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An Analysis of Critical Factors Affecting Sustainable Development of Spiritual Tourism: a Case Study of Hanoi, Vietnam

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Abstract

This study tries to clarify the factors affecting sustainable development in spiritual tourism. The author clarifies the definition of spiritual tourism and relies on the theory of sustainable development to demonstrate why research needs to be done. Spiritual tourism does not necessarily have to be related to religion, and in order to develop sustainably, it must ensure three aspects: environment, society, and economy. The selected research area is Huong Pagoda in Hanoi, Vietnam. The research was done based on the semi-structured interview method. However, before implementing the above method, the author also completed the unstructured observation. During the research process, the author interviewed tourists, tourism planners and observations to get information about tourism planners' policies, tourist characteristics and factors affecting tourism's sustainable development and spiritual tourism from the perspective of tourism planners. Through the research process, the author found that the age of participating in spiritual tourism is getting younger day by day; the policies are unclear and have not been properly implemented. The unreasonable waste treatment and small traders (locals) charge a higher service price than the listed price for tourists are potential factors affecting the sustainable development of spiritual tourism in Huong Pagoda, Hanoi, Vietnam. Developing specific tourism policies, building and operating a waste treatment plant, and at the same time, increasing the dissemination of knowledge about the environment and tourism to local people and tourists are issues that need to be prioritised by the authorities.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background Information

The tourism industry brings numerous benefits for the sustainable development of a country in terms of economic growth, revenue, employment generation, the improvement of living standards, and so on (Thakur, 2019). According to Norman (2004), Spiritual tourism is different from pilgrimage, the phrase "spiritual tourism" is used to distinguish these two concepts of tourists. The tourism industry in Vietnam achieved a revenue of 15.6 million international visitors and over 80 million domestic visitors (Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism, 2019). In Hanoi, Vietnam, the number of tourists is 26 million guests in the year 2018 (Hanoi Tourism Department, 2018).

Under the influence of the covid pandemic, the number of visitors to Hanoi has decreased significantly in 2020. Specifically, only around 8.65 million visitors to Hanoi, equal to 30% compared to 2019, in which international visitors are estimated to reach 1.11 million visitors, equaling 15.8% compared to 2019 (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of VietNam, 2020). Going to spiritual places such as pagoda, temples year-round, especially at the beginning of the year, is one of the long-lasting customs of Vietnamese people (VietNam Government Portal, 2018). Therefore, it can be seen that the number of tourists coming to Hanoi for the purpose of spiritual tourism is very large. Since the emergence of sustainable development, according to the Brundtland Report (1987), sustainable development is an advancement to meet the

needs of the current time, while the capacity of future generations is not affected to achieve their own needs. Krishna and Manickam (2017) state that sustainable development should include three significant elements: economy, environment, and social community.

1.2 *Rationale*

There are several research papers about spiritual tourism in Hanoi, Vietnam, such as spiritual culture (Nguyen, 2002), Route of Vietnam tourism (Bui, 2011), and other research. Nevertheless, there is no specific research on the sustainable development of spiritual tourism in the North of Vietnam. These topics just mentioned the contemporary issues in spiritual tourism, cultural tourism in Hanoi, and cultural heritage in Hanoi and how it was exploited and applied to these types of tourism. Therefore, there is a need to research spiritual tourism in Hanoi, Vietnam.

The author desires this research to be a small part of the reliable sources in finding solutions for the sustainable development of spiritual tourism in Hanoi. The author will clarify the concept of authentic spiritual tourism so that visitors can better understand the activities they did in the past and will do in the future. This research will help tourists take appropriate actions when they attend tourism and spiritual tourism to develop sustainably. This paper will contribute to the study of Norman (2004).

1.3 *Aim and Objectives*

This research aim to analyse the critical factors affecting the sustainable development of spiritual tourism at Huong Pagoda, Hanoi, Vietnam. Based on the aim, the following objectives have been taken into consideration in this study:

To identify and discuss the key policy intentions of spiritual tourism from the perspective of tourism planners in Hanoi.

To evaluate the characteristics of tourists participating in spiritual tourism at Huong Pagoda, Hanoi.

To investigate potential factors affecting the sustainable development of spiritual tourism from the perspective of tourism planners in Hanoi

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 *Introduction*

In Chapter 2, the author's goal is to clarify the concept of spiritual tourism and sustainable development. Therefore, the author will have classifications and separate definitions and related factors between religious tourism and spiritual tourism. The author also clarifies the link between

tourism and factors of sustainable development. The results from previous empirical studies in different contexts will be mentioned in chapter 2.3. In chapter 2.4, the author will mention the basic information of the location in the research.

