Raising Awareness of Considerable Factors on Developing Sustainable Religious Tourism in Chiang Mai, Thailand for Chinese Travelers

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Abstract

This study aims to raise awareness of the considerable factors on developing sustainable religious tourism in Chiang Mai for Chinese travelers. The study examines the mission and strategy of different religious institutions to determine how they sustain their practical beliefs and highlights the challenges faced by each institution for Chinese travelers to acquire the foreknowledge in supporting sustainable religious tourism in Chiang Mai. An interview was conducted with six key institution administrators. A purposive sampling method was conducted with the institutions. An open-ended question was asked about their organization's mission and strategy, challenges faced, and considerable factors for developing sustainable religious tourism. The interviews were recorded on a video to let the interviewee speak naturally. The spoken words were played back and written into a digital document. Documentation was also carried out to review the events. Based on the results, the discussion pointed out the following issues on raising awareness: 1. Institutions being part of an educational network in developing society, 2. Coordination amongst institutions for utilizing knowledge, skills and expertise to make a solid contribution to the cause, 3. Education as the bridge for understanding, learning and business trade.

Keyword: Chinese Travelers, Education, Religious Tourism, Strategy, Sustainability

Introduction

The people from mainland China are heavily fond of traveling to places or areas that showcase events for shopping, sightseeing, recreation, and leisure (Liu, Li and Yang, 2015). Chinese travelers tend to visit sites in large groups to share the experience and moments with each other as a family and develop their friendship status with people whom they are highly acquainted with (Zhao, Zhu and Hao, 2018). One way to bond with relatives and friends is by taking an incursion trip that features religious attractions. Religious activities

bring about curiosity and wonder for Chinese travelers as it enhances their spiritual wellbeing (Huang and Chu, 2019). Studies on religious tourism indicate that it has been around for ages and has been a part of local people's identity, cultural values, and social beliefs, thus allowing visitors to obtain a better understanding of how people live their lives in a changing environment and modestly adapt to their surroundings (Camilleri, 2018). However, there have been cases where religious tourist sites in northern Thailand have been put at risk of being unsustainable due to being continuously exposed to foreign travelers who expect that the authenticity of practical beliefs is configured to their itinerary schedule.

1.1 Threats to a Sustainable Religious Tourism

Places that have once been praised for their religious tradition have to compromise their values in order to attract more foreign tourists to gain more revenue share. Sacred grounds had to be demolished in order to provide the proper roads for transporting visitors, provide a comfortable parking space for tour buses, and keep the supply flow of goods available for hungry appetites and purchasing souvenirs (Sonchaem et al., 2017). Holy relics had to be relocated to areas that are meant to attract the attention of travelers so that they can be lured to visit other areas that give them a buying impulse of rare items (Asawachi, 2018). Local worshippers are often interrupted by the noise and crowd, making it impossible to carry out the function of making offerings to the divine spirit (Morris and Nguyen, 2018). At worst, these worshippers are aghast to smell cigarette smoke and see a display of uncourteous behavior on the temple ground they hold dearly (Khaosod.com, 2015). What makes matter worst is the mound of garbage that temple caretakers have to be responsible for without having the proper equipment to maintain the sanitation (Ming, 2018) for other visitors to be impressed upon; eventually, they also bring more garbage to dispose of as they don't want to hold it with them.

With the tourism authority in China looking to promote more traveling services linked to religion, Chiang Mai offers a splendid haven that has locals practicing in the diverse belief of Buddhism (95%), Islam (4.6%), Hindu and Sikh (1%), and Catholic/Christianity (.7%) while being part of the cultural mosaic that makes all feel welcomed to socialize and engage in trade. However, it's essential that religion is given the proper acknowledgment and space to let it serve the true mission purpose and not coerced to serve the commercialized visiting mass (Shakeela and Weaver, 2018) otherwise, the sustainability of the ritual services, divine customs, holy ceremonies, and consecrated ceremonies will become diluted as a cheap novel tour for visitors and not worth returning in future traveling.

Research Aim & Questions

This study aims to raise awareness of the considerable factors on developing sustainable religious tourism in Chiang Mai for Chinese travelers. In order to achieve the aim, the work examines the mission and strategy of different religious institutions to determine how they sustain their practical beliefs. Also, the research highlights the challenges faced by each institution for Chinese travelers to acquire foreknowledge in supporting sustainable religious tourism in Chiang Mai. To reach the aim, the study proposes the following questions:

1. What is the mission and strategy of each different religious institution in sustaining the practical beliefs?

2. What challenges does each institution face for Chinese travelers to have the foresight on supporting sustainable religious tourism in Chiang Mai?

3. What are the considerable factors on developing sustainable religious tourism for Chinese travelers to be aware of?

Literature Review

3.1 Chiang Mai and its charms

Chiangmai is located in the north of Thailand. It's been a popular place for travelers from all around the world due to its cultural hospitality and natural wonderland with many attractions. Chiang Mai is a national and international potential tourism site for visitors to make their spiritual merit (Choe and O' Regan, 2021) and experience other interesting cultural-religious activities. Thailand was announced by the Chinese government in 1988 to grant permission for Chinese people to visit. Since then, Thailand has been noticing an increasing number of Chinese tourists interested in visiting sites and activities related to religion (Sangkakorn, 2013).

