architecture and society. In the 1950s, air travel became suddenly available and the primary reason for traveling is for leisure as many hotels began to sprout along the seafronts, displacing the countryside and hosting thousands of tourists each year., resulting in rapid growth. Early 20th century, the purpose of travel was for exploration and discovery for society. The later part of the twentieth century was dominated by mass tourism, and it was assumed that people traveled in large groups to all-inclusive resorts. Tourism today is about self-exploration and discovery, not about acquiring new regions or original artwork, but rather about acquiring experiences (Robinson et al., 2011).

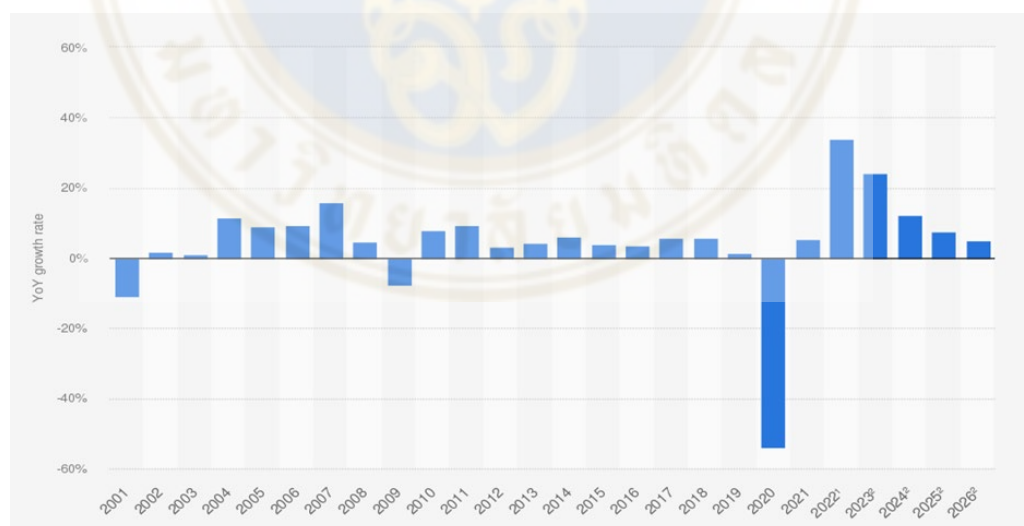


Figure 2.1 Growth rate of global business travel 2001-2022, with forecast until 2026

Source: Statista Research Department, 2022

In terms of revenue and the number of people who travel globally, the tourism industry has grown rapidly and steadily in the past (Figure 2.1; Statista, 2022).

There are three crucial events that reduce the number of income and travelers. In 2001, the United States experienced a recession caused by a real-estate bubble that affected more than half of the country's states. The global financial crisis known as the Great Recession began in 2009, and the COVID-19 recession began in 2020. This was the first recorded drop in global business tourism since 2010 (Statista, 2022).

Tourism in Thailand began in the early 1900s when King Rama V traveled to stay at the Royal palace in a seaside resort town for his vacation, which boosted domestic tourism by encouraging Thai elite to visit Hua Hin and other provinces in Thailand. Between 1956 and 1975, the United States established military bases throughout Thailand, causing travel services to expand to meet American leisure demand, such as restaurants, bars, nightclubs, and other catering services. Thai tourism developed during the era of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat. Sarit's government invested heavily in infrastructure to support tourism sites. Moreover, the Tourist Organization of Thailand was established by him to strengthen Thailand's international image, develop and promote the tour business, and encourage foreigners through advertising. Thailand was the 11th-largest source of revenue from foreign tourism in 1996. In the past, Thailand's tourism was characterized by the four Ss of sea, sun, sand, and sex, but in recent years, the popularity of urban-based activities, cultural attractions, and natural resources has grown substantially (Kontogeorgopoulos, 1998).

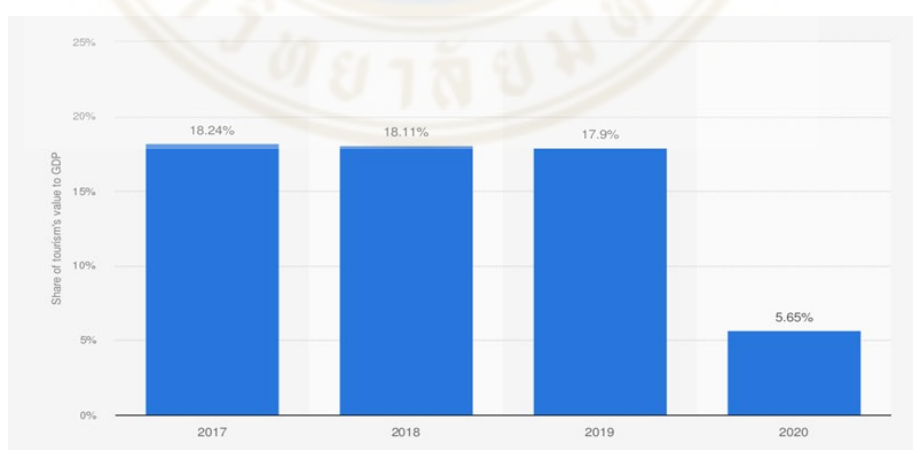


Figure 2.2 Share of tourism contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) value in Thailand from 2017 to 2020

Source: Statista Research Department, 2022

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, one of the key economic drivers in Thailand was travel. The tourist sector's contribution to Thailand's GDP in 2020 was 5.65 percent, a sharp decline from the previous year's 317% (Figure 2.2; Statista, 2022). According to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, the incoming travel ban has resulted in zero tourist arrivals in April and May 2020. During the COVID-19 outbreak, the Thai tourism authority made the decision to work with the tourism sector in order to develop a new strategy in an effort to increase GDP and boost domestic travel through the project called “We Travel Together” (Udomkerdmongkol, 2020). Thailand expects foreign visitor travelers will resume their upward trend by 2024 (Figure 2.3; Ministry of tourism and sports, 2021). The number of tourists is expected to be 34.7 million, with a travel market value of 2.4 trillion baht (Nguyen, 2022).