2.2 *Theoretical Background*

2.2.1 *Spiritual Tourism*

In leisure travel, spiritual tourism is a phenomenon (Norman, 2012). Spirituality is the meaning when people find their meaning and purpose individually and they believe in a higher or highest power that they have never grasped (Kale, 2004). Spiritual tourism is the tourism featured by this project (Norman, 2012). People have a lot of motivations to travel, one of the common motivations is religion and spirituality (Timothy and Olsen, 2006). In 2012, Strategic Initiatives & Government Advisory (SIGA) team stated that religious tourism is a form of tourism that tourists have their motivation to experience religious activities and religious products such as ant architecture, art, and culture when they go to travel. "Spiritual tourism is characterized by visitors seeking to benefit spirituality through the practice of religious and belief rituals" (Norman, 2011). In 2008, a note made by Haq, Ho Yin Wong, and Jackson note on the suggestions that elements of religious tourism and pilgrimage can be factors of spiritual tourism as well because of difficulty in clearly distinguishing what is religious and what is spiritual in tourism. This note is quite realistic when Norman (2012) also stated that although identity and project of personal significance are the factors that define spiritual tourism, pilgrimages can be part of this type of tourism that may be similar to religious tourism. On the other hand, Robledo (2015) stated spiritual tourism is the journey to find meaning, the connection that keeps the soul inside each person with the invisible intangible elements at the same time, this also increases the character. From the above authors like Norman (2011, 2012), Robledo (2015), and others, spiritual tourism is a form of travel with the main purpose of healing the soul and spirit. This may or may not be related to religion. When people or tourists want to take a religious tour or a pilgrimage, make sure they have faith in a particular religion. However, for spiritual tourism, they only need to have faith in improving their souls and they can do this through a spiritual tour.

2.2.2 *Sustainable Development*

As defined by the United Nation was published in 2019, future generations also have the need to be met like generations at present. Thus, sustainable development is to meet the needs immediately without consequences in the future.

According to the United Nations, every person living on the planet must make a concerted effort so that humanity and the planet have a comprehensive future in all aspects with sustainability and resilience. Sustainable development also has standards. Economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection are the three factors that people must associate in a harmonious way if they want to achieve sustainable development in the future (United Nation, 2019). These are all core elements and occupy important positions in the development and prosperity of humans and the planet (United Nation, 2019). Depending on the social situation, everyone has different cultural, spiritual, and social needs. Ensuring that these balance needs are the goal of social sustainability (Assefa and Frostell, 2007). Tourism creates positive impacts on local people, such as contributing to the pride of their cultural traditions, which is a supportive factor for peace and job creation for local people (UNEP, 2002). Like the current generation, future generations also have service and resource needs that need to be met. Ecosystems are limited, and the necessary services are always themselves (Morelli, 2011). According to Morelli, the needs of the current generation are met and do not affect the demand for future generations is environmental sustainability. Sustainable social development, sustainable environmental development is all related to the needs of people in generations, and of course, sustainable economic development is similar. Tourism operators always protect the environment where they exploit tourism to meet their customers' needs, thereby improving the quality of service and the company's reputation to have been able to maintain a stable collection source (Kaffashi, et al., 2015). According to author Joachim (2005), the definition of sustainable economic development used in most economic forums in the world today is to maintain income with permanent duration. The income referred to here is one of the needs of the people, and that they are sustained and permanent, means economic sustainability. The economy is heavily affected by tourism, it is largely in categories such as motels, retail, restaurants, entertainment, and transportation, thereby creating changes in that area such as tax revenue, employment, and sales (Stynes, 1997). Tourism development is not only a joyous signal but also a concern because while the economy is promoting growth, at the same time the environment can be ruined if the economy is developed in a way that is not sustainable (Zhong, Deng, Song and Ding, 2011).

2.2.1 The necessary factors to develop the sustainable development of tourism

The link between the elements of sustainable development of tourism, including spiritual tourism, is recognized by Phan and Vo (2017). The authors agree that the tourism industry needs to achieve economic, social, and environmental sustainability dimensions. All economic activities must be practical and valuable so that all social classes can achieve prosperity. Humans want society to develop sustainably, everyone must have equality, and human rights are essential rights and should be respected. Besides resources that are valuable to humans, there are resources that, if depleted, will not be renewable. Therefore, protecting and managing resources are things that people need to do to have a sustainable environment.

