



Explore Factors Affecting Domestic Tourists' Choice of Spiritual Destination in Nghe an, Vietnam

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Abstract

Nghe An, Vietnam has nearly 2,500 historical and cultural relics, stretching from the sea to the high mountains, not only rich in artistic and architectural value, but also rich in history and culture. Spiritual tourism destinations (DLTL) in Nghe An have been attracting domestic and foreign tourists, satisfying the need to explore and find a place of spiritual peace. To explore the factors that influence the decision to choose a tourism destination in Nghe An recently, the research team, through a survey of 400 tourists, has shown that there are 7 groups of factors that influence the decision to choose. tourism destination, including: Destination Image (DD), Destination promotion activities (QB), Reference group (TK), spiritual Attitude (TDTL), Discovery motivation (DCKP), Spiritual motivation (DCTL). Exploring these factors helped tourism businesses clearly identify the name and impact of factors that influence on domestic tourists' decision to choose a spiritual destination in Nghe An. The proposed feasible solutions in this article could help businesses supplement and adjust destination promotion policies in the next period.

Keywords: Factors influencing destination choice, Factors influencing spiritual destination choice, Spiritual tourism in Nghe An, Spiritual tourism.

1. Introduction

Researching consumer behavior is one of the contents that many scientific disciplines focus on analyzing, in order to understand and explain the mechanism of consumer behavior. These research results can contribute to helping businesses and policy makers devise policies to encourage and direct behavior according to certain purposes.

In research on tourist destination selection behavior, Isaac (2008) believes that studying tourist behavior is the key to helping businesses and destinations carry out marketing, promotion and sales activities. tourism products. However, the behavior of tourists today has changed a lot, the speed of change depends on the development of science and technology and internet communication, changing the basic factors affecting the decision to choose a tourist. choose tourist destinations compared to previous periods. That poses a theoretical requirement for updated research to deepen understanding of consumer behavior, especially tourists' travel destination selection behavior.

In the spiritual tourism map of Vietnam, Nghe An owns many attractive destinations that many tourists have been interested in recently. Nghe An, has many famous works built very early associated with the appearance of Buddhism, imported Taoism along with indigenous folk beliefs in this land as well as new works built recently. This. Each of these worship facilities carries certain values, becoming unique cultural heritages and important humanistic tourism resources. These include:

First, spiritual destinations associated with religion and faith, including Buddhist spiritual destinations and other spiritual places.

As for religious and spiritual destinations in Nghe An, we can mention pagodas with high value in terms of architecture, art and sacredness such as Diec Pagoda (Tung Lam Ancient Heron); Can Linh Pagoda, Dai Tue Pagoda; Chi Linh Pagoda (Gam Pagoda)...

As for other spiritual destinations associated with faith, we can mention famous temples such as Con Temple, Qua Son Temple, Bach Ma Temple, Hong Son Temple (Vinh City), Van Loc Temple (Cua Lo Town), Nguyen Xi Temple (Nghì Loc district), Cuong Temple (Dien Chau district), Ong Hoang Muoi Temple (Hung Nguyen district), Mai Hac De Temple (Nam Dan district), Duc Hoang Temple (Yen Thanh district)...

Second, spiritual destinations associated with worship and gratitude beliefs, such as Mrs. Hoang Thi Loan's Tomb, Uncle Ho's Ancestor Temple, Truong Bon relic site...

According to many researchers, Nghe An is recognized as a cultural region with an early history and its own unique characteristics. During thousands of years of existence and development, the people of Nghe An have

created a unique material and spiritual culture. Spiritual destinations in Nghe An are not only associated with religion and spirituality, but also with the worship and gratitude beliefs of Vietnamese people, creating a unique attraction for tourists, especially tourists. inland. Tourists come here not only purely to worship Buddha and pray to Saints but also to admire the scenery, helping visitors achieve true relaxation.

