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The Impact of Destination Image on Revisit Intention of Spiritual Tourists

Vuong Hoai Thao NGUYEN
Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics and Finance (UEF), Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Email, thaonvh@uef.edu.vn

Quyet Thang NGUYEN
Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, HUTECH University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Email, nq.thang@hutech.edu.vn

Bao Trung DUONG
Faculty of Business Administration, Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Email, trung.db@ou.edu.vn
Corresponding Author

Abstract

This study explores the influence of destination image on tourist satisfaction and revisit intention in the context of spiritual tourism in An Giang, Vietnam. Additionally, the study examines the moderating role of religiosity in the relationship between satisfaction and revisit intention. Focusing on three main dimensions: cognitive, affective, and overall image, the research mainly analyzes their relationships with satisfaction and revisit behavior. Data were collected from 700 domestic tourists who had visited An Giang and analyzed using the PLS-SEM method. The results indicate that cognitive and religiosity significantly influence satisfaction, while overall image strongly impacts both satisfaction and revisit intention. Notably, religiosity plays a crucial moderating role, enhancing spiritual attachment and revisit intention. This study provides valuable theoretical and practical contributions, helping managers and policymakers improve destination image, enhance tourist experiences, and promote the sustainable development of spiritual tourism.

Keywords Destination image; Religiosity; Revisit intention; Satisfaction; Spiritual tourism

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Introduction

Spiritual tourism has also been and is being implemented in many places in Vietnam. An Giang Province, located in the southwestern region of Vietnam, is renowned for its captivating spiritual tourism destinations and various traditional festivals. With a harmonious blend of natural beauty, well-developed infrastructure, profound spiritual characteristics, and diverse recreational activities, An Giang has emerged as a prominent destination for spiritual tourists. Within An Giang, spiritual tourism is primarily concentrated in the Sam Mountain and Cam Mountain tourist areas, which host the nationally recognized Via Ba Chua Xu Festival at Sam Mountain. This festival features a wide array of cultural, artistic, and traditional sporting events, including weekly and monthly bull racing competitions, and folk games catering to tourists. In An Giang, spiritual tourism makes substantial contributions to the province's economy. According to the An Giang Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, the province welcomed over 8 million tourists in 2019, generating approximately 4,500 billion VND in revenue. Spiritual tourism accounts for a significant portion of this total, playing a crucial role in local economic development. Previous studies have indicated that destination image significantly influences tourist attraction and satisfaction (Williams & Soutar, 2009; Lin et al., 2007). In the context of the burgeoning spiritual tourism sector, understanding the factors constituting destination image and their impact on tourist satisfaction and revisit intention is of paramount importance (Long & Hien, 2024). However, research evaluating the impact of destination image on tourist satisfaction at spiritual tourism destinations remains limited (Chiwawa & Wissink, 2023). Furthermore, in Vietnam, most studies on spiritual tourism have focused on analyzing factors influencing tourist loyalty or assessing the current situation and development potential of this type of tourism. Comprehensive evaluations of the components comprising the destination image of spiritual tourism and their influence on tourist satisfaction and return intention at spiritual tourism destinations are still lacking. Moreover, previous studies have not clearly defined the moderating role of religiosity, even though some literature has indicated that an individual's level of religiosity can significantly influence their commitment to a spiritual destination (Wang et al., 2019). The aim of this study is to examine the factors that contribute to the formation of the image of spiritual tourism destinations in An Giang, Vietnam, and to evaluate how different components of destination image, including cognitive image, affective image, overall image, and religiosity, influence tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. Additionally, the study aims to propose practical solutions to enhance visitor satisfaction, thereby increasing the likelihood of tourists returning to these destinations. To achieve these purposes, the research is conducted to clarify the following questions: (1) What factors shape the image of spiritual tourism destinations in An Giang? (2) How do cognitive image, affective image, overall image, and religiosity impact the satisfaction and revisit intention of spiritual tourists? (3) What solutions can enhance satisfaction and thereby encourage the revisit intention of spiritual tourists in An Giang? In summary, the research initially reviews the related background of spiritual tourism. It then explores the concept of destination image and its dimensions. The study also implemented PLS-SEM to figure out the relationships of destination image components with guest satisfaction and revisit intention, especially the moderating role of religiosity. Finally, the search also concludes with relevant implications.

Literature review

Theoretical background: Destination image concept

The theory of destination image components by Echtner & Ritchie (1993) provides a more detailed and specific approach to understanding the image of tourist destinations. The image of a destination is divided into three fundamental components: overall image, attribute-based image, and both psychological and functional characteristics, while also distinguishing between common and unique elements of a destination. This theory is widely and extensively applied in tourism-related studies to analyze and assess destination image from various perspectives. Therefore, this study employs the component-based destination image theory as the foundation for analyzing the formation of the research model. According to a recent study by Liu et al. (2025), destination image is described as a combination of perceptions, emotions, and overall impressions that tourists have about a location, shaped by personal experiences, media information, and social interactions. Baloglu & McCleary (1999) applied this theoretical framework to construct a destination image model, emphasizing the crucial role of cognitive and affective factors in influencing how tourists evaluate a destination. The cognitive image of a destination has been extensively examined in the existing literature through various attributes and dimensions, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding of tourists' perceptions of a destination (Assaker, 2014; Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Qu et al., 2011; Chi & Qu, 2008; Quintal et al., 2014). Prior research has consistently recognized the cognitive destination image as a multidimensional construct, comprising multiple attributes that collectively shape tourists' perceptions (Kim & Park, 2015; Assaker, 2014; Quintal et al., 2014). The specific components that define the cognitive image of a destination, however, vary depending on geographical location and the type of tourism. Drawing on these considerations, the present study conceptualizes the cognitive destination image through four principal dimensions: natural environment, infrastructure, spirituality, and entertainment activities (Ceylan et al., 2021; Huang, 2018; Ritchie & Crouch, 2010).

