NATURE AS IMPRESSION FOR DAO: A THEORY OF SPIRITUAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN DA NANG - VIET NAM

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to generate a theory of spiritual tourism using data from a site in Việt-Nam, the city of Đà-Nẵng. 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." (Rinschede, 1992, p. 53).

Among uncountable holy places located around the world, Mecca in Saudi Arabia, old city Jerusalem of Israel, and chain sites of Lumbini – 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 (DTNHS, 2011).

2. The national Mercy Goddess festival is organized annually from 1991 for the commemoration of this Bodhisattva, at the Buddhist pagoda Quán Thế Âm (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 traits and diamond-shaped entrances (Đà-Nẵng, 2011).

4. The Buddhist pagoda Linh Ứng (Sacred Efficacy) on July 2010 made possible through the contribution of Da-Nang Buddhist Congregation, administration levels, and donors (Nở, 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 (Phương, 2011).
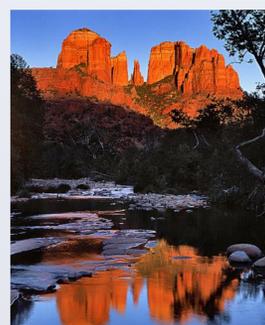
Research question

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 travel to certain place but also to possibly have 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 live (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999, Schanzel & McIntosh, 2000). Besides, cruises with new age movement and contemporary psychological seminars and workshops are added to the list of spiritual tourism.

Cathedral Rock at Sedona, Arizona

Spirit of Alaska Cruise
June 12 to 19, 2015
www.spiritualcruise.com
Join Us on an Amazing Shamanic Seminar-at-Sea

Spiritual cruise

Tourism development theories

The morphology of tourism development has been discussed to understand how tourism is developed and classified by different development theories (Andriotos, 2000; Sharpley, 2000, 2003; Andriotis & Vaughan, 2009; Awang, Hassan, & Zahari, 2009):

1. Laissez-faire: As development is generated without much interference of government and operations of individual entrepreneurs, the production and goods exchange, and tourism development can be attained by themselves thereby raising local standards of living.

2. The diffusionist paradigm: A development process that extends from one location to other locations, better understood as emanating from the core development to peripheral areas. A prerequisite for this to happen is innovation either exists in certain areas or refers objects or phenomena.

3. The dependency theory: A development at peripheral countries, regions, or areas in which large corporations and foreign headquarters of tourism-generated countries exploit and control many development facets such as investment capital, resources, services, and expenditures.

4. The sustainable development approach: A development that emphasizes the preservation of resources and maintains them for the needs of future generations, increases productive potentials, ensures equitable benefits for communities and tourists, and keep continuity.

5. Modernization theory: Tourism is approved as a development strategy that generates foreign exchange, increases gross domestic product, attracts investment, facilitates technology, promotes employment, which are to be determined through the development stages of a nation.

6. Neo-liberalism: A tourism development in which the government, affected by certain unexpected domestic or foreign events such as an economic crisis, restricts its support to and management of tourism and yields to the private sector to regulate the tourism industry.

7. Alternative development: Based on the concept of sustainability, this tourism development focuses on a range of strategies of conservation, greenness, responsibility, control, friendship, and community, which brings benefits to both the tourism environment and hosts and tourists.

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).
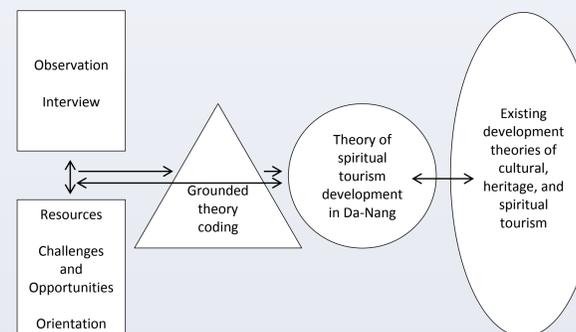

Figure 1. Research model

RESULT

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

Memo: Reflections during observations, interviews, and analyses.

Interview: 10 participants in tourism domain 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).
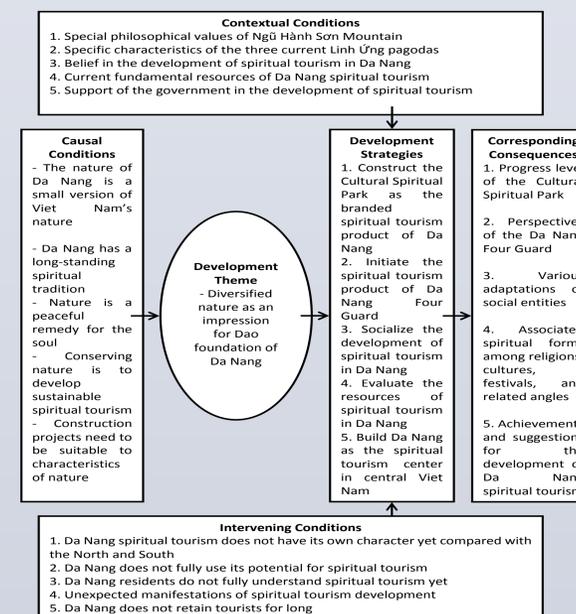

Figure 2. The spiritual nature theory of Da-Nang spiritual tourism development

❖ **Selected facets:** At this time, Da Nang spiritual tourism cannot be determined as a development but as a pre-development where spiritual tourism products are being enhanced in quantity and quality as well as being tailored to the preferences of spiritual tourists. However, challenges such as the limited understanding and perception of spirituality and spiritual tourism, shortage of human resources, incomplete spiritual activities, manifestations of superstition, and lack of broader marketing remain. By overcoming these challenges, the quality of Da Nang spiritual tourism can take another step forward.

❖ **Orientation:** Recommendation for orientation is the spiritual orientation for the development of spiritual tourism in Da Nang. Stating differently, to spiritually orientate is to emphasize the spiritual values of Da Nang (e.g., religious spirituality especially Buddhism, natural spirituality such as Five Movement Mountains, or human spirituality) so that the picture of Da Nang spiritual tourism becomes clearer, more specific and especially, more evident.

❖ **Spiritual nature theory:** Rely on the relationships between the development theme of "Diversified nature as an impression for Dao foundation of Da Nang" and other categories, the spiritual nature theory is established for the spiritual tourism development in Da Nang. Interpretatively, Da Nang develops spiritual tourism not only to adapt to a tourism trend and meet the needs of spiritual tourists but also to enhance the meaning of the diversified elements of nature that implicitly convey the spiritual message of Da Nang's land and people.

❖ **Alternative theory:** Manifestations show that the development of Da Nang spiritual tourism is most compatible with the alternative development theory, in terms of both development content and development form. Consider the development content of Da Nang spiritual tourism that includes all things, activities, and events such as pagodas, prayers, festivals, and so on. These meet most of the concepts of conservation, greenness, responsibility, control, friendship, and community embedded in alternative tourism development.

❖ **Essence theory:** Spiritual tourism in Da Nang was originally developed from the spontaneous activity of residents, without any participation from government and tourism operators, to a form of tourism development recognized by societal institutions and entities. This tourism development suggests a theory that can be termed as essence, which is not mentioned in the establishment of tourism theories. The theory of essence development can be understood as tourism development that refers to the essential or original values of a particular activity to reproduce them along with the development.

CONCLUSION

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

Generalisation 2: The 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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