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# How Religious Destinations Innovate Tourism Models in Religious Personalization: An Evidence from Contemporary Art-Temple Collaboration

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**Abstract:** In response to the development of religious personalization, the old marketing strategies of most religious destinations have been unable to effectively promote their popularity in modern times. This article deeply explored how to use contemporary art to design religious destinations comprehensively and proposed an effective solution to enhance the popularity of religious destinations in religious tourism. We established an actor network in religious tourism with qualitative and quantitative analyses and took the Buddhism Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple in Taiwan as a case analysis. We found temples to be the main actors in religious tourism networks and temple organizations to serve as their spokespersons. The successful obligatory point of passage (OPP) in the network was that "the religious performance of Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple is a contemporary art style, and every subject who enters the temple field can obtain interests". This is primarily formulated by the interaction between religion and contemporary art. The results show that adopting a contemporary art style in this case can successfully expand the popularity of the religious destination. Through the actor network model proposed in this paper, it can be used as a strategy for other religious destinations to improve religious tourism.

**Keywords:** religious destination; Buddhism; Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple; Taiwan; religious personalization; religious tourism; contemporary art; strategy; actor network; obligatory point of passage (OPP)

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research Background and Problems

Due to technological changes in transportation, the Internet, and communication tools, neoliberalism brought economic changes to Taiwan at the end of the 20th century, and also changed Taiwan's religious belief model; religion began to become more personalized, individualized and diversified [1]. Religious neoliberalism changes the previous model of using religious destinations in a region as centers of faith and leisure.

These phenomena also created challenges to the development of Taiwanese religious destinations, which were supported by believers for a long time. At the same time, they also prompted Taiwan's religious organizations to actively develop religious tourism and formulate strategies to attempt to increase the visibility of religious destinations as a means to acquire necessary resources. In addition, the Taiwanese government anticipates that religious tourism could bring huge economic benefits and encourage visitors to participate in religious tourism activities, and religious activities in many temples have been designated as cultural activities that attract increased attention [2]. Due to the efforts of the government and religious organizations, religious tourism has become a popular tourism

model in Taiwan. According to survey data, in the past decade, half of Taiwan's top six tourist destinations were religious destinations [3]. However, religious tourism still faces a problem, in that external resources are concentrated in just a few well-known religious destinations or activities [4].

In Taiwan, most religious destinations are temples of Buddhism, Taoism, and those reflecting folk beliefs. Currently, most temples in Taiwan are faced with uneven access to tourism resources. Religious organizations have adopted various strategies for acquiring the necessary resources, such as holding extensive religious festivals, emphasizing claims of 'connection with gods and witchcraft', or implementing digital business models to expand their visibility and increase the development of religious tourism [4]. For Taiwanese temples, holding religious festivals is a crucial method of attracting attention; however, if festivals are held too frequently, their religious significance may be neglected. Some temples emphasize the 'connection with gods and magical witchcraft' via private rituals to satisfy believers' spiritual needs. These temples focus on the majesty and grace of the gods and lack spiritual reflection [5] (p. 43) in a way that creates challenges regarding engaging visitors who are not interested in the religious practices in that specific environment.

The above-mentioned strategies for developing religious tourism are commonly used in many religious destinations, but most of the strategies are similar or only suitable for a few specific objects. These strategies cannot effectively create the characteristics of their respective religious destinations.

In response to the stagnant development of religious tourism, official surveys have shown that there is not a comprehensive design for many religious destinations, and the depth and attractiveness in the religious culture are lacking [4]. These are the main reasons why resources are difficult to obtain. Therefore, even though Taiwan's religious organizations are eager to develop tourism, these destinations must undergo comprehensive professional design to highlight their own cultural characteristics and formulate effective strategies for attracting visitors, which has become an urgent problem for most of these destinations.

*1.2. Research Motivation and Purpose*

This research case, Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple, Tamsui, Taiwan, is one of the few temples in Taiwan that interprets the mercifulness of Buddhism using a contemporary art style and promotes religious tourism via contemporary art and modern pilgrimages. Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple was built by Buddhist organizations in 1997. They invited the well-known contemporary artist, Lee Sun Don, and Taiwanese architects to design this temple. The construction of the temple is a piece of artwork and represents a cultural heritage that will remain for thousands of future pilgrims to adore [6]—this was the purpose behind the temple's design.

Contemporary architecture does not follow a specific style or standard; it strives to break away from the past and incorporate changes and improvements in the old architecture [7]. On the basis of traditional way, Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple uses wood, stone and glass walls as building materials for energy-saving innovative design, which conveys a bright and concise modernity in the sense of simplicity and promotes religious buildings to become a contemporary architectural art landscape.

Unlike most temples in Taiwan, which are still built in adherence to the traditional pattern, Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple designed a religious destination in line with the religious neoliberalism style, from the perspective of contemporary people. Not only is the overall design of the temple consistent with the religious sanctity and essence, but also its contemporary art style reflects an innovative interaction between religion and art.

Although the temple experienced low visibility among religious destinations after its official opening in 2000, it gradually gained attention because of its contemporary artistic characteristics, which have attracted pilgrimages and visits and have been praised and supported by the government and civil society organizations.

The approval of these external forces proved the feasibility of using a contemporary artistic style to expand the visibility of religious destinations and develop religious tourism.

Generally speaking, the architecture, cultural relics, and activities of famous new religious destinations will have unique characteristics; there will also be strategies and techniques for developing religious tourism. These are the keys to successfully expanding visibility. These research data have a certain reference value for religious destinations with low visibility to develop tourism. Understanding the attractive characteristics of Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple and how to use strategies and techniques to successfully expand the visibility in the religious tourism network may provide enlightening solutions for the development of religious tourism elsewhere in Taiwan.

Therefore, we used the Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple as a case study. The purpose of this research was to identify the attractive characteristics of this temple and successfully introduce its specific strategies and technique through the interactive verification of qualitative and quantitative analysis. In addition, we also wanted to clearly understand the strategies and techniques used by network participants to interact and to stabilize network relationships after the characteristics of the temple are recognized. This research used the dynamic and historical perspectives of the actor network theory (ANT) [8] as the basis for the establishment of religious tourism network in this case, and proposed this case as the main non-human actor of the religious tourism network, explaining how the characteristics of Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple helped develop a consensus between the heterogeneous actors, both human and non-human, and to understand the process for effectively distributing interests to form a stable religious tourism network. The ultimate purpose of this research is to propose a successful religious tourism network model.

This research is an empirical pathway, understanding how human and non-human actors interact and stabilize the relationship in religious tourism networks, which is a reference for religious organizations to formulate tourism strategies. Moreover, religious tourism resources can be redistributed, ensuring that tourism resources are not primarily focused on a few religious destinations, cause commercial interference, and promote the balanced development of religious services and tourism in religious destinations.