According to a report by the Chiang Mai Province Office (2021), there are locals who practice the following faith:

	Religions in Chiang Mai	Number of Faith Practitioners	Percent
1	Buddhism	1,519,879	91.80
2	Christianity (Protestant/Catholic)	92,716	5.60
3	Other religions	23,345	1.41
4	Islam	19,371	1.17
5	Hinduism/Sikhism/Brahmanism	331	0.02
		1,655,642	100.00

Figure 1: Religion and Faith Practitioners in Chiang Mai

Source: The Chiang Mai Provincial Cultural Office (2021) from the National Statistical Office of Thailand. (2012). The 2010 Population and Housing Census. Population Statistics Group, Social Statistics Bureau, National Statistical Office. Bangkok

From the figure above, there have been different religions practiced in Chiang Mai. The latest figures from the Chiang Mai Provincial Cultural Office indicate that more practitioners of the Buddhist faith overwhelm religions such as Christianity, other types of beliefs, Islam, and Hinduism/Sikhism/Brahmanism. Although Buddhism has a large number of followers,

Chiang Mai is still considered a distinctive province rich in religious and cultural diversity. Chiang Mai has become one of the popular tourist sites for visitors to be enriched in the pluralistic elements of culture, religion, and traditions from various groups. The number of religious people is displayed in the pie graph as follows.
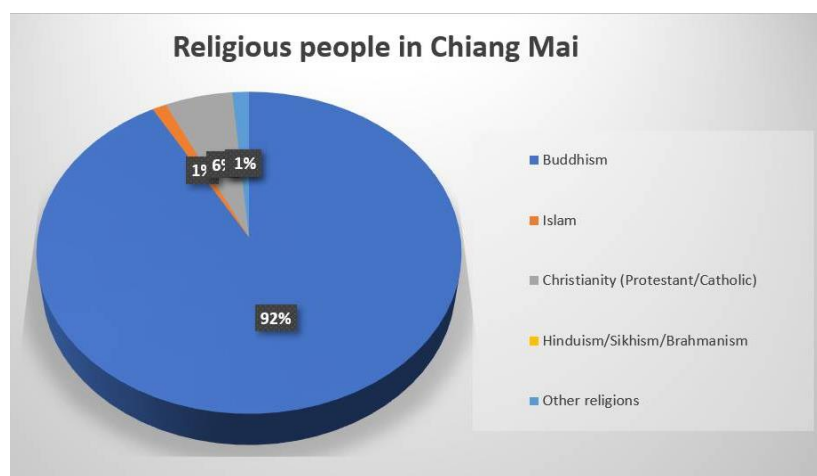

Figure 2: Number of Religious People in Chiang Mai
Source: The Chiang Mai Provincial Cultural Office (2020)

Religion in Chiang Mai has a fascinating cultural history that can be seen through many sacred sites and temples scattered throughout the area. Excluding the law stating that the King must be Buddhist, there is no official Thailand religion, which means that all Thai nationals enjoy religious freedom. However, Buddhism is the most common faith with approximately 91.80 % of the population. In comparison, the Muslim population in

Chiang Mai is scattered throughout the province. Two of Christianity's significant denominations had been recognized in Chiang Mai, including The Church of Christ in Thailand and The Roman Catholic Church.

Sangkakorn (2008) found that the most favorite to least favorite place or activity of Chinese visiting Chiang Mai were temples and cultural sites
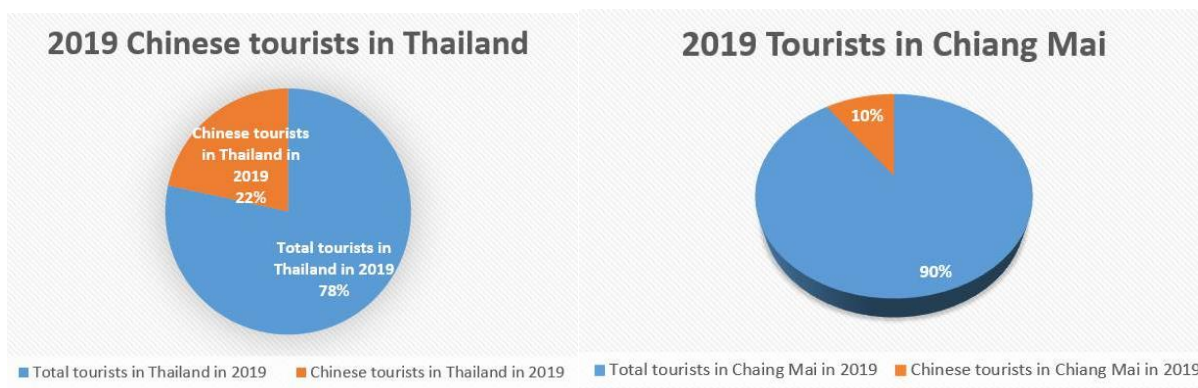
Figure 3: Number of Chinese Tourists in Thailand and Chiang Mai in 2019

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2021)

Figure three shows the number of Chinese tourists entering Thailand and the percentage visiting Chiang Mai in 2019. In 2019, Chiang Mai had earned more than 102,300 million Baht from tourism alone (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2021). It would be better if other cultural tourism aspects of Chiang Mai could motivate more tourists from China to visit or re-visit the city.

3. 2 Sustainability in Religious Tourism: Mission and Strategy of Institutions

Sustainability is an idea to maintain the flow of resources to meet the current needs with the conceptual intention of not compromising the needs of future generations. As a strategy for organizations and leaders, sustainability is about balancing the operation of being conscience of generating products with higher consumer value, effectively managing risks, improving the work culture, developing the wellbeing of all stakeholders involved, and ensuring that the business reputation is approved in the public's mind (Smith, 2008). Religious tourism is mainly derived from the visitors themselves who are on a divine mission to be in closer touch with their beliefs by performing on the worship, making offerings, doing ritual traditions, and engaging in a dialogue with fellow believers for spiritual researching (Rasul, F., Fatima, U. and Sohail, 2016). Sustainable religious tourism is the strategic practice for keeping the ideas and training authentic while balancing the related events to be in harmony with the surrounding environment.

