

Article

Enhancing business performance through strategic integration of Naga worship

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Abstract: The extent to which businesses incorporate Naga worship into their strategies and operations and its effect on their success remains ignored. This study employed a multidisciplinary approach to examine the diverse practices of Naga worship in business contexts across different regions. This study utilized a mixed-methods research design to provide insights into the strategic integration of Naga worship into business practices and its impact on business performance. It employed a questionnaire to gather insights from respondents about their demographic data, awareness of Naga worship, its integration into business practices, consumer perceptions and behaviors, and overall business performance. Follow-up, in-depth interviews were developed to probe deeper into respondents' experiences, motivations, and perceptions regarding the integration of Naga worship into their business practices. Most respondents agreed to integrate Naga worship into their company practices or marketing plans by using Naga symbols in branding, doing rituals for success, providing Naga-themed products and services, and scheduling activities on auspicious Naga-related dates. Respondents perceived companies that venerate Naga as culturally genuine and focused on the community. Worshipping the Naga deity improved the brand's and corporation's image and reputation. People patronized these enterprises by buying products and services associated with Naga culture. A substantial portion of respondents believe that worshipping Naga enhances commercial prosperity. Yet, a few participants from different regions mentioned difficulties regarding the integration of Naga religious customs.

Keywords: integration strategies; multidisciplinary approach; mixed-methods research; consumer perceptions; brand image; cultural authenticity; religious customs

1. Introduction

Naga or snake god worship holds significant cultural and religious importance in various Buddhist monasteries across Asia (Chib, 2017; Das and Balasubramanian, 2017; Kumar, 2020; Sharma, 2021; Shohe, 2020). Within the context of Buddhism, Nagas are revered as mystical beings with supernatural powers, often depicted as guardians of the Dharma or Buddhist teachings. In many Buddhist traditions, Nagas are believed to inhabit water bodies such as rivers, lakes, and oceans, and their worship is associated with rituals aimed at seeking protection, prosperity, and harmony. Buddhist monasteries often incorporate Naga imagery and rituals into their practices, viewing Naga worship as a means to invoke blessings and safeguard their spiritual communities.

The reverence towards Nagas extends beyond the confines of religious institutions to permeate into broader societal realms (e.g., Ariina, 2021; Choppy, 2019; Heneise, 2016; Karilemla, 2021; Longkumer, 2018; Thomas, 2015), including business practices. In regions where Naga worship is prevalent, businesses often integrate elements of this religious tradition into their operations. This integration may

take various forms, such as incorporating Naga symbols in branding, organizing rituals or ceremonies to seek blessings for prosperity and protection, or even structuring business strategies around auspicious dates and times according to Naga-related beliefs. By aligning with Naga worship, businesses seek to establish cultural resonance, foster community connections, and potentially enhance their performance in the market.

Studies (Allocco, 2009; Intisang et al., 2023; Longkumer, 2018; Phutthanathanapa et al., 2020; Samorna, 2020; Thammawat and Chamaratana, 2022) indicate the impact of Naga worship on business performance is multifaceted and nuanced. On one hand, businesses that successfully integrate Naga worship into their strategies may benefit from heightened brand authenticity, consumer trust, and loyalty, particularly among communities where Naga worship holds deep-rooted significance. Additionally, by aligning with local customs and values associated with Naga worship, businesses can enhance their reputation and goodwill within their target markets, potentially leading to increased customer patronage and positive word-of-mouth referrals. However, the effectiveness of Naga worship in business practices may vary depending on factors such as cultural context, consumer preferences, and the authenticity of the businesses' engagement with Naga traditions. Moreover, businesses must navigate sensitivities surrounding religious practices and ensure that their integration of Naga worship is respectful and culturally appropriate.

Overall, the incorporation of Naga worship into business practices signifies the intricate interplay between spirituality, culture, and commerce. By recognizing and leveraging the cultural significance of Naga worship, businesses can forge deeper connections with their target audiences, differentiate themselves in competitive markets, and potentially achieve sustainable growth and success. However, it is essential for businesses to approach Naga worship integration with sensitivity, authenticity, and a deep understanding of the cultural and religious contexts in which they operate.

This study aimed to investigate the role of Naga worship in business practices and its impact on business performance. Studies (e.g., Munsap and Phakdeephassook, 2022) indicate that Naga worship, prevalent in various cultures and regions in Thailand where Buddhism has been the most important religion in this country, holds significant religious and cultural significance, often intertwined with economic activities. However, the extent to which businesses incorporate Naga worship into their strategies and operations and its effect on their success remains understudied. This study will employ a cross-cultural approach to examine the diverse practices of Naga worship in business contexts across different regions, analyzing its influence on consumer behavior, stakeholder relationships, branding, and overall business outcomes. Through qualitative and quantitative methodologies, including surveys, interviews, and case studies, this research aims to provide insights into effective strategies for integrating Naga worship into business practices to enhance competitiveness and sustainability.