*1.3. Contemporary Art and Religious Tourism*

The origin of many art forms is related to religious activities. People's early beliefs and religious worship were one of the reasons for the emergence and development of many artistic forms [9]. The close relationship between religion and art is due, in large part, to the use of art by religion, especially in medieval Europe, where various art forms were used to promote religion. While the art of today has re-examined appropriate ways of expression, the development of religion has become increasingly personal. The historical, cultural, and artistic value of religious art continues to promote religious destinations' visibility. Despite the decline in the population of believers, in many countries, artistic historical churches are still visited by a sizable number of non-believers, which has raised awareness of the conservation and development needs of these churches [10]. This interest shows that art remains a valuable strategy for the development of religious destinations. Pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred place [11], which differs from other journeys in that it maintains its particular religious characteristics concerning visits to a sacred place and the experience of pilgrimage itself [12]; pilgrimage is now affected by new forms of motivation linked to the search for spirituality, authenticity and cultural enrichment, resulting in new forms of tourism that provide an alternative to the traditional model [11]. Modern religious tourism is a sacred journey and secular ritual and can be regarded as modern pilgrimage [13,14].

Tourists, provided that they are engaged in activities related to the beliefs of the religious destinations, regardless of their religious beliefs, can be regarded as religious tourists [15,16]. Thus, despite the gradual decline in religiosity, religious destinations can still continue to provide services to visitors in a religious context [3].

According to official survey data from Taiwan in 2013, 82 of the 100 most famous religious tourist destinations in Taiwan were sites representing Buddhism, Taoism, and

folk beliefs [17]. While historical and cultural values are important for the development of religious tourism, there are 60 tourist destinations in which the architectural art represents the primary inspiration for religious tours [17]. Thus, in Taiwan, religious art appears to constitute a popular aspect of religious tourism. There is a need for newly established temples to develop their own tourism model. These temples need innovations to distinguish them from the traditional temples and attract attention via artistic expressions. The creation of contemporary art is based on the current societal context [18], a representation of that period's style of art [19], and an embodiment of the contemporary philosophy and logic that raises people's awareness and participation. Religious groups design religious places using contemporary styles based on religious significance, consistent with the current trends and the needs of modern society, which creates opportunities to expand the visibility of religious places and make them new sites for religious tourism. For example, a few newly built temples were designed using contemporary art concepts, and they reinterpreted the spatial function of religious places, making them a place for the believers to pilgrimage and for ordinary people to appreciate art. Contemporary art is also known as global art, not only in Taiwan, but also in many places, and contemporary art is also used in the design of religious destinations. For example, the Floating Moon Temple in China, the Ekouin Temple in Japan, and the Khmeresque Buddhist temple in Cambodia were all professionally designed by considering contemporary art to attract people's attention.

Temples in Taiwan are places where art is consistently assembled; however, most have similar traditional design styles. Thus, generating high visibility in religious tourism is challenging. Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple was designed using contemporary art concepts. Like the aforementioned internationally famous contemporary religious building, the harmonious presentation of contemporary styles in religious places highlights contemporary religious thinking and engagement in current society, making an innovative expression that conforms to the times. Moreover, Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple used contemporary art as a medium to convey religious messages, and they attracted the contemporary population through their ideologies and beauty. When religious sites become the main actors in forming an interactive network with the outside world, they become the driving force of religious tourism, leading to religious destinations becoming new tourist attractions.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Research Methods and Research Framework

We selected a case study as a research method and considered Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple. A case study focuses on a unique individual, group, or phenomenon as the research object, and collects extensive data by one or more methods to gain an in-depth understanding of the case [20]. In order to clearly understand the religious tourism network of Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple and to make the proposal of the religious tourism network in this case more scientific, according to Jick's (1979) [21] suggestions on case studies, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used for data collection, so the results can be cross-retested by triangulation to check their consistency and improve their reliability and validity. The compiled data were used to construct the religious network of this case with reference to the important concepts of the ANT [22]. The research framework is illustrated in Figure 1.
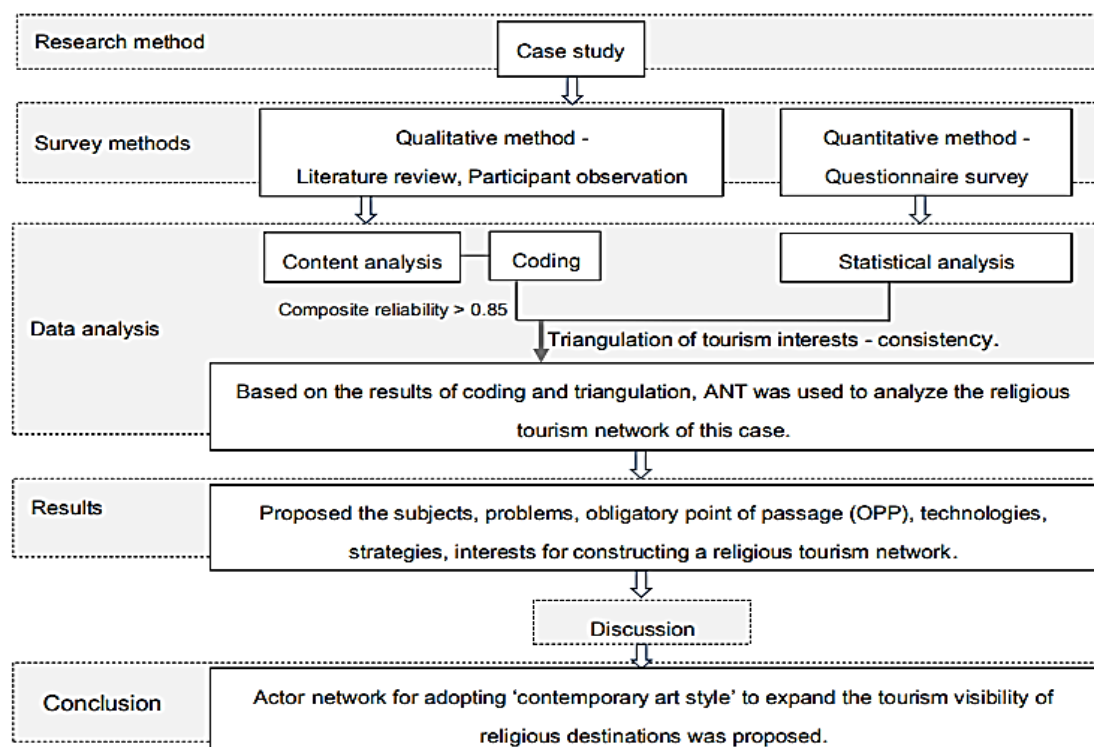
**Figure 1.** Research framework.

