

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Expectation of the Elderly and Disabled Towards Facilities and Utilities at Buddhist Tourist Attractions in Mueang District, Chiang Rai, Thailand

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## ABSTRACT

The Tourism for All initiative has been central to public interests since 2016 due to the fact that World Tourism Organization (WTO) has urged tourism to take into account equality in accessing tourist destinations and the use of facilities and utilities for those with physical impairments. Also, the population structure in Thailand undergoes changing and transcending into ageing society. A number of scholars place their interests on studying adjustment of tourist sites to accommodate the needs of the increasing number of elderly and disabled people. This article attempts to examine expectations of the elderly and disabled in visiting Buddhist tourism spots in Chiang Rai, Thailand. The data will be used to improve the design and development of facilities and utilities in the Buddhist tourism sites to meet with the tourists' expectations and satisfaction and therefore create memorable tourism experience for them.

**Key words:** Expectation, elderly and disabled, Buddhist tourist attractions,

## INTRODUCTION

The demographic structure of Thailand is changing as the population structure is in transition to "Population Ageing" and the modern lifestyle increases the number of people with chronic illness. And thus, the number of elderly and disabled people in Thailand has increased at a rapid rate [4]. The universal design is referred to the design and develop the infrastructure, services, and products to equally accommodate people of all groups in the society whether it be the elderly, disabled, or people with physical impairments. The heart of design is convenience, safety, fairness and equality in everyday lifestyle and in other places in regard to construction of buildings, facilities and utilities. This means the creative design ideas for public benefits [19]. For this reason, many countries around the globe pay attention on improving and developing tourist attractions to meet the trend of "Tourism for All" to accommodate the growth of elderly and disabled travelers or rehabilitation patients by assuring that all the attractions are equipped with facilities and utilities for the elderly and disabled travelers [3]. So, they can have access to and use these services at tourism spots with "convenience" and "safety" whether it be parking, ramps, toilets, elevators and braille blocks for the blind [11].

For Thailand, Office of the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Tourism and Sports found that Buddhist sites lacked facilities for the disabled and elderly. And, the survey was not conducted to explore the needs of the

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elderly and the disabled prior to development of the facilities and utilities. [8] Thus, the design could not optimally meet the needs of users [14]. Therefore, developed the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Tourism Development Plan, which proposed strategies for the development of infrastructure and facilities to accommodate expansion of tourism industry and Tourism for All. However, tourists with impairments such as the disabled and elderly still faced difficulties traveling to many places [22]. Nevertheless, older people and travelers with disabilities are increasing and traveling more than in the past [21]. Thitikarn Stated that mobility impaired is only physical limitation and inferior perspective from normal people in society. This is not the true travel problems and obstacles making it difficult to travel for neither the elderly nor disabled but the fact is because inefficient facilities that cannot truly serve the disabled [24].

The Buddhist tourist attractions in Chiang Rai are popular among Thai and foreigner tourists, especially elderly people who want to worship the holy things, perform meditation, and observe beauty of religion places. The top-5 popular Buddhist sites in Chiang Rai are Wat Phra Kaew, Wat Huai Pla Khang, Wat Rong Suea Ten, Wat Rong Khun, and Rai Chern Tawan International Meditation Center. This study recognizes the needs to examine the expectations of the elderly and the disabled on the use of facilities for all in these Buddhist tourist sites for improving the design of facilities that optimally meet the needs in using the facilities of the elderly and the disabled.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Universal design

Universal Design is a universal concept that the United Nations publishes and promotes equality [26]. The meaning of universal design is product design and environment that everyone can use as widely as possible, without the limitations of age and physical condition. In addition, universal design is a concept that takes into account the usage, cost, benefit, coverage for all, and no special modifications to specific individuals or groups. It is a design that starts with the idea of how to do different types of people, such as the elderly, the pregnant, the dwarf, the baby with the stroller, physically disabled, and intellectual disability can live in a society with ordinary people normally and peacefully [23].

