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DEVELOPING A SPIRITUAL TOURISM DESTINATION IMAGE MEASUREMENT SCALE OF AN GIANG

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Abstract

Spiritual tourism is an emerging type of tourism which plays an important role in the positioning strategy of An Giang tourism. To gain a competitive advantage, it is essential to illustrate the key elements that have the impact on An Giang's image. A scale that is appropriate for the characteristics of this spiritual tourist location is required to gauge the perception of An Giang's spiritual tourism. The goal of this research is to create a scale that can assess An Giang's image as a spiritual tourism destination. In order to gather scale qualities for this study, a literature analysis and focus group interviews were employed. Additionally, the replies from an online survey were gathered. This paper used EFA to analyze the data. For measuring the scale's dependability, Cronbach's Alpha was employed. As a result, an eight-factor trustworthy scale was created. The designed scale can be used for both destination management companies and marketing firm. The image of An Giang as a spiritual tourism destination can be measured and used to develop future positioning initiatives. The scale can be also used as a reference for further research.

Keywords: *An Giang, destination image, measurement scale, spiritual tourism*

1. Introduction

Vietnam has many advantages in tourism resources, creating favorable conditions for the tourism industry to develop strongly. Vietnam welcomed 18 million foreign tourists and 82 million domestic tourists in 2019, and the country earned 726,000 billion VND from tourism (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2019). According to a report from the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, nearly 15 million people visit spiritual tourism sites throughout the nation each year, with forms of spiritual tourism like pilgrimage and participation in religious and belief festivals accounting for more than 42% of all domestic tourists. Additionally, there are about 25,000 houses of worship for 13 different religions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016).

In An Giang province, spiritual tourism is mainly in the tourist areas of Sam Mountain and Cam Mountain with the organization of the national festival named Via Ba Chua Xu of Sam Mountain with many cultural, cultural, and traditional activities, such as: Organizing weekly and monthly bull races, and folk games for tourism. In addition, An Giang has the advantage of developing many types and products of tourism such as sightseeing tourism, river eco-tourism, and historical and cultural tourism.

Currently, in the world, several studies demonstrate that a destination's image has a substantial impact on attracting tourists and creating visitor satisfaction (Williams & Soutar, 2009). The number of studies examining the influence of destination image on traveler satisfaction at spiritual tourism locations is nonetheless limited. Another drawback is that most research on spiritual tourism in Vietnam focuses on examining the variables influencing visitor loyalty or evaluating the existing state and potential future

growth of this form of tourism. An Giang has not been evaluated in a general way in terms of the factors constituting the image of a spiritual tourist destination and the influence of these factors on the satisfaction and intention to return of tourists. Besides, according to the author's survey, in An Giang, there have not been any similar or repeated studies done there. Therefore, this study focuses on building and proposing image scales for spiritual tourism destinations in An Giang province. From thence, this can be the basic for further and more researches in the future.

2. Theoretical Framework and Methods

2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Destination image

Destination image as a subject of study has roots in numerous academic fields (Prebeac & Mikuli, 2008). Prior to the development of tourist research, 'images' were investigated in the fields of marketing, consumer behavior, and social and environmental psychology (Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010). Furthermore, according to Konecnik and Gartner (2007), destination image has undergone extensive study with roots in marketing and has been explored in disciplines including anthropology, geography, and sociology. Furthermore, according to Konecnik and Gartner (2007), destination image has undergone extensive study with roots in marketing and has been explored in disciplines including anthropology, geography, and sociology. They pointed out the idea of destination image, which was mainly investigated under the topic of "tourist decision process" established from consumer behavior research. The literature demonstrates that psychology, philosophy, geography, anthropology, sociology, and consumer behavior are where the idea of a destination image first emerged.

To better grasp the concept of image destination, it is therefore necessary to review the destination image that has been constructed based on these principles before moving on to the meaning of destination image. Our comprehension of destination image as a mental construct is greatly enhanced by anthropology and sociology (Prats, Camprub, & Coromina, 2016). Consumer behavior, with the idea of "product image," is another closely connected discipline that contributes to the creation of research destination image (Madden, Rashid, & Zainol, 2016). According to Pan and Li (2011), the idea of image has been widely embraced by marketing researchers in connection to how a person perceives a product, establishment, or institution. Later, the idea of an image made its way into the tourism industry with reference to how people perceive a location.

