

# Evaluating the LCM Framework for Institutional Sustainability Impact of Buddhist Leadership and Management Innovation on the Operational Effectiveness of Urban

Taranun Sukpoon<sup>1</sup>, Naiyana Wongjunya<sup>2</sup>, Chaichana Wongjunya<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>1,2,3</sup> Suan Sunadha Rajabhat University, Thailand

## Abstract

Modern religious institutions in urban settings face significant challenges in resource management, transparency, and community engagement. This research develops and validates the LCM Model (Leadership, Committees, and Modern Management) to enhance the operational effectiveness of Buddhist temples in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area. Utilizing a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design, the study first conducted a quantitative survey with 360 temple abbots and representatives using multistage random sampling. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) through LISREL. This was followed by a qualitative phase involving in-depth interviews with 15 key informants, including successful administrators and government officials, to refine the model. The findings indicate that Buddhist leadership, community participation, and management innovation all maintain a "High" level of practice within urban temples. The SEM analysis confirms that these three factors have a statistically significant positive influence on temple operational effectiveness ( $p < .05$ ), collectively explaining 87% of the variance in institutional performance. Notably, Buddhist leadership serves as the primary driver, catalyzing both community synergy and the adoption of modern management tools. The resulting LCM Model provides a strategic roadmap for religious administrators to achieve long-term sustainability and maintain public trust amidst rapid social and technological change.

**Keywords:** Buddhist Leadership; Management Innovation; Community Participation; Institutional Effectiveness; LCM Model; Urban Religious Governance.

## I. Introduction

The landscape of religious administration in the twenty-first century is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by the dual forces of rapid urbanization and the pervasive influence of digital technology. In Thailand, the Buddhist temple, or *Wat*, has historically functioned as the epicenter of social, educational, and spiritual life. According to data from the National Office of Buddhism, there are currently more than 41,000 temples scattered across the kingdom, serving as both legal entities and community sanctuaries. However, as the nation transitions toward a "Thailand 4.0" digital economy, these traditional institutions are facing unprecedented challenges regarding their operational sustainability and public relevance. The disparity between ancient monastic traditions and the requirements of modern administrative transparency has created a significant "governance gap" that necessitates a systematic re-evaluation of how temples are managed, particularly in high-density urban environments like the Bangkok Metropolitan Area (BMA).

The urgency of this research is underscored by a series of high-profile administrative crises that have eroded public faith in the clergy. Srisuwannaket (2021) notes that temple corruption and the misappropriation of funds have frequently hit national headlines, exposing legal loopholes and a systemic lack of transparency within the closed administrative circles of the Sangha. Investigations by the Police Anti-Corruption Division and the State Audit Office previously identified evidence of fraud in restoration schemes across 33 temples, involving sums exceeding 270 million baht (Thailand Development Research Institute [TDRI], 2021). Such scandals are not merely isolated incidents of financial misconduct; they represent a fundamental failure in institutional management. When religious

institutions, which are supported by over 3 billion baht in annual state subsidies and billions more in private donations, fail to provide verifiable accounting, the result is a precipitous drop in Thailand's Corruption Perception Index (CPI), where the nation recently ranked 104th out of 180 countries (TDRI, 2021).

In the specific context of the Bangkok Metropolitan Area, the complexity of temple management is magnified by the diverse needs of an urban population. Unlike rural temples that often benefit from tight-knit communal ties, urban temples must cater to a transient, technologically savvy, and increasingly skeptical demographic. Anamwathana (2025) highlights a shifting trend in religious engagement among Thai youth, noting that while 86 percent of the population still identifies as Buddhist, only slightly more than half of undergraduate respondents consider Dhamma teachings when making significant life decisions. This "spiritual drifting" is further complicated by the emergence of the "Mutelu" wave—a phenomenon where Gen Z and Millennials integrate traditional beliefs with e-commerce and digital lifestyle trends (Thailand Now, 2025). As spirituality moves online, temples that remain tethered to archaic, non-transparent administrative models risk becoming obsolete. The modern urban temple must therefore function as a "Smart Temple," utilizing digital tools not only for the propagation of faith but for the rigorous management of institutional resources.

To address these challenges, the integration of secular management theories with Buddhist principles offers a promising pathway for reform. Total Quality Management (TQM) and the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, traditionally applied in the corporate and educational sectors, have shown significant potential when adapted for faith-based organizations. Hananta and Susyanti (2024) argue that TQM implementation positively impacts organizational performance, innovation, and stakeholder satisfaction. When applied to religious settings, TQM principles such as continuous improvement and fact-based decision-making can bridge the gap between spiritual goals and administrative efficiency. However, the application of such "mechanistic" tools must be balanced with the "organic" nature of religious leadership. In a Buddhist context, this means aligning modern strategic planning with the *Brahmavihāra* principles—Metta (loving-kindness), Karuna (compassion), Mudita (sympathetic joy), and Upekkha (equanimity).

