

Exploring Identity and Experience in Buddhist Pilgrimage Tourism: An
Integrated Perspective on Nostalgic Travel
การสำรวจอัตลักษณ์และประสบการณ์ในการท่องเที่ยวแสวงบุญเชิงพุทธ: มุมมองบูรณาการ
ของการท่องเที่ยวเชิงโหยหาอดีต

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Abstract

This study explores nostalgic faith-based tourism through an experiential and identity-based perspective, extending beyond the traditional Theory of Planned Behavior framework. Rather than focusing solely on behavioral intention, this research examines how perceived authenticity and emotional attachment shape tourists' engagement with Buddhist pilgrimage destinations. A quantitative approach was employed using data collected from 400 Thai tourists who had visited Lumbini. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was applied to test the relationships among experiential, psychological, and behavioral constructs. The findings reveal that perceived authenticity significantly enhances emotional attachment, which in turn influences both travel intention and actual tourism behavior. While traditional predictors such as attitude and perceived behavioral control remain important, emotional and identity-related factors demonstrate stronger explanatory power in nostalgic tourism contexts. The study suggests that effective tourism management should prioritize meaningful experiences, symbolic value, and emotional resonance rather than relying primarily on informational or media-based communication strategies. These insights contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of faith-based tourism by integrating experiential and identity dimensions into behavioral models.

Keywords: Theory of Planned Behavior; Media Exposure Behavior; Buddhist Tourism;
Lumbini; Nostalgic Tourism

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มุ่งอธิบายพฤติกรรมการท่องเที่ยวแสวงบุญเชิงพุทธ ณ ลุมพินี ในบริบทของการท่องเที่ยวเชิงโยหยาอดีต โดยบูรณาการแนวคิดทฤษฎีพฤติกรรมตามแผนร่วมกับมิติด้านอัตลักษณ์และการรับรู้สื่อ เพื่อทำความเข้าใจกลไกการตัดสินใจของนักท่องเที่ยวในเชิงลึก การศึกษาให้ความสำคัญกับบทบาทของทัศนคติ บรรทัดฐานทางสังคม การรับรู้ความสามารถในการควบคุมพฤติกรรม รวมถึงความสอดคล้องกับตนเอง และการเปิดรับสื่อ การวิจัยใช้ระเบียบวิธีเชิงปริมาณ โดยเก็บข้อมูลจากนักท่องเที่ยวชาวไทยจำนวน 400 คน ด้วยวิธีการสุ่มแบบตามสะดวก และวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลด้วยโมเดลสมการโครงสร้าง (SEM) เครื่องมือวิจัยมีความเชื่อมั่นอยู่ในเกณฑ์ยอมรับได้ผลการวิจัยชี้ให้เห็นว่า การรับรู้ความสามารถในการควบคุมพฤติกรรม ทัศนคติ และบรรทัดฐานเชิงอัตวิสัย ล้วนเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญที่ส่งผลต่อความตั้งใจในการเดินทางอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ โดยแบบจำลองสามารถอธิบายความแปรปรวนของความตั้งใจได้ในระดับค่อนข้างสูง นอกจากนี้ ความสอดคล้องระหว่างอัตลักษณ์ของนักท่องเที่ยวกับลักษณะของแหล่งท่องเที่ยวมีบทบาทในการเสริมสร้างทัศนคติเชิงบวกต่อการท่องเที่ยวเชิงศาสนา อย่างไรก็ตาม การเปิดรับสื่อไม่ปรากฏบทบาทในการเป็นตัวแปรปรับระหว่างความตั้งใจและพฤติกรรมจริง ข้อค้นพบดังกล่าวสะท้อนให้เห็นว่าการตัดสินใจท่องเที่ยวเชิงศรัทธามีรากฐานมาจากแรงจูงใจภายใน เช่น ความเชื่อ ความทรงจำ และความหมายเชิงสัญลักษณ์ มากกว่าปัจจัยภายนอกอย่างสื่อ ดังนั้น การจัดการการท่องเที่ยวควรมุ่งเน้นการสร้างประสบการณ์ที่เชื่อมโยงกับศรัทธา อัตลักษณ์ และบริบททางประวัติศาสตร์ ควบคู่กับการพัฒนาโครงสร้างพื้นฐานเพื่อสนับสนุนการเดินทางและเสริมสร้างความยั่งยืนของการท่องเที่ยวแสวงบุญ