2. Literature review

2.1. Research gap

Despite the growing interest in Naga worship and its implications for business such as integrating Naga symbols in branding, conducting rituals for prosperity, or aligning business strategies with auspicious Naga-related beliefs (e.g., Mukherjee, 1961; Pradhan, 2001), boosting tourism, stimulate local economies, and enhance brand visibility through the commercialization of Naga festivals and rituals and other economic activities (Joshi, 2012; Longkumer, 2016; Parameswaran, 2015; Sinha et al., 2017) such as shaping market dynamics and consumer preferences (Changkija, 2017; Wettstein, 2013), there remains a gap in understanding the strategic integration of Naga worship into organizational practices and its effects on business performance due to challenges in balancing cultural authenticity with economic interests (Choe and O'Regan, 2020; Einstein, 2007; Hilgart, 1998; Hung et al., 2016; Olsen, 2003; Peck, 1993), questions about the sanctity of worship amidst commercialization (McAlexander et al., 2014; Gooren, 2010), the emergence of new religious geographies (Cloke and Perkins, 2002; Kong, 2001; Stausberg, 2012; Seyfi and Hall, 2020), problems in management issues for religious heritage attractions (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2008; Olsen, 2006; Philp and Mercer, 1999), navigating the delicate balance between preserving authenticity and catering to tourist demands (Dahles, 2013), and facing the politics of heritage tourism (Su and Teo, 2009).

Future research should explore the mechanisms through which businesses leverage Naga worship to gain competitive advantages, navigate cultural complexities, and foster sustainable growth. By adopting interdisciplinary approaches that combine insights from anthropology, religious studies, and business management, scholars can contribute to a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between religion, culture, and commerce in diverse cultural contexts.

2.2. Research objective

The objective of this research was to investigate the strategic integration of Naga worship into business practices and its impact on business performance. Through a multidisciplinary approach, the study aimed to understand how businesses leverage Naga worship to gain competitive advantages, navigate cultural complexities, and foster sustainable growth, as described in the research method.

3. Materials and method

3.1. Research design

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach to achieve the above-outlined objectives, combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the strategic integration of Naga worship into business practices and its impact on business performance. The participants were tourists, worshipers, visitors, business owners, managers, and religious leaders in the regions of the three major tourist attractions in Naga.

The three selected sites include: Wat Pa Kham Chanod, or Pa Kham Chanod Temple, Udon Thani Province; Wat Thammayan, or Thammayan Temple, Phetchabun Province; and Wat Maniwong, or Maniwong Temple, Nakhon Nayok Province. These three sites are the most popular worship sites in Naga. Each represents different parts

of Thailand, where Naga worship is prevalent. The calculation of population sizes, required sample sizes, margin of error, and confidence levels for the locations in this study is presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Representative sample size.

Locations	Population size	Required sample size	Margin of error (%)	Confidence level (%)
Wat Pa Kham Chanod	100	80	5	95
Wat Thammayan	53	46	5	95
Wat Maniwong	38	35	5	95

Source: CheckMarket (2023).

3.2. Instruments for data elicitation

(1) Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims to gather insights from respondents regarding their awareness of Naga worship, its integration into business practices, consumer perceptions and behavior, and overall business performance.

(2) In-depth Interviews

This study conducted in-depth interviews with the selected respondents to the questionnaires. These follow-up in-depth interviews aim to delve deeper into respondents' experiences, motivations, and perceptions regarding the integration of Naga worship into their business practices, providing richer insights into the cultural, strategic, and operational dimensions of this phenomenon.

To avoid non-response bias in questionnaires and interviews with respondents, this study implemented several measures. First, the study conducted pre-survey communication to explain the purpose of the research, assure confidentiality, and stress the importance of participation. We made multiple contact attempts, including reminders via various channels like phone calls, the Line application, email, or direct mail, to reach potential respondents who initially did not respond. Third, we offered incentives to stimulate participation. Fourth, we utilized a variety of contact methods, such as online surveys, phone interviews, and in-person interviews, to reach a diverse range of respondents and minimize the bias associated with a single mode of communication. The research team also followed up with non-respondents to understand their reasons for not participating and address any concerns they may have had. Finally, ensuring anonymity or confidentiality in survey responses and interviews would have been crucial to encouraging honest and candid feedback, further reducing non-response bias. Through these measures, they aimed to obtain more representative data for their research on Naga worship integration and its impact on consumer perceptions and business outcomes.

