FACTORS AFFECTING MILLENNIAL GENERATION'S INTENTION TO CHOOSE SPIRITUAL TOURISM IN VIETNAM: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION

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Abstract: The study focuses on analyzing factors that influence the Millennial generation's intention to choose spiritual tourism and determining the mediating role of attitude and motivation in this relationship. Based on the theory of planned behavior, theories of motivation and basic human value theory, the study has identified 3 factors: Tourism destination image, spiritual belief and reference groups influence the Millennial generation's intention to choose spiritual tourism. A survey based on a sample of 287 domestic and international tourists of the Millennial generation participating in travel experiences at spiritual tourist destinations in Vietnam. After collecting data, SmartPLS software is used to test the relationships of the research model. Research results show that all three factors influence the Millennial generation's intention to travel spiritually and confirm the mediating role of attitude and motivation in this relationship.

Keywords: Attitude, travel motivation, spiritual tourism, intention, behavior, JEL classification: A14, M30, N30

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INTRODUCTION

According to Baker (2003), spirituality is a psychological aspect that exists in each person that helps find the meaning and purpose of life. It provides direction for the journey to find answers to life-oriented questions. Spiritual factors are proven to have a significant, positive impact on human health and spirit, thereby improving quality of life (Adegbolam, 2006; Counted et al., 2018; Koenig, 2012; Vitorino et al., 2018). Spiritual tourism is a type of tourism carried out to understand oneself and discover the meaning of life (Sirirat, 2019); At the same time, it connects with the supreme spirit and enriches spiritual values in life (Singh, 2009; Bone, 2013; Sharpley, 2011; Ivona and Privitera, 2019; Buzinde, 2020).

Mannell (2007) argues that the pressures of life and work have also motivated people to seek spirituality, heal their spirits, build good relationships, control their emotions, and control their health and improve themselves. The Millennial generation (Gen Y) is an ambitious generation, always wanting to do something new or break a record that was previously unattainable. They are not afraid to work hard to overcome challenges. This can have a negative impact on human psychology. However, according to Tudorache et al. (2019), Gen Y is also considered to be able to balance work and life in a sustainable way. According to Quintal et al. (2016), Tangsupwattana and Liu (2017), Husnain et al. (2019), Gen Y is the most promising, most vibrant consumer segment and is an economically dynamic market segment of the tourism industry, they have a desire to explore the spiritual world and experience different cultures. Gen Y members have high incomes and greater discretionary spending power (Chen and Chou, 2019; Gardiner et al., 2014). The rapid pace of development as well as the emergence of new trends has led to a drastic change in the behavior of Gen Y. Therefore, this group has become a key research segment for marketers (Bilgihan, 2016).

Currently, researchers around the world have been studying factors that can help develop spiritual tourism. A number of studies have been conducted on different aspects such as emphasizing spiritual tourism as a small part but a different product from religious tourism (Sirirat, 2019); research on the relationship between the attractiveness of spiritual tourism destinations with tourist satisfaction and intention to return (Timothy and Olsen, 2006; Chi and Qu, 2008; Um et al., 2006); attract spiritual tourists by building an attractive brand and image for spiritual tourism (Beerli and Martin, 2004; Phukan et al., 2012). When researching factors influencing spiritual tourism intention, Kumar et al. (2022)

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conducted an overview of empirical articles on spiritual tourism and adopted the method of interpretive structural modeling (Interpretive Structural Modeling – ISM) to identify influencing factors including destination image, tourist spirituality, infrastructure, accessibility, destination costs, entertainment facilities, religious management, etc. Thus, each study has unique significance in determining concepts, components and factors affecting spiritual tourism intention. However, approaches based on theories of motivation, the theory of planned behavior (TPB) or value theory are still missing in the above studies. Therefore, the objective of this study is based on the integration of the theory of planned behavior, theories of motivation and basic human value theories to identify factors affecting Millennial generation's intention to choose spiritual tourism and the mediating role of attitude and motivation in this relationship. The research context was conducted at typical spiritual tourism destinations in Vietnam.

LITERATURE REVIEW
1. Theory related to travel behavioral intention
Theory of planned behavior

According to Eck and Gebauer (2022), behavioral intentions predict the likelihood of an individual's future actions. To express the relationship between beliefs and behavior, Ajzen's (1991) theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was used, and also explains issues related to human behavior. This is a theory in the field of psychology and behavioral science that studies how people plan and control their behavior. TPB theory was developed from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) of (Ajzen, 1991). TPB theory expands TRA theory by stating that behavioral intention is influenced by three factors: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. With the addition of the variable of perceived behavioral control, TPB theory has proven its value and effectiveness in a series of psychological studies related to human behavior. Attitude toward a behavior is influenced by two factors: a person's beliefs about the effects and results if performing the behavior and that person's assessment of the effects (Ajzen,1991).

Subjective norms are understood as an individual's perceptions and are influenced by beliefs and normative reasons or motivations to listen to social influences (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1975). Perceived behavioral control is an individual's perception of internal or external controls that govern behavior in a specific situation (Ajzen, 1991).

