

Factors Affecting Tourists' Return Intention towards Vung Tau City, Vietnam-A Mediation Analysis of Destination Satisfaction

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Abstract—This study was conducted to identify key factors affecting tourists' satisfaction as well as their return intention towards Vung Tau tourist destination. Quantitative approach was major method applied and questionnaires were delivered to 301 leisure tourists visiting the beach city of Vung Tau. The significant correlations between variables indicated that better destination image, natural and cultural environment, price, infrastructure, accessibility, local cuisine, leisure and entertainment, and destination satisfaction could lead to higher tourists' return intention. In addition, the empirical results showed that destination image, infrastructure, price, natural and cultural environment, and tourists' destination satisfaction significantly and positively affected tourists' return intention. Contrarily, safety and security provided significant negative effect on tourists' return intention.

Index Terms—tourists' destination satisfaction, tourists' return intention, vung tau city, path analysis, mediation

I. INTRODUCTION

Travel and tourism is considered as one of the largest service industries around the world. It has been the industry providing jobs for lots of labors and having strong relationships with many other industries, thus it created a multiplier effect: the maturing of tourism brought about other sectors' advancement, which improved social-economic situation and raised community's standard of living.

In order to create successful tourism, attracting tourists and maintaining high tourists' return intention is an indispensable task [1]. Obviously, if the marketers try to attract lots of tourists to their destination, but after the first visit, visitors do not want to return here anymore, how the tourism sector can exist and growth in a long run, create positive word of mouth, obtain economic benefits from this service in the far future and achieve cost – effective by repeat visitors?

Actually, Vung Tau tourist city, located in the southeast of Vietnam, is a famous tourism destination for many tourists from inside and outside the country. According to the report of Department of Culture, Sport and Tourism Vung Tau City, nearly 4 million tourists visited the city in 2011; 4.17 million in 2012 and 4.5 million in 2013.

The above figure illustrated the potential development of Vung Tau's tourism industry. However, as young tourism industry, facing to difficulties and challenges as well as severe competitions from other destinations, finding the way to attract tourists and increase their repeat visitation is the most important one.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Loyalty's concept has been recognized as one of essential indicators of corporate success in the marketing literature [2], [3] with the value considered to be "self-evident to every business person" [4]. According to [5], loyalty refers to the repeat purchase commitment of products or services in spite of situational influences and marketing efforts directed at causing changes in behavior or "a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future" [6]. Or [7] claimed that loyalty is the likelihood of customers' returning to a destination. And in this research, loyalty is investigated in the tourism context, therefore it is understood as the intention to revisit or return intention [1], [8]. Undeniably, tourists' return intention is a key factor contributing to the sustainable development of any business organizations working in the tourism sector. This is the reason why destination loyalty or tourists' return intention has received considerable attentions from academics and researchers as a key target for developing useful business strategy [9].

Although different research brought out different sets, there are some main factors considered to be important to have profound impacts on tourists' return intention. They are novelty seeking, natural and cultural environment, safety and security, leisure and entertainment, local cuisine, infrastructure, accessibility, price, negative attributes, destination image and tourists' destination satisfaction.

Undeniably, nowadays, customers' satisfaction plays an extremely momentous role in all business organizations' survival or development. It affects directly to companies' reputation, market share as well as profit, to the choice of destination, the consumption of products and services and the decision to return [8], [10], [11].

Therefore, satisfaction has been investigated widely in many consumer behavior researches also tourism studies,

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but there is still no consensus definition of this important term. As [12], satisfaction is relationship's result between tourists' expectations about the destination based on their previous destination's images and experiences' evaluation at the destination, or "function of pre-travel expectations and travel experiences" [13] or comparison's results between tourists' experiences at the destination and the expectations about the destination [14]. Tourists' satisfaction is significant to achieve high visitors' intention in revisiting the same destination [10], [11], [15], [16], [17]; [18], [19], [20].