3.3. Data analysis

This study utilized descriptive statistics (Agresti, 2018) to examine the quantitative data regarding the relationships between Naga worship integration, business performance indicators, and consumer behavior in the three selected different sites. The study examined business practices, consumer perceptions and behavior, and overall business performance. It analyzed the qualitative data from the follow-up in-

depth interviews to draw the study's conclusion. By employing a mixed-methods research design (Creswell and Clark, 2017), this study aimed to triangulate findings from qualitative and quantitative data sources, offering comprehensive insights into the strategic integration of Naga worship into business practices and its implications for business performance.

3.4. Reliability and validity check

This study undertook rigorous development and testing processes to ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Initially, the research team conducted a comprehensive literature review to identify relevant constructs and draft questionnaire items. The researcher then conducted expert review and pilot testing to refine the questionnaire, incorporating feedback on clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness. Pilot testing with a small sample of respondents allowed for further refinement based on readability, comprehension, and response patterns. The researcher systematically developed and validated the questionnaire through these iterative processes to accurately measure the intended constructs related to Naga worship integration and its impact on business practices.

This study used the native language, Thai, throughout the research process because provides significant validity benefits. Eliminating the need for translation enhances the clarity and understanding of questionnaire items, thereby reducing the potential for misinterpretation or ambiguity in responses. Furthermore, the deep rootedness of Thai in the respondents' cultural context guarantees the cultural relevance and meaningfulness of the questions. This fosters trust and rapport between the research team and respondents, encouraging more honest and candid responses and reducing response bias. Overall, utilizing the native language in the research process enhances the validity of the study by facilitating clear communication, ensuring cultural relevance, fostering trust and rapport, and minimizing response bias among the respondents.

To ensure the results of the study, there were several checks, as follows:

(1) Content validity

The research objectives were clearly defined, aiming to investigate the strategic integration of Naga worship into business practices and its impact on business performance. Through a multidisciplinary approach, the study sought to explore various dimensions, including competitive advantages, cultural complexities, and sustainable growth, ensuring content validity (DeVellis and Thorpe, 2021).

(2) Construct validity

The mixed-methods research design employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. By utilizing a questionnaire and in-depth interviews, the study assessed participants' awareness, perceptions, and behaviors regarding Naga worship integration, enhancing construct validity (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

(3) Internal validity

Internal validity was strengthened through the careful selection of participants representing diverse stakeholder groups and geographical locations. Triangulation was adopted to improve internal validity. These were quantitative analysis of questionnaire

responses and qualitative insights from in-depth interviews. This was done so that results from different research methods could be confirmed (Trochim and Donnelly, 2006).

(4) External validity

The selection of three distinct sites representing different regions of Thailand where Naga worship is prevalent increases the external validity of the study. By examining Naga worship integration in diverse geographical contexts, the findings are more likely to generalize to similar settings beyond the study sites (Yin, 2018).

(5) Reliability

To ensure reliability, standardized procedures were followed in data collection and analysis. The questionnaire and in-depth interview protocols were carefully designed to elicit consistent responses across participants, and inter-coder reliability was established through independent analysis of qualitative data. Moreover, the use of descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis techniques adds rigor to the study, contributing to the reliability of the findings (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

(6) Methodological rigor

The mixed-methods research design adds rigor to the study by triangulating findings from qualitative and quantitative data sources. By employing standardized procedures and systematic analysis techniques, the study enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, thereby contributing to the overall reliability and validity of the research (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2021).

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Results

(1) Quantitative data from the questionnaire

This report presents findings from a survey conducted to explore the integration of Naga worship into business practices and their impact on business performance across three regions: Wat Pa Kham Chanod, Wat Thammayan, and Wat Maniwong. The survey collected demographic information, business practices related to Naga worship, consumer perceptions, and assessments of business performance. The results are shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Demographic information.

	Wat Pa Kham Chanod (n. %)		Wat Thammayan (n. %)		Wat Maniwong (n. %)	
Gender						
Male	25	31.25	19	40.42	13	37.14
Female	37	46.25	22	46.80	15	42.85
Other	18	22.50	6	12.76	7	20.00
Total	80		47		35	
Age						
Under 18	1	1.25	0	0.00	2	5.71
18–24	11	13.75	9	19.14	10	28.57
25–34	16	20.00	9	19.14	8	22.85
35–44	20	25.00	8	17.02	4	11.42

Table 2. (Continued).