Theory of motivation

According to Grbac et al. (2013), the nature of behavioral intention is the result of the motivational process. A tourist is an individual consumer considered in psychological aspects, such as motivation, emotions and lifestyle (Decrop, 2006). In particular, motivation is considered as the reason, psychological cause, motivation and purpose to direct tourists' actions in a certain direction (Mlozi et al., 2013). Theory of motivation (Dunne et al., 2007) and motivation model (Crompton, 1979) are the most widely used approaches with two groups of factors: push motivation and pull motivation.

Motivation is significant in explaining the desire to travel, representing internal factors or emotional factors. According to Yoon and Uysal (2005), push factors include escape from the present, rest and relaxation, health and fitness, adventure and social interaction, spiritual belief, spending time with family and finding other joys,..

Motive pull explains the act of choosing a destination or type of travel. Pull motives include extrinsic factors related to natural and historical attractions, cuisine, people, recreational facilities, and destination image (Hyde, 2008; Swarbrooke and Horner, 2007) and reference group (Jalilvand et al., 2013).

2. Theory of value structure and content and characteristics of the Millennial generation
Since the birth of social science, "value" has been one of the important and core concepts in many fields such as society, psychology or other related fields. The theory of of value structure and content (Schwartz ,1992), suggests that within each person there can be 10 basic values, expressing the person's aspirational goals and behavioral motivations in life, including: Self-direction, Stimulation, Hedonism, Achievement, Power, Security, Conformity, Tradition, Benevolence and Universalism. These ten values represent four main, opposing aspects of the human value system including: Openness to change, Conservation, and Self- enhancement and self-transcendence.

To date, there are many different approaches to determining the human generation cycle. Inglehart's (1977) generational cohort theory has become a tool for dividing dominant customer groups because individuals belonging to a particular group will exhibit similar values, preferences, and experiences (Parment, 2013; Ladhari et al., 2019). Among the identified generation groups, studies often focus on Gen Y because, according to Glover (2010), Gen Y is an important consumer group in tourism because of their size and purchasing power, and their Y genes' values and behaviors may differ from the values and behaviors of previous generations. According to Lub (2013), Ordun (2015), Khera and Malik (2017), Messarra et al. (2016) identified Gen Y as individuals born after 1980. While another group of researchers suggested that Gen Y was identified in the late 1970s (Quintal et al., 2016; Dalla Pozza et al., 2017). However, such differences in timelines are acceptable given the common differences between countries and cultures (Soares et al., 2018). In this study, based on the proposal of Dalla Pozza et al. (2017), Cham et al. (2018), Chen and Chou (2019), Husnain et al. (2019), Gen Y is defined as individuals born between 1977 and 1994. Based on the theory of basic human values (Schwartz, 1992), Y gene characteristics are expressed as follows:

Regarding openness to change, Gen Y is a generation that is autonomous in thought and action, likes to seek new things, and wants to experience life's challenges (Schwartz, 2012). Therefore, in tourism, Gen Y often loves to travel, often has a desire to explore the world and experience different spiritual cultures.

Regarding conservation, Gen Y always focuses on personal and family safety; know how to find ways to balance life, respect traditions; maintain traditional values and ways of thinking, religious rituals etc. (Schwartz, 2012). Therefore, Gen

Y always has spiritual belief and always looks to tourist destinations to help control emotions and reduce stress. Regarding self-enhancement, Gen Y has been proven by the scientific community to be the most curious workforce today. They always want to learn and acquire new knowledge and skills in life and work, always like to explore and learn, are not afraid to set lofty goals and make constant efforts to achieve them (Schwartz, 2012). Generation Y also attaches great importance to building a better spiritual life for themselves and their families. This is what motivates them to set big financial or career goals. Regarding self-transcendence, according to Schwartz (2012), Gen Y knows how to listen and accept the opinions of others even when they do not agree with them, proactively absorb and learn. According to Pendergast (2009), the development of information and communication technology, one of the events that marked the rise of Gen Y, has created an increasingly wide gap between Gen Y and its values, characteristics of the previous generation.

3. Spiritual tourism and factors affecting the Millennial generation's intention to choose spiritual tourism

3.1. Spiritual tourism

Spiritual tourism is considered a type of tourism characterized by the intentional search for spiritual benefits that coincide with religious activities (Norman, 2014). Several studies on pilgrimage and religious tourism have been conducted under the term "spiritual tourism" (Messarra et al., 2016; Sharpley and Sundaram, 2005). While in some cases, tourist activities may not correspond to any religious activities and thus there is a separation of religious pilgrimage tourism from spiritual tourism (Norman, 2014). Spiritual tourism is considered a journey to a sacred site or temple for the purpose of spiritual development, which is important for an individual's beliefs or faith (Jesurajan and Prabhu, 2012). Spirituality is elusive (Coyle, 2002; Narayanasamy, 2014; Lepherd, 2015), whereby those who engage in religious and spiritual experiences reflect more positive lifestyles than others (Vishkin et al., 2019; Manning et al., 2019; Sulphey, 2020).