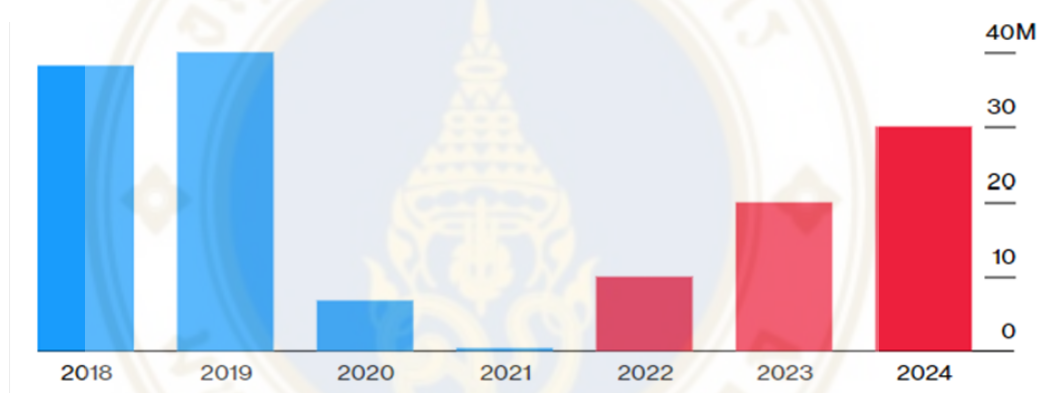


Figure 2.3 Forecast tourist arrivals for 2022, 2023, and 2024

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2021

2.2 The phenomenon of Mutelu

The term "Mutelu" is used to describe a phenomenon in which people of faith and belief visit holy locations to worship amulets and talismans. This also includes religious activities related to having faith in sacred things in religious locations. In addition, the worship of talismans is part of the Mutelu phenomenon for life stability and fulfillment (Jansuri, 2021). This corresponds to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2016), faith-based tourism is an additional option for travelers or believers who want to visit religious or holy places to improve their mental prosperity and life auspiciousness.

Similarly, Duangwises (2017) stated that Mutelu is a Thai trend that stems from the belief that holy places and talismans can bring good fortune and success in life. Beginning with bracelets and fashion takrut that artists and celebrities in society wear to decorate for beauty, people believe that it will bring them good luck for work, study, love, a successful life, protection from danger, and so on. This is an example of a supernatural belief phenomenon through amulets and talismans. Those who wear talismans have religious beliefs and perform sacrifices in religious or holy places such as Naka cave in Bueng Kan province, Thao Wessuwan at Wat Chulamanee in Samut Songkhram province, and Ai Khai at Wat Chedi in Nakhon Si Thammarat province.

According to Khanom et al. (2022), Ai Khai is the identity of Wat Chedi in Nakhon Si Thammarat province, and people believe that praying for blessings from Ai Khai will bring peace, fulfill their hopes, and fulfill their wishes. When those people receive what was requested, they will come to deliver the promised offerings. Ruengmak & Tipsrinimit (2021) also explain Ai Khai Wat Chedi is one of the Mutelu phenomena that the worshippers use more things for offering. Countless stucco chickens, "fragments of firecrackers piling up higher than a person's height, and sacred objects that are reproduced four times within a month" (Ruengmak & Tipsrinimit, 2021, p.60). These are some examples of how people's beliefs and faith influence their actions.

2.3 Religious Tourism

People of faith who travel alone or with a group for religious or spiritual purposes take part in religious tourism. (Griffin, & Raj, 2018). The travel reason is similar to Rinschede (1992), the travel motivation is strongly motivated by religious reasons, and it is one of the earliest forms of tourism. Additionally, it is a historical phenomenon that has affected religions all over the world. According to Boris (1996), religious tourism includes a variety of spiritual locations and related services that are traveled for both secular and religious reasons.

A study by Jongmeewasin (2016) found that many of today's most popular religious tourist destinations are associated with ancient sites of worship or the locations of apparent miracles. Religion and spirituality have an undeniable and significant

influence on tourism. While religion has traditionally been the primary motivation for travel, other factors can come into play.

Religion is inherent in every society including Thai. This is a tool for determining behavior, actions, and thoughts. As a result, most Thai people plead for holy buddha and spirits in order to avoid bad luck and ward off evil. Hence, it is natural for humans to seek sacred sites based on their beliefs (Pichphandaycha, 2018). The meaning corresponds with Wongvipak (2009), Religious beliefs of Thai people play a role in psychology and society by reducing anxiety and providing the comfort of trusting supernatural powers to help oneself in times of crisis. In addition, religion and beliefs influence human behavior to do what is right and punish what is wrong.

Currently, Thai people are increasing their awareness of the importance of religious tourism more than in the past. There are more religious activities, such as making pilgrimages, paying homage to sacred objects and places, etc., as people believe that these activities may bring prosperity into their lives. It is also a way to see local art, folk culture, and community traditions, including cultural heritage (Siriphaprapagon et al., 2019). Religious tourism also helps to improve people's quality of life and mental health of travelers, demonstrating that religious activities are one of the motivators for people to travel to religious places (Jeeranun et al., 2016).

Religious tourism is another popular form of tourism in Mutelu's interest group in Thailand. Thai travelers prefer to visit temples or sacred sites in order to engage in religious activities and practice dharma, as they believe that worshipping sacred sites, making merit, or making a donation will bring prosperity into their lives (Laophuangsak, 2016).

2.4 Beliefs and Tourism

Beliefs that exist in today's people's way of life can be found in many societies around the world, including Che Kung Miu Temple in Hong Kong, where people pray for good fortune, Man Mo Temple in Taiwan, where people pray for study and work, and Long Shan Temple in Japan, where people pray for a soul mate. Thailand has a variety of beliefs, such as religious, spiritual sacred, and superstition. There also is a combination of these beliefs which affects the creation of rituals and cultural

patterns. Some beliefs reflect the relationship between humans and the use of natural resources in their lives such as the Naga cave; Thais believe that visiting the cave will bring them good fortune and reveal their lottery numbers. Thao Wessuwan; People believe that it will help to prevent bad things and dangers from happening. Ai Khai; People believe that it will fulfill their hopes and wishes (Khanom et al., 2022).