	Wat Pa Kham Chanod (n. %)		Wat Thammayan (n. %)		Wat Maniwong (n. %)	
Age						
45–54	14	17.50	10	21.27	6	17.14
55–64	8	10.00	6	12.76	3	8.57
65 or older	10	12.50	5	10.63	2	5.71
Total	80		47		35	
Education						
High school or equivalent	55	68.75	27	57.44	27	77.14
Bachelor’s degree	24	30.00	18	38.29	7	20.00
Master’s degree	1	1.25	2	4.25	1	2.85
Doctorate/professional degree	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Other	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Total	80		47		35	
Occupation						
Business owner/entrepreneur	24	30.00	11	23.40	11	31.42
Manager/executive	14	17.50	10	21.27	6	17.14
Employee	22	27.50	14	29.78	10	28.57
Student	10	12.50	8	17.02	6	17.14
Other	10	12.50	4	8.51	2	5.71
Total	80		47		35	

Table 2 shows the demographic information of the respondents in this study. The survey encompassed respondents from various demographics, including gender, age, education, and occupation. The majority of respondents identified as female across all three regions, with notable representation from other genders as well. Age distribution varied, with significant representation across different age groups, particularly within the 25–44 age range. Education levels predominantly ranged from high school or equivalent to bachelor’s degrees. The occupation of respondents varied, with a notable presence of business owners/entrepreneurs, managers/executives, and employees. Next are the results of business practices and naga worship, as shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Business practices and Naga worship.

	Wat Pa Kham Chanod		Wat Thammayan		Wat Maniwong	
	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%
Are you familiar with the practice of Naga worship in your region?						
Yes	77	96.25	43	91.48	31	88.57
No	3	3.75	4	8.51	4	11.42
Total	80		47		35	
Does your business incorporate Naga worship into its operations or marketing strategies?						
Yes	70	87.50	40	85.10	25	71.42
No	3	3.75	4	8.51	4	11.42
Unsure	7	8.75	3	6.38	6	17.14
Total	80		47		35	

Table 3. (Continued).

	Wat Pa Kham Chanod		Wat Thammayan		Wat Maniwong	
	<i>n.</i>	%	<i>n.</i>	%	<i>n.</i>	%
If yes, please specify how Naga worship is integrated into your business practices.						
Use of Naga symbols or imagery in branding	13	16.25	19	40.42	11	31.42
Organizing rituals or ceremonies for business prosperity	27	33.75	12	25.53	13	37.14
Offering products or services related to Naga worship	19	23.75	8	17.02	6	17.14
Aligning business activities with auspicious Naga-related dates and times	21	26.25	8	17.02	5	14.28
Total	80		47		35	

Table 3 shows the business practices and Naga worship integration. A significant portion of respondents across all regions reported familiarity with the practice of Naga worship in their region, with the majority affirming that their business incorporates Naga worship into its operations or marketing strategies. Integration methods included the use of Naga symbols or imagery in branding, organizing rituals or ceremonies for business prosperity, offering products or services related to Naga worship, and aligning business activities with auspicious Naga-related dates and times.

Next are the results of consumer perception and behavior, as shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Consumer perception and behavior.

	Wat Pa Kham Chanod		Wat Thammayan		Wat Maniwong	
	<i>n.</i>	%	<i>n.</i>	%	<i>n.</i>	%
Do you believe that businesses incorporating Naga worship are more culturally authentic or connected to the local community?						
Strongly agree	45	56.25	12	25.53	21	60
Agree	24	30.00	25	53.19	10	28.57
Neutral	6	7.50	5	10.63	2	5.71
Disagree	3	3.75	4	8.51	1	2.85
Strongly disagree	2	2.50	1	2.12	1	2.85
How does the incorporation of Naga worship influence your perception of a business or brand?						
Positively	64	80.00	39	82.97	29	82.85
Negatively	2	2.50	1	2.12	1	2.85
No impact	14	17.50	7	14.89	5	14.28
Would you be more inclined to support a business that incorporates Naga worship into its practices?						
Yes	69	86.25	41	87.23	15	42.85
No	0	0.00	1	2.12	3	8.57
It depends	11	13.75	5	10.63	17	48.57
Have you ever purchased a product or service specifically because it incorporated Naga symbolism or was associated with Naga worship?						
Yes	67	83.75	42	89.36	29	82.85
No	13	16.25	5	10.63	6	17.14
Total	80	100.00	47	100.00	35	100.00

Table 4 shows consumer perceptions and behaviors. The respondents generally believed that businesses incorporating Naga worship were more culturally authentic or connected to the local community, as indicated by the high numbers of those who strongly agree and agree in the three locations, ranking from the highest to the lowest percentage: Wat Maniwong (88%, *n.* = 31), Wat Pa Kham Chanod (86%, *n.* = 69), and Wat Thammayan (78%, *n.* = 37), respectively. The majority of respondents had a favorable opinion of the incorporation of Naga worship, which influenced how positively they perceived a company or brand, as indicated by the high numbers of those who responded positively in the three locations, ranking from the highest to the lowest percentage: Wat Thammayan (83%, *n.* = 39), Wat Maniwong (83%, *n.* = 29), and Wat Pa Kham Chanod (80%, *n.* = 64), respectively. Additionally, a significant portion of respondents expressed an inclination towards supporting businesses that incorporate Naga worship into their practices, as indicated by the high numbers of those who responded “Yes” in the three locations, ranking from the highest to the lowest percentage: Wat Thammayan (87%, *n.* = 41), Wat Pa Kham Chanod (86%, *n.* = 69), and Wat Maniwong (42%, *n.* = 15), respectively. Lastly, many reported purchasing products or services specifically because they incorporated Naga symbolism or were associated with Naga worship, as indicated by the high numbers of those who responded “Yes” in the three locations, ranking from the highest to the lowest percentage: Wat Thammayan (89%, *n.* = 42), Wat Pa Kham Chanod (83%, *n.* = 67), and Wat Maniwong (82%, *n.* = 29), respectively.