Leadership remains the most critical variable in this administrative evolution. The dissertation research conducted among 360 temple abbots in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area reveals that leadership is the primary driver of institutional success, accounting for a substantial portion of the variance in operational effectiveness. Specifically, the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis conducted using LISREL software demonstrated that the integrated factors of leadership, community participation, and innovation explain 87% of the total variance in temple effectiveness (Sukpoon, 2025). This statistic is a testament to the fact that when an abbot transitions from a traditional "authority figure" to a "strategic leader" who values transparency and modern management, the entire institution experiences a revitalization. This transformation is not merely about adopting technology; it is about fostering a culture of "Mindful Governance" where decision-making is inclusive and data-driven.

The role of the Temple Committee (C) in the proposed LCM Model is another cornerstone of this research. Historically, the management of temple assets was often concentrated in the hands of the abbot or a small, non-professional group of laypeople. This centralized model is no longer viable in an era where public accountability is demanded. Nuttavuthisit et al. (2014) emphasize that participatory governance is the key to promoting accountability and transparency in resource allocation. By empowering committees that include professionals from various fields—accountants, lawyers, and community leaders—temples can ensure that their operations meet the legal and ethical standards of the 21st century. The research findings indicate that community participation maintains a "High" level of practice (mean = 3.82) in successful urban temples, suggesting that synergy between the clergy and the laity is essential for long-term sustainability (Sukpoon, 2025).

Furthermore, Management Innovation (M) serves as the third pillar of the LCM framework.

Innovation in this context is not limited to social media presence; it encompasses the systemic adoption of "Management 4.0" practices. This includes the implementation of digital accounting systems, the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for educational outreach, and the development of "Ecosystems of Faith" that are verifiable and efficient. Wongjunya (2025) suggests that the transition toward a "SMART Temple 4.0" model allows for a more effective transition of religious property management into the digital age. This is particularly relevant given that the National Office of Buddhism has begun exploring digital Buddhism initiatives, such as the Digital Buddhism Research & Innovation Center, to assist in the national strategic deployment of religious dissemination (Media OutReach, 2024).

The significance of this study also extends to the socioeconomic impact of temples on urban development. A well-managed temple serves as more than just a place of worship; it is a provider of social welfare, a preserver of cultural heritage, and a hub for community education. If temples fail to manage their resources effectively, these social functions are compromised. Conversely, when a temple achieves operational excellence, it can significantly contribute to the "Sustainable Development Goals" (SDGs) by promoting social equality and community well-being. The dissertation data indicates that operational effectiveness is measured through four key dimensions: infrastructure management, academic and educational promotion, religious propagation, and administrative transparency. The high R-squared value of 0.87 in the predictive model confirms that the LCM framework provides a robust and reliable roadmap for achieving these outcomes (Sukpoon, 2025).

Despite the clear benefits of modernizing temple administration, significant barriers remain. The hierarchical nature of the Sangha and the traditional patronage system often create resistance to change. Many abbots, while spiritually advanced, lack the managerial training required to oversee large-scale urban institutions. There is also a persistent misconception that "management" and "business-like" practices are antithetical to Buddhist asceticism. However, as documented in the *Dighajanu Sutta*, the Buddha himself taught the importance of wise resource management and the diligent preservation of wealth for the benefit of the community. Therefore, the LCM Model does not seek to "secularize" the temple, but rather to provide the tools necessary to protect and enhance its spiritual mission in a complex modern world.

In conclusion, the necessity of this research stems from the urgent need to restore public trust and ensure the institutional sustainability of Buddhist temples in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area. The crisis of faith triggered by non-transparent management can only be solved through a holistic approach that integrates Buddhist leadership, community participation, and modern management innovation. By validating the LCM Model through both quantitative and qualitative methods, this study offers a scientific and culturally grounded framework for religious governance. The findings provide critical insights for the National Office of Buddhism and local temple administrators, offering a clear path toward operational excellence that balances tradition with the demands of the digital era. The high level of predictive power found in the 87% variance explanation confirms that the components of leadership, committees, and innovation are not merely complementary; they are the essential building blocks of the modern urban temple.

## II. Literature Review & Hypotheses

The theoretical framework of this research is constructed upon a multidisciplinary synthesis that bridges the gap between secular organizational management and the sacred traditions of the Thai Sangha. To understand the operational effectiveness of urban temples, one must first integrate the paradigms of Total Quality Management (TQM), Strategic Planning, and Sustainable Development. Total Quality Management, originally pioneered by theorists such as Deming and Juran, posits that organizational excellence is not a static destination but a continuous process of improvement driven by leadership commitment and stakeholder engagement. In the context of a Buddhist temple, TQM

translates into the "Mindful Management" of resources, where every administrative action—from the maintenance of temple grounds to the propagation of Dhamma—is subjected to a cycle of planning, execution, and evaluation. As noted by Hananta and Susyanti (2024), TQM principles are increasingly relevant to non-profit and religious organizations because they emphasize transparency and the reduction of "waste," which in a temple setting refers to the inefficient use of public donations and community trust.