According to the Vietnam Government Committee for Religious Affairs (2019), most of Vietnam's famous spiritual tourist sites are relics and landscapes, mainly focusing on temples, pagodas, shrines, mausoleums, and memorial areas. It is also the most suitable environment for developing tourism, which is sustainable, given the context provided by the overall management plan, performance, and operations (Seifi and Ghobadi, 2017). According to Mai and Nguyen (2015), humans cannot create everything, especially the natural environment. The natural environment is where all things in nature exist. When unsustainable development of tourism can change them in a negative way, such as changing wildlife, water resources are also affected.

Tourism infrastructure such as accommodation, restaurants, hotels, tourist centers are agreed by Barroso and Martin (2007) as components of the infrastructure, and customers are satisfied only when these services reach the best state. Relevance with other industries is formed by creating a similar multiplier effect when other industries progress. As a result, the community's living standard increases, and the social situation improves (Khuong and Nguyen, 2015).

Mai and Pham (2017) agree that, in the world, the business industry brings many benefits and job opportunities to workers in the tourism industry. Tourism activities that create job opportunities also mean economic progress and prosperity. Along with an increasing number of international and domestic tourists, tourism brings an increasing source of income to the economy. Tourism activities attract the participation of all economic sectors and people from all walks of life, bringing income not only to those directly engaged in the tourism business but also indirectly to related industries and exports locally and generating income for local communities.

From the above concepts and the opinions of the researchers raised, it has been concluded that there is a relationship between the environment, society, economy (the factors of sustainable development), and the tourism industry (including spiritual tourism).

2.3 *Review of existing empirical research*

2.3.1 *Spiritual tourism*

Position and performance are considered to be one of the facets to discover spiritual development trends in contemporary times (Blom et al., 2016). In places where it is thought that there is a potential for spirituality or this is rediscovered, geographical, historical, social, and human values are among the factors considered to be the driving forces of spiritual tourism participants, the strength that attracts them, motivates them to move (Preston, 1992, Rinschede, 1997). In 2017, Lopez, Gonzalez, and Fernandez conducted a study to investigate the features and characteristics of The Way of Saint James's spiritual travel, and also included reviews and comments on changes, The difference between what's old and new, like feelings and motivation. The study subjects of Lopez, Gonzalez, and Fernandez (2017) are participants in spiritual tourism in the form of pilgrimages. Lopez, Gonzalez, and Fernandez (2017) used a mixed research method for this study. However, qualitative research methods still account for the majority. Researchers have learned about demographic and sociological characteristics such as satisfaction, spending habits, and motivation. To get the results of the study, the 28 questionnaires were used by Lopez, Gonzalez, and Fernandez (2017). The results of the study were considering spiritual motivation is the only thing, under any viewpoint such as secular or religious, it does not affect visitors attending spiritual tourism because this impulse is not enough (Lopez, Gonzalez and Fernandez, 2017). In 2012, Mikaelsson identified that spiritual tourism visitors tended to enjoy activities like walking on pilgrimage routes and sleeping in places of a religious nature as well as they are fascinated by religious history, human history, and symbols. A study by Banerjee, (2015) has studied the characteristics of spiritual tourism in the cultural and living environment as well as sustainable development in Rishikesh. The research paper created by Banerjee (2015) is a study of the motives and experiences of foreign visitors when visiting Rishikesh as well as the identification of spiritual tourism as a tool of socio-cultural and sustainable development. at the same time help, people have a sense of spiritual tourism. Banerjee (2015) used spiritual tourism resources that were available at the time such as books and data (secondary sources) for research. The results that Banerjee (2015) have obtained are that international visitors to Rishikesh are mostly attracted by spiritual factors, believing that the sense of peace brought about by the religious places leads them to feel satisfied mentally. In terms of visitor experience, Banerjee (2015)

reported that Rishikesh had too many restrictions such as security restrictions, hotel amenities, credit card restrictions. Banerjee (2015) also analyzed the economic situation of Rishikesh under the contribution of spiritual tourism. In the same topic between spiritual tourism and sustainability, Sirirat (2019) used a mixed research method between survey and research in the concept of spiritual tourism as a sustainable tool and the potential of spiritual tourism in Nakhon Phanom Province, Thailand. Sirirat (2019) has made claims that Environmental Education is an overview of everything about the people and the planet they live on. People are living in a natural and unnatural environment. Helping people to fully and properly understand the nature of the environment is the main purpose of Environmental Education. This is also part of the results that Sirirat (2019) has achieved so that project participants can live sustainably in a healthy environment because they have certain knowledge about the environment. Sirirat (2019) asserts that Environmental Education is a type of tool and spiritual tourism is a tool.