[1] Seven Principles of Universal Design were developed by a working group of architects, product designers, engineers and environmental design researchers, led by the late Ronald Mace [23]. Universal Design can help to create an inclusive, accessible play space for all by following the principles in table 1

**Table 1:** Seven Principles of Universal Design

Principle	The Design	Examples for Play spaces
Equitable Use	Is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities	Motion-operated automatic doors
Flexibility in Use	Accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities	Equipment, benches, chairs, etc. of different heights and sizes
Simple and Intuitive Use	Easy to understand, regardless of users experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level	Simple signage easy for all people to interpret
Perceptible Information	Communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities	Wall, floor, and sidewalk art communicates location
Tolerance for Error	Minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions	Paint splatters on the art room wall allows for children's mistakes
Low Physical Effort	Used effectively and comfortably with a minimum of fatigue	Seamless transition in flooring and playground surfacing
Size and Space for Approach and Use	Provides appropriate size and space for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of users body size, posture, or mobility	Extra-wide doorways and entries to equipment

Sources: The Center for Universal Design (1997)

### 2.2 Tourist Expectations

Expectations are the prediction of outcomes of an activity before the activity takes place, often based on previous experiences. Expectations might be partially based on a marketing message that is itself a representation of an ideal, whilst the actual experience is one that is based on degrees of tolerance of service that is satisfactory, but which does not quite meet expectation [17].

Expectancy model is prominent in explaining motivation, and it represents the psychological needs to pursuit a goal state. The two conditions for this pursuit are: 1) it must be possible to anticipate the occurrence of the goal state so there must be an expectation; and 2) the goal state must have some intrinsic value or attractiveness (valence) and it serves as a motive [27]. Thus, the relationship between motivation and expectation is that motivation can be conceptualized as the product of expectancy and valence [4]. A recent research study carried out proved the correlation between tourist expectation and travel motivation. Interestingly, when tourists have high expectations, they are more willing to search for tour information, acquire knowledge regarding the destination culture, and other information [6]. In addition, Larsen [5] suggests that tourism experience includes interactions that happen on three stages:

- 1) Pre-trip (expectation). On the pre-trip stage, tourists plan and anticipate the possible activities through expectations. Expectations before the trip are the pre-perceptions of travelling performance [5, 18].
- 2) During-trip (perception). During the travelling process, tourists generate their actual perceptions and assessments of the tourism services and attributes.
- 3) Post-trip (memory). After the trip tourists have memories, through overview of photos, story-telling or word-of-mouth conversations such memory will provide feedbacks for next rounds of experiences [2, 15]. See in Figure 1.

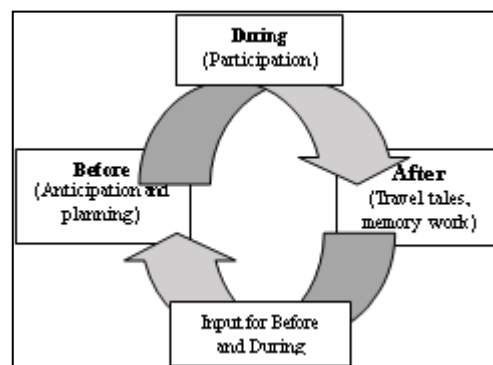


Figure 1 Experience circle

Sources: Ek et al. (2008)

Tourist expectations are an important factor for tourism destinations and tourism activities. If tourist have low expectations, it is less likely that they will go to a certain destination or participate in a certain activity. Rodriguez Del Bosque and San Martin (2008) state that images influence expectations. A favorable preconceived image from the destination or activity will have a positive effect on a person's belief of a future experience at the destination or from the activity. This positive effect will make the destination or activity occupy a favorable position for the person's choice process.

### 2.3 Measurement of Expectations

The research of Rodriguez Del Bosque and San Martin [16] on consumer expectation is an example of a study that include variables of interest to investigate different hypotheses of expectations. Expectations should be measured for each attribute of the product which is of importance, as well as for the overall experience measured the items on a 7-point Likert-Scale [9]. The respondents were asked to indicate to what level of expectation they based each item.

