



## Social Role Communication of the Religious Sites: Public Relations Media Using for Social Role Promotion in Suan Kaew Temple, Nonthaburi Province

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### Abstract

At present, Suan Kaew Temple has limitation in their media usage. The aims of this research were (1) to study history and social contribution activities of Suan Kaew Temple, Nonthaburi Province, (2) to study the existing public relations media used in promoting social activities of the temple, (3) to study the temple's need for new media design for promoting its social contribution activities, and (4) to develop new media prototypes for disseminating the temple's social activities. A productive goal of this research was the digital files of media prototype designed by the researcher for new media production according to the temple's need. The methods consisted of (1) documentary research, (2) participatory observation, and (3) in-depth interviews. The result included: (1) Suan Kaew Temple, formerly known as Wat Kaew, was an abandoned temple for 80 years. The temple organized 19 social projects for helping the people in need, (2) major problems of using the existing media consisted of unattractiveness and limited types of media which led the target audience to pay less attention to the temple's message, (3) the temple's need for new media design focused on the temple's image as the knowledge donor and moral practice initiator in a manner of simplicity, and (4) the new media prototype, developed by the researcher, emphasized on the temple's image and delivered to the temple in the form of digital template files for long-run production of various media types according to the temple's needs.

### Introduction

Buddhist temples have been a religious place for people to find a peace of mind. The monks carry out activities in various fields according to the Buddhist teaching and tradition. In the past, the temple was a place for Buddhists to study various fields of knowledge such as vocational training, Thai traditional medicine treatment, and various types of artistic creation. At present, the temple continues to be the center of teaching

Buddhist philosophy as well as activities of the Thai community (Lopez, 2021).

Currently, there are many temples performing missions or playing a role in line with social change in order to give assistance to people in community and society. The famous temple known for its outstanding contribution to society is Suan Kaew Temple, Nonthaburi Province (personal communication, Yodyanyong, 2020, May 20). Suan Kaew Temple, formerly known as Wat

Kaew, was an abandoned temple for 80 years. Phra Ratchathammanithet (Phra Phayom Kalayano) fully restored Wat Kaew by bringing personal property to develop the temple consistent with the nearby environment, as well as simulating the area as Mokkhaplaram Park in the city. Later, the temple's name was changed to "Wat Suan Kaew or Suan Kaew Temple" with a focus on spreading Buddhism teachings. Phra Ratchathammanithet (Phra Phayom Kalayano) has been involved with many types of monk activities and became aware of social problems caused by factors such as unequal social status, lack of knowledge and job opportunities that occurred among the middle class and underprivileged groups. Therefore, Suan Kaew Foundation was established to spread moral teachings of the Lord Buddha, especially the Dharma principles to help humans solve problems by themselves. At present, the temple organizes 19 social projects for helping people in need, such as a vocational training project for the unemployed and homeless people in order to help generate their own income and reduce social problems.

At present, Suan Kaew Temple has used public

communication (Keyton, 2017), it is important that effective media for successful communication should be launched through multiple channels and used through varying types of media to attract more attention of the target audience. Therefore, the existing media communication of Suan Kaew Temple should be improved.

### Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows.

1. To study history and social contribution activities of Suan Kaew Temple, Nonthaburi Province.
2. To study the existing public relations media used in promoting social activities of the temple.
3. To study the temple's need for new media design for promoting its social contribution activities.
4. To develop new media prototype for disseminating the temple's social activities.

### Conceptual framework

This research was carried out according to the conceptual framework shown in the following diagram.

