

การท่องเที่ยวเชิงศาสนา ความเชื่อของบุคคล การเรียนรู้ส่วนบุคคล และพฤติกรรม
การท่องเที่ยว: หลักฐานเชิงประจักษ์จากนักท่องเที่ยวพระธาตุพนมในประเทศไทย
RELIGIOUS TOURISM, PERSONAL BELIEF, INDIVIDUAL LEARNING, AND
TOURISM BEHAVIOR: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM PHRA THAT PHANOM
TOURISTS IN THAILAND

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อทดสอบผลกระทบของการท่องเที่ยวเชิงศาสนา ความเชื่อของบุคคล และการเรียนรู้ส่วนบุคคลที่มีต่อพฤติกรรมการท่องเที่ยวของนักท่องเที่ยวพระธาตุพนมในประเทศไทย ซึ่งนักท่องเที่ยวพระธาตุพนมในประเทศไทย จำนวน 400 คนเป็นกลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้ในการวิจัย และใช้การวิเคราะห์การถดถอยพหุคูณเชิงชั้นในการทดสอบผลกระทบทางตรงและเชิงแทรก ผลลัพธ์การวิจัย พบว่า การท่องเที่ยวเชิงศาสนา ความเชื่อของบุคคล และการเรียนรู้ส่วนบุคคล มีผลกระทบที่สำคัญเชิงบวกต่อพฤติกรรมการท่องเที่ยว นอกจากนี้ ความเชื่อของบุคคลและการเรียนรู้ส่วนบุคคล มีผลกระทบเชิงแทรกที่จำเป็นต่อความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างการท่องเที่ยวเชิงศาสนากับพฤติกรรมการท่องเที่ยว ดังนั้น การท่องเที่ยวเชิงศาสนามีบทบาทสำคัญที่มีอิทธิพลและผลกระทบ และสามารถชักจูงและจูงใจต่อพฤติกรรมของนักท่องเที่ยวให้มาท่องเที่ยวและกราบไหว้สักการะพระธาตุพนมในประเทศไทย และความเชื่อของบุคคลและการเรียนรู้ส่วนบุคคลสามารถส่งเสริม สนับสนุน และผลักดันทั้งทางตรงและทางอ้อมให้นักท่องเที่ยวมาและกลับมาท่องเที่ยวและกราบไหว้สักการะพระธาตุพนมมากขึ้น ด้วยเหตุนี้ ผู้บริหารพระธาตุพนมในประเทศไทยและตัวแทนหน่วยงานราชการ สามารถส่งเสริมและยกระดับการท่องเที่ยวเชิงศาสนาให้มีความยั่งยืน โดยต้องบำรุงรักษา จัดการ และสร้างสรรค์คุณลักษณะ คุณประโยชน์ และคุณค่าของพระธาตุพนมให้เป็นอย่างดี เพื่อจูงใจและชักนำให้นักท่องเที่ยวในประเทศไทยและต่างประเทศให้มาและกลับมาท่องเที่ยวและกราบไหว้สักการะพระธาตุพนมอย่างต่อเนื่อง

คำสำคัญ: การท่องเที่ยวเชิงศาสนา ความเชื่อของบุคคล การเรียนรู้ส่วนบุคคล พฤติกรรมการท่องเที่ยว
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Abstract

This study examines the effects of religious tourism, personal belief and individual learning on the tourism behavior of Phra That Phanom tourists in Thailand. 400 Phra That Phanom tourists in Thailand are the samples of the study. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was utilized to investigate the direct and moderating effects. The results indicate that religious tourism, personal belief and individual learning significantly and positively affect tourism behavior. In addition, both personal belief and individual learning have critical moderating effects on religious tourism-tourism behavior relationships. In summary, religious tourism plays a significant role in influencing, affecting, motivating, and persuading tourists' behaviors to visit Phra That Phanom in Thailand. Moreover, personal belief and individual learning can, directly and indirectly, promote, support and advance tourists for visiting and revisiting Phra That Phanom. The results suggest that executives and other related government agencies can promote sustainable religious tourism of Phra That Phanom by maintaining, managing and creating the important characteristics, benefits and values that will help motivate and influence all tourists from Thailand and other regions to visit and revisit Phra That Phanom on a regular basis.