In recent years, the exploitation of spiritual tourism in Nghe An has achieved certain successes. The number of domestic tourists on pilgrimage is increasing, and the income and employment of local people has also improved significantly.

Identifying the important role of spiritual tourism activities in tourism development as well as local socio-economic development, Nghe An provincial government has promoted the development of spiritual tourism, considering it as a strengths in the local socio-economic development strategy. However, compared to the available potential, the achieved results are not really commensurate. Under the strong impact of globalization and the 4.0 Industrial Revolution, many new factors are appearing that have an impact and influence on spiritual tourism activities, requiring empirical research to identify factors that influence spiritual tourism. affects the choice of spiritual destinations in Nghe An of tourists, especially domestic tourists, helping businesses providing spiritual tourism services in the area with a basis to develop plans and solutions to develop Developing spiritual tourism quickly, effectively and sustainably.

Through a survey of 400 domestic tourists coming to Nghe An from January to April 2023, the authors used SPSS 20 and AMOS 20 software to test the proposed theoretical model, providing recommendations. Conclude and propose solutions to increase the number of domestic tourists to the province's spiritual destinations, develop the tourism industry as well as contribute to the socio-economic growth of Nghe An in the coming time.

2. Theoretical Overview and Research Model

2.1. Theoretical Overview

First, the study examines the destination selection behavior of domestic tourists as a type of tourism service consumption behavior.

The tourist destination selection behavior, including the tourist's spiritual destination selection, is the entire process that tourists reveal through investigating, evaluating, learning and making decisions about choosing a destination. destination, and is also a study of deciding to use or remove a destination from the choice list to satisfy needs and wants.

If we consider tourists' consumption behavior from an economic perspective, this behavior is closely linked to economic factors. The decision to choose a tourist destination is influenced by the economic circumstances of tourists, more specifically their ability to pay. However, this is not the deciding factor in choosing a destination or not (Crompton M.A, 1979).

If we consider tourists' consumption behavior from a psychological perspective, Olson J.C. & Peter P.J (2005) believed that the decision to choose a travel destination also depends heavily on preferences, emotions, beliefs, beliefs or perceptions, which also play an important role in the travel decision process.

If considering the destination selection behavior of tourists in terms of brands, F. Herzberg (1982) believed that a product or service is sold well when customers feel satisfied with the product. that product or service. Regarding the decision to choose a travel destination, customers often decide to buy before experiencing the service, so the destination selection process is often influenced by the reputation of the service provider and attractiveness and popularity of the destination.

Second, the study considers that the decision to choose a spiritual tourism destination is a pre-planned behavior.

The research team believes that a tourist's decision to choose a travel destination is a planned behavior from the beginning. This behavior is developed based on self-awareness or the ability to perform the behavior (Bandura, 1977).

Thus, the decision behavior of tourists to choose a spiritual tourism destination is the result of a cause and effect chain linking beliefs with behavior. On the basis of different experiences, tourists may form different beliefs about the consequences of deciding to choose or not choose a travel destination, and different normative beliefs. These beliefs in turn determine attitudes and subjective norms which then determine tourists' respective destination choice intentions and behavior.

Third, research the destination selection behavior of tourists

Woodside and Lysonski (1989) stated that: "The general pattern of the tourist destination selection process is the result of a cognitive learning process that leads to preferences in different destinations and has developed it. . Destination decisions also need to depend on the value characteristics, attitudes, and motivations of tourists before being impressed by the first image of the tourist destination.

Um and Crompton (1990) believe that the Destination Selection process has two stages: (1) the stage of forming thoughts about whether to have a travel trip or not; (2) destination selection stage after deciding to take a trip. Um and Crompton (1990) also have similar views on the important role of cognitive and attitudinal processes in the destination selection process. Through testing the role of two factors, attitude and perception in destination choice, destination awareness is influenced by internal factors including social psychology, external factors, and even marketing communication activities, consulting friends or experience. After that, Um and Crompton (1990) also built a model of tourists' destination choice based on the analysis of internal influencing factors (motivation, intention, perception, attitude). , personal...) and external (social interaction - word of mouth information, experience..., marketing communications - promotional materials, social network information channels...)