### 2.4 Buddhist tourism in Thailand

Thailand in the eyes of foreign tourists, most are considered as a country with beautiful tourist attractions, unique culture, and distinctive and long-lasting way of life. In particular, it is a land of Buddhism, which tourists are interested in and want to study follow the guidelines of Buddhism for education and religious practice or walking for pilgrimage similar to Buddhists travel to worship in four districts in India. And to commemorate the Kathina ceremony in the importance religious day, which shows that religious activities are a part of making

people travel to important religious place. Because of this, a group of foreign tourists choose religious activities as an alternative to travel in Thailand. This niche market not only draws international tourists into Thailand, but also boosts domestic travel and contributes significantly to the local economy. Thai people belief in Buddhism for a long time with the unity. The way of life of Thai people who have ties to Buddhism from birth to death. Buddhism is a spiritual body that is a place to purify the mind, develop the mind is a place to study, learn and become a popular tourist more and more continuously. Buddhist tourism aims to generate income in the community and is also a succession of Buddhism by encouraging both Thai and foreign tourists to visit temples [7].

Tourism Authority of Thailand [25] was divided the type of Buddhist tourism attractions into: 1) Religious sites: refer to buildings or religious buildings. The religious residence of the priests, the type of religious places. It may be divided into different religions, such as Buddhism, Wat Chedi, Stupa, Prang, Pagoda, Islam, mosque or mosque, Christian churches. And 2) Meditation site: The place for the practice of Pertinent Insight meditation in accordance with Buddhist principles such as Sathien Tham, and Bureau of Enlightenment Wat Om Noi. The purposes of Buddhist tourism are doing merit, sacred worship or practice, and participate in the ordinances [12]. Moreover, the study of Buddhist tourism in Chiang Rai focuses on the process of learning and creating historical and cultural tourist routes in Buddhist history and local culture into: 1) Historical sources and Buddhism 2) Object-oriented religious tourism that focuses on Buddhist art 3) Focus on Faith, Belief and Cultural Traditions and 4) Dhamma Practice [10].

### 2.5 Conceptual Framework

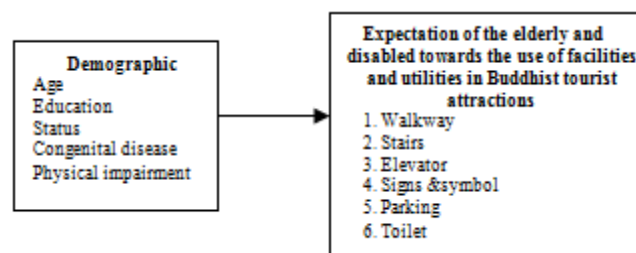


Figure 2 Conceptual Framework

### 3. Objectives

1. To examine the expectation of the elderly and disabled towards facilities and utilities at Buddhist tourism sites in Mueang District, Chiang Rai Province
2. To investigate demographic factors of the elderly and disabled that affect the expectation in using the facilities and utilities in Buddhist tourist attractions in Mueang District, Chiang Rai Province

### Hypothesis

$H_1$  : The elderly and disabled with different demographic factors show different expectation towards the use of facilities and utilities in Buddhist tourist attractions.

$H_0$  : The elderly and disabled with different demographic factors do not show different expectation towards the use of facilities and utilities in Buddhist tourist attractions.

### 4. Materials and Methods

The population in this study was the elderly and those having impairment to access facilities and utilities in the Buddhist tourist attractions in Chiang Rai. And, 450 samples were recruited using accidental sampling technique during August 2017 to March 2018. The questionnaire used in the study was sectioned into 3 parts: general information of the respondents, expectation to the use of facilities, and suggestions to improve facilities. There are 3 levels of assessment: 1 = low expectation, 2 = moderate expectation, 3 = high expectation. F-test was employed to test the hypothesis.