2.5 Travel Motivation

Motivation is a need or circumstance that stimulates a traveler to take action. Travel motivation can be attributed to a psychological need, the trip's purpose, or a traveler's personal preference (Uysal & Hagan, 1993).

2.5.1 Tourist Motivation Factors

The "push and pull factors" are the two dimensions of travel motivation. This concept became a central idea in explaining tourist motivation. Tourists who have gathered a lot of information about their vacation, destination, or attractive travel programs are considered as "pull factors", influencing their final selection. Push factors are internal motivations that influence an individual when making a decision. Needs and preferences are examples of person-specific motivations (Dann, 1977). Additionally, push factors are used to determine when and where to travel, as well as the desire to travel (Crompton, 1979). This can be linked to Maslow's hierarchy of need theory (Maslow, 1943) as it is the most influential theory on motivation. Peter et al. (2011) have described that physiological need is one of the primary factors in selecting a vacation. Some people utilize their vacations to improve and grow their talents by participating in activities and discovering new cultures. However, societal, cultural, and economic aspects have an impact on consumer decision-making; these determinants can affect push and pull factors.

According to Uysal et al. (1996), Tourists travel for a variety of reasons, both internal and external to themselves. Internal and external factors can influence one's motivation to travel. Individuals' needs, wants, and desires are examples of internal factors that affect travel decisions. Each person has a unique attitude and personality, which influences their motivation for traveling (Uysal & Hagan, 1993). Um &

Crompton (1990) mentioned that external reasons include mass media, word-of-mouth, and travel programs, while internal reasons include travelers' sociodemographics, values, and motives of travelers.

2.5.2 Thai Tourist Motivation Factors and Mutelu Phenomenon

Jansuri, (2021) mentioned various factors related to the Mutelu phenomenon and tourism in Thailand, which include internal factors such as personal beliefs and faith in the sacred items. External factors include attractive things, attractions, legends, and wonders of nature. Another factor is the presence of powerful individuals who practice Mutelu and visit holy sites for worship, including well-known masters of ceremonies, actors, and celebrities. As images or videos of the influential figures' journeys, Mutelu activities, and talismans are shared on social media. These motivating elements influence people to visit the same sacred locations.

2.6 Travel Motivation Framework

According to the Travel Motivation Framework (Figure 6), travel motivation stems from two sources: internal motivation or push factors and external motivation or pull factors. Begin with internal motivation or push factors such as personal beliefs and faith, needs, wants preferences, and travel experience. External motivation or pull factors include influencers or actors or celebrities who travel to religious or holy sites to worship, famous fortune tellers who advise people to make merit or avoid bad luck, social media bombardment, and appealing travel programs.

Another factor that influences travel choices and behavior is sociodemographics, which is concerned with determining travel motivation. Age, gender, income, status, education, and career status are all part of sociodemographic data.

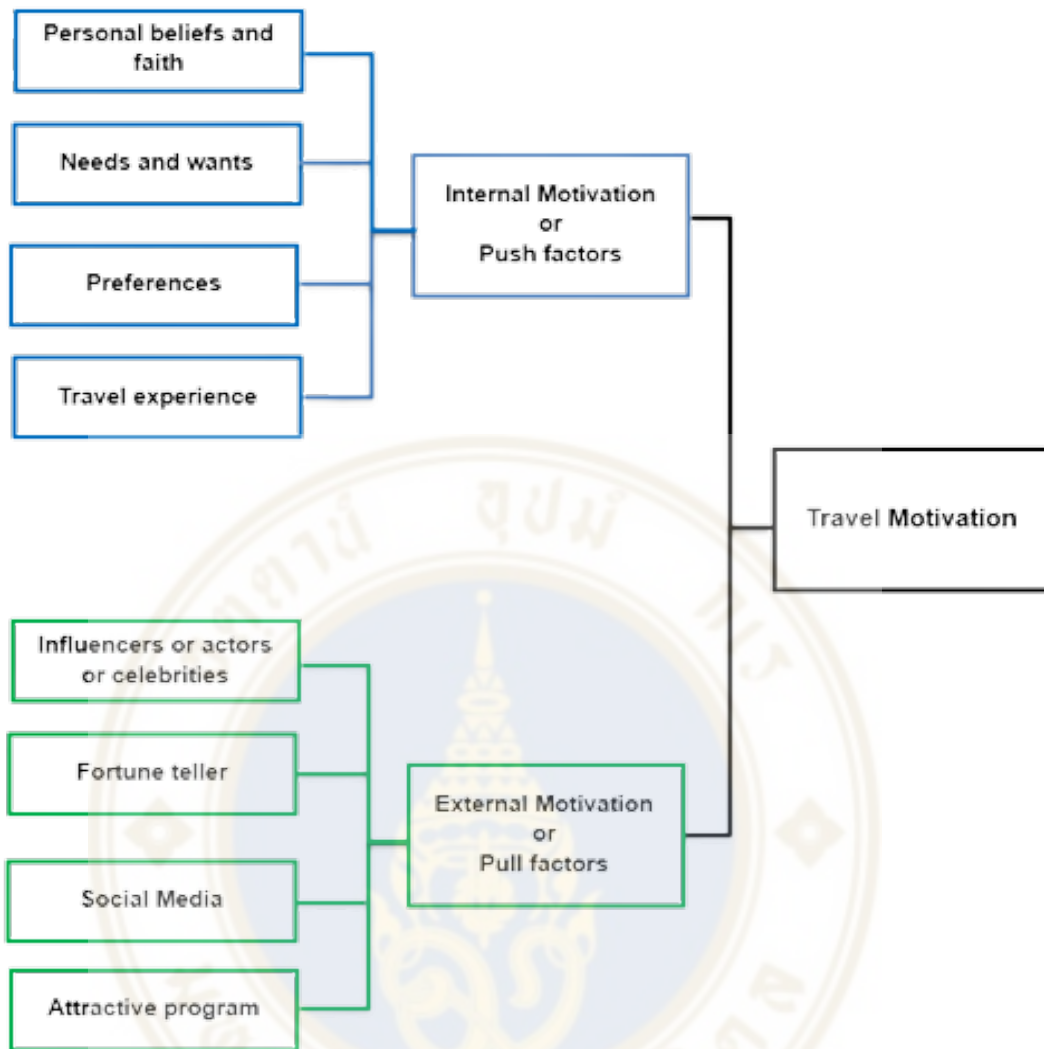


Figure 2.4 Travel Motivation Framework (Source: Own illustration)