Strategic Planning further complements this framework by providing the "Visionary Roadmap" necessary for urban temples to navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing social landscape. Strategic management in a religious context involves the alignment of a temple's spiritual mission with the practical realities of urban governance. This requires what Kaplan and Norton (2001) describe as a "Balanced Scorecard" approach, where success is measured not only by financial stability but by internal process efficiency, community learning, and the fulfillment of the spiritual needs of the congregants. In the Bangkok Metropolitan Area, where temples compete with digital distractions and secular lifestyles, strategic planning allows abbots to identify their "Internal Strengths" (such as historical heritage) and "External Opportunities" (such as digital outreach) to ensure institutional relevance. This strategic lens is crucial for the "M" component of the LCM Model, representing Management Innovation, as it shifts the temple from a reactive traditionalism to a proactive institutionalism.

The third theoretical pillar is Sustainable Development, specifically as it aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For a temple to be "Effective," it must be "Sustainable"—meaning it can maintain its functions across generations without depleting its social or spiritual capital. The Sustainable Development Theory, when applied to the BMA's religious hubs, emphasizes the "Social Pillar" of sustainability, where the temple acts as a provider of "Quality Education" (SDG 4) and a promoter of "Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions" (SDG 16). By adopting these global standards, temples can standardize their operations, making them verifiable to both the state and the public. This theoretical integration is not a secularization of the temple but an empowerment of its traditional role through modern structural rigor.

Defining "Operational Effectiveness" within this study requires a multidimensional approach that captures the unique characteristics of a Buddhist institution. Based on the dissertation findings, effectiveness is operationalized through four primary dimensions: Infrastructure and Environment Management, Academic and Educational Promotion, Religious Propagation, and Administrative Governance. Infrastructure management involves the physical upkeep of the *Ubosot* (ordination hall) and public facilities, ensuring they are conducive to meditation and community gathering. Academic promotion refers to the temple's role in supporting both monastic and lay education, which is a traditional cornerstone of Thai society. Religious propagation involves the innovative dissemination of Buddhist teachings to contemporary audiences. Finally, Administrative Governance focuses on the transparency of financial accounts and the systematic management of temple property. The research identifies that a high level of performance in these areas is what constitutes "Operational Excellence" in the 21st century.

The development of research hypotheses stems from the causal relationships between the three primary latent variables: Buddhist Leadership, Community Participation, and Management Innovation. Hypothesis 1 (H1) posits that Buddhist Leadership has a direct positive influence on Community Participation. This is grounded in the belief that an abbot who embodies the *Sangahavatthu 4* (virtues of bonding) can effectively mobilize the laity and the temple committee to take an active role in governance. Hypothesis 2 (H2) suggests that Buddhist Leadership significantly drives Management Innovation. In this path, the leader acts as a "Change Agent" who facilitates the adoption of new technologies and administrative methods. Hypothesis 3 (H3) proposes that Community Participation influences Management Innovation, reflecting the idea that a diverse committee brings in fresh

perspectives and professional skills that catalyze innovative practices.

The remaining hypotheses focus on the direct impact of these factors on the ultimate outcome: Operational Effectiveness. Hypothesis 4 (H4) argues that Buddhist Leadership directly enhances Operational Effectiveness by providing the moral and strategic direction needed for excellence. Hypothesis 5 (H5) suggests that Community Participation leads to greater Effectiveness through increased accountability and resource sharing. Finally, Hypothesis 6 (H6) posits that Management Innovation is a critical determinant of Effectiveness, as modern tools and processes allow the temple to achieve its goals more efficiently. The structural model validated in this research confirms these paths, demonstrating that these variables are deeply interconnected. Collectively, the model explains 87% of the variance in the operational effectiveness of temples in the BMA, providing a statistically robust foundation for the LCM Model (Sukpoon, 2025).

### III. Research Methodology

To capture the multidimensional nature of religious administration, this study employed a Mixed-Methods Sequential Explanatory Design. This methodology is particularly suited for complex organizational research as it allows the researcher to first identify broad patterns through quantitative data and then provide "Depth and Texture" through qualitative insights. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), a mixed-methods approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem than either method alone, especially when investigating human behavior and institutional dynamics within a cultural context like the Thai Sangha.

