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CONTENTS

HERITAGE IN DMOS' BRANDING STRATEGY: THE CASE OF CARIBBEAN ISLANDS

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to stimulate discussion and debate, and to draw attention to the extent that 'heritage' is used as a branding strategy in Caribbean destinations' logo designs. A visual methodology was used to analyse the logo designs of 21 Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) member countries representing the English, French, Spanish and Dutch speaking Caribbean. The branding strategies of each destination were analysed, compared, and contrasted. The analysis found that member countries of the CTO mainly used a neutral branding strategy in their logos. 52% of the DMO logos analysed adopted a neutral position in their branding strategy. 38% of DMOs have based their branding on heritage and 10% on sun-and-sea.

Keywords: Destination branding, Heritage tourism, Caribbean destinations, Visual methodologies.

Introduction

In the tourism industry, branding is used to communicate with the market, and can positively impact how a destination performs (Park, Eisingerich, Pol & Park, 2013; Walters & Mair, 2012). It is also a way of telling the narrative of the destination (Elliot, Khazaei & Durand, 2016). Tangible (material) and intangible (immaterial) heritage is traditionally used in the branding strategies of destinations in the Caribbean (Park, 2014). Because of their negative image and difficulties in attracting visitors, post-colonial, post-conflict and post-disaster destinations like those in the Caribbean often use key features of their heritage and history in promotional materials (Séraphin & Gowreesunkar, 2017; Séraphin, Butcher & Korstanje, 2016; Séraphin, Ambaye, Gowreesunkar & Bonnardel, 2016). For these destinations, branding is also used as a defence mechanism designed to protect the good name the destination might have built up over the years (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). 'Heritage' covers cultural heritage and built heritage (Park, 2014).

There is a wide range of publications in the field of heritage tourism. Heritage tourism, and more specifically, cultural tourism is considered one of the most sustainable forms of tourism (Hammouda, 2019; Chauhan, 2021). However, there is limited Caribbean research examining heritage alongside marketing and more specifically destination logos (Séraphin, Yallop, Capatina & Gowreesunkar, 2018). Authenticity has been pointed out by Kolar and Zabkar (2010) as a tourism driving force. In the same line of thought, Chhabra (2017) and (Park, 2014) explained how nostalgia can attract visitors. This form of marketing is also associated with retro-branding (Dion & Mazzalovo, 2016). Declining destinations have been using this marketing strategy to restore their image (Avraham, 2015). However, the use of heritage in Caribbean tourism has also been associated with commodification and staged authenticity (Stonich, 2001: Sealy, 2018). Nevertheless, heritage tourism provides an avenue for the creative expression of Caribbean people and a sense of belonging in what is a culturally and ethnically diverse, but politically fragmented, region (Sealy, 2018; Crick, 2022).

In this study, 'heritage' is to be understood from the angle of 'identity' and 'culture' which includes, but not exclusively, African-Caribbean aesthetics and folk culture (Séraphin *et al,* 2018a). This research paper is of importance due to the shortage of research in the field of tourism in the Caribbean, particularly in the area of branding (Séraphin *et al,* 2018b). Two research questions are addressed in this study:

RQ1: What is the branding strategy used by Caribbean destinations' DMOs in their logos? Is it a strategy based on an idiosyncratic identity (heritage); a more universal stereotype strategy (sea-and-sun strategy); or a neutral strategy to follow the global trend (Séraphin, Platania & Pilato, 2017)?

RQ2: To what extent is 'heritage' used (percentage of DMOs using it in their branding strategy, and the form of 'heritage' used (cultural, scientific, or built) in DMOs' logo design.

In order to address the research questions of this study, the DMO logos of specific Caribbean destinations are analysed, compared, and contrasted using a specific framework. The framework used to analyse, discuss, and contrast the logo of DMOs is based on the results of three publications, namely:

   (a) Séraphin, H. Ambaye, M., Gowreesunkar, V. & Bonnardel, V. (2016c). This research paper focuses on how logos express the history, identity, heritage etc. of a destination.
   (b) Séraphin, H. Gowreesunkar, V. & Ambaye, M. (2016b). The focus is on the construction of the new logo of Haiti as a process that relates to the identity and heritage of the island.
   (c) Séraphin, H. Yallop, A. Capatana, A. & Gowreesunkar, V. (2018b). The study explains the central influence of Voodoo in the design of the original logo of Haiti's DMO.

Background

The Caribbean As A Destination

The tourism industry is very important for the Caribbean. Some destinations are totally relying on the tourism industry for their survival. (Holder, 1989; Peters, 1980; Sealy, 2018). Out of all the destinations in the Caribbean, 6 of them have stood out pre-Covid in terms of number of visitors (Séraphin, Gowreesunkar, Roselé-Chim, Duplan & Korstanje, 2018). They are referred to as the *'Big 6'* (Cuba', 'Jamaica', 'Bahamas', 'Puerto Rico' and 'Aruba'), as they receive at least 1 million visitors annually (figure 1). The weather is the main pull factors for the Caribbean, it is also a push factor (Hubner & Gosling, 2012). Other pull factors include events and festivals (Séraphin & Dosquet, 2015), such as The Literary Festival; the San Sebastian Festival in Puerto Rico; Route du Rhum in Guadeloupe; and the Crop Over Festival in Barbados (Séraphin & Dosquet, 2015). The islands also have rich folk lore traditions, colonial architecture, beautiful flora and fauna and other rich traditions that could be marketed as attractions.

The Caribbean: A Heritage Destination?

Five hundred years of colonial history has assured the Caribbean a unique heritage of rituals, customs, values, beliefs, exotic food, festivals, special events and vernacular traditions. Heritage tourism can be and to some extent is used as a branding strategy in Caribbean tourism to diversify destinations away from the stereotypical sun-lust mass tourism image and to project a more eclectic tourism offering. Heritage tourism can be a pull factor due to the fact that each destination has its own unique culture and heritage. However, the tour-packaged brochures,

which are produced outside the region, tend to feature accommodation services and facilities rather than the destination or its special characteristics (Picazo & Moreno-Gil, 2018; Sealy, 2014). These brochures are typically produced for mass marketing campaigns which sell a standardised product with very little differentiation. Consequently, many visitors are oblivious to, and do not experience, authentic Caribbean culture, heritage or lifestyles, as very often they are encouraged to remain within their all-inclusive enclaves for so called 'safety' reasons (Pattulo, 2006; Sealy, 2018; Williams, 2012). This fact has stimulated interests in this research as a means of observing the extent to which heritage is captured in the tourism logos of the chosen destinations.

Heritage tourism can combat seasonality and the targeted media outlets makes it easier to connect with potential special interests' tourists. Unlike mass tour operators, heritage tour operators are less susceptible to price but instead focus on the quality of the experience and reputation of the destination (Inkson & Minnaert, 2018). The distribution networks for heritage tourists are well placed to deal with small numbers and they provide opportunities for well-connected strategic alliances with actors who can effectively distribute and promote a destination. Heritage tourism can provide destination planners in the Caribbean with new branding opportunities and new marketing outlets from which to attract more allocentric tourists who gravitate towards cultural products.

A Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) report recorded that heritage tourism increases the local value-added (Caribbean Tourism Organisation, no date). Since much tourism revenue is concentrated in the hands of large foreign owned hotel chains based overseas, heritage tourism can enable tourism benefits to spill over into the wider community through networks and links with local entrepreneurs (Sealy, 2018). It can also help to spread tourism benefits geographically beyond the beach and into grass roots organisations outside the resorts. Heritage tourism is also a more sustainable form of tourism since it promotes the conservation and preservation of the natural and built environment. It highlights the need to preserve local customs and traditions that can enhance destination image and provide more branding opportunities and media value to the destination. In the Caribbean, heritage tourism can be a major source of income (compared to other forms of tourism), as this form of tourism, has the potential to engage visitors in a process of co-creating their tourist experiences with locals while bridging the gaps between locals and visitors through engagement with the local communities (Caribbean Tourism Organisation, no date; Seraphin, Gowreesunkar, Zaman & Bourliataux, 2019; Turnquest, 2022).

Branding (Logo) Of The Caribbean As A Destination: A Brief Overview

According to Barisic and Blazevic (2014), a logo is a symbol of visual identity which consists of a variety of graphical and typeface elements. A logo is the final product of a graphic design consisting of various symbols, imagery and representations that may reflect the ethos, culture or values of a place. The corporate name, slogans, graphics, colour and typeface are all features of effective logos. Logos convey visual and graphical messages about the brand quality, origin, personality, associations and ownership (Hem & Iversen, 2004). Logos can be regarded as company assets and can have a financial value attached to them known as the brand value (Muller, Kocher & Crettaz, 2013). But logo symbols can be misinterpreted by tourists or clash with other existing perceptions that the potential tourists may have of the destination. This is particularly problematic for Caribbean destinations due to the different source markets all of which have different cultural orientations and perceptions of the various destinations in the Caribbean. Lee, Rodriguez and Sar, (2012) explained that a logo of a destination should tell the narrative of the destination, and this message need to be understood the same way by all potential visitors. Consumers respond to advertising in terms of their culture, language, values,

beliefs, and perceptions. The emotional appeals, symbols, persuasive approaches, and other characteristics of the logo must coincide with the cultural norms of the target market if the logo is to be effective (Hudson & Hudson, 2017). For logos to be effective they must be appropriately designed, cater to the target market, and need to be used consistently over a period of time (Barisic & Blazeviv, 2014).

Post conflict, post-colonial and post disaster destinations typically have poor images in source markets due to the sensationalised reporting of conflicts and disasters by the international media. It is all the more important for those destinations to think about their branding strategies as potential visitors and investors are actually taking into account the image of a destination when choosing where to go on holiday (Alhemoud and Armstrong, 1996; Dai, Wang & Kirillova, 2022) Laws, Scott and Parfitt, 2002; Bose, Pradhan, Bashir & Roy, 2022). Because brand image is very important for visitors (Lee, Rodriguez & Sar, 2012), destinations need to think carefully about their branding strategies (Rafaeli *et al.,* 2008).

Methodology And Results

Selection Of Destinations / Logos

This paper is not considering every single destination in the Caribbean. We have only taken into consideration destinations that are part of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO). The CTO is comprised of 26 members (onecaribbean.org [online]): Anguilla; Grenada; Nevis; Antigua and Barbuda; Guyana; Saint-Lucia; Bahamas; Haiti; St. Maarten; Barbados; Jamaica; Saint Martin; Belize; Martinique; St. Vincent and the Grenadine; British Virgin Islands; Montserrat; Trinidad and Tobago; Cayman Islands; Puerto-Rico; Tobago; Curacao; St Eustatius; Turks and Caicos Islands; Dominica; St Kitts and Nevis. We then reduced the list to 21 (table 1), based on data available on the destinations. Our study is therefore taking into consideration 80% of the DMOs logos of destinations that are members of the CTO. Therefore, we consider the sample of this research to be representative. Also, Haiti is not considered for the study because, previous research carried by the lead author has already focused on the study of the DMO logo of the destination. Please refer to table 1.

Table 1: Sample of Caribbean islands DMO logos

Sample And Reliability

The sample selected for this study is totally representative of the Caribbean area because this sample comprises: (1) English, French, Spanish and Dutch speaking Caribbean territories, (2) destinations with different levels of performance, such as the number of visitors and income (3) destinations of different size, (4) geographical location in the Caribbean (5) political regime and (6) social and economic performance. (7) As mentioned previously, the study is based on 80% of the members of the CTO.

Visual Research Methods And Data Analysis

The paper adopts an interpretative approach through visual methods. Visual methods are a form of observation within the qualitative research domain. The observation of photos, symbols and artefacts is becoming more and more an established form of methodology in business and tourism research (Rakic & Chambers, 2012; Rose, 2012; Pink, 2013; Volo & Irimiás, 2020). Such methods are established in historical and archaeological research for the curation of images and objects. Visual methods are also derived from traditional ethnographic methods used in anthropology and sociology (Glaw, Inder, Kable & Hazelton, 2017). Like any form of observation, the method is subjected to researcher bias. Despite this, this method is very suitable for this research as the researchers are not trying to generalise or establish facts but are looking at exploring an important issue in order to stimulate debate and to draw attention to Caribbean marketing strategies concerning how heritage is captured in DMOs' logos. As with most qualitative research the lack of competence of the observer may hamper the validity and reliability of observations, however, both authors are from the Caribbean – Guadeloupe and Barbados - so their familiarity with Caribbean creole culture and history helped in the interpretation of the logos. The secondary researcher is a trained historian with a BA (Hons) in Caribbean History and has worked in Barbados tourism marketing for 22 years. In addition to this, inter-rater validity was used to validate the observations of the researchers. Inter-rater validity occurs when researchers send their findings to a 3rd party to see if they concur with the findings of the observer(s) (Silverman, 1993).

The logo of the different DMOs are analysed using a theoretical model (figure 1) developed by Séraphin, Yallop, Capatina & Gowreesunkar (2018), This model was previously used to analyse the logo of another Caribbean island - the Haitian DMO. The observations were then organised into a matrix (tables 2 & 3) using the concepts 'heritage', 'sea-sun-sand' and 'neutral' as codes. The authors used their own knowledge of Caribbean history and destination marketing to interpret the logos' symbols. This was also the method used by Seraphin *et al*, (2018) in work previously published in *the Journal of Business Research*. Visual methods do not have any single established practice for analysing data due to the different disciplines that use these methods and the multitude of objectives and subjects. The approach used in this study is more in line with the historical curation of objects where the historian uses their historical knowledge and expertise to interpret artefacts. The interpretations of the researchers were coded as shown below into conceptual themes from the theoretical framework. For transparency, the logos of the destinations analysed are included in table 1 so that readers can draw their own conclusions. Interpretivists hold the view that reality is socially constructed, subjective and comprise multiple perspectives. This view is in line with Hexter (1971) who contents that historical data is "already out there where they are open to public scrutiny and criticism".

Figure 1: Theoretical Model To Analyse Logo
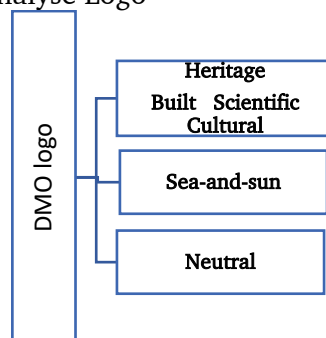
Source: The Authors (Adapted From Seraphin, Yallop, Capatina And Gowreesunkar, 2018)

According to the model, destinations and tourism organisations are either adopting, (1) a logo reflecting key elements of the heritage (either built, scientific or cultural) of the destination, (2) a logo based on a universal 'sea-and-sun' stereotyped or (3) a neutral approach (a logo with no element related to the previous).

Results and Discussion of Findings

Results

Table 2 below provides the results of the analysis of the Caribbean DMOs' logo. In a nutshell, the majority of destinations in the Caribbean (member of the CTO) have adopted a neutral strategy (11); closely followed by a heritage-based strategy (8); and way behind, a sun-and-sea (2) strategy.

Table 2: Analysis of Sample of Caribbean islands DMO logos

	A	B	C
1	Heritage	Sea-and-sun	Heritage
2	Heritage	Neutral	Heritage
3	Heritage	Heritage	Neutral
4	Heritage	Neutral	Neutral
5	Neutral	Sea-and-sun	Neutral
6	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
7	Heritage	Neutral	Neutral

Source: The authors

Heritage and more specifically, scientific heritage (table 3), as a branding strategy is very popular with Caribbean DMOs despite the fact that it is not the main strategy adopted. In the following sections we are going to analyse and discuss the strategies adopted by DMOs with a focus on the ones that have adopted a heritage-based strategy. The case of the destinations which opted for a neutral strategy will also be discussed, as well as the potential impacts of such an approach.