Keywords: religious tourism, personal belief, individual learning, tourism behavior,
Phra That Phanom tourists

1. Introduction

Nowadays, competitive environments and situations have changed continuously and these changes create new coming competitors, increased expectations and wants of clients, growths of digital technologies, pressures of health climates and situations, and forced requirements and compliances of laws and regulations. Indeed, the health climates and situations are called the COVID-19 pandemics have affected business operations, industry activities and the quality of people's lives nationwide and worldwide. Several businesses and industries have closed down their operations, adjusted their activities, changed their methods and procedures or started new operations. For tourism industry, tour operations, airlines, hotels, and other related businesses have gone through several changes, including types, forms, methods, procedures, and contents. Interestingly, since 2022, the situation of the COVID-19 pandemics has recovered as reflected through a decreased number of patients. Accordingly, businesses have returned to renew operations and activities and start their new challenges, effective strategies and efficient techniques. A tourism business has quickly adjusted and repositioned itself to be more challenging and these strategies greatly enhance sustainable tourism, wellness and health tourism and experiential tourism. For the context of experiential tourism, religious tourism is considered one of the oldest and fastest-growing segments which needs explicit reposition during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ahmad et al., 2021). It attracts and motivates tourists with religious purposes, such as pilgrimage, missionary work, or

spiritual retreat. It encompasses a wide range of activities, from visiting holy sites and participating in religious ceremonies to attending religious events and festivals. Moreover, religious tourism is often driven by personal faith, a desire to connect with a particular religious community, or an interest in learning about different religions and their practices. Thus, religious tourism is one of a well-known experiential tourism which focuses on unique and authentic experiences over more traditional forms of tourism.

Religious tourism is considered the most growing and developing tourism sector due to socio-cultural changes. It has a significant impact on benefits of local economies as getting donations and charity and purchasing and spending for accommodations, souvenirs and others and it promotes, enhances and creates local people's qualities of life (Heidari et al., 2021). In addition, religious tourism is defined as contemporary patterns of visitation to places of religious importance or pilgrimage sites where visitors aim to fulfill religious needs and recreational needs (Shinde, 2015). It is a form of travel associated with religious purposes or with a religious orientation. It is a sacred place that people visit to participate in or follow-up on religious ceremonies, a pilgrimage visit, or an activity to fulfill religious duties (Kartal et al., 2015). Visitors have had pilgrimage travels for three reasons: having exclusively religious characters with a motivation for spiritual or religious fulfillment, a journey for sacred celebration and religious rite that are completed on arrival, and a destination for immanent and transcendent together a complex spiritual travel phenomenon. Great religious tourism has a positive relationship with best push and pull motives which attract the power of the visiting destination, superior satisfaction through a positive experience of tourists during their visit which exceed their expectations and certain loyalty via an intention of the tourists to repeat the visit to the travel destination. As mentioned earlier, religious tourism plays a significant role in driving and determining tourists' behaviors.

Interestingly, both personal belief and individual learning are important drivers of tourism behavior. Personal belief is defined as a collection of cultural models and schema constructed to understand, orient and manage experience, using subjective reference to the supernatural for appropriate living (Kline, 2012). It helps share conventional ideas about how the world works that an individual learns by talking and acting with his or her fellows who help guide an attention to drawing inferences about and evaluation of experience. It represents a cognitive response which includes interactivity, social role and image, informativeness, opinion, and viewpoint (Ariffin et al., 2018). An individual's personal belief can enhance active direct experience and achieve inferences made based upon past experience that relates to the present stimulus. Thus, personal belief can help to shape an individual attitude towards religious tourism. It is likely to drive, determine and explain tourism behavior. Similarly, individual learning refers to a means or an approach of meaning-oriented learning, instruction learning, planned learning, and emergent learning behavior an individual undertakes to study a given situation to flourish and survive in the complex environment (Kusemererwa et al., 2020). These types of learning

have linked an individual's behaviors to self-lifestyle and self-life practice. Moreover, individual learning is a process through which an individual creates knowledge by interpreting and assimilating a diversity of tacit and/or explicit information (Balbastre et al., 2003). It represents an individual's view and interpretation of the world, including explicit and implicit understandings through dialogues, negotiations or arguments with others. With regard to religious tourism, tourists have visited and revisited the places of religious importance or the pilgrimage sites because they have existing knowledge and experience which attract, motivate and influence them to participate in and follow-up on religious ceremonies, pilgrimage visits, and activities. Accordingly, individual learning is a significant determinant of tourism behavior. Furthermore, both personal belief and individual learning are proposed to moderate the effects of religious tourism on tourism behavior. They can positively strengthen the religious tourism-tourism relationships. More personal belief and individual learning can link to greater the research relationships.

In addition, tourism behavior is a valuable outcome of religious tourism, personal belief and individual learning. It refers to a spontaneous action that presents cognition responses and appears in which involvement with tourism is directly related to great tourism attributes' perceptions as leading to a superior commitment of the selected tourism (Leong, 2017). It reflects to an individual's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values and interests from the tourism involvement perspective. Therefore, tourism behavior becomes a major result of successfully applying religious tourism, personal belief and individual learning.