The quantitative phase of the research utilized a cross-sectional survey design to test the hypothesized relationships between leadership, participation, innovation, and effectiveness. The population for this study consisted of the abbots and administrative representatives of Buddhist temples located within the Bangkok Metropolitan Area (including Bangkok, Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, Samut Prakan, Samut Sakhon, and Nakhon Pathom). Using a Multistage Random Sampling technique, a total sample size of 360 respondents was determined. This sample size is statistically significant for the application of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), as it meets the general requirement of having at least 10 to 20 observations per estimated parameter. The primary instrument was a structured questionnaire featuring a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Highest" (5) to "Lowest" (1).

The validity and reliability of the quantitative instrument were rigorously tested. The Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was evaluated by a panel of five experts, resulting in scores between 0.80 and 1.00 for all items, indicating high content validity. Furthermore, a pilot study was conducted with 30 non-sample participants to test the reliability of the scales. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for all latent variables exceeded 0.90, with the overall reliability of the questionnaire reaching a remarkable 0.985 (Sukpoon, 2025). This high level of internal consistency ensures that the instrument reliably measures the intended constructs of Buddhist leadership and institutional performance across different urban settings.

Following the quantitative analysis, the qualitative phase was initiated to refine and validate the proposed LCM Model. This phase involved "Intensity Sampling" to select 15 key informants who possess deep expertise in Buddhist administration, management science, and public policy. The informant group included highly successful temple abbots (recognized for their exemplary management), senior officials from the National Office of Buddhism, and distinguished academics in the field of Innovation Management. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, allowing the researcher to probe into the "How" and "Why" behind the quantitative results. This qualitative depth was essential for understanding the nuances of the LCM framework—specifically, how "Leadership (L)," "Committees (C)," and "Modern Management (M)" interact in real-world scenarios to overcome traditional administrative barriers.

Data analysis for this research involved a two-tiered approach. First, descriptive statistics,

including means and standard deviations, were used to assess the current levels of the study's variables. Second, and more importantly, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was performed using the LISREL software package. SEM is a powerful multivariate statistical technique that allows for the simultaneous estimation of multiple causal relationships while accounting for measurement error. The model fit was evaluated using several indices, including the Chi-Square/df ratio, the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The final model showed an excellent fit with the empirical data (P-Value = 0.35, RMSEA = 0.015), confirming the validity of the LCM framework.

The qualitative data were analyzed using Content Analysis and Triangulation. The interview transcripts were coded to identify recurring themes and "Success Factors" that contributed to the model's refinement. By triangulating the SEM results with the expert testimonies, the research ensured that the final LCM Model was not only statistically significant but also practically applicable and culturally appropriate for the Thai Sangha. This rigorous methodological structure provides a "Proven" foundation for the study's findings, ensuring that the recommendations for enhancing temple effectiveness are grounded in both high-level data and expert human experience.

#### **IV. Results and Analysis**

The analytical phase of this research represents a rigorous synthesis of quantitative data and structural modeling, aimed at decoding the complex administrative dynamics within the Buddhist temples of the Bangkok Metropolitan Area (BMA). Following the data collection from 360 respondents and the subsequent refinement through qualitative expert interviews, the results provide a statistically significant map of institutional performance. The analysis is divided into three critical areas: the descriptive assessment of organizational variables, the validation of the structural equation model (SEM), and the confirmatory factor analysis of the latent constructs that define the LCM framework.

##### *Descriptive Statistical Analysis: The State of Urban Monastic Governance*

The initial layer of analysis involves a descriptive evaluation of the four primary variables: Buddhist Leadership, Community Participation, Management Innovation, and Operational Effectiveness. The findings reveal a compelling consensus among temple administrators regarding the current state of religious governance. The variable of Buddhist Leadership (L) emerged as a cornerstone of the study, achieving an overall mean score of 3.80 on a 5-point Likert scale, with a standard deviation indicating a high level of agreement among the respondents. According to the interpretation criteria established by Best (1977), a mean score within the 3.41 to 4.20 range signifies a "High" level of practice. This suggests that abbots in the BMA are not merely traditional spiritual figures but are increasingly perceived as virtuous leaders who integrate the *Brahmavihāra* principles—loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity—into their daily administrative routines. When compared to broader studies on public sector leadership in Thailand, such as the research by Phrakrusoponthamrongkit and Chareonpu (2019), it becomes evident that religious leadership is evolving toward a more "Professionalized Virtue" model, where spiritual authority is leveraged to foster institutional stability and community trust.

Further examination of the data shows that Management Innovation (M) also maintains a high standing, with a mean score of 3.76. This figure is particularly significant given the traditionalist nature of the Sangha. It indicates that urban temples are successfully moving beyond archaic administrative methods and are beginning to adopt "Management 4.0" strategies. This innovation is observed in two primary dimensions: process innovation and technological adoption. The high mean for innovation suggests that temples are increasingly utilizing digital platforms for financial transparency and religious propagation, matching the trends identified by the National Office of Buddhism regarding the digitization of religious assets (Media OutReach, 2024). This shift is critical because, as noted by

Hananta and Susyanti (2024), innovation is the primary catalyst for organizational survival in volatile environments. The fact that temples in the BMA score highly in this area suggests a readiness to adapt to the "Mutelu" wave and other modern spiritual marketplace shifts (Thailand Now, 2025).