Table 3: Analysis Of Sample Of Caribbean Islands Using Heritage In Dmo Logos

	A	B	C
1	Culural heritage		Scientific heritage
2	Scientific heritage		Scientific heritage
3	Scientific heritage	Scientific heritage	
4	Scientific heritage		
5			
6			
7	Scientific heritage		

Source: The authors

The following subsections analyse each branding strategy adopted by the DMOs.

Built Heritage And Cultural Heritage

None of the destinations of the Caribbean are branding themselves as built heritage destinations, neither as cultural destinations. This result is probably due to the fact that many destinations have been through a rebranding strategy, to meet current visitors needs and demands (Chacko & Marcell, 2008; Rose, Merchant, Orth & Horstmann, 2016; Séraphin et al, 2018). That was the case of Haiti which branded itself between 1939 and 2011 as a cultural heritage destination for a repositioning. The destination has now adopted a scientific heritage strategy based on sea-and-sun (Séraphin *et al,* 2018)

Scientific Heritage

When it comes to using heritage as a branding approach, scientific heritage is by far the most popular one. The scientific heritage symbols used in the branding strategies of destinations include the use of plants (nutmegs); natural features (mountains; sea-and-sun) and animals (bird, turtle, fish). This is mainly because natural features are major pull factors used by destinations to attract visitors. Moreover, many attractions are based on these natural features. Because of the heavy reliance of the industry on these natural features, they become cause for concern because of the tourism pressure on them (Curtin, Richards & Westcott, 2009; McDowall & Choi, 2010; Puczko & Ratz, 2000; Sheller, 2004; Mason, 2021).

Neutral

By adopting a neutral branding strategy, DMOs in the Caribbean are following the global trend of a neutral branding strategy (Séraphin *et al*, 2017), as opposed to adopting a regional or locally based branding strategy (Da Silva Lopes & Casson, 2007; Dubesset, 2012). It may thus be safer to adopt a more neutral logo design in order to prevent offending local sensitivities or conflict between brands or confusion in the marketplace; and to bring the brands more in line with contemporary Caribbean ideals and values. In more recent times Caribbean cultural ideals more represent European and American ideologies rather than the Afro-centric ideas which are rejected in several islands. However, by adopting a neutral branding strategy, the Caribbean opens itself to be misrepresented by other players in the tourism supply chain. It is disheartening that despite 500 years of colonial history which has given the Caribbean vibrant forms of expression and architecturally and historically significant buildings and sites, the Caribbean still appears to prefer the narrow niche of tropical hedonism in its branding strategies (Cameron & Gatewood, 2008). The move towards neutrality demonstrates the difficulty of reconciling advertising campaigns with the cultural preferences of increasingly heterogeneous international and domestic markets targeted by these destinations. Ideally, it seems that the destinations are adopting a 'glocal' approach. 'Glocalisation entails re-appropriating and reinterpreting distinctive local (national) culture and identity within global settings' (Park, 2014: 126). Another reason for a more neutral approach could be because the destinations in the Caribbean are primarily marketed and packaged through 3rd party intermediaries such as tour operators who market each island under their own tour operator branding umbrella. The predominance of all-inclusive resort enclaves in the islands means that tourists to the region do not get to experience true, authentic Caribbean culture at the destination. One must wonder to what extent this may be attributed to neutral branding strategies.

The Undisciplined Of Tourism

The approaches used by DMOs shows that there is not an agreement in the industry in terms of key elements that should be included in logo design. The results of our analysis do not allow us to identify any significant pattern or correlation that would help to understand why a specific type of destination uses a specific type of branding strategy. If we consider the 'Big 6' branding strategy: Cuba (A1) has adopted a cultural heritage strategy; Aruba (C4), Jamaica (C5), the Bahamas (C7) and Puerto-Rico (A6) have adopted a neutral strategy. The Dominican Republic (B5) has opted for a heritage branding strategy. From this sample within the sample, there is a clear pattern that reflects the worldwide trend, but we cannot conclude which strategy is the most effective. The most visited island of the Caribbean (the Dominican Republic) and the second most visited island, namely Cuba, have both different approaches when it comes to branding. The four other leading destinations have opted for a similar strategy. Based on our findings, we can come to a number of conclusions:

(1) The first conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis is that the majority of Caribbean destinations have adopted a neutral strategy.
(2) The branding strategy does not really impact on the performance of the destination.
(3) Heritage is still used as part of the branding strategy of destinations but it is not the main strategy adopted by DMOs. When heritage is the chosen approach, scientific heritage is the most popular one. The use of cultural heritage and built heritage is rather marginal.

Toward A Research Method For The Design Of Dmos' Logo

Current Practice In Logo Design

The great variety of approaches used to brand the DMOs as well as the variety of design is mainly due to the fact that logos are most of the time used by destinations to standout. This is the case of the new Haitian DMO logo (Séraphin et al, 2016c). In 2012, the DMO organised a competition opened to Haitians from Haiti or from the diaspora. The only guideline was: *'Imagine, create, compose and draw the Haiti of your dreams'.* The DMO received 400 proposals. In 2017, the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) organised a similar type of competition as shown in figure 3.

Figure 3: Cto Logo Design Competition

Good Practice

Existing research have identified key elements that should be included in a logo. Among these are elements referring to the identity, history, tradition and culture of the destination; meaningful colours; values and essence of the destination (Marti, 2008; Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2013). Séraphin *et al* (2016c), even developed a framework identifying the key components of a logo as shown in figure 4.

Figure 4: Framework For The Design Of Dmo Logo
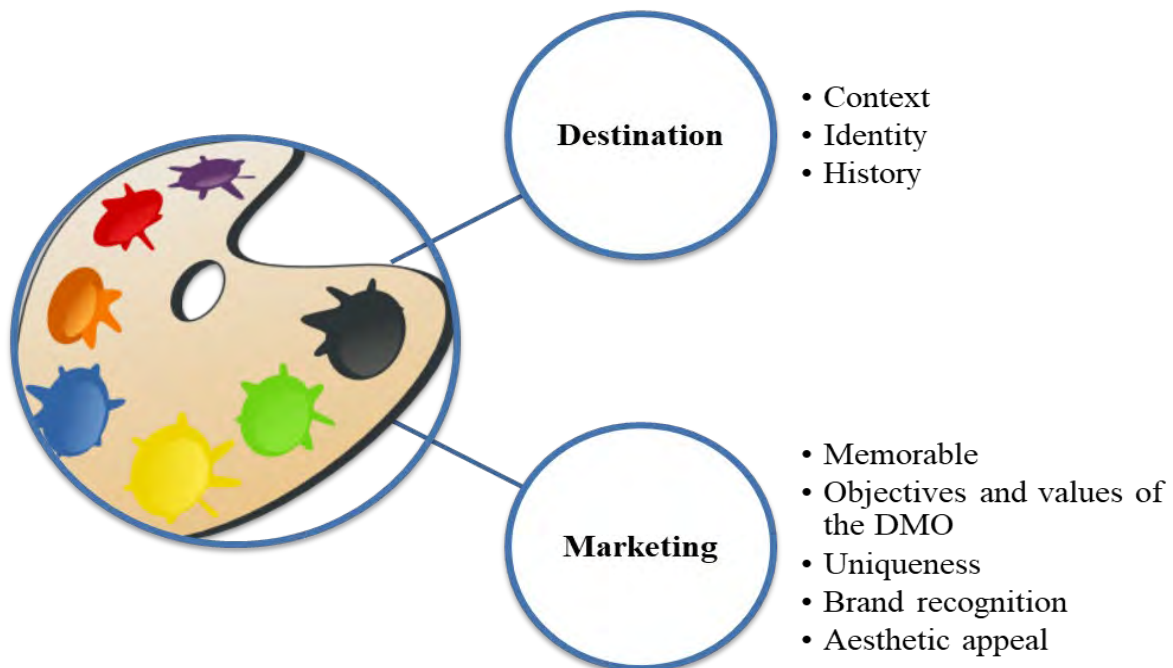
Source: The Author (Adaptation Of Seraphin *Et Al*, 2016)

We are arguing here that DMO logo design should be the results of a scientific approach. This view is also supported by Séraphin *et al* (2016c). This could be done for instance by designing

an online survey (questionnaire) that would cover areas such as visual aesthetics; cultural identity and other destination characteristics. Each question could be associated to a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 for 'strongly disagree' and 5 for 'strongly agree'. Questions would also cover gender, age and exposure to the selected destination culture. The questionnaire would be sent to natives living in the country, and diaspora from the destination, but also to tourists (people who have already visited the destination and potential visitors).

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) could then be conducted on the overall set of completed questionnaires to confirm item relevance. Such a survey would show discrepancies between the way locals and diaspora perceive the logo versus how tourists would. Locals and diaspora have an intimate knowledge of the destination that non-natives would not have. Indeed, as mentioned earlier in this paper, if we compare the old and the new Haitian DMO logos, it could be argued that the destination has moved from a heritage-based strategy to a sun-and-sea based strategy. However, both logos, old and new (figure 5), include heritage symbols. However, the symbolic meaning of the hibiscus is only known by natives from the country (Séraphin *et al*, 2018b).

All administrations in charge of tourism need to explore how potential visitors are perceiving the image of the destination they are in charge of, bearing in mind that people from different cultures will have their own subjective and distinctive perceptions of any one destination, which will further complicate marketing strategy. This is part of the destination reputation management (Anholt, 2011). 'Each destination has a different set of associations wrapped up with its brand' (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2011: 171).

Figure 5: Old And New Logo Haitian DMO

It is worth highlighting the fact that the understanding/knowledge (or not) of a destination impact on how this destination is perceived by potential visitors (Li, Lu, Ying, Jiang, Barnes & Zhang, 2014). Hence the reason why Li et al (2014) suggested that it is important to investigate how much visitors know about the destination. Cognitive and affective image are important when it comes to decision-making (Li *et al*, 2014).

Conclusion

Key Findings

52% of DMOs' logos analysed have adopted a neutral position in their branding strategy; 38% of DMOs have based their branding on heritage and 10% on sun-and-sea. By adopting a neutral position, most of the destinations are following the global trend. That said, 'heritage' remains an important element in the branding of Caribbean destinations. More specifically, scientific heritage represents 87% of the DMOs which opted for a heritage strategy. The remaining 13% went for cultural heritage.

Limitations

The use of visual methodology in this research has its limitations. A potential limitation is that visual materials may be interpreted differently from their intended meaning (Glaw, Inder, Kable & Hazelton (2017). Researchers may interpret material differently based on their own values, ideas, culture, and language. The two authors, however, are Caribbean natives who migrated so they have significant understanding and identify with the logos' symbols and images.

Future Research

Further research is needed to have a better understanding of the role of heritage in creating demand for Caribbean destinations and its subsequent adoption in DMOs branding strategies. Further research could also explore the thinking of DMOs behind the design - colours, images and symbols that lead to their use. What is apparent is that cultural heritage takes a back seat when it comes to branding Caribbean destinations with neutrality being the preferred choice.

The other question is why? Although speculative, this is probably to satisfy the idiosyncratic needs of the increasingly psychocentric characteristics of contemporary Caribbean visitors. This approach is unfortunate as neutrality conveys a message that the Caribbean is undifferentiated which is far from the truth. A destination logo is critical to the tourist's decision-making process therefore a logo should evoke associations, perceptions, and images about the place's culture and history. A destination logo should evoke positive feelings to internal and external audiences (Hem & Iversen, 2014). It is not clear if the move to neutrality in logo design would achieve this. Certainly, more research needs to be done to understand the thought processes behind Caribbean DMOs logo designs. Surveys and interviews with DMO marketing staff should be forthcoming.

The results of this study may help destination marketers to rethink their destination branding strategy. With 23 UNESCO world heritage sites in the Caribbean, destination planners could be missing out on opportunities for a more sustainable form of tourism and high yielding cultural tourists. Cultural tourism is worth 40% of all international tourism arrivals. Researchers note that cultural tourism is moving towards the mass market, broadening its concept beyond sites and monuments, and towards creativity, lifestyles, traditions, and everyday culture (Kalvet, Olesk, Marek, Tiits & Raun, 2020). The cultural tourism market is estimated to grow at a rate of 20.77% between 2022 and 2027. The size of the market is forecast to increase by US$6600.71 million (Technavio, 2022). Caribbean destination marketers should consider how they can synergise culture and heritage with the needs of local residents, international investors and tour operators to produce a more sustainable tourism product through its branding activities. Another area for future research would be to observe the branding strategies of the tour operators who sell Caribbean vacations to determine the messages that are conveyed through their branding strategies for Caribbean destinations. Additionally, research should be done on other regions of the world with a similar history and topographical features such as those in the Pacific and Indian oceans to see if the same approach to destination branding is undertaken.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DESTINATION IMAGE, SATISFACTION AND REVISIT INTENTION: AN EMPIRICAL VIETNAMESE TOURIST VISITS DA LAT CITY

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Abstract

This study aims to measure the mutual impact relationship between destination image, satisfaction, and intention to revisit Da Lat by domestic Vietnamese tourists. Quantitative research methods were used and collected 200 Vietnamese tourists. After filtering, 176 value answers were used for analysis. The research used SPSS 22.0 to measure reliability, satisfaction, and correlation between destination image, satisfaction, and intention to revisit. The findings showed that destination image (environment, infrastructure, and entertainment) positively influence Vietnamese revisit intention. In addition, destination image (security and safety, environment, infrastructure, and entertainment activities) positively influences Vietnamese satisfaction. Furthermore, overall satisfaction positively influences Vietnamese revisit intention. The study provides a deeper understanding of the destination image and satisfaction in sharping tourist revisit intention. These findings provide additional information for developing the destination image, reinforcing the satisfaction of domestic tourists to increase their intention to revisit Da Lat.

Keywords: Destination Image; Satisfaction; Revisit Intention; Vietnamese Tourist; Da Lat City

Introduction

After the COVID-19 pandemic, various economic sectors have implemented strong strategies and advancements to revive the country's economy (Chi & Phuong, 2022; Roach et al., 2021). The tourism industry has been prioritized as a pioneer in revival and development. Many localities have launched campaign programs to attract visitors, resulting in a 168.3% increase in domestic tourism in 2022 compared to the plan and surpassing pre-pandemic levels (Vietnamnews, 2022). This rise in domestic tourism can be attributed to limited long-distance travel, high costs, and uncertainty regarding pandemic safety (Vietnamnews, 2022). Da Lat City is one of the "hot trends" and perennially popular destinations. Da Lat has always been a favorite destination for domestic tourism in Vietnam. The total number of overnight visitors to Da Lat in the first six months of 2022 reached over 3.1 million, a 90.3% increase over the same period in 2021 (Mai, 2022). Da Lat has always been a favorite destination for domestic tourism in Vietnam. Thus, the study was conducted to understand Da Lat's destination image and find solutions to improve visitor satisfaction and increase intentions to return to Da Lat by Vietnamese tourists.