According to Haq and Medhekar (2016), Serrallonga (2018), Zsolnai and Flanagan (2019), spiritual tourism is considered a type of cultural tourism that focuses on thinking deeply about life and integrating body, mind and spirit together. It is described as traveling to a specific place or area for spiritual gain without any religious motive. It can also be explained as a type of tourism that is primarily aimed at achieving spiritual experiences. Spiritual tourism can be considered a broad term that includes tangible spiritual assets (mosques, churches, temples, shrines, monasteries, cathedrals, mountains, deserts, lakes, etc.) and intangible spiritual aspects (events, festivals, meetings, rituals, prayers...) (Cheer et al., 2017; Güzel and Sariyildiz, 2019; Ivona and Privitera, 2019).

3.2. Factors affecting the Millennial generation's intention to choose spiritual tourism

Currently, researchers have mentioned many factors that influence the intention to choose spiritual tourism (Kumar et al., 2022). However, to select appropriate influencing factors for the scope of the research, the article focusing on the Millennial generation will be conducted based on the following two bases:

(1), The research will integrate two TPB theories (Ajzen, 1991) and the theory of motivation (Dunne et al., 2007; Crompton, 1979) to identify factors that affect the intention to choose spiritual tourism.

(2), These factors will be placed in the context of value theory (Schwartz, 1992) to screen and select factors that match the value characteristics and behavioral motivations of the Millennial generation.

Thus, with 2 bases used as the basis for selecting groups of influencing factors, the study has identified 3 groups of factors influencing the intention to choose spiritual tourism, including destination image, spiritual belief and reference group.

First, destination image affects the attitudes and spiritual tourism motivations of the Millennial generation

Spiritual tourism is a hot topic of interest to academics. The role of marketing in this area will be to attract and motivate spiritual tourists by building an attractive brand and image for spiritual tourism (Beerli and Martin, 2004; Phukan et al., 2012; Le et al., 2023). Heritage buildings have been shown to be a source of spiritual inspiration for tourists (Willson and McIntosh, 2013). Spirituality is felt more in places with a rich cultural and heritage history (Kumar, 2019; Piewdang et al., 2013). Costs incurred when traveling are one of the important factors affecting tourist behavior (Nicolau and Más, 2006; Seyidov and Adomaitienė, 2017). Destination costs will impact tourists' decision-making attitudes regarding factors such as activities undertaken, length of stay, and costs incurred during the trip. This will either motivate or demotivate the spiritual traveler to undertake a journey. Community potential and cooperation are also one of the main characteristics to build the image of a spiritual tourism destination (Kuralbayev et al., 2017). Spirituality is often associated with positive well-being (Lifshitz et al., 2019). Relaxation, entertainment, and safety activities at the destination will tend to have a positive impact in reducing tourists' stress levels (Dowson, 2016; Moal-Ulvoas, 2016). Accessibility, infrastructure at the destination and travel attitudes and motivations are interconnected (Kumar et al., 2022). An accessible destination will appeal to travelers eager to enjoy their time traveling and seeking tranquility to escape mental chaos.

H1: Destination image has a positive impact on the attitude towards spiritual tourism of the Millennial generation

H2: Destination image has a positive impact on the Millennial generation's spiritual tourism motivation

Second, spiritual belief affects the attitudes and spiritual tourism motivations of the Millennial generation

For tourists, spiritual belief is especially meaningful and brings value to their spiritual life (Güzel and Sariyildiz, 2019). They are always attracted to different places or areas for spiritual reasons, motives or experiences. They are excited and eager to explore, search, and visit spiritual landscapes and remote, deserted areas (Smith et al., 2010; Haq and Wong, 2010). According to Abdul Halim et al. (2021), spiritual beliefs related to health, healing, and spiritual transformation are among the first important factors that cause an individual to embark on a spiritual journey. Spiritual journeys and spiritual connections or experiences can occur before, during and after a journey or visit. Spiritual belief can originate from the religion an individual follows, family traditions or local living customs. Individuals and groups of travelers with spiritual belief have the tendency and motivation to learn about different cultures, customs, beliefs, and religions; wanting to meet

and interact with native people (Norman, 2014; Palmer, 2014); change their daily routine, participate in spiritual festivals, rituals and ceremonies; make life simple, easy to control emotions and achieve peace of mind and mental satisfaction; solve the problems; understand the illness, misfortune, and loss of loved ones; aware of one's own humanitarian and spiritual needs (Di Giovine and Choe, 2019)

H3: Spiritual belief has a positive impact on attitudes toward spiritual tourism of the Millennial generation

H4: Spiritual belief has a positive impact on the millennial generation's spiritual travel motivation

Third, reference group affects the attitudes and spiritual tourism motivations of the Millennial generation. People tend to follow their reference group consciously or subconsciously (Fernandes and Londhe, 2015). A person may have their own spiritual interests or because reference group influences tourist behavior. Families with elders with high spiritual intelligence tend to go on such trips with their families - including young children even though, at their age, they may not be spiritually awakened. Stress is a modern concept and even young children are affected by stress (Kleber, 2019; Lodha, 2018). Research by Munar and Jacobsen (2014), on the influence of information shared through media networks has a strong impact on tourists' attitudes and motivations. Kar et al., 2024 show that social networks are a mediating environment to help individuals receive and evaluate the experiences of people with travel experience. That means tourists are influenced by the information they receive through the process of absorbing experiences from reference group.