คำสำคัญ: ทฤษฎีพฤติกรรมตามแผน พฤติกรรมการเปิดรับสื่อ การท่องเที่ยวแสวงบุญเชิงพุทธ ลุมพินี การท่องเที่ยวเชิงโยหยาอดีต

1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale of the Study

In recent years, tourism driven by spiritual motivation has gained increasing attention as travelers seek experiences that go beyond leisure and entertainment. (Hemprapai, et al., 2023). In the context of Buddhist tourism, pilgrimage journeys are not only physical movements across destinations but also symbolic processes that connect individuals with faith, memory, and personal meaning. These experiences often involve elements of nostalgia, where visitors attempt to reconnect with historical narratives and sacred identities associated with religious sites. (Poudyal, 2026).

Among the most significant pilgrimage destinations, Lumbini in Nepal, which is recognized as the birthplace of the Buddha, serves as a central point of spiritual significance

for Buddhist communities worldwide. (Niyomthanawat & Worapongpat, 2025). For Thai tourists in particular, visiting Lumbini represents both a religious aspiration and an emotionally meaningful journey. The growth in post-pandemic travel has further reinforced this trend, as individuals increasingly seek purposeful and reflective travel experiences rather than purely recreational trips. (Mishra, 2025).

While previous research has extensively applied the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to explain travel intention, most studies have emphasized rational decision-making processes, such as attitudes, social influence, and perceived control. (Worapongpat, 2026b). However, in the context of faith-based and nostalgic tourism, decision-making may extend beyond purely cognitive evaluation. Emotional attachment, personal identity, and symbolic meanings associated with destinations are likely to play a crucial role in shaping tourists' behavior. (Kafley, 2023).

In addition, the rapid expansion of digital media has transformed how tourists perceive and engage with destinations. (Worapongpat, 2026a). Online content, including social media, travel vlogs, and religious communication platforms, contributes to shaping expectations and pre-visit perceptions. (Khadka, et al., 2025). Despite this, the extent to which media exposure influences actual travel behavior particularly in deeply internalized contexts such as religious pilgrimage remains unclear. Existing studies provide mixed evidence, suggesting that external information sources may be less influential when intrinsic motivations are strong. (Mondol, et al., 2025).

Given these considerations, there is a need to re-examine pilgrimage tourism by integrating cognitive, emotional, and contextual factors within a unified framework. This study therefore investigates nostalgic Buddhist tourism at Lumbini by combining the Theory of Planned Behavior with self-congruity and media exposure perspectives. The research aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how faith, identity, and media interact in shaping tourist behavior, while also offering practical implications for the sustainable management of pilgrimage tourism.

1.2 Objectives

1. To investigate the key psychological and social factors that shape tourists' intention to engage in nostalgic faith-based tourism within Buddhist pilgrimage contexts.
2. To examine the role of self-identity alignment in influencing tourists' evaluative perceptions and emotional responses toward pilgrimage experiences.

3. To assess the extent to which media engagement contributes to or alters the relationship between intention and actual tourism behavior in spiritually motivated travel.