Novelty is defined as the level of dissimilarity between current perception and past experience [21] or "a trip characterized by new and unfamiliar experiences" [22]. There were some studies investigating about novelty seeking' role in tourists' satisfaction as well as their revisit intention [23], [24], [25].

Natural environment consists of all things existing in nature and are not made or caused by human. In the field of tourism, natural environment comprises of many factors such as weather, beach, lake, mountain, desert, etc. [26]. Cultural environment is defined as the arts, customs, and habits characterizing a particular society or nation. In tourism sector, [26] mentioned that cultural environment includes quality of life; language barriers; local residents' hospitality and friendliness; festival or concert; religion; historic attractions; customs and ways of life.

"Safety is the protection from unintended incidents while security is the protection from intended incidents". As [27], the thought behind both of the terms is to take care of people by eliminating threats and ensuring a secured environment. The difference between them is safety is concerned especially with human life and health's protection while security refers to the protection against criminal activities.

According to Oxford dictionary (2005), leisure refers to time spent doing what you enjoy when you are not working or studying while entertainment is defined as films/ movies, music, etc used to entertain people. Leisure and entertainment consists of outdoor activities, adventure activities, shopping as well as nightlife, etc. [25].

Food has become an increasingly important element in tourism industry and 25% of total tourism expenditure was accounted for by foods and this number was even much higher [28]. Therefore, more researchers focused on food's role in culture and tourism in the literature on tourists' destinations. For destination food providers, it is essential to enlarge knowledge about tourists' food culture (including their eating habits, their tastes, custom, etc) to make the foods become congruous with tourists' habits. This will effectively help improve the food service also enhance customer satisfaction [29].

Infrastructure are tools which are quite transparent for most people, wide in temporal and spatial scope, embedded in familiar structures such as power grids, water, the Internet and airlines [30]. Besides, [25] mentioned that infrastructure includes general infrastructure (health services, telecommunications, etc)

and tourism infrastructure (such as accommodations, restaurants, hotels, tourism centers, etc).

Accessibility was defined as "easy-to-reach desired goods, services, activities and destinations by the availability, affordability and convenience of transport facilities, information or geographic distribution of activities and destinations" [31].

Price was defined as what customers actually pay in exchange for products or services' benefits or a visible indicator of services' level and quality [32]. As [33], consumers are willing to pay more for services at a destination if they identify its association with luxurious images. In these cases, consumers are willing to pay higher price for functionally equivalent goods which are associated with the destination's sophistication. [34].

According to [35], positive attributes refers to characteristics conveying favorable impressions about the destination, whereas negative attributes are those doing the opposite. As [11], both positive as well as negative destination attributes are important in evaluating the holiday experiences. Moreover, [36] pointed out that the negative attributes can provide unfavorable effects on holiday satisfaction.

Destination image is a quite popular topic in lots of studies, especially in tourism literature. This concept is defined as "the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination" [37] or "A favorable or unfavorable prejudice that the audience and distributors have of the product or destination" [38], "Totality of impressions, beliefs, ideas, expectations, and feelings accumulated towards a place over time by an individual or group of people" [39]. Positive destination image affects positively both tourists' satisfaction and their revisit intention [18], [40], [41], [42], [43].

In order to obtain all the objectives and further analyses, this study hypothesizes that:

- H1: Factors of novelty seeking, natural and cultural environment, safety and security, leisure and entertainment, local cuisine, infrastructure, accessibility, price, negative attributes and destination image affect tourists' destination satisfaction.
- H2: Tourists' destination satisfaction affects their return intention.
- H3: Factors of novelty seeking, natural and cultural environment, safety and security, leisure and entertainment, local cuisine, infrastructure, accessibility, price, negative attributes and destination image affect tourists' return intention.
- H4: Tourists' return intention is indirectly affected by novelty seeking, natural and cultural environment, safety and security, leisure and entertainment, local cuisine, infrastructure, accessibility, price, negative attributes, and destination image image.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Questionnaire Design and Data Collection

The purpose of this research was investigating tourists' return intention towards Vung Tau destination, the

quantitative approach was the main method of this dissertation. In other words, data was collected through delivering questionnaire to target sample of 301 leisure tourists who came to VT for leisure and stayed in the city for more than one day. The questionnaire was built based on major concepts and variables drawn from literature. Most of measures were based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, in which 1 is “strongly disagree” and 5 is “strongly agree”.