H5: Reference group has a positive impact on attitudes toward spiritual tourism of the Millennial generation

H6: Reference group has a positive impact on the Millennial generation's spiritual travel motivation.

Fourth, spiritual tourism attitudes and motivations affect the attitudes and spiritual tourism motivations of the Millennial generation.The relationship between attitude and behavioral intention has been mentioned in the TPB (Ajzen, 1991). According to researchers Di Pietro et al., 2012, the influence of attitude on choice intention is the most basic relationship in theoretical models of behavior. Recent studies also show the influence at many different levels of attitudes on travel choice intentions and plans.

H7: Attitude towards spiritual tourism has a positive impact on the intention to choose spiritual tourism of the Millennial generation

According to Munar and Jacobsen, 2014; Levitt et al., 2019 motivation is also the most important factor in studies on behavioral intentions in the field of tourism. According to Levitt et al. (2019), the level of motivation to participate in travel ranges from low, medium and high, the average group has the highest rate of participation in travel experiences. Furthermore, highly motivated tourists are willing to choose travel based on the availability of related activities. Seyanont (2017) believes that both push and pull factors influence tourists' intentions. According to Valeri (2023), it has been proven that a motivated spiritual tourist will be more inclined to consume spiritual tourism.

H8: Spiritual travel motivation has a positive impact on the Millennial generation's intention to choose spiritual tourism

Fifth, the mediating role of spiritual tourism attitudes and motivations in the relationship between tourism destination image, spiritual belief and reference group on the intention to choose spiritual tourism of the Millennial generation

According to content analysis of theories related to travel behavioral intentions, it has been shown that the intention to choose spiritual tourism is the result of attitudes toward spiritual tourism and motivation to perform spiritual tourism. In particular, according to Haq and Wong, 2010 tourism destination image includes resources, events, activities and spiritual journeys that act as catalysts in forming the intention to choose tourism. spiritual tourism by influencing tourists' cognitive attitudes and spiritual tourism motivations. Besides, spiritual belief also changes consumers' consumption patterns (Skousgaard, 2006). It regulates cognitive attitudes and motivates performance. A person with low spiritual belief may not feel motivated to undertake spiritual tourism (Norman, 2014; Palmer, 2014). According to Decrop (2006); Woodside and MacDonald (1994), influences from reference group have an important impact on each individual's perception of subjective norms, thereby creating spillovers and influencing attitudes. In addition, information shared through different media channels has a strong impact on tourists' motivation and behavioral intentions. Kainthola et al. (2024) through phenomenological analysis of interviews, the authors pointed out motivating factors such as spiritual beliefs and curiosity formed from information sources. References have formed the motivation of spiritual tourists and it is shown more clearly in their intention to choose spiritual tourism throughout the journey.

Thus, with the above analysis and the integration between two TPB theories (Ajzen, 1991) and motivation theory (Dunne et al., 2007; Crompton, 1979), 3 groups of factors have been shown: Destination image, spiritual belief and reference group influence the intention to choose spiritual tourism through cognitive attitudes about spiritual tourism and spiritual tourism motivation. Therefore, the study sets out two hypotheses as follows:

H9a,b,c: Attitude towards spiritual tourism plays a mediating role in transmitting the positive influence from tourism destination image, spiritual belief and reference group on the intention to choose spiritual tourism of the Millennial generation

H10a,b,c: Spiritual tourism motivation plays a mediating role in transmitting the positive influence from tourism destination image, spiritual belief and reference group on the world's intention to choose spiritual tourism of the Millennial generation. The proposed research framework is as follows Figure 1.

RESEARCH METHODS
1. Research context
Spiritual tourism is one of the popular types in Vietnam. Up to now, there are 18,491 temples, monasteries, meditation monasteries, retreats, Buddhist halls, and monasteries in Vietnam. Nearly 8,000 festivals take place across all regions of the country (of which 88.4% are folk festivals, 4.2% are historical festivals and 6.8% are religious and belief festivals) and more than 44,000 places, landscapes and historical relics, of which more than half are places that exploit

the spiritual tourism model. The abundance of spiritual tourism destinations has created popular types of spiritual tourism in Vietnam, such as sightseeing activities, sightseeing at religious sites such as temples, pagodas, etc.
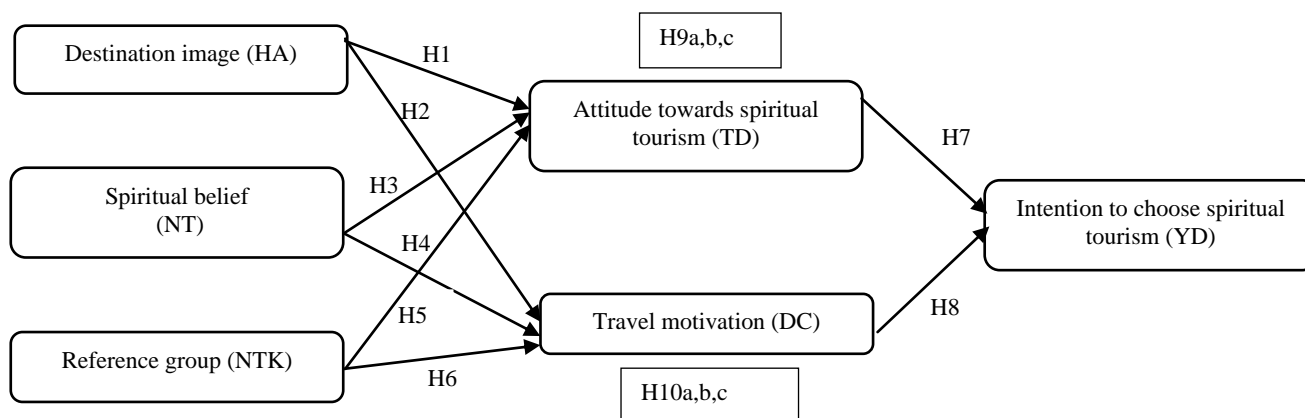