4. To propose integrated management approaches for nostalgic pilgrimage tourism that emphasize experiential value, cultural meaning, and historical continuity.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Related Theoretical Concepts

Understanding nostalgic faith-based tourism requires a broader perspective that goes beyond purely rational decision-making frameworks. (Shinde, 2021). In pilgrimage contexts, travel behavior is often shaped by a combination of cognitive evaluation, emotional attachment, and symbolic meaning. (Nakkanrian, et al., 2022). Tourists are not only motivated by practical considerations but also by the desire to connect with spiritual values, personal identity, and culturally embedded memories.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) remains a useful foundation for explaining intention formation, particularly in terms of how individuals evaluate travel, respond to social influence, and assess their ability to undertake a journey. (Niyomthanawat & Worapongpat, 2025). However, in the context of religious and nostalgic tourism, these components may not fully capture the depth of tourists' motivations. Emotional and identity-related dimensions are likely to play a complementary role in shaping behavioral outcomes.

One such dimension is self-congruity, which reflects the alignment between a self-concept and the perceived image of a destination. (Phraathikanchaiya Piyatharo Muangmai Sirirote Namsena. (2023). When tourists perceive a strong correspondence between their personal beliefs and the symbolic meaning of a pilgrimage site, they are more likely to develop favorable evaluations and deeper emotional engagement. In nostalgic tourism settings, this alignment is particularly important, as experiences are often constructed through memory, imagination, and personal interpretation. (Sotrin, 2022).

In addition to internal psychological factors, external informational environments also influence tourist perceptions. The expansion of digital media has increased access to travel-related content, allowing individuals to form expectations and emotional impressions prior to visiting a destination. (Phra Kru Pariyatti Wachirakhun, 2021). Media engagement can shape awareness and interest; however, its influence on actual behavior may vary depending on the strength of intrinsic motivations. In highly meaningful contexts such as religious pilgrimage, internal drivers may outweigh externally mediated influences. (Worapongpat, 2022a).

Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of nostalgic faith-based tourism should integrate cognitive evaluation, identity alignment, and mediated experience within a unified conceptual perspective.

2.2 Related Studies

Recent research in religious tourism has increasingly emphasized the role of psychological and experiential factors in shaping tourist behavior. (Worapongpat, et al., 2025). Studies grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior consistently demonstrate that evaluative judgments, perceived social expectations, and perceived control contribute to the formation of travel intention. These findings confirm the relevance of TPB in explaining structured decision-making processes within tourism contexts.

At the same time, a growing body of literature highlights the importance of emotional and identity-based constructs. Research on nostalgic and memory-based tourism suggests that tourists are motivated not only by destination attributes but also by their personal connection to symbolic meanings and past experiences. (Worapongpat, 2023). Self-congruity, in particular, has been identified as a key factor that enhances emotional attachment and reinforces positive attitudes toward destinations.

Furthermore, studies examining media and tourism behavior indicate that exposure to digital content can increase awareness and stimulate initial interest. However, the influence of media on actual travel decisions remains inconclusive. (Phra Supakit Supanyo, & Phra Methee Pariyatti Wiboon. (2023). Some findings suggest that while media plays a role in shaping perceptions, deeply internalized motivations such as faith, cultural identity, and emotional resonance may exert a stronger influence on behavioral outcomes.

2.3 Research Gap and Contribution

Despite the expanding literature, several limitations remain. First, many studies continue to emphasize cognitive determinants of behavior while underrepresenting emotional and identity-driven processes, particularly in religious tourism contexts. (Worapongpat, 2022b). Second, the role of nostalgia as a meaningful experiential dimension has not been sufficiently integrated into behavioral models. (Rai, 2020). Third, although media engagement is widely acknowledged, its role in shaping behavior especially in spiritually significant travel remains ambiguous.

This study addresses these gaps by adopting an integrative perspective that combines cognitive, emotional, and contextual dimensions to explain nostalgic Buddhist tourism. (Santachitto, 2021). By examining the interplay between intention formation, self-identity

alignment, and media engagement, the research provides a more holistic understanding of tourist behavior and offers implications for the design and management of pilgrimage experiences.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

This study employed a quantitative approach to investigate factors influencing nostalgic faith-based tourism behavior in a Buddhist pilgrimage context. The research was designed to explain relationships among psychological, social, and experiential variables, with an emphasis on how these factors collectively shape travel intention and actual behavior.