B. Factor Analysis and Reliability

For this study, the factor analysis procedure was applied twice with the principal component extraction method and varimax rotation to analyze dependent and independent variables; one for the group of ten independent variables consisting of 70 items and one for two dependent variables including 16 items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .848 for the group of independent variables and .743 for the group of dependent variables. According to Pallant [44], to be significant, the value of KMO must equal to .60 or above, indicating that the presented data was suitable for principal components analysis. In addition, Bartlett's test of sphericity [45] was significant because the value of p is smaller than .005, demonstrating sufficient correlation between the variables to go on with the analysis.

TABLE I. SUMMARY OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Given names	Number of items	Alpha
Novelty seeking (NOSE)	7	.943
Natural & Cultural Environment (NATCUL)	6	.908
Safety and Security (SAFSEC)	4	.927
Leisure and Entertainment (LEISENT)	3	.946
Local cuisine (LOCUI)	3	.942
Infrastructure (INFRAS)	7	.930
Accessibility (ACCES)	5	.907
Price (PRICE)	3	.624
Negative attributes (NEGATT)	6	.889
Destination image (DESIMA)	3	.783

Using the Kaiser-Guttman's retention criterion of Eigenvalues greater than 1, 10 independent factors (including 47 items) were considered appropriate to retained for further analysis. These factors accounted for 76.44% of the total variance and the Cronbach's coefficients ranged from .624 to .946, which indicated good subscale reliability.

TABLE II. SUMMARY OF DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Given names	Number of items	Alpha
Tourists' destination satisfaction (TODESA)	3	.799
Tourists' return intention (TORETINT)	4	.846

In addition, a two-factor solution was conducted for the group of dependent variables comprising of 7 items. These factors accounted for 70.72% of the total variance. The two factors were considered appropriate to retained for further analysis. The Cronbach's coefficients ranged

from .799 to .846 between two factors indicating good subscale reliability.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

A. Profile of Tourists Involved in the Study

TABLE III. TOURISTS PROFILE (N = 301)

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
- Male	121	40.2
- Female	180	59.8
Total	301	100
Age		
- <18	17	5.6
- 18 – 25	60	19.9
- 26 -30	41	13.6
- 31 – 40	93	30.9
- 41 -60	90	29.9
Total	301	100
Hometown		
- HCM City	166	55.1
- Dong Nai	41	13.6
- Binh Duong	32	10.6
- Lam Dong	14	4.7
- Da Nang	4	1.3
- Hue	14	4.7
- Ha Noi	30	10.0
Total	301	100
Education level		
- Vocational	20	6.6
- School	62	20.6
- College degree	183	60.8
- Studying	19	6.3
- University	17	5.6
- High school	301	100
degree		
- Master or higher		
Total		
Times of visit		
- 1 time	77	25.6
- 2 times	46	15.3
- 3 times	55	18.3
- >3 times	123	40.9
Total	301	100
Purpose of visit		
- Business	12	4.0
- Leisure	270	89.7
- Visiting	19	6.3
friends/Family	301	100
Total		

B. Relationship between Tourists' Return Intention, Tourists' Destination Satisfaction and the Independent Variables

In order to identify which factors had relationship with dependent variable of tourists' return intention, Pearson Correlation (r) was used. Table IV presented that there were positive correlations between the dependent variable TORETINT and TODESA ($r=.363$, $p<.001$), between TORETINT and independent variables: DESIMA ($r=.528$, $p<.001$), TODESA ($r=.363$, $p<.001$), NATCUL ($r=.336$, $p<.001$), PRICE ($r=.325$, $p<.001$), INFRAS ($r=.309$, $p<.001$), ACCES ($r=.301$, $p<.001$), LOCUI ($r=.203$, $p<.001$), LEISENT ($r=.198$, $p<.001$). This meant that better TODESA, DESIMA, TODESA, NATCUL, PRICE, INFRAS, ACCES, LOCUI, and LEISENT could lead to

higher tourists' return intention.