*2.2. Research Survey*

After fully explaining the purpose and content of the research and obtaining the consent of Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple, the survey and data collection were carried out. We used a literature review, participant observations, and questionnaires related to religious tourism to collect the data about this situation. The explanation for the investigation method is as follows:

(1) Literature review: From October 2019 to August 2020, 50 media reports (e.g., TV, Internet news, and blogs) and some other documents were collected, summarized, and unified.

(2) Participant observation: Researchers visited the case site between July 2017 and July 2018 to obtain real and direct data and reduce the reactionary effects of the observed data, which could make the research results more practically relevant. They participated in teaching contemporary art courses. They also acted as observers, recording and collecting data. This role as an observer lasted until July 2020.

(3) Questionnaire method: Questionnaires were administered used to obtain the objective data and results. The first draft of the questionnaire, namely 'Tourists' attitudes toward the contemporary art style of temples', was designed with reference to relevant documents, and six experts in the area of tourism and design were invited to conduct the focus group method and modify and confirm the content of the questionnaire. The survey respondents were visitors who were above 18 years, who were engaged in religious tourism at the Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple. After explaining the purpose of the research and obtaining their consent, a questionnaire was issued. The questionnaires were distributed between June and August 2020. A total of 115 valid questionnaires were received (please refer to the supplementary materials for the content of the questionnaire and the data of the respondents).

*2.3. The Reference Theory for Constructing Religious Tourism Network—The Actor Network Theory (ANT)*

The ANT is a scientific approach that demonstrates the construction of scientific knowledge via a social aspect [22,23], and investigates how the actors connect to the other involved factors through interaction to adapt, negotiate, and finally reach consensus [7]. The ANT consists of four parts.

(1) Actors: Latour believes science to be a field of interaction between humans and non-humans. (1983) [24]. He considers human and non-human actors to share equal status.

(2) Networks: The network concentrates the resources to a certain place-point via the point to connect with each other to make the scattered resources form a network and expand to all the corners.

(3) Translation: Translation is the key to helping actors connect to form a network and solve problems and gain interests. Actors generate interaction via strategies and technology, which result in changes in interests and goals.

(4) Obligatory point of passage (OPP): OPP is the most important concept in the translation process. It finds a common solution to the problems of different actors. Translation allows the actors' appearances and meanings to change, be adjusted, and be displaced. It further fosters stable integrity in the actors [24–27].

The ANT considers the often-neglected non-human influence factors [28], which corresponds to our study's aim to emphasize the non-human role of religious destinations, such as temples. Regarding the artistic style of religious destinations, the ANT plays an essential role in the innovative network action. We implemented the ANT as a theoretical basis to provide evidence of this new way of developing religious tourism and explored the theoretical connection between the ANT and these ways of developing religious tourism.

The ANT contends that heterogeneous actors can be both human and non-human, and both play an active role in knowledge formation; therefore, they should be treated equally [28]. In the current design, the non-human actors (e.g., Buddha, space, architecture, cultural relics, and art) and human actors (e.g., individuals, governments, non-government organizations, social media, and artists) are treated equally. A heterogeneous actor network connecting human and non-human actors is the theoretical basis for the development of religious tourism in temples. Regarding the actor network composition, their interaction connects the temple-related human and non-human. Once the actors have successfully become members of the tourism network and the network is firmly built, the actor network across the interior and exterior spaces becomes an essential part of the religious tourism network. In this way, an innovative religious tourism network composed of heterogeneous actors has formally formed.

*2.4. Data Analysis*

Data analysis was divided into three steps, namely the following:

(1) Content analysis and coding: the data from the literature review and participant observation were analyzed and coded in accordance with the research question and the ANT framework. After brainstorming, the researcher and the two tourism management experts divided the collated data into the two categories of human actors and non-human actors. Then, two tourism management experts were invited to conduct a content analysis and element coding of the two categories in line with the important concepts of the ANT—problems, OPP, interests, technology, and strategy. The analyst's triangle correction above 0.85 was used as the criterion for the reliability of the content analysis, as recommended by Kassarjian (1977) [29]. The mutual agreement of coding was 0.827 ($67 \times 2/(74 + 88)$), the average mutual agreement was 0.827, and the composite reliability was 0.905 ($2 \times 0.827/(1 + (1 \times 0.827))$), higher than 0.85. As a result, the reliability criterion was met.

(2) Statistical analysis and triangulation: ANT is the basis for the construction of the religious tourism network in this study. OPP is the key to the successful translation of actors into actor network members. In order to confirm OPP and improve the validity and reliability of the research, SPSS 12.0 was used to carry out a statistical analysis of the returned questionnaires to reduce the error rate of the research process and improve the study's validity. The results of the statistical analysis and coding results were subjected to data triangulation and methodological triangulation for the 'recommended tourism project'. The validation process invited three experts in 'tourism and design' to discuss and check the consistency of the research results, and the results suggested that the data collected using different tools were consistent. Different methods were used to study the same case, and the results are consistent, indicating that the results of the study were convergent validity and reliability [18]. This result also confirmed that the OPP of the religious tourism network is of a contemporary art style.

(3) Based on the results of coding and triangulation, ANT was used to analyze the religious tourism network framework, as well as the strategies and techniques used by actors to stabilize network relations for interests, and to further establish an innovative actor network of religious tourism.

## 3. Results

The research results show that the Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple actors involved in developing religious tourism networks included non-humans and humans (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Classification of actors.

| Classification | Actors |
|---|---|
| Non-human actor | Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple |
| Spokesperson for the non-human actor | Temple organization |
| Human actors | Government organizations, civil organizations, media (e.g., TV, Internet news, blogs.), artists, visitors |

While the architecture, installations, and cultural relics of the Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple were designed and planned by experts invited by the temple organization, the completed temple exhibits an innovative style combining religion and contemporary art, thus representing attractiveness, knowledge, and interests. The innovative style automatically arouses the interests and entries of different human actors and would eventually generate benefits. In these interactions, the actors' respective problems were solved via individual cases and translated to the network members, using strategies and technology to generate benefits. Therefore, the temple could be regarded as an independent actor in the network and was classified as a non-human actor. Meanwhile, the temple organization acted as an intermediary between the non-human and human actors in the religious tourism network and had a close relationship with the non-human actors (i.e., temples). Therefore, religious organizations were regarded as spokespersons for non-human actors (i.e., temples). The others that were humans were classified as human actors. At the same time, through the formation of a stable network relationship, this temple would have many opportunities to expand its visibility. The analytic results and explanations of the actors' problems, solutions, interests, OPP for translation, deployment technology, and strategies during the stages of enrollment and mobilization in the network were as follows.