Natural environment

The natural environment plays a pivotal role in shaping the destination image, exerting a positive influence on how tourists perceive a location (Puh, 2014). Research in this field underscores the intrinsic value that natural environments contribute to tourism development, with scholars recognizing the complex interaction between a destination's physical attributes and its ability to attract and retain visitors. According to Beerli & Martín (2004), the components of the cognitive image are influenced by various attributes, including landscape, climate, and environmental cleanliness, all of which are closely linked to the natural environment.

Infrastructure

According to Meidayati (2017), infrastructure is defined as a collection of essential needs, facilities, tools, and equipment necessary to ensure the effective operation of social and economic systems while serving the common interests of the community. The development of infrastructure not only enhances the functionality of a tourist destination but also plays a crucial role in meeting visitors' expectations. These expectations are shaped by the unique characteristics of each location and the distinctiveness of the tourist destination (Hermawan, 2021). Dalimunthe et al. (2020) argue that destinations equipped with comprehensive infrastructure have a greater competitive advantage in supporting long-term sustainable development goals, ensuring that tourism development is both efficient and environmentally conscious.

Spirituality

Spirituality transcends religious boundaries, encompassing the abstract aspects of human existence that reflect the profound, non-material dimensions of life (Jarratt & Sharpley, 2017). According to Willson et al. (2013), tourists' transcendent experiences often stem from their connection with the natural environment or other elements of the Earth. Jafari & Scott (2014), along with Zamani-Farahani & Henderson (2010), have demonstrated that spirituality can positively influence tourists' decision-making processes.

Entertainment activities

The availability and diversity of recreational options play a crucial role in enhancing the overall appeal of a destination, offering a wide range of experiences that cater to the varied preferences and expectations of tourists (Ritchie & Crouch, 2010). This aspect has become increasingly significant in today's competitive tourism market, where destinations must differentiate themselves not only through natural beauty or cultural heritage but also through the quality and variety of entertainment activities (Dwyer et al., 2004). Beyond serving as a source of enjoyment for visitors, recreation also acts as a cornerstone for local economic activity and the development of the tourism industry (Ceylan et al., 2021).

S-O-R Theory (Stimulus-Organism-Response)

Chen et al. (2021) applied the S-O-R model in their study to examine how positive emotions associated with a destination's image such as feelings of relaxation, joy, and cultural connection impact tourists' revisit intentions. Kim & Lennon (2013) extended Mehrabian & Russell's SOR framework by incorporating both internal stimuli, such as website quality, and external stimuli, like brand reputation, to examine how these factors affect consumers' cognitive and emotional responses, ultimately shaping their purchase intentions. Additionally, Erul et al. (2024) contributes to the theoretical refinement of the S-O-R model by integrating concepts of place attachment and emotional solidarity, offering practical insights for destination management and policy interventions aimed at fostering residents' support for tourism initiatives.

Hypotheses

Cognitive image and overall image

Cognitive image is an important component of destination image, encompassing tourists' specific evaluations and perceptions of the destination's physical and functional aspects, such as infrastructure, natural environment, recreational activities, and service

quality (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). These perceptions not only shape tourists' expectations but also form the basis for the development of the overall image, which is a comprehensive perception of the destination after integrating all specific factors (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Numerous studies have shown that cognitive image has a significant impact on the overall image of the destination. From this, the author proposes the hypothesis:

H1: Cognitive image has a positive impact on the overall image

Cognitive image and satisfaction

Cognitive image is considered one of the important factors affecting tourist satisfaction. According to the study by Fakeye & Crompton (1991), cognitive image includes tourists' actual perceptions of specific elements of the destination, such as infrastructure, natural environment, recreational activities, and service facilities. These factors create an overall impression of the destination, thereby directly affecting the level of satisfaction. When the elements in the cognitive image are highly rated, satisfaction tends to increase, as they meet or exceed tourists' expectations (Chi & Qu, 2008). Especially in the context of spiritual tourism, factors such as sacredness, peaceful space, and cultural values are highly appreciated by tourists, thereby increasing the level of satisfaction (Kim et al., 2015). With the above theoretical and practical basis, the author proposes the hypothesis:

H2: Cognitive image has a positive impact on satisfaction

Affective image and overall image

Kislali et al. (2016) stated that destination image comprises the cognitive, affective, and overall aspects of the destination image, this depends on the structure used in a particular study. Bigne et al. (2001), Assaker et al. (2011) and Papadimitriou et al. (2015) provide an overview of the destination image, concentrating on the affective and overall image. Prayag (2009) also captured the overall and cognitive images. Molinillo et al. (2018) created a more comprehensive destination image that included cognitive, affective, and overall aspects. According to Beerli & Martín's (2004) research, positive feelings like joy, happiness, and excitement enhance a site's impression and attraction to tourists. Using the theoretical and practical underpinnings presented above, the author proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Affective image has a positive impact on the overall image