A survey method was utilized as the primary data collection technique, allowing for systematic measurement of latent constructs. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was selected as the analytical method due to its suitability for examining complex relationships among multiple constructs simultaneously.

3.2 Participants and Data Collection

The study focused on Thai tourists who had prior experience visiting Lumbini or expressed interest in Buddhist pilgrimage travel. Given the absence of an accessible sampling frame, participants were recruited using a non-probability approach.

Data collection was conducted during the period from January to March 2025 through both offline and online channels. On-site questionnaires were distributed at locations associated with religious tourism, including temples and travel coordination points. In parallel, an online survey was disseminated via social media platforms and travel-related communities to reach individuals with relevant experience.

Respondents participated voluntarily and were informed about the purpose of the study before completing the questionnaire. All responses were recorded anonymously to ensure ethical research standards.

A total of 400 usable responses were obtained. This sample size is considered adequate for SEM analysis, as it meets commonly recommended thresholds for studies involving multiple observed variables and latent constructs.

3.3 Measurement Development

The research instrument consisted of a structured questionnaire developed from established literature in tourism behavior and related theoretical frameworks. The items were adapted to reflect the context of nostalgic Buddhist pilgrimage tourism.

The questionnaire was divided into two main sections. The first section collected demographic information, including gender, age, education, occupation, and income. The second section measured key constructs using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strong disagreement to strong agreement.

The constructs included self-congruity, attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, behavioral intention, tourism behavior, and media engagement. Each construct was represented by multiple items, with the number of indicators determined based on theoretical relevance and empirical suitability. Although some constructs were measured with a limited number of items, they were retained due to their conceptual importance and satisfactory statistical performance.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. Initially, descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent characteristics and general response patterns.

Subsequently, the measurement model was evaluated to ensure the adequacy of the constructs. This involved assessing factor loadings, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Reliability was examined using internal consistency measures to confirm the stability of the scales.

Finally, the structural model was analyzed to test the proposed relationships among variables. Path coefficients and significance levels were examined to determine the strength and direction of relationships. The overall explanatory power of the model was also evaluated using appropriate statistical indicators.

In addition, the role of media engagement was examined within the model to understand its influence on the relationship between intention and actual tourism behavior.

4. Research Results

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1

Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	141	35.17
	Female	259	64.83
Age	20–30 years	231	57.62
	31–40 years	101	25.25

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	41–50 years	44	11.00
	51 years and above	24	6.13
Marital Status	Single	284	71.03
	Married	116	28.97
Occupation	Student	219	54.71
	Employee	131	32.75
	Others	50	12.54
Monthly Income	Below 15,000 THB	220	55.04
	15,001–30,000 THB	120	30.00
	Above 30,001 THB	60	14.96

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 400 respondents. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents were female, accounting for 259 individuals or 64.83%, while 141 respondents or 35.17% were male.

In terms of age, most respondents were between 20–30 years old, with 231 individuals representing 57.62% of the sample. This was followed by respondents aged 31–40 years, totaling 101 individuals or 25.25%. Respondents aged 41–50 years accounted for 44 individuals or 11.00%, while those aged 51 years and above comprised 24 individuals or 6.13%, respectively.

Regarding marital status, the majority of respondents were single, with 284 individuals representing 71.03%, whereas 116 respondents or 28.97% were married.

In terms of occupation, most respondents were students, accounting for 219 individuals or 54.71%. Employees represented 131 respondents or 32.75%, while respondents in other occupations totaled 50 individuals or 12.54%.

With respect to monthly income, the majority of respondents earned below 15,000 THB per month, accounting for 220 individuals or 55.04%. Respondents earning between 15,001–30,000 THB amounted to 120 individuals or 30.00%, while those earning above 30,001 THB accounted for 60 individuals or 14.96%, respectively.