### 3.1. Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple's Strategies and Technology for Expanding Visibility

Data analysis showed that the innovative style of the Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple needed to become the core of the temple organization's strategy and technology to develop its religious tourism network. The contemporary art style of non-human actors was the core strategy for stabilizing network relationships, and temple organizations became

the spokespersons for the non-human actors and promoters of network stability. They cooperated to achieve the purpose of expanding the visibility of religious destinations using several strategies.

### 3.1.1. Strategy 1: Temple Where Religion and Contemporary Art Merge

The architecture, space, sculpture, and garden design of Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple all reflect the beauty of contemporary art. The main building's appearance (Figure 2a–c) has a mixture of ancient Chinese architecture and modern creativity. With timber as the principal material, the walls were illuminated with a massive mosaic of glass inside the building. The bright space made the exquisite carving of the Buddha more obvious and increased attention (Figure 2d). The pure appearance of the building and the consideration of green energy reflected the beauty of modern architecture in a way that differed from that adopted in the traditional brick-based Chinese temples.
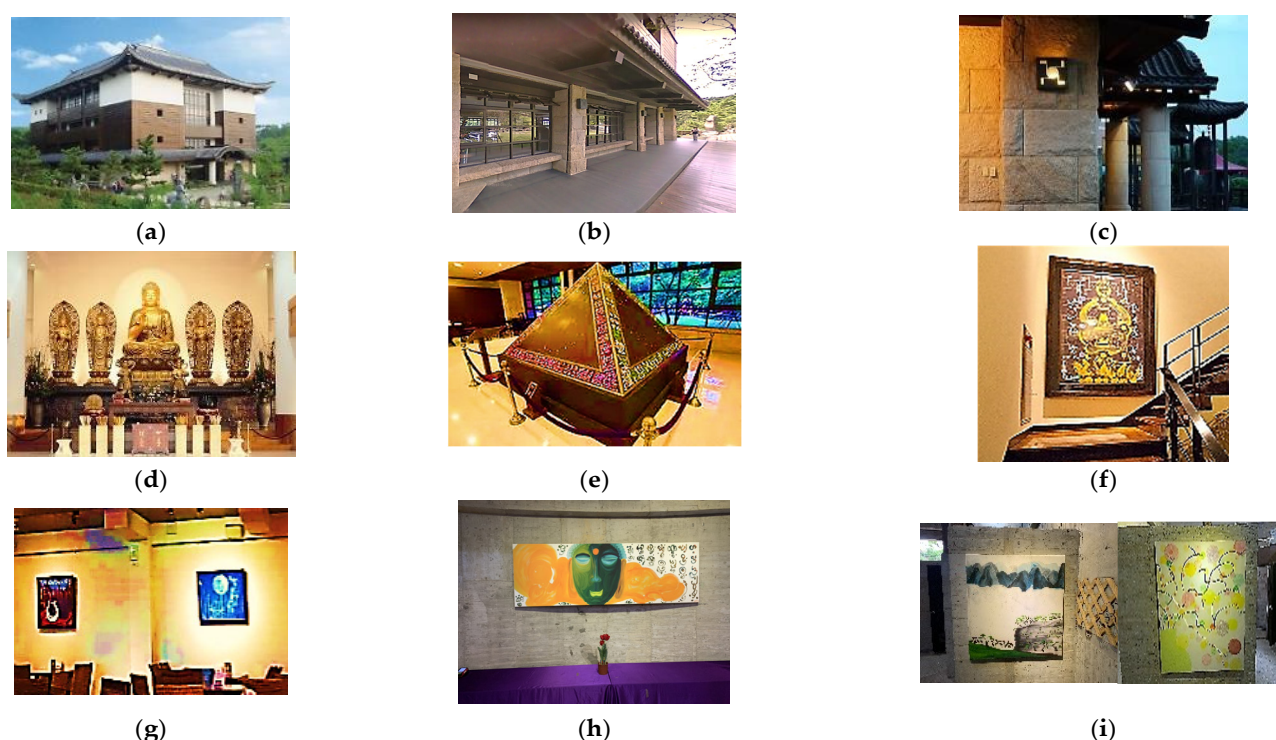


**Figure 2.** (**a**) The main building of the temple; (**b**) Glass curtain wall of the building; (**c**) Wall lamp of the building; (**d**) Buddha statues; (**e**) Artwork 'Blessing'; (**f**) Painting 'Guanyin' in the stair landing; (**g**) Painting 'Moon' in the lounge; (**h**) Painting 'The king of Rulai' in the reception center; (**i**) Painting 'Wonderful attainment' and 'Spectacular blossom' in the lavatory. Figure source: Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple. https://www.yuandao.org.tw/art.php; https://www.facebook.com/yuandao.org (accessed on 14 August 2020).

The inside of the temple was not only utilized for religious purposes. Multimedia artwork was displayed in the lobby (Figure 2e), and artistic oil paintings of contemporary artists were properly displayed in the indoor space (Figure 2f–i). While the oil paintings abstractly illustrated the Buddhist characters, symbols of religion, or blessings, the multimedia artwork included the use of cosmic symbols to express the meaning of blessings.

Over 169 acres of garden contained many elegant sculptures from a famous Chinese sculptor. The garden also contained the contemporary artist Lee Sun-Don's stainless sculpture artwork 'Soaring', which was exhibited at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009 (Figure 3a). Every exquisite sculpture artwork was properly placed in the ponds, bridges, and hiking tracks throughout the garden (Figure 3a–f). The garden fence was a waterfall-like 'water wall' (in the day; Figure 3g,h) and a colorful fountain (in the night; Figure 4a,b).