This study attempts to examine the effects of religious tourism, personal belief and individual learning on tourism behavior of Phra That Phanom tourists in Thailand through moderating effects of both personal belief and individual learning. For Thailand's aspect, religious tourism has expanded significantly through operations, activities, festivals, and events because there are interesting religious sites which can attract, motivate and influence tourists' visits. In this study, Phra That Phanom tourists in Thailand are the samples of the study because Phra That Phanom is popular among Thai people and Buddhists from other Asian countries although it is seldom visited by non-Asian tourists. It is a famous pagoda in Thailand which is believed to house an important religious relic as the breast bone of the Lord Buddha. Accordingly, why and how Phra That Phanom tourists have visited and revisited are an important issue to investigate. The key research question is how religious tourism affects tourism behavior. The specific research questions are: (1) How personal belief affects tourism behavior, (2) How personal belief moderates the religious tourism-tourism behavior relationships, (3) How individual learning affects tourism behavior, and (4) How individual learning moderates the religious tourism-tourism behavior relationships.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows. In the next section, a brief background and a relevant literature of religious tourism, personal belief, individual learning, and tourism behavior

are provided. In addition, the conceptual model is presented and their hypotheses are developed. In the subsequent section, the information about research methods, including data collection, sample selection, measurements for all variables and statistical techniques are described. Moreover, estimated results and possible discussions are provided. Finally, the study concludes with a discussion of limitations, implications, future research directions, and an overall summary.

2. Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are presented as follows.

1. To examine the effects of religious tourism, personal belief and individual learning on tourism behavior of Phra That Phanom tourists in Thailand. In
2. To examine the moderating effects of both personal belief and individual learning on the research relationships.

3. Relevant Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

The theory of planned behavior is utilized to explain the effects of religious tourism on tourism behavior. It focuses on modeling behavior that is under an individual's complete volitional control, allowing for incorporating behavior over which an individual has limited volitional control (Ajzen, 1991). It comprises three perceptual constructs of beliefs, including attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control that influence behaviors with a high degree of accuracy. In the context of religious tourism, tourists have visited and revisited Phra That Phanom mainly because it provides them with valuable outcomes as reflected through their attitudes toward their favorable behaviors. They have been motivated to conform those referents as an intention to bring out their greater behaviors. Next, they have learned and utilized past experience to relate to Phra That Phanom to provide a conceptual guide and encourage behavioral attempts. Therefore, religious tourism has encouraged tourists to continuously visit and revisit Phra That Phanom. Moreover, both personal belief and individual learning play important roles in directing and moderating the religious tourism-tourism behavior relationships. Figure 1 shows the conceptual model of the research relationships.

A. Religious tourism

Religious tourism has continuously increased worldwide and it is largely associated with cultural, spiritual and religious aspects. In this study, religious tourism is a key and significant player affecting and influencing tourism behavior. It refers to contemporary patterns of visitation to places of religious importance or pilgrimage sites where visitors aim to fulfill religious needs and recreational needs (Shinde, 2015). It is a form of travel associated with religious purposes or with a religious orientation. It is a sacred place that people visit to participate in or follow-up on religious ceremonies, a pilgrimage visit, or an activity to fulfill religious duties (Kartal et al., 2015). It promotes visits to sacred places

which typically entail visitors' experience with ancient pilgrimage routes, learning about local culture and creating relationships with local communities. Thus, it can fulfill their needs for spirituality. Next, religious tourism contains the visit of religious ceremonies and conferences, including all the visit of local, regional, national, and international religious destinations (Heidari et al., 2021). It focuses on the visit of religious sites, monuments or destinations with the primary aim of engaging with or intensifying a specific faith. Visitors have had pilgrimage travels for three reasons: having exclusively religious characters with a motivation for spiritual or religious fulfillment, a journey for sacred celebration and religious rite that are completed on arrival, and a destination for immanent and transcendent together with a complex spiritual travel phenomenon. Great religious tourism has a positive relationship with best push and pull motives which increase the power of the visiting destination and superior satisfaction through a positive experience of tourists during their visit which exceeds their expectations and certain loyalty via their intention to repeat the visit to the travel destination.

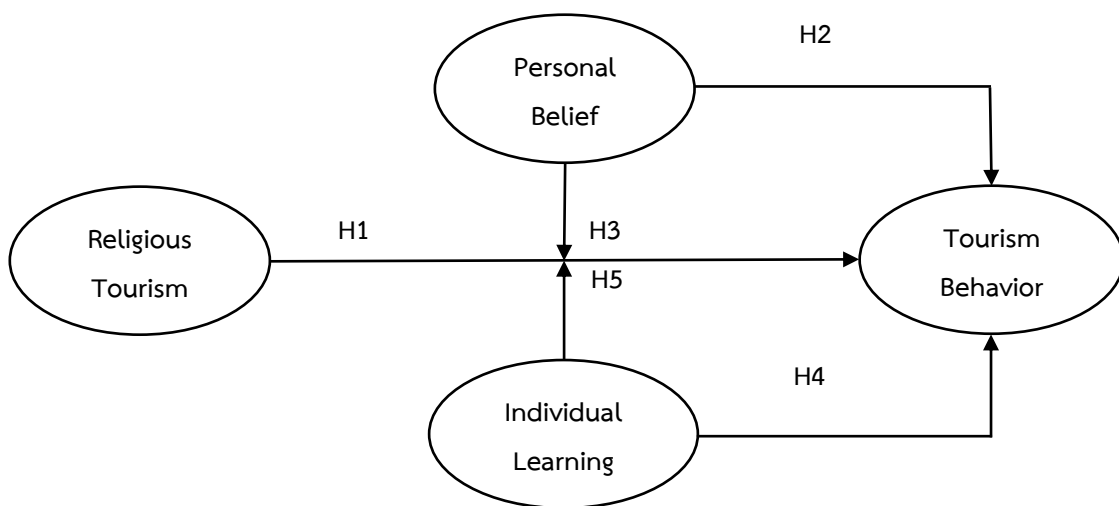


Figure 1 A conceptual model of the religious tourism-tourism behavior relationships