Figure 1. Model of factors affecting the Millennial generation's intention to choose spiritual tourism

Sightseeing activities that combine worship, prayer and other types of spiritual tourism have doctrinal goals to help people become more relaxed in their souls, thereby improving their health and leading a comfortable life. In Vietnam, spiritual tourism destinations are widely distributed throughout the country. However, the spatial scope of the research will be limited to typical spiritual tourist destinations in three geographical regions of Vietnam, specifically, the research focuses on understanding and surveying in Ninh Binh in the North. The Central region is typical with Da Nang spiritual tourist destination and the Southern region is typical with An Giang spiritual tourist destination. There are two reasons why the research team chose the typical spiritual tourism destinations mentioned above. First, these are destinations with rich spiritual tourism resources with systems of temples, pagodas, etc.; festivals, landscapes, and historical sites. Second, these destinations all attract a large number of domestic and foreign spiritual tourists to visit. Thus, based on the characteristics of spiritual tourism resources and the number of annual tourists, the study selected three typical tourist destinations Ninh Binh, Da Nang and An Giang representing the three regions of North, Central and South of Vietnam to carry out investigations and surveys.

2. Questionnaire design

In order to collect analytical data, a questionnaire was built with 21 scales inherited and developed from previous reputable research works. Most of the scales used in the questionnaire were inherited from foreign studies, so in order to check their suitability and ensure reliability, the research team consulted with 15 experts and researchers in the field of social sciences and tourism. In addition, the team conducted a test survey on 50 samples to calibrate the wording in the questionnaire to ensure clarity and ease of understanding. After comments from experts and feedback from respondents, some question items were revised and the questionnaire was completed with a 3-part structure: (i) introducing the purpose of the questionnaire; (ii) content of questions and (iii) demographic information. The Likert scale is used with 5 levels (level 1: completely disagree, level 5: completely agree).

3. Collecting data

Research participants are international and domestic tourists of the Millennial generation who intend to choose spiritual tourism at spiritual tourism destinations in Vietnam. A purposive non-random sampling method was used and the data collection period lasted 8 months from January 2023 to August 2023. A total of 300 surveys were distributed using both online formats. Directly and indirectly through the Google Forms application, the total number of valid questionnaires collected from the two survey forms was 287, reaching a rate of 79.3% (Table 1). Data after collection are processed through Smart PLS software version 4.0.9.2.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the study sample (Source: Compiled by the research team)

Characteristic	Indicator	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	113	39.37
	Female	174	60.63
Age	29 - 34 years old	67	23.34
	35 - 40 years old	91	31.71
	41- 46 years old	129	44.95
Income	Under 10 million VND	28	9.76
	From 10 to 15 million VND	74	25.78
	From 15 to 20 million VND	81	28.22
	Above 20 million VND	104	36.24

RESEARCH RESULTS
1. Evaluating the measurement model
First, the authors estimated convergence through the factor loadings of each factor and the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient

(CA), composite reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each variable. The results of evaluating the outcome measurement model are shown in the figure (Figure 2) and statistical table below.
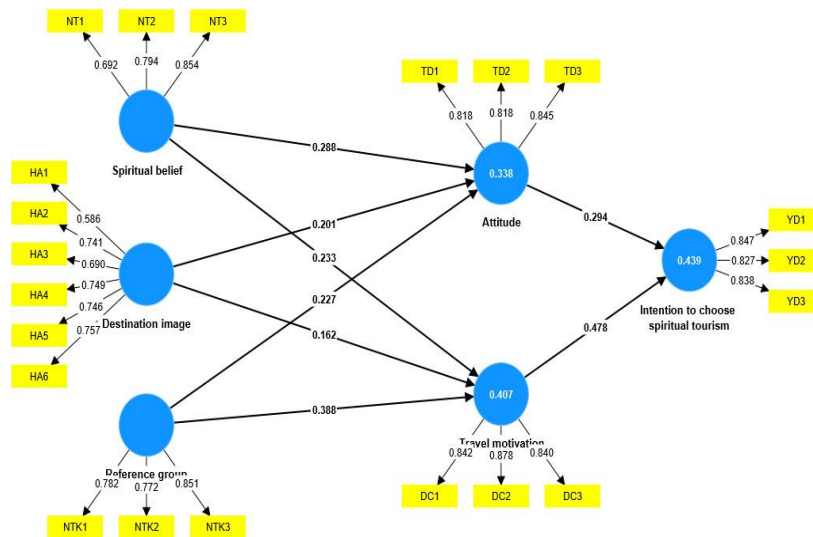

Figure 2. Results of estimating the reflective measurement model (Source: SmartPLS analysis results of the research team)

1.1. Assessing internal consistency reliability

The data analysis results below reflect internal consistency reliability (Table 2). Reliability indices through Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and composite reliability coefficient of latent concepts are all within the threshold recommended by Hair et al. (2019), the lowest is also 0.687 and the highest is 0.890. Thus, the measurement model of this study achieved internal consistency reliability when both alpha coefficient and composite reliability met the requirements.