In the night, after the garden was closed, a steel fence emerges from the water. This unique design has become a trend in Taiwanese architecture, representing a style of simplicity, tranquility, and healing.
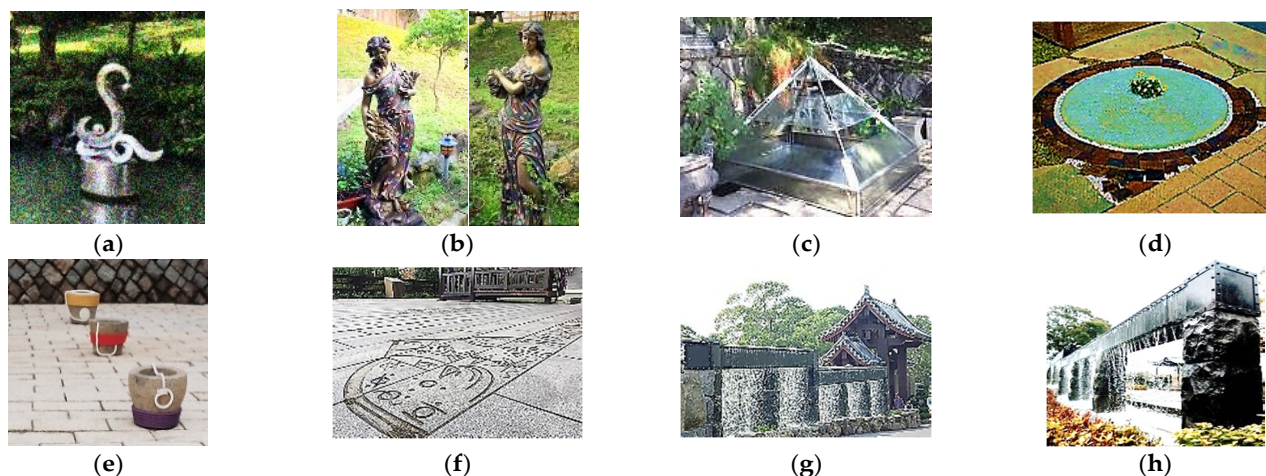


**Figure 3.** (**a**) Sculpture 'Soaring'; (**b**) Sculpture 'Goddess'; (**c**) Artwork 'Pyramid'; (**d**) Artwork 'Wealth'; (**e**) Artwork 'Three virtues'; (**f**) Intaglio 'Huayan World'; (**g**) Water fence; (**h**) Water fence. Figure source: Yuan-Dao Guanyin temple; https://www.yuandao.org.tw/art.php; https://www.facebook.com/yuandao.org/ (accessed on 28 August 2020).
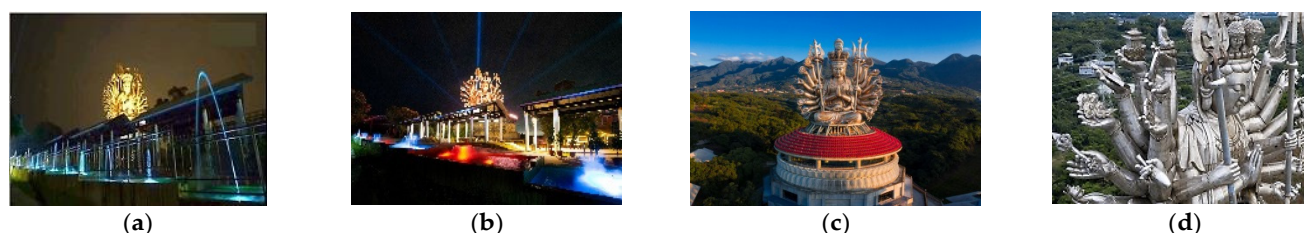


**Figure 4.** (**a**) Fountain fence; (**b**) Fountain fence; (**c**) Guanyin statue; (**d**) Guanyin statue. Figure source: Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple; https://www.yuandao.org.tw/thousand.php; https://www.facebook.com/yuandao.org/ (accessed on 10 April 2021).

Guanyin Bodhisattva in Buddhism represents compassion toward and helping all living beings to relieve their worries. Its lofty position in Buddhism is also a representative figure of Buddhism and is very familiar to the public. This Guanyin statue artwork received a Guinness world record certification in September 2019 for being the 'Largest Steel Sculpture', resulting in the Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple receiving global visibility for its religious and artistic nature. The temple's visitors were no longer limited to just the people of the region but people from all across the globe. The temple fulfilled the design idea of 'the construction of temples as the creation of an artwork' to intensify the religious and artistic experience of the visitors. This formation in which contemporary art embodies religion was officially realized. At the same time, this temple broke away from tradition and used environmental protection and modern technology for the Guanyin Bodhisattva statue that was 30.3 m tall (Figure 4c,d).

3.1.2. Strategy 2: 'Fortune Blessing' Media Innovation and Artistic

Usually, temples offer religious experiences, such as 'Fortune blessing'. The media are generally similar and lack a sense of design. For example, the use of incense and the fashion of amulets are similar across different temples and are the most common blessing media that can be seen in temples. The Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple invited contemporary artists to redesign its own incense (Figure 5a,b) and amulets (Figure 5d,e). Each year, an annual

amulet boasts its own unique color and style. The 20 kinds of incense each has its own artistic packaging (Figure 5c), color, fragrance, and symbol of blessing. Further, they passed environmental testing and are eco-friendly, making them particularly innovative religious media that both convey the meaning of 'Fortune Blessing' and serve as popular souvenirs.

(**a**)

(**b**)

(**c**)

(**d**)

(**e**)

(**f**)

**Figure 5.** (**a**) Blessing incense; (**b**) Blessing incense; (**c**) Art packaging box for incense; (**d**) Amulets; (**e**) Amulets; (**f**) Contemporary art painting exhibition. Figure source: Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple; https://www.facebook.com/yuandao.org/ (accessed on 5 February 2022).

3.1.3. Successfully Translated Technology—Events

In this case study, events were the main technique through which other actors were translated into network members. The temple organization became the spokesperson of the non-human actor–temple and promoted the temple's use during events as a bridge for bringing in outside actors, arousing interest, and expanding visibility. There were several types of events.

Firstly, the temple organization hosted religious and artistic experiences, and the events were located at Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple. They represented both static and dynamic experiences. The static experiences included contemporary art-based large-scale painting exhibition (Figure 5f), the totemic energy oil painting and sculpture exhibition, the contemporary artist teacher–student joint exhibition, and the Buddhist cultural relics exquisite exhibition, which kindled interest among visitors toward religion via contemporary art experiences. The dynamic experiences included 33 Guanyin statue patrol activities, praying for amulets, creative teaching by contemporary artists, an art summer camp and children's painting competition, and an international photography salon biennale competition. These experiences allowed visitors to deepen their religious and artistic experiences via personal involvement.

Secondly, cross-industry cooperation activities were organized. These were organized in cooperation with civil organizations. For example, the temple was used as a place for the GP DEVA Pull-Zen International Inc. jewelry exhibition catwalk and shooting TV commercials [30]. The temple organization co-organized the Forshang-Cup national go competition in cooperation with the Forshang World Foundation. The participants included both domestic and foreign players [31]. The Forshang-Cup national go competition held in Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple has been held for more than 10 years, making the Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple a well-known go competition venue in Asia. Further, the temple organization cooperated with the Taiwan Sports and Leisure Development Association to organize road running activities and made Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple a publicity attraction in the advertisement of road-running activities [32].