#### 4.1 Research Instrument

The 3-ranking scale questionnaire was constructed to assess the expectation of the elderly and the disabled on the use of facilities in the Buddhist tourist attractions. The facilities were classified into 6 types: walkways, stairs, elevators, signs and symbols, parking and toilets. The interpretation of the 3 levels of expectation were the following.

Mean score 2.34-3.00 refers to Expectation at the high level

Mean score 1.67-2.33 refers to Expectation at the moderate level

Mean score 1.00-1.66 refers to Expectation at the low level

Thirty copies of the questionnaire were tried out and Cronbrach's Alpha reliability test was performed and the reliability score was 0.87.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Demographic information of the respondents

Age: Majority of the respondents were between 61-70 years old accounting for 141 persons (31.3%), followed by 51-60 years old accounting for 139 persons (30.9%), and below 50 years old accounting for 122 persons (27.1%) respectively.

Education: Majority of the respondents held secondary education accounting for 141 persons (31.3%), followed by primary education accounting for 121 persons (26.9%), and bachelor degree accounting for 102 persons (22.7%) respectively.

Status: Majority of the respondents were married accounting for 313 persons (69.6%), followed by single accounting for 82 persons (18.2%), and widow/widower accounting for 36 persons (8%) respectively.

Congenital disease: Majority of the respondents had no disease accounting for 292 persons (64.8%), followed by diabetes accounting for 44 persons (9.8%), visual impaired accounting for 38 persons (8.4%) respectively.

Physical Impairments: Most of the respondents had no physical impairments accounting for 300 persons (66.7%), followed by visual impaired accounting for 79 persons (17.6%), communication impaired 24 persons (5.3%) respectively.

**Table 2:** Number and percentage of the respondents' demographic information

<b>Demographic Information</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Age</b>		
Below 50 Yrs.	122	27.1
51 - 60	139	30.9
61 - 70	141	31.3
71 – 80	39	8.7
81 and Above	9	2.0
<b>Education</b>		
Below Primary	28	6.3
Primary	121	26.9
Secondary	141	31.3
Vocational	22	4.9
Bachelor	102	22.7
Master	15	3.3
Doctorate	21	4.6
<b>Status</b>		
Single	82	18.2
Married	313	69.6
Widow/Widower	36	8.0
Separated	19	4.2
<b>Congenital Disease</b>		
None	292	64.8
Diabetes	44	9.8
Visual impaired	38	8.4
Heart disease	21	4.7
Knee pain/Osteoarthritis knee/Osteoporosis	17	3.8
Deaf/Hearing impaired	6	1.3
	32	7.1
<b>Physical Impairment</b>		
None	300	66.7
Visual	79	17.6
Auditory	17	3.8
Communication	24	5.3

Mobility	7	1.5
Cognitive and Learning	12	2.7
Physical	11	2.4

### 5.2 Expectation of the elderly and disabled towards the use of facilities and utilities in the Buddhist tourist attractions

The elderly and disabled tourists showed overall expectation in using facilities within the Buddhist tourist attractions at the high level ( $\bar{x}$ = 2.34, S.D. = 0.43). The expectation on using walkway services in the Buddhist tourist sites at the highest level ( $\bar{x}$ = 2.52, S.D. = 1.04), followed by toilets ( $\bar{x}$ = 2.47, S.D.= 0.53), and parking respectively ( $\bar{x}$ = 2.43, S.D.= 0.59). The facilities holding the lowest level of expectation was elevator ( $\bar{x}$ = 1.88, S.D. = 0.93) as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** The expectation of the elderly and disabled towards the facilities and utilities for all at the Buddhist tourism sites

Facilities and Utilities	Expectation		
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Interpretation
Walkway	2.52	1.04	High
Stairs	2.18	0.46	Moderate
Elevator	1.88	0.93	Moderate
Signs and symbols	2.35	0.45	High
Parking	2.43	0.59	High
Toilet	2.47	0.53	High
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.34</b>	<b>0.43</b>	High