Table 2. Results of internal consistency reliability assessment (Source: SmartPLS analysis results of the research team)

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)
Destination image	0.806	0.817	0.861
Reference group	0.722	0.724	0.844
Spiritual belief	0.687	0.723	0.825
Attitude towards spiritual tourism	0.770	0.775	0.867
Intention to choose spiritual tourism	0.787	0.792	0.875
Travel motivation	0.814	0.818	0.890

1.2. Evaluating convergence

The results of the extracted variance of each variable are shown through the index of convergent validity (represented by the AVE values of the latent concepts all > 0.5) which are good (Table 3). These indexes range from the value 0.510 to the value 0.729, all greater than 0.5 and meeting the condition of convergent validity. Thus, the scales in the model with the official sample achieve the necessary convergence accuracy.

Table 3. Results of average extraction variance analysis (Source: SmartPLS analysis results of the research team)

	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Destination image	0.510
Reference group	0.644
Spiritual belief	0.613
Attitude towards spiritual tourism	0.684
Travel motivation	0.729
Intention to choose spiritual tourism	0.701

Table 4. Evaluating the discriminant validity using Fornell and Larcker criteria (Source: SmartPLS analysis results of the research team)

	Destination image	Reference group	Spiritual belief	Attitude towards spiritual tourism	Intention to choose spiritual tourism	Travel motivation
Destination image	**0.714**					
Reference group	0.499	**0.802**				
Spiritual belief	0.582	0.388	**0.783**			
Attitude towards spiritual tourism	0.482	0.439	0.493	**0.827**		
Intention to choose spiritual tourism	0.551	0.593	0.536	0.506	**0.837**	
Travel motivation	0.491	0.559	0.477	0.446	0.609	**0.854**

1.3. Evaluating the discriminant validity

The Table 4 shows that the discriminant values for the four constructs all achieved discrimination because the square roots of the AVEs (main diagonal in bold) were higher than the off-diagonal correlations (rows and columns). For

example, for the construct "Spiritual belief" the square root of AVE = 0.783, higher than the correlation values in its column (0.493, 0.536 and 0.477) and also higher in the same row (0.582 and 0.388). Similar to other latent structures, the main diagonal value also meets the requirements. In addition, according to Garson (2016), the discriminant value between two related latent constructs is proven when the HTMT coefficient < 1. Besides, according to Henseler et al. (2015), the value of the HTMT coefficient must be lower than 0.850. The Table 5 below shows that the HTMT coefficient of each structure has a value lower than 0.850 (the highest value is only 0.850 < 0.9). Therefore, discriminant validity criteria were established for HTMT. In summary, from the above results, the authors concluded that the scales used in the research model have achieved very good internal consistency reliability, convergence and discriminant validity. Therefore, all six scales of these latent constructs were used for analysis in the structural equation model.

Table 5. Evaluating the discriminant validity using HTMT criteria (Source: SmartPLS analysis results of the research team)

	Destination image	Reference group	Spiritual belief	Attitude towards spiritual tourism	Intention to choose spiritual tourism	Travel motivation
Destination image						
Reference group	0.643					
Spiritual belief	0.820	0.549				
Attitude towards spiritual tourism	0.594	0.589	0.653			
Intention to choose spiritual tourism	0.683	0.785	0.731	0.641		
Travel motivation	0.597	0.729	0.614	0.565	0.751	

2. Evaluating the SEM structural model

The results table shows that all direct relationships between variables are statistically significant and all research hypotheses are accepted at 95% confidence level (The P-value of all relationships is lower than 0.05) (Figure 3). This shows that all main effects in the model are confirmed to be statistically significant.

Figure 3. SEM structural model estimation results

In addition to the R2 coefficient to evaluate the endogenous structure, the change in the R2 value when an exogenous variable is removed, expressed through Cohen's impact measure (called the f^2 impact coefficient) (Table 6), also used to evaluate how important the removed variable is compared to the endogenous variable.