2.3.2 *The necessary factors to develop the sustainable development of tourism*

The global development model of 2000 is the model of sustainable development (Lafferty & Eckerberg, 2013), although tourism has a long time been seen as a means of "development" (Jenkins, 1991; WTO, 1980). Hunter (1995) also agrees that tourism as a means of development of sustainable development. Except at the global level, progress towards achieving the target for sustainable tourism development at a lower level cannot be considered. In this context, contradictions have arisen between sustainability in many tourism development texts and the underlying trends in international tourism since 2000 (Hall, 2013; Torkington et al., 2020). What has facilitated the expansion of the travel and tourism sector is the growth of international tourism. The increase in material wealth, especially in emerging economies, is a major underpinning of this growth (Fletcher, 2011). More and more attention is being paid to the link between the economy, peer-to-peer accommodation, and "overtourism" (Milano et al., 2019; Peeters et al., 2018). This concern is growing related to the uncontrolled, unsustainable growth of the tourism industry. Mishan (1969) states that these concerns were expressed more than 50 years ago. In 2019, however, Stoval et al. stated that attention has focused on how the tourism industry has influenced climate change.

A century ago, McKercher (1993, p. 14) observed that people assumed that tourism only brought about the same results as other industries. According to Young (1973), tourism challenges

sustainability, and the ability to directly contribute to development compared to other economic activities is none. According to Marco (2005, P. 5), the excellent condition of the ecosystem determines human happiness. For sustainable development, the ecosystem is a multi-level, multi-dimensional system. This also speaks to the core of sustainable development as the organization of society through economic structures and processes for environmentally sustainable development. The concept of "overtourism" has emerged because of the constant growth of the tourism industry (Alexis, 2017; Dodds & Butler, 2019; Milano et al., 2019). According to Sharpley (2020), tourism is going in the wrong direction when it is in stark contrast to the policies and principles that have been advocated for two decades for sustainable development. This happens on a global scale. In the context of both sustainable development and tourism development, the world has seen broader support for the concept of deceleration (Martínez-Alier et al., 2010); (Andriotis, 2018; Hall, 2009; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). In 2020, Richard Sharpley published a study titled "Tourism, sustainable development, and the theoretical divide: 20 years on". Based on the data that the author mentioned above, Richard Sharpley concluded that tourism remains closely aligned with sustainable development.

2.4 Background to the primary research context

According to Vietnam Institute for Tourism Development Research (2019), spiritual tourism in the world in general and Vietnam, in particular, has become an increasingly popular trend.

However, spiritual tourism in Vietnam has specific differences compared to other places in the world:

1. Spiritual tourism in Vietnam is associated with religion and faith.
2. Spiritual tourism in Vietnam is associated with worshiping and paying tribute to national heroes and forebears who have contributed to the country and nation.
3. Spiritual tourism in Vietnam is associated with ancestor worship, family lineage, gratitude, and filial piety to the parents.
4. Spiritual tourism in Vietnam is associated with spiritual sports activities such as meditation, yoga towards balance, ethereal, transcendence in spiritual life, characteristic and typical.
5. Spiritual tourism also includes activities associated with sacred elements and mysteries.

According to Vietnam Economic News - Ministry of industry and trade (2019), 1/3 of the tourists in Vietnam are spiritual tourists. According to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (2020), Hanoi tourism strives to reach 19 million visitors by 2021, which means more

than 6 million tourists will participate in spiritual tourism. The Hanoi Center for Investment, Trade and Tourism Promotion (2019) has confirmed that with nearly 6,000 relics already in inventory, Hanoi possesses the most significant number of relics in the country. Specifically, the study will mainly focus on Huong Pagoda, Hanoi, which emphasizes the factors affecting the sustainable development of spiritual tourism at this location. Huong Pagoda is a place on the list of "Great festivals in the North not to be missed during the New Year" (Mong Cai City People's Committee, 2015). The situation of spiritual tourism at Huong Pagoda has developed but has not yet reached sustainability. The author believes that analysing the impact of related factors will help this development be sustainable.