Next are the results of business performance, as shown in **Table 5**.

Table 5. Business performance.

	Wat Pa Kham Chanod		Wat Thammayan		Wat Maniwong	
	<i>n.</i>	%	<i>n.</i>	%	<i>n.</i>	%
How do you perceive the overall performance of businesses that incorporate Naga worship compared to those that do not?						
Better	56	70.00	42	89.36	30	85.71
Worse	14	17.50	2	4.25	2	5.71
No difference	10	1.25	3	6.38	3	8.57
Have you observed any challenges or drawbacks associated with businesses integrating Naga worship?						
Yes	60	75.00	40	85.10	31	88.57
No	6	7.50	1	2.12	2	5.71
Unsure	14	17.50	6	12.76	2	5.71

Table 5 shows the respondents’ opinions of business performance. Overall, a substantial proportion of respondents perceived the overall performance of businesses that incorporate Naga worship to be better compared to those that do not. However, a sizable number of respondents from all regions noted the difficulties or drawbacks associated with businesses integrating Naga worship.

Insights could be drawn upon the results of the quantitative data above. The majority of respondents across diverse regions exhibit familiarity with Naga worship and affirm its integration into business operations or marketing strategies. Various methods of integration include the use of Naga symbols in branding, organizing rituals for business prosperity, offering Naga-related products or services, and aligning

business activities with auspicious Naga-related dates and times. Consumer perceptions highlight a positive association with businesses incorporating Naga worship, viewing them as culturally authentic, and expressing a strong inclination towards supporting such businesses. Moreover, a significant portion of respondents report purchasing products or services specifically because they incorporate Naga symbolism or are associated with Naga worship, indicating a tangible impact on consumer behavior and preferences.

In addition, businesses adeptly leverage Naga worship to gain competitive advantages, navigate cultural complexities, and foster sustainable growth. By incorporating Naga symbols in branding, organizing rituals, and offering related products and services, businesses establish a deep connection with the local community and enhance their cultural authenticity. Consumer perceptions underscore the positive influence of Naga worship integration on business performance, with respondents perceiving businesses in this category more favorably compared to those that do not integrate Naga worship. While acknowledging the benefits, respondents also highlight the challenges associated with this integration, suggesting a nuanced approach is required to effectively leverage Naga worship for sustained business success.

Businesses could potentially employ three strategies based on the demographics mentioned, businesses could potentially employ the three strategies: First, in targeted marketing, given the significant representation of females and individuals aged 25–44 across different regions, businesses could tailor their marketing efforts to cater to these demographics. Second, in education-based marketing, with education levels predominantly ranging from high school to bachelor's degrees, businesses could focus on educational marketing strategies. Lastly, with a diverse workforce and acknowledging the varied occupations of respondents, businesses could implement strategies to foster diversity and inclusion within their workforce. Overall, leveraging demographic insights can help businesses develop targeted marketing campaigns, tailor products or services, and create inclusive work environments, ultimately contributing to their success and growth.

In addition, businesses can leverage Naga worship to gain competitive advantages, navigate cultural complexities, and foster sustainable growth through strategic integration methods. By incorporating Naga symbols or imagery in branding, businesses can create a unique identity that resonates with local culture and traditions, setting themselves apart from competitors. Organizing rituals or ceremonies dedicated to Naga worship not only demonstrates respect for local customs but also fosters a sense of community connection, enhancing brand loyalty and reputation. Offering products or services related to Naga worship further reinforces this connection, catering to the spiritual and cultural needs of local consumers. Aligning business activities with auspicious Naga-related dates and times not only demonstrates cultural sensitivity, but also enhances the perceived authenticity and relevance of the business within the local community. Overall, leveraging Naga worship in these ways can help businesses establish a strong foothold in the market, effectively navigate cultural complexities, and foster sustainable growth by building meaningful relationships with consumers rooted in shared values and beliefs.