Previous studies investigated the influence of destination image factors (including seven elements) on destination image perception (Králiková et al., 2020; D.-B. Park & Nunkoo, 2013). The model also identified that destination image overall positively affects tourist loyalty (Králiková et al., 2020). Loyalty in the model is understood as the intention to return or recommend to others. The study on the factors affecting the intention to return of domestic tourists: The case of tourism destinations in An Giang province reexamined the impact of factors such as destination image, tourist experience, and travel barriers on the intention to return of domestic tourists to tourism destinations in An Giang province (Phuc & Dung, 2022). The research results showed that destination image and tourist experience positively impact the intention to return. In contrast, travel barriers have a negative effect on the intention to

return (Phuc & Dung, 2022). In addition, customer satisfaction is also influenced by many factors, such as product quality, service quality, price, situational factors, and individual factors (Sato et al., 2018). Furthermore, the relationship between destination image, satisfaction, and revisit intention has been established in previous studies (Abdullah & Lui, 2018; Allameh et al., 2015; Park et al., 2019; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). However, the studies focus on destinations like Da Lat, which is still rare in the literature.

Thus, the study aims to understand the relationship between destination image, satisfaction, and revisit intention in Da Lat tourism. Furthermore, the study focuses on domestic tourists who have visited Da Lat and its tourist destinations and beauty from the perspective of domestic visitors as the subject. The study seeks to evaluate the experiences of domestic tourists when visiting Da Lat and identify the factors that contribute to their satisfaction and dissatisfaction during their vacation and travel in Da Lat. The study used the SPSS 22.0 software to analyze the data through surveys to achieve the research purposes. The outcome of this study will contribute to the development of tourism in the country in general and Da Lat tourism in particular. Moreover, the analysis can serve as marketing material for tourism and destination marketing organizations.

Literature Review

2.1. Da Lat City

Da Lat - a city on the Lam Vien plateau with a diverse range of unique flowers and a very characteristic climate. Visitors will feel the gentle and cool air year-round when coming to Da Lat. Surrounding us are majestic mountains, vast forests, and abundant plant life. When visiting Da Lat, tourists come to an area with endless flower fields, friendly locals, unique cultural identities of the local people, famous landscapes, and ideal tourist destinations. It would be remiss not to mention the cuisine of Da Lat. Da Lat's culinary culture combines the culinary quintessence of many different regions. The most notable among them are the three dishes recognized by the Vietnam Culinary Culture Association (VCCA) as being in the "Top 100 delicious dishes of Vietnam": pork leg stew with artichoke, Da Lat flower hotpot, and Da Lat vegetables with vinegar and chrysanthemum sauce (Baolamdong, 2022).

Historically, Da Lat has been likened to the "miniature melting pot" of Vietnam, with people from all over coming here. Alongside this, unique cultural traits from every region have created a fusion of cultures from the East to the West, from the North to the South. The French contributed to the enlightenment of this region with grand architecture influenced by European architecture. Some notable works include Da Lat Teachers' College, Da Lat Train Station, and The Church of the Chicken. Later, Da Lat knew how to exploit and transform its natural treasures to promote tourism and development. Infrastructure was developed with nature, such as the Lam Vien Square, Xuan Huong Lake, and Da Lat Strawberry Gardens. These are destinations that attract a large number of tourists. Eco-tourism areas and cafes also appeared. They were built to embellish the beautiful and magnificent nature of Da Lat, such as the Hoa Son Dien Trang eco-tourism area, the Da Tien eco-tourism area, the Lung Chung Cafe, and Hunter Café.

2.2. Destination Image

Destination image is visible in the classic definition: "A tourism destination is a geographical unit visited by tourists being a self-contained center" (Burkart & Medlik, 1974, p. 46). Destination image expresses all objective knowledge, prejudices, imagination, and emotional thoughts of an individual or group about a particular location (Lawson & Baud-Bovy, 1977).

Meanwhile, Mill and Morrison (1992) argued that a tourist destination is a place where interdependent factors must be combined to create a satisfying vacation experience for tourists. These factors include attractions, facilities, infrastructure, transportation, and accommodations (Mill & Morrison, 1992).

The Theory of Planning Behaviour (TPB) suggests that someone with a positive attitude toward a particular destination is more likely to choose that destination for their vacation (Ajzen, 1991). Tourist behavior can be divided into three stages: before, during, and after the trip. Specifically, tourist behavior includes decision-making, website experiences, evaluation of the travel experience, and post-travel behavior (Williams, 2003). The study characteristics and intentions of cruise passengers to return to the Caribbean for land–based vacation showed the attributes of cruise passengers and their booking methods for their cruise vacation and identified factors that influence their intention to return for a land-based vacation (Baker & Unni, 2019). Furthermore, previous studies show the impact of destination images on tourist behavior (Abdullah & Lui, 2018; Kim, 2018; Som & Badarneh, 2011; Tosun et al., 2015). Therefore, based on previous research, it is evident that the destination image significantly influences the intention of tourists to return (Bigné Alcañiz et al., 2009; Kim, 2018). Thus, the image of a tourist destination is an essential factor that affects the intention of tourists to revisit, and destinations with widely known images are more attractive to tourists (Kim, 2018; Tosun et al., 2015). Based on the above evidence, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): The destination image of Da Lat positively impacts the intention of domestic tourists in Vietnam to revisit.

2.3. Satisfaction

Tourists have their expectations before arriving at their chosen destination, which can include images of the location, pricing, or the quality of services or products based on recommendations from friends and family or information and pictures found online (Güzel et al., 2020; Nguyen, 2020; Sato et al., 2018). Once the tourists arrive and experience the quality of their chosen destination, they can compare it to their previous expectations to determine if their trip was satisfactory (Nguyen, 2020; Quintal & Polczynski, 2010). If tourists' experiences exceed their expectations, they are delighted with their journey (Jiang et al., 2020). Conversely, if their experience at the destination is uncomfortable, they will not be satisfied (Jiang et al., 2020; Sato et al., 2018). Researchers of destination images have noticed that destinations with more positive photos are more likely to be preferred by tourists when making decisions (Abdullah & Lui, 2018; Nguyen, 2020; Sharma & Nayak, 2019). Furthermore, the experienced image of a destination positively influences the perception and satisfaction of tourists. A more favorable impression leads to higher levels of satisfaction among tourists (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003).

Previous studies in Vietnamese tourism identified the relationship between destination image and satisfaction (Thao et al., 2020; Vang et al., 2021; Vu & Vang, 2020). The factors that affect the satisfaction of domestic tourists were studied in Ho Chi Minh City (Thao et al., 2020). The study collected data from 530 domestic tourists and applied an exploratory factor analysis model. The results showed that the factors that influence the satisfaction of tourists are as follows: destination brand image, diverse and hospitable services, accommodation, food and beverage, transportation and cleanliness, support services, events, and safety. The study revealed that these factors directly and positively impact the satisfaction of domestic tourists in Ho Chi Minh City, with the destination brand image having the most decisive influence (Thao et al., 2020). Furthermore, the survey was collected from tourists who had visited My Tho City (Vu & Vang, 2020). The research proposed a model consisting of seven factors influencing tourists' satisfaction while visiting My Tho. The research results revealed that the satisfaction

of tourists is directly and positively influenced by the seven factors of the destination image, which are natural features, product price, infrastructure, tour guidance, tourism resources, emotional value, reliability, and service capacity, ranking in descending order of impact (Vu & Vang, 2020). The effect of destination image on domestic tourists' satisfaction with Dong Thap tourism destination in Vietnam (Vang et al., 2021). The research findings indicate that the perceived image is the starting point for forming the emotional image. Both emotional and perception images directly and positively impact the overall picture. Still, only components of perception image and overall image have a direct impact on tourist satisfaction. Additionally, the study finds an indirect relationship between perception image and overall image through emotional image, an indirect relationship between perception image and satisfaction through overall image, the progression from emotional image to the overall image, and an indirect relationship between emotional image and satisfaction through overall image (Vang et al., 2021). Thus, the study proposes the hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): The destination image (Da Lat) positively influences the satisfaction of domestic tourists in Vietnam.

2.4. Revisit Intention

The intention to return of a tourist is the desire of travelers to visit a destination they have been to before (Kim, 2018; Park et al., 2019; Som & Badarneh, 2011). The intention to return is influenced by many factors, such as the image of the destination, quality of experience, perceived value, and satisfaction (Park et al., 2019; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Seetanah et al., 2018; Tosun et al., 2015). In addition, many tourists want to return to a destination if they enjoyed it during their first visit (Akgün et al., 2020; Papadimitriou et al., 2015). Moreover, loyalty to a particular destination is reflected in the intention to return and willingness to recommend it to others (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Oppermann, 2000). The study on satisfaction and desire to return among domestic tourists in Soc Trang province (Trang & Loan, 2012). The study used a Likert 5 scale and proposed an Importance Performance Analysis model and level of satisfaction for tourism companies in Soc Trang. The results showed that tourist satisfaction was directly proportional to their intention to return. However, there were also cases of tourists who were inclined to explore and did not want to repeat their travel behavior, which could explain why they had no intention of returning to the same destination despite their high satisfaction. On the other hand, destination brand equity and authenticity positively and directly affect tourists' revisit intention and indirectly influence tourists' revisit intention by mediating tourist satisfaction (Shi et al., 2022). Based on the evidence presented, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Tourist satisfaction positively impacts the intention to return among domestic tourists when visiting Da Lat.
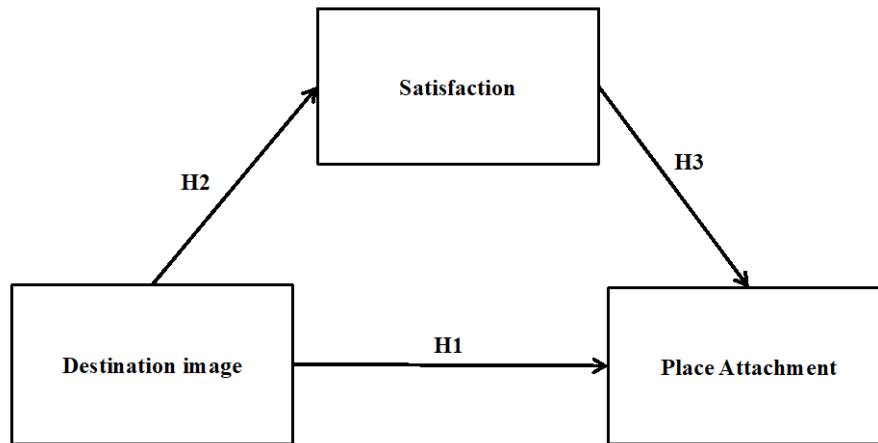
Figure 1. Research framework

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Measurement

The study used a questionnaire to collect information about Da Lat's destination image through the lens of Vietnamese domestic tourists, their satisfaction, and their intention to return. The questions were constructed based on the hypotheses and theoretical foundations adapted from the literature. The survey included a total of 32 questions divided into four main sections. A Likert 5 scale was used for all inquiries. Section 1 included 17 questions about the destination image of Da Lat, which was adapted and modified from previous studies (Beerli & Martín, 2004; Ha Nam Khanh, 2022); section 2 included five questions about tourist satisfaction adapted from earlier studies (Del Bosque & San Martín, 2008; Gök & Sayın, 2015); section 3 had four questions about the intention to return to Da Lat, adapted from previous studies (Gök & Sayın, 2015; Latiff & Ng, 2015); and the final section included five questions about demography.

3.2. Data Collection And Analysis

The research first conducted a pilot survey with ten students from the Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education and three experts in the tourism industry to verify the value, accuracy, and necessity of the questions. After the pilot survey, the questionnaire was distributed through a web page for domestic tourists in Vietnam from March 14, 2023, to March 25, 2023. The study used a convenient sample method. The questionnaire was updated on Google Forms, then a link and QR code were created. After that, the link was notified to domestic tourists via Gmail, Facebook, Instagram, and Zalo.

Additionally, the randomly scanned QR codes of people on the street diversify the survey samples and increase the accuracy of the research. Then, the study collected information from respondents and excluded those who answered: "Never been to Da Lat." The study conducted 200 samples of domestic tourists; after removing participants who had not traveled to Da Lat, 176 representatives were valid for analysis.

The study used SPSS 22.0 statistical method to describe the characteristics of the study participants; describe the observed variables of each factor; test the reliability of each construct; and analyze the correlations between destination image, satisfaction, and revisit intention.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Demographics

SPSS is used to analyze data collected through survey research. The following is a descriptive statistic on gender, age, marital status, education, and occupation of valid survey samples (n=176). The percentage of the male was 42%, while the female was 58%. Most of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 29 (87.5%). A large percentage (85.8%) was single. Regarding education, 69.3% of the participants had a bachelor's degree.

Table 1. Demographic

Items		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	74	42
	Female	102	58
Age	Under 18	2	1.1
	18 - 29	154	87.5
	30 - 40	13	7.4
	41 - 50	7	4.0
Married status	Single	151	85.8
	Married	25	14.2
Education	High school	22	12.5
	Bachelor	122	69.3
	Graduated	32	18.2
Occupation	Officer	14	8.0
	Private company	15	8.5
	Student	113	64.2
	Own business	15	8.5
	Others	19	10.8

4.2. Constructs Analysis

4.2.1. Destination Image

Looking at the data collected, variables related to environmental observation and entertainment activities are rated quite highly by tourists, unlike human factors, which are relatively low (Table 2). The three attributes that tourists rated the highest are "This picturesque destination boasts a plethora of beautiful and charming landscapes, from quaint villages to breathtaking jungles" (M=4.51, SD=.881), "It is a popular tourist hotspot that attracts visitors." (M=4.49, SD=.448), and "Da Lat is renowned for its cool and refreshing climate, which provides a welcome escape from the sweltering heat of other regions in Vietnam." (M=4.42, SD=.910). The three attributes with the lowest ratings are "There are clear efforts being made to adhere to food safety regulations." (M=3.72, SD=.848), "The environment in Da Lat is largely untouched and pristine, making it a refreshing change from polluted cities." (M=3.79, SD=.978), and "The food and beverage facilities are maintained at a high level of cleanliness, ensuring a comfortable and hygienic dining experience." (M=3.81, SD=.831).

4.2.2. Satisfaction Analysis

Table 3 shows the high satisfaction levels of tourists with the environment scenery (M=4.22, SD=.881) and activities in Da Lat (M=4.18, SD=.826). However, tourists are moderately

satisfied with the variables related to security and safety in Da Lat (M=3.95, SD=.834) and the human factor (M=3.98, SD=.878).

4.2.3. Revisit Intention Analysis

The result indicated that the intention of domestic tourists to return is quite high. However, it should be noted that the attribute with the highest level of research involvement is "I am eager to plan another trip to Da Lat, this time with my loved ones, and create more happy memories together." (M=4.36 SD=.883) and the attribute with the lowest evaluation is "I have set a goal to revisit Da Lat within the next six months, as I believe there are always new things to discover and enjoy in this charming city." (M=3.82, SD=1.075) (Table 4).

4.3. Cronbach's Alpha Analysis

Cronbach's alpha analysis was used to check the reliability of each construct. The scale is accepted when Cronbach's alpha score is greater than or equal to 0.7 (Hair et al., 2019). Therefore, table 5.5 shows that Cronbach's alpha of destination image (Cronbach's alpha = 0.95), satisfaction (Cronbach's alpha = 0.886), and intention to return (Cronbach's alpha = 0.85) all exceed 0.7. Thus, all items were well established with reliability levels within the acceptable range (Table 5).

