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## THE NEW CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE THESIS

Thesis title: The effect of destination image on satisfaction and revisit intention of spiritual tourists in An Giang province.

Major: Business Administration. Major code: 9340101

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## THE NEW CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE THESIS

### *Theoretical Contributions*

First, in addressing the initial research gap namely, the lack of studies that specifically analyze the components of cognitive image in the context of spiritual tourism, this dissertation develops and validates an integrated model. The model clarifies the elements that constitute the cognitive image, including infrastructure, natural beauty, entertainment activities, and, most notably, spiritual characteristics. The inclusion of the “spiritual characteristic” variable in the model not only emphasizes the distinctiveness of spiritual tourism destinations compared to other tourism types, but also contributes to expanding destination image theory by incorporating a localized and culturally appropriate approach rooted in spiritual beliefs.

Second, this study addresses a common limitation in previous literature, where the destination image has often been examined from a one-dimensional cognitive perspective. The current research adopts a multi-dimensional and holistic approach, by simultaneously measuring cognitive image, affective image, and overall image. This approach provides a

more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of how tourists form impressions of spiritual destinations. It not only enriches the conceptual framework but also establishes a strong theoretical foundation for future studies on tourist behavior.

Third, a significant contribution of this study lies in the integration of religiosity as a moderating variable in the relationship between satisfaction and revisit intention—an aspect that has not been explored in previous research within the Vietnamese context. The results demonstrate that religiosity plays a clarifying and amplifying role in the impact of satisfaction on future behavioral intentions, especially in sacred tourism environments such as An Giang. This offers a meaningful theoretical and practical contribution by broadening the behavioral model for spiritual tourists in a manner that is more aligned with the cultural and religious characteristics of Vietnamese society.

Fourth, the study simultaneously analyzes the interrelationships between different dimensions of destination image including cognitive image, affective image, and overall image alongside satisfaction and revisit intention. This approach enables a comprehensive explanation of the antecedents influencing tourists' post-experience behaviors, particularly satisfaction and the decision to revisit. The findings significantly enhance the theoretical framework for understanding tourist behavior in the domain of spiritual tourism.

Beyond addressing existing research gaps, the dissertation also contributes to the systematization and refinement of measurement constructs. Most observed variables were adapted from previously validated scales. However, through qualitative research, several measurement items were adjusted to better reflect the unique cultural and religious context of the study area. These refined and context-specific items not only improve construct validity but also represent an empirical contribution to the development of measurement instruments in the field of tourism behavior research.

This study also applies the S-O-R theoretical framework (Stimulus–Organism–Response) to explain the proposed model and derive managerial implications. Unlike earlier studies that predominantly rely on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the S-O-R framework emphasizes individuals' cognitive and emotional responses to environmental stimuli. It allows for the integration of physical, cultural, and service-related attributes of the destination as important stimuli that directly influence tourists'

psychological states and behaviors. This makes the S-O-R theory particularly well-suited to the present research topic.

Finally, the study utilizes a bibliometric analysis of 4,194 articles indexed in Scopus to identify prevailing and emerging themes in destination image research, thereby uncovering relevant research gaps. Through this method, the author also identifies prominent contributors in the field, whose work informs both the theoretical framework and the development of measurement scales for this study.

### ***Practical Contributions***

In the context of Vietnam's tourism sector in general, and An Giang province in particular, transitioning from mass tourism to a model that emphasizes experiential, culturally rooted, and sustainable tourism, in-depth quantitative studies like this one are both necessary and highly applicable. In reality, many localities still rely primarily on qualitative strategies in tourism development, lacking a scientific foundation to assess priority areas, implementation effectiveness, or tourists' behavioral responses, particularly amid increasing competition among destinations. This often leads to dispersed investment, inconsistency in policy planning, and difficulty in measuring real outcomes.

This study, by examining the factors that influence tourists' revisit intentions—particularly through latent constructs such as perception, emotion, overall impression, satisfaction, and relational aspects helps bridge the gap in tourism management practices at the local level. The findings also support An Giang's local government in identifying policy leverage points and improving destination marketing. Specifically, the results generated through SEM modeling can be translated into actionable priority strategies. At the national level, this study also offers a valuable reference for other provinces with similar characteristics. In short, behavior-based tourism research with a robust theoretical foundation, such as the present study, is crucial, not only in reinforcing the academic understanding of tourist behavior in Vietnam but also in facilitating more evidence-based and effective tourism policymaking in the near future. The contributions of the Study include:

First, the study successfully develops and tests a theoretical model reflecting the relationships between destination image, tourist satisfaction, and revisit intention of

domestic tourists in the context of spiritual tourism in An Giang province. The findings reveal that: (1) The cognitive image of the destination comprises four components: infrastructure, natural beauty, spiritual characteristics, and entertainment activities; (2) The overall image is shaped by both cognitive and affective dimensions; (3) Satisfaction is positively influenced by the overall image; (4) Revisit intention is affected by both satisfaction and the overall image; and (5) Most notably, religiosity serves as a moderating variable in the relationship between satisfaction and revisit intention. This model contributes to the expansion of theoretical knowledge in destination marketing and tourist behavior research in culturally and spiritually distinct environments.

Second, based on the established relationships in the model, the study proposes a set of practical managerial implications for relevant stakeholders. Specifically, destination managers and tourism businesses are advised to prioritize infrastructure improvements, protect natural landscapes, sustainably leverage spiritual values, and develop immersive recreational activities. Enhancing both cognitive and affective images will help strengthen tourists' overall perception of the destination, leading to higher satisfaction and a greater intention to return. In particular, destination marketing strategies should integrate cultural and religious elements to foster emotional connection and loyalty among visitors to spiritual destinations like An Giang. Furthermore, increased satisfaction also facilitates positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), generating a ripple effect among future tourists.

Third, on the academic front, this study underscores the importance of integrating religiosity into tourist behavioral models in the context of spiritual tourism—a relatively novel approach in the field of tourism behavior research in Vietnam. The findings also open new theoretical avenues by encouraging future research to consider other influencing factors such as service quality, tourism experience, destination attachment, or the influence of social media. Such expansion moves toward a more comprehensive and systematic understanding of tourist behavior. It lays a strong foundation for developing tourism strategies tailored to the unique cultural and social contexts of the Mekong Delta region, contributing to the overarching goal of sustainable tourism development in An Giang and beyond.

*Ho Chi Minh city, 24/06/2025*

**PhD Student**

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