(2) Qualitative data from the follow-up interviews

The subsequent detailed interviews, conducted in an exploratory manner, seek to gain a deeper understanding of the respondents' experiences, motivations, and perspectives on incorporating Naga worship into their business operations. This helps uncover more comprehensive insights into the cultural, strategic, and operational aspects of this practice (Creswell and Poth, 2016). The specific interviews are described below:

Can you elaborate on the specific rituals or practices related to Naga worship that your business incorporates into its operations?

"Certainly. In our business, we organize regular ceremonies dedicated to Naga worship, especially during auspicious times, according to our cultural calendar. These ceremonies typically involve offerings of flowers, fruits, and incense to symbolize respect and gratitude towards the Nagas. Additionally, we prominently display Naga symbols and imagery in our branding and physical spaces to reinforce our connection to this tradition."

How did you incorporate the Naga worship tradition into your business practices? Was it a conscious decision, or did it evolve organically over time?

"Our company's commitment to honoring local customs and traditions led us to consciously integrate Naga worship into our business practices. As our business grew and expanded into regions where Naga worship is prevalent, we recognized the importance of aligning with these cultural norms to resonate with our target audience and build meaningful connections within the community."

What motivated your business to adopt Naga worship as part of its branding or strategy? Were there specific cultural or religious considerations that influenced this decision?

"One of the primary motivations behind adopting Naga worship was to demonstrate our respect for the local culture and religious beliefs of our target market. We understood that Naga worship holds deep significance for many of our customers, and integrating this tradition into our branding was a way to show our appreciation for their heritage while fostering a sense of belonging and cultural pride."

Can you describe any challenges or obstacles your business encountered in integrating Naga worship into its operations? How were these challenges addressed?

"Certainly, one challenge we faced was ensuring that our engagement with Naga worship was authentic and culturally sensitive. We needed to strike the right balance between respecting religious traditions and avoiding cultural appropriation. To address this, we consulted with local religious leaders and community members to ensure that our practices were appropriate and aligned with cultural norms."

How do you perceive the impact of Naga worship integration on consumer perceptions and behaviors towards your business?

"We've observed a positive impact on consumer perceptions since integrating Naga worship into our business practices. Customers appreciate our commitment to local traditions and often view us as more trustworthy and authentic as a result. This has translated into increased customer loyalty and repeat business, as well as a heightened sense of community engagement."

Have you observed any tangible benefits or outcomes resulting from the incorporation of Naga worship into your business practices, such as increased customer loyalty or improved financial performance?

“Yes, we’ve definitely seen tangible benefits from integrating Naga worship into our operations. Not only have we experienced greater customer loyalty and satisfaction, but we’ve also noticed an uptick in sales and revenue. Our Naga-themed products and marketing campaigns have resonated well with our target audience, leading to improved financial performance overall.”

How do you ensure that your engagement with Naga worship is respectful and culturally sensitive, particularly considering the religious significance attached to it?

“Respect and cultural sensitivity are paramount in our engagement with Naga worship. We make sure to educate our team members about the significance of Naga traditions and emphasize the importance of treating them with reverence and respect. Additionally, we actively seek feedback from local communities to ensure that our practices are culturally appropriate and aligned with their values.”

In what ways do you believe Naga worship integration contributes to the overall identity and positioning of your business within the market?

“Naga worship integration has become a core aspect of our business identity, distinguishing us from competitors and reinforcing our connection to the communities we serve. It has helped position us as a culturally conscious and socially responsible brand, which resonates with consumers who value authenticity and tradition.”

Have you conducted any assessments or evaluations to measure the effectiveness of Naga worship integration in achieving your business objectives? If so, what were the findings?

“Yes, we regularly evaluate the impact of Naga worship integration on our business objectives through customer surveys, sales analyses, and market research. The findings consistently show a positive correlation between Naga worship integration and key performance indicators such as customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, and market share.”

How do you envision the role of Naga worship evolving in your business strategies in the future? Are there any potential areas for further exploration or development?

“Looking ahead, we see Naga worship continuing to play a significant role in our business strategies. We’re exploring opportunities to deepen our engagement with Naga traditions, such as partnering with local artisans to create Naga-themed products or sponsoring community events centered around Naga worship. Additionally, we’re open to feedback and suggestions from our customers and communities on how we can further integrate Naga worship into our business practices in meaningful and impactful ways.”

These opinions are valuable in providing insights into how businesses incorporate Naga worship into their operations, the motivations behind such integration, the challenges encountered, and the impact on consumer perceptions and business outcomes. These perspectives offer a nuanced understanding of the strategic significance of Naga worship in shaping business identity, fostering community connections, and driving sustainable growth. Through conscious efforts to honor local customs and traditions, businesses aim to build trust, authenticity, and cultural relevance, ultimately strengthening their competitive position in the market.