Table 2. Destination Image Analysis

Destination image	Mean	SD
Security and safety		
In Da Lat, the maintenance of law and order is satisfactory.	3.39	.842
There are clear efforts being made to adhere to food safety regulations.	3.72	.848
The city is ensuring the safety of its residents and visitors by enforcing traffic regulations.	3.90	.920
Environment		
Da Lat is renowned for its cool and refreshing climate, which provides a welcome escape from the sweltering heat of other regions in Vietnam.	4.42	.910
This picturesque destination boasts a plethora of beautiful and charming landscapes, from quaint villages to breathtaking jungles.	4.51	.881
It is a popular tourist hotspot that attracts visitors.	4.49	.848
The environment in Da Lat is largely untouched and pristine, making it a refreshing change from polluted cities.	3.79	.978
Human factor		
Local people in Da Lat exhibit warm hospitality and friendliness.	3.39	.932
Service staff in Da Lat demonstrate a high level of enthusiasm.	3.85	.876
Service staff in Da Lat demonstrate a high level of professionalism.	3.86	.880
Infrastructure		
Numerous modern and safe transportation options provide convenient access to all areas of Da Lat.	3.87	.814
The food and beverage facilities are maintained at a high level of cleanliness, ensuring a comfortable and hygienic dining experience.	3.81	.831
The accommodations, including homestays, guesthouses, and hotels, are also well-maintained and provide visitors with a safe and comfortable stay.	3.99	.838
Da Lat boasts a diverse and rich culinary culture, offering various delicious and unique dining options.	4.10	.895
Entertainment activities		
Da Lat offers numerous entertainment options, from thrilling activities to laid-back attractions.	4.04	1.016

Visitors can also browse the various souvenirs and locally sourced products in town.	4.26	.868
The region offers plenty of serene and tranquil sights to enjoy, making it a perfect destination for those seeking relaxation.	4.41	.788

Note: SD: Standard deviation

Table 3. Satisfaction Analysis

Satisfaction	Mean	SD
Security and safety	3.95	.834
Environment	4.22	.881
Human factor	3.98	.878
Infrastructure	4.01	.898
Entertainment activities	4.18	.826

Note: SD: Standard deviation

Table 4. Revisit Intention Analysis

Revisit intention	Mean	SD
I am committed to sharing positive experiences and impressions of Da Lat with others.	4.16	.801
I look forward to recommending Da Lat to my friends, colleagues, and anyone who is interested in visiting a beautiful and unique destination in Vietnam.	4.23	.912
I am eager to plan another trip to Da Lat, this time with my loved ones, and create more happy memories together.	4.36	.883
I have set a goal to revisit Da Lat within the next six months, as I believe there are always new things to discover and enjoy in this charming city	3.82	1.075

Note: SD: Standard deviation

Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha Analysis

Construct/Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Destination image	**.949**
In Da Lat, the maintenance of law and order is satisfactory.	.947
There are clear efforts being made to adhere to food safety regulations.	.947
The city is ensuring the safety of its residents and visitors by enforcing traffic regulations.	.948
Da Lat is renowned for its cool and refreshing climate, which provides a welcome escape from the sweltering heat of other regions in Vietnam.	.947
This picturesque destination boasts a plethora of beautiful and charming landscapes, from quaint villages to breathtaking jungles.	.946
It is a popular tourist hotspot that attracts visitors.	.946
The environment in Da Lat is mainly untouched and pristine, making it a refreshing change from polluted cities.	.946
Local people in Da Lat exhibit warm hospitality and friendliness.	.946
Service staff in Da Lat demonstrate a high level of enthusiasm.	.945
Service staff in Da Lat demonstrate a high level of professionalism.	.944
Numerous modern and safe transportation options provide convenient access to all areas of Da Lat.	.945
The food and beverage facilities are maintained at a high level of cleanliness, ensuring a comfortable and hygienic dining experience.	.945
The accommodations, including homestays, guesthouses, and hotels, are also well-maintained and provide visitors with a safe and comfortable stay.	.945
Da Lat boasts a diverse and rich culinary culture, offering various delicious and unique dining options.	.946
Da Lat offers numerous entertainment options, from thrilling activities to laid-back attractions.	.948
Visitors can also browse the various souvenirs and locally sourced products in town.	.947
The region offers plenty of serene and tranquil sights to enjoy, making it a perfect destination for those seeking relaxation.	.948
Satisfaction	**.886**
Security and safety	.869
Environment	.870
Human factor	.853
Infrastructure	.848
Entertainment activities	.863
Revisit intention	**.853**
I am committed to sharing positive experiences and impressions of Da Lat with others.	.817
I look forward to recommending Da Lat to my friends, colleagues, and anyone who is interested in visiting a beautiful and unique destination in Vietnam.	.772
I am eager to plan another trip to Da Lat, this time with my loved ones, and create more happy memories together.	.784
I have set a goal to revisit Da Lat within the next six months, as I believe there are always new things to discover and enjoy in this charming city	.776

4.4. Correlation Analysis

4.4.1. Destination Image And Revisit Intention

The results of analyzing the correlation between images of Da Lat's tourist destination factors and the intention of domestic tourists to revisit intention (hypothesis 1) are presented in Table 6 and Table 7. The factors "Environmental" (β = 0.41, P-value = 0.000 < 0.05), "Infrastructure" (β = 0.211, P-value = 0.043 < 0.05), and "Entertainment activities" (β = 0.205, P-value = 0.008 < 0.05) of images of Da Lat's tourist destinations all have an impact on the intention of tourists to return. Furthermore, the factors "Safety and security" and "Human" do not have statistically significant meanings for the intention of visitors to return to Da Lat because their significance level (Sig.) is 0.299 and 0.859, respectively, which is greater than 0.05, so the hypothesis that these two factors directly affect visitors' intention to return to Da Lat is rejected.

Table 6. Summary of multiple regression analysis for destination image and revisit intention.

Source	SS	DF	MS	F
Model	64.36	5	12.872	55.994*
Error	39.08	170	.230	
Total	103.44	175		

Note: Dependent variable: revisit intention, * p <.001

Table 7. The multiple regression analysis results between destination image and revisits intention.

Variable	B	SE	ß	t	p
Constant	.338	.238		1.422	.157
Security and safety	.079	.076	.077	1.041	.299
Environment	.416	.078	.411	5.308	.000**
Human factor	-.014	.081	-.015	-.177	.859
Infrastructure	.225	.111	.211	2.036	.043**
Entertainment activities	.206	.077	.205	2.674	.008**
R = .789, R^2 = .622, Adj R^2 = .611					

Note: Dependent variable: revisit intention, ** p < .05

4.4.2. Destination Image And Satisfaction

The images of Da Lat as a tourist destination significantly impact domestic tourists' satisfaction (hypothesis 2) (Table 8 and Table 9). The results of the correlation analysis show that four factors of Da Lat's image affect tourist satisfaction: security and safety (β = 0.232, P-value = 0.000), environmental scenery (β = 0.172, P-value = 0.007), infrastructure (β = 0.260, P-value = 0.003), and entertainment activities (β = 0.233, P-value = 0.000). Moreover, these four factors explain 74.7% of the variation in domestic tourists' satisfaction while visiting Da Lat (R^2 = 0.747).

Table 8. Summary of multiple regression analysis for destination image and satisfaction

Source	SS	DF	MS	F
Model	66.900	5	13.380	100.339*
Error	22.669	170	.133	
Total	89.569	175		

Note: Dependent variable: satisfaction, * p <.001

Table 9. The multiple regression analysis results between destination image and satisfaction.

Variable	B	SE	ß	t	p
Constant	.202	.181		1.114	.267
Security and safety	.223	.058	.232	3.839	.000**
Environment	.162	.060	.172	2.718	.007**
Human factor	.094	.061	.107	1.536	.126
Infrastructure	.258	.084	.260	3.058	.003**
Entertainment activities	.218	.059	.233	3.714	.000**
R = .864, R^2 = .747, Adj R^2 = .739					

Note: Dependent variable: satisfaction, ** $p < .05$

4.4.3. Satisfaction And Revisit Intention

Satisfaction significantly affects the intention of domestic tourists to return (Table 10 and Table 11). The analysis showed that hypothesis H3, which states that satisfaction significantly predicts the intention of domestic tourists to return to Da Lat, was accepted (β = 0.776, P-value = 0.000). Moreover, this explains 60.2% of the variation in the intention to return to Da Lat among domestic tourists. This indicates that when tourists are satisfied with Da Lat as a destination, they are likely to return.

Table 10. Summary of regression analysis for satisfaction and revisit intention.

Source	SS	DF	MS	F
Model	62.228	1	62.228	262.730*
Error	41.212	174	.237	
Total	103.44	175		

Note: Dependent variable: revisit intention, * $p < .001$

Table 11. The regression analysis results between satisfaction and revisits intention.

Variable	B	SE	ß	t	p
Constant	.754	.212		3.549	.000*
Satisfaction	.834	.051	.776	16.209	.000*

Note: Dependent variable: revisit intention, * $p < .001$

5. Conclusion And Discussion

The study showed that destination image positively affects tourist revisit intention, consistent with previous studies (Abdullah & Lui, 2018; Ajzen, 1991; Baker & Unni, 2019; Kim, 2018; Som & Badarneh, 2011; Tosun et al., 2015). More specially, the Vietnamese domestic tourist awareness of the environment, infrastructure, and entertainment activities from Da Lat affect their revisit intention. Furthermore, the outcomes indicated that destination image positively impacts tourists' satisfaction, aligning with previous studies (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Thao et al., 2020; Vang et al., 2021; Vu & Vang, 2020). In particular, the perception of security and safety, environment, infrastructure, and entertainment contributed to Vietnamese tourists' satisfaction with Da Lat tourism. Finally, the result showed satisfaction positively affects tourists' intention to revisit Da La for traveling, consistence with previous studies (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Oppermann, 2000; Shi et al., 2022; Trang & Loan, 2012). Interestingly, human factors of Da Lat destination image did not show the significance to tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. It can be explained the human factor category was not well-defined or measured

accurately. The other four factors (security and safety, environment, infrastructure, and entertainment activities) were simply more important to tourists regarding overall satisfaction and revisit intention. The study participants might not perceive any significant negative experiences or interactions with the local population or service providers during their visit. The study also did not account for potential biases or cultural differences that could affect tourist perceptions of the human factor.

In the context of Da Lat tourism, a positive destination image can result in repeat tourism and increased revenue for businesses in the area. The tourism industry in Da Lat focuses on enhancing its environmental sustainability practices, improving infrastructure, and broadening the range of entertainment activities. Furthermore, tourists with a favorable impression of Da Lat, its attractions, and local services are more likely to return for future vacations and recommend the destination to others. Therefore, tourism stakeholders in Da Lat must promote a positive image of the destination through effective marketing campaigns, high-quality service, and sustainable tourism management practices. Doing so will increase the likelihood of tourists returning to the destination, leading to a sustainable tourism industry in Da Lat.

Based on the result showed that "the perception of security and safety, environment, infrastructure, and entertainment activities contributed to Vietnamese tourists' satisfaction with Da Lat tourism," it is clear that these factors play a critical role in ensuring that tourists have a positive experience when visiting Da Lat. The practical implication of this statement is that businesses and tourism operators in the Da Lat region should prioritize these factors to ensure that tourists feel safe, comfortable, and entertained. Da Lat might involve investing in infrastructure development, improving security measures, and offering various attractions and activities that appeal to visitors. By focusing on these critical areas, businesses can attract more tourists to Da Lat and help to bolster the local economy.

Customer satisfaction is crucial for attracting repeat visitors to the tourist destination. In order to promote sustainable tourism in Da Lat, tourism businesses, establishments, and public authorities need to prioritize customer satisfaction by providing high-quality products, services, and experiences that meet the expectations and preferences of their target audience. Thus, a sound customer relationship management strategy should be implemented to satisfy and delight customers with personalized experiences, continuous engagement, and effective problem-solving. By doing so, businesses and establishments in Da Lat will be able to increase the likelihood of repeat visits, boost the loyalty of their customers, and, ultimately, contribute to the overall growth and success of the tourism industry in the region.
In conclusion, the study implies that tourist satisfaction and perception of the Da Lat tourism destination are crucial in shaping their revisit intention. Therefore, the tourism stakeholders in Da Lat need to focus on enhancing the visitors' overall experience through a combination of measures, such as improving tourism infrastructure, quality of services, and promotion of unique tourist experiences. By taking these practical measures, Da Lat tourism destination can increase tourist revisit intentions and gain a competitive advantage in the global tourism market.

6. Limitations And Recommendation

This study on Da Lat tourism presents some limitations that should be considered. Firstly, the data to assess the hypotheses within the proposed theoretical framework were collected from tourists who visited Da Lat City. Since Da Lat is a small town in Vietnam, the results may not necessarily represent the perceptions of most Vietnamese who visit different tourist destinations throughout the country. Furthermore, the data were collected using a convenient sampling method, which might not have represented the entire tourist population in the area.

Future research can be conducted in various tourist destinations to ensure the generalizability of the findings. Most of the participants are collected students, and the results reflect their degree of perception of destination image, experience, satisfaction, and behavior that may not represent the whole population. To account for a more comprehensive analysis, future studies should involve individuals from all age groups and occupations, focusing on obtaining comparable participation percentages and comparing these groups. Finally, it is possible that the research or survey that evaluated the five factors of destination image and their impact on tourist satisfaction and revisit intention had some limitations in its methodology, sample size, or data analysis. Therefore, the findings may not generalize to all destinations or tourist populations. Future studies can consider more other factors that could affect tourist satisfaction and revisit intention, such as perceived risk, experience, or e-word of mouth.

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PILGRIMAGE TO THE HIMALAYA: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES AND PRESENT SCENARIO

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Abstract

The Himalaya, known as an abode of Shiva and Shakti, the folk deities, has many world-famous highland and valley pilgrimages. This paper examines pilgrimage to the Himalaya, its historical perspectives, and present scenario. A detailed qualitative study was carried out on pilgrimages of the Himalaya – river valleys and highlands. Source areas and inflows of pilgrims, the impact of pilgrimage tourism on culture and livelihood, and changes in the nature of pilgrims were elaborated. Mass pilgrimage tourism has a significant impact on the culture and livelihood of rural people. The historical perspectives of pilgrimage tourism in the Uttarakhand Himalaya were rich during the past. The pilgrims were following certain rich norms while visiting the pilgrimages, leading to strengthening the culture, which has been slightly diluting since the latter half of the 20th Century. However, pilgrimage tourism's impact on rural livelihood as a major source of income is significant. The rural people are providing services to pilgrims on the roadside mainly during the *yatra* season and running their livelihood.

Keywords: Pilgrimage, Folk Deities, Culture, Trekking, Himalaya.

Introduction

The Himalaya houses holy destinations – rivers, confluences, lakes, caves, summits, glaciers, and pilgrimages. It is believed to be an abode of Lord Shiva, Shakti, and folk deities, and has been a centre to legends of countless cultures and religions, myths, and scriptures besides incomparable natural beauty. It is linked to self-realization embodied spiritual aspiration to substantial potential. The traditional scriptures on the deities and cultural mobility have established the pilgrimages in the Himalaya (Bharati, 1970; Bakker, 1990; Jha, 1991; Sax, 1991; Messerschmidt, 1992). Tourism in the form of pilgrimage to Hindu sanctuaries, located in High Mountain, has existed for a long time in the Himalaya, which plays a significant role in strengthening Hindu culture and society. The Aryan culture predominated by worshipping the holy rivers and nature deities integrated into Hinduism in due course of time. The Himalaya has spiritual importance, and it is a sacred place for Hindus (Grotzbach, 1994). Pilgrimage donates a journey to the holy places whereas pilgrims mean a person who performs journey (Singh, 2013; Singh, 2002; Laidlaw, 2008).