Affective image and satisfaction

In destination image research, affective image is considered a complementary factor to cognitive image, creating a more comprehensive impression of the destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Positive emotions such as joy, relaxation, or a sense of peace often contribute to increasing tourist satisfaction when the actual experience corresponds to initial emotional expectations. According to the study by Prayag & Ryan (2012), a positive affective image helps improve the level of tourist satisfaction by increasing the perceived value of the experience. Especially in spiritual tourism, emotional factors such as tranquility, sacred atmosphere, or moments of deep peace often play a very important role in shaping satisfaction (Kim et al., 2015). These positive emotions not only enhance the value of the experience but also create a deep emotional connection between tourists and the destination. With the above theoretical and practical basis, the author proposes the hypothesis:

H4: Affective image has a positive impact on satisfaction

Overall image and satisfaction

Baloglu & McCleary (1999) define overall impression as a component of the destination image, together with cognitive and affective components. Similarly, Echtner & Ritchie (1993) argue that in order to get a more complete picture of a destination's image, it is necessary to look at both overall and attribute-based assessments. Furthermore, despite evaluating affective and cognitive components, several investigations postulated that the overall image had an impact on outcome variables (Stylidis et al., 2017). Since then, other studies have used this approach to create an overall destination image based on the cognitive and affective image components (Almeida-Santana and Moreno-Gil, 2018). Some studies have found that the overall image has an impact on satisfaction, regardless of the direct or indirect impact of the two other image components (Molinillo et al., 2018; Styliadis et al., 2017; Wang & Hsu, 2010). Based on the theoretical and practical grounds laid out above, the author proposes the following hypothesis:

H5: Overall image has a positive impact on satisfaction

Overall image and revisit intention

Prayag et al. (2017) discovered a direct and indirect positive link between overall image satisfaction and referral intentions. Papadimitriou et al. (2015) used a sample of Greek domestic visitors to eliminate additional image components from their model while hypothesizing and confirming the impact of overall image on behavioral intention. De la Hoz-Correa & Muñoz-Leiva (2019) found that the entire impression has a significant impact on referral intention, independent of individual picture components. The

same is evident in Santana & Sevilha Gosling's (2018) study, which collected data online from travelers to Brazil. Zhang et al. (2014) discovered that the overall image has the largest influence on tourists' behavioral intentions. Based on the theoretical and practical foundations presented above, the author suggests the following hypothesis:

H6: Overall image has a positive impact on revisit intention

Satisfaction and revisit intention

High satisfaction with the travel experience at the destination will lead to the intention to revisit of tourists (Trung et al., 2024). This has been demonstrated through numerous studies, showing that satisfaction is an important factor in predicting the intention to revisit of tourists (San Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008). Tourist satisfaction is defined as a positive emotional state arising when the actual experience meets or exceeds initial expectations (Kalulu et al., 2025). This is an important factor in promoting loyal behavior of tourists, especially the intention to return. According to consumer behavior theory, satisfaction not only strengthens the attachment to the destination but also increases the probability of tourists returning in the future (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Chi & Qu (2008) point out that satisfied tourists often tend to return to the destination to recreate positive experiences when they are also likely to share positive emotions with others, thereby enhancing the brand value of the destination. Satisfaction is an important link between destination image and revisit intention, as it reflects the success of the destination in meeting the needs and expectations of tourists. On that basis, this study proposes the hypothesis:

H7: Satisfaction has a positive impact on revisit intention

The moderating role of religiosity

Religiosity is an important factor in shaping the perceptions and behaviors of tourists, especially in the context of spiritual tourism. In the relationship between overall image and return intention, religious belief can play a moderating role, increasing or decreasing the influence of the overall image on tourists' return behavior. According to the study by Weaver & Agle (2002), religious belief affects how individuals evaluate and react to experiences, changing perceptions of the value and meaning of the destination. For tourists with strong religious beliefs, the overall image of the destination is not only evaluated based on common factors (such as facilities, peaceful space) but also includes feelings of sacredness and spiritual value. This increases their intention to revisit, as the spiritual values at the destination have a deeper meaning than a typical travel experience. Conversely, for tourists with low religious beliefs, the overall image of the destination may be less influenced by spiritual factors and is evaluated mainly based on general cognitive and emotional factors. The revisit intention of this group of tourists tends to depend more on satisfaction from service experience or entertainment value at the destination (Chi & Qu, 2008). From the above theoretical and practical foundations, the author proposes the hypothesis:

H8: Religiosity moderates the relationship between satisfaction and revisit intention
H9: Religiosity moderates the relationship between overall image and revisit intention