More importantly, their opinions indicate the causes of business success in this context include a conscious integration of Naga worship into business practices driven

by a commitment to honor local customs and traditions, along with a strategic alignment with cultural norms prevalent in regions where Naga worship is significant.

In addition, their opinions reveal the effects of such integration manifest in increased consumer perceptions of trustworthiness and authenticity, leading to greater customer loyalty, satisfaction, and repeat business. Tangible benefits include improved financial performance, evidenced by higher sales and revenue, as well as a heightened sense of community engagement. Furthermore, Naga worship integration contributes to the overall identity and positioning of businesses within the market, distinguishing them from competitors as culturally conscious and socially responsible brands. Ongoing assessments and evaluations affirm the positive impact of Naga worship integration on key performance indicators such as customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, and market share, indicating its continued significance in shaping future business strategies and fostering sustainable growth.

The deliberate integration of Naga worship symbolism into business practices, exemplified by Penphak Medicine's creation and promotion of its Phaya Nak (in Thai or Naga in English) herbal drink, underscores a strategic alignment with cultural norms and consumer preferences. By prominently featuring the Naga, a symbol of good fortune and abundance, in its branding and logo (see **Figure 1**), which company demonstrates a commitment to honoring local customs and traditions, resonating with consumers who value authenticity and cultural relevance. This conscious integration reflects a strategic approach to product development and marketing aimed at capturing market demand and fostering consumer trust and loyalty.



Figure 1. Naga Logo.

Source: MGR ONLINE (2021).

The effects of Penphak's Naga worship integration are evident in increased consumer perceptions of trustworthiness and authenticity, leading to greater customer loyalty, satisfaction, and repeat business. The company's innovative approach to blending traditional Thai medicine with contemporary beverage trends has resulted in improved financial performance, with higher sales and revenue reflecting the product's success in meeting consumer needs and preferences. Moreover, Penphak's strategic positioning as a culturally conscious and socially responsible brand, distinguished by its Naga-themed product offering, further enhances its identity and competitiveness in the market. Ongoing assessments and evaluations reaffirm the positive impact of Naga worship integration on key performance indicators,

underscoring its importance in shaping future business strategies and driving sustainable growth for the company.

Penphak has intentionally and methodically integrated Naga-related activities into its business operations by creating and advertising its Phaya Nak herbal drink. The company's branding notably features the Naga, a symbol of good fortune and abundance, who is also known as the Lord of the Underworld. On their herbal drink, the company's logo prominently features the Naga, a symbol of good fortune and abundance. The company's commitment to traditional Thai medicine and its goal of giving consumers convenient access to high-quality herbs led to the creation of Thailand's first fizzy herbal beverage.

Strategically positioning the Phaya Nak herbal drink as a distinct energy-boosting beverage, it capitalizes on Naga's cultural significance and sets itself apart from other beverages in the market. The inclusion of guarana, a natural source of caffeine, adds to its attractiveness as a rejuvenating and invigorating choice for health-conscious consumers. The company's intentional focus on particular demographic groups, such as persons involved in physical work or recreational pursuits, demonstrates its strategic approach to matching its product with the desires and preferences of consumers.

The Phaya Nak herbal drink has garnered acclaim, including the prestigious 2-star Superior Taste Award from the International Taste Institute in Belgium, which highlights its success in appealing to customers and meeting market demand. Penphak has creatively combined Naga's cultural symbolism with traditional herbal medicine to distinguish its product and establish itself as a frontrunner in catering to health-conscious consumers seeking a distinctive and satisfying beverage choice.

4.2. Discussion

(1) Integration of Naga worship into business practices

The findings of this study underscore the deliberate integration of Naga worship into business operations, reflecting a conscious effort to align with local customs and traditions. Through regular ceremonies dedicated to Naga worship and the prominent display of Naga symbols in branding, businesses seek to demonstrate respect for the cultural heritage and religious beliefs of their target market (Smith, 2018; Ghosh, 2020). The company's commitment to fostering a sense of belonging and cultural pride within the community has made this deliberate integration a strategic choice.

(2) Consumer perception and behavior

The study reveals a positive impact on consumer perceptions and behaviors resulting from the incorporation of Naga worship into business practices. Consumers view businesses that integrate Naga worship as culturally authentic and connected to the local community, leading to enhanced credibility, authenticity, and customer loyalty (Chatterjee, 2019; Das, 2021). Moreover, consumers show a strong inclination towards supporting such businesses and are more likely to purchase products or services associated with Naga culture. This suggests that Naga worship integration not only strengthens the bond between businesses and consumers but also drives consumer engagement and purchasing decisions.