Crompton (1979) pointed out a model of tourist destination selection based on the analysis of internal and external influencing factors (including factors that describe the characteristics of the destination such as: social interaction). – word of mouth information, experiences..., marketing communications - promotional materials, social network information channels...) (Kozak & Rimmington, 1998).

2.2. Internal Factors Include

- Attitude towards tourism: Personal attitude towards the destination can significantly influence the decision to choose a spiritual destination and the intention to return of tourists (Um & Crompton, 1990). Many studies in the field of tourism (Nichols & Snepenger 1988; Um & Crompton 1990; Cullingford (1995)) have confirmed the influence of status on destination choice decisions.
- Travel motivation: Is a combination of factors such as desires, needs, emotions, beliefs and habits (Tezak & Sergo, 2013), which plays a role in shaping and promoting destination choice behavior. to travel. The travel motivation model is divided into two important groups of factors: push factors and pull factors. Each tourist brings with him a set of personal motives, expressing his own desires, creating a diversity of choices and shaping travel outcomes (Tezak & Sergo, 2013). This also highlights that motivation is not only a guiding principle in destination choice, but also shapes tourists' behavior at the destination.

2.3. External Factors Include

- Destination images. Destination image is not simply information about a specific place, but can also represent all the knowledge, impressions, prejudices and emotions of an individual or group of people towards it (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Studies have proven that images and information about spiritual destinations can create a strong impression on tourists, promoting interest and desire to explore these destinations. A spiritual tourism destination is often made up of many different factors such as natural resources, historical and cultural values, customs, conditions of the destination such as other environments such as geography, stability, etc. Political decisions and scientific and technical factors also directly or indirectly affect consumer decision making in tourism (Hyde, 2004; McCracken, 2005: Swarbooke & Horner, 2007).
- Destination promotion activities. Woodside & Lysonski (1989) pointed out that a business's customer outreach activities are one of the two most important factors that impact the choice of a tourist destination. Specifically, customer outreach activities such as recommendations from travel agents, advertising in the media, direct mail (especially through tour guides), participation in fairs Travel and many other activities also have an important impact on the decision to choose a destination. The information and impressions that customers gather from these activities can form the basis for building a destination image in their minds. Through activities such as encouragement from agents, advertising, participating in events and interacting with local people, businesses can create strong experiences and impressions in the minds of visitors, from that affects the decision to choose a destination (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989).
- Reference group. In dealing with travel decisions, customers often seek information from trustworthy sources, and reference groups are one of the main sources they place their trust in to gather information about their destination of interest. Research by Jenkins (1978) shows that the opinions of reference groups including: friends, relatives, colleagues or people who have gone through similar experiences at previous destinations, have a positive impact on customers' travel decision-making process (Jenkins, 1978; Filiatrault & Ritchie, 1980; Nichols & Snepenger, 1988; Decrop, 2006).

The above studies all show that reference groups not only influence the goals of the trip but also have the ability to influence the decision-making process, even in the stages before, during and after the decision is made. Each individual stands in a unique social position, and this position will affect how they perceive and act when making decisions.

2.4. Research Model and Hypothesis

To point out the factors that influence Vietnamese people's decision to travel abroad and the relationship between these factors, the author has inherited the theories explaining planned behavior of Ajzen (1991), and explanatory theories of factors influencing tourist behavior include Um & Crompton (1990); Woodside & MacDonald (1994); Decrop (2006). The factors in the model are arranged in order to reflect the impact of environmental factors on the individual psychology of tourists, including:

One, destination image, includes the attractions of the destination that impact tourists' psychology, perception, and travel motivation (Um & Crompton, 1990).

Second, Destination promotion activities, including marketing activities of destinations and travel businesses to attract tourists to tourist destinations (Woodside & MacDonald, 1994).