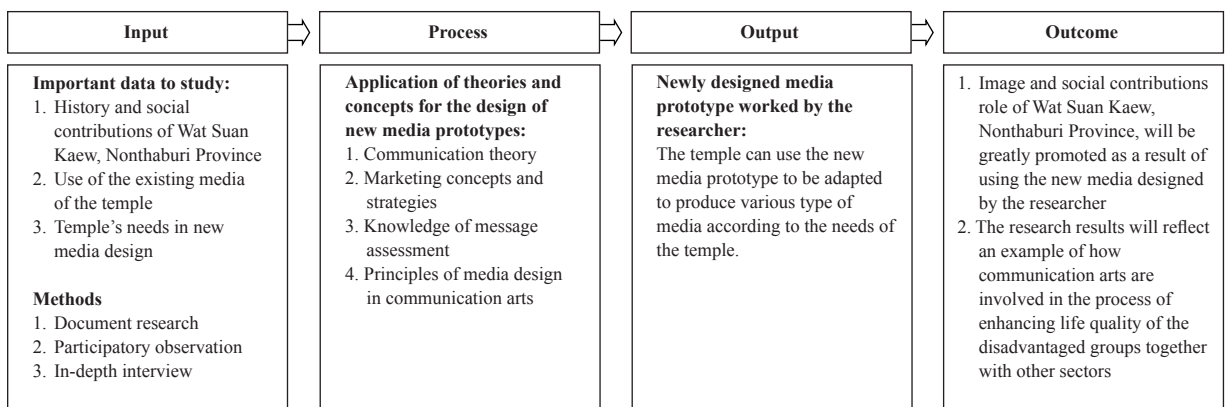


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

relations media for promotion of their social role, but the PR media efforts are implemented in a limited condition. The current use of the temple's media consists of small hanging banners, large signs (billboard), and websites, with designs that are not interesting (personal communication, Saksom, 2020, May 20). When considering the issue of the role of media in society, it is clear that media has become a part of everyone's life and a major role in today's society (Siva Sivani Institute of Management, 2019). When considering the concept of

### Research methodology

#### 1. Major principles

**Media Role.** Media, especially social media, gives organizations a voice and a way to communicate with peers, potential consumers, and target audiences. The role of public relations media in marketing is to use it as a communication tool, it offers organizations accessibility to those interested in their product or service and creates visibility of the organizations v to those that do not know them yet. The factors affecting the use of

media includes product, market, channel, message, media, and budget. Additionally, 5 effective media criteria includes aesthetic appearance, easy perception to message, appropriate message volume, useful message, and persuasive capacity.

**Message design.** Message design is an interdisciplinary area of knowledge. Good message design is simple, bold, and direct. It provides rational, functional aesthetics, as well as effective and efficient layouts for all media. A group of design disciplines all deal with the design of messages. The main components in message design are words, visuals and forms. These main components may be used in many different ways to design, produce, transmit and interpret messages.

**Concept of communication.** Communication has been the process of sending and receiving messages through verbal or nonverbal means. Effective media for successful communication should be launched through multiple channels with varied types and attractive aspects to attract more attention of the target audience.

## **2. Sampling technique**

A purposive sampling technique was conducted by defining the key informants' characteristics. To represent Suan Kaew Temple, they should: (1) directly relate to temple's media preparation and use, (2) conveniently provide needed information in order to meet research objectives, and (3) cordially assess the quality of the new media prototype files designed by the researcher.

The chosen key informants included:

2.1 Prarajathamnitet (Phra Phayom Kalyano), the Abbot of Suan Kaew Temple

2.2 Mr. Pornsin Saksom, Head of Human Resources Department who was assigned by the Abbot to oversee the media preparation and use for publicizing the temple's activities.

2.3 Mr. Anucha Yodyanyong, temple facilitator, who was assigned by the Abbot to do overall tasks and help oversee the media preparation and use for publicizing the temple's activities.

## **3. Data collection methods**

3.1 Documentary research was conducted to synthesize information from concept papers, theories and related research. The synthesized data were used together with the analysis of the results from participatory observation and in-depth interviews.

3.2 Participatory observation (as an outside observer) was conducted to collect basic information of the temple on the following issues: (1) history and social

contribution activities, and (2) characteristics of the existing media and problems of media use.

3.3 In-depth interviews were conducted to: (1) explore the characteristics of the existing media, problems of media use, Suan Kaew Temple's need for new media design, and (2) to survey opinions of the temple's representatives concerning the new media prototype designed by the researcher. The survey was made through media quality assessment form which had been verified by 4 qualified experts in visual communication art in a process of "Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) qualification."