Table 6. SEM structural model estimation results (Source: SmartPLS analysis results of the research team)

	Structural path coefficient	Standard deviation	Significance level (P values)	Conclusion Hypothesis	Value f^2	Degree of influence
Destination image -> Attitude towards spiritual tourism	0.201	0.067	0.003	Accept	0.035	Small influence
Destination image -> Travel motivation	0.162	0.070	0.021	Accept	0.025	Small influence
Reference group -> Attitude towards spiritual tourism	0.227	0.062	0.000	Accept	0.057	Small influence
Reference group -> Travel motivation	0.388	0.057	0.000	Accept	0.187	Average influence
Spiritual belief -> Attitude towards spiritual tourism	0.288	0.067	0.000	Accept	0.081	Small influence
Spiritual belief -> Travel motivation	0.233	0.069	0.001	Accept	0.059	Small influence
Attitude towards spiritual tourism -> Intention to choose spiritual tourism	0.294	0.057	0.000	Accept	0.123	Small influence
Travel motivation -> Intention to choose spiritual tourism	0.478	0.059	0.000	Accept	0.326	Average influence

Table 7. Assessing model quality through the R-square index (Source: SmartPLS analysis results of the research team)

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Attitude towards spiritual tourism	0.338	0.331
Intention to choose spiritual tourism	0.439	0.435
Travel motivation	0.407	0.401

If the value $0.15 > f^2 \geq 0.02$, it proves that the exogenous variable has a small impact on the endogenous variable; $0.35 > f^2 \geq 0.15$ proves that the exogenous variable has a medium impact on the endogenous variable and if $f^2 \geq 0.35$ proves that the exogenous variable has a large impact on the endogenous variable (Cohen, 1988). If $f^2 < 0.02$, it is considered to have no impact (Table 7).

Table 8. Multicollinearity test results – external model

	VIF
HA1	1.366
HA2	1.637
HA3	1.566
HA4	2.084
HA5	2.236
HA6	1.796
NT1	1.254
NT2	1.387
NT3	1.421
NTK1	1.424
NTK2	1.349
NTK3	1.644
DC2	1.916
DC3	2.097
DC1	1.597
TD1	1.446
TD2	1.679
TD3	1.683
YD1	1.594
YD2	1.670
YD3	1.691
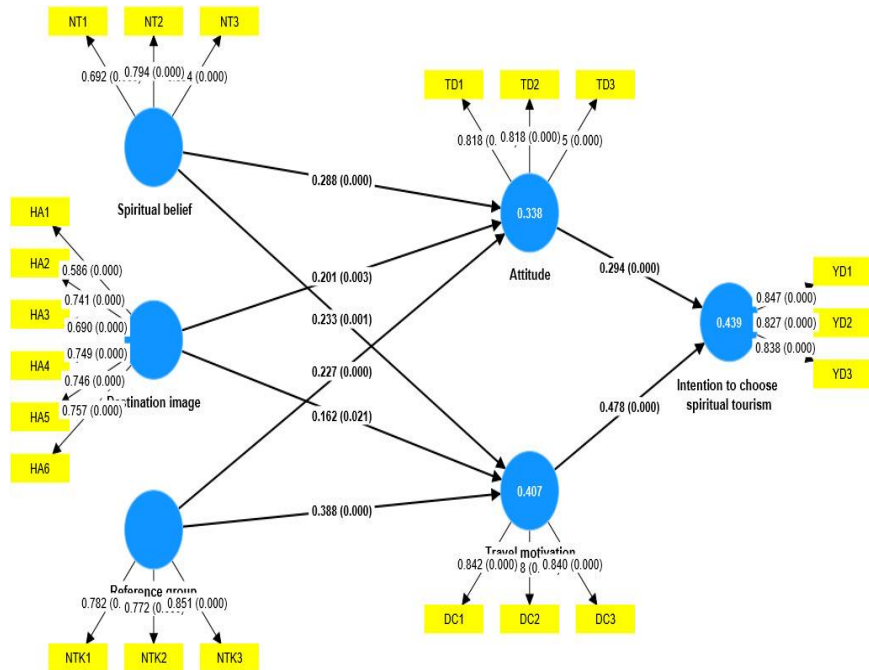
Figure 4. SEM model with intermediate variables

Table 9. Results of multicollinearity testing - internal model (Source: SmartPLS analysis results of the research team)

	Destination image	Reference group	Spiritual belief	Attitude towards spiritual tourism	Intention to choose spiritual tourism	Travel motivation
Destination image				1.744		1.744
Reference group				1.357		1.357
Spiritual belief				1.542		1.542
Attitude towards spiritual tourism					1.248	
Intention to choose spiritual tourism						
Travel motivation					1.248	

Checking multicollinearity

The results show that the variance magnification factor VIF indicates the association between the predictors does not violate the assumption of multicollinearity: Multicollinearity test results – external model (Table 8) and results of multicollinearity testing - internal model (Table 9). Because all coefficients are within the acceptable range, the value of the VIF coefficient is lower than 3, so the structural model does not occur (Hair et al., 2019). Thus, the research model does not have multicollinearity phenomenon.

3. Analyzing the role of intermediate variables

Intermediate variables play a very important role and appear commonly in studies using SEM models. This is considered a variable that transmits the impact from the explanatory variable to the dependent variable. This transmission contributes to explaining the nature of the cause-and-effect relationship between destination image, spiritual belief, reference group and motivation, travel attitudes and intention to choose spiritual tourism (Figure 4).