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research aims to investigate the individual key factors that influence travel motivation as well as the factors that relate Thai belief, faith, and tourism. In order to construct an online questionnaire and collect data, the researcher leverages the understanding from the literature review and conceptual framework. This chapter is divided into five sections: research design, population and sample, data collection methodology, questionnaire survey, and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

For this paper's entire scope, the questions were derived from the research objectives and research questions. The quantitative method is used because the results are generalizable and do not represent a single group. Moreover, the answers to this questionnaire will enable travel agents to better understand the variables that influence travelers' motivation and to modify their programs accordingly in order to gain an advantage over rivals, particularly in the highly competitive travel industry in the future.

3.2 Population and Sample

This study will have a sample size of 125 people. This respondent will include Thai tourists of all ages. These respondents will be travelers who have traveled to religious or holy sites before and made their own decisions about their Thailand trip.

3.3 Data Collection Methodology

The most practical and quick approach to gathering data from a target group or respondents is through an online questionnaire form, thus which will be the research

method of data collection. The questionnaire survey will be conducted by using Google forms and distributed via online social media channels such as Facebook, Line, and Instagram.

3.4 Questionnaire Survey

The survey questionnaire is created in both English and Thai language because the target group or respondents are Thai people. The first section is about general questions. This section will ask simple demographic questions or inquire about the respondents' characteristics. The second part contains specific questions. This section is intended to gather opinions on travel motivations and decisions. Respondents are asked to complete a closed-form questionnaire and select only one answer per question, with the exception of questions no 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, and 11.

General information of the respondent

1. **Gender** Male Female Alternative
2. **Age** 18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 Above 55
3. **Status** Single Divorce
 Married with children Married without children
4. **Income**
 Lower than THB 15,000 THB 45,001 - 60,000
 THB 15,001 - 30,000 THB 60,001 - 100,000
 THB 30,001 - 45,000 More than THB 100,000
5. **Education**
 High school diploma or lower Master's degree
 Bachelor's degree Doctoral degree
6. **Career status**
 Employee or Full-time Entrepreneur or Business owner
 Freelance or Part-time Retired

Specific questions

1. What is your most common reason for traveling?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vacation | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural reasons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion purpose |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visit family or friend | <input type="checkbox"/> Others... (please specify) ... |

2. Who do you typically travel with?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alone | <input type="checkbox"/> Boyfriend or Girlfriend or Wife or Husband |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Colleagues or Partner or Clients |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | <input type="checkbox"/> Others... (please specify) ... |

3. Who has the most influence over your decisions regarding travel? Please rank the top 3 people who inspire you the most when choosing your trip.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A. Myself | <input type="checkbox"/> E. Friend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> B. Influencers or Actors | <input type="checkbox"/> F. Boyfriend or Girlfriend or Wife or Husband |
| <input type="checkbox"/> C. Fortune tellers | <input type="checkbox"/> G. Family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> D. Others... (please specify) ... | |

4. What are the motivations that influence your decision to travel to religious or sacred or holy or Mutelu sites? Please list the top 3 things that are most important to you when selecting your trip.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A. Stress at work | <input type="checkbox"/> E. To meet new people who shared similar interests |
| <input type="checkbox"/> B. Travel trends | <input type="checkbox"/> F. To learn about different cultures and religions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> C. Someone passes away | <input type="checkbox"/> G. Others... (please specify) ... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> D. Religious /Spiritual belief | |

5. Why are you interested in traveling to religious, sacred, holy, or Mutelu sites? Please list the top 3 things that are most important to you when selecting your trip.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A. Blessing for money | <input type="checkbox"/> E. Blessing for success |
| <input type="checkbox"/> B. Blessing for health | <input type="checkbox"/> F. Blessing for lottery winners |
| <input type="checkbox"/> C. Blessing for love | <input type="checkbox"/> G. Others... (please specify) ... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> D. Blessing for work or study | |

6. How often do you visit religious or sacred or holy sites per month?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 - 2 times per month | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 - 6 times per month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 - 4 times per month | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 7 times per month |

7. What sources do you use to learn about religious or sacred or holy or Mutelu sites?

- Social media ex. Facebook, IG, LINE
- Friend
- Fortune teller
- TV advertisement
- Family
- Others... (please specify) ...

8. Do personal beliefs affect your motivation to travel to religious or sacred or holy or Mutelu sites?

- Yes
- No

9. What are your personal beliefs that affect your motivation to travel to religious or sacred or holy or Mutelu sites? Please list the top 3 things that are most important to you when selecting your trip.

- A. Fulfill your hope or wishes
- B. Prevent bad things and dangers
- C. Bring you good fortune
- D. Mind healing
- E. Religious beliefs
- F. Others... (please specify) ...

10. What are the most important internal factors influencing your decisions to travel to religious or sacred or holy or Mutelu sites? Please list the top 3 things that inspired you the most when planning your trip.

- A. Needs and wants; Blessing for love, job, money, health, lottery winners
- B. Personal belief and faith in the spiritual, religious, amulets, talismans, or sacred sites
- C. Personal preferences ex. Perceived travel benefits, interesting destinations
- D. Travel experience ex., Destination loyalty
- E. Others... (please specify) ...

11. What are the most important external factors influencing your decisions to travel to religious or sacred or holy or Mutelu sites? Please list the top 3 things that inspired you the most when planning your trip.