## **4. Research tools**

4.1 Participatory observation recording forms

4.2 In-depth interview recording forms

4.3 New media prototype quality assessment forms

## **Results**

### **1. History and social contribution activities of Suan Kaew Temple, Nonthaburi Province**

Suan Kaew Temple, formerly known as Wat Kaew, was an abandoned temple for 80 years located on a garden area in Nonthaburi Province. Later, Luang Por Thian, Jittasupho and 3 to 4 other monks traveled to stay amidst an unorganized environment. Afterwards, Phra Rajathamnitet, well-known as Phra Phayom Kalayano, came to stay and conducted the Buddhist activities. Also, Phra Rajathamnitet (Phra Phayom Kalayano) fully restored Wat Kaew by bringing his personal property to develop the temple amidst the pleasant and natural garden consistent with the characteristics of MOKKHAPLARAM Religion Practice Garden Temple (an ideal temple establishment concept for reflecting the Buddhism mission as the forestry plantations for aiding people from their grief), following the concept of the great monk, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu Indapanno. In this regard, "Wat Kaew" subsequently was renamed to "Wat Suan Kaew ("Suan means Garden") or Suan Kaew Temple" with a focus on spreading Buddhism teachings based on a concept of forestry plantations for restoring people's mind and body and releasing grief. Phra Ratchathammanithet (Phra Phayom Kalayano) was involved with many Buddhist activities in various communities and became aware of social problems caused by various factors. Therefore, the temple established the Suan Kaew Foundation to help people and pets in need with the appropriate and constructive activities, as well as to help spread moral teachings of

the Lord Buddha, especially of the Dharma principles for people to engage with solving their own problems (personal communication, Yodyanyong, 2020, May 20).

The successful activities included 19 social projects for helping people in need and abandoned pets to meet safer living conditions. The projects were as follows: (1) summer novice ordination program, (2) ethics training camp, (3) Rom Pho Kaew Project, (4) service platform project, (5) molting project, (6) passion regurgitation project, (7) children hunger assistance project, (8) project for illiteracy, (9) asphyxiation revival project, (10) elderly housing project, (11) goodness bridge project, (12) super-poor market project, (13) Suan Kaew nursery project, (14) agriculture and environment support projects, (15) sewage fermentation tank project according to the royal initiative, (16) life skills house project, (17) plant conservation project, (18) dog condo project, and (19) funding card project for job creation and nation development in 2020 (personal communication, Parajathamnit, 2020, May 20).

## 2. The existing public relations media used in promoting social activities of the temple

The major problems of the existing media were unattractiveness and limited type of media which led the target audience to pay less attention to the temple's message. The type of public relations media used by the temple, consisted of hanging banners in various sizes installed in scattered areas within the temple grounds and on the temple's website. Each small banners contained content of events. The media, made by the temple staff, was designed by a general form of letters without any special decorations. Additionally, most of the media materials, vinyl and wood planks, were easily breakable. At present, Suan Kaew Temple has used public relations media that is artless and contains uninteresting design for their role in social promotion (personal communication, Saksom, 2020, May 20).

When considering the concept of communication (Keyton, 2017), the effective media for successful communication should be launched through multiple channels and used through varying types of media to attract more attention of the target audience, therefore, in order to gain greater attention and contribution from the target audience and the general public, the existing media of Suan Kaew Temple should be improved.

The above example of an existing banner, as shown in in Figure 1, appears on the temple's ground is artless because it was designed by composing letters in scattered position without an approach of harmonious or beauty.



**Figure 2** An example of the existing banner publicized in Suan Kaew Temple  
Source: Photo by the researcher

## 3. The temple's need for new media design for promoting its social contribution activities

Prarajathamnit (personal communication, 2020, May 20) stated that the new media design should emphasize the temple's characteristics, philosophy, and image of knowledge and moral practice with a simplicity manner. The details of the temple's need for new media design were as follows: (1) media format should be simple in both form of text and illustration, (2) the digital file of master media, designed by the researcher, should be adaptive for text and illustrations in order to produce various types of media following the temple's needs, and (3) key messages presented in the new media should include: (3.1) messages giving directions to various places in the temple (3.2) messages reminding people of living and pursuing a career in moral ways, (3.3) texts on the history of the temple; (3.4) messages disseminating the temple's role in helping society, and (3.5) messages inviting visitors to support the products and works made by vocational trainees specifically trained by the Suan Kaew Foundation (personal communication, Saksom, 2020, May 20).

## 4. Development of new media prototype for disseminating the temple's social activities

The development of new media prototype consisted of 3 steps: the first draft of media prototype

design process, the first media prototype improvement, and the completion of final media prototype.

**The first media prototype improvement:** the temple's representatives were satisfied with the sets of new media design which were created to meet 5 effective media criteria, namely, aesthetic appearance, easy perception to message, appropriate message volume, useful message, and persuasive capacity. However, the comments from key informants for media improvement included: (1) carefully correct word spelling of some specific terms, and (2) edit the "Suan Tham Waterfall" picture to be clearer.