Results from Table 10 show that all indirect effects of the structural model are statistically significant (P-values are lower than 0.05). This result, when combined with the results of estimating direct relationships (Table 6), is statistically significant (P-value is lower than 0.05), this demonstrates that there is a partial mediating effect in the structural model. Besides, both direct and indirect effects are in the same direction (shown by the path coefficients of both Table 6 and Table 10, which have positive signs). From there, it can be concluded that the mediating effect of the model in this study is an additional partial mediating effect. This suggests that there may be additional potential mediating variables in the

structural model, although they may convey less impact from destination image, spiritual belief, and reference group on intention to choose spiritual tourism. Considering each pair of mediating variables, it can be seen that motivation for the intention to choose spiritual tourism plays a more prominent mediating role than attitude towards the intention to choose spiritual tourism on all 3 links from destination image, spiritual belief and reference group to intention to choose spiritual tourism. This implies that motivation is the catalyst that conveys a stronger impact on the intention to choose spiritual tourism. However, the contribution of attitude to the intention to choose spiritual tourism is also significant on average with VAF values always higher than 25% (Table 10).

Table 10. Estimation results in the structural model with intermediate variables (Source: SmartPLS analysis results of the research team)

Mediating relationship	Path coefficient	T-statistic	Significance level (P values)	VAF value %	Conclusion about intermediate effect
Spiritual belief→ Attitude towards spiritual tourism→ Intention to choose spiritual tourism	0.085	3.336	0.001	43.4	Additional mediating effect
Destination image→ Attitude towards spiritual tourism→ Intention to choose spiritual tourism	0.059	2.564	0.010	43.4%	Additional mediating effect
Destination image → Travel motivation → Intention to choose spiritual tourism	0.077	2.164	0.031	56.6	Additional mediating effect
Reference group → Attitude towards spiritual tourism → Intention to choose spiritual tourism	0.067	2.722	0.007	26.6	Additional mediating effect
Reference group → Travel motivation → Intention to choose spiritual tourism	0.185	5.139	0.000	73.4	Additional mediating effect
Niềm tin tâm linh → Travel motivation → Intention to choose spiritual tourism	0.111	3.055	0.002	56.6	Additional mediating effect

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on the literature review, the study has integrated theories of planned behavior, motivation theory and basic human value theory to identify and test a model with 3 independent variables: Destination image, spiritual belief and reference group. By applying SmartPLS software in data processing, research results show that all three factors of all have an influence on attitudes, motivation and intention to choose spiritual tourism, in which the reference group has the strongest influence in relation to motivation and intention to travel with the highest structural path coefficient of 0.388 and in the relationship with spiritual travel attitudes and intentions, spiritual belief has the strongest influence with a structural path coefficient of 0.288. The study also identified the mediating role of travel attitudes and motivations in the relationship of the three factors with the Millennial generation's intention to choose spiritual travel. This result contributes to providing empirical evidence on the influence of factors on spiritual travel choices of the Millennial generation in Vietnam. The research team's findings have important theoretical and practical implications, consistent with many researchers Phukan et al. (2012); Kumar et al.(2022).

Theoretical implications

Our research has developed the original TPB theoretical model, which includes three main components: behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral control by further integrating motivation theory and adding Personality traits of the Millennial generation. Therefore, it develops new components for measuring the influence on tourists' behavioral intentions. In addition, the article also tests the mediating role of attitude and motivation in the influence relationship of destination image, spiritual beliefs and reference groups on the intention to choose spiritual tourism by applying use Smartpls SEM.

Managerial implications

In Vietnam, the number of spiritual tourists is increasing, accounting for a large proportion of the overall tourist structure. Spiritual tourism and needs are increasingly diverse, not only limited to the framework of activities associated with religion but increasingly expanding to spiritual activities, national beliefs and other sacred elements. Spiritual tourism activities are increasingly proactive and in-depth and have become an indispensable need in the spiritual life of generations, especially for the Millennial generation with the aim of finding balance in life, control emotions and reduce stress. Therefore, to receive positive attitudes and motivation to perform spiritual tourism behavior from tourists, spiritual destinations need to diversify spiritual tourism products and improve the quality of tourism products, investment and upgrading of infrastructure, availability of services to enhance the image of spiritual tourism destinations. At the same time, spiritual destination management agencies need to research and evaluate issues of tourists' attitudes, motivations, behaviors, and experience expectations to take measures to maintain and enhance tourists' spirituality, thereby creating reference group and public opinion groups to stimulate tourists' motivation to choose spiritual tourism. Besides, there needs to be policies, strategies and marketing programs applied and implemented to increase the flow of spiritual tourists; Establish advertising and PR programs and apply them to each specific destination to improve the development capacity of spiritual tourism.

CONCLUSION AND NEW RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study is one of the first studies to investigate the influence of factors on the Millennial generation's intention to

choose spiritual tourism and test the mediating role of attitudes and motivations in the relationship. The relationship between that factor and the Millennial generation's intention to choose spiritual tourism is based on the integration of 3 theories of planned behavior, motivation theory and basic human value theory. The study proposed a research model based on common perception and previous studies.

Although the study has important findings, there are still some limitations. *First*, this study was conducted using a purposive non-random sampling method, so the results are subjective, reducing its objectivity and generalization. Furthermore, the scope of the research was only conducted at 3 typical spiritual tourist destinations in 3 regions of Vietnam, so the experimental results only allow for some short-term conclusions and implications. *Second*, the study did not test the differences in the influence of factors on the attitudes and motivations of international tourists and domestic tourists with the intention of choosing spiritual tourism. Therefore, this may be a new research direction in the future.

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