- A. Famous person; Influencers or actors celebrities
- B. Fortune teller
- C. Family or friend

- D. Attractive programs ex., Mutelu trend, New religious or sacred or holy sites
- E. Others...(please specify)...

12. What kinds of travel destinations do you prefer?

- Religious sites ex. Temples, Phra Pathom Chedi, Khao Khitchakut, City Pillar Shrine
- Culture, and heritage sites ex. Historical park
- Spiritual sites ex. Ai Khai, Mae Nak Shrine, Phumphuangs Shrine
- Other sacred sites ex. Tiger God Shrine, Taowesuwan, Naga Cave
- Others... (please specify) ...

13. Have you ever returned to the same location after traveling?

- Yes
- No (please skip question no. 14)

14. What motivates you to return to the same location for a second time or more?

- Make a wish
- Change one's bad fortune through a ceremony
- Fulfill one's vow
- Make merit
- Religious or Spiritual belief
- Others... (please specify) ...

3.5 Data Analysis

The percentage statistical method will be used to analyze the data. In order to investigate the factors that most influence Thai people's decisions to participate in Mutelu programs and visit religious or holy sites, researcher uses the mode method to identify the data with the highest frequency or most duplicates.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDING

This chapter includes the findings and analyses of the respondents' characteristics (4.1) and specific questions (4.2), which include the key factors that influence Thai people's travel motivation based on data collected from questionnaires. Google forms were used to conduct the survey, which was then distributed via social media platforms such as Facebook, Line, and Instagram. Data were collected between February 18, 2023, and March 4, 2023. This questionnaire was completed by 125 people, but approximately 4% or 5 of them were ineligible because they were not influenced by religious, sacred, holy, or Mutelu sites. So, they were filled out and only 120 respondents are eligible for the analysis.

4.1 Respondents' Characteristics

The respondents were asked about age, gender, status, income, education, and career status.

Table 4.1 Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	86	71.67%
Male	29	24.17%
Alternative	5	4.17%
Total	120	100%

According to the survey results, 71.67% of respondents are female, 24.17% are male, and the remaining 4.17% of respondents are alternative as shown in the Table 4.1.

Table 4.2 Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	6	5.00%
26-35	72	60.00%
36-45	38	31.70%
46-55	4	3.33%
Above 55	0	0%
Total	120	100%

Table 4.2 shows that there are two primary groups of respondents: those between the ages of 26 and 35 (60%) and those between the ages of 36 and 45 (31.7%). Over 90% of all responders fell into one of these two categories.

Table 4.3 Status

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	103	85.83%
Married with children	10	8.33%
Married without children	7	5.83%
Divorce	0	0%
Total	120	100%

From Table 4.3, the vast majority of respondents at 85.83% are single. This is because the majority of respondents are women. This also corresponds to Mala (2018), “more Thai women are in the never-married category than ever before and more

than half prefer to remain single”. The second group, with 8.33%, is married with children, while the remaining 5.83% are married without children. There is no respondent who is divorced.

Table 4.4 Income

Income	Frequency	Percentage
Lower than THB 15,000	3	2.50%
THB 15,001 - 30,000	15	12.50%
THB 30,001 - 45,000	26	21.67%
THB 45,001 - 60,000	30	25.00%
THB 60,001 - 100,000	34	28.33%
More than THB 100,000	12	10.00%
Total	120	100%

From Table 4.4, the average monthly income of respondents is between THB 60,001 and 100,000, or 28.33% of all respondents, which is the highest percentage. This is followed by the range between THB 45,001 and 60,000, at 25%, THB 30,001 to 45,000, at 21.67%, THB 15,001 to 30,000, at 12.50%, above THB 100,000, at 10.00%, and below THB 15,000, at 2.50%.

Table 4.5 Education

Education	Frequency	Percentage
High school diploma or lower	1	0.83%
Bachelor’s degree	85	70.83%
Master’s degree	34	28.33%
Doctoral degree	0	0%
Total	120	100%

In terms of education, Table 4.5 shows that the majority of respondents have a bachelor's degree at 70.83%. This demonstrates that majority of respondents with bachelor's and master's degrees earn between THB 30,000 and THB 100,000. Only one respondent has a high school diploma or less, accounting for 0.83%. There are no respondents with doctoral degrees.

Table 4.6 Career status

Education	Frequency	Percentage
Employee or Full-time	94	78.33%
Freelance or Part-time	12	10.00%
Entrepreneur or Business owner	14	11.67%
Retired	0	0%
Total	120	100%

According to Table 4.6, the majority of respondents (78.33%) are employees or work full-time, followed by entrepreneurs or business owners (11.67%), and freelance or part-time workers (10%). There is no retired respondent. This illustrates that the vast majority of full-time respondents aged 26-35 earn between THB 30,000 and THB 100,000.

4.2 Specific Questions Analysis

The respondents were asked about their travel habits, beliefs, and motivations.

Table 4.7 The most common reason for traveling

	Frequency	Percentage
Vacation	101	84.17%
Business	5	4.17%
Visit family or friend	0	0%
Cultural reasons	2	1.67%
Religion purpose	12	10.00%
Total	120	100%

From Table 4.7, the majority of respondents (84.17%) decide to travel for vacation purposes. The second group's travel reason is religious (10%). The third group's travel reason is business (4.17%), and the last group's reason is cultural (1.67%). There are no respondents for the reason of visiting family and friends. It is reasonable to assume that the majority of respondents live with their families and in the same city as their friends.

Table 4.8 The person who is typically traveling with

	Frequency	Percentage
Alone	6	5.00%
Friends	47	39.17%
Family	41	34.17%
Boyfriend or Girlfriend or Wife or Husband	25	20.83%
Colleague or Partner or Client	1	0.83%
Total	120	100%

According to the data, 39.17% of respondents typically travel with their friends. Family came in second at 34.17%, followed by boyfriend or girlfriend or wife

or husband at 20.83%, alone at 5%, and the remaining 0.83% traveling with a colleague, partner, or client.