Bruwer et al. (2017) claim that the notion of destination image first appeared in the 1970s. The concept of destination image considers the importance of feelings connected to physical attributes in customers' choice to buy a certain brand (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). According to Barnes, Mattsson, and Srensen's (2014) definition of brand image, concept is the culmination of consumers' perceptions of a brand as formed by various sources, a collection of thoughts, sentiments, and attitudes toward brands (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990), or the perception of a brand as a whole (Lee, James, & Kim, 2014b; Truong, 2015). According to the research review, perception, affect, and overall image all contribute to destination image structure.

2.1.2. Cognitive image

According to the most popular definition of a cognitive image (Becken et al., 2017), it is a collection of assumptions and information about a place. As a result, in this study, the perceived image is the destination's knowledge and belief. This means that a person's impression of a perceived component of the destination image is determined by their knowledge and beliefs regarding the features of the destination. For instance, Gartner (1994) defined the cognitive-image component as a person's assessment or intellectual

comprehension of product attributes. Additionally, according to Laban et al. (2015), a person's perception of an attribute destination is their best-guess appraisal of it. In a similar vein, according to Line, Hanks, and Miao (2017), a person's sense of 'what is here' determines how a place is seen. The cognitive component is described in another definition by Stylidis et al. (2017b) as "consisting of a group of key attributes corresponding to the resources available at a travel destination". Thus, it may be inferred that the seen image has two fundamental characteristics: it depicts a concrete aspect of a location, and its evaluation is arbitrary..

2.1.3. Affective image

Emotions, which are a component of attitudes, have a significant impact in our daily lives, according to Yan et al. (2018). Despite this, only a small number of research (Pike, 2002; Pezenka, 2016) have taken into account how tourists perceive a location. With growing interest in destination images in tourist behavior and the employment of both cognitive and affective images in tourism, the crucial function of attitude theory has, however, largely gone unnoticed. Recent studies are extremely clear in demonstrating how measurements are becoming the norm. All of these researches concur that an emotional component of a place is how you feel about it. A tourist's feelings about a destination are thus considered their affective image in this study. According to the structure contained in a given study, Kislali et al. (2016) also note out that the phrase "destination image" can relate to the cognitive, affective, and overall elements of a destination image. Only the destination image is shown in Bigne et al. (2001) and Assaker et al. (2011)'s holistic perspective. Both the big image and the cognitive image were caught by Prayag (2009). In terms of perception, affectivity, and overall image, Molinillo et al. (2018) create a more comprehensive destination image.

2.1.4. Overall image

The overall impression is described by Baloglu and McCleary (1999) as a part of a destination image that matches to its cognitive and affective components. Similar to this, Echtner and Ritchie (2003) contend that a combination of overall and attribute-based impressions of a location must be looked at to generate a more comprehensive assessment of the image of a destination. Additionally, despite evaluating affective and cognitive components, some research have postulated that the overall image only has an impact on outcome variables (Stylidis et al., 2017a). This approach has been employed in numerous studies since, and it involves displaying overall destination images in accordance with cognitive and emotive image components (Almeida-Santana & Moreno-Gil, 2018). In fact, Nghiem-Phu (2014) defined the emotive, cognitive, and overall image as the structure of the destination image on the basis of a study's meta-analysis from 2008 to 2012. Therefore, it may be claimed that holistic, emotive, and cognitive images all work together to generate a more complete perception of the destination.

2.1.5. Satisfaction and return intention

According to certain studies (Hutchinson, Lai, and Wang, 2009; Orel and Kara, 2014), there may be a direct link between customer happiness and intent to return. According to Bowen and Chen (2001), two crucial components of the loyalty of the destination are the want to return and the readiness to refer others. The most effective method for gauging social behavior is the return (Ajzen, 2002). Behavioral intent relates to the actual activity; when an intention is provided, a behavior will be carried out. Park and Yoon (2009) stated that managers and marketers must be adept at anticipating visitors' intentions to return because doing so can boost sales, market share, and better word-of-mouth while also reducing advertising costs.