Religion is part of a nation's culture that shapes the way individuals in a group perceive a particular issue dealing with politics, society, economics, and other aspects of human lives when traveling to another nation or being a host to foreign travelers, which can either change their viewpoints or others who they come in contact with (Nyaupane, Timothy and Paudel, 2015). Those who travel to visit important religious sites are mainly motivated to explore the culture of the

people, how beliefs are practiced, and how sacred objects are worshipped so that they can get a better feel to meet their own spiritual fulfillment (Gokalp et al., 2016). A study done by Luz (2020) mentions the importance of those who make the pilgrimage to visit certain sites that are based solely on a spiritual quest. In contrast, the believers want to be at ease with their struggle by practicing the faith at a location that helps them return to one that is original and pure. Although a number of pilgrimage travelers bring in a lot of revenue for shrine maintenance, local businesses and help to boost the nation's economy, there are still some negative impacts from too many visitors who have carelessly spoiled the essence and prestige of sacred areas by contributing to noise pollution, traffic jams, excess garbage waste, and environmental degradation which have put onerous stress on the local people who have to compromise their wellness/wellbeing for the sake of others trying to earn an income from the event (Rashid, 2018). A study done by Collins et al. (2015) pointed to the issue of the conflict of interests amongst stakeholders and suggested that whatever may the perception or framing that influence the behavior of individuals and groups there needs to be a collective approach for developing sustainable grounds for disagreements to be solved, issues to be addressed with sincerity, and that all interests are fully understood with compliance to increase the benefits.

Government institutions, religious organizations, and the local community are key players in developing a sustainable framework that would promote religious tourism as a mutual benefactor in the lives and livelihood of all. According to Mandal et al. (2017), when people know that their roles and functions are integrated as part of a strategic value-chain, they can provide valuable insights and essential information for designing a framework that would give tourists a meaningful experience. For such a sustainable framework to take shape, Lin et al. (2017) provide the idea of assessing cultural themes and relevant concepts to pinpoint out the values that are highly critical for developing the quality service standards in reinforcing a positive impression amongst travelers to make a return visit in the future.

3.3 Sustainability in Religious Tourism: Challenges of Institutions

Those who make the pilgrimage from abroad are coming from a diverse cultural background shaped by their government's policy, social environment, social media thoughts which are a part of their daily lives enhancing their traveling experience (Kartal, Tepeci and Atli, 2015) and lets them be fully aware of what they determine as positive or negative towards their happiness and self-satisfaction (Kim and Kim, 2019). Collins-Kriener and Walls (2015) stated that these individuals making the pilgrimage don't really consider themselves as being tourists because they see themselves as making the journey for

spiritual reasons unlike normal travelers who enter the nation for curiosity or pleasure, thus raising mindfulness for institutions to accommodate a smooth entry process into the nation and moderate security, as well as for commercial sectors to provide what is needed and not push certain items, such as food, beverages, or services, that may be deemed as inappropriate to their beliefs. While there are a large number of literature works cautioning about overcrowding of people, which is detrimental in the view of a sustainable religion (Collins-Kreiner, 2020). The truth is that religious sites also need a lot of spiritual travelers to constantly make visits and spend their income which will be used for developing the infrastructure around essential areas that are holy and sacred. Atlas et al. (2015) pointed out that religious travelers have many options to choose from to go on their spiritual quest, which serves as a reminder that if devout places no longer carry that magnificent luster. Then they will lose out on being strongly noticed as a destination image to other holy sites that outperform them in meeting these unique visitors' needs. In a study that looks into religion and entrepreneurship by Farmaki et al. (2020), sustaining religious tourism will have to require parallel cooperation between the entrepreneurs and religious organizations; the authors state that religion may either directly or indirectly encourage, support and strengthen entrepreneurship or it may inhibit entrepreneurship. Although it's good

for both sides to share their resources, the test is on the religious leadership's resolve to not compromise its ethical principles and moral values for showcasing its sacred artifacts to make quick cash.

In the practice of toleration, religious institutions must take careful notice between travelers who are ideally there for spiritual fulfillment and ones who are only on recreational leisure. The latter type of visitors can be described as being led by a curiosity that is not fully aware of what is right nor wrong, lacking the ability to comprehend customary procedures that are significant to the beliefs, and unintentionally causing disruption to devotees who are in the middle of carrying out their practice for reaching enlightenment (Shinde, 2015). While some faith believers understand that religion has to cope with modern times, they apply an onerous reminder in private settings to ensure that the leadership endorses the teachings and practical beliefs to be rigorously genuine with the origin and ban all thoughts from giving in to the temptations of being used as a cash making tool for other commercial tourism sidelines to inject more, but unnecessary, income (Küpeli, Koc and Hassan, 2018).

3.4 Sustainability in Religious Tourism: Factors and Awareness

Implementing the idea of sustainable religious tourism is highly dynamic, whereas the internal and external environmental factors interchange with one another to provide a complex abstract that

needs to be learned and analyzed for grasping the issue. Çakmak and Dilek (2018) discovered that just because something is built to accommodate religious travelers more effectively, it does not exactly translate into a mass demand in the thousands making reservations and arrangements to come to the place. Organizations or institutions promoting religious tourism need to understand that this is a niche market where travelers have already decided what they need to have when making their excursion abroad from their home country. It is important to understand what constitutes their behavior with regards to such principles that are deemed as being acceptable, such as from consuming food and beverages to engage in banking and finance, tourism planning, determining the appropriate cosmetics for purchasing, communicating to people who are functioning on their jobs, and accessing proper travel and transport services for their members as well as themselves (El-Gohary, 2016). A study done by Aulet and Vidal (2018) illustrated the importance of religious sites needing to have some space for rituals to occur out of respect, otherwise it will lose many faithful followers who abhor the sight of religious premises being operated as an entertainment theatre which rapidly destroys the credibility as an actual place for prayers and worship. Based on the assessment, Fourie et al. (2015) indicated that religion carries a strong personal interest and wonder in visitors wanting to know more about how local