Religious tourism can increase more tourists and possibly lead to higher tourism earnings, learning a cultural legacy, respect of the people of different religions who worship in the places, learning to regard members of other religions, and improvement of the peace in the world through a dialogue among religions. It can generate a greater amount of donations and charity, motivation of faithful participants in the resident trade by purchasing some souvenirs or leaving some votive offering that help create the reputation of certain local craft activities, and a growing number of tourists that help increase the revenues and other benefits obtained by a business dedicated to tourism and hospitality services in a certain religious site. Accordingly, religious tourism plays a significant role in driving and

determining tourists' behaviors. It is hypothesized to have a significant and positive effect on tourism behavior. Therefore,

H1: Religious tourism has a positive effect on tourism behavior.

B. Personal belief

Personal belief is the second indicator for determining tourism behavior in this study. It refers to a collection of cultural models and schema constructed to understand, orient and manage experience, using subjective reference to the supernatural for appropriate living (Kline, 2012). It helps share conventional ideas about how the world works and an individual learns by talking and acting with his or her follows who help guide an attention to drawing inferences about and evaluation of experience. It influences an individual's cognitive assessment and interpretation of reality through feeling and behaviors that are largely influenced by a way of the situations (Abu-Doleh & Hammou, 2015). Moreover, personal belief is an aspect of shared identity and dealing with what are considered to be eternal truths and it tends to be held very strongly (Shepherd, 2010). It represents a cognitive response which includes interactivity, social role and image, informativeness, opinion, and viewpoint (Ariffin et al., 2018). An individual's personal belief can enhance active direct experience and achieve inferences made based upon past experience that relates to the present stimulus. It reflects views on what knowledge is, how it is gained and the limits and criteria for determining knowledge (Tickle et al., 2005). Accordingly, personal belief can link to an individual' rational values and reasonable preferences. For a religious tourism aspect, personal belief has forced, motivated and attracted tourists to visit and revisit places of religious importance or pilgrimage sites continuously. It can help shape an individual attitude towards religious tourism. Sustainable and in-depth personal belief can affect and influence them to have obtained great tourism behavior. Thus, personal belief is likely to drive, determine and explain tourism behavior. It is hypothesized to have a significant relationship with tourism behavior. In addition, while personal belief is an important determinant of tourism behavior, it can strengthen the association between religious tourism and tourism behavior. It can also increase the religious tourism-tourism behavior relationships because it helps explain the links between tourists' motivational factor and their reasonable behaviors. Therefore,

H2: Personal belief has a positive effect on tourism behavior.

H3: Personal belief positively moderates the religious tourism-tourism behavior relationships.

C. Individual learning

Individual learning is the last determinant of tourism behavior in this study. It is defined as a means or an approach of meaning-oriented learning, instruction learning, planned learning, and emergent learning behavior an individual undertakes to study a given situation to flourish and survive in the complex environment (Kusemererwa et al., 2020). It is development of new knowledge or insights that have the potential to influence behavior and a drive of individuals to be creative and innovative in

their qualities of life (Mutonyi et al., 2020). These types of learning have linked an individual's behaviors to self-lifestyle and self-life practice in a daily life. In addition, individual learning is a process through which the individual creates knowledge by interpreting and assimilating a diversity of tacit and/or explicit information (Balbastre et al., 2003). It is an exclusive and habitual manner of acquiring knowledge, skills and attitude development. It represents an individual's view and interpretation of the world, including explicit and implicit understandings through dialogues, negotiations or arguments with others. It requires a climate to encourage an individual to follow situational rules and procedures. With regard to religious tourism, tourists visit and revisit the places of religious importance or the pilgrimage sites mainly because they have existing knowledge and experience which attract, motivate and influence them to participate in and follow-up on religious ceremonies, pilgrimage visits, and activities. A tourist with great individual learning is likely to make more commitment with the places of religious importance or pilgrimage sites where visitors come to fulfill religious needs and recreational needs by visiting religious ceremonies and conferences. Thus, individual learning has potential to encourage tourists to acquire understanding and knowledge to fulfill religious needs and recreational needs, improve inside spirituality and enhance great religious behaviors. It is a tourist's ability to acquire new knowledge which requires more understanding to perform effectively under given religious tourism conditions. Accordingly, individual learning is a significant determinant of tourism behavior. It is hypothesized to significantly and positively affect tourism behavior. Moreover, individual learning is also proposed to moderate the effects of religious tourism on tourism behavior. It has potential to affect the strengths of the relationships between religious tourism and tourism behavior. It can cause an amplifying effect on the religious tourism-tourism behavior relationships. Thus, individual learning can positively strengthen the research relationships. Therefore,

H4: Individual learning has a positive effect on tourism behavior.