2.2. Research model

The author develops the following research model based on the above study goals and hypotheses:
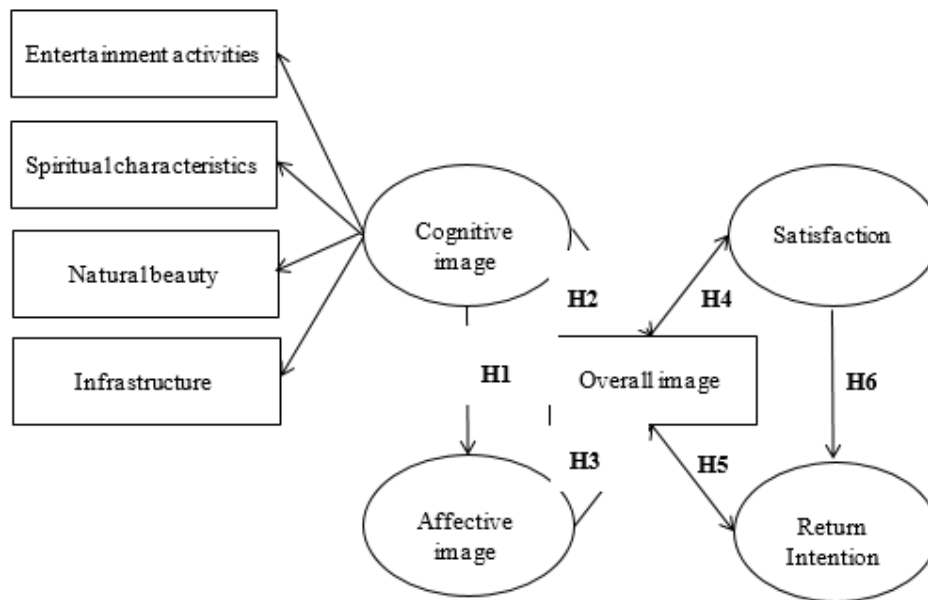
(Source: The author suggested)

Hypothesis H1: Cognitive image has a positive influence on affective image

Hypothesis H2: Cognitive image has a positive influence on overall image

Hypothesis H3: Affective image has a positive influence on overall image

Hypothesis H4: Overall image has a positive influence on satisfaction

Hypothesis H5: Overall image has a positive influence on return intention

Hypothesis H6: Satisfaction has a positive influence on return intention

3. Research methodologies

3.1. Scale development

The scale used in this study for the research model's principles is based on inheritance and correction from earlier investigations. Specifically, the Destination Image Scale includes the following factors: Infrastructure with 4 observed variables, Natural beauty with 4 variables, Recreational activities with 5 observed variables, and spiritual characteristics with 4 variables. observation, Affective image has 4 observed variables and overall image has 5 observed variables. Satisfaction scale includes 05 observed variables. The scale of intention to return includes 05 observed variables. The number of observed variables is shown in the following table, and each observational boundary measuring research idea is rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 being the strongest disagreement and 5 being the strongest agreement:

Coding	Research concept	No. Observed variables	References
IN	Infrastructure	4	Yi Fong Wang, Anh Quyen Le Thanh (2011); Summary of expert opinions
NA	Natural beauty	4	Lee el at. (2007); Summary of expert opinions
EN	Entertainment activities	5	Chaulagain, Wiitala, & Fu, (2019); Summary of expert opinions
SPI	Spiritual characteristics	4	Hoang Ba Huyen Le, Thi Binh Le (2020); Summary of expert opinions
AF	Affective image	4	Papadimitriou et al. (2015); Summary of expert opinions
OVE	Overall image	5	Mike Rimmington (2014); Summary of expert opinions
SA	Satisfaction	5	Gani & c.s. (2019); Summary of expert opinions
RE	Return intention	5	Thiumsak & Ruangkanjanases (2016); Summary of expert opinions

(Source: The author)

3.2. Research stages

3.2.1. Qualitative research

This qualitative research phase aims to determine the factors affecting the satisfaction and return intention of spiritual tourists; building scales of destination image, satisfaction and return intention of spiritual tourists based on theoretical bases and previous studies. The author uses the method of interviewing experts in the field. These are experts with knowledge, understanding the theories related to the image of spiritual tourism destinations and have a lot of practical experience to give objective views on the needs and perspectives of the spiritual tourism market. The goal of this research phase is to modify and include variables into the scale for the model's concepts and to confirm that the theoretical underpinnings of the model are in line with reality and the viewpoints of the experts.

3.2.2. Quantitative research

The author employs a practical sampling strategy for the quantitative research phase. Survey subjects include tourists and experts in the field. The author sent 500 votes to tourists and received 460 answers, the sample was selected according to a convenient method to ensure quality and information security respondents' responses. Data was collected from January 2023 to April 2023.

3.3. Data processing method

The author first uses Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to evaluate the quality of the construction scale. According to Nunnally & Bernstein (1994), Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the population should be greater than 0.6 and the total correlation coefficient is better greater than 0.4 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is then equipped to extract factors for further analysis. Factor loading coefficients are the criterion to ensure the practical significance of EFA. This coefficient which is greater than 0.3 is considered the minimum level and it should be greater than 0.5 for best practical significance (Hair et al., 1998). In this study, the factors with the transfer coefficient greater than 0.5 was selected. Moreover, the Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) has value between 0.5 and 1. The total variance extracted is greater than 0.5 to ensure the explanatory content of the factors obtained from the results of EFA analysis.