Third, reference groups demonstrate the influence of subjective norms under the influence of the external environment on tourists' travel attitudes and motivations (Decrop, 2006).

Thus, the proposed research model of the topic can be presented as Figure 1.

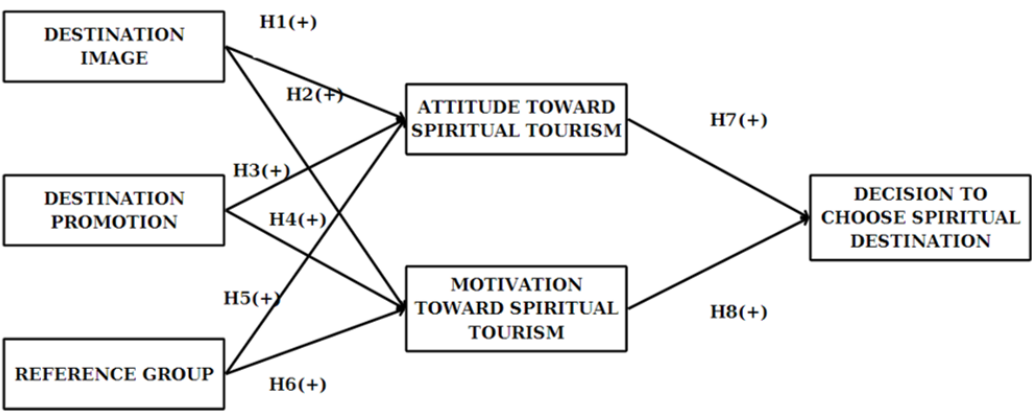


Figure 1.
Research model.

Notably, the proposed research model has:

- Remove the variable Intention to choose a travel destination from the model. According to research by Ajzen (1985), Lam & Hsu (2006) showed that scholars do not really agree on the certainty between Behavioral Intention and Decision to implement behavioral intention. The subjects of the survey were domestic tourists who had traveled to spiritual destinations in Nghe An, so the authors found it unnecessary to measure the relationship between intention to choose a destination. to spiritual tourism and the decision behavior to choose a spiritual tourism destination, the Intention variable was removed from the original model of Ajzen (1991).
- Replace the subjective norm variable with the Reference Group variable because the impact of reference groups in the author's proposed group model also reflects tourists' perceptions of values and standards in tourism, similar to subjective norm variable in the original model of Ajzen (1991). To avoid duplication and correlation of variables, the authors decided to remove the Subjective Standard variable from the research model, replacing it with the Reference Group variable.

The model's hypotheses include:

- Hypothesis H1: Destination image affects tourists' spiritual tourism attitude in the same direction.
- Hypothesis H2: Destination image affects tourists' spiritual travel motivation in the same direction.
- Hypothesis H3: Promotional activities of spiritual tourism destinations have a positive impact on tourists' spiritual tourism attitudes.
- Hypothesis H4: Promotional activities of spiritual tourism destinations have a positive impact on tourists' spiritual tourism motivation.
- Hypothesis H5: Reference groups have a positive impact on tourists' spiritual tourism attitudes.
- Hypothesis H6: Reference groups have a positive impact on tourists' spiritual travel motivation.
- Hypothesis H7: Spiritual tourism attitude has a positive impact on tourists' choice of spiritual tourism destination.
- Hypothesis H8: Spiritual tourism motivation has a positive impact on tourists' choice of spiritual tourism destination.