4.2 Results Addressing Objective 1: Psychological and Social Factors Influencing Intention to Participate in Nostalgic Buddhist Pilgrimage Tourism

Table 2

Determinants of Travel Intention

Factor	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t-value	Significance
Attitude	0.262	5.811	$p < 0.001$
Social Influence	0.287	5.568	$p < 0.001$
Perceived Capability	0.381	8.087	$p < 0.001$

Table 2 presents the analysis of psychological and social factors influencing tourists' intention to engage in nostalgic faith-based tourism within Buddhist pilgrimage contexts. The findings revealed that all factors significantly influenced travel intention at the 0.001 level of significance.

Considering the standardized coefficients (β), perceived capability had the strongest influence on travel intention ($\beta = 0.381$, $t = 8.087$, $p < 0.001$). This was followed by social influence ($\beta = 0.287$, $t = 5.568$, $p < 0.001$) and attitude ($\beta = 0.262$, $t = 5.811$, $p < 0.001$), respectively.

The results indicate that individuals' perceptions of their own ability and readiness to travel have the greatest impact on their travel intention. At the same time, social influence from surrounding people and positive attitudes toward traveling also play important roles in encouraging individuals' intention to travel.

4.3 Results Addressing Objective 2: The Influence of Self-Identity Alignment on Tourists' Evaluative Perceptions and Emotional Responses

Table 3

Effect of Self-Identity Alignment on Attitude

Relationship	Coefficient (β)	t-value	Result
Self-congruity $\rightarrow$ Attitude	0.684	27.629	Significant

Table 3 presents the analysis of the effect of self-identity alignment (self-congruity) on tourists' attitudes toward pilgrimage experiences. The findings revealed that self-congruity had

a positive and statistically significant influence on attitude, with a standardized coefficient (β) of 0.684 and a t-value of 27.629.

The results indicate that when consumers perceive that the image or identity of a tourist destination is consistent with their own self-image, they tend to develop more positive attitudes toward traveling. Moreover, the relationship was found to be relatively strong, reflecting that self-congruity is an important factor in shaping tourists' positive attitudes.

4.4 Results Addressing Objective 3: The Role of Media Engagement in the Relationship between Travel Intention and Tourism Behavior

Table 4

Role of Media Engagement in the Model

Path	Coefficient (β)	t-value	Significance	Interpretation
Intention $\rightarrow$ Behavior (with media effect)	0.035	1.644	Not significant	No moderating effect

Table 4 presents the role of media engagement in the relationship between intention and actual tourism behavior. The findings revealed that the effect of intention on behavior under the influence of media engagement had a standardized coefficient (β) of 0.035 and a t-value of 1.644, which was not statistically significant.

The results indicate that media engagement did not play a moderating role in the relationship between intention and behavior. In other words, differences in consumers' levels of media engagement did not significantly alter the relationship between intention and behavior. This finding may suggest that media-related factors are not a major element in directly strengthening the transition from intention to actual behavior within the context of this study.

4.5 Integrated Structural Findings Related to the Research Objectives

Table 5

Summary of Structural Findings

Dimension	Key Outcome
Cognitive and social factors	Influence travel intention
Identity alignment	Strengthens attitude
Media-related factor	Limited influence on behavior

Table 5 summarizes the structural findings of the proposed model. The results revealed that cognitive and social factors significantly influenced travel intention, identity alignment strengthened positive attitudes, while media-related factors demonstrated only a limited influence on actual tourism behavior.

In addition, the findings showed that identity alignment played an important role in strengthening positive attitudes toward travel. In other words, when consumers perceive that the image of a tourist destination is consistent with their self-identity, they are more likely to develop favorable attitudes toward traveling.

At the same time, media-related factors demonstrated only a limited influence on behavior. Since the analysis did not find a significant moderating role of media engagement, it may be concluded that media factors do not directly strengthen the transition from intention to actual behavior within the context of this study.