In this case, the religious tourism development mode held events by itself to mobilize the other actors in the temple. The non-human actors (i.e., temples) provide space for other actors to enter the temple. Religious organizations, the spokespersons of the non-human actors, continued to plan events to persuade more actors to enter religious places. When

the human actors are in contact with the non-human actors, there is an opportunity to bring additional resources into the religious tourism network, which could help the religious tourism network to develop steadily and achieve its purpose of spreading the religion.

### 3.2. OPP—Religious Performance Is a 'Contemporary Art Style'

The OPP was a common cognition of actors in the network that encouraged actors to be translated into a member of the network, improving the visibility of the religious destinations. By determining the content of the OPP, the key factors that expanded each religious destination's visibility can be determined. After analyzing the data of the visitor's questionnaire and media reports, we obtained the data of two tourism interests and achieved consistency through the triangulation of experts, which confirmed that the characteristic of this case that aroused the tourism interests of the actors was a 'contemporary art' style. This is also the OPP in the religious tourism network of this case. The analysis results of questionnaire surveys, media reports, and triangulation verification are explained below.

3.2.1. Coding Results of Content Analysis of Media Reports—The Experience of Combining Religion with Contemporary Art Is Valued

A total of 50 media reports and comments were coded and analyzed, and the results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Tourism recommendations from the media.

| Tourism Interests | Recommended Tours | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Sculptures, Building (n) | Overall Environmental Design (n) | The Aforementioned Two and 'Fortune Blessing' Media (n) |
| Tourism Interests of Visitors–External | Contemporary art experience (11) | Contemporary art and religious experience (2) | Contemporary art and religious experience (32) contemporary art experience (3) religious experience (2) |
| Tourism Interests of Visitors–Internal | Special, surprise (11) | Special relax blessing (2) | Special, surprise (2) relaxation, peace, blessing, special, surprise (35) |
| Total (%) | 11 (22%) | 2 (4%) | 37 (74%) |
| Type of media (n) | Blogs (8); Internet and TV reports (3) | Blogs (2) | Blogs (19); Internet and TV reports (18) |

Ninety-six percent of the media in Table 3 mentioned the experiences of contemporary art, and the experience and satisfaction drawn from combining religion with contemporary art were the most recommended, indicating that this was an important tourism feature of this research case. For most bloggers, the Internet, and TV reports, using contemporary art to develop religious tourism was attractive.

3.2.2. The Result of the Questionnaire Analysis: Contemporary Art Style Is Attractive to Human Actors

The analysis showed more male visitors (60%) in this case than female visitors (40%). Forty-four percent of respondents were first-time visitors. Those aged between 18 and 29 years accounted for 21% of all the respondents, making them the largest age group. More than twice (56%) of those visiting the temple were in the 50–59 years age group (20% of all respondents). While most young visitors obtained temple tourism information for the first time through the Internet, middle-aged visitors obtained information through recommendations from relatives and friends. The attitudes and interests of the visitors by age group were significantly different (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Tourist attitudes and interests of the visitors of different ages.

| Visitors' Attitudes and Tourism Interests | Visitor Age (Number of People) | | | | | | Pearson Chi-Square Test | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 18–29 (n = 34) | 30–39 (n = 17) | 40–49 (n = 29) | 50–59 (n = 25) | ≥60 (n = 10) | Total (n = 115) | $\chi^2$ | Asymptotic Significance |
| Tourism motivation | | | | | | | 37.778 | <0.001 |
| Art | 23 | 9 | 12 | 2 | 0 | 46 (40%) | | |
| Religion | 4 | 2 | 4 | 13 | 6 | 29 (25%) | (df = 8) | |
| All of the above | 7 | 6 | 13 | 10 | 4 | 40 (35%) | | |
| Recommended projects | | | | | | | 37.008 | <0.001 |
| Sculptures, building | 23 | 6 | 14 | 2 | 0 | 45 (39%) | | |
| Overall environmental design | 1 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 10 (9%) | (df = 8) | |
| The above two and 'Fortune Blessing' media | 10 | 9 | 10 | 21 | 10 | 60 (52%) | | |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 (0%) | | |
| Tourism interests—external | | | | | | | 18.376 | 0.019 |
| Innovation, art | 13 | 13 | 16 | 17 | 10 | 69 (60%) | | |
| Religious culture | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 (3%) | (df = 8) | |
| All of the above | 18 | 4 | 12 | 8 | 0 | 42 (37%) | | |
| Tourism interests—internal | | | | | | | 24.010 | 0.002 |
| Relaxation, peace, blessing | 14 | 11 | 17 | 9 | 9 | 60 (52%) | | |
| Special, surprise | 6 | 2 | 9 | 2 | 0 | 19 (17%) | (df = 8) | |
| All of the above | 14 | 4 | 3 | 14 | 1 | 36 (31%) | | |
| Willingness to recommend | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 34 | 17 | 29 | 25 | 10 | 115 (100%) | - | - |
| Contemporary art is attractive | | | | | | | | |
| Agree | 34 | 17 | 29 | 25 | 10 | 115 (100%) | - | - |
| Will come again | | | | | | | | |
| Agree | 34 | 17 | 29 | 25 | 10 | 115 (100%) | - | - |

However, all interviewees agreed that the contemporary art style of the temple was attractive and was 'willing to recommend it to others'. Ninety-four percent of respondents believed that contemporary art style had a positive influence on religious beliefs. At the same time, all the visitors expressed the 'willingness to come again'.

Twenty-five percent of visitors visited the temple for religious interests. However, 35% of visitors toured the temples for religious and artistic interests, and 68% of 18–29-year-old visitors toured the temples for artistic interests and highly recommended the sculptures and buildings. While the visitors have different travel motives, the most commonly identified external travel interest was 'innovation and art', and the most frequently identified internal tourism interest was 'relaxation, peace, and blessing', This shows that contemporary art style became a characteristic of religious tourism and can bring about religious and artistic tourism experiences. Further, the development of characteristic tourism (in this case) was the balance between secularity and sacredness.