people practice faith in their everyday lives, and those tour operators should always have information available about certain religious places or events. Religious sites welcoming tourists can serve in meeting the needs of travelers who are need of some material comfort and spiritual confidence to help them recharge their soul as they wait to go back to work in their home country, according to the research of Jaelani, Setyawan and Hasyim (2016) who were evaluating groups from a need's perspective. Although some individuals, especially the younger ones, may lean more towards materialistic interest than being fully devoted to a particular faith, they have a keen sense of what is happening around the world and have identified how religion has become part of the conflict. Wani et al. (2015) encourage the leaders of faith in attempting to demonstrate how religion can be applied as a method for achieving peace, consensus, peaceful co-existence, and cooperation among the commonalities to build that bridge of trust and consensus for further action; and the first tool that religious communities can use is civilizational dialogue to build trust and consensus among themselves. Religious tourism is part of the local community, and the local community thrives on a healthy balance of the economy, society, and environment that co-exist and collaborates with the ideas in place, thus creating a sustainable climate for people to perform their ceremonious beliefs with peace and
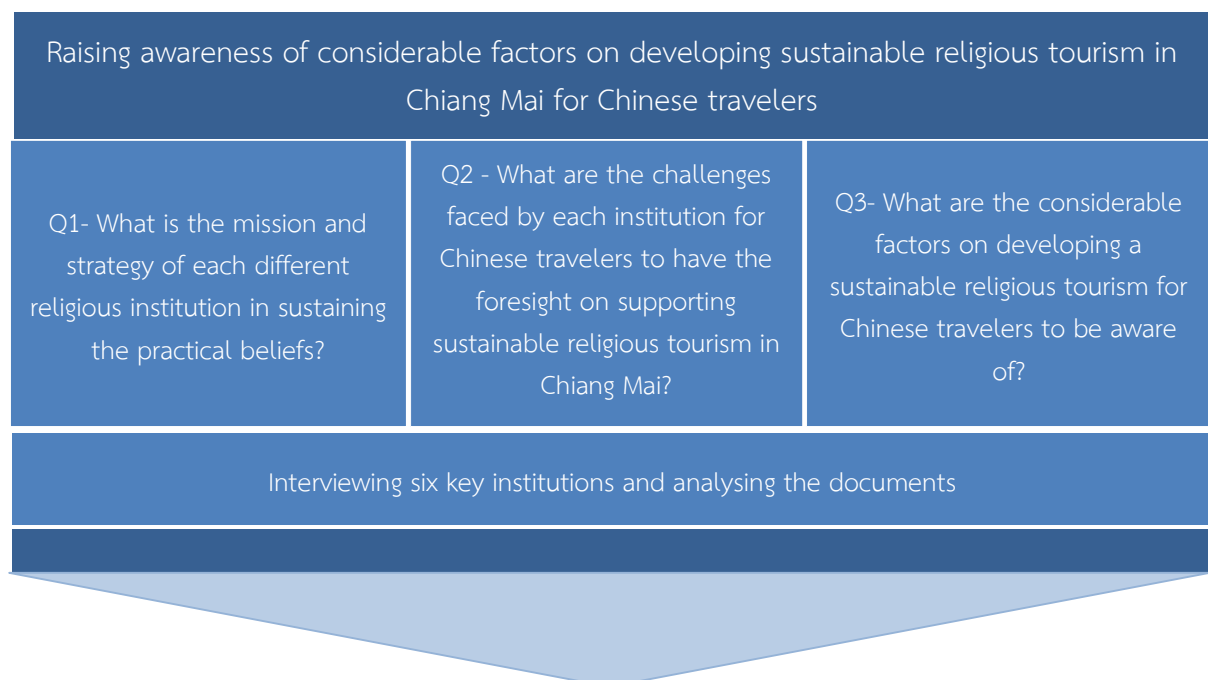
goodwill toward others (Zouni and Digkas, 2019). Nevertheless, there are some tourists who may feel that the guards of faith have been mostly orientated around the status quo of practice and have not kept up to date on the current needs of belief in modern times, thus triggering a sense for hierarchical reform to question itself on how it is going to adapt in the long run to please the long-time followers who are not ready for change and for the ones who are pushing for the difference (Terzidou, Scarles and Saunders, 2017). As these old guards encounter more of the new religious tour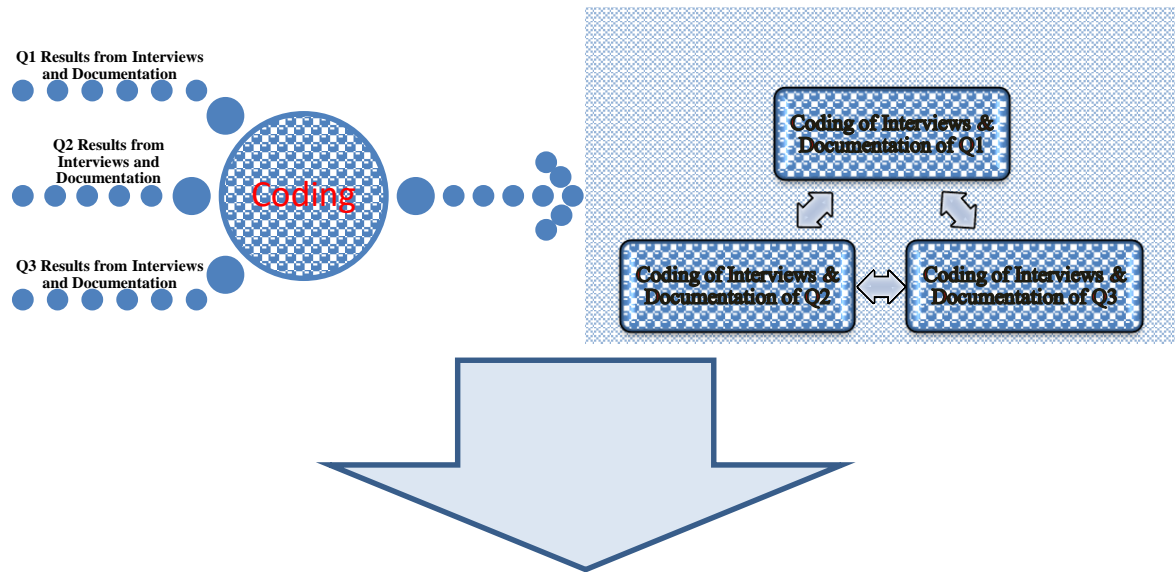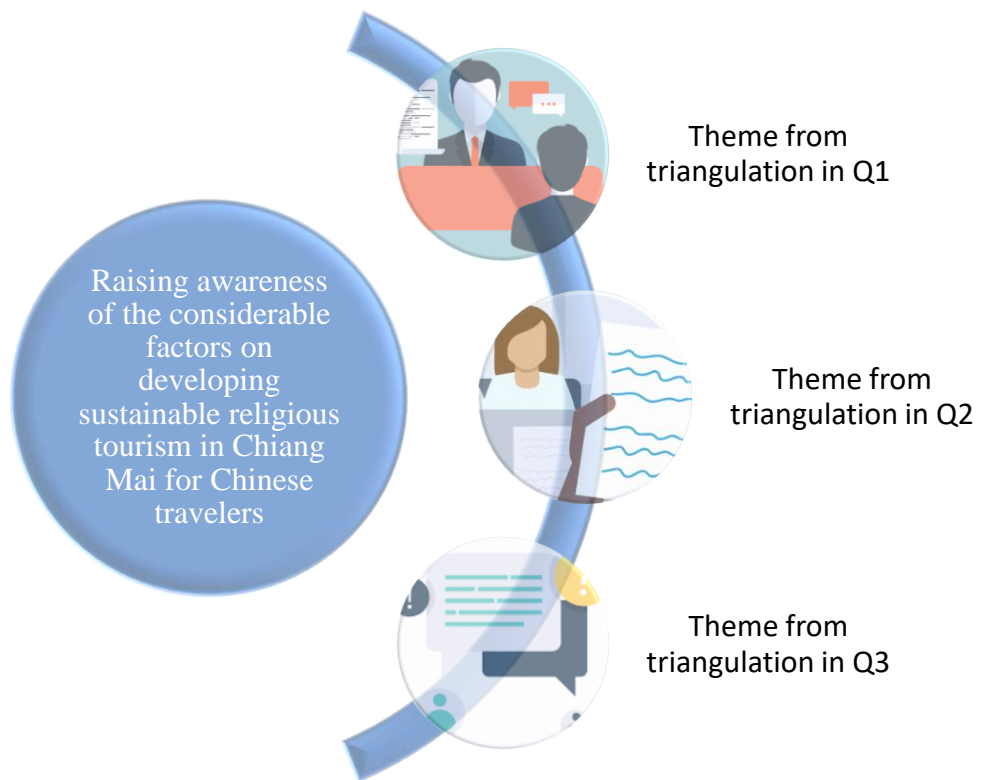ist in the future, an initiative needs to be taken for learning about what those individuals are going through with their emotional feelings, educational interaction, and social experiences for developing a better sense of respect and understanding each other culture (Cortese, D'Ambrosio and Petracca, 2019).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for 'raising awareness of considerable factors on developing sustainable religious tourism in Chiang Mai for Chinese travelers' is given below.