4. Research results and discussion

4.1. Cronbach's alpha results

The results of Cronbach's alpha test are presented in the following table:

Table 2.1. Cronbach's Alpha results of the scales

Factors	Observed variables	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Infrastructure	IN1	10.92	3.137	.740	.680
	IN2	10.93	3.203	.726	.689
	IN3	10.92	3.447	.689	.714
	IN4	11.02	3.483	.370	.887
					Cronbach's Alpha = .796
Natural beauty	NA1	10.32	2.825	.645	.450
	NA2	10.34	2.954	.614	.477
	NA3	10.41	2.699	.632	.447
	NA4	10.70	4.217	.025	.859
					Cronbach's Alpha = .659
Entertainment activities	EN1	13.97	5.435	.667	.864
	EN2	14.06	5.191	.634	.875
	EN3	14.08	5.325	.727	.851
	EN4	14.05	5.171	.778	.839
	EN5	14.07	5.087	.771	.840
					Cronbach's Alpha = .880
Spiritual characteristics	SPI1	10.49	3.797	.704	.724
	SPI2	10.64	3.646	.722	.714
	SPI3	10.72	3.987	.670	.743
	SPI4	10.57	4.425	.436	.850
					Cronbach's Alpha =.810
Affective image	AF1	10.60	2.894	.791	.803
	AF2	10.55	3.154	.672	.851
	AF3	10.53	3.239	.652	.859
	AF4	10.62	2.902	.770	.811
					Cronbach's Alpha = .869
Overall image	OVE1	14.42	6.222	.641	.826
	OVE2	14.41	5.825	.713	.807
	OVE3	14.45	6.008	.622	.830
	OVE4	14.47	5.774	.663	.820
	OVE5	14.42	5.678	.674	.817
					Cronbach's Alpha = .851
	SA1	12.96	8.127	.709	.889

Factors	Observed variables	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Satisfaction	SA2	12.97	8.125	.746	.881
	SA3	12.92	7.895	.772	.875
	SA4	12.93	7.651	.768	.876
	SA5	12.94	7.866	.774	.875
					Cronbach's Alpha = .901
Return intention	RE1	14.46	4.240	.642	.663
	RE2	14.41	4.185	.626	.667
	RE3	14.47	3.866	.718	.627
	RE4	14.51	3.924	.691	.638
	RE5	14.40	5.753	.037	.868
					Cronbach's Alpha = .751

(Source: Data processing results)

The Cronbach's alpha results show that the items of "Entertainment activities", "Spiritual characteristics", "Affective image", "Overall image", and "Satisfaction" are all notably significant.

However, in which, the observed variable IN4 has the coefficient Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted of 0.887 which exceeds the Cronbach's Alpha value of the total variable and the total correlation coefficient is less than 0.4, so the reliability analysis is thus re-run by eliminating this statement.

Table 2.2. Cronbach's Alpha results of "Infrastructure"

Factors	Observed variables	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Infrastructure	IN1	7.34	1.598	.761	.857
	IN2	7.36	1.572	.804	.817
	IN3	7.34	1.737	.777	.843
					Cronbach's Alpha = .887

All observed variables have a suitable total correlation coefficient exceeding 0.4 and the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.887 is greater than 0.6 which now meets the requirements of reliability.

The Cronbach's Alpha results also show that the observed variable NA4 has a total correlation coefficient (Corrected Item-Total Correlation) of 0.025 which is less than 0.4. This variable is removed and reliability analysis is re-run.

Table 2.3. Cronbach's Alpha results of "Natural beauty"

Factors	Observed variables	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Natural beauty	NA1	7.10	2.000	.755	.783
	NA2	7.12	2.112	.723	.813
	NA3	7.18	1.907	.727	.812
					Cronbach's Alpha = .859

All observed variables have a suitable total correlation coefficient exceeding 0.4 and the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.869 surpasses 0.6 which is acceptable.

The Cronbach's Alpha results also show that the observed variable RE5 has a total correlation coefficient (Corrected Item-Total Correlation) of 0.037 which is less than 0.4. This variable was deleted from the scale and reliability analysis was re-run.