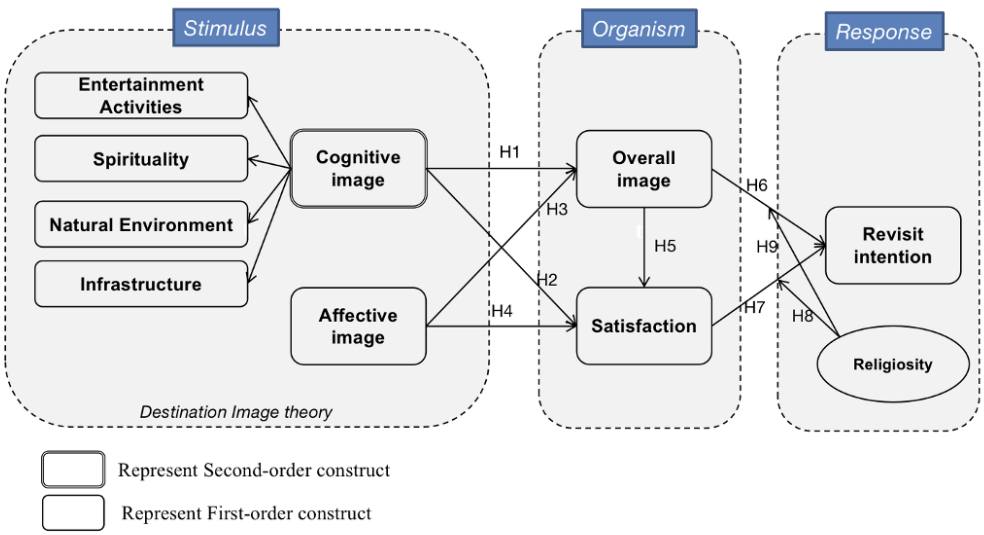

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Research methodology

This study employs a non-probability sampling method using a convenience approach. The survey subjects of the study are domestic tourists from many different regions of Vietnam; therefore, the questionnaire is designed in Vietnamese. First, a group of ten experts in the tourism industry participated in a direct discussion to conduct a preliminary review. They are experts in the field of tourism, including university lecturers, business managers, and heads of departments at travel companies. To clarify and

eliminate potential errors in terms of vocabulary, topic, order, and difficulty of the questions, this study conducted a preliminary review. The results from the pilot questionnaire provided important feedback, helping to improve the structural validity of the questionnaire. In the next step, a pilot test was conducted with 20 volunteer students to check the stability of the questionnaire. Based on feedback from the pilot test, some questions were adjusted to be more appropriate before finalizing the questionnaire. This study conducts data collection through self-administered online surveys using Google Forms. Links to the questionnaire were distributed on online travel communities in Vietnam, where most users share a common interest in tourism. The official data collection was conducted with 700 valid responses, with a description of the participants' characteristics presented in Table 1. To ensure statistical validity and reliability, the sample size was set to 700 responders. The valid data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM is a sophisticated statistical technique that is well-suited for assessing complicated models with latent components, allowing for the simultaneous investigation of many associations (Hair et al., 2021). The analysis process was divided into two stages. The measuring model was tested for reliability and validity during the first round of evaluation. The second stage evaluated the structural model using the bootstrapping technique to test hypotheses and propose model quality.

Research results and discussion

Descriptive statistics

This study employs a quantitative research approach, focusing on the population of An Giang province. To facilitate data collection, web-based surveys were distributed through social media platforms and tourism-related networks. While convenience sampling may limit generalizability, it is appropriate for this study, as it enables researchers to capture insights from a diverse group of tourists and examine the relationship between destination image and revisit intention in a specific cultural and spiritual context. In general, the survey subjects are quite diverse, with a not too large difference in the proportion of males and females; the age is quite young, with about 49.4% under 30 years old. Among them, the majority are students; workers; office workers (accounting for: 22.6%, 10.2%, 12% respectively) with 35.7% being Buddhists and 22.9% being Catholics. In addition, the survey subjects also indicated that they mostly knew An Giang through introductions from friends and relatives, accounting for 27.8%; coming to An Giang mainly for tourism and resort with 36.5%; and about 32.4% of the surveyed subjects have only been to An Giang once and mostly stayed in An Giang for a short time from 1-2 days (accounting for 38.5%).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Demographic variables	Criteria	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	335	47.8%
	Female	314	44.8%
	Prefer not to disclose	51	7.4%
Age group	< 30	346	49.4%
	31-40	140	20%
	41-50	102	14.6%
	> 50	112	16%
Occupation	Student	158	22.6%
	Worker	71	10.2%
	Office Employee	84	12%
	Homemaker	42	6%
	Businessperson	34	4.8%
	Specialist	44	6.3%
	Government Official	46	6.5%
	Retired	33	6%
	Engineer	34	4.8%
	Doctor	34	4.8%
	Other	103	14.8%
Religion	Buddhism	250	35.7%
	Catholicism	160	22.9%
	Cao Dai	1	0.2%
	Protestantism	3	0.4%
	Islam	1	0.2%
	Other religions	3	0.4%
	No religion	281	40.2%
Source of information	Friends and family	195	27.8%
	Television advertisements	106	15.2%
	Newspapers and travel magazines	85	12.2%
	Public transportation advertisements	85	12.4%
	Internet	140	20%
	Other	87	12.4%
Purpose of Visiting An Giang	Leisure/Travel	255	36.5%
	Business	101	14.4%
	Pilgrimage	120	17.2%
	Visiting friends and relatives	116	16.5%
	Other	108	15.4%
Frequency of Visit to An Giang	First time	226	32.4%
	Second time	148	21.1%
	Third time	134	19.1%
	More than 3 times	192	27.4%
Length of Stay in An Giang	1-2 days	269	38.5%
	3-4 days	175	25%
	5-6 days	117	16.7%
	More than 6 days	139	19.8%

Assessment of reliability and convergent validity

In the official research phase, the author checked the quality of the variables in the model through assessing the reliability and convergent validity of the scale through Table 2 below. Looking at the Outer Loadings (convergence coefficient) table, the items (manifest variables) of the scales all converge to the correct factors with a convergence coefficient almost always greater than 0.7.