H5: Individual learning positively moderates the religious tourism-tourism behavior relationships.

D. Tourism behavior

Interestingly, tourism behavior is a significant result of successful religious tourism operations and activities. In this study, tourism behavior is a valuable outcome of religious tourism, personal belief and individual learning. It is defined as a spontaneous action that presents cognition responses and appears in which involvement with tourism is directly related to great tourism attributes' perceptions as leading to a superior commitment of the selected tourism (Leong, 2017). It is a favorable propensity toward a commodity, service or destination of places of religious importance or pilgrimage sites, a tourist's perception of acceptance from referent groups, such as members of the family, relatives, and colleagues for instructing behavior through embracing his or her intention to visit and the tourist's perception of his or her attributes or possession of the necessary expertise to perform a behavior (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). It reflects to an individual's perceived relevance of the object based on

inherent needs, values and interests from the tourism involvement perspective. In addition, tourism behavior reflects tourists' consumption behavior, including pre-visit, on-site and post-visit of the tourists to a particular destination (Leri & Theodoridis, 2021). It is an effective means of the intention to revisit and to recommend a destination through the likelihood of their repeating an activity or revisiting a facility and destination. It can substantially impact the dynamics of their tourism decision-making processes. Therefore, tourism behavior becomes a key outcome of successful application of religious tourism, personal belief and individual learning. It is hypothesized to be a result of the factors, namely religious tourism, personal belief and individual learning.

4. Research Methodology

A. Phra That Phanom tourists in Thailand as a sample of the study

Phra That Phanom, a highly-revered pagoda located beside the Mekong river is very well known among Thai people and Buddhists from other Asian countries although it is seldom visited by non-Asian tourists. This famous pagoda located in the Northeast of Thailand is considered a major Buddhist pilgrimage site. According to the legends, Phra That Phanom contains the Lord Buddha's breast bone and it is enshrined. It is one of the most important Theravada Buddhist structures in the region. Every year, a week-long festival at Phra That Phanom attracts thousands of people from both sides of the Mekong river who make pilgrimages to honor the shrine. The festival is traditionally packed with religious events. In Thai folk Buddhism, Phra That Phanom is considered auspicious for all Thai Buddhists. It is a popular pilgrimage destination for those born in the year of the Monkey. They are also regarded as lucky for those born on Sunday. As mentioned earlier, a number of visitors normally come to visit Phra That Phanom to honor the shrine. These people are called as Phra That Phanom tourists. Because of this, a study of Phra That Phanom tourists' behaviors is considered an important topic to investigate because their reasons and values of their visits become a major cause and consequence of religious tourism at Phra That Phanom. The result of the study would serve as useful information for sustainable maintenance, development and improvement of Phra That Phanom. Accordingly, Phra That Phanom tourists in Thailand are considered the appropriate samples of the study.

B. Design, population and sample

This study used convenience sampling to select participants. Because the population of this study could not be counted, 400 Phra That Phanom tourists in Thailand were contacted (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). To collect data, a questionnaire with dichotomous scales was utilized. The questionnaire was distributed to these participants who made pilgrimages to honor the shrine. They had different characteristics, including gender, age, marital status, education level, occupation, a number of visits to Phra That Phanom, their perception of Phra That Phanom, and their achievement through Phra That Phanom' visits. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire and return to the researcher.

After checking the accuracy and completeness of the returned questionnaires, all information was ready to be used for verifying the research hypotheses.

C. Measures and the questionnaire

In this study, self-developed measurements of these constructs from existing literature were employed. Multiple items were for measuring each construct. Despite their carefully defined constructs, the measurement was impossible for one to directly manifest or observe the scale due to the abstract nature of the construct. The variables were estimated scales derived from their definitions and were applied from relevant literatures of religious tourism, personal belief, individual learning, and tourism behavior. The measurements using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) were applied, except for control variables. A source of measurements is presented in Table 1. Measurements of these constructs are self-developed from existing literature as shown in Appendix A. Thus, all earlier mentioned variable measurements were used in this study. Interestingly, control variables were empirically tested, including gender, age and salary. Gender was measured using a dummy variable suggesting that male = 0 and female = 1. In addition, age was measured using a dummy variable indicating that below 35 years old = 0 and equal to or above 35 years old = 1. Next, salary was measured using a dummy variable indicating that below 30,000 baht = 0 and equal to or above 30,000 baht = 1.