The main process to complete final media prototype files:

1. Conceptualize the media theme: the image of knowledge donor and moral practice initiator in a manner of simplicity.

2. Specify the format of media prototype file:

2.1 File version: 2 sets of master digital file were made with the same graphical elements, font patterns, illustrations and information) but with different colors in each file set. The chosen colors, suitable for use in religious places according to the occasion and appropriateness, were orange tones for master file set 1 and green tones for master file set 2.

2.2 File elements: true information and real pictures of person, product, and things within the temple were used as "main elements" in media design, with an emphasis on simplicity style and clear message communication.

2.3 File utility: both sets of master file were made and delivered to the temple in form of digital template file for long-run production of various media types according to the temple's needs.

2.4 File specification: (1) JPEG files, useful for the arrangement of relevant presentation or reports, (2) PSD (Photoshop) files for operating in Photoshop program in order to modify texts and illustrations according to production needs, and (3) Font file to be installed on computer before using PSD file (Photoshop).

5. Recommend the new media use guideline: The researcher proposed a guideline for a new media application by offering 2 sets of prototype files to be modified in further media production process. The guidelines are shown in the Table 1 below:

**Table 1** New media usage guidelines

media type that can be produced from media master files	media using guidelines	
	venue for media presentation	media presentation period
Pamphlet for publicizing the temple history and its activities.	At least 200 pamphlets placed at government agencies, educational institutions, and public relations organizations for distribution to Buddhists and general public	Present pamphlets continuously throughout the year
Direction Sign and Billboard for publicizing the temple social activities.	At least 1 Direction Sign and 1 Billboard should be installed in the entrance and exit areas of government agencies and nearby educational institutions	Present along with the pamphlets; continuously throughout the year
Images and text in the temple's main page on Website and Facebook for publicizing the temple's history and its social activities.	At least 1-2 designed pattern(s) presented in media prototype files should be applied and presented on the main page of the temple's Website and Facebook page. This approach can promote the "unity" of appearance in all media of the temple to create recognition, and create interest in receiving the temple's news and participate in more temple activities.	Present along with the pamphlets, direction sign, and billboard; continuously throughout the year

Source: recommended by the researcher

## 6. New media pieces presented in the 2 sets of complete master file:

The new media pieces presented in the 2 sets of complete master file, orange tone in master file set 1 and green tone in master file set 2, are shown in figures 2 to 19 below.

**New media piece 1:** Presenting a brief history of Suan Kaew Temple, Nonthaburi Province, with simple and colorful design. However, to add more information, the temple can also modify the text and images as needed.



**Figure 3** A new media piece 1 presented in orange tone in master file set 1

Source: designed by the researcher



Figure 4 A new media piece 1 presented in green tone in master file set 2  
Source: designed by the researcher

**New media piece 2:** Presenting activities and important places within Suan Kaew Temple, Nonthaburi Province, with simple and colorful design. However, to add more information, the temple can also modify the text and images as needed.



Figure 5 A new media piece 2 presented in orange tone in master file set 1  
Source: designed by the researcher



Figure 6 A new media piece 2 presented in green tone in master file set 2  
Source: designed by the researcher

**New media piece 3:** Presenting activities and appropriate practices within Suan Kaew Temple, Nonthaburi Province, with simple and colorful design. However, to add more information such as cooperation to maintain cleanliness, etc., the temple can also modify the text and images as needed.



Figure 7 A new media piece 3 presented in orange tone in master file set 1  
Source: designed by the researcher



Figure 8 A new media piece 3 presented in green tone in master file set 2  
Source: designed by the researcher

**New media piece 4:** Presenting important places and direction within Suan Kaew Temple, Nonthaburi Province, with simple and colorful design. However, to add more information such as other internal places, etc., the temple can also modify the text and images as needed.



Figure 9 A new media piece 4 presented in green tone in master file set 1  
Source: designed by the researcher



**Figure 10** A new media piece 4 presented in green tone in master file set 2  
Source: designed by the researcher

**New media piece 5:** Presenting important places and direction for keeping the peaceful atmosphere within Suan Kaew Temple, Nonthaburi Province, with simple and colorful design. However, to add more information such as calling for additional cooperation, etc., the temple can also modify the text and images as needed.