2.5 Conclusion

The first part of Chapter 2 ends after the author distinguishes between what is characteristic of spiritual tourism and what is characteristic of other types of tourism. In addition, other theories such as sustainable development and tourism are also closely linked by the author. Moreover, the author clarifies the importance of sustainable development, especially in tourism, in this study with the type of spiritual tourism.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Aim and Objectives

This research aims to analyse the critical factors affecting the sustainable development of spiritual tourism at Huong Pagoda, Hanoi, Vietnam. Based on the aim, the following objectives have been taken into consideration in this study:

To identify and discuss the key policy intentions of spiritual tourism from the perspective of tourism planners in Hanoi.

To evaluate the characteristics of tourists participating in spiritual tourism at Huong Pagoda, Hanoi.

To investigate potential factors affecting the sustainable development of spiritual tourism from the perspective of tourism planners in Hanoi.

3.2 Research Approach

From philosophical assumptions to research design and data collection is the research method, and this is also considered a strategy (Myers and Avison, 2002). The quantitative method is a method associated with numbers; the results obtained are based on data and are often used in the scientific approach to research. Besides, the qualitative method is more closely associated with phenomenology (Lee, 1997).

The characteristic of the research paper is to clarify the definition and analyse the impact, and the author uses the qualitative research method. The author believes that the qualitative research method can help achieve the purpose and objectives of the research.

However, from the author's point of view, this research should be done personally and not accept support from outside sources because continuity and long-term cannot be guaranteed.

3.3 *Sampling*

According to Shona McCombes (2022) it is difficult for researchers to collect data from everyone when studying a group of people. Therefore, the researcher chooses a sample. These are defined as individuals who will actually participate in the study. For the purpose of this study, the author will focus on tourists coming to Huong Pagoda. The author decides to choose convenience (or chance) sampling. Convenience templates allow authors to collect data from the most convenient source with secondary permission.

3.4 *Data Collection*

Vuong Khanh Tuan and Prof. Dr. Premkumar Rajagopal had a research paper using the observational method to analyze sustainable tourism in 2019. The author decided to use this method in the research paper. The author's observations will be based on observational questionnaires similar to previous researchers. The author observes the sample under the position of a non-participant to avoid the author's personal influence on the data collection process. According to Cohen D, Crabtree B (2008) informal and unstructured observation is a necessary step before using the semi-structured interview method. The semi-structured interview method is also the primary method that the author uses in the research. Bernard (1988) agrees that Semi-structured interviewing is best used in cases where the opportunity for interviewing is limited. This is entirely consistent with the researcher's circumstances. In this study, the author uses a semi-structured interview to collect information on aspects affecting the sustainability of spiritual tourism at Huong Pagoda, Hanoi, Vietnam.

3.5 *Data Analysis*

Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) agree that researchers must put some effort into determining what factors are important in the responses from the respondents. The reason for this data analysis is that the results needed by the author were not available in the direct responses of the interviewees.

According to Strauss (1987), a researcher's proficiency in the field of qualitative analysis is based on coding proficiency. Vogt, Gardner and Haefele (2012) explained that the researcher needs to create something to represent or "translate" the collected information. They call this code.

According to (Gibbs and Flick, 2018) mentioned that there are two approaches to coding that are "Data-driven" and "Concept driven".

The author is a proponent of a well-founded theory, so she chose the Data-driven coding method, also known as open coding.

As recommended by Strauss and Corbin, in the process of applying open coding, the author will apply the questioning method. Specifically, the author encodes the initial responses of the interviewees by repeatedly asking questions and using comparative measures.

The author set up a questionnaire for observation and interview with the common point of which aspects affect the sustainable development of spiritual tourism at Huong Pagoda, Hanoi, Vietnam. The question also includes limiting the range of answers to ensure that the personal opinions of the interviewees are focused and do not exceed the scope of sustainable development.

3.6 *Trustworthiness*

Amankwaa (2016) recommends that researchers take the necessary steps to make readers feel that the study is worth considering. Trustworthiness becomes one of the factors for persuasion, according to Sandelowski (1993).

Pilot & Beck (2014) agreed that trustworthiness (the rigour of study), besides factors such as method, and interpretation, is considered an assurance of the quality of the study.

Most researchers agree that trustworthiness is necessary.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) agree that in qualitative research, if researchers want to improve the reliability of the study, researchers can use an inquiry audit.