Shaivism and Vaishnavism are two cults, existed in the Himalaya. The followers of the Shaiv cult worship Lord Shiva and goddess Shakti and they are no-vegetarian. Meanwhile, the followers of the Vaishnav cult worship Lord Vishnu and they are pure vegetarians. Owing to the large number of followers of the Shaiv cult, the temples of Shiva and Shakti are outnumbered. On the other hand, the followers and temples of Vaishnav cults are few, although, Badrinath, the seat of Lord Vishnu is the major pilgrimage center and is one of the *char dhams* of India. Denotes four pilgrimages. India has char dhams – Puri, Rameshwaram, Dwarika, and Badrinath. Similarly, the Uttarakhand Himalaya has Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath known as char dhams. The Himalaya symbolizes Shiva and Shakti, and an abode of folk deities, and thus, the entire Himalaya has high spiritual significance. The Himalaya has irresistible majestic beauty, many faces, and moods, and attract pilgrims to devote time and worship. It obtains snow-capped ranges, misty sparkling valleys, tinkling streams, lakes, and beautiful forests, an inspirational and full of sanctity. It is home to those who are seeking spiritual salvation. The Hindu pilgrimage centers and ancient Buddhist

monasteries are situated in the Himalaya making it the secret cultural landscape. Further, the countless fascinating legends are making these pilgrimages a hallowed destination for pilgrims. Trekking along the course of the Ganga River from Haridwar to Gangotri and Badrinath is the spiritual destination of great power, ancient than India's scriptures. Himalaya is the home for many glacial-fed rivers, known for their purity and sanctity, and spectacular forest landscapes, all together attract pilgrims.

The richness of the Himalaya can be viewed through the presence of numerous highland and river valley pilgrimages. Within the Garhwal Himalaya, one of the naturally and culturally integrated parts of the Himalaya, Panch Badri (five temples of Lord Vishnu), Panch Kedar (five temples of Lord Vishnu), and Panch Prayag (meeting places of rivers), are situated at different locations and altitudes (Figure 1). Two highland pilgrimages – Yamunotri and Gangotri are situated on the bank of the Yamuna and Bhagirathi rivers, respectively nearly to their source areas. All these are the highland and the river valley pilgrimages having importance in Hindus' religious wisdom. Besides these pilgrimages, thousands of Lord Shiva and Shakti temples lie in the entire region. The Garhwal Himalaya has 17 prayags and more than 100 places, where two rivers meet (Sati, 2015), having high spiritual significance. These are the places where the pilgrims take a holy dip during auspicious occasions. The Kumaon Himalaya has five famous pilgrimages – Jageshwar, Bageshwar, Purnagiri, Dunagiri, and Chhota Kailash. It also provides a famous trekking route to Kailash-Mansarovar *yatra* (Cultural procession). Besides, the highland and river valley pilgrimages, the Uttarakhand Himalaya have *Siddha Peethas*, *Shakti Peethas*, and *Jyotirlingas*. Jageshwar is one amongst the 12th *Jyotirlingas* in India, known for its 124 temples of Shiva and Shakti, built by Adi Shankaracharya. Joshimath, Surkanda, Kunjapuri, and Chandrabadni are the *Shaktipeethas*, and many *Siddha Peethas* are situated here. These pilgrimages and cultural locales have been the centers of spiritual attainment and *Moksha* (Salvation) for the centuries, visited by exodus pilgrims every year.
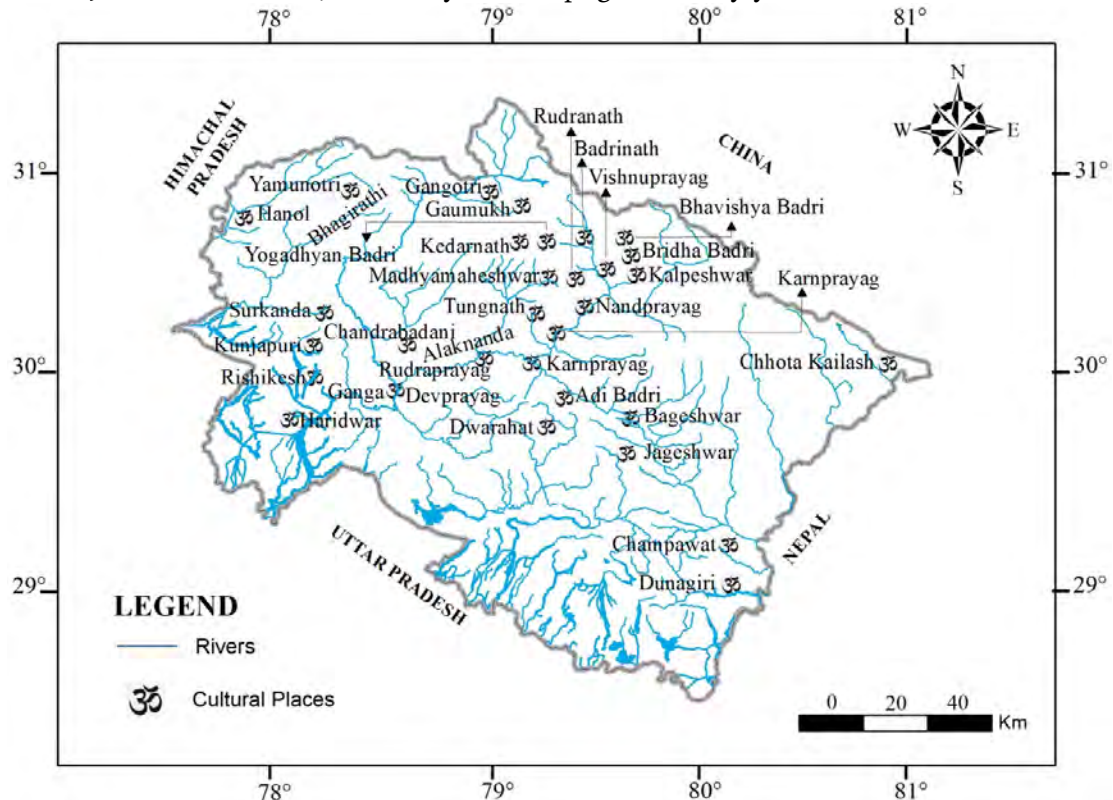

Figure 1: Major Pilgrimages – Highlands And River Valleys In The Uttarakhand Himalaya

The pilgrimage to the Himalaya began between the 4th and the 2nd century BC, as mentioned in the epos Mahabharata. The route was started from Haridwar to the source of the Yamuna, Ganga, Mandakini, and Alaknanda rivers from west to east. The highland pilgrimages, located above 3,000 m, are remained open for six months of the summer and monsoon seasons, mainly from April-May to October-November. The dates of opening and closing of these highland pilgrimages are decided by the descendent of the king of Tehri in Narendra Nagar. The *Kul Purohits* (Spiritual teachers) decide the date according to the Hindu calendar. In the meantime, the river valley pilgrimages remain open throughout the year. This paper discusses pilgrimage to the Himalaya and describes the historical perspectives and present scenario of the pilgrimage tourism in the Uttarakhand Himalaya. Source areas of pilgrims and pilgrims' inflows are also described.

This study covers the pilgrimage centres and pilgrims' inflows in the Uttarakhand Himalaya, an integral part of the Himalaya. It is the land of rivers, having rich biodiversity, and an abode of Shiva and Shakti. Uttarakhand was the part of Uttar Pradesh state before 2000 and now it is an independent state of the Republic of India. It is a mountainous state, about 16% geographical area of which is snow-capped. The mountain peaks, river valleys, alpine grasslands, and different forest landscapes support pilgrimage tourism and make this land unique. This study was conducted using a qualitative approach. Field visits of the pilgrimages – river valleys and highlands were made. The pilgrimages mainly Panch Badri, Panch Kedar, and Panch Prayag were described with their historical perspectives and pilgrims' inflows were illustrated.

Historical Perspectives

The Himalaya has been remaining a center for peace, penance, and salvation and for spiritual attainment from time immemorial. In the Rishi tradition of India, our Rishis performed penance in the Himalaya and composed many treatises. The pilgrimage centres of the Uttarakhand Himalaya are referred to in the Hindu scriptures of Ramayana and Mahabharata. It is believed that Lord Rama and his younger brother Lakshmana visited Rishikesh after killing the devil king Ravana. Two hanging bridges on the Ganga – Ram *Jhula* and Lakshman *Jhula* are named after them at Rishikesh. It is also believed that Lord Lakshmana performed penance at Lakshman *Siddha Peeth* situated in the Raja Ji National Park near Dehradun city after killing Ravana. The Pandavas after killing their 100 Kauarava brothers in the famous battle of Mahabharata stayed in Uttarakhand while on the way to Swarga (heaven). The temple of Kedarnath was believed to be built by Bhima, one of the Pandava brothers. Pandukeshwar, a small settlement located before Badrinath, is named after the Pandavas. The great saint Ved Vyasa, who scribed the Bhagawat Geeta, visited the highland pilgrimages after the war of Mahabharata. Vedas were believed to be written in the Himalaya by Rishi Ved Vyasa.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century AD, Adi Guru Shankaracharya of Kaldi (Kerala), the founder of the ancient Swami order, visited Uttarakhand after establishing three *dhams* in different parts of India – Rameshwaram in the south, Puri in the east, and Dwarika in the west. In the Hindu scriptures, these pilgrimages already existed in the given places since the period of Ramayana and Mahabharata. Adi Shankracharya re-established and renovated them. He travelled the entire Uttarakhand Himalaya and re-established many temples of Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva. The temples of Panch Badri, Panch Kedar, Bageshwar, and Jageshwar are among them. He travelled up to Bageshwar, where he built the temple of Lord Shiva on the banks of the Gomati and Saryu rivers. On the bank of the Jataganga in Jageshwar, he built a group of 124 temples of Shiva and Shakti. He is believed to be a forerunner of starting trekking in Uttarakhand. The famous Vishnu temple at Badrinath, one of the *char dhams* of India, was

re-established by him. It is believed that Adi Shankaracharya died at Bhairav Jaap near Kedarnath at the age of 28 years in 820 AD (Nand and Kumar 1989).

Figure 2: sadhus are on the *char dham yatra* near rishikesh. photo by author.

The pilgrims including saints and sages (sadhus) have undertaken the journey through the Himalaya in the past. They performed the journey to the pilgrimages, situated in the high Himalaya by trekking for several days or months (Figure 2). Pilgrims believed that the longest distance and days they travel to visit the pilgrimages bring them to attain salvation or enlightenment. The highland pilgrimages in the Himalaya are situated above 3,000 m. Haridwar, a valley pilgrimage, is the gateway to *char dhams* of Uttarakhand – Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath. Before the Chinese aggression of 1962, these pilgrimages were trekked kilometers by pilgrims, after which, a road was constructed to Badrinath and Gangotri and now these two pilgrimages are accessible by road. However, a trek of about 16 km goes to Kedarnath, Yamunotri, and Gaumukh pilgrimages. Another divine route goes to Kailash-Mansarovar, which takes about a month trekking. A journey to Kailash-Mansarovar is performed during the summer via the Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand.

Pilgrimage to the Himalaya: *Char Dham Yatra*

Pilgrimage to the Himalaya begins from Haridwar, also known as Hardwar. The term 'Hari' means Lord Vishnu and 'Dwar' means Gateway thus, Haridwar denotes 'Gateway to Badrinath' (Lord Vishnu). Similarly, 'Har' means Lord Shiva, therefore, Hardwar also denotes 'Gateway to Kedarnath' (Lord Shiva). The importance of Haridwar is described in the Hindus scriptures. The Ganga flows through Har Ki Pauri where pilgrims take a holy dip on the Ganga to liberate themselves from the cycle of birth and death. The *Char dham yatra* goes to Rishikesh, 24 km from Haridwar, along the Ganga River, is known as 'Saffron Belt'. Rishikesh is known as the 'Yoga Capital of the World'. The ghats of Rishikesh are famous for morning and evening aarti. Rishikesh is the centre of ashrams where spiritual teachers pronounce Vedic teaching to their disciples. The banks of the Ganga are the places for walking, puja, and meditation. Devprayag is situated on the banks of the Bhagirathi and Alaknanda rivers about 69 km from Rishikesh. These rivers make a beautiful and pious confluence at Devprayag, after which, the Bhagirathi and Alaknanda rivers are called the Ganga (Figure 3). A road bifurcates from Devprayag goes to Badrinath pilgrimage along the course of the Alaknanda River. Rudraprayag (Mandakini

joins Alaknanda), Karnprayag (Pindar joins Alaknanda), Nandprayag (Nandakini meets Alaknanda), and Vishnuprayag (Dhauli Ganga meats Alaknanda) are the famous valley pilgrimages, situated on the way to Badrinath pilgrimage. Another road bifurcates from Rudraprayag, a valley pilgrimage, and goes to Gaurikund, a base camp of the Kedarnath pilgrimage along the Mandakini River. From Devprayag, another road goes to Gangotri pilgrimage along the Bhagirathi River. Yamunotri is one of the highland pilgrimages, situated on the bank of the Yamuna River, close to Gangotri. *The Char Dham Yatra* can be performed from the east to west i.e., Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri.

Figure 3: Devprayag, where the Alaknanda River joins the Bhagirathi River and after confluence, these rivers are called 'the Ganga'.

Badrinath is considered one of the important *dhams*, named after the famous temple of Badrinath, an abode of Lord Vishnu. About 3,100 m altitude, close to the Tibet border, Badrinath is situated on the right bank of the Alaknanda River, which is also called the Vishnu Ganga. Badrinath is one of the five Badris. The others are Bridha Badri, Bhavishya Badri, Yogdhyana Badri, and Adi-Badri. All these are the abodes of Lord Vishnu. The Kedarnath pilgrimage is situated on the bank of Mandakini where four other rivulets join the Bhagirathi including the Saraswati. Kedarnath is a sheet of Lord Shiva, one of the Panch Kedar. The other Kedars are Madhyamaheshwar, Tungnath, Rudranath, and Kalpeshwar. All five temples of Lord Shiva are situated above 3,000 m, which remained close during the winter season because of heavy snow. The idols of Lord Shiva are brought to the valley pilgrimages, the winter sheets. Seventeen famous prayags[1] are situated in the Garhwal Himalaya although there are above 100 prayags in the entire Uttarakhand. The Panch Badris, Panch Kedar, and Panch Prayags are the famous pilgrimages – highland and valley for the Hindus. Two female folk deities – Yamuna and Ganga have summer dwellings in the highland pilgrimages – Yamunotri and Gangotri, respectively. Yamunotri, located on the left bank of the Yamuna River, is believed to be the daughter of Yama, the god of death. Taking a ship of water (aachman) of the Yamuna River is believed to be getting rid of all sufferings. The idol of goddess Yamuna is brought to Kharsali village, a winter dwelling and valley pilgrimage. Gangotri pilgrimage is located on the right bank of the Ganga River. The Ganga is the pious river of India. In the Hindu scripture, it is

mentioned that taking a holy dip in the Ganga River liberates from the cycle of birth and death. The idol of goddess Ganga is brought to Mukhimath (Mukhawa), winter abode, for six months when the Gangotri pilgrimage remained snow-capped (Figure 4). The Kumaon Himalaya has Jageshwar, Bageshwar, Purnagiri, and Dunagiri pilgrimages, the abodes of Shiva and Shakti. The *Char Dhams*, valley pilgrimages, and other numerous cultural locales have been the centres of spiritual attainment for centuries. The Himalaya is itself an embodiment of Lord Shiva. The rivers, forests, and mountains are named after the fold deities and pilgrims worship all forms of nature.