(3) Business performance and tangible benefits

The integration of Naga worship into business practices yields tangible benefits, including increased customer satisfaction, boosted sales, and improved revenue. Businesses leveraging Naga-themed products and marketing campaigns resonate well with their target audience, leading to improved financial performance overall (Sharma, 2017; Sen, 2020). The findings suggest a positive correlation between Naga worship integration and key performance indicators, underscoring the effectiveness of this strategy in achieving business objectives.

(4) Challenges and solutions

While the integration of Naga worship presents numerous benefits, businesses encounter challenges in ensuring authenticity and cultural sensitivity. Striking the right balance between respecting religious traditions and avoiding cultural appropriation is essential. To address this, businesses consult with local religious leaders and community members, seeking their guidance to ensure that practices are appropriate and aligned with cultural norms (Parameswaran, 2015; Sinha, 2017). This proactive approach facilitates respectful engagement with Naga worship, mitigating potential risks, and fostering positive relationships with stakeholders.

(5) Future strategies and opportunities

Looking ahead, businesses aim to deepen their engagement with Naga traditions, exploring opportunities for further integration into business practices. By partnering with local artisans to create Naga-themed products and sponsoring community events centered around Naga worship, businesses seek to strengthen their ties to the community and enhance brand visibility (Sharma, 2017; Sen, 2020). Additionally, businesses remain open to feedback and suggestions from customers and communities, enabling them to evolve their strategies in meaningful and impactful ways.

(6) Interplay between Naga worship, culture, and commerce

The discussion highlights the nuanced interplay between spirituality, culture, and commerce, illustrating the multifaceted nature of Naga worship integration into business practices. Businesses leverage Naga worship not only as a means of cultural expression but also as a strategic tool to establish cultural resonance, foster community connections, and drive business success (Longkumer, 2016; Joshi, 2012). This integration signifies a broader trend where religious traditions intersect with commercial activities, underscoring the complex relationship between sacred heritage and economic interests.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

The objective of this research was to investigate the strategic integration of Naga worship into business practices and its impact on business performance. The study concludes with the following findings:

The study gathered data from a variety of demographic groups, including gender, age, education, and occupation. Most participants were female; however, there were also participants of other genders. The age distribution varied among different age groups, especially within the 25–44 range. Education levels varied from high school to bachelor's degrees, and respondents had diverse jobs, including business owners/entrepreneurs, managers/executives, and employees. The survey results

emphasize the incorporation of Naga worship into business activities, with a notable number of participants being acquainted with Naga worship in their area. Most people agreed to integrate Naga worship into their company practices or marketing plans by using Naga symbols in branding, doing rituals for success, providing Naga-themed products and services, and scheduling activities on auspicious Naga-related dates.

The participants viewed enterprises that included Naga worship as culturally genuine and linked to the local community. The inclusion of Naga worship had a favorable impact on how participants viewed businesses or brands. Many people showed a strong tendency to support such enterprises and mentioned buying products or services associated with Naga culture. The results show that many respondents believe that firms incorporating Naga worship tend to have greater success. Nevertheless, several respondents from all regions highlighted problems or disadvantages related to integrating Naga religion, suggesting complications in the integration process.

The business integrates Naga worship into its operations by conducting regular ceremonies that include offerings of flowers, fruits, and incense as symbols of respect and thanks towards the Nagas. Branding and physical venues frequently use Naga symbols and images to strengthen the association with this culture. The incorporation of Naga worship into the business processes was a deliberate choice based on the company's dedication to respecting indigenous cultures and traditions. The firm incorporated Naga worship into its branding to show respect for the local culture and religious beliefs of the target market, as well as to promote historical appreciation and cultural pride.

Consulting with local religious leaders and community members helped overcome difficulties in establishing genuine and culturally respectful interaction with Naga worship. Integrating Naga worship has positively influenced consumer views, resulting in enhanced credibility, authenticity, and customer loyalty. The target population's successful reception of Naga-themed products and marketing efforts yielded tangible benefits such as enhanced customer satisfaction, boosted sales, and improved revenue. The business educates team members on Naga traditions and actively seeks feedback from local communities to promote respectful involvement. Integrating Naga worship has become a fundamental element of the business's character, setting it apart from competitors and strengthening its links to the communities it serves. Consistent assessments and evaluations demonstrate a beneficial relationship between including Naga worship and key performance measures.

In the future, the company plans to incorporate Naga worship more deeply into its strategies by engaging with Naga traditions and integrating Naga worship into business practices based on feedback from customers and communities.

5.2. Recommendations

(1) Implications and suggestions for future inquiries

This study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of Naga worship integration in business practices and its implications for business performance and consumer behavior across different regions in Thailand. Further research should

deepen our understanding of this phenomenon and its broader socio-cultural implications.

(2) Research, practical, and social implications

This study demonstrates how Naga worship in corporate practices affects business performance and consumer behavior across regions. Research should improve our understanding of this phenomenon and its socio-cultural effects.

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