Stage 1

Raising awareness of considerable factors on developing sustainable religious tourism in Chiang Mai for Chinese travelers

| Q1- What is the mission and strategy of each different religious institution in sustaining the practical beliefs? | Q2 - What are the challenges faced by each institution for Chinese travelers to have the foresight on supporting sustainable religious tourism in Chiang Mai? | Q3- What are the considerable factors on developing a sustainable religious tourism for Chinese travelers to be aware of? |

Interviewing six key institutions and analysing the documents

Stage 2

Q1 Results from Interviews
and Documentation

Q2 Results from
Interviews and
Documentation

Coding

Q3 Results from Interviews
and Documentation

Coding of Interviews &
Documentation of Q1

Coding of Interviews &
Documentation of Q2

Coding of Interviews &
Documentation of Q3

Stage 3

Raising awareness
of the considerable
factors on
developing
sustainable religious
tourism in Chiang
Mai for Chinese
travelers

Theme from
triangulation in Q1

Theme from
triangulation in Q2

Theme from
triangulation in Q3

(Jentoft and Olsen, 2017)

Figure 4 was designed in the form of triangulation to get a better validity for the research aim to provide greater insight and understanding with the findings (Jentoft and Olsen, 2017). The theoretical framework begins at stage 1 with the arrangement of the research aim on "raising an awareness on the considerable factors on developing sustainable religious tourism in Chiang Mai for Chinese travelers". Three research questions were developed to reach the aim by inquiring about the following:

1. The mission and strategy of each different religious institutions in sustaining the practical beliefs.

2. The challenges faced by each institution for Chinese travelers to have the foresight on supporting religious tourism in Chiang Mai.

3. The considerable factors on developing a sustainable religious tourism for Chinese travelers to be aware of.

To answer the three questions, the method of interviewing and documentation were implemented separately to gather the data.

Stage 2 is the process of allocating the data from the interview and documentation. The data are to be coded to highlight the keywords that appear most frequently from interviewing and documentation. Upon codification, the information is set for triangulation of the two methods to determine where the keywords connect, which will be provided as themes based on the study.

Stage 3 arranges the themes from stage 2 to be utilized for providing information on the aim of "raising awareness of the considerable factors on developing sustainable religious tourism in Chiang Mai for Chinese travelers". The themes will provide insights on areas that need to be developed or initiated to uphold sustainability in religious tourism

Research Methodology & Results

5.1 Data Collection Method

An interview was conducted with six key institution administrators. A purposive sampling method was conducted with McGilvary College of Divinity, The Chiang Mai Provincial Cultural Office's Administrator, The Catholic Mission Chiang Mai Diocese, the Provincial Islamic Council in Chiang Mai, the Chiang Mai Islamic Learning Institute, and the National Buddhist Office of Thailand.