Table 4.9 The most influential person over decisions regarding travel

	1st		2nd		3rd	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Myself	84	70.00%	17	14.17%	8	6.67%
Influencers or Actors	1	0.83%	12	10.00%	48	40.00%
Fortune tellers	1	0.83%	6	5.00%	6	5.00%
Family	14	11.67%	34	28.33%	17	14.17%
Friend	9	7.50%	31	25.83%	31	25.83%
Boyfriend or Girlfriend or Wife or Husband	10	8.33%	20	16.67%	10	8.33%
Others... (please specify)...	1	0.83%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	120	100%	120	100%	120	100%

The result in Table 4.9 shows the most influential person over the decision regarding travel, which is broken down into first, second, and third places. To begin with 1st place, Myself was chosen as the most significant person by 70% of the survey participants. Only one respondent chose others and specified “clients”. For 2nd place, family and friends had similar percentages with 28.33% and 25.83%, respectively as the majority of respondents typically travel with their family and friend. For 3rd place, 40% of respondents answered influencers or actors as the third order. Only a small percentage of them (8.33%) responded with boyfriend, girlfriend, wife, or husband because most respondents are single. It is related to the previous result in Table 4.8 that the majority of respondents, more than 70%, prefer to travel with friends and family.

Table 4.10 The most important motive for selecting the trip

	1st		2nd		3rd	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Stress at work	40	33.33%	24	20.00%	11	9.17%
Travel trends	18	15.00%	48	40.00%	23	19.17%
Someone passes away	4	3.33%	1	0.83%	4	3.33%
Religious or Spiritual belief	41	34.17%	22	18.33%	18	15.00%
To meet new people who shared similar interests	7	5.83%	12	10.00%	40	33.33%
To learn about different cultures and religions	9	7.50%	13	10.83%	22	18.33%
Others... (please specify) ...	1	1.00%	0	0%	2	2.00%
Total	120	100%	120	100%	120	100%

According to Table 4.10, data illustrates the most important motivation of respondents when choosing the trip, which is divided into first, second, and third places. First place, there are two majority groups of respondents who shared a similar trend in religious or spiritual belief and stress at work, with 34.17% and 33.33%, correspondingly. This is due to the fact that 78.33% of respondents are employees or full-time workers. As a result, it is undeniable that there is stress at work. Only 1% of respondents answered others which specified "to build prosperity". Second place, the

majority of respondents (40%) choose their trip based on travel trends. Third place, most of the respondents at 33.33% chose the trip because they wanted to meet new people with similar interests. Only 3.33% have choose "Someone passes away" because the majority of respondents listed vacation as the most common reason for traveling rather than religious reasons (84.17%:10%). The death of someone is part of a religious ritual. There are two respondents who answered, "wish for a child" and "life problems," both of which reflect Thai beliefs.

Table 4.11 The most interested in traveling to religious, sacred, holy, or Mutelu sites

	1st		2nd		3rd	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Blessing for money	60	50.00%	19	15.83%	20	16.67%
Blessing for health	10	8.33%	23	19.17%	16	13.33%
Blessing for love	5	4.17%	9	7.50%	18	15.00%
Blessing for work /study	17	14.17%	49	40.83%	9	7.50%
Blessing for success	27	22.50%	16	13.33%	52	43.33%
Blessing for lottery winners	1	1.00%	4	3.00%	3	3.00%
Others... (please specify) ...	0	0%	0	0%	2	1.67%
Total	120	100%	120	100%	120	100%

The data from Table 4.11 shows the most interested in visiting religious, sacred, holy, or Mutelu sites, which is divided into first, second, and third places. First, the majority of respondents 50% answered blessing for money as both group of

respondents around 11.67%, were entrepreneurs or business owners and 78.33% were full-time workers. Second, 40.83% of respondents answered blessing for work /study because the majority of respondents are full-time employees. Third, 43.33% of respondents answered blessing for success. Only 1.67% or 2 respondents answered, "follow the trend" and "wish for a child".

Table 4.12 Travel frequency

	Frequency	Percentage
1 - 2 times per month	87	72.50%
3 - 4 times per month	20	16.67%
5 - 6 times per month	8	6.67%
More than 7 times per month	5	4.17%
Total	120	100%

Based on Table 4.12, the vast majority of respondents (72.50%) travel 1-2 times per month. Then, 16.67% of respondents travel 3-4 times per month, 6.67% travel 5-6 times per month, and 4.17% travel more than 7 times per month.

Table 4.13 Sources for learning about religious or sacred or holy or Mutelu sites

	Frequency	Percentage
Social media	85	70.83%
TV advertisement	0	0%
Friend	21	17.50%
Family	6	5.00%
Fortune teller	6	5.00%
Others...(please specify)...	2	1.67%
Total	120	100%

According to Table 4.13, 70.83% of respondents learn about religious, sacred, holy, or Mutelu sites through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and LINE. 17.50% of respondents learned about these sites from a friend. There are two groups of respondents with a similar percentage of 5%: family and fortune tellers. Only 1.67% of those surveyed chose others and cited the same source as Google. There are no respondents who selected TV advertisements.

Table 4.14 Personal beliefs affect the travel motivation of Thai people

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	108	90%
No	12	10%
Total	120	100%

Table 4.14 shows that the majority of respondents 90% admitted that their personal beliefs influence their travel motivation. The remaining 10% believed that personal beliefs had no impact on their travel motivation.

Table 4.15 Personal beliefs that affect travelers' motivation to travel to religious or sacred or holy or Mutelu sites

	1st		2nd		3rd	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Fulfill your hope or wishes	72	60.00%	18	15.00%	14	11.67%
Prevent bad things and dangers	6	5.00%	19	15.83%	24	20.00%
Bring you good fortune	19	15.83%	58	48.33%	24	20.00%

Table 4.15 Personal beliefs that affect travelers' motivation to travel to religious or sacred or holy or Mutelu sites (cont.)