3. Research Method

3.1. Build the Scale

Through reference to previous studies, the project has proposed a set of research scales as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Scale of research model.		
Code	Scale	Source
	Destination image	
DD1	I find this a safe destination	Um&Crompton (1992), Hill (2000), Muntinda & Mayaka (2012), Hsu & cộng sự (2017); Doãn Văn Tuấn (2020).
DD2	I heard that the destination's landscape and architecture are very ancient	
DD3	I heard that the destination is a sacred place	
DD4	I found getting around to this location easy	
DD5	Other interesting features of the destination (shopping, outside services, sports...) appealed to me	
	Promotional activities of spiritual destinations	
QB1	The ancient, historical architecture propagated through images and spiritual tourism websites influenced my decision to choose a destination.	Mayo & Jarvis (1981); Luo & Zhong (2015); Gruen (2005); Crick (2003); Doãn Văn Tuấn (2020).
QB2	I often prioritize choosing famous long-standing spiritual destinations and historical and cultural relics.	
QB3	Traditional festivals and unique cultural activities pique my interest.	
QB4	Spiritual places located on tour routes are often my priority choice.	
QB5	I chose the destination with the criteria of cultural exchange with indigenous peoples.	
	Reference group	
TK1	Advice from people who have gone before helps me choose and decide on a suitable tourist destination	Murphy & cộng sự (2007); Doãn Văn Tuấn (2020)
TK2	Before going to a tourist destination, I often search for information on Google, Facebook,...	
TK3	I would not choose this travel destination if there were negative reviews.	
TK4	Videos about travel destinations on social networks create excitement for me.	
TK5	Services that provide information about travel and destinations help me decide whether to go or not.	
TK6	I will definitely visit a travel destination if it has positive feedback.	
	Attitudes towards spiritual tourism	
TD1	The information I knew and received made me feel very excited and want to set foot on this historical and cultural relic.	Doãn Văn Tuấn (2020), Sparks & Pan (2009)
TD2	In general, the destination of the historical site brings a lot of value compared to the cost you spend on a trip.	
TD3	I was fascinated when mentioning that spiritual tourist destination when I received information that that place was very sacred and ancient.	
TD4	Thanks to advertising programs, I knew that the spiritual resort was very calm and pure	
TD5	I was fascinated when mentioning the destination included in the spiritual cultural tour program.	
	Spiritual travel motives	
DC1	I want to travel to rest, relax and eliminate stress	Fodness (1994),

DC2	I want to travel to enjoy the services and entertainment here	Chetthamrongchai (2017), Doãn Văn Tuấn (2020), Marzuki & et al (2017), Um&Crompton (1990).
DC3	I want to travel to learn about the cultural and historical values there	
DC4	I want to travel to express my respect for my faith and beliefs	
DC5	I want to travel to enrich the experience of culture, religion and belief	
DC6	I want to travel to discover new sides of myself	
	Decided to choose a spiritual tourism destination in Nghe An	
QD1	I chose this tour because I had relatives go with me	Decrop (2006), Chen & et al (2019), Doãn Văn Tuấn (2020)
QD2	I chose it because it has interesting spiritual destinations	
QD3	I choose because the destinations match my beliefs	
QD4	I chose the tour because the tour length was suitable for me	
QD5	I chose the tour because there were spiritual activities that were suitable for me	
QD6	I choose the tour because the price is cheaper than other providers	
QD7	I chose the tour because of the reputable organizer and good brand	

3.2. Defining Research Sample

According to Yamane Taro (1967), determining sample size when the overall sample size is unknown is done according to the following formula:

$$n = Z^2 \frac{p \times (1 - p)}{e^2}$$

In which: n is the sample size to be determined, Z is the value of looking up the Z distribution table based on the selected confidence (Z = 1.96 when the confidence used is 95%), p is the size estimate ratio. Sample n is successful (choose p = 0.5 so that the value p(1-p) is the largest. e is the allowable error (e = ±0.05). Then: n = 384.16.

The selected survey subjects are tourists who have visited spiritual sites in Nghe An during the period from April 2023 to August 2023. Selected spiritual locations include: Ong Hoang Muoi Temple; Con Temple; Qua Son Temple; Gam Pagoda; Duc Hau Pagoda; Diec Pagoda; Truong Bon relic area, Uncle Ho's ancestral church area. The research team distributed 480 questionnaires, collected 420 questionnaires, and after screening and coding, 400 questionnaires met the standards, ensuring research requirements.