Table 2.4. Cronbach's Alpha results of "Return Intention"

Factors	Observed variables	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Return intention	RE1	10.80	3.606	.667	.852
	RE2	10.75	3.556	.649	.860
	RE3	10.81	3.149	.799	.798
	RE4	10.85	3.203	.770	.811
					Cronbach's Alpha = .868

All observed variables have a suitable total correlation coefficient exceeding 0.4 and the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.868 is greater than 0.6 which presents that all observed variables are appropriate for the total variable.

4.2. EFA analysis

The outcomes from the above tables indicates that the correlation between the observed variables and the factors they represent is notably significant. Consequently, the survey data guarantees reliability and is suitable for scrutinizing the exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The EFA analysis's results are indicated in the tables below:

Table 2.5.Result of exploratory factor analysis EFA

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.862
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	8798.832
	df	528
	Sig.	.000

Total Variance Explained							
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings[a]
Factor	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	7.243	21.947	21.947	6.885	20.864	20.864	4.352
2	3.838	11.631	33.578	3.476	10.533	31.397	3.686
3	3.451	10.457	44.036	3.107	9.416	40.813	4.941
4	2.595	7.862	51.898	2.304	6.981	47.794	3.845
5	2.365	7.165	59.063	1.993	6.039	53.833	2.641
6	1.697	5.142	64.205	1.374	4.164	57.997	2.871
7	1.536	4.656	68.861	1.199	3.633	61.630	2.955
8	1.011	3.064	71.925	.657	1.992	63.623	5.034
9	.762	2.308	74.233				

Pattern Matrixᵃ								
	Factor							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
SA3	.821							
SA5	.821							
SA4	.799							
SA2	.795							
SA1	.765							
EN5		.874						
EN4		.862						
EN3		.787						
EN1		.680						
EN2		.647						
OVE2			.828					
OVE5			.770					
OVE1			.685					
OVE4			.640					
OVE3			.610					
AF4				.887				
AF1				.881				
AF2				.697				
AF3				.663				
SPI2					.848			
SPI1					.844			
SPI3					.736			
SPI4					.477			
IN2						.892		
IN1						.837		
IN3						.821		
NA1							.838	
NA3							.820	
NA2							.800	
RE4								.894
RE3								.834
RE1								.628
RE2								.620

(Source: Data processing results)

The table of "KMO and Bartlett's Test" shows that the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) coefficient of 0.862 exceeds 0.5, this indicates factor analysis is suitable. The Barlett's test statistic is 8798.832 with a statistically significant result (sig. = 0.00 < 0.05), so this confirms that the observed variables are correlated with the entire dataset and the factor analysis ensures complete statistical significance. The table of "Total Variance Explained" reveals that the Cumulative value of 63.623% surpasses 50%, and the total value of the Initial Eigenvalues is 1.011 which exceeds 1 indicating the satisfaction with the results. These findings

present the compatibility of the survey data with the theoretical research model. The results of the rotation matrix demonstrates that there are 33 observed varibles across 8 factors. All observed variables have factor loadings grater than 0.5, suggesting convergence of these 33 variables and no variables were excluded from the model.

5. Conclusion

The main objective of this study was developing a measurement scale of spiritual tourism destination image which allows the opportunities to evaluate which factors have the influence on spiritual tourist satisfaction and return intention in An Giang. The findings indicated the eight dimensions including: Infrastructure, Natural beauty, Entertainment activities, Spiritual characteristics, Affective image, Overall image, Satisfaction and Return intention. The results can be used as a reference for further researches of spiritual destination image's factors or the relationship between these factors together with tourist satisfaction and return intention of spiritual tourist.

There are some implications associated with the destination image for practitioners in tourism sectors. The scale that was developed in this study can provide reliable and valid analytical tool in order to evaluate the spiritual tourism destination image. The created scale includes a manageable number of items which can be administered easily. The marketers of An Giang or tour operators can adopt the scale to examine tourism marketing issues, factors causing changes in destination image and impact of destination image on tourist's behaviors so that they can formulate effective marketing strategies which can ultimately help to enhance tourists' satisfaction and return intention.

A number of limitations are recognized in this study. First, the tourists who have done the survey traveled to An Giang in different periods of time so the image of An Giang from their perspectives may vary. This can depend on the ability to recall their experience and their emotions. Second, the population of the survey was domestic visitors so the results can only be applied to Vietnamese tourists. Third, the spirituality factor of the destination should be scrutinized by further studies to determine whether this factor has a major influence on the tourist's satisfaction and return intention. Lastly, the survey was carried out only from 460 visitors which may not be generalized to other settings so when applying other contexts, it is necessary to revalidate and even revise the scale.

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