TABLE IV. CORRELATIONS BETWEEN VARIABLES

	TO RE TINT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. INFRAS	.309**	1									
2. NATCUL	.336**	.558**	1								
3. NEGATT	-0.07	-.084	-.143*	1							
4. ACCES	.301**	.661**	.638**	.169**	1						
5. SAFSEC	.054	.401**	.389**	.267**	.320**	1					
6. LEISENT	.198**	.304**	.475**	.207**	.384**	.242**	1				
7. LOCUI	.203**	.370**	.456**	.275**	.388**	.370**	.313**	1			
8. DESIMA	.528**	.187**	.335**	.026	.213**	.067	.249**	.177**	1		
9. PRICE	.325**	.331**	.441**	-.042	.436**	.157**	.309**	.305**	.269**	1	
10. NOSE	.101	.204**	.229**	.002	.175**	.061	.093	.104	.029	.153**	1
11. TODESA	.363**	.492**	.624**	.155**	.527**	.307**	.312**	.387**	.253**	.423**	.226**
Mean	3.75	4.18	4.07	1.59	4.09	4.21	3.77	4.02	3.47	3.64	4.50
SD.	.579	.428	.425	.554	.463	.537	.583	.469	.527	.478	.452

Note: **.Correlation is significant at the .005 level.

*.Correlation is significant at the .05 level.

C. Factors Directly Affect Tourists' Return Intention

From multiple regression analysis, it could be concluded that four out of 10 independent variables of this research had direct effects on tourists' return intention. Those were safety and security, destination image, infrastructure and price. Besides that, in order to identify which of these four factors had most influence to tourists' return intention, this study based on standardized coefficient (Beta). Through that, destination image possessed the highest Beta ($\beta = .500$, $p < .001$), followed by infrastructure ($\beta = .237$, $p < .05$), price ($\beta = .156$, $p < .05$) and safety and security ($\beta = -.125$, $p < .05$). These findings indicated that the factors of destination image, infrastructure, and price had significant positive effects on tourists' return intention. Meanwhile, safety and security had significant negative effects on tourists' return intention. Thus this study argued that when tourists felt satisfied with the factors such as: destination image, infrastructure and price, they were more likely to have higher revisiting intention. On the other hand, safety and security condition of Vung Tau city is not quite good, which affected badly to their intention in returning to this place.

From the result of simple linear regression between tourists' destination satisfaction and tourists' return intention, TODESA provided substantial positive effect on TORETINT ($\beta = .453$, $p < .001$). This meant that when tourists felt more satisfied with the destination, the possibility that they return to this place was more likely to be higher.

D. Indirect Effects on Tourists' Return Intention

As [46], the independent variable's indirect effect on the dependent variable through intervening variable was the total product of independent variable's effect on the

intervening variable and intervening variable's effect on the dependent variable.

The result of multiple regression analysis showed that tourists' destination satisfaction was mainly affected by three important factors: NATCUL ($\beta = .406$), INFRAS and PRICE ($\beta = .135$). It proved that when tourists feel they are satisfied to the factors such as natural and cultural environment, infrastructure and price, they are more likely to be more satisfied with the destination.

These three factors directly affected the intervening variable of TODESA and then TODESA directly caused an effect on tourists' return intention ($\beta = .453$). Therefore, through the intervening variable of TODESA, the factors of Natural and Cultural Environment, Infrastructure and Price created indirect effects on tourists' return intention at (.184), (.061) and (.061) respectively.