The cultural processions to the Himalaya are ancient. Besides the *char dham yatra*, cultural procession of *Dev* and *Devi* are performed at the local level. The idols of folk deities are carried by local pilgrims from village to village for a month or more. Nanda Devi is a female adorable deity. The idol of Nanda Devi is carried to Homkund every year in the month of August. The Nanda Devi Raj Jat is the longest spiritual procession of 22 days, is one of the poignant examples of pilgrimage tourism. This procession is performed every 12 years where thousands of pilgrims trek to the high Himalaya along with the idol of Nanda Devi and a Khadu (goat).

Figure 4: Yamunotri, a summer abode of goddess Ganga, remains snow-clad during winter. Photo by Author.

Source Area and Pilgrims' Inflows

The pilgrims visiting pilgrimages in the Himalaya are mainly the Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and Buddhists. The Teerthankars of Jains is believed to be the incarnations of Hindu deities. Many Teerthankars performed penance in the Himalaya. Lord Buddha, a son of the Hindu king Suddhodhana, established Buddhism, which spread throughout south, southeast, and northeast Asia. Adi Shankaracharya mentioned Lord Buddha as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The Sikh religion originated in the 15th century AD in India by Guru Nanak Dev. They have two highland pilgrimages in Uttarakhand – Govind Ghat and Hemkund Sahib. All these religions are integrated into Hinduism. Hindus within the Indian subcontinents are outnumbered. They are mainly domestic pilgrims. Nepali pilgrims also visit the pilgrimages of the Uttarakhand Himalaya. A number of Jain pilgrims visit the pilgrimages of the Himalaya. Among the foreign

pilgrims, Buddhists are outnumbered. They belong to Sri Lanka, Southeast, and Northeast Asia. A number of Tibetan pilgrims also visit the pilgrimages of the Uttarakhand Himalaya.

In the last 18 years (2000-2018), about 300 million domestic pilgrims and 0.48 million foreign pilgrims visited the pilgrimages of Uttarakhand (UTDB, 2018). Haridwar received about 240 million domestic pilgrims and 0.32 million foreign pilgrims. It was followed by Rishikesh. In the highland pilgrimages, the highest domestic pilgrims visited Badrinath (13 million), followed by Kedarnath (7 million). Domestic tourists trek 16 km to reach Kedarnath therefore their number is just half than Badrinath (Figure 5). Gangotri has received 5 million and Yamunotri has received 4 million domestic pilgrims (Sati, 2021). The highest number of foreign pilgrims visited Kedarnath (23094 persons) because Kedarnath is accessible by air, as chopper services are available during the *yatra* season. It is followed by Gangotri (6429 persons), Badrinath (3805 persons), and Yamunotri (3752 persons). Badrinath and Kedarnath are the two famous highland pilgrimages. Visiting them in a lifetime is the dream of pilgrims. Badrinath is visited by the highest number of pilgrims because it is accessible by road whereas, a 16 km trekking needs to reach Kedarnath, therefore, the pilgrim number is comparatively less. Pilgrims also visit Gangotri and Yamunotri whereas the inflow is comparatively less. The Gangotri temple is located roadside whereas the Yamunotri temple is a 16 km trekking. Foreign pilgrims' inflow is nominal. Foreigners visit India for natural tourism, and they visit the places, which are accessible.

Figure 5: Pilgrims trekking to Kedarnath pilgrimage along the course of the Mandakini River in Rudraprayag district. Photo by Author.

The Present Scenario

During the past, the pilgrims while pilgrimage to the Himalaya, prepared food items and managed accommodation. They maintained the hierarchy of the social systems, followed a different path of worshipping folk deities. This was the reason that the local people, who were serving the pilgrims during the pilgrimage season, did not have sufficient income from the

pilgrims. Many of the highland pilgrimages were not connected by any means of transportation, therefore, trekking was only the option to reach these pilgrimages. The food items were mainly nonperishable made by ghee including *pua, puri*, and *sattu*. Further, a large group of pilgrims was poor with a limited capacity of expenditure. The *Char Dham yatra* was performed by trekking before the Chinese aggression of 1962. The pilgrims undertook *yatra* from Haridwar for several days often months. It was difficult to trek all the highland pilgrimages thus, the pilgrims visited one or two pilgrimages one time.

The advent of modern pilgrimage tourism in the Uttarakhand Himalaya led to a significant change in the culture and society. The people of mountainous mainland of the Himalaya are innocent. They adapt the cultural imprints of pilgrims easily and smoothly. The author has observed that the food habit of the folks, which are providing services to the pilgrims along the road sides, has changed. With the increase in income from pilgrims, they have adapted the modern culture. A road was constructed from Rishikesh to Badrinath after 1962, which led to a large increase in pilgrims' inflow. Slowly, the pilgrims' use modern means of transportation like taxies, AC buses, and their vehicles. Many of them have become open-minded, started eating and drinking in hotels and restaurants. The pilgrims who are using modern means of transportation and accommodation have changed the cultural landscapes and the major idea of the pilgrimage tourism in the Himalaya. Thus, enormous changes social practices have also been noticed in the pilgrimage sites. The pilgrims are losing the deep sense of pilgrimages mainly the new generation not following the norms of pilgrimage tourism. The author observed that mass tourism, in the form of river rafting, trekking, and mountaineering, has replaced pilgrimage tourism largely. In the pilgrimage centres, the VIP culture has been developed. The common pilgrims make a long queue for Darshan (worshiping inside the temple known as *garvagriha*) of deities whereas, there is a provision of Darshan without making queue if someone pays an extra fee or he or she is VIP. Those visiting Kedarnath pilgrimage by chopper are enjoying the extra facilities of Darshan. In Rishikesh and Haridwar, where a large number of foreign tourists visit, the scenario is different. The young tourists in the name of yoga are consuming drugs and involved in sexuality. It has been observed that the young and educated local tour guides after spending several days with the young female tourists/pilgrims from abroad come close to each other and in many cases, they become life partners. Many of them are settled in India and many in other countries. This has diluted the real sense of pilgrimage.

Environmental risks due to mass pilgrims and geo-environmental hazards in many highland pilgrimages are noticed high, mainly during the past decades. The high landscape fragility also accentuates the environmental risks. The Kedarnath tragedy of 2013 is a unique example of geo-environmental hazards, which has led to the killing of more than 10,000 people and damaging huge property (Sati, 2013). The pilgrimage site, the entire Kedarnath town was fully damaged. Lagging proper institutional facilities – registration of pilgrims visiting pilgrimage centers, weather prediction, and properly following the warnings are the other issues related to the highland pilgrimages.

In the meantime, the development of infrastructural facilities and increase in the income level of pilgrims, the radical changes in terms of the pilgrims' behaviour, and their impact on the culture and livelihood of the local people were observed significantly. Adopting new practices in terms of transportation and accommodation has increased a considerable income and economic scenario of the local people and the State as well. The river valleys from Rishikesh to *char dhams* in different directions are connected by roads. The rural people have constructed economic avenues such as hotels, models, *dhawas*, and tea stalls along the roadside, augmenting employment. Many resorts have also been constructed on the way, providing food and beverages to the pilgrims.

Discussion

The Himalaya has extraordinary sights and vibrations. The temples of the Himalaya emanate spiritual powers through conscious practices, meditation, and chanting. Pilgrimage to holy places bless the pilgrims with divine knowledge and feelings, and also enlightened with a rich history. Pilgrimages are believed to be the centre of love nature, high mountains, and places of spiritual power. The landscape all through the river valleys and highlands is spectacular, attracts the pilgrims. The sages and saints have been performing meditation in the Himalaya for time immemorial. The rivers are believed to be pious and many of them are named after folk deities. The Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati rivers are three female deities, worshiped by pilgrims. The mountain peaks are also known as the centers for meditation. The two mountains – Nar and Narayan situated on the two sides – east and west of Badrinath highland pilgrimages are believed to be the holy mountains. Similarly, there are many other mountains where the pilgrims perform meditation. Many forests of the Himalaya are named after the folk deities, e. g. Nanda Van and Badri Van.

Not much attention was given to pilgrimage tourism by policymakers and development researchers (Cohen, 1992; Rinschede, 1992). The Himalaya has many highland and river valley pilgrimages of world-famous. These pilgrimages make unique spiritual landscapes and provide peace of mind. However, many highland pilgrimages are inaccessible where trekking of above 15 km has to be performed still today. Some of them are Yamunotri, Gaumukh, Kedarnath, Madhyamaheshwar, Tungnath, Rudranath, Purnagiri, and Kailash-Mansarovar. Many other local pilgrimages are also accessible by trekking. The roads' quality is not good in the many areas, which are leading to the highland pilgrimages. Accommodation facilities are poor, therefore, many pilgrims avoid visiting the pilgrimages. A study conducted by the author shows that every day 5,000 pilgrims visit Gangotri highland pilgrimage during the *yatra* season meanwhile, a large number of pilgrims return on the same day because of lagging accommodation facilities (Sati, 2018). The impact of natural hazards is enormous on pilgrims. The *yatra* season falls during the monsoon period when the entire Uttarakhand Himalaya receives heavy downpours. The pilgrimage centres, situated along the river valleys and highlands are ecologically fragile. Landslides and mass movements along the roadsides are common during the pilgrimage season. Thus, the pilgrims face lots of problems during the pilgrimage to the Himalaya.

Conclusions

The Himalaya has been a center for the attainment of spirituality and salvation. The sages and saints across India visit and meditate in these pilgrimage centres. Pilgrimage tourism has a significant impact on the income and economy of the rural people, who are involved in providing services to pilgrims. Along with mass pilgrims visiting the highland pilgrimages, the number of *dhawas*, hotels, motels, and restaurants is increasing. Although, natural and adventurer tourism is also practiced in Uttarakhand, yet the pilgrims are outnumbered. In the meantime, carrying capacity such as transportation and accommodation in the pilgrimage centres is not sufficient.

The remote pilgrimage centers, which are ecologically fragile and where the construction of the road is not possible, ropeways facilities can be provided. Homestay facilities can be provided along the trekking routes, which are leading to the highland pilgrimages. In the pilgrimage centres, folklore – songs and dances can be performed. This will make pilgrims understand the folk culture. The local food and beverages can be served to the pilgrims in the pilgrimage centres. A separate nodal agency for pilgrimage tourism can be set up which will look into all

affairs of pilgrims in all the pilgrimage centres. Tour guides can be trained for imparting knowledge about the folk culture to pilgrims. Institutional facilities such as registration of pilgrims at the entry point i.e., Haridwar or Rishikesh can be ensured. Similarly, weather prediction can be followed strictly so that any future catastrophe in the pilgrimage centres can be minimized.

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THE IMPACTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABLE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES: CASE STUDY IN HONG KONG MA WAN PARK

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Abstract:

Environmental education experience in parks has been neglected in literature. This study aims to explore environmental and sustainable educational experiences of visitors in Hong Kong Ma Wan Park where is a nature park that combines nature, learning, and arts. The authors conducted 24 in-depth interviews with visitors to explore the views on those environmental and sustainable educational experiences. This experience is defined as visitors' knowledge acquired through visitation, and changes of attitude and behaviours toward environmental sustainability. Data analysis shows that visitors' environmental education experiences are reflected in "7 Rs": 1) Refocusing on green education, 2) Reinforcing pro-environmental behaviour, 3) Responding for sustainable development, 4) Rekindling low-carbon lifestyle, 5) Respecting nature, 6) Retrieving tree information, and 7) Relaxing and enjoying art in nature. Result suggests those experiences can enable visitors to acquire authentic, professional, and specific knowledge about nature, to develop appreciative and responsible attitudes toward environment, to show philanthropic support of environmentally sustainability, and to prompt environmentally responsible behaviours. The findings of this study show that the environmental education experiences can be 5I's inspiring, influential, informative, interactive, and innovative in terms of influencing visitors' awareness, value, attitude, and behaviours for environmental sustainability. This study provides insights for other nature parks to design and implement creative, artistic, and interactive environmental education experiences for visitors about environmental sustainability. Implications, limitations, and future research directions were discussed.

Keywords: Environmental Sustainability, Environmental Education Experiences, Nature Park

Introduction

The extreme weather conditions urge for the urgency for environmental protection, energy saving (William & Hudnut, 2008). Hence, sustainability and conservation are essential for living (Maser, Beaton, & Smith, 1998). Sustainability has become a touchstone for development (William & Hudnut, 2008). Environmental education has the function to influence the positive changes in attitude and behaviour to cope with the climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation. The pace of environmental degradation is fast, so environmental education should educate people about the physical environment and to inspire people to live green. Environmental education has failed in part because in indoor classroom fail to let learner to feel the beauty of nature in outside natural area (Saylan, & Blumstein, 2011. Also, environmental education experiences in nature parks are unexplored. The aims of this to explore visitor's environmental education experiences in Hong Kong Ma Wan Park.

Background of Ma Wan Park

Ma Wan Park is a nature park that combines nature, learning, arts, and love, with an emphasis on interactive instruction. Ma Wan Park attained an award "Your Most Favourite Nature Spot" from U magazine. The winners were chosen by the public, so the award is a proof of people's support for Ma Wan Park's conservation efforts (Ma Wan Park, 2019). Ma Wan Park encourages care for the environment and enable people get close to nature and combines nature,

education, and art to promote positive values like love of life, family, and the Earth. Its 5.6-hectare Nature Garden has over 1, 000 native trees and is opened to the public for free (Ma Wan Park, 2019).

Literature Review

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development refers to a series of processes on the improvement of human life (Blewitt, 2008; UNSGHLPS, 2012). We cannot just focus about satisfy humanity's needs without support life-sustaining systems (Lambin, 2005; Brinsmead & Hooker, 2011). Human beings are interdependencies in a single global system (Moldan et al. 2012). Sustainable development is the goal (Hove, 2004). It must use the sustainable development process to achieve sustainability (Prugh & Assadourian, 2003; Sartori et al. 2014; Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi, 2009). To operate towards sustainability, we should realize we are part of a larger system in business ecology and extends the willingness to examine the larger socio-economic system and how we impact it at the individual, community, and organizational level, and eventually at the planetary level (Laing & Frost, 2010). Hence, green value propositions include contributions to the physical environment of buildings, community, and the global environment (Swarbrooke, 1999). It is beneficial to stakeholders to make environmental sustainability as determination (Ahmad et al. 2013). Nature parks is one of the key stakeholders influence and educate visitors about environmental sustainability.

Environmental Education

The process of education should emphasize active, experiential, inquiry-based learning and real-world problem solving in the larger community (Cortese, 2003). Education experiences acquire information about green practices provided by education institutions (Boo & Park, 2013). Environmental orientation included environmental interest, knowledge about nature conservation and engagement in environmentally responsible behaviours (Ballantyne et al., 2011). Free choice learning refers to the type of learning that occurs when individual exercise important choice that can occur outside schools (Falk, 2015). It refers to the self-directed learning in national parks and nature centre (Falk, 2015). Providing experiences for learners about ecological principles and facilitating the understanding about their roles between natural environment (Farmer et al, 2007). Authenticity is a critical factor in considering education content, environmental issues, and environmental changes (Uzzell et al, 1994). The education activities in natural parks are authentic and interesting than in classroom to attract visitor's interest, attitudes and to influence their perception about creatures and environment (Cavas & Eylul, 2011). Thus, learning at nature parks can provide visitors ecological and environmental knowledge (Lugg & Slattery, 2003). Helping learners to learn how to love the earth is a high calling and can be conducted through ecotourism (Kimmel, 1991). Once people begin to understand the environment, they can appreciate the environment deeply and respect the environment (Butler, 1993). Hence, the nature parks play a significant role to inspire visitors to cherish the nature. Nature experience can foster a sense of commitment (Russell, 1999).