### 3.2.3. OPP Confirmation

The recognition of OPP affects the translation of the actors on the network. According to the tourism projects recommended by the media and visitors, experts were invited to triangulate the analysis results (Figure 6). The results showed that the recommended projects were related to the contemporary art style performance. Thus, contemporary art style appeared to be the main factor in the formation of network OPP.
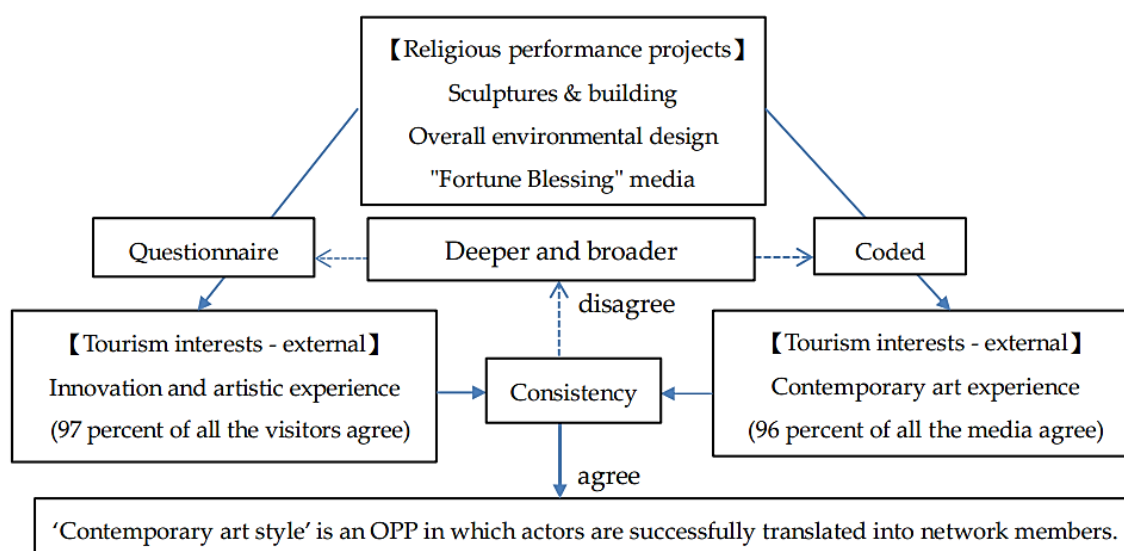
**Figure 6.** Triangulation by experts—confirmation of obligatory point of passage (OPP).

The field surveys found that government, civil organizations, and artists were attracted by the religious contemporary art style and, thus, attracted to become members of the network. In addition, this case is related to the other actors via the contemporary art styles and has expanded the visibility of the temple. Thus, 'religious performance in the contemporary art style' was the OPP for all the actors that were translated into network members.

*3.3. Human Actors, Translation*

After determining the OPP, the human actors agreed with the 'contemporary art style' of the case. They used strategies and technology to connect with the case, and thus, solve problems and obtain interest. These were the key moments that were required for the human actors to translate to the network members. The elements of the relationship between the actors and the OPP are shown in Table 4, and the technology and strategies used for the translation are shown in Table 5.

**Table 4.** Elements of the relationship between the actors and OPP in the network.

| Subject | Government Organization | Civil Organizations | Media (Blogger, etc.) | Artists | Visitors |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Problem | Local development stagnation | There is no place for extra points | Lack of attractive themes | Lack of suitable places for exhibitions | No motivation to visit the temple |
| OPP | Religious performance is a 'contemporary art style' | | | | |
| Interests | Increase tourist numbers, Boost the economy | Increase in participants and followers | Subscribers increase | Appreciators increase | Art and religious Experience, Psychological satisfaction |

**Table 5.** Technology and strategies of translation.

| Subject | Government Organization | Civil Organizations | Media (Blogger, etc.) | Artists | Visitors |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Technology | Enter the temple space | | | | |
| Strategy | Activity cooperation, recommendation | Activity cooperation | Reviews, reports, recommendations | Cooperation in the exhibition activities of the contemporary art | Reviews, recommendations |

Governments expect religious tourism to bring opportunities for local development; however, the tourism strategies adopted by most traditional temples are uncreative, making it difficult for these temples to attract the general public. The activities of civil organizations and artists, as well as media reports, were expected to attract increased attention to the special and innovative attractions of temples. It is expected that the visitors would have a special tourism experience and have their tourism interests fulfilled. Therefore, both the non-human actors (i.e., temple) as well as the human actors were driven by the contemporary art style of the non-human actors, allowing other human actors to use technology and strategies to make the network more stable. The strategy to expand the visibility of the case via the application of the contemporary art style was supported and shown to be successful.

**4. Discussion and Conclusions**

The design concept of the Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple states that the temple is no longer just a place of worship but also an exhibition hall for contemporary art. Within the interaction between religious and contemporary art, the beauty of contemporary art, differing from the beauty of a traditional temple, takes advantage of OPP in developing the religious tourism network. Hence, it positively affects the development of religious tourism and creates a realistic phenomenon, highlighting the involvement of non-human actors in the network and bringing into focus the equality between the human and non-human actors. The Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple utilizes technology and strategies, which enables it to connect to the other actors while ensuring profits. The temple organization has become a delegate of non-human actors, playing an intermediary role in the developing actor network at the Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple. Further, it lets the translated actors, who have access to the network, satisfy themselves with the transition.

This transition is realized through the creation of profits. This research has shown that the greatest problem that the Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple faces is the lack of visibility and insufficient outer resources when it first started operating. When a religious organization holds a series of art activities, the temple's contemporary art is likely to attract the attention of the other actors, including visitors who may be Buddhists, tourists, or activity participants. After entering the temple and enjoying the religious and artistic experiences, they can achieve both psychological and travel satisfaction. When the number of temple visitors reaches a certain threshold, the temple then focuses on social media and tries to obtain further online engagement from visitors. The largest attraction of the temple often lies in its presentation of contemporary art and travel satisfaction. Both visitors and social media may give their appraisals via texts, photos, or videos, and many agree that they are attracted by the artistic achievements of the Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple. These messages can be shared easily on social media. Further, this feature of the temple encourages more artists to attend and hold contemporary art exhibitions. Moreover, it strengthens the impression of the contemporary art style of the temple. The problems arising from the government organizations and civil organizations could be solved by having temples cooperate to hold activities. The temple's visibility, as well as profits, could increase this way. Heterogeneous actors could freely connect via these translations and build meaningful and stable relationships. The interaction between the actors was found to appear incessantly.

