This research aims to generate a theory of spiritual tourism using data from a site in Vietnam, the city of Da-Nang. Given that this form of tourism is young for Da-Nang, the issue is how the city should develop its spiritual tourism offering in a determinative and authentic way for the efficiency of its environment, socio-cultural, and economic sectors. Academically, spiritual tourism theory is wanting. Development and discussion of the grounded theory is based cultural, heritage, and spiritual tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Spiritual tourism has existed from the history of human tourism, for the primary purpose of redemption, healing, and guidance. In a similar context, “religious motivated tourism is probably as old as religion itself and is consequently the oldest type of tourism” (Romschide, 1992 p. 53). Among uncountable holy places located around the world, Mecca in Saudi Arabia, old city Jerusalem of Israel, and sites of Lumbah – Bodhgaya – Sarnath – Kushinagar in Nepal and India are the most famous spiritual addresses. Regarding Viet-Nam, its spiritual tourism is related to Buddhism, folk religions, and ancestral worship.

Da-Nang spiritual tourism

Da-Nang city is located in the centre of Viet-Nam. Key but select spiritual attractions are presented below.

1. Da-Nang spiritual tourism originates from the nature of Five Movements Mountains. Due to the harmony of beauty among land, sea, and space, Buddhist monks built pagodas and used caves for religious practices 300 years ago (DTNHIS, 2011).

2. The national Mercy Goddess festival is organized annually from February 1st for the commemoration of the Bodhisattva, at the Buddhist pagoda Quan Thien Am (Mercy Goddess) of the mount Metal (QTA, 2011).

3. The Christianity Main Cathedral built by the French in 1923. Adapting to gothic architecture, the cathedral is ornamented by pointed tars and diamond-shaped entrances (Da-Nang, 2011).

4. The Buddhist pagoda Linh Ung (Sacred Efficient) on July 2010 made possible through the contribution of Da-Nang Buddhist Congregation, administration levels, and donors (Ni, 2011).

5. April 10 launched a detailed plan on the Five Movements Mountains Cultural Spiritual Park, which is built in an area of 1,30 km² with an expected investment of US$ 96 M (Phuang, 2011).

Research question

Is the current development of spiritual tourism in Da-Nang city is well oriented?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining spiritual tourism

In recent decades, tourism is not only a pleasure but also embraces various significant meanings to people that in turn can considerably shape their lives. Tourism’s experiences are not only associated with physical needs of the place but also to possibly become a spiritual experience that embraces physical and psychological benefits, altruism, and other personal development and changes in life (Wilson & Harris, 2006). Spirituality is not always characterized with religion, other tourism trips such as wilderness, wildlife, rural, or nature tourism also contain various spiritual dimensions, and are preferred for certain tourist’s need of solitude and reflection upon his or her life (Friedelsson & Anderson, 1999, Schanbel & McIntosh, 2000). Besides, cruises with new age movement and contemporary psychological seminars and workshops are added to the list of spiritual tourism.

METHOD

Grounded theory

This research uses conventional techniques of observation, memo, and interview; processes with inductive reasoning of Glaser (1992), analyzes through coding procedure and theory paradigm of Strauss and Corbin (1990), applies constant comparison of Glaser and Strauss (1967), and interprets the revealed theory from the visual presentation of Morrow and Smith (1995), as illustrated by the model (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Research model

RESULT

Grounded theory

This research uses conventional techniques of observation, memo, and interview; processes with inductive reasoning of Glaser (1992), analyzes through coding procedure and theory paradigm of Strauss and Corbin (1990), applies constant comparison of Glaser and Strauss (1967), and interprets the revealed theory from the visual presentation of Morrow and Smith (1995), as illustrated by the model (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Research model

Observation: Field trip observations to five holy sites in Da-Nang. 

Memo: Reflections during observations, interviews, and analyses.

Interview: 10 participants in tourism until data is saturated.

Data: 20 structured and open-ended questions in Vietnamese and recorded on a digital voice device.

Analysis: Open, axial, and selective coding referring NVivo qualitative analysis software, and English translation at final stage.

Theoretical model: In nine weeks, the researcher completed the research process so that the theory emerges (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The spiritual nature theory of Da-Nang spiritual tourism development.

CONCLUSION

Generalisation 1: A theory reflects the amplitude and accuracy of a research matter to contribute to the literature.

Generalisation 2: Theoretical orientation is not only important but also solidifies the process of tourism development.

Generalisation 3: While spirit of cooperative community is reinforced, quality of tourism workforce is challenging.

Generalisation 4: The spiritual nature development can supplement and construct typical products and potential spiritual experiences.

Generalisation 5: Among forms of the alternative development, developing spiritual tourism can carry a harmony to a place or society.

Generalisation 6: The essence development can be postulated for a good selection of proper products that tourism can develop more authentically.

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