D. Tests of factorability, validity and reliability

To achieve factorability, validity and reliability, factor loadings, item-total correlations and Cronbach alpha coefficients were investigated (Hair et al., 2010). The factor loadings of all items were greater than 0.60. In addition, the item-total correlations were greater than 0.30 indicating the achievement of the convergent validity. Next, the Cronbach alpha coefficients as well as the composite reliability were achieved with scoring greater than 0.07. According to these three criteria, all the indices could be accepted. Table 2 presents the factorability, validity and reliability results for multiple-item scales used in this study.

Table 1 A summary of measurements of all variables

Variables	Items	References
Tourism behavior (TB)	8	Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012; Leri and Theodoridis, 2021; Leong, 2017
Religious tourism (RT)	9	Heidari et al., 2021; Kartal et al., 2015; Shinde, 2015
Personal belief (PB)	5	Abu-Doleh and Hammou, 2015; Ariffin et al., 2018; Kline, 2012; Tickle et al., 2005
Individual learning (IL)	5	Balbastre et al., 2003; Kusemererwa et al., 2020; Mutonyi et al., 2020

Table 2 Results of measure validation

Items	Factor Loadings	Item-total Correlation	Cronbach Alpha
Tourism behavior (TB)	0.79-0.94	0.77-0.94	0.96
Religious tourism (RT)	0.68-0.88	0.68-0.87	0.92
Personal belief (PB)	0.85-0.94	0.84-0.94	0.94
Individual learning (IL)	0.89-0.94	0.89-0.95	0.95

E. Statistical techniques for hypotheses testing

This study tested the direct effects of religious tourism, personal belief and individual learning on tourism behavior. It also tested the moderating effects of both personal belief and individual learning on the religious tourism-tourism behavior relationships. To examine the research relationships, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used as a statistical tool to prove and verify the research results (Tajeddini & Ratten, 2020). In this study, religious tourism was the dependent variable. Next, both personal belief and individual learning were both direct and moderating variables whereas tourism behavior was the dependent variable. Accordingly, the results of this study are presented in the next section.

5. Results and Discussion

In Table 3, descriptive statistics and correlation matrix for all variables are presented. Multicollinearity problem might occur when inter-correlation in each predict variable is more than 0.80, which suggests a strong relationship (Hair et al., 2010). The correlations range from 0.43 to 0.88 for predictor variables that link to consequence variable at the $p < 0.05$ level, which suggests that the predictor variables in the conceptual model can critically affect the consequence variable. However, the correlations range from 0.42 to 0.64 for each predictor variable at the $p < 0.05$ level, which suggests that the possible relationships of the variables in the conceptual model could be tested. Thus, there are no substantial multicollinearity problems encountered in this study.

Table 3 Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

Variables	TB	RT	PB	IL
Mean	4.03	4.60	4.16	4.14
s.d.	0.91	0.45	0.85	0.84
TB				
RT	0.43***			
PB	0.85***	0.46***		
IL	0.88***	0.42***	0.64***	

*** $p < .01$

Table 4 presents the results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis and hypotheses testing of the direct and moderating relationships. In this study, religious tourism plays a significant role in driving, determining and explaining tourism behavior. It has a positive effect on tourism behavior ($b = 0.41, p < 0.01$; $b = 0.06, p < 0.03$; $b = 0.09, p < 0.01$; $b = 0.10, p < 0.01$). According to the existing literature, religious tourism is a contemporary pattern of visitation to places of religious importance or pilgrimage sites where visitors aim to fulfill religious needs and recreational needs (Shinde, 2015) and it is a sacred place that people visit to participate in or follow-up on religious ceremonies, a pilgrimage visit, or an activity to fulfill religious duties (Kartal et al., 2015). It motivates, attracts and influences Phra That Phanom tourists to visit and revisit religious sites, monuments or destinations with the primary aim of engaging with or intensifying a specific faith. It also promotes and enhances visits to sacred places which typically entail visitors experience with ancient pilgrimage routes, learning about local culture, and creating relationships with local communities. Accordingly, religious tourism can fulfill their needs for spirituality. *Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported.*

Interestingly, personal belief is a critical determinant of tourism behavior. It has a significant positive effect on tourism behavior ($b = 0.17, p < 0.02$; $b = 0.82, p < 0.01$). It is a collection of cultural models and schema constructed to understand, orient and manage experience, using subjective reference to the supernatural for appropriate living (Kline, 2012). It can help share conventional ideas about how the world works and an individual learns by talking and acting with his or her follows who help guide an attention to drawing inferences about and evaluation of experience. Accordingly, personal belief can continuously force, motivate and attract Phra That Phanom tourists to visit and revisit places of religious importance or pilgrimage sites. They can shape their attitudes towards religious tourism that links to great tourism behavior in the long term. Thus, personal belief is a main factor that affects the Phra That Phanom tourists' behaviors through embracing their intention to visit and perceiving relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values and interests from Phra That Phanom tourism involvement perspective. *Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is supported.* Similarly, personal belief also plays a moderating role in strengthening and amplifying the religious tourism-tourism behavior relationships. It positively moderates the effects of religious tourism on tourism behavior ($b = 0.15, p < 0.01$). It is important to consider when interpreting research findings. It can help alter, strengthen and amplify the research relationships. Accordingly, a great personal belief has a critical positive effect on the religious tourism-tourism behavior relationships. *Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is supported.*