E. Path Diagram of Tourists' Return Intention

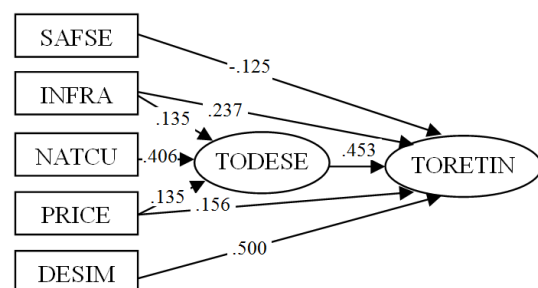


Figure 1. Path coefficients of TORETINT model

Note: All coefficients in the model were significant at the .005 level.

F. Significance of the Indirect Effects

Table V showed the results of the bootstrapping method recommended by [46] to test the significance of

indirect effects or mediations. The output provided the bootstrapped confidence intervals (at the 95%). If there is a ZERO (0) lies within the interval range between the lower boundary (LL) and the upper boundary (UL), then we can conclude that, with 95% confidence, there is no mediation or indirect effect. On the other hand, if zero does not occur between the LL and the UL, then we can conclude that, with 95% confidence, the mediation or indirect effect is significant [47]. As can be seen in the output of Table V, the indirect effects of INFRAS, NATCUL, and PRICE on TORETINT through the mediation of TODESA were estimated to lie between 0.0610 and 0.3428; 0.0754 and 0.3762; and 0.421 and 0.2784 with 95% confidence, respectively. Because zero is not in the 95% confidence interval, we can conclude that the indirect effects of INFRAS, NATCUL, and PRICE on TORETINT were indeed significantly different from zero at $p < .05$ (two tailed) and the mediation of TODESA in this study was true.

G. Total Causal Effects of Tourists' Return Intention

The total effect of one variable on TORETINT could be divided into direct and indirect effects. The table V summarizes the effects of independent variables including INFRAS, NATCUL, DESIMA, PRICE and SAFSEC together with TODESA on TORETINT.

Regarding the total effect, DESIMA factor had the strongest effect on TORETINT with $\beta = .500$ and according to [48], this was considered as a substantial effect. Next is TODESA factor with $\beta = .453$, which had a substantial effect on TORETINT. The factor of INFRAS, PRICE and NATCUL had moderate effects on the dependent factor or TORETINT with the values of β were .298, .217 and .184 respectively. All of these factors including DESIMA, INFRAS, PRICE, NATCUL and TODESA had positive effects on TORETINT while SAFSEC had negative effect with $\beta = -.125$. The total effect of these factors on Tourists' return intention was 1.527.

TABLE V. DIRECT, INDIRECT AND TOTAL EFFECTS

Variables	Causal effects			LL	UL
	Direct	Indirect	Total		
INFRAS	.237	.061	.298	.0610	.3428
NATCUL	---	.184	.184	.0754	.3762
PRICE	.156	.061	.217	.0421	.2784
DESIMA	.500	---	.500		
SAFSEC	-.125	---	-.125		
TODESA	.453	---	.453		
Total	1.221	.306	1.527		

V. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Discussion of Findings

Table V showed that destination image factor had the strongest effect on tourists' return intention. Next was the Tourists' destination satisfaction factor, followed by infrastructure, price and natural and cultural environment with the descending β values. All of these factors had positive β values, which represented for positive significant effects on tourists' return intention. These

results were consistent with many preceding studies on tourists' return intention [1], [10], [11], [49], [50], etc. On the other hand, only safety and security factor had negative β value, which showed a negative significant effect on the main dependent variable–TORETINT.

Thanks to the degree of effects of above factors, it could be concluded that destination image was the most important factor that affected significantly to tourists' return intention, followed by tourists' destination satisfaction, infrastructure, price, natural and cultural environment, and safety and security.