### 5.3 Demographic factors of the elderly and disabled affecting the expectation in the use of facilities and utilities at the Buddhist tourist temples in Muaeng District, Chiang Rai Province

The hypothesis testing indicated that the respondents with different age, education, status, congenital disease, and physical impaired showed an effect on the expectation in the use of facilities and utilities in the Buddhist tourist attractions with significance level of .05 as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Result of expectation towards facilities and utilities in the Buddhist tourism sites classified by demographic factors

Demographic factors		$\bar{x}$	Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Age	Below 50 Yrs.	2.23	BetweenGroup WithinGroup Total	10.81 160.66 171.47	4 445 449	2.703 0.361	7.488	0.000*
	51 - 60	2.08						
	61 - 70	1.87						
	71 – 80	2.01						
	81 and Above	1.58						
Education	Below primary	2.14	BetweenGroup WithinGroup Total	7.388 164.081 171.469	6 443 449	1.055 0.371	2.843	0.007*
	Primary	2.06						
	Secondary	1.90						
	Vocational	2.03						
	Bachelor	2.07						
	Master	2.51						
	Doctorate	2.00						
Status	Single	1.98	BetweenGroup WithinGroup Total	7.477 163.992 171.469	3 446 449	2.492 0.368	6.778	0.000*
	Married	2.08						
	Widow/Widower	2.09						
	Separated	1.45						
Congenital Disease	None	2.11	BetweenGroup WithinGroup Total	9.257 162.212 171.469	6 443 449	1.543 0.366	4.214	0.000*
	Diabetes	2.00						
	Visual impaired	1.92						

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	Heart disease	1.80						
	Knee	1.48						
	pain/Osteoarthritis	2.26						
	knee/Osteoporosis	1.94						
	Deaf/Hearing impaired							
	Hypertension							
Physical Impairment	None	2.07	BetweenGroup WithinGroup Total	6.560 164.940 171.469	6 443 449	1.088 0.372	2.923	0.008*
	Visual	1.99						
	Auditory	2.15						
	Communication	1.92						
	Mobility	2.02						
	Cognitive and	1.47						
	Learning Physical	2.14						

\* Statistical Significance at 0.05

## 6. Discussion

The results of this study indicated that the tourists with different age range, education background, congenital disease, and physical impairments showed different expectation towards the range of facilities provided at the Buddhist tourist attractions. The results were consistent with [1] which stated that people with physical disabilities expressed their opinion towards difficulties in traveling on the basis of their physical limitations. The study by [6] also revealed that the disabled needed wide space on downward walkway in having enough room for their wheelchairs so that they could have equality in accessing facilities and services provided at the tourism sites similarly to normal people in the society. The business sector should focus on providing the elderly and disabled equal access to services. [7] Pointed out that the 1-5 star hotels in Thailand had improved design of hotel facilities to accommodate the elderly and disabled such as wheelchair ramp, size of walkway, room and bathroom wider than normal, elevator control panel position suitable for wheelchair users. This is considered a new dimension of tourism in today's society with no restriction in age and physical disability.

## 7. Conclusion

The elderly and disabled people showed their expectation to be facilitated with facilities within the Buddhist tourist attractions at the moderate level. The focus of their expectation with the highest level was the service of pedestrian accessibility, followed by toilets and parking. This is considered basic facilities that the tourist attraction should provide to facilitate visitors. In addition, the design of facilities for the elderly and disabled must consider physical variables such as age, status and other physical limitations in order to be able to provide facilities to optimally meet the needs of the elderly and disabled.

The agencies involving in tourism development in Chiang Rai Province should accelerate developing the facilities in major tourist destinations within the province based on the concept of facility design for all and seriously mobilizing the tourism for all policy to upgrade the quality of service and tourism in Chiang Rai to meet the demands of national and international recognition.

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## Authors' Contribution

Khwanruethai Krongyut and Wachirawit Worachit-sanuphong developed the idea and important role in the result and material section. Khwanruethai Krongyut performed the statistical analysis, the discussion and the abstract submission.

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