Table 4 Results of hierarchical multiple regression analysis and hypotheses testing^a

Variables	TB	TB	TB	TB	TB
RT		0.41*** (0.05)	0.06** (0.03)	0.09*** (0.03)	0.10*** (0.03)
PB			0.17** (0.07)	0.82*** (0.03)	
IL			0.69*** (0.07)		0.83*** (0.03)
RT*PB				0.15*** (0.03)	
RT*IL					0.08*** (0.03)
Gender	-0.03 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.09)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	0.01 (0.05)
Age	0.05 (0.07)	0.06 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.07 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)
Salary	0.11 (0.08)	0.07 (0.07)	0.01 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)
Adjusted R ²	0.01	0.18	0.77	0.73	0.77

p<.05, *p<.01, ^a Beta coefficients with standard errors in parenthesis.

In addition, individual learning significantly and positively affects tourism behavior. It has a positive effect on tourism behavior ($b = 0.69, p < 0.01$; $b = 0.83, p < 0.01$). It is a means or an approach of meaning-oriented learning, instruction learning, planned learning, and emergent learning behavior an individual undertakes to study a given situation to flourish and survive in the complex environment (Kusemererwa et al., 2020). It can link to an individual's behaviors to self-lifestyle and self-life practice in a daily life. It is an exclusive and habitual manner of acquiring knowledge, skills and attitude development. It represents an individual's view and interpretation of the world, including explicit and implicit understandings through dialogues, negotiations or arguments with others. In this study, Phra That Phanom tourists have visit and revisit Phra That Phanom because they have existing knowledge and experience which attract, motivate and influence them to participate in and follow-up on religious ceremonies, pilgrimage visits, and activities. With great individual learning, the Phra That Phanom tourists could have more commitments with the places of religious importance or pilgrimage sites in order to fulfill religious needs and recreational needs and visiting religious ceremonies and conferences. Thus, Hypothesis 4 is supported. Moreover, individual learning has a significant positive

moderating effect on the religious tourism-tourism behavior relationships. It positively strengthens, alters and amplifies the effects of religious tourism on tourism behavior ($b = 0.08$, $p < 0.01$). It can change the strength and direction of the research relationships and positively moderate these relationships. Accordingly, individual learning is a significant moderator of the religious tourism-tourism behavior relationship. *Thus, Hypothesis 5 is supported.*

6. Implications and Directions for Future Research

A. Theoretical implication and directions for future research

In this study, the theory of planned behavior is applied and confirmed. It helps explain how religious tourism has an effect on Phra That Phanom tourists' behaviors, including attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. Religious tourism via Phra That Phanom has motivated and attracted thousands of tourists who make pilgrimages to honor the shrine. Accordingly, the theory of planned behavior is a significant concept that explains and determines the effects of religious tourism on tourism behavior. Religious tourism greatly motivates Phra That Phanom's visits. To expand and verify the current study, future research may need to investigate other dimensions and components of religious tourism through an in-depth and extended review of existing literatures. These dimensions and components may help increase benefits, advantages and gains of new religious tourism's results. In addition, future research may need to incorporate other potential moderators of the conceptual research model to strengthen the religious tourism-tourism behavior relationships. Validated moderators could significantly help strengthen the research relationships. Next, future research may need to collect data from non-Asian tourists in order to verify the generalizability of the study. A comparative study between Thai tourists and non-Asian tourists may help prove the results of the current study and explain better understandings of the results. Moreover, there are many famous pagodas in Thailand. Their religious tourism characteristics and tourism behaviors may be different from Phra That Phanom. Therefore, future research may need to collect data from tourists of these pagodas in order to suggest similarities or differences of the results for developing and maintaining sustainable religious tourism. Finally, this study used tourists as a unit of analysis. Future research may need to collect data from an organization's views of religious tourism in order to enhance religious tourism of Phra That Phanom.

B. Managerial implication

Religious tourism is an important tool for promoting, motivating and advancing Phra That Phanom tourists' visits. It is considered a significant concept that enhances growth and sustainability of Phra That Phanom tourism. Best Phra That Phanom tourism may increase willingness to continuously visit or revisit. Thus, executives who are responsible for managing and maintaining Phra That Phanom need to determine and utilize valuable strategies, techniques and operations in order to survive and sustain this tourism for the long term which may include a week-long festival, development and

application of maintenance system and an inspection schedule of Phra That Phanom characteristics and values. In addition, government agencies related to Phra That Phanom, such as Tourism Authority of Thailand, Nakhon Phanom governor, That Phanom mayor, and others need to utilize a strategic plan for developing Phra That Phanom tourism, including a budget assignment and allocation, a religious event and activity, promotion, and perception campaign. More success of Phra That Phanom administration and operation can create sustainability of its reputation and build economic growth in That Phanom city, Nahon Phanom province and the regions nearby. Finally, tourists would gain benefits from visiting and revisiting Phra That Phanom in the long term.