4.6 Explanatory Power of the Proposed Research Model

Table 6

Explained Variance of Key Constructs

Construct	R ² Value	Interpretation
Attitude	0.468	Moderate
Intention	0.357	Moderate
Behavior	0.433	Moderate

Table 6 presents the explained variance (R²) values of the key constructs in the model. The findings revealed that attitude, intention, and behavior were explained at moderate levels by the variables included in the study.

For the intention construct, the R² value was 0.357, also indicating a moderate level. This means that the factors included in the study were able to explain 35.7% of the variance in travel intention.

Meanwhile, the behavior construct had an R² value of 0.433, which is likewise considered moderate. This suggests that the model was able to explain 43.3% of the variance in behavior.

Overall, the R² values of all constructs were at a moderate level, reflecting that the proposed model had an acceptable ability to explain behavior and its related factors.

However, there may still be additional factors beyond those included in the model that could further influence consumers' attitudes, intentions, and behaviors.

4.7 Results Addressing Objective 4: Implications for the Management of Nostalgic Buddhist Pilgrimage Tourism

Based on the empirical findings, an integrated management approach for nostalgic Buddhist pilgrimage tourism should emphasize three key dimensions: (1) strengthening tourists' positive attitudes and perceived capability to participate in pilgrimage activities, (2) enhancing identity congruence between visitors and pilgrimage destinations through cultural and spiritual interpretation, and (3) preserving historical continuity and cultural meaning to enrich the experiential value of pilgrimage tourism. Although media engagement did not significantly moderate the relationship between intention and behavior, media channels may still serve as supportive tools for communicating cultural heritage and pilgrimage narratives.

Figure 1.

Integrated Structural Model of Nostalgic Buddhist Pilgrimage Tourism along the Lumbini Pilgrimage Route



Source: Ntapat Worapongpat, 2026

4.8 Results Addressing Objective 4: Integrated Management Implications for Nostalgic Buddhist Pilgrimage Tourism

Figure 2.

Integrated Structural Model of Nostalgic Buddhist Pilgrimage Tourism along the Lumbini Pilgrimage Route



Source: Ntapat Worapongpat, 2026

4.9 Results Addressing Objective 4: Integrated Management Implications for Nostalgic Buddhist Pilgrimage Tourism

Figure 3.

Integrated Structural Model of Nostalgic Buddhist Pilgrimage Tourism along the Lumbini Pilgrimage Route