	1st		2nd		3rd	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Mind healing	15	12.50%	18	15.00%	39	32.50%
Religious beliefs	8	6.67%	6	5.00%	19	15.83%
Others... (please specify)...	0	0%	1	0.83%	0	0%
Total	120	100%	120	100%	120	100%

Data from Table 4.15 demonstrate the most personal beliefs that influence respondents motivation to visit religious, sacred, holy, or Mutelu sites, which is divided into first, second and third places. In 1st place, 60% of respondents choose to go to travel to the aforementioned sites because they want to fulfill their hop or wishes as they believe in religious, sacred, holy or Mutelu sites. In 2nd place, 48.33% of respondents believe that visiting these locations will bring them good fortune. Other personal beliefs that have similar percentages are preventing bad things and hazards, fulfilling your hopes or wishes, and mind healing (15.83%, 15%, and 15%, respectively). Only 0.83% of responses, or one person, chose others and specified "prosperity," which is a personal belief. In 3rd place, the initial group 32.50% of those surveyed believe that visiting these sites will help them heal their minds. Followed by the second and third groups of respondents had the same percentage of 20% in preventing bad things and bringing them good fortune.

Table 4.16 Internal factors influencing your decisions to travel to religious or sacred or holy or Mutelu sites

	1st		2nd		3rd	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Needs and wants	77	64.17%	15	12.50%	15	12.50%
Personal belief and faith	17	14.17%	54	45.00%	18	15.00%
Personal preferences	9	7.50%	34	28.33%	26	21.67%
Travel experience	17	14.17%	17	14.17%	61	50.83%
Others... (please specify)...	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	120	100%	120	100%	120	100%

Based on Table 4.16, the result shows internal factors influencing respondents' decisions to travel to religious or sacred or holy or Mutelu sites, which is divided into first, second and third places. To begin with first place, needs and wants are the most influential factors in their decision to travel at 64.17%. Followed by two internal factors that had the same percentages of 14.17% which are personal belief and faith in the spiritual, religious, amulets, talismans, or sacred sites and travel experiences. In the second place, 45% of respondents answered personal belief and faith in the spiritual, religious, amulets, talismans, or sacred sites. In the third place, 50.83% of respondents indicated that their internal motivator is personal travel experience, such as destination loyalty.

Table 4.17 External factors influencing your decisions to travel to religious or sacred or holy or Mutelu sites

	1st		2nd		3rd	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Famous person; Influencers or actors or celebrities	20	16.67%	46	38.33%	29	24.17%
Fortune teller	11	9.17%	32	26.67%	12	10.00%
Family or friend	71	59.17%	20	16.67%	15	12.50%
Attractive programs ex., Mutelu trend, New religious or sacred or holy sites	18	15.00%	22	18.33%	64	53.33%
Others... (please specify)...	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	120	100%	120	100%	120	100%

According to Table 4.17, the result shows external factors influencing respondents' decisions to travel to religious, sacred, holy or Mutelu sites. It was divided into three places: first, second, and third. For the first place, 59.17% of respondents answered family or friend as their priority. For the second place, 38.33% of respondents answered famous persons such as influencers or actors, or celebrities as their motivator influencing their decision. Followed by fortune tellers at 26.67%. For the third place, the majority of respondents answered attractive programs at 53.33% such as Mutelu trend, new religious or sacred or holy sites impact their decision to visit the aforementioned sites.

Table 4.18 Preferable travel destinations

	Frequency	Percentage
Religious sites ex. Temples, Phra Pathom Chedi, Khao Khitchakut, City Pillar Shrine	52	43.33%
Spiritual sites ex. Ai Khai, Mae Nak Shrine, Phumphuang Shrine	23	19.17%
Culture, and heritage sites ex. Historical Park	12	10.00%
Sacred sites ex. Tiger God Shrine, Taowesuwan, Naga Cave	33	27.50%
Total	120	100%

From Table 4.18, the majority of respondents (43.33%) prefer to visit religious sites such as temples, Phra Pathom Chedi, Khao Khitchakut, and City Pillar Shrine. The second group 27.50% prefers to travel to other sacred sites such as Tiger God Shrine. The third group 19.17% prefers to visit spiritual sites such as Taowesuwan and Naga Cave. The remaining 10% prefer to visit cultural and heritage sites.

Table 4.19 Number of people who returned to the same location after traveling

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	109	90.83%
No	11	9.17%
Total	120	100%

Table 4.19 shows that more than 90% or 109 of respondents returned to the same location after traveling. Only 9.17% or 11 people of those who travel do not go back to the same place. As a result, almost 100% of respondents returned to the same locations.

Table 4.20 Motivation to revisit the same location for a second or more times

	Frequency	Percentage
Make a wish	51	46.79%
Make merit	23	21.10%
Change one's bad fortune through a ceremony	3	2.75%
Fulfill one's vow	17	15.60%
Religious or Spiritual belief	14	12.84%
Others... (please specify) ...	1	0.92%
Total	109	100%

According to Table 4.20, the majority of respondents (46.79%) return to the same location to make a wish. Following that is 21.10% who would like to make a merit at the same location a second or more times, 15.60% who would like to visit the same place to fulfill their vow as they have received what they desire, and 12.84% who return to the same sites because they have religious or spiritual beliefs. The remaining 2.75% of respondents decided to return because they want to change their bad luck through a ceremony. Only one respondent or 0.92% returned because she wishes to meditate at the same location.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The chapter will identify the internal and external factors that have a significant impact on Thai travelers' decision to make trips to religious, sacred, holy, or Mutelu sites which will be mentioned in summary of findings and discussion (5.1). This paper also seeks to assist travel agents and destination management companies in gaining competitive advantages and staying ahead of competitors by understanding the factors associated with Thai beliefs and faith that influence traveler decisions. They can effectively attract domestic tourists by providing the right travel programs to the target group, which is Thai travelers. More details will be mentioned in recommendation (5.2). There are some limitations for future research in (5.3).

5.1 Summary of Findings and Discussion

This survey was completed by 125 people, but only 120 of them believe in religious, sacred, holy, or Mutelu sites which most of them based on qualitative method. The following is the general information conclusion. 71.67% are female, 24.17% are male, and 4.17% are alternative. The majority of respondents are between the ages of 25 and 35, with 85.83% being single. Most of them, 78.33%, work full-time and earn between THB 60,001 and THB100,000. The highest level of education held by 70.83% is a bachelor's degree, followed by a master's degree at 28.33%.