The Outer Loadings of the observed variables are all greater than 0.7; therefore, the observed variables are all significant in the model.

Table 2: Loading, Cronbach's alpha, CR, and AVE

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Alpha	CR	AVE
Infrastructure	INF1	0.893	0.88	0.926	0.806
	INF2	0.905			
	INF3	0.861			
Entertainment Activities	ENT1	0.776	0.867	0.904	0.654
	ENT2	0.775			
	ENT3	0.803			
	ENT4	0.846			
	ENT5	0.84			
Affective Image	AFE1	0.877	0.869	0.911	0.718
	AFE2	0.82			
	AFE3	0.825			
	AFE4	0.866			
Overall Image	OVE1	0.772	0.849	0.892	0.623
	OVE2	0.826			
	OVE3	0.763			
	OVE4	0.786			
	OVE5	0.799			
Religiosity	REL1	0.834	0.786	0.862	0.61
	REL2	0.787			
	REL3	0.701			
	REL4	0.797			
Satisfaction	SAT1	0.85	0.914	0.936	0.745
	SAT2	0.812			
	SAT3	0.872			
	SAT4	0.883			
	SAT5	0.895			
Natural Environment	NAE1	0.902	0.864	0.917	0.786
	NAE2	0.878			
	NAE3	0.879			
Revisit Intention	RE1	0.84	0.89	0.924	0.753
	RE2	0.832			
	RE3	0.906			
	RE4	0.89			
Spirituality	SPI1	0.847	0.852	0.9	0.693
	SPI2	0.872			
	SPI3	0.847			
	SPI5	0.76			

Assessment of discriminant validity

Discriminant validity is used to assess the uniqueness and distinctiveness of a construct compared to other constructs in the model. Discriminant validity is checked through the Formell-Larcker criterion, requiring the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct to be greater than the correlation coefficient with other constructs, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) index, with a value less than 0.85 or 0.90, ensures clear differentiation. These criteria help determine that the latent constructs in the model do not overlap, increasing the reliability and accuracy of the research model.

Table 3: Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

	INF	ENT	AFE	OVE	REL	SAT	NAE	REV	SPI
INF									
ENT	0.080								
AFE	0.171	0.065							
OVE	0.273	0.259	0.569						
REL	0.192	0.214	0.634	0.633					
SAT	0.208	0.125	0.277	0.516	0.334				
NAE	0.323	0.208	0.190	0.331	0.301	0.24			
REV	0.202	0.277	0.476	**0.749**	0.647	0.603	0.246		
SPI	0.051	0.22	0.083	0.199	0.137	0.058	0.199	0.104	

According to Henseler et al. (2015), when the average correlation coefficient within a scale is higher than the average of cross-correlations, it is considered better. Based on Table 3, the highest HTMT value is 0.749 between the REV and OVE factors. Therefore, it can be concluded that all HTMT values are below 0.85, indicating that the model meets the discriminant validity requirement.

Hypothesis testing results

Based on the P-values (Table 4), it can be seen that two hypotheses will be rejected, namely H4 (Affective Image has a positive impact on Satisfaction) and H9 (Religious Belief moderates the relationship between Overall Image and Return Intention) (P-value > 0.05). For more rigor, we add the results of the Bias confidence interval, hypotheses H4 and H9 both contain the value zero in the range of 2.5% and 97.5%. From there, it can be affirmed that H4 and H9 are rejected. All remaining P-values are less than 0.05, we continue to check the Bias confidence interval value with consistent results. Next, considering the Original sample values, all results are positive. It can be concluded that all remaining hypotheses (H1,2,3,5,6,7,8) are accepted.

Table 4: Hypothesis testing results

Path	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	CIBC 2.5%	CIBC 97.5%	Remark
COG -> INF	0.517	0.516	0.066	7.868	0.000	0.349	0.615	**Accepted**
COG -> ENT	0.653	0.654	0.050	13.061	0.000	0.524	0.73	**Accepted**
COG -> OVE	0.323	0.325	0.033	9.816	0.000	0.257	0.385	**Accepted**

COG -> SAT	0.113	0.114	0.048	2.354	0.019	0.016	0.207	**Accepted**
COG -> NAE	0.679	0.676	0.034	19.71	0.000	0.605	0.742	**Accepted**
COG -> SPI	0.525	0.525	0.059	8.856	0.000	0.392	0.62	**Accepted**
AFE -> OVE	0.441	0.442	0.027	16.445	0.000	0.388	0.489	**Accepted**
AFE -> SAT	0.04	0.04	0.042	0.941	0.347	-0.048	0.119	**Rejected**
OVE -> SAT	0.392	0.391	0.035	11.282	0.000	0.322	0.457	**Accepted**
OVE -> REV	0.378	0.379	0.035	10.699	0.000	0.303	0.443	**Accepted**
REL -> REV	0.256	0.257	0.039	6.582	0.000	0.18	0.328	**Accepted**
OVE*REL -> REV	-0.034	-0.034	0.029	1.163	0.245	-0.089	0.022	**Rejected**
SAT*REL -> REV	0.072	0.071	0.03	2.403	0.016	0.013	0.13	**Accepted**
SAT -> REV	0.306	0.306	0.027	11.209	0.000	0.252	0.357	**Accepted**

Model comparison

To compare the models, the study employed the FIMIX-PLS segmentation analysis of three models (Figure 2). Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC) firstly was used to analyze with AIC values of Model A (11611.63), Model B (11612.14), and Model 3 (11606.99). The results recommend that Model B is better than other models in the field of model fit. To enhance the outcomes, the analysis conducts to test the BIC-based Akaike weights. Table 5 shows that BIC of Model C is highest of 11720.77comparing with Model A and Model B (11707.2 and 11716.82, respectively). Obviously, the study can conclude that Model A and B could be consider as the better model among three types of model.