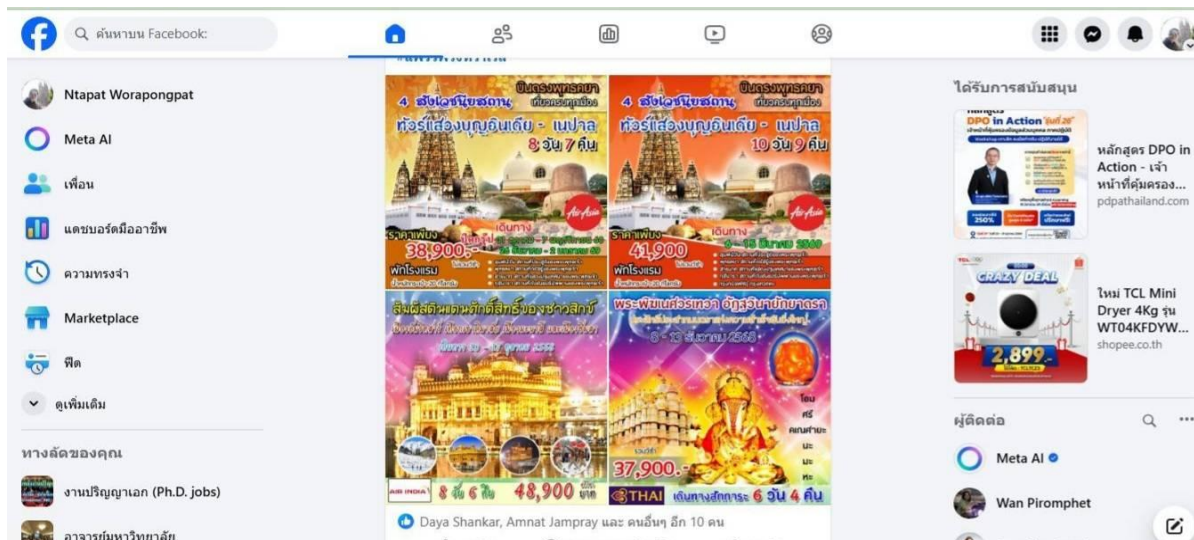


Source: Ntapat Worapongpat, 2026

4.10 Results Addressing Objective 4: Integrated Management Implications for Nostalgic Buddhist Pilgrimage Tourism

Figure 4.

Integrated Structural Model of Nostalgic Buddhist Pilgrimage Tourism along the Lumbini Pilgrimage Route



Source: Ntapat Worapongpat, 2026

5. Conclusion and Discussion

5.1 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that nostalgic faith-based tourism is shaped by a combination of practical considerations, social influence, and identity-related factors. While the core elements of the Theory of Planned Behavior remain relevant in explaining intention formation, the findings suggest that decision-making in pilgrimage contexts cannot be fully understood through cognitive evaluation alone.

The results highlight the importance of self-identity alignment in strengthening positive attitudes toward pilgrimage experiences. Tourists who perceive a meaningful connection between their personal beliefs and the symbolic value of the destination are more likely to develop stronger intentions to travel.

In contrast, media-related factors appear to play a more limited role in influencing actual behavior. Although media engagement contributes to awareness and pre-travel expectations, it does not significantly alter the relationship between intention and behavior. This suggests

that deeply rooted motivations—such as faith, memory, and personal meaning—are more influential in shaping pilgrimage decisions.

Overall, the study emphasizes the need to incorporate emotional and identity-based perspectives alongside traditional behavioral models when examining tourism in religious contexts.

5.2 Discussion

The findings provide several important insights into the dynamics of nostalgic faith-based tourism. First, the strong influence of perceived capability highlights the importance of practical feasibility in pilgrimage travel. Even when individuals possess strong spiritual motivation, their intention to travel is still conditioned by their perceived ability to manage time, cost, and accessibility. This reinforces the idea that rational and emotional factors operate simultaneously rather than independently.

Second, the role of self-congruity suggests that tourism behavior in religious contexts is closely linked to identity construction. Pilgrimage destinations are not merely physical locations but symbolic spaces where individuals negotiate meaning, belief, and personal values. (Ghimire, 2013). This perspective extends beyond traditional behavioral models by emphasizing the experiential and interpretive nature of tourism.

Third, the non-significant influence of media engagement provides a nuanced understanding of the role of external information. While digital media can stimulate interest and shape expectations, it may have limited power in altering behavior when motivations are internally driven. (Ghimire, 2019). This finding challenges assumptions that media exposure consistently translates into behavioral change, particularly in contexts where decisions are grounded in deeply held beliefs.

From a managerial perspective, the results suggest that tourism strategies should prioritize meaningful experience design over purely promotional efforts. Developing pilgrimage experiences that emphasize authenticity, symbolic value, and emotional engagement is likely to be more effective than relying solely on media communication. In addition, aligning tourism offerings with visitors' identity and belief systems can enhance both satisfaction and long-term engagement (Hall, 2006).