Nature Parks

Nature Parks provide conservation education, to engender pro-conservation attitudes, and to encourage the public to support conservation efforts (Ballantyne et al., 2008). The strategy of emphasizing the pro-conservation elements and education opportunities packed in the experiences that can attract visitors (Ballantyne et al., 2008). The influence within national parks and protected areas have changed the interviewees' knowledge and attitudes (Hughes &

Saunders, 2005; Madin & Fenton, 2004; Tubb, 2003), Ecotourism experiences and their influence on interviewees' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours. However, knowledge may increase, but environmental attitudes and behaviors show no change (Beaumont, 2001; Cable et al., 1987; Lee & Balchin, 1995; Lee & Moscardo, 2005; Morgan et al., 2003; Orams, 1997; Tubb, 2003; Wiles & Hall, 2005). Hollinshead (1999) Welford et al., (1999) argued that the primary motives of nature-based tourists expect entertainment, comfort, and consumption. Whereas research has proved the positive effects of wildlife tourism on visitors' environmental knowledge and attitudes, by raising visitors' awareness of sustainability and behaviours (Ballantyne et al., 2011., Ballantyne et al., 2007; Ballantyne and Packer, 2009; Lee & Moscardo, 2005; Tisdell & Wilson, 2005).

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore visitor's views on environmental education experiences in Ma Wan Park. Qualitative research emphasis on words rather than numbers (Maxwell, 2013). It aims at understanding things rather than with measuring them (Gordon & Langmaid, 1989), It focus on subjectivity and the authenticity of human experience (Silverman, 2013) allows the researcher to gain an insight into the different meanings, perceptions, feelings, and attitudes of research subjects (Holloway et al., 2010). The researchers conducted 24 in-depth interviews with Ma Wan Park visitors. Ma Wan Park was chosen because it is a nature park that combines nature, learning, art, and love, with an emphasis interactive instruction. The researchers used purposive sampling for obtaining informative data from interviewees who visited Ma Wan Park. The sample group comprised twelve females and twelve males. Interviewed are all aged 30-65. Their education levels were secondary (7), undergraduate (9) and postgraduate (9). Interviewing would be discontinued once 'saturation' was reached. At that point, no further insights would be forthcoming from the interviews (Myers, 2019). Data collection took place in Ma Wan Park. The researchers adopted in-depth semi-structured interviews lasting 45 to 65 minutes at the park. Questions were designed to elicit responses regarding each interviewee's views about their environmental education experiences in Ma Wan Park. Responses were analysed using manual coding, scanning the recordings, and flagging emergent themes and common views (Veal, 2006). Finally, the results were grouped into similar conceptual areas according to prevalent themes.

Findings and Discussion

The purpose was to understand visitor's environmental education experiences in Ma Wan Park. It is a nature park that combines nature, learning, arts, and love, with an emphasis on interactive instruction for providing meaningful environmental education experiences for visitors (Ma Wan Park, 2019). It offers community education about green management and conservation, to engender pro-conservation attitudes, and to encourage the public to support conservation efforts (Ballantyne et al., 2008). The strategy of emphasizing the pro-conservation elements and education opportunities packed in the experience could attract visitors to experience (Ballantyne et al., 2008).

Education experiences acquire useful information about green practices provided by formal and informal education institutions (Boo & Park, 2013). One challenge facing environmental educators was how to teach an urbanized population about nature. It is important to recognize and reaffirm the deep interconnections with the rest of nature if we fail to venture beyond the classroom (Bell, 1997). Ma Wan Park is an informal outdoor classroom to allows learners to develop knowledge that classroom could not offer the natural, interactive, and authentic experiences. Also, education should emphasize active, experiential, inquiry-based learning and real-world problem solving in the larger community (Cortese, 2003). Authenticity is a critical

factor in considering environmental issues (Uzzell et al, 1994). Thus, learning at nature parks can provide visitors not only ecological and environmental management information but also the authenticity of local knowledge (Lugg & Slattery, 2003) and green knowledge. The education activities in natural life parks such as Ma Wan Park are more authentic and interesting than in routine classrooms to attract visitor's motivation their perception about environment (Cavas & Eylul, 2011). Thus, visitors would understand the true meaning of "nature" (Miles, 1991).

Ma Wan Park enables learners to adopt flexible learning. It let learners choose and control over their learning outside schools (Falk, 2015). It is a self-directed learning that regularly occurs in settings like national parks and nature centre, (Falk, 2015). Hollinshead (1999), and Welford et al., (1999) argued that the primary motives of nature-based tourists are looking for entertainment, comfort, and consumption, it may be unrealistic to expect them to support sustainable practices through overt behaviour. However, Ma Wan Park provide experiences for learners to learn about ecological principles and facilitating the understanding about their roles and relationship between natural environment (Farmer et al, 2007). Once visitors begin to understand the environment, they can appreciate the environment and commit to protect the environment (Butler, 1993). Familiarity with nature can helps to develop close relationship with nature, and based on this closer relationship, people develop a determination to live green and in harmony with the nature (Pendleton, 1983). Hence, the nature parks play a vital role to provide a venue for visitors to understand and feel about the nature authentically. In addition, nature experience can foster caring, commitment, and action (Russell, 1999). After visiting Ma Wan Park, visitors would realize the pressing needs to protect the beautiful landscape and natural resources. The goal is to nurture environmental interest, knowledge about nature conservation and engagement in environmentally responsible behaviours (Ballantyne et al., 2011). The motivation for facilitating the learners about the environment is to develop learner's affection for their world, with the hope that such affection will lead to supportive and responsible behaviour. Helping learners to learn how to love the earth is a calling and can be conducted through ecotourism (Kimmel, 1991). Whereas research has proved the positive effects of environmental education experiences on visitors' environmental knowledge and attitudes, by raising visitors' awareness of sustainability and environmentally friendly attitude and behaviours (Ballantyne et al., 2011., Ballantyne et al., 2007; Ballantyne and Packer, 2009).

The results of in-depth interviews visitors' perspectives on their environmental education experiences that reflected on values, attitudes, feelings, and behaviour. The environmental education experiences in Ma Wan Park were perceived as 5I's informational, influencing, innovative, inspiring, and interactive. It inspired visitors to acquire more knowledge about the nature, embrace responsible environmental attitudes and engage in pro-environmental behaviour. The results 7R's was revealed about the insights of visitors' environmental education experiences:

1) Refocusing on green education
2) Reinforcing pro-environmental behaviour
3) Responding for sustainable development
4) Rekindling low-carbon lifestyle
5) Respecting nature
6) Retrieving tree information
7) Relaxing and enjoying art in nature

Refocusing on Green Education

Ma Wan Park is a tourist attraction and nature park that combines nature, learning, arts, and love, with an emphasis on interactive instruction. The process of education should emphasize active, experiential, inquiry-based learning (Cortese, 2003). Provide green education experiences (Boo & Park, 2013) through the interesting activities organized by Ma Wan Park. Programs include environmental interest, knowledge about nature conservation and engagement in environmentally responsible behaviours (Ballantyne et al., 2011).

I can learn the exotic species, biological diversity as well as to learn how to protect our earth. The interactive and outdoor nature park allow me to develop a sense of appreciation and responsibility towards the planet.

Ma Wan Park is an excellent venue for providing visitors to become environmentally conscious through interactive and authentic experiences.

We learnt a wider perspective of nature environment and hold initiative-taking attitude towards environment protection. My kids have found the interesting knowledge of trees and have develop positive attitudes toward environment protection.

Reinforcing of Pro-Environmental Behaviour

Pro-environmental responsibility must be adopted for ensuring environmental sustainability. Reinforce environmental behaviour in all facets of life including special moments is the most convincing way to protect the environment.

After attending this solar cooking activity, I will do my utmost to reduce energy consumption.

Green nature program with full steps of green consciousness encourages me to engage in eco-friendly.

Responding For Sustainable Development

All life on earth is interrelated. Climate change affects all the creatures and environment on earth. To respond for sustainable development, Ma Wan Park takes a role to spread green knowledge to educate visitors to respond to sustainable development attentively. Motivating visitors to engage voluntarily in pro-environmental behaviour in their daily life is expected to contribute to environmental sustainability. Ma Wan Park promote the green wedding to response to sustainable development. Guests can hold green wedding ceremony, students can join the study tours, elderly can walk freely, and visitors can appreciate the beauty of the plants relaxingly. Ma Wan Park is a garden dedicated to the collection, cultivation, preservation and display 400 diverse kinds of vegetation, including 100 indigenous tree species.

We appreciate the beauty of plants, and we want to cherish every plant and refocus green world, which helps to increase the sustainability conscious, as well as minimize environmental risks.

It helps to nurture a sense of personal responsibility towards the natural environment and educate the visitors to cherish all the natural beauty and sustain for next generations. Ma Wan Park take a role of balancing between conservation and meeting the visitor's needs, it serves an important channel to spread the message of sustainable development.

Rekindling Low-Carbon Lifestyle

Visitors are educated to change their lifestyle in a more ecologically favourable way. For example, participate in recycling activity and buying eco-friendly products (Kalafatis et al., 1999; Laroche et al., 2001; Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007). A low carbon lifestyle makes a better place to live. Unlike waste that is tangible of impact on the environment, energy is intangible that treated as an unavoidable cost (Yu et al., 2012). All the activities organized in Ma Wan Park were energy saving. Only sunlight is used. No air-conditioning and fan were used.

Ma Wan Park is a good outdoor classroom to educate visitors to live green. It is commendable to see management are devoted to plan, implement, and promote Ma Wan Park. All visitors are inspired to take part to change the world into a better and greener place for you and me!

Protecting environment is not merely an attitude, daily action is required. Buying products from local farmers not only can guarantee fresh and delicious fruits and food, but also can reduce money and save time during transportation process.

I make sure that I turned off the lights, phone charger and all electric applicants when not in use. It helps to reduce unnecessary electricity waste. Switch to compact fluorescent light bulbs and use bicycle and walk more.

Respecting Our Nature

Nature experience can foster caring, commitment, and action (Russell, 1999). Improved visitor's connectivity to the natural world. Environmental education experience in the Ma Wan Park arouses visitor's environmental awareness and appreciation.

I realized that nature should not be taken for granted. It is a highly integrated and interdependent functioning system upon which all life forms. I am connected to nature, rather than isolated from nature.

Retrieving Tree Information

Ma Wan Park held a program called 'Hundred Little Tree Trailblazers lead Ma Wan Tree Blossom' visitors were invited as little tree trailblazers for the Park's Tree Blossom programme on Earth Day (Ma Wan Park, 2019). In addition, the Ma Wan Tree Blossom smart phone mobile app called 'iTree Hunt photo contest and iTree Tour' launched to inspire more visitors to learn more about how to cherish the nature..

Tree Blossom activity with eco-tours led by tree surgeon to introduce different trees with a smartphone application. I appreciate those creative and digital ways to educate the visitors.

By using Ma Wan Tree Blossom mobile application, I acquire information about 100 tree species and their features. The application introduces lots of interesting facts of a wide range of native trees to arouse public interest and raise awareness of conservation. Its GPS tracking function enables users to identify the location of different tree species in the park at their fingertips, bringing a whole new tree appreciation experience to visitors.

I learnt the professional knowledge about native trees in Nature Garden through iTree Tours guided by professional arborists. After reading the tree knowledge via mobile application, I

learnt that Lichens could grow on tree bark, bare rock, sterile soil, sand, dessert & even polar region as well as used to make test paper for acidity.

I joined the iTree Hunt photo contest. By capture my impressive images of the tree or plant in Ma Wan Park and upload their entries to Facebook.

Relaxing and Enjoy Art in Nature

Ma Wan Park captivate natural sceneries and four popular landscapes including the European-style Sweet Garden, the Hilltop Lookout which overlooks the Tsing Ma Bridge, Rambler, and Ma Wan Channels: The Golden Mean Plaza and the Rainbow Fall (Ma Wan Park,2019). The natural environment of the park is well preserved and provides an ideal home to over a thousand of native trees and a wide range of insects and animals. With its artistic design and natural scenic beauty, Ma Wan Park is an ideal location for drawing. To encourage people to enjoy the fun of creating art in the natural environs, Ma Wan Park has held lots of art programmes to inspire Hong Kong families' creativity amid its natural scenic beauty. Professional instructors teach visitors to enjoy art in nature. While art is inspired by our lives, our lives are associated with nature. Visitors can experience and enjoy green living in the park, while learning the importance of preserving nature. The unique and spectacular landscape of Ma Wan Park provides painters with boundless inspiration and creative ideas. Visitors in Ma Wan Art Jam workshops got the chance to paint on native wood. By providing a chance for the family to create art together, the workshops aimed to improve the communication and bonding among family members, strengthening parent-child relationships. The excerpts below describe the contributions that a nature park can bring in busy city. It shows that the nature park can be a significant outdoor classroom. Ma Wan Park provides visitors with easy access to the beauty of the nature and enjoy art simultaneously.

I joined the drawing and painting camps, I appreciate the natural beauty and drawing together in such beautiful outdoor venue.

I have spent quality times together in nature and appreciate art. It enhances our family bonds. It is special that nature and Art Jam are integrated, I can also completely relax my mind.

I love the Art Jam workshops to draw on native wood. After attending the art jam workshops, I learnt that every single item or even rubbish can turn to be an art product.

Conclusions

By studying environmental education experiences in Ma Wan Park, the insights gained from visitors, these contributions are 7R's are refocusing on refocusing on green education, reinforcing pro-environmental behaviour, responding for sustainable development, rekindling low-carbon lifestyle, respecting nature, retrieving tree information, and relaxing and enjoying art in nature. Additional research to further explore other nature parks in world and its meaning for visitors is needed. The result suggests that Ma Wan Park environmental education experiences can enable visitors to acquire knowledge, raise environmental awareness and encourage green living. Ma Wan Park was perceived by all the study visitors as a valuable nature classroom which raised environmental awareness, upheld moral obligation to engage in green living, and induced visitor's greater pro-environmental behaviour for sustainable development. This research contributed to provides empirical evidence in environmental education experiences of visitors of Ma Wan Park. This study contributes to environmental education literature in relation to nature parks and to managerial practitioners about how to plan, implement environmental education experiences to educate visitors' knowledge about

sustainable development, environmental protection, and green living. The results of this study highlight the significance of nature park as a channel to nurture visitors about environmental protection. Future researchers may use focus group to draw out visitor's memories of experiences about the environmental education experience of other nature parks in the world.

Managerial Implications

Based on the results, some implications for nature park management to enrich visitor's environmental education experiences are recommended.

Recommendations to Nature Park Management

- To design more innovative learning-based activities that can be implemented in parks for the mass public and overseas visitors.
- To launch and promote different theme of interactive, informative, inspiring environmental education program and events regularly.
- To use social media as a key interactive channel to promote all the information and activities.
- To coordinate with educational institutions to weave a promising future for nature habitat and public education.
- To encourage the visitors to use public transportation and use eco-transportation inside the park area.
- To use renewable energy such as solar power inside the parks.

Limitations

This study has several limitations which the authors attribute to the relative weakness of interviews to present valid, reliable, and trustworthy empirical evidence. Consequently, it is recognized that the results of this study present a snapshot of views amongst a specific group of visitors at Ma Wan Park. Even the authors make no claims regarding the generalization of the results, this study has indicated a concentration of the environmental education experiences in Ma Wan Park. This finding should be of interest to the management of all nature parks.