Table 5: FIMIX-PLS segmentation analysis results of three model

	Model A	**Model B**	**Model C**
AIC (Akaike's Information Criterion)	11611.63	11612.14	11606.99
AIC3 (Modified AIC with Factor 3)	11632.63	11635.14	11631.99
AIC4 (Modified AIC with Factor 4)	11653.63	11658.14	11656.99
BIC (Bayesian Information Criteria)	11707.2	11716.82	11720.77
CAIC (Consistent AIC)	11728.2	11739.82	11745.77
HQ (Hannan Quinn Criterion)	11648.57	11652.6	11650.98
MDL5 (Minimum Description Length with Factor 5)	12257.49	12319.52	12375.88
LnL (LogLikelihood)	-5784.82	-5783.07	-5778.5
EN (Entropy Statistic (Normed))			
NFI (Non-Fuzzy Index)			
NEC (Normalized Entropy Criterion)			

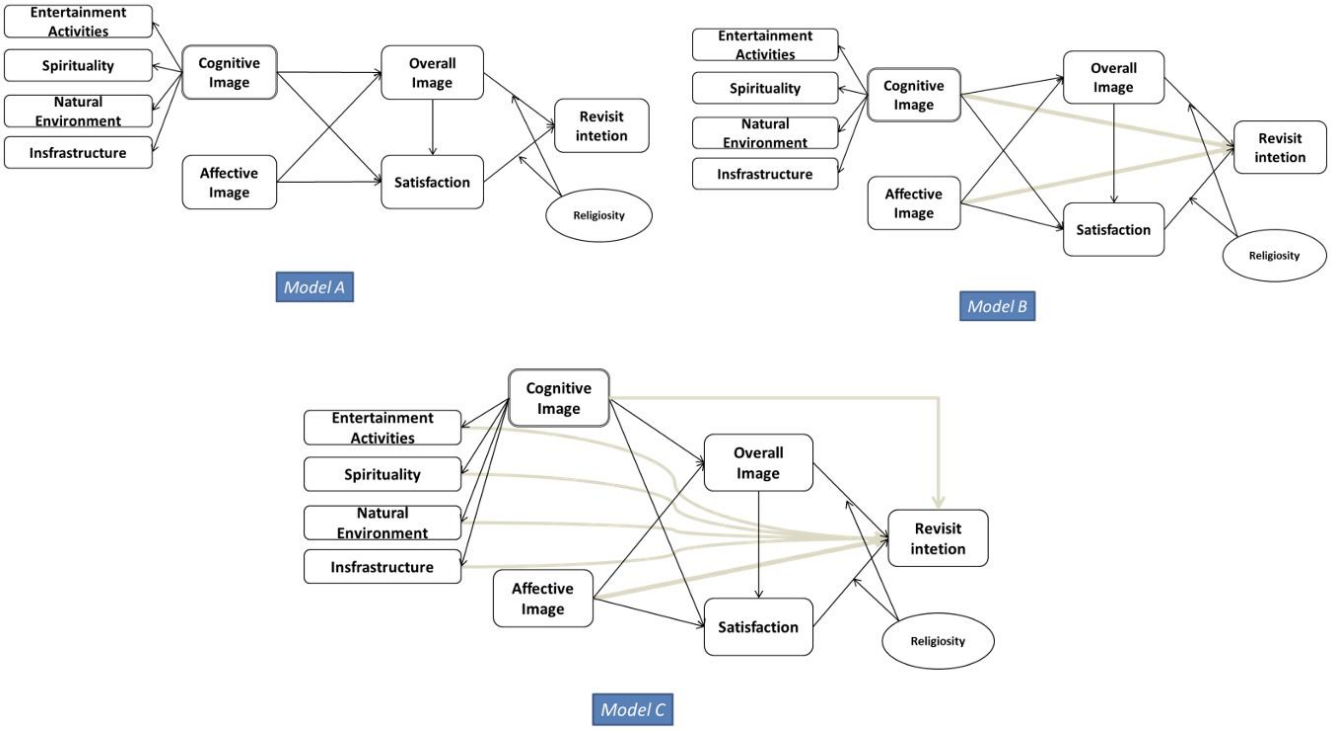

Figure 2: The predictive model comparison of three models

Assessment of moderating effect

Applying the theory of Hair et al. (2021) along with Hayes (2013) to examine the moderating role of Religiosity (REL). The Table 6 shows that OVE*REL affects REV with P-values greater than 0.05, implying that REL does not impact REV through Overall Image (OVE), meaning there is no moderating effect from OVE to REV. Further analysis of SAT*REL leading to REV reveals a P-value lower than 0.05 (0.016), indicating that REL influences REV through Satisfaction (SAT).