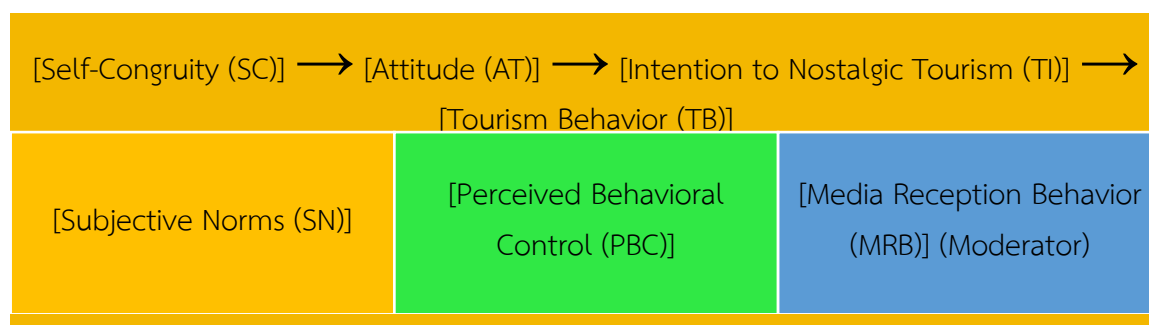
These insights contribute to the literature by offering a more integrated view of tourism behavior, where cognitive, emotional, and contextual factors interact in shaping decision-making processes. The study therefore supports a shift from purely predictive models toward more holistic approaches that capture the complexity of faith-based tourism.

5.3 New Knowledge

The research titled “Media Exposure Behavior and Buddhist Pilgrimage Tourism to Lumbini: A Study of Nostalgic Tourism Management under the Theory of Planned Behavior” introduces an extended conceptual model that integrates Self-congruity and Nostalgia Tourism within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework.

Figure 2

Model of Nostalgic Tourism to Lumbini Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior



This framework presents several noteworthy contributions: Establishing Self-Congruity as a Core Driver: The study confirms that SC plays a critical role in shaping tourists’ attitudes toward faith-based nostalgic travel. Empirical Support for TPB Variables: Attitude, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioral Control were verified as essential predictors of travel intention. Clarifying Media’s Secondary Role: Although MRB was not found to be a significant moderator, it functions as a supporting element that enhances awareness, emotional engagement, and contextual understanding of pilgrimage experiences. Overall, this expanded TPB model provides a more comprehensive view of how personal identity, emotional memory, and behavioral intention interact within the context of Buddhist nostalgic tourism, offering both theoretical enrichment and practical guidance for tourism management in cultural and spiritual destinations.

5.4 Recommendations

The findings suggest that effective management of nostalgic faith-based tourism should move beyond conventional promotion and focus on creating meaningful and immersive experiences.

First, tourism development should emphasize experiential depth by integrating spiritual significance, historical narratives, and symbolic meaning into pilgrimage routes. Designing

activities that allow visitors to engage with the cultural and religious context can strengthen emotional connection and enhance overall experience quality.

Second, tourism providers should adopt an identity-oriented approach in designing products and communication strategies. Aligning tourism experiences with visitors' beliefs, values, and sense of self can foster stronger engagement and more positive evaluations. This includes developing personalized or theme-based pilgrimage programs that resonate with different groups of tourists.

Third, the results indicate that media plays a supportive rather than decisive role. Therefore, communication strategies should prioritize authenticity and relevance rather than persuasion. Digital platforms can be used to provide meaningful content, such as storytelling, virtual experiences, and educational materials, to enhance pre-visit understanding without over-relying on promotional messaging.

Finally, improving accessibility and on-site support remains essential. Infrastructure, travel information, and service quality should be designed to reduce barriers and facilitate the travel process, particularly for first-time or younger visitors.

5.5 Future Research Directions

This study opens several avenues for further research. Future studies could explore comparative perspectives by examining differences between domestic and international tourists in terms of motivation, perception, and behavior.

In addition, incorporating additional constructs—such as emotional attachment, spiritual fulfillment, or post-visit reflection—may provide a more comprehensive understanding of tourism experiences in religious contexts.

Methodologically, future research may benefit from longitudinal designs to capture changes in perception and behavior over time, or mixed-method approaches to gain deeper insights into the subjective meanings associated with pilgrimage travel.

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