The descriptive results for Community Participation (C) and Operational Effectiveness also align with the high-performance trend, with mean scores of 3.82 and 3.81, respectively. The consistently high scores across all four variables indicate that successful urban temples are operating in a state of "Administrative Equilibrium," where the leadership, the committee structure, and the innovative processes are synchronized to achieve institutional goals. This statistical consistency provides the empirical justification for the LCM Model, suggesting that these three components are not isolated silos but are deeply integrated facets of a single governance ecosystem.

### *The Structural Model: Deciphering the 87% Variance*

The core of the quantitative analysis lies in the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) performed using LISREL software. Unlike traditional regression analysis, SEM allows for the simultaneous evaluation of multiple causal paths while accounting for the measurement error inherent in latent constructs. The final structural model demonstrated a superior fit with the empirical data, as evidenced by the fit indices: the Chi-Square value was non-significant relative to its degrees of freedom ( $p$ -value = 0.35), the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) was 0.96, the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) was 0.94, and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was 0.015. These indices collectively confirm that the theoretical LCM framework is a robust representation of reality within the BMA's religious context.

The most profound finding from the SEM analysis is the Squared Multiple Correlation ( $R^2$ ) value for Operational Effectiveness, which reached 0.87. This indicates that the combination of Buddhist Leadership, Community Participation, and Management Innovation explains **87% of the total variance** in the operational effectiveness of urban temples. In the field of social science and management research, an  $R^2$  value exceeding 0.70 is generally considered to have "High Predictive Power." An 87% explanation rate is extraordinary, suggesting that the LCM Model has identified nearly all the critical levers required to drive institutional excellence. This leaves only 13% of the variance to be explained by external factors, such as government policy changes or macroeconomic shifts, thereby positioning the LCM Model as a definitive roadmap for temple administrators.

The path coefficients within the model further elucidate the hierarchy of influence. The study identified six direct paths (H1 through H6), all of which were statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The path from Buddhist Leadership to Community Participation (H1) yielded a coefficient of 0.83, while the path from Buddhist Leadership to Management Innovation (H2) also reached 0.83. These identical, high coefficients demonstrate the "Dual-Engine" role of the abbot; the leader is equally responsible for mobilizing human capital (the committee) and implementing structural change (innovation). Furthermore, the path from Management Innovation to Operational Effectiveness (H6) showed a coefficient of 0.47, indicating that while innovation is essential, its impact is optimized when it is mediated by strong leadership and community support. These numbers confirm that leadership is the "Primary Driver," but it is the synergy between the three LCM components that results in the 87% effectiveness rate.

### *Factor Analysis and the Breakdown of Latent Constructs*

To understand the qualitative essence of these numerical results, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to break down the latent variables into their constituent indicators. This process reveals exactly what "leadership" and "innovation" look like in a high-performing urban temple. For the construct of Buddhist Leadership, the most significant factor loading was observed in "Mindful Decision-making" (*Sati-Sampajanna*). This indicator refers to the leader's ability to remain calm,

ethical, and objective when managing temple conflicts or financial resources. Unlike secular leadership models that prioritize "decisiveness" or "profitability," the Buddhist model emphasizes "Right View" and "Right Resolve." This finding aligns with the research of Tainchaiyapark (2022), who argues that good governance in Thai temples is inextricably linked to the moral integrity of the abbot. The high loading for mindful decision-making suggests that the "L" in the LCM framework is rooted in a psychological and spiritual readiness that prevents the types of administrative scandals recently highlighted by the Thailand Development Research Institute (2021).

The analysis of Management Innovation (M) revealed that "Innovation Strategy" and "Technological Integration" are the two most powerful indicators. Innovation strategy in a temple context involves the deliberate planning of new ways to engage the community, such as creating digital Dhamma content or implementing transparent e-donation systems. The data shows that temples which have a clear, written strategy for innovation are significantly more effective than those that adopt technology in a piecemeal fashion. This supports the argument by Wongjunya (2025) that temple property management in the 21st century requires a shift toward "Smart" systems that can be audited and verified. The breakdown of the innovation variable underscores that technology is not a "magic bullet" but a tool that must be guided by a clear strategic vision.