According to Irene Korstjens & Albine Moser (2018), credibility is ensured through the application of strategies commonly used by researchers: prolonged engagement, triangulation, persistent observation and member check. The author has chosen the "data-driven coding" method for this research paper. Therefore, the author continues to apply the "persistent observation" strategy to ensure the credibility of the study. Before analysing the data, the author continuously read and re-read the collected information, including the answers of the interviewees and the information obtained after observing the participants. Next is the coding work; aspects like the core category, concept, and code are all relabelled. This is for the purpose of checking the characteristics of the

data. The data was studied by the author until the intended depth of insight was provided by the final theory.

3.7 Transferability

Findings from one study that can be applied to another population in a different context are called transferability in qualitative research (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Personal information such as demographics and life experiences of the participants in the study were also provided in detail to demonstrate transferability (Hannes, 2009). This study is an overview analysis of the critical factors affecting sustainable development in spiritual tourism. The "critical" factor makes the author believe that the transferability in this study is relatively high.

3.8 Ethical Issues

The study participants served as the data source. Researchers must 'protect the life, health, dignity, integrity, self-determination, privacy and confidentiality of research subjects' personal information' (World Medical Association, 2013). Any behaviour that harms a research subject is considered research misconduct. For particular research subjects such as people with cognitive disabilities and children, the researcher must obtain permission from the subject's legal guardians.

For research participants, respect for copyright is imperative and fraud in research and publication (Scott-Lichter D., 2012).

In addition, researchers must respect and ensure confidentiality as well as a sense of appreciation or compensation for the time of study subjects (WHO, 2012 & Njue M et al., 2015).

3.9 Limitations

According to Price, James H. and Judy Murnan (2014), the effects or influences on the interpretation of the findings and results of a study are often characteristics of the method the author used or the design of the study is considered a limitation of the study. Any scientific paper has its limitations (Aguinis, Hermam, Jeffrey R. Edwards, 2013). Specifically, in the process of collecting samples, the author must limit the number of interviewees, and this affects the generalization of information. This is a limitation of the study design (Creswell, 2003). Vietnam is a high-context culture (Muir JA et al., 2018). If the research results do not accurately reflect the actual situation, it also means that the applicability of the research is not high. When this phenomenon occurs, there is a limitation in research data collection (Kenrick and Neuberg, 2010). One limitation that the author faces is the limitation of the author's expertise. All

information, including information collected by the author and the author's analysis and judgment, is only relevant at the present time.

Chapter 4: Discussion

4.1 Introduction

According to the Ministry of Planning and Investment of Vietnam, Vietnam is a developing country. In developing countries, research on pilgrimages (a form of spiritual tourism) is rarely compared with more developed countries (Ebadi, 2016). According to Roxas et al. (2020), a comprehensive and systematic approach can be identified as supporting sustainable tourism development (spiritual tourism) from pilgrimage activities. In order to complete this research paper and contribute to increasing the number of research articles in this category, the author continues to discuss three objectives - the steps that should be completed to be able to clarify the issue of "the factors affecting the sustainable development of spiritual tourism at Huong Pagoda, Viet Nam".

4.2 To identify and discuss the key policy intentions of spiritual tourism from the perspective of tourism planners in Hanoi.

McKercher (2002) argues that two aspects make spiritual tourism an integral concept. The first is tangible elements such as the design style of the destination (pagoda, temples, monasteries, churches). The second is intangible factors such as the destination's atmosphere, the quality of services, and the culture in the area. According to the Vietnam Tourism Magazine (2020), to exploit the available potential for tourism and preserve and promote the historical and cultural values of the tourist area, it is necessary to have policies and reasonably developed plans. Kumar. S et al. (2022) argue that finance is one of the factors that hinder and negatively affect potential investment proposals in underdeveloped and developing countries. This is the consequence of not paying attention. According to the Theoretical information agency of Vietnam's Ministry of industry and trade (2022), one of the most critical local tasks (in the context of this study is Hanoi) is to improve the marketing of spiritual tourism. The tourism planners who responded in the Huong Pagoda area, Hanoi, also have the correct perception of the government's policies. However, it seems that no drastic action has been taken yet.