7. Conclusion

Phra That Phanom is not only a highly-revered pagoda located beside the Mekong river, but it is also a major Buddhist pilgrimage site. Religious tourism for this pagoda has been important for motivating visits of Thai people and Buddhists from other Asian countries. The objective of this study is to examine the effects of religious tourism, personal belief and individual learning on tourism behavior of Phra That Phanom tourists in Thailand. In addition, both personal belief and individual learning are hypothesized to moderate the religious tourism-tourism behavior relationships. In this study, 400 Phra That Phanom tourists in Thailand are the samples of the study. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis is utilized to investigate the research relationships. The results of the study indicate that religious tourism has a significant and positive effect on tourism behavior. In addition, personal belief significantly and positively affects tourism behavior and it critically moderates the religious tourism-tourism behavior relationships. Moreover, individual learning significantly and positively affects tourism behavior and it critically moderates the religious tourism-tourism behavior relationships. For verifying and expanding the current study, future research may need to investigate other dimensions and components of religious tourism, put potential moderators of the conceptual research model, collect data from non-Asian tourists, tourists of each pagoda and an organization's views to verify the generalizability of the study, provide similarities and differences of the result, and enhance religious tourism. In summary, religious tourism is important for Phra That Phanom tourists' visits. The results of this study suggest that executives and government agencies of Phra That Phanom need to use effective strategies, techniques and operations to survive and sustain Phra That Phanom. They can help promote and enhance its sustainability, values and reputations and build economic growth in this region. Accordingly, religious tourism success of Phra That Phanom can create its survival, sustainability and economic growth around this region.

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Appendix A

Measurement of all variables

Items

Religious tourism

RT1: Phra That Panom as the sacred religious site of the northeastern part of Thailand, inspires tourists who make pilgrimages to honor the shrine.

RT2: Phra That Panom as the great pagoda of the growing Buddhism, inspires tourists to make pilgrimages to honor the shrine.

RT3: Phra That Phanom is considered a great pagoda because tourists who make pilgrimages to honor to shrine have faith that it contains Lord Buddha's breast bone.

RT4: Phra That Phanom is believed to be a great pagoda for Buddhists to come and worship at least seven times.

RT5: Phra That Phanom is considered a great pagoda because Buddhists believe that making pilgrimages to honor the shrine will result an auspicious life.

RT6: Phra That Phanom is considered a great pagoda because Buddhists believe that making pilgrimages to honor the shrine once will motivate them to live an honorary life.

RT7: Phra That Phanom is considered a great pagoda because tourists who make pilgrimages to honor the shrine believe that it is the only pilgrimage destination for those who are born in the year of the Monkey.

RT8: Phra That Phanom is considered the largest pagoda in the northeastern of Thailand because it has similar characteristics to a Sunday god who had greater power when compared to other gods and this encourages people who are born on Sunday to come as their pilgrimage destination.

RT9: Phra That Phanom is religious tourism which is believed to enhance joy and happiness of tourists.

Personal belief

PB1: A tourist had believed that worshipping sacred item is an honorary life.

PB2: A tourist has accepted that a sacred item can always bring a growing life.

PB3: A tourist has adhered to sacred items which give his/her benefits of living a good life.

PB4: A tourist had always been confident and trusted that a sacred item affects a spirit and conscious of a human life without any particular reasons based on scientific principles and proofs.

PB5: A tourist has always respected sacred items which are believed to result in an inspiring life .

Individual learning

IL1: A tourist has had a good experience from worshipping sacred items.

IL2: A tourist has always understood that worshipping sacred items can lead to a happy mind.

Appendix A

Continued

Items

Individual learning

IL3: A tourist has been confident that worshipping sacred items can lead to good feelings, spirits and inspirations of a living life.

IL4: A tourist has been aware of a worship of sacred items which is fundamental of a living life.

IL5: A tourist has brought learning through experience, understanding and knowledge of a worship of sacred items as a fundamental guideline in determining and planning life activities.

Tourism behavior

TB1: A tourist has always come to worship Phra That Phanom and made it as a normal way of living life.

TB2: A tourist has searched for an opportunity and a good time to worship Phra That Phanom every year of living life.

TB3: A tourist has clearly planned and determined a schedule of activity and travel for a worship of Phra That Phanom.

TB4: A tourist has been confident that worshipping Phra That Phanom is necessary for living a life of human.

TB5: A tourist would revisit and worship Phra That Phanom when he or she has an appropriate opportunity and a suitable time period.

TB6: A tourist would always recommend and make a word of mouth to relatives, friends and others on the basis of happiness gained from worshipping Phra That Phanom.

TB7: A tourist has always persisted in Phra That Phanom which is a sacred item of an important living life principle.

TB8: A tourist has always understood that a worship of Phra That Phanom is always an honorary life.