McGilvary College of Divinity is an institute in charge of Protestantism in Chiang Mai under the division of administrative areas of churches in Thailand, while Chiang Mai Provincial Cultural Office is an agency that operates at the provincial level in charge by the Ministry of Culture. The office is responsible for serving the people, promoting and supporting people, groups, organizations, and local organizations to participate in religious missions, arts, and cultures. Also, it is responsible for the coordination and performing of duties as a governmental agent of the Ministry of Culture in the

region. The Catholic Mission Center Chiang Mai Diocese is a Roman Catholic Diocese with a total population of 5,709,443. As of 2014, there are 68,975 Catholics with 15,080 Catechumens. The Office of Provincial Islamic Council in Chiang Mai is in charge of the Muslim with the collaboration of the Department of Local Administration.

An open-ended question was asked about their organization's mission and strategy, challenges faced, and considerable factors for developing sustainable religious tourism. The interviews were recorded on a video to let the interviewee speak naturally. The spoken words were played back and written into a digital document. Documentation was also carried out to review the events that they had done from the past and to understand the tasks performed in meeting their mission and strategy objectives, challenges encountered and how they were resolved, and issues addressed for developing sustainable religious tourism. The study location was concentrated in the Chiang Mai provincial area. Interviewing appointments were set in advance out of respect for the senior figures to contemplate the questions sent beforehand so that each minister could provide an in-depth response to the inquiries for the interview process. Unfortunately, the Sikh and Hindu committee were not available for doing the interview.

The replies from the interviews and highlights from documentation were sorted separately for coding which were then transcribed into a tabular format. The coded table was set up for triangulation from the interviews and documentation to see where the keywords and messages from each method connected and provided meaning from the scheme (Chu and Ke, 2017). Each of the triangulated methods featured its own code and was converted into themes. The next part of this section provides the information for the three research questions. This is followed by an insightful discussion with regards to "raising awareness of the considerable factors on developing sustainable religious tourism in Chiang Mai for Chinese travelers". *The results are in the appendix section.

5.2 Mission and Strategy of Each Different Religious Institutions in Sustaining the Practical Beliefs

Religious institutions such as the McGilvary College of Divinity are committed to being the source of practice, learning, research, and knowledge for their followers of the faith. As an organization, the emphasis is on promoting the youth to be the banner for carrying out the teaching and being financially sustainable to provide the budget that supports their events of spreading the faith. Whereas the Catholic Mission is more orientated in utilizing the relationship with the divine spirit and humanity for developing by targeting those who have a lesser fortune than others. The Catholic Mission is ongoing with their idea

through dissemination and pastoral care training and teaching for the sake of increasing the number of followers and practitioners to keep the religion progressing. The Provincial Islamic Council stresses the spiritual identity of holding one's nationality in self-esteem and divine beliefs as being centered on how one carries out his life in general. The Chiang Mai Islamic Learning Institute is set forth to be the bridge for helping people understand Islam in a better light and hoping that the teachings will be integrated with other beliefs to create balance and harmony. The Chiang Mai Provincial Cultural Office assumes the role of developing and providing services for learning and research on religion, arts, and culture that supports morality and ethics, fostering the sense of Thai values and national identity. This institution integrates the ideas from other religions, arts, and cultures to become methods that inspire citizens on proud of being Thai and living in a peaceful and sustainable society. The National Buddhist Office of Thailand oversees the standard and procedures for any affairs that deal with the maintenance and status of temples in the provincial areas. The bureau promotes, supports, and coordinates in disseminating Buddhism and Buddhism-religious education by supervising and controlling the quality of education in schools and providing learners with moral knowledge and the development of Buddhists-religion. All of these six institutions commend on being

able to cooperate and coordinate with the works of others whenever an auspicious date arrives for celebration for that particular religion. The Chiang Mai Provincial Cultural Office takes on the leading role of getting each religious institution involved to showcase goodwill and amity for sustaining a society that welcomes all to practice their faith. Bacsi (2017) discussed how religious diversity could contribute to the cultural identity of a nation as travelers can get a better experience to visibly explore and learn how people can congregate in commerce, hold holy ceremonies, and educate one another in peaceful ways. The uniqueness of letting different religious institutions handle their own mission affairs while at the same time valuing the sense of cooperation, collaboration, and coordinating with their fellow peer's divine matters make it worthwhile for people to see the different rays of light but always return to their faith without any compromising. Such an experience that showcases a variety of different religious tourism helps make travelers use their leisure time with quality, which serves the purpose of the types of visitors that the religious organization wants (Brendan, 2015).

5.3 Challenges Faced by Each Institution for Chinese Travelers to Have the Foresight on Supporting Sustainable Religious Tourism in Chiang Mai