Edgell, D. et al. (2019) identified that developing and developed countries use their government's tourism policies to sponsor national tourism offices. Given preceding elaborations, the author

finds that in spiritual tourism in Hanoi, it may have happened that some tourism planners at the local level do not have a clear and correct perception of policy decisions issued by national policymakers. The reason is that they do not think that tourism (including spiritual tourism) is a general economic sector. Besides, the ambiguity in the policy of preserving beliefs, culture and spirituality is also part of the reason (Theoretical information agency of Vietnam's Ministry of industry and trade, 2022). At the International Conference on Spiritual Tourism for Sustainable Development in 2013, Mr. Tuan Nguyen - Director General of Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, identified the critical solution to develop spiritual tourist sites in Vietnam (including Huong Pagoda, Hanoi), including the implementation of responsible tourism policies. According to Tran.V (2019), the total amount in 2018 that more than 1.4 million visitors to Huong Pagoda donated was 112 billion VND - equivalent to 4.7 million USD. Based on the statements of the researchers mentioned above, the author also found the same problem. Without a clear and specific policy combined with the proper awareness in implementation, it is likely that the number of money tourists have donated will not be able to contribute to the development of spiritual tourism in Hanoi.

4.3 To evaluate the characteristics of tourists participating in spiritual tourism at Huong Pagoda, Hanoi.

Among the many motivations, the search for satisfaction and meaning can be considered the main factor for tourists to participate in spiritual tourism (Rinsschede, 1997). Huong Pagoda was classified as a national relic by the Ministry of Culture (now the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism) on April 8, 1962. Besides, Huong pagoda is a famous destination not only by natural beauty, such as caves, mountains, and lakes, but it is also because of the cultural beauty of Vietnamese people's Buddhist beliefs. From the characteristics of the destination, the author can see that the visitors to Huong pagoda may not be Buddhists; they may be mere tourists. According to López-Sanz, J.M et al. (2021), economic and social sustainability (elements of sustainable development) in destinations can only be achieved if visitor numbers increase (including new or loyal visitors). In 2022, journalist Thach had an interview with a 23-year-old tourist at Huong Pagoda, and he said that this was the eighth time in a row he had attended the Huong pagoda festival. In spiritual tourism, visitor satisfaction is the factor that has the most significant influence on visitor loyalty (Thuy, T., 2019). Also, according to Thuy, T. (2019), for spiritual tourism in Vietnam, the age of visitors is rejuvenated, and the group of office workers involved in spiritual tourism is quite large. The

rejuvenation of the tourist's age can be easily recognized through the author's "observation".

4.4 To investigate potential factors affecting the sustainable development of spiritual tourism from the perspective of tourism planners in Hanoi.

The tourism industry needs to achieve economic, social and environmental sustainability aspects for tourism to have sustainable development (Phan and Vo, 2017). According to the Vietnam Government Committee for Religious Affairs (2019), most of Vietnam's famous spiritual tourist sites are relics and landscapes, mainly focusing on temples, pagodas, shrines, mausoleums, and memorial areas. In the case of the study, Huong Pagoda is a special national monument (Vietnam Tourism, 2019).

Hence, a number of factors affect the sustainable development and preservation of Huong Pagoda, one being effective waste management as a top priority of Hanoi's Tourism planners. According to the data of the waste collection management unit at Huong Pagoda in 2016, only about 40 - 45 % of the waste can be treated as combustible waste. The remaining organic waste is buried in the ground in the area and waiting to decompose. This will undoubtedly have a negative impact on the relic environment in the future (Minh, 2016). Besides that, one of the factors that can be considered affecting both economic and social aspects in the sustainable development of spiritual tourism at Huong Pagoda is the situation of small traders (also local people) who do not comply with the quoted price in trading activities (also known as ripped off the tourists). Tourism activities that create job opportunities are also synonymous with economic progress and prosperity. Tourism activities attract the participation of all economic sectors and people from all walks of life, bringing income not only to those directly engaged in the tourism business but also indirectly to related industries and exports in Vietnam's local communities and generating income for local communities. If the situation of locals illegally collecting service fees from tourists is not handled thoroughly, it will indeed cause growing frustration and leave a wrong impression on tourists. As a result, the rate of tourists returning to Huong Pagoda will not be high because, according to Zhang et al. (2018), when planning to travel, people often recall memories to choose a destination. This economic impact is obvious. Moreover, if there is no steady flow of tourists, the business situation of local people will also be negatively affected, and their quality of life will also decrease. This situation may be due to the weak management of the competent authority in the Huong Pagoda area.

4.5 Conclusion

Based on the observation and interview results, the author can see that the level of perception is important. Perceptions include tourism planners', locals', and tourists' perceptions. They are inseparably related and directly affect each other. Tourism planners' perception must be correct to develop policies and management methods by the perception of locals and tourists. Besides, the awareness level of locals and tourists must also be suitable to comply with government policies and understand the plan that tourism planners have set.