4. Research Results

4.1. Cronbach’s Alpha

With a total of 480 ballots issued, 420 ballots received. After the filtering process, there are 400 valid votes remaining. The author entered data into Excel software, coding variables as shown in Table 1.

After being collected, the data were cleaned, coded, and entered using SPSS 20 software. Hypotheses from H1 to H8 were tested for Cronbach's Alpha and EFA coefficients on SPSS 20 software and continued to be analyzed. Confirmatory factor CFA, SEM model analysis on AMOS software.

The results of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient analysis show that the independent variables (after eliminating observed variables with total variable correlation coefficients less than 0.3) have Cronbach's Alpha coefficients greater than 0.688 (>0.6) and have Cronbach's Alpha coefficients greater than 0.688 (>0.6). The smallest total variable correlation is 0.360 (> 0.3), showing that the independent and dependent variables included in the model can be used and are used well. After preliminary evaluation of the scale using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, there are 26 observed variables belonging to 06 factor groups that satisfy the conditions for analysis and assessment of reliability of Cronbach's Alpha and are included in exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

4.2. Analysis EFA

EFA's task is to explore the structure of the scale of factors: DD, QB, TK, TD, DC and QD. After ensuring the correct implementation of the EFA process, the factors will be tested to clean the data.

Table 2. KMO & Barlett’s Test.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.715
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4343.966
	df	253
	Sig.	0.000

With the results of factor analysis of variables belonging to the factors, the author obtained the KMO coefficient of 0.715, Sig. is 0.000, which confirms the KMO value, ensuring the appropriateness of exploratory factor analysis and the meaningfulness of the data included in the factor analysis. The Chi-Square statistic of the Bartlett test has a value of 253 with a significance level of Sig. is 0.000 which is less than 0.05 (Table 2).

At the same time, analysis of the extracted variance shows that the extracted variance reaches a value of 68.225%, this value is quite high, so 75.390% of the variation of the data is explained by 7 factors, the scales are extracted and accept. The stopping point when extracting factors is at the 7th factor with an eigenvalue of 1.001 greater than 1 (this confirms that the included variables are arranged into 8 factor groups)

After three runs, the variables QB5, QD5, TD3 did not meet the factor loading condition greater than 0.5 and were eliminated from the model. The rotated matrix of factors is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Rotated matrix of factors.

	Component							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
QD2	0.921							
QD1	0.905							
QD4	0.863							
QD3	0.853							
QB3		0.869						
QB2		0.784						
QB4		0.781						
QB1		0.753						
TK1			0.889					
TK3			0.874					
TK2			0.814					
DD2				0.867				
DD1				0.867				
DD3				0.811				
DC4					0.934			
DC2					0.804			
DC5					0.733			
DC1						0.942		
DC3						0.862		
TD1							0.867	
TD2							0.837	
TD4								0.913
TD5								0.775

In particular, the TD factor group (Attitude towards the destination) is divided into 2 groups:

- TD1 and TD2, renamed as factor group: Attitude towards the historicity of the destination, denoted as TDTL
- TD4 and TD5, renamed as factor group: Attitude towards the spirituality of the destination, denoted TDLS
- The DC factor group (Motives for tourism), is divided into 2 groups:
- DC1 and DC3, renamed Travel Discovery Engine, denoted DCKP
- DC2, DC4 and DC5, renamed Spiritual Engines, denoted DCTL

Then, the original theoretical model can be redrawn as shown in Figure 2.