Firstly, the findings show that there are many results that are similar to the literature review, but some result is not the same. Their own, family, and influencers are the three most influential people in their travel decisions. This is because the vast majority of respondents stated that they usually travel with their families. Influencers came in third place, which is consistent with Jansuri's (2021), which stated that influencers or actors are one of the motivating factors that influence people to visit sacred sites. Religious or spiritual beliefs, travel trends, and meeting new people are the

top three reasons for choosing a trip. The first important motive corresponds to the term Mutele, which Jansuri, 2021 stated in their journal "Mutelu is used to describe a phenomenon in which people of faith and belief visit holy locations, which also includes religious activities related to having faith in sacred things in religious locations". Money, work or study, and success are the top three blessings given upon those who visit religious, sacred, holy, or Mutelu sites. This is due to the fact that the majority of respondents are entrepreneurs or business owners, as well as full-time employees. As a result, these are their top priorities in life. This aligned with the details that Duangwises (2017) stated in academic journal "Thai trend that stems from the belief that holy places and talismans can bring good fortune and success in life". Furthermore, it corresponded to Khanom et al. (2022) "People believe that praying for blessings will bring peace, fulfill their hopes, and fulfill their wishes". The majority of respondents (70.83%) learned about religious, sacred, holy, or Mutelu sites via social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and LINE. Jansuri (2021) confirmed this by mentioning images or videos of influential figures' journeys, Mutelu activities, and talismans being shared on social media. These encourage people to visit the same sacred sites.

Secondly, respondents are asked to identify the factors they usually consider when choosing a vacation destination. According to the findings, the first three internal factors that influence travelers to visit religious or sacred or holy or Mutelu sites are Needs and wants, Personal belief and faith, and Travel experience, accounting for 64.17%, 45%, and 50.38%, respectively. This can be confirmed by the research of Uysal et al. (1996) "Individuals' needs, wants, and desires are internal factors that can influence one's motivation to travel". For the first three external factors that influence travelers to visit religious or sacred or holy or Mutelu sites are family or friend, famous person, and attractive programs, accounting for 59.17%, 38.33%, and 53.33%, respectively. The first place was not mentioned in the literature review or in any framework. This could be because the majority of respondents typically travel with friends and family, so external factors are dependent on these people. The second place answered can be supported by Jansuri's (2021) assertion that influential persons, such as well-known masters of ceremonies, actors, and celebrities, who travel to holy sites for worship, serve as motivation for others to do the same. The third place, the majority of respondents answered attractive programs such as Mutelu trend, new religious or sacred or holy sites

impact their decision to visit the aforementioned sites. It is undeniable that travel programs dealing with beliefs and faith are the best sellers among Thai people who believe in this phenomenon, and the Mutelu phenomenon has skyrocketed year after year since 2020.

Lastly, the majority of respondents prefer to visit religious, sacred, and spiritual sites with 43.33%, 27.50%, and 19.17%, respectively. Hence, the findings show that about half of Thai respondents practice a religion, which is consistent with Laophuangsak (2016) "Thai travelers prefer to visit temples or sacred sites in order to engage in religious activities, as they believe that worshipping sacred sites, and making merit, will bring prosperity into their lives". Moreover, 90.83% of respondents return to the same location a second or more times and 46.79% have a purpose for making a wish. This can be confirmed by the journal of Khanom et al. (2022) "People believe that praying for blessings will bring peace, fulfill their hopes, and fulfill their wishes".

In a nutshell, the findings of this study give support to many theories and factors identified in previous research studies. So, in order to succeed in this highly competitive industry, travel agents or destination management companies must concentrate on both internal and external factors that drive customers to the aforementioned sites.

5.2 Recommendations

In order to survive in the new normal, travel agents and travel destination management companies should take the following actions based on the information gathered in this study.

1. In order to gain a competitive advantage and stay ahead of competitors, travel agents and destination management companies should create travel programs that correspond to current travel trends as majority of respondents indicated that travel trends are one of the most important factors motivating them to choose a trip. Examples include Ai Khai, which was popular among Thai tourists 1-2 years ago but is still popular today or Naga cave, where entrance tickets were sold out quickly and people needed to book in advance at least 1-2 months because this year of the rabbit of 2023 falls under the water element, and Thai people believe that "Naga" represents "water."

2. Family and friends are the most influential external factors that travelers consider when traveling. This is due to the correlation with respondents' answers about who they usually travel with. However, it is critical to develop travel programs that offer religious activities related to having faith in sacred things that friends and family can participate in to attract more tourists. For example, travel agents may collaborate with locals in the area to provide activities such as relative or friend cooperate to prepares local dishes to offer to the monks or people team up to create sacred bracelets for their loved ones.

3. The most influential internal factors that travelers consider when traveling are their needs and wants. According to the findings of this study, the majority of respondents want to make a wish, and the two most common things they wish for are money and work, as more than half of respondents are entrepreneurs or business owners and full-time workers. Hence, researcher recommend travel agents and travel destination management companies to include sacred places where travelers can make a wish for money and work. Wat Phra That Doi Kham is one such example. Since ancient times, Thai people have believed that those who go to ask for blessings will receive as much money as they desire. Another example is the City Pillar Shrine. Many people believe they will be blessed with effortless and successful work.

4. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and LINE are the most popular channels that travelers use to learn more about religious, sacred, holy, or Mutelu sites. Moreover, images or videos shared on social media of influential figures' journeys, Mutelu activities, and talismans. These encourage people to visit the same sacred sites. As a result, rather than focusing solely on their official website or word of mouth, travel agents or destination management companies should consider advertising through these channels.

5.3 Limitation & Future Research

The research does not specify each traveler's destination. Each destination may influence these motivation factors differently. Future research could concentrate on specific locations and the specifics of each factor. Moreover, because the sample groups and number of respondents, the responses collected may be biased and do not accurately

reflect the real motivators. Future research might use larger sample sizes to better reflect the real factors that Thai travelers consider when choosing a travel destination that is related to religious, sacred, holy, or Mutelu sites.



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