For the variable of Community Participation (C), the factor analysis highlighted the "Temple Committee Synergy" as the dominant indicator. This refers to the collaborative relationship between the monastic members and the lay experts on the temple board. In the BMA, where many laypeople are professionals in law, accounting, or engineering, their participation adds a layer of "Secular Expertise" that complements the "Spiritual Wisdom" of the monks. The SEM results show that when these two groups work in harmony, the temple's ability to manage its infrastructure and educational programs (the effectiveness dimensions) increases exponentially. This synergy acts as a safeguard against the "centralization of power," which is often cited as a root cause of institutional decay.

Finally, the measurement of Operational Effectiveness itself was broken down into its four operational pillars. The highest factor loadings were found in "Administrative Transparency" and "Religious Propagation." This is a crucial finding, as it suggests that the "Output" of a successful temple is not just physical buildings, but the maintenance of public trust and the effective dissemination of teachings. The 87% variance explanation mentioned earlier is most strongly reflected in the temple's ability to provide a "Transparent Account" of its operations to the public. As the BMA population becomes more educated and digitally connected, their expectations for transparency have risen. The LCM Model's success in predicting effectiveness lies in its ability to show how leadership and innovation directly feed into this transparency, thereby creating a "Virtuous Cycle" of faith and institutional growth.

### *Synthesis and Managerial Implications*

The results of this study provide a scientific validation of the LCM framework as a transformative tool for religious administration. The high mean scores for leadership (3.80) and innovation (3.76) prove that there is a strong foundation of practice already existing in the BMA, but the SEM results show that there is still room for optimization. The 87% variance explanation is a clarion call for the National Office of Buddhism and individual abbots to focus their resources on the three pillars of the LCM Model. By prioritizing mindful leadership, empowering professional committees, and strategically adopting management innovation, urban temples can overcome the "Governance Gap" and ensure their sustainability in the digital age.

The implications of these findings are both local and national. Locally, temple abbots can use the factor analysis results as a "Self-Assessment Tool" to identify whether their decision-making is mindful and their innovation is strategic. Nationally, the high predictive power of the model suggests that the LCM framework could be integrated into the national strategic deployment for religious

institutions. As Thailand moves toward a more transparent and digitally integrated society, the temples that embrace the findings of this research—moving from traditional, opaque administration to the high-effectiveness, 87%-predictive LCM model—will be the ones that survive and thrive. This analysis confirms that the modernization of the Sangha is not a threat to tradition, but rather the most effective way to protect it.

## V. The LCM Model: Discussion & Implications

The synthesis of the quantitative data and the qualitative expert elicitation culminates in the validation of the LCM Model—a strategic framework designed to harmonize the spiritual mission of the Buddhist temple with the administrative rigors of the twenty-first century. The discussion of these findings necessitates a deep exploration of the three pillars—Leadership, Committees, and Modern Management—and their collective ability to address the contemporary "faith gap" in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area (BMA).

### *The Evolution of Abbot Leadership (L): From Tradition to Virtue-Based Governance*

The first pillar of the model, Abbot Leadership (L), represents the most significant causal driver identified in the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis. The research demonstrates that leadership does not function as a static exercise of ecclesiastical power; rather, it has evolved into a dynamic form of "Virtue-Based Governance." The mean score of 3.80 for this construct indicates that abbots in urban areas are successfully navigating the transition from traditional, autocratic authority toward a more inclusive and mindful leadership style. This shift is grounded in the Buddhist principle of *Adhipateyya* (States of Supremacy), specifically *Dhamma-adhipateyya* (Supremacy of the Dhamma), where the leader's decisions are guided by ethical truth rather than personal whim or social pressure.

In the complex urban environment of Bangkok, an abbot's leadership is tested by the need to manage substantial financial assets and diverse human resources. The implication of the high loading for "Mindful Decision-making" in the factor analysis suggests that effectiveness is primarily rooted in the leader's psychological and spiritual state. As Tainchaiyapurk (2022) highlights, good governance in temples is not merely a matter of following secular law; it is the external manifestation of an internal commitment to *Sila* (morality) and *Sati* (mindfulness). When an abbot applies the *Brahmavihāra* principles—loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity—to administrative tasks, it creates a "Culture of Trust" that permeates the entire institution. This form of leadership is essential for modern institutional sustainability because it provides the moral legitimacy required to attract and retain the support of a technologically savvy and increasingly critical urban laity. Furthermore, the strong path coefficient (0.83) from Leadership to Management Innovation confirms that the abbot acts as the "Chief Innovation Officer" of the temple. Without the leader's endorsement, the adoption of modern management tools remains superficial. Therefore, the primary implication for religious administration is the necessity of providing abbots with "Modern Leadership Training" that integrates traditional monastic virtues with contemporary strategic management skills.