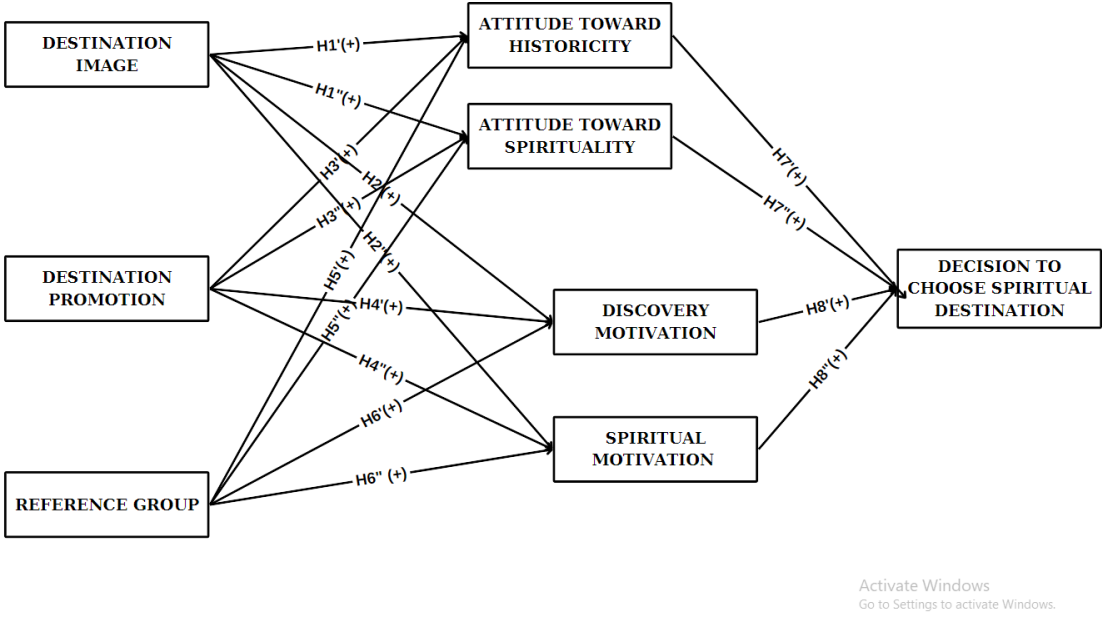


Figure 2. Adjusted research model after EFA analysis.

Thus, after analysis, it can be concluded that the observed variables are correlated with each other on an overall scale. And the model has 8 factors that need to be regressed. And the Pattern Matrix table of factor rotation shows us 8 groups of factors with 23 observed variables as shown in table 4 including factors DD, QB, TK, TDLS, TDTL, DCKP, DCTL and QD. continue to be tested in the next steps.

- Then, the hypotheses are rewritten as follows:
- Hypothesis H1': Destination image has a positive impact on tourists' Attitude towards History in spiritual tourism.*
 - Hypothesis H1'': Destination image has a positive impact on tourists' attitudes toward spirituality in spiritual tourism.*
 - Hypothesis H2': Destination image affects tourists' discovery travel motivation in the same direction.*
 - Hypothesis H2'': Destination image affects tourists' spiritual travel motivation in the same direction.*
 - Hypothesis H3': Promotional activities of spiritual tourism destinations have a positive impact on tourists' attitude towards history in spiritual tourism.*

Hypothesis H3'': Promotional activities of spiritual tourism destinations have a positive impact on tourists' attitude towards history in spiritual tourism.

Hypothesis H4': Promotional activities of spiritual tourism destinations have a positive impact on tourists' exploration motivation.

Hypothesis H4'': Promotional activities of spiritual tourism destinations have a positive impact on tourists' spiritual motivation.

Hypothesis H5': Reference groups have a positive impact on tourists' attitudes toward history in spiritual tourism.

Hypothesis H5'': Reference groups have a positive impact on tourists' attitudes toward spirituality in spiritual tourism.

Hypothesis H6': Reference groups have a positive impact on tourists' motivation to explore in tourism.

Hypothesis H6'': Reference groups have a positive impact on tourists' spiritual motivation in travel.

Hypothesis H7': Attitude towards history has a positive impact on tourists' choice of spiritual tourism destination.

Hypothesis H7'': Attitude towards spirituality has a positive impact on tourists' choice of spiritual tourism destination.