B. Recommendations for Tourism Decision Makers in VT

Firstly, the local administration should mobilize all the residents living in the city to plant trees by choosing a specific day and letting all people do this meaningful action together. Each year, whenever this day comes, residents as well as the local authority must repeat this activity by growing plants around the beaches and the city to create "Forest in the city" image for this place. In addition, the local government should think about reorganizing the location of all restaurants, hotels, resorts, shopping stores or amusement places, etc. They should put all things with the same function in the same area, which makes city's image become more professional, orderly also facilitate tourists in enjoying beautiful beaches, all tourism products and services of the city.

Furthermore, tourism managers need to test the state of all restaurants, hotels and entertaining places (such as bars, movie theaters, karaoke or shopping stores, etc.) in the city regularly and make sure that they are always in best condition. If there are any problems, they should be solved immediately. In addition, the local authority needs to upgrade the facilities of all hotels, restaurants, resorts as well as all entertaining places to make all of them become high – quality relaxation places with international standard. This will bring the totally relaxed feeling to all tourists as well as motivate them to come to this destination again for relaxing and enjoying life. Besides, the city should invest in its electricity and water system to ensure that lacking of these essential factors (especially in dry season) will not happen.

The local government should control strictly about the price of all business shops from restaurants, hotels, motels, shopping centers or amusement places, etc and have some strategies to prevent price escalation in special holidays. In addition, the law of price discrimination between tourists and local residents should be promulgated in order to protect all tourists against discriminatory treatment. Specifically, the price needs to be written clearly in the menu and if there are any changes or increases in price in vacations, the menu must mention all of the information. The local managers must impose strict punishments for all people who do not obey the above rule as well as raise price immoderately by forcing them to pay a large amount of money or taking away their business right and not allowing them to do business anymore.

Additionally, more public garbage-cans should be put around the city, especially in beaches areas; more public

toilet facilities should be built and the city should have more cleaning teams to clean up trash in beaches regularly. Indubitably, Vung Tau is considered as Buddha land, where has many pagodas and temples. Thanks to this advantage, tourism makers can develop the spiritual tourism and put more local guides in these hollowed temples, pagodas. Furthermore, the city should organize more special events and festivals (about cultural, sport or shopping, etc).

Tourism decision makers should put more experienced and skillful rescue teams around all beaches, mobilize more guardians in crowded tourists' places to intensity control and ensure the safety for tourists. In addition, more night- security guards should be reinforced in deserted places in order to minimize social evils (such as robbery, rape, etc); make tourists feel secured and enjoy comfortably all tourism activities at night. As well as this, local administration should gather all hawkers and beggars in one place, open vocational training classes to teach them and give them opportunities to work in any business enterprises in Vung Tau.

Last but not least, the local government should invest more money in building a monumental private amusement area with various kinds of games from thrilling, adventurous to gentle style, which can satisfy variety demands of all tourists coming to this destination. Besides, the local tourism makers should cooperate well with other tourism managers in other provinces as well as other countries locating near Viet Nam, which helps tourists to travel to different provinces in our country or dissimilar nations in only one trip.

In conclusion, to do all of above activities, there must be the appearance of professional, talented and well - educated tourism makers. Therefore, first and foremost, the local administration should invest time and money in educating and training the human resource, in building skillful and highly qualified tourism makers, which will contribute a lot in building a bright future for the tourism industry of the city.

C. Limitations of the Study and Futhure Research

Limitation was about the sample size of the study. Because of restriction of time, finance, location and human resource, the researcher could deliver surveys to 301 tourists visiting Vung Tau City. Therefore, the result could not represent all tourists' opinions about the destination.

It is recommended that further study should invest more time and effort to build a more comprehensive research model and conduct research with a larger sample size, which makes the result more accurately. Lastly, this research's conceptual framework was lacked of some constructs, such as perceived value [51] or perceived risk [50]. For that reason, future research can consider about supplementing these factors in the model.

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