### *Synergy through Temple and Community Committees (C): The Path to Transparency*

The second pillar, Temple and Community Committees (C), addresses the structural requirements of shared decision-making. Historically, the management of Thai temples was often concentrated in the hands of the abbot or a small, non-professional inner circle, a model that has become increasingly vulnerable to transparency issues and public skepticism. The LCM Model advocates for a transition toward a "Participatory Governance Model," where the committee acts as a bridge between the clergy and the community. The high mean score of 3.82 for this variable reflects a growing recognition among urban temples that specialized lay expertise is a prerequisite for operational excellence.

The involvement of professional laypeople—including accountants, legal experts, and community organizers—on the temple committee introduces a layer of "Checks and Balances" that is often missing in traditional monastic settings. Nuttavuthisit et al. (2014) argue that participatory community development is the most effective way to ensure accountability in the allocation of public resources. In the BMA, where temples function as significant socioeconomic hubs, the committee's role in managing "Religious Property" and "Public Donations" is paramount. The study's findings suggest that when committees are empowered to participate in strategic planning, the temple's operational effectiveness scores rise significantly. This implies that the National Office of Buddhism (NOB) should standardize the "Professionalization of Temple Committees," encouraging the inclusion of lay experts who can navigate the complexities of modern financial reporting and legal compliance. By moving toward stakeholder transparency, the temple can mitigate the risks of corruption that have historically eroded public faith, as documented by the Thailand Development Research Institute (2021).

#### *Modern Management (M): Integrating Technology and Resource Planning*

The third pillar, Modern Management (M), serves as the technical engine of the LCM framework. With a mean score of 3.76, the research indicates that urban temples are at the threshold of a "Digital Reformation." Modern management in this context involves the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and systematic resource planning into the daily life of the *Wat*. This includes the use of digital accounting systems, the implementation of electronic donor management (e-Donation), and the strategic use of social media for the propagation of the Dhamma.

The factor analysis highlighted "Innovation Strategy" as a dominant indicator, suggesting that technology is only effective when it is part of a broader institutional vision. Wongjunya (2025) emphasizes that the "Smart Temple 4.0" model is not just about having a Facebook page; it is about creating an "Ecosystem of Faith" where the temple's operations are data-driven and verifiable. For instance, the use of blockchain or centralized digital ledgers for temple funds could revolutionize the way public donations are managed, providing a real-time audit trail that satisfies the demands of modern urbanites. Moreover, management innovation extends to the temple's educational and social welfare programs. By adopting modern pedagogical tools and project management techniques, temples can enhance their "Academic and Educational Promotion" effectiveness, ensuring that they continue to serve as centers of lifelong learning. The implication here is that the "Digital Divide" within the Sangha must be addressed through the provision of infrastructure and technical training, allowing urban temples to meet the spiritual and social needs of the "Mutelu" generation (Thailand Now, 2025).

#### *Managerial Contribution: Solving the Urban "Faith Gap"*

The most significant managerial contribution of the LCM Model is its holistic approach to solving the "Faith Gap"—the disconnect between traditional religious institutions and the expectations of a modern, urbanized society. The "Faith Gap" is often caused by a lack of transparency, a failure to innovate, and an autocratic leadership style that alienates the younger demographic. The LCM Model provides a "Validated Roadmap" to bridge this gap by focusing on the synergy between the leader (L), the committee (C), and the management system (M).

By achieving an 87% variance explanation in operational effectiveness, the model proves that the "Crisis of Faith" is largely an "Administrative Crisis." When a temple demonstrates operational excellence through transparent governance and innovative outreach, public trust is naturally restored. This creates a "Virtuous Cycle" of increased donations, improved community participation, and greater social impact. The LCM Model demonstrates that "Modernization" is not a departure from Buddhist values; rather, it is the most effective way to protect those values in a complex world. The model suggests that the future of the Thai Sangha in urban areas depends on its ability to become a "Learning Organization" that values both ancient wisdom and modern efficiency.

## VI. Conclusion

The research concludes that the operational effectiveness of Buddhist temples in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area is no longer a matter of traditional survival, but a complex challenge of institutional management and social relevance. Through a rigorous mixed-methods approach, this study has validated the LCM Model as a robust framework for enhancing the performance of these vital socio-cultural institutions. The findings provide a clear empirical basis for a systematic reform of religious administration in Thailand.

### *Summary of Findings and the 87% Predictive Power*

The primary conclusion of this study is the confirmation of the "High Predictive Power" of the LCM Model. The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis revealed that Buddhist Leadership, Community Participation, and Management Innovation collectively explain 87% of the variance in the operational effectiveness of urban temples. This high R-squared value indicates that the model has captured the essential "Critical Success Factors" for temple administration. The study found that while all three factors are significantly positive in their influence, Buddhist Leadership serves as the primary catalyst, directly driving both committee engagement and management innovation. The descriptive statistics further confirm that successful urban temples are already practicing these components at a high level (means ranging from 3.76 to 3.82), but the structural model reveals the "Causal Mechanics" that lead to excellence. The path coefficients show that the synergy between a virtuous leader and a professional committee is the most effective way to implement the innovations required for institutional sustainability.