**Figure 11** A new media piece 5 presented in orange tone in master file set 1  
Source: designed by the researcher



**Figure 12** A new media piece 5 presented in green tone in master file set 2  
Source: designed by the researcher

**New media piece 6:** Presenting messages to invite the visitors to make merit by buying a second-hand television which was assembled from the skill of vocational trainers of Suan Kaew Foundation, within Suan Kaew Temple, Nonthaburi Province, with simple and colorful design. However, to add more information such as calling for cooperation in supporting other temple's activities, the temple can also modify the text and images as needed.



**Figure 13** A new media piece 6 presented in orange tone in master file set 1  
Source: designed by the researcher



**Figure 14** A new media piece 6 presented in green tone in master file set 2  
Source: designed by the researcher

**New media piece 7:** Presenting messages for reminding the way of living and working on moral basis, delivered to the visitors within Suan Kaew Temple, Nonthaburi Province, with simple and colorful design. However, to add other reminders, the temple can also modify the text and images as needed.

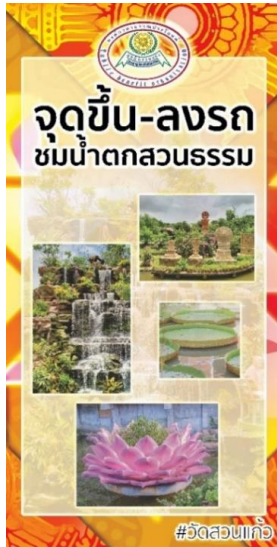


**Figure 15** A new media piece 7 presented in orange tone in master file set 1  
Source: designed by the researcher



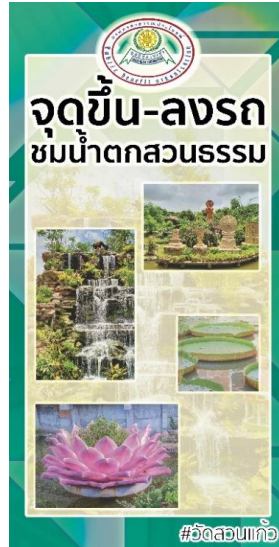
**Figure 16** A new media piece 7 presented in green tone in master file set 2  
Source: designed by the researcher

**New media piece 8:** Presenting important places within Suan Kaew Temple, Nonthaburi Province, with simple and colorful design. The temple can also modify the text and images to add other messages or pictures as needed.



**Figure 17** A new media piece 8 presented in orange tone in master file set 1

Source: designed by the researcher



**Figure 18** A new media piece 8 presented in green tone in master file set 2

Source: designed by the researcher

**New media piece 9:** Presenting text that shows the important role of the Abbott in helping society, within Suan Kaew Temple, Nonthaburi Province, with simple and colorful design. The temple can also modify the text and images to add other messages or pictures as needed.



**Figure 19** A new media piece 9 presented in orange tone in master file set 1

Source: designed by the researcher



**Figure 20** A new media piece 9 presented in green tone in master file set 2

Source: designed by the researcher

## Discussion

1. According to the concept of communication (Nordquist, 2019), “communication” is the process of sending and receiving messages through verbal or nonverbal means, and the effective media for successful communication should be launched through multiple channels with varied types and attractive aspects in order to attract the attention of the target audience. The mentioned concept was the approach for analyzing the problem of existing public relations media used by Suan Kaew Temple. This was because Suan Kaew Temple faced the limitations of the temple’s media designing skill which was artless and had a dull design without offering a special design concept.

2. According to Van Ruler (2018), communication are strategic and the relevant media for public relations should be consistent with the organization mission, vision, and values. The mentioned statement supported this research finding which identified that the new media design, made for Suan Kaew temple, were designed with an emphasis on the temple’s characteristics, philosophy, and image of knowledge donor and moral practice initiator with a manner of simplicity.

3. The findings of this research revealed that the key informants proposed to have different sets of master digital file for use in Suan Kaew Temple according to the occasion and appropriateness, as well as for long-run production of various media types following the temple’s varied needs, this key informants’ proposal was in accordance with the concept of public relations and media (Comit, 2019), which stated that there were many different types of public relations activities and relevant media to use according to the occasion and appropriateness of the events. The marketers and media designers should recognize the mentioned concept.

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