Each religious institution that is not involved with Buddhism faces challenges of their own to keep themselves visible and

active in credibility and trust as they perform in the eye of the public followers. For the McGilvary College of Divinity, followers can easily forget about the teachings and practice as they set out on the journey to find jobs in big urban areas and not be able to support the local network for getting new members to join the faith. Also, members with diverse ethnic and national backgrounds are having difficulty maintaining their quality of life due to not having citizenship which limits them from gaining a proper educational degree and finding working opportunities. Furthermore, the church is not equipped in evangelism to persuade newcomers to become part of the faith. The Catholic Mission shares the same issue with McGivalry College with regards to their members' quality of life situation; not having citizenship makes it challenging to provide for themselves and their families. In addition, the number of followers of the Catholic religion, especially with the younger generation, has been drastically reducing. The Provincial Islamic Council knows that no matter how much merit is made or helping in charity, it cannot win over the minds of the younger generation who are more interested in the trends going on in social media. The concern is that the morals are missing from the previous teachings of Islam. Therefore, there is pressure on the parents to indoctrinate the fundamental Islamic principles in their family not as a force from the institution but to be aware that Allah will not accept

them if they do not make that commitment. Another issue of concern is that there are some members who are involved with drug trafficking which seriously puts the institution at risk of being associated with the illegal activity. The Chiang Mai Islamic Learning Institute noticed that the unity amongst Muslim followers still needs to be developed as there are those who still tend to do things on their own. The Institute has been making an effort to have an open dialogue in the community to help counter the prejudice and negative outlook against the religion and devotees in order to help people be dispelled of the myth or misunderstanding that creates fear, ignorance, and hate in their minds. However, in order to support the positive causes, they need ongoing support in funding to keep this dialogue viable. The Chiang Mai Provincial Culture Center has no problems in providing coordination and support for any religious institution that wants to have an activity that develops peace and harmony in the community. However, they cannot get too much involved or they will be labeled as being biased and favoring one religion over the other. As for the National Buddhist Office of Thailand, the establishment is concerned with the lack of agency-level to carry out their tasks on supporting the decentralization of the Buddha's business center and not being able to effectively provide the proper support for the Sangha's idea.

Religion as any other entity in a

social community has its aims and goal to accomplish. As being part of diversity within the culture, religion can showcase how people who are dedicated to a mission can find ways of sustaining the lives of people are in unfortunate circumstances, solve conflicts and disputes, and demonstrate how powers can be combined to collaborate with others who have a different belief (Bacsi, 2017). The challenges that religious institutions face can also be seen as an analogic metaphor for tourists to see how these lessons, success or failure, can be applied with their organizations back home. The performance by religious figures narrates a nation's culture blending in everyday politics, society, economy, and technology that shapes a civilization (Tomljenović and Dukić, 2017).

5.4 Considerable Factors on Developing a Sustainable Religious Tourism for Chinese Travelers to be Aware of

The religious institutions have been active in working closely with each other, but due to time and resources, and other commitments, there has not been any real working collaboration. The works through education and health have given sustainable space and positive recognition by the government and social community. By far, education seems to be the essential factor that enables the institutions to be simultaneously in closer contact with their groups, such as families, religious administrators, and schools, and develop

plans for creating more practitioners and leaders to spread the message of faith. Families are considered the critical nucleus for a religion to be held in the highest esteem. The message in the teachings promotes ways for the parents and children to stay strong as a family while abiding by the guidelines for good living under the divine belief. The ministers provide the infrastructural support to help followers get access to education and work opportunities so that the wellbeing of the family is looked after with graceful intentions. The institutions provide partnerships for training and development with other government institutions that require the expertise for a particular staff seminar. They also welcome foreign visitors who want to learn and make a trade with their key contacts. But with any events that are to be done on an international level, it is best to make contact with the Chiang Mai Provincial Cultural Office first to explain the details and let the office take on the leading role with other religious institutions to know what their role will be in the event.

Sustainable religious tourism should be considered with the projects and ideas that institutions do to maintain their mission. The root of these concepts is on nurturing lives to be fulfilled with the consideration of utilitarian and intrinsic values (Lean, 2009), which should give foreign visitors a good sense of how to be appropriately engaged with the activities. Those who are new to traveling in this aspect will come with their own frame of

mind on what's best for the situation. With social media and moderate culture being influenced by global society, travelers will have to consider the fact that they can create a change that can either support the traditional rituals and values or degrade the beauty into a cheap commercial cash line for tourist entertainment. Thus the power is in their presence when encountering locals performing their beliefs (Suntikul, 2018).

Discussion About "Raising Awareness of Considerable Factors on Developing Sustainable Religious Tourism in Chiang Mai for Chinese Travelers"

For travelers coming from mainland China to be engaged with religious tourism in Chiang Mai, Thailand, it is recommended that the outlook be more lenient on being part of a sustainable form to support the religious institutions in helping them to achieve their mission aims and objectives. Religious tourism is about connecting with other fellow human beings; thus, individuals' minds, souls, and spirits contribute to sustainability by reinforcing a path that reaches out to the people in the community for support (Varga et al., 2018).

6.1 Institutions Being Part of an Educational Network in Developing Society

The practical ideas of religious institutions seem to be more applicable in the Chiang Mai social community when it is part of an educational network. This is not

precisely by default but the religious values and principles have much more meaning as they are integrated with how people are coping with life and their social environment. As the institutions are maintaining their sustainability through the education channel, Chinese visitors who can offer high support of human resources, technological know-how, develop educational framework policies, and apply appropriate methods for promoting the messages and values of the religious teachings and ideas would gain a lot more in a travel experience. Travelers can make some time in helping to spread the faith into the social community.

Learning is one of the key ideas for establishing the institution as a resource center for knowledge and for developing one's path towards serving the principles, being educated, instilling a sense of national pride in being Thai, and taking on the role as a minister to help spread the beliefs to followers and novice practitioners. These religious institutions indeed emphasized learning as an ideal method for establishing the resource center of the religious institution to hold credibility in being the resource for knowledge and wisdom. Moreover, with education being highly valued in the culture the learning is applied as a path for helping people practice their faith with deep devotion, obtain a better understanding of the principles, sustain the beliefs with new leaders to carry out the mission and build good relations with

others who have different beliefs. Therefore, an exchange of ideal methods for learning effectively from one's working background experience in China would be a wonderful way to not only sustain the mission purpose but also build a good cultural relationship with one another. Engaging in these types of activities would help travelers to see how religious tourism is part of life's rhythm and that the traveling itself is the very basic nature of how people live in their own worldly affairs (Yunus Mohd Noor and Ainshah Muzamli Shah, 2017). Cooperation with other institutions is highly valued. There is a tremendous will to work or cooperate on religious events, which is deemed to collaborate on peace and goodwill towards each other. Tourists from China will eventually have some difficulties communicating with their Thai colleagues when participating in the cooperation event as they meet with other diverse followers of the faith. While the translation gadget or tour guide translator may be available to get the communications across the travelers are given a unique opportunity in creating and co-creating value to assist the institutions of fulfilling their spiritual prosperity of followers, establishing their trust and well-being as the host community, and being able to meet the satisfaction of tourists' requirements while developing the prestige and aura of the locals' historical, cultural, and natural environment (Paniccia, Leoni and Baiocco, 2017).