Chapter 5: Conclusions & Recommendations

In this chapter, the author reviews the findings that the author has collected during the research on the sustainable development of spiritual tourism at Huong Pagoda, Hanoi, Vietnam. What findings are helpful, what are limited, and recommendations will also be given. Through the research process, the author first found that the Vietnamese Government had the right judgments about the status and importance of spiritual tourism in Vietnam in general and Hanoi in particular at this time. There are also policies and plans in place to improve the status quo. However, because of the lack of linkage, the gap between National Agencies and local authorities is quite large. This means that even though the Government has set the right policy, the local officials (tourism planners in Hanoi) cannot implement it properly and sufficiently. This may stem from their incorrect or insufficient awareness of spiritual tourism's current status and potential. Besides, it may also stem from the fact that the Government's resolutions and policies are not extremely clear, thus causing misunderstandings and incorrect perceptions from tourism planners. The policy mentioned is not merely the regulations on planning for spiritual tourism at the destination of Huong Pagoda. What is more essential and also the critical point is that tourism planners must be aware that they lack awareness of the reality of spiritual tourism at Huong Pagoda and underestimate the importance of this type of tourism. This form of tourism contributes to Vietnam's economy. This is the main reason why even if the government has issued the right policy, tourism planners in Hanoi have not been able to apply them effectively. Therefore, one of the recommendations is that tourism planners in Hanoi should improve their capacity to understand and follow the set policies properly. At the same time, the government should also issue policies more clearly. The government should also ensure that policies cover economic, social and environmental aspects to achieve sustainable development.

The characteristics of tourists participating in spiritual tourism activities at Huong Pagoda are somewhat different from those commonly seen in other spiritual tourism activities in Vietnam (older people with religious beliefs). Visitors' age is rejuvenated, and the presence of teenagers and children is easy to see. Furthermore, not all visitors to Huong Pagoda have religious beliefs. In some cases, the tourists are foreigners or children. They only participate in this tourism activity because they want to see the beauty of nature or enjoy the festive atmosphere. The authorities need more relevant advertising and offer more convenient services for this group of customers.

The basic theory of sustainable development in tourism is to balance the development of three aspects: environment, society, and economy. Therefore, the pressure on Hanoi authorities and tourism planners is enormous. They need to ensure that they correctly and fully understand the characteristics of tourists and the factors that affect the sustainable development of tourism. If only one aspect is missing, that development will be unsustainable. Among the most influential factors, waste treatment and business management of small traders (local people) are the two factors that influence sustainable development in spiritual tourism at Huong Pagoda. These two factors directly influence three aspects: environment, society, and economy. Therefore, the author realizes that the important thing that tourism planners and Huong Pagoda management authorities need to implement as soon as possible is to implement a waste treatment plant and propagate knowledge to local people and tourists. At the same time, it is necessary to have sanctions for violations.

Regarding waste treatment, locals and tourists need access to more information about the seriousness of the waste situation at Huong Pagoda. People raise awareness and change their actions to contribute to environmental protection. In addition, the authorities are obliged to implement a reasonable waste collection and treatment plan to protect the environment and not affect the lives of local people. For small businesses charge a higher service price than the listed price for tourists, propaganda to raise awareness is also essential. Local people need to understand tourist psychology that when tourists know that they have to pay higher service prices than listed prices, they will not feel comfortable and it will harm the long-term development of Huong Pagoda spiritual tourism. Nevertheless, relying on the local people's self-discipline is not enough. Managers also need stricter management, such as regular unexpected checks, building a hotline to receive information from tourists and verifying and sanctioning appropriately and fairly.

In terms of limitations, the author is aware that the study has limitations. This is a Secondary Research article, but because spiritual tourism has not received much attention in Vietnam, valuable and helpful references for the research topic are few. In addition, the location of the study is a specific destination. However, the research subject is a fairly broad topic and includes many information and aspects that need to be covered, so the limitation of the study save is relatively high. Specifically, the applicability to other locations is not high, especially in other regions. Because the study's results depend a lot on the characteristics of tourists, the characteristics of the destination, and the perspective of Tourism planners and local authorities, it is not easy to apply to other counting points. In addition, the author has not fully understood the factors affecting sustainable development. Therefore, in the future, researchers may consider studying more closely the factors affecting the sustainable development of spiritual tourism from the perspective of other stakeholders In this study, the author mainly focuses on the perspective of Tourism planners. Besides, future researchers can also apply more suitable research methods to bring about higher research efficiency because the time to conduct the research is a limitation of the study.

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