Hypothesis H8': Exploration motivation has a positive impact on tourists' choice of spiritual tourism destination.

Hypothesis H8'': Spiritual motivation has a positive impact on tourists' choice of spiritual tourism destination.

5. Implication and Recommendation

5.1. Theoretical and Practical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the systematization and expansion of the theoretical framework on tourist behavior related to the choice of spiritual destinations, especially in the context of Nghe An province. The research findings clarify the groups of factors influencing tourists' decisions to select spiritual tourism destinations, thereby supporting the development and refinement of theoretical models more aligned with practical realities.

From a practical perspective, the study provides reliable data for tourism managers and enterprises operating in the tourism sector of Nghe An. The confirmation of hypotheses H2', H3'', H4', H4'', H6', H6'', and H8' indicates that several factor groups significantly influence tourists' decision-making, including: Destination Image (DD), Destination Promotion Activities (QB), Reference Group (TK), Attitude Toward Spirituality (TDTL), Discovery Motivation (DCKP), and Spiritual Motivation (DCTL). Identifying factor groups such as attitudes toward the historical and spiritual aspects of destinations, discovery motivation, and spiritual motivation constitutes a key outcome. These insights enable stakeholders to better understand the intrinsic needs and motivations of tourists, thus offering a sound basis for developing appropriate strategies to attract and effectively serve visitors.

5.2. Policy and Managerial Recommendations

5.2.1. First, Enhance Branding and Increase the Attractiveness of Spiritual Tourism Destinations in Nghe An

Nghe An is home to hundreds of recognized historical and cultural relics, including many ancient temples and pagodas such as Gam Pagoda, Dai Tue Pagoda, Co Am Pagoda, and Dong Bac Pagoda. These sites are rich in religious and cultural heritage. Therefore, spiritual tourism in Nghe An has considerable potential for development, particularly in the forms of religion- and belief-based tourism, folklore and legendary narratives, and gratitude-related cultural values. These elements contribute to a unique spiritual tourism identity for the province.

To increase tourist retention and satisfaction, however, it is essential to diversify spiritual tourism products and services. According to the research model, destination image positively influences discovery motivation but has not yet significantly impacted tourists' spiritual awareness. Therefore, it is critical to intensify efforts to highlight spiritual narratives associated with destinations, develop related products and services (shopping, entertainment), and go beyond scenic and logistical elements.

Specific proposals include:

- (i) Developing a unified spiritual tourism brand for Nghe An, supported by collaboration among state agencies, local tourism service providers, and travel companies.
- (ii) Integrating spiritual tourism with other tourism types—such as experiential or night tourism—to enrich product offerings, promote the overall tourism brand, and extend tourists' length of stay in the province.

5.2.2. Second, Improve the Effectiveness of Promotional and Marketing Activities for Spiritual Tourism in Nghe An

Despite certain improvements in promotion, current marketing efforts remain limited, especially online. Many spiritual destinations lack a strong online presence, and promotion still relies heavily on travel agencies or word-of-mouth. To enhance efficiency and cost-effectiveness, the following measures are recommended:

- (i) Conduct comprehensive market research to identify target segments, evaluate Nghe An's tourism resources and image compared to other provinces, and develop a digital database of images, information, and publications to support professional promotional campaigns.
- (ii) Expand the use of digital marketing strategies, including online tour sales and internet-based campaigns, and actively participate in tourism forums, exhibitions, and international trade fairs. These platforms provide valuable opportunities to introduce the potential of spiritual tourism in Nghe An to both domestic and international partners.

5.2.3. Third, Strengthen the Quality of Human Resources Serving Spiritual Tourism

Currently, the quantity and quality of human resources for spiritual tourism in Nghe An do not meet the needs of both present and future development. It is therefore necessary to recruit and train a competent workforce of tour guides who are well-versed in local history, spirituality, and culture, proficient in foreign languages, and skilled in tourism service standards. Capacity-building initiatives should also target the broader tourism labor force within the province.

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