6.2 Coordination Amongst Institutions for Utilizing Knowledge, Skills and Expertise to Make a Strong Contribution to the Cause

Some of the religious institutions are challenged by many factors that are making their number of supporting followers dwindle. For Chinese spiritual travelers, it is good to be mindful of the dynamic environment that is causing the challenges of keeping the foundation sustainable. Seeing the reality of struggle but being able to draw the spiritual concepts to overcome obstacles while comforting the souls of others to make progress is an exclusive experience for travelers to understand what religion truly means in life (Varnavas, Rodosthenous, and Vogazianos, 2018).

One of the constant challenges is getting strong cooperation from a key government agency to assist in granting legal status to the younger generation to perform their faith freely and be given more educational opportunities to enhance their quality of life. The youth still need proper mentoring in order to be raised in good mental health with a strong spirit. The other challenge is a reality check on being aware that religion can sometimes be replaced with other moderate things that draw more interest in life like social media or the latest technological gadget; thus religion has to keep up with the young generation's influences in life. What is a genuine concern with the institutions is that the number of followers has been declining lately as there

are more preoccupied with making a living that is far away from their hometown as well as changes in the social environment. A sustainable institution requires a good, strong number of followers who keep the practical beliefs flourishing with others as their lives go through disruption and changes. The quality in numbers provides a practical impact with each other in having common respect towards each other to find a proper solution while giving others a positive impression that the situation can be resolved (Emmanuel, 2014). In addition, maintaining a good relationship with other institutions requires a solid coordinated effort amongst individuals and groups to sustain the idea and acquire sufficient resources to achieve the aims and objectives of the institution. Human resources that are combined to help one other to get closer to their aims and objectives without expecting anything in return can be a perfect example of kindness and compassion that enlightens the idea of how tourism can bring people together (Weaver and Jin, 2016). Chinese visitors taking part in this endeavor can make a positive contribution by brainstorming with the local religious leaders on assisting in finding effective methods for the younger individuals to be exposed to more opportunities in learning and work, and integrating social media that will balance their leisure along with their practice of faith. Most importantly, Chinese visitors will need some vital patience and reason with their Thai religious colleagues

to see some positive results.

6.3 Education as the Bridge for Understanding, Learning and Business Trade

Education is a trade that supports other religious institutions' mission objectives in Chiang Mai. Education acts as the social mainstream that brings people together from different ways of thinking and working together in balanced harmony. Chinese visitors who want to be a helping hand that promotes sustainability should foresee how their resources fit with the needs of others. Topics of discussion that provide lessons for moral and ethical behavior development are integrated as part of a curriculum or course outline to help learners understand how faith can be applied in daily life. Education is applied as a method for getting highly involved in the community as well as making an essential contribution towards social development with the locals. With education as a valued trade in sustaining religious tourism, it strengthens the local community's economic health and rearing positive leaders to become a part of the socio-cultural, political, and environmental conditions to help the less fortunate have hope (Egresi, Bayram and Kara, 2012). It's been acknowledged that certain ethnic tourist groups from mainland China have been recently taking part in activities and events that have been hosted in Chiang Mai. While these ethnic groups already have a purpose for visiting their religious hosts, other groups from China are more

than welcome to discuss business and trade that supports the ideal principles of Halal. Promoting the business trade with Halal would be considered as helping to spread the education and learning with regards to the positive messages of the religious customs to others who are curious about the Islamic faith while also solidifying the practical belief of followers in China to feel a sense of purity in their daily life. However, when engaging in trade, there's always a tendency to exchange gifts as a sign of graciousness and goodwill towards others. The symbolic actions of giving gifts communicate itself to be the beginning or confirming a courteous pact of a business relationship. Sometimes the value in price or generosity of the gift would be a measure to determine how strong the relationship will be or what kind of reciprocation should be taken to maintain a strong bond of making business trade in the long term (Adler and Offutt, 2018).

Conclusion

This study attempted to raise awareness of the considerable factors for Chinese travelers entering Chiang Mai under a sustainable religious tourism program. Religious tourism in this aspect would be for the travelers to make a soulful contribution to help the cause of each institution's mission aims and objectives. Therefore, the considerable factors for raising awareness in this study points to the following issues:

1. Institutions being part of an educational network in developing society.

2. Coordination amongst institutions for utilizing knowledge, skills, and expertise to make a strong contribution to the cause.

3. Education as the bridge for understanding, learning, and business trade.

These three factors are not only about being mindful but to also serve as a guideline for action for Chinese travelers.

However, the idea that one will be coming for leisurely shopping and fun-filled recreational activities for this type of travel will not draw any interest from most prospective tourists. Those who decide to go on this type of trip would be travelers who have already instilled an initiative attitude that see themselves assisting to their best of their abilities with each religious institution's idea of being part of an ongoing educational network. Also, these travelers would have to know their own capabilities and capacity in providing assistance with the coordination of other people's knowledge, skills, and expertise to accomplish the cause's goal. Furthermore, the idea of education being valued as a partner for developing society has to be planned with results leading to the institution being able to sustain itself for the long term. When all is said and done, those genuinely interested in foregoing sustainable religious tourism should find a traveling agent to help them make the critical contacts for the trip with a particular interest to occur.

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