Table 6: Results of moderating effect assessment

Path	**Original Sample**	**Sample Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**T Statistics**	**P Values**	**CIBC**		**Remark**
						2.5%	**97.5%**	
OVE -> REV	0.378	0.379	0.035	10.699	0	0.303	0.443	**Accepted**
OVE*REL -> REV	-0.034	-0.034	0.029	1.163	**0.245**	-0.089	0.022	**Rejected**
REL -> REV	0.256	0.257	0.039	6.582	0	0.18	0.328	**Accepted**
SAT*REL -> REV	0.072	0.071	0.03	2.403	0.016	0.013	0.13	**Accepted**

SAT -> REV	0.306	0.306	0.027	11.209	0	0.252	0.357	**Accepted**

The analysis of the Original Sample (O) impact coefficient shows that both relationships yield positive results (0.072 and 0.306). From this, it can be concluded that as religious belief increases, the influence of satisfaction on revisit intention also strengthens. To be more comprehensive, the study employs slope plot (Memon et al., 2019) to illustrate clearly the effects. Figure 3 shows that triple line describe the correlation among OVE (a-xis) and REV (y-xis) with the mid-line illustrating an average level of REL. All the lines show the positive slope and closely parallel with each other. Therefore, there is no any change in REL that could adjust the level of REL while changing OVE. As the result, religiosity does not moderate the relationship between overall image to revisit intention.

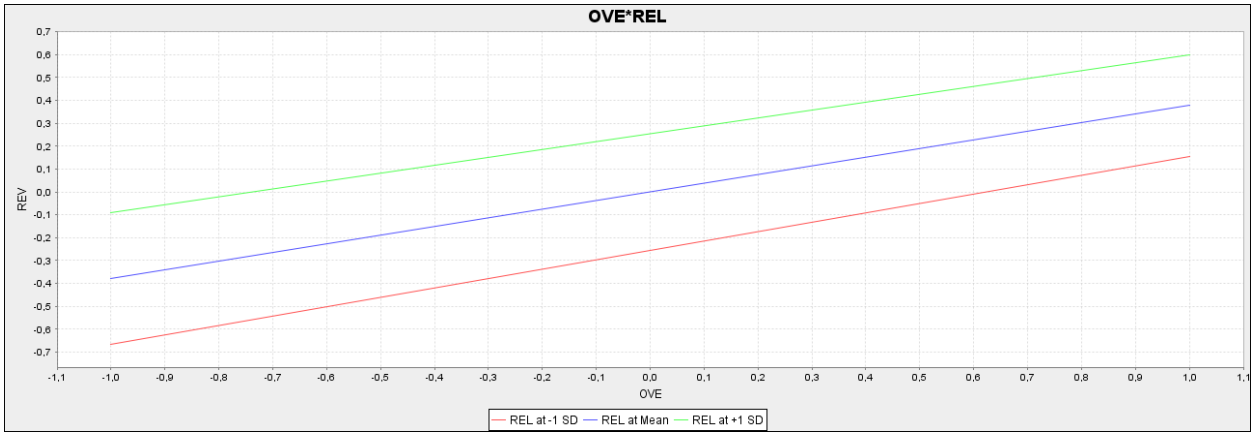

Figure 3: Simple slope analysis of the two-way interaction effect OVE*REL on REV

Figure 4 shows the three lines symbolize the relationship among SAT (a-xis) and REV (y-xis). The central line defines the connection for an average level of REL. All the lines show the positive slop, thus it could be seen a positive relationship between SAT and REV. The distances between middle lines with other two lines are increasingly larger while growing up the value SAT because of the positive moderating effect. Thus, at great levels of the moderator REL, the effect of SAT on REV is stronger, while at lower levels of moderator REL, the effect of SAT on REV is weaker.