### *Policy Recommendations for the National Office of Buddhism*

Based on the validated LCM Model, this research offers three key policy recommendations for the National Office of Buddhism (NOB) to enhance religious governance on a national scale:

1. **Standardization of Leadership Training:** The NOB should develop a mandatory "Monastic Administrative Curriculum" that goes beyond traditional Dhamma studies. This curriculum should include training in mindful leadership, conflict resolution, financial management, and strategic planning. By equipping abbots with these tools, the state can ensure that religious leaders have the professional capacity to manage modern institutions without compromising their spiritual integrity.
2. **Professionalization of Temple Committees:** Legislative and regulatory frameworks should be updated to encourage the active participation of lay professionals on temple boards. This includes establishing standardized roles and responsibilities for committees and implementing "Transparency Protocols" for financial reporting. The NOB should facilitate the creation of a "Certified Temple Accountant" program to help temples meet modern auditing standards.
3. **Digital Infrastructure Deployment:** To support Management Innovation, the NOB should launch a "Smart Temple Initiative" to provide urban temples with the necessary ICT infrastructure. This should include a centralized "Sangha Management System" that allows for the digital tracking of temple assets, personnel, and religious services. Such a system would not only enhance operational efficiency but also provide the data needed for national-level strategic planning for religious propagation (Media OutReach, 2024).

### *Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research*

While this research provides a comprehensive framework for urban temples, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the scope of this study was limited to the Bangkok Metropolitan Area (BMA). While the BMA represents the most complex and resource-rich environment for temple management, the findings may not be directly generalizable to rural temples in Thailand's outlying

provinces. Rural temples often face different challenges, such as limited financial resources, a declining population of young monks, and a greater reliance on traditional community ties rather than digital innovation.

Therefore, future research should focus on the application of the LCM Model in rural and semi-urban contexts. Comparative studies could investigate how "Leadership" and "Participation" function differently in communities where the temple is still the primary social center versus urban areas where it is one of many competing institutions. Additionally, longitudinal studies could be conducted to track the long-term impact of LCM implementation on public trust and "Faith Metrics" over time. Finally, research into the specific "Digital Literacies" required by the elderly monastic population would be invaluable for bridging the generational gap within the Sangha. Despite these limitations, the LCM Model stands as a definitive and statistically validated foundation for the modernization of the Thai Buddhist institution, ensuring that the light of the Dhamma continues to shine brightly through the lens of operational excellence.

## References

- Anamwathana, P. (2025). Examining religious engagement among Thai Buddhist undergraduates. *ISEAS Perspective*, 2025(42). <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2025-42-examining-religious-engagement-among-thai-buddhist-undergraduates-by-panarat-anamwathana/>
- Best, J. W. (1977). *Research in education* (3rd ed.). Prentice-Hall.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Hananta, S. A., & Susyanti, J. (2024). Implementation of total quality management (TQM) in organizations and business. *International Journal of Economics and Management Research*, 3(2).
- Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. (2001). *The strategy-focused organization: How balanced scorecard companies thrive in the new business environment*. Harvard Business Press.
- Media Outreach. (2024, March 26). UN digital Buddhism research & innovation center makes a stunning debut, NetDragon digital religion department assist Thailand's national Buddhist strategic deployment. <https://www.media-outreach.com/news/thailand/2024/03/26/287541/>
- Nuttavuthisit, K., Thøgersen, J., & Somsup, A. (2014). Participatory community development: Evidence from Thailand. *Community Development Journal*, 49(3).
- Phrakrusoponthamrongkit, & Chareonpu, W. (2019). Effective monastery management of 15th region Clergy. *Journal of Political Science Review*, 6(2), 277-298. <https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/kupsrj/article/view/236195>
- Srisuwannaket, T. (2021, April 28). Temple corruption erodes public faith. Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI). <https://tdri.or.th/en/2021/04/temple-corruption-erodes-public-faith/>
- Sukpoon, T. (2025). *A model for enhancing the operational effectiveness of temples in Bangkok and metropolitan areas* [Doctoral dissertation, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University].
- Tainchaiyapark, P. (2022). The management of the temple based on good governance. *Journal of Educational Innovation and Research*, 4(1), 63-74. <https://so03.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/jeir/article/view/247946>
- Thailand Now. (2025, January 1). The Mutelu wave: How Gen Z is reshaping Thailand's spiritual marketplace. <https://www.thailandnow.in.th/arts-culture/the-mutelu-wave-how-gen-z-is-reshaping-thailands-spiritual-marketplace/>
- Wongjunya, N. (2025). Management of temple religious property in the 21st century. *Journal of Religious and Theological News*, 7(1). <https://so07.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/rtnb/article/view/9411>