The current results show that 'religious performance is a contemporary art style' is the OPP, prompting all actors to become network members. From the theoretical perspective of the ANT, we examined the network connection development of various actors in the tourism development of the Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple. Due to different problems and purposes, different actors have different relational materiality through the OPP, and every subject who enters the temple field can benefit each other. Through the temple's 'contemporary art style', each actor will use technology and strategies to connect with the temple, develop relevance for one another, and obtain certain benefits. Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple's innovative religious tourism model in religious personalization is gradually realized. The results are summarized in Figure 7.
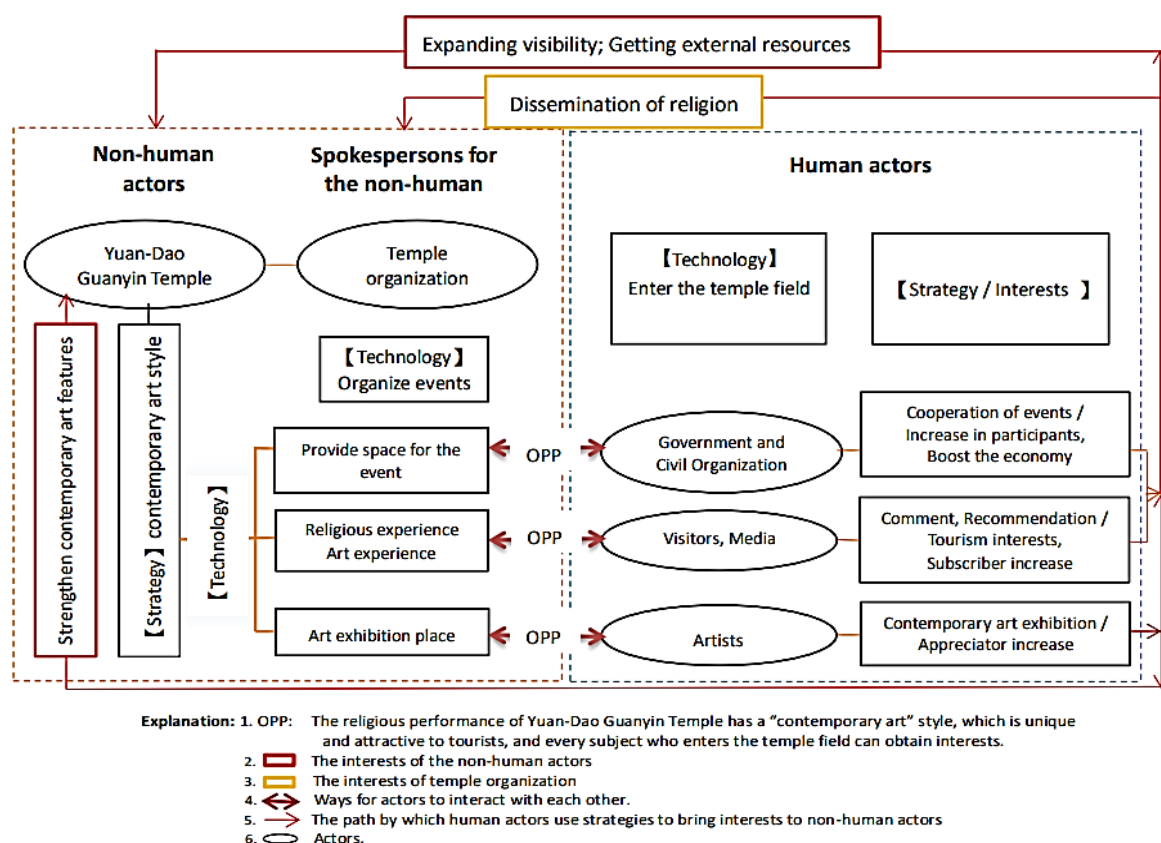


**Figure 7.** Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple adopts the actor network of innovative tourism model in contemporary art style.

The contemporary art style combined with religion successfully aroused the interest of other actors. Each actor in the religious tourism development process would call the others via 'technology' and 'strategies' to ensure that the problems are solved, and benefits obtained, further helping to develop a connected relationship and position in the network. The human actors enter the religious destinations via OPP to form a link with the Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple. They use their own resources to propose strategies and bring benefits to themselves. This strengthens the OPP intermediary role in such a way that the contemporary art style expands the temple's visibility and attracts new actors into the field to further form a stronger network of connections. Thus, temples could gradually eliminate the problems of internal reform, connect with the outside world, and develop a new model for the innovation of religious tourism.

'Religious performance is a contemporary art style' was the key to ensuring success in the religious tourism network. The existence of non-human actors could be formulated due to the mutual interaction between religion and art. While religious organizations are no longer concerned with the practice of preaching through art, it is undeniable that

both religion and art are emotional revelations. Therefore, early religious artwork can be considered nonverbal doctrines. While religion and art seem to be remote in modern times, outstanding religious artworks still hold the capacity to appeal to many people, even though it is generally more difficult to develop religious tourism. The reutilization of art in religious destinations for public expositions is a highly valuable strategy.

Contemporary art is a borderless and comprehensive visual expression, reflecting current trends. It can progressively comprehend the thoughts of modern people and draw their attention. When a religious performance is transformed into contemporary art, religion and modern people can be connected instantaneously. This perspective was demonstrated in the OPP in the ANT of this case study—the temple's visibility was demonstrably expanded by the contemporary art style of the religious performance in the temple, while successfully marketing the temple in religious tourism.

The connection process between the temple and other actors may promote its secularity. However, the persistence in the sanctity of religion is essential. The results show that the contemporary art style of this case still has the function of religious soothing. Therefore, using contemporary art in the temple is likely to persuade more people to enter religious destinations for religious and artistic experiences, and each person who does so is a potential believer. Existing religious cultures must be sustained with innovative thinking and practical operations to expand the visibility of religious destinations in Taiwan and other regions, and a more specific standard needs to be followed. Consequently, this research represents one way to develop religious tourism with native features to increase religious belongingness and tourism benefits to the local community. The ANT developed in the Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple accomplished the goal of 'innovative and sustainable tourism models through contemporary art'. This reutilization of art provides a new avenue in religious tourism for Taiwanese temples, which, though they have attempted interior revolutions, are restrained by difficulties.

## 5. Research Limitations

The case study is mainly aimed at the problem of promoting religious tourism in Taiwan and proposes possible solutions. However, there are few religious destinations featuring contemporary art in Taiwan, and it is difficult to find other cases for comparison and comprehensive discussion. In order to avoid the subjectivity of case studies, the researchers adopted quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and consistency verification to promote the scientific rigor of the results and have more reference value.

## 6. Impact Statement

Through the analysis of the ANT, we were able to depict the interaction neutrally and equally between the non-human (i.e., the Yuan-Dao Guanyin Temple) and human actors and conducted this research without overly narrowing the existing studies in religious tourism and neglecting other aspects. The current findings indicate that contemporary art could become a new strategy to expand the visibility of religious destinations, as some of the neglected non-human and human actors can bring active influences to the development of religious tourism. With changes in religion and personalization, the development of religious tourism could be challenging; therefore, paying attention to the equality of heterogeneous actors is necessary to advance related religious tourism research. Further, analyzing the interaction mode and translation occurring among the participants in the religious tourism industry and outlining the best network model to serve as the basis for future strategies must happen, as was demonstrated in this case study. This line of research can be used as a theoretical basis for expanding the visibility of religious destinations via certain strategies and providing practical suggestions for the development of temple tourism. Thus, even in the era of increased secularization, temples can maintain their religious sanctity and develop religious services and tourism.

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