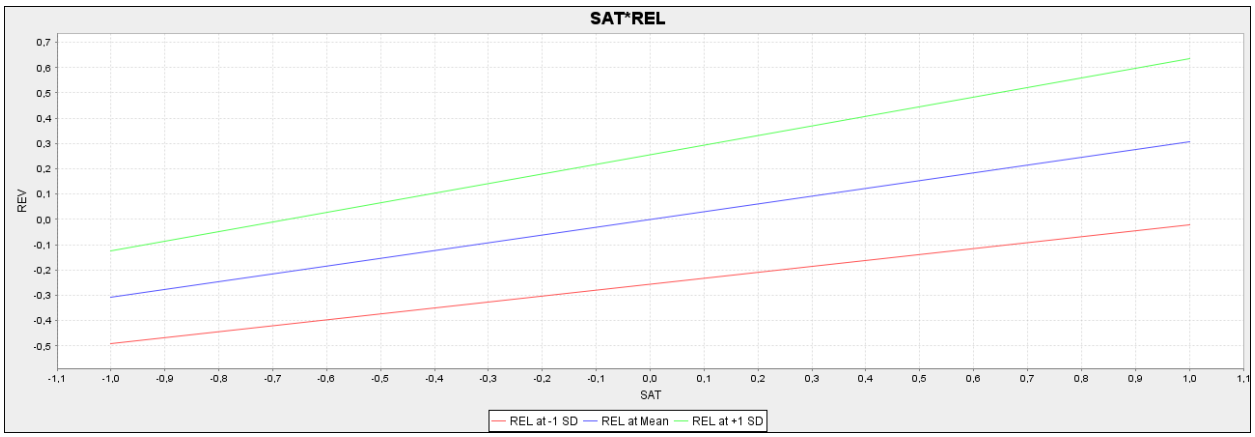

Figure 4: Simple slope analysis of the two-way interaction effect SAT*REL on REV

Discussion

Several hypotheses proposed in this study align with the results obtained from real-world data analysis. The findings not only exhibit similarities but also highlight differences compared to previous research. First, the results indicate that infrastructure, natural beauty, spiritual elements, and entertainment activities strongly influence the destination image. Second, the study reveals that the perceived image (including infrastructure, natural beauty, entertainment activities, and spiritual elements) has a positive impact on both the overall image and satisfaction, with effect sizes of 0.155 and 0.014, respectively. This finding is consistent with the studies of Echtner & Ritchie (1993) and Beerli & Martín (2004). Finally, affective image positively influences the overall image, with an average effect size of 0.288. However, it contradicts the hypothesis that affective image has a positive impact on satisfaction. This is a noteworthy finding as it challenges many previous studies in this field, despite the common assumption that affective image plays a crucial role in enhancing tourists' enjoyment. The overall image positively influences satisfaction and revisit intention, with effect sizes of 0.129 and 0.201, respectively. This result aligns with the study by Chi & Qu (2008), which suggests that a positive overall image fosters satisfaction and a sense of connection with the destination, ultimately encouraging tourists to return or recommend it to others.

Conclusion and implications

This study expands the theoretical understanding of destination image by incorporating spirituality as a key component of the cognitive image, an aspect that has been largely overlooked in previous research, particularly in the context of spiritual tourism in Vietnam (Jarratt & Sharpley, 2017). Unlike conventional studies that focus solely on cognitive or overall image, this research adopts a three-dimensional approach, integrating cognitive, affective, and overall image to provide a more comprehensive framework for understanding tourist perceptions and decision-making (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Additionally, while existing literature extensively discusses the influence of destination image on satisfaction and revisit intention (Chen & Tsai, 2007), this study extends the discussion by examining religiosity as a determinant of spiritual tourist behavior, addressing a gap in prior research on how religious beliefs shape travel decisions (Haq & Jackson, 2009). Furthermore, this study applies the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory to spiritual tourism research, diverging from the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) that is commonly used in tourism studies (Ajzen, 1991). The S-O-R framework allows for a deeper exploration of how external stimuli including the physical, cultural, and service attributes of a destination trigger emotional and cognitive responses, ultimately influencing tourist satisfaction and revisit intention (Kucukergin et al., 2020). By refining measurement scales to better align with the unique characteristics of spiritual tourism, this study contributes to the evolving discourse on destination marketing, consumer psychology, and tourism management, particularly in Vietnam's growing religious tourism sector.

A destination's image is formed by three fundamental components: cognitive image, affective image, and overall image, with cognitive image playing a crucial role in shaping the other two. Destination managers should focus on enhancing cognitive image by establishing An Giang as a "Spiritual and Cultural Destination" brand. Organizing diverse cultural entertainment activities such as festivals, art exhibitions, and traditional performances can provide visitors with rich cultural experiences and contribute to a positive cognitive image. For spiritual tourism sites, authorities should prioritize heritage conservation, preservation of religious values, and the creation of a solemn atmosphere. Personalized spiritual experiences, such as meditation, prayer, and participation in traditional religious ceremonies, could be incorporated into tourism programs. This study also confirms that religious belief influences tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. This suggests that tourists' revisit decisions are shaped by varying religious beliefs. To strengthen the cultural and religious aspects of spiritual tourism in An Giang, a well-planned approach is needed for destination management and development. Authorities should organize periodic religious and cultural events, such as the Lady Xu Festival, to reinforce the region's spiritual significance. Additionally, tourism businesses should focus on developing interactive religious experiences, helping visitors gain a deeper understanding of the local cultural and religious values. Overall image and satisfaction significantly influence revisit intention, with overall image playing a particularly vital role in tourists' return decisions. Destination managers should enhance promotional activities through effective communication strategies, unique branding, and innovative visitor experiences to improve An Giang's spiritual tourism image, thereby increasing the likelihood of repeat visits.

Limitations and future research directions

This study was conducted in An Giang, with a focus on specific spiritual tourism destinations, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or tourism types. To enhance the applicability of the results, future research should expand to diverse geographical locations and encompass a broader range of tourism forms to examine whether the observed patterns hold across different cultural and religious contexts. Additionally, as the study was conducted within a specific time frame, it may not fully capture evolving trends in spiritual tourism or changes in visitor behavior over time. To address this limitation, future research should adopt longitudinal approaches to provide a more dynamic and comprehensive understanding of tourist behavior in this field. Moreover, the measurement of religious belief presents inherent complexities due to its highly personal and subjective nature, making it difficult to quantify accurately. This may result in findings that do not fully reflect its true impact on tourist behavior. To improve the assessment of religiosity in tourism studies, future research could focus on specific dimensions of religious engagement, such as participation in religious festivals, pilgrimage frequency, or personal attachment to spiritual destinations, to develop a more nuanced and precise analytical framework.

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