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EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ROLES OF TOUR GUIDES, THEIR SERVICE QUALITY, AND TOURISTS' BEHAVIOR IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM

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Abstract

An important role played by tour guides on group tours is to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip; however, research focusing on their role in the field of tourism is still limited. Among tourists' behavioural intentions and satisfaction with tour guides, this study demonstrates the new role of tour guiding service quality. The data were obtained from 317 Vietnamese tourists who participated in domestic package tours. A positive correlation has been found between the tour guide's performance and the level of tourist satisfaction, as well as between tourist travel intentions and the quality of the tour guide's service. There is a substantial correlation between tourist satisfaction and tour guide performance, with service quality as an effective mediator in this relationship. The results provide insight into practical implications for tour guides to improve their capabilities and show how important tour guides are in group package tours. Tour operators need to enhance tour guide services and performance to maximize tourist satisfaction and optimistic tourist behaviour intention.

Keywords: Service Quality, Tour Guide Performance, Tourist Behaviour Intention, Tourist Satisfaction, Vietnam Tourism

Introduction

The quality of tour services is demonstrated in part by the quality of tour guides during tours. Tour guides are not only critical characters in the progress of package tours of travel agencies (Chan et al., 2015), but they are also an essential representative of the tourism business as well as their services are primarily dependent on their performance and technical expertise (Chen et al., 2011; Hwang & Lee, 2019). Tour guides' professional skills are crucial to tourists' travel services (Lin et al., 2017). Their roles and professional knowledge are also important to tourists' experience at the destination (Huang et al., 2010). Therefore, the tour guide service becomes the key component of the numerous tourism services provided by travel companies when the tour guides present high-quality service to visitors, which is not only important to the economic growth of travel companies and connected to, but also vital to the reputation of the attraction they serve (Huang et al., 2010).

Several studies have been conducted to discover the links between tourist satisfaction, tour guide performance, and behaviour intention (Chen et al., 2011; Hwang & Lee, 2019). Providing excellent customer service and consulting on tours are influenced by two layers of guide satisfaction, namely satisfaction with the tour experience and satisfaction with the service facilities, as illustrated by Huang et al. (2010). Additionally, Hwang and Lee (2019) established that professional tour guide competencies are essential to improve three variables: satisfaction with the journey, satisfaction with the guide service, and word-of-mouth. Furthermore, they serve as mediators between visitors, travel agents, and tourist attractions in the vicinity, as reported by Chang (2014).

Based on the difference between what visitors perceive of the service and what they feel, tour guides can measure the service they provide. Previous research noted that the tour guide's service quality has a key contribution to the tourism industry (Chan et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2017). For example, Žabkar et al. (2010) pointed out that the high level of service and the resultant loyalty contribute to reassuring voice and referrals, as well as return visits - eventually influencing the success of travel agencies, tourism operations, and tourism businesses. As Alazaizeh et al. (2019) pointed out, there is still a lack of the standard of tour guide service in the correlation between tourist satisfaction, tour guide performance, and behaviour intention. In Chang (2014), the correlation between tourist fulfilment, tour guide performance, and shopping behaviour was also described as mediated by perceived confidence and benevolence of trust and tourists' happiness and shopping behaviours. However, the tour guide's service quality is still missing in Chang's (2014) report.

This research attempted to assess the impact of service quality on tour guide performance, tourist satisfaction, and behaviour intention. The goal of this study is to improve knowledge of visitor behaviour and to make recommendations for human resources and management of customer relationship strategies in the tourism market. On the other hand, Huang et al. (2010) suggested that potential researchers examine the role of tour guide performance in various contexts. Therefore, Vietnamese domestic tourists were considered the study's source. Furthermore, Vietnam, a country with over 3000 km of coastline, is attracting tourists from all over the world and domestic tourists. Specifically, many Vietnamese tourists visit beach destinations and scenic locations to rediscover the local charm of the country. Moreover, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, Vietnam's tourism relies only on domestic tourists to gradually recover. However, the study of Vietnamese tour guides on the connection between Vietnamese domestic tourists and local travel agencies is still limited to the field of tourism research, without considering the economic and social benefits resulting from the role of a tour guide. Therefore, this research responds to the important part of Vietnamese tour guides' current recovery of Vietnam's tourism. To assess whether tour guide performance, tourist satisfaction, and tourist behaviour intention are connected, including the value of tour guide service quality, a purposive sample strategy was used to gather quantitative data from Vietnamese domestic tourists.

Literature Review

Tour Guide Performance

According to Ap and Wong (2001), a thorough understanding of the environment and service in a well-described cultural, geographical, and linguistic field are essential to a tour guide's job. Cohen (1985) argues that the current guide is descended from the tutor and the pathfinder. The two lines of origin were drawn from the leadership and mediation of the role of tour guides. Regarding Cohen (1985), tour guide roles consist of four key components: a tool that provides guidance, access, and control; a social component including conflict resolution, integration, morality, and animation; a third part providing representation and organization; and a fourth element giving communication.

Tourist satisfaction is positively influenced by tour guide performance, according to studies (Lin et al., 2017). To understand the culture of the tourism host, the tour guide serves as a cultural interface between tourists and hosts (Huang et al., 2010). Furthermore, tour guide performance also significantly influences the satisfaction of visitors (Chan et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2017). Moreover, a substantial study has been undertaken to determine how the tour guide affects tourist satisfaction (Weiler & Black, 2015). Previous studies suggested that perception

influences the satisfaction of tourists (Kuo et al., 2018; Zhang & Chow, 2004). The hypothesis is then framed like this:

Hypothesis 1: Tour guide performance will positively impact tourist satisfaction.

Research has shown that tour guides significantly impact tourist behaviour (Hwang & Lee, 2019; Mak et al., 2011). Tour guides are one of the most significant factors in boosting sustainable tourism growth in Macau in reviewing the quality of services for tourist guides (Mak et al., 2011). In the analysis of 325 older Korean travellers, Hwang and Lee (2019) suggested that the experienced tour guide's perception affects the participant's word in the mediation relationship with the guided tour. The performance of tour guides is critical for affecting visitor satisfaction with visited cultural heritage sites and improving tourists' sustainable behaviour (Alazaizeh et al., 2019). Teng and Tsai (2020) studied the guide who, during the tour package, undertook the dual roles of a tour guide and a tour guide, positively influenced tourism behaviours in the context of Taiwanese tourists. Earlier research has shown the value of tourist guides in shaping the behaviour of tourists. This study then suggested the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Tour guide performance will positively impact tourist behaviour intention.

Service Quality Of Tour Guiding

As a result of service quality, customers' expectations differ from their service experiences (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Heung (2008) said three essential frameworks measure a tour guide's perceived efficiency, customer orientation, central service delivery, and communication efficacy. Tour guides' service level includes service, friendliness, productivity, and memorable encounters with visitors (Chand, 2010; Chen et al., 2016). The service standard of tour guides is one of the most significant reasons for the tourism business's success (Mak et al., 2011). Practical guides can direct visitors to the local site and customs landscape (Cho & Wang, 2011; Žabkar et al., 2010). Tour guides boost tourism skills, calm physical, emotional, and spiritual states, and keep visitors in good memories. The consistency of tour guides can be recognized not only by tourists but also by tourist agency images overall (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010).
Participants are most motivated to take part in tours for the support and guidance they will receive (Chan et al., 2015; Zhang & Chow, 2004). It is more likely that customers will be satisfied with both tour services and tour experience (Chan et al., 2015) as long as the perceived needs of customers are met by these services (Chan et al., 2015). Zhang and Chow (2004) used a significance and performance analysis to analyse tour guides in Hong Kong viewed by Chinese continental tourists. Findings show that tour guides in Hong Kong perform well, thus increasing their ability to solve problems, technical capabilities, reliability, and language skills. According to Lin et al. (2017), a tour guide's efficiency strongly impacts the quality of tour guidance service provided to group tour participants. The findings showed that the professional attributes of tour guides, including experience, skills, and behaviours, influenced tourists' expectations of the level of tourist service. The hypothesis is then framed:

Hypothesis 3: Tour guide performance will positively impact the service quality of tour guiding.

Tourist Satisfaction

The more satisfied your customers are, the more money you'll make, the more word-of-mouth you'll develop, and the more likely you'll get repurchases (Alegre & Garau, 2010). The consumer's satisfaction is determined by the difference between their expectations and their

awareness of the product's effectiveness, according to Kotler (1997). In other words, satisfaction is related to the responsive appraisal and feeling of the customer (Song et al., 2011; Hanqun Song & Cheung, 2010). Customer satisfaction refers to a state of thinking or actual reality and behavior or image, emotions, and effect determined by external factors such as the authentic environment of individuals and locations, social conditions, group activity, and psychological state (Albayrak et al., 2010). Since it is essential to meet potential behavioral intentions (Han et al., 2017; Hwang & Lee, 2019), the capability of tour operators to improve customer travel satisfaction has become crucial in the competitive market.

The correlation between tourist satisfaction and travel intention has been established (Alazaizeh et al., 2019; Chang, 2014). Murray and Howat (2002) recognized customer loyalty as one of the primary factors contributing to customers' future behaviour with 218 sports and leisure center customers. Chinese tourists to Taiwan who are shopping for package tours are most satisfied with their tour guides, according to Chang (2014). Furthermore, Chan et al. (2015) revealed that tourist satisfaction and tourism experience have significantly impacted client conduct in the sense of Hong Kong Chinese visitors. Moreover, Alazaizeh et al. (2019), in a study of sustainable tourism in Petra Archaeological Park in Jordan, indicated that visitor satisfaction significantly influences sustainable behaviour intention. The hypothesis is then suggested as follows:

Hypothesis 4: Tourist satisfaction will positively impact tourist behaviour intention.

The quality of tour guiding and tourist satisfaction have been associated in previous studies (Kang et al., 2004; Lin et al., 2017). In order to determine customer satisfaction with the standard of service, one must examine the amount of difference between expectations and awareness and the level of the actual performance that is delivered. Regarding customer satisfaction, there is a slight gap between expectations and perceptions regarding high-quality services (Parasuraman, 1988; Parasuraman et al., 1985). The standard of service was recently widely recognized as a determinant of the pleasure of visitors (Kang et al., 2004; Lin et al., 2017). Customers' satisfaction with service quality was examined in Kang et al. (2004)'s study of Japanese hotels and ryokans (traditional Japanese inns). They found that customer satisfaction was impacted by creativeness, physical aspect, encounter performance, and unexpected service. In the sense of package tours in Shanghai, Huang et al. (2010) analysed the satisfaction of services satisfaction. The findings revealed that tourist satisfaction with tourism guidance services (including domestic and international tourists) influenced their satisfaction with tourist products and the overall tourist experience. The hypothesis is then suggested as follows:

Hypothesis 5: Service quality of tour guiding will positively impact tourist satisfaction.

Tourist Behaviour Intention

Several ways and contexts have been used to define and measure tourist behaviour intention (Chan et al., 2015; Zeithaml et al., 1996). The conceptualization of behavioural motives as a two-dimensional system that requires fidelity and readiness to pay more is based on Zeithaml et al. (1996) study. Baker and Crompton (2000) took advantage of Zeithaml et al. (1996)'s level of behavioural intention to demonstrate that an improved festival experience of tourism could improve the happiness of festival visitors and retention and desire to pay more. Lee et al. (2011) found that loyalty relates to tourist satisfaction with tourist facilities. Chan et al. (2015) study on Chinese tourists who visited and had many tour services in Hong Kong found that tour guide service directly affected Chinese tourist behaviour intention, and their satisfaction also affected their behavioural intention, which increased Chinese tourist loyalty and

willingness to pay for the next trip. According to Alazaizeh et al. (2019), the tour guides' performance at Petra Archaeological Museum positively impacts tourist satisfaction and the intention to engage in sustainable behaviour of tourists.

The SERVQUAL paradigm Zeithaml et al., 1996) suggests that consumers who receive high levels of service quality have more favourable behavioural intentions. Therefore, when senior tourists are pleased and delighted with the tour guide, they will recommend the tourist agency to more people. Previous studies also backed this finding in figuring out the satisfaction of the guide service through word of mouth (Chan et al., 2015; Heung, 2008). Heung (2008) analysed that data collected from 431 visitors showed that visitors are likelier to have strong word-of-mouth intent when pleased with the guide service. Furthermore, Chan et al. (2015) documented a direct correlation between tour guide services and behavioural intentions. It is more likely that visitors will follow the same tour operator on another tour when they are satisfied with the support and commitment of the tourist guide. The hypothesis is then suggested as follows:

Hypothesis 6: Tour guide service quality will positively impact tourist behaviour intention.

In this study, the quality of tour guiding is thought that impact the correlation between tour guide performance, tourist satisfaction, and travel intention. Specifically, the tour guide's expertise influences the association between services and tourist satisfaction, which benefits higher service quality and satisfaction (Alazaizeh et al., 2019; Lin et al., 2017). Thus, the level of service of tour guides is likely to mediate between tourist guides and tourist satisfaction. On the other hand, tour guides often influence the standard of services and the purpose of visitor behaviour (Hwang & Lee, 2019; Zhang & Chow, 2004). Moreover, the standard of tour services directs the decided sense of tourist activity (Chan et al., 2015; Mak et al., 2011). As a result, the quality of service offered by tour guides can also act as a mediator between the intention of tourists and tour guides' performance. The hypothesis is then suggested as follows:

Hypothesis 7: The service quality of tour guiding mediates the relationships between tour guide performance and tourist satisfaction.

Hypothesis 8: The service quality of tour guiding mediates the relationships between tour guide performance and tourist behaviour intention.

According to the study's hypotheses, the conceptual model is shown in Figure 1.
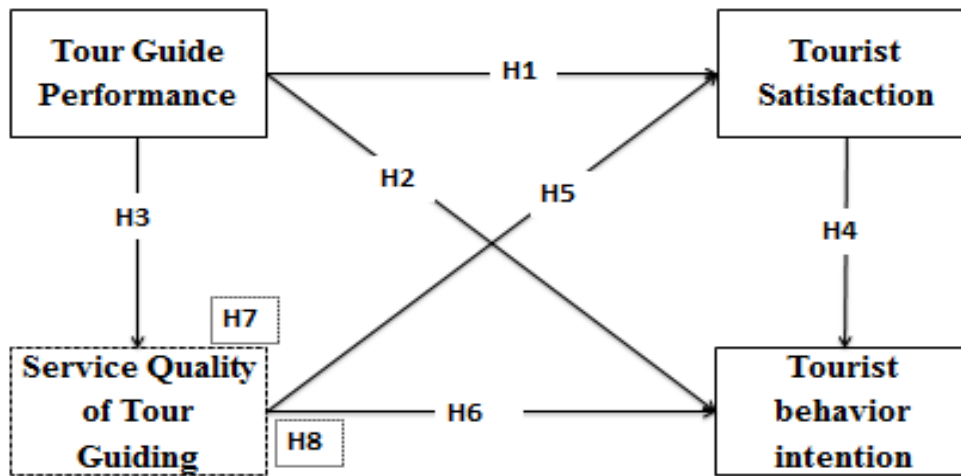
Methodology

Figure 2. Research of Tour Guide Performance, Tourist Satisfaction, Service Quality of Tour Guiding, and Tourist Behavior Intention

Measurement

For empirical testing of structures within the proposed model, measured objects were developed on different scales and validated from previous studies. A survey containing five parts was prepared by a quantitative analysis method. Gender, marital status, age, education, jobs, monthly incomes, and travel experiences were the demographic questions in this survey's first segment. After evaluating multiple previous studies like Chang (2014); Mak et al. (2011), the decision was taken to include these questions. Part two, the level of tour guide performance scales, was adapted with 19 items from Alazaizeh et al. (2019); Hwang and Lee (2019). Part three, the service quality of tour guiding, was measured using five items cited from Cho and Wang (2011); Lin et al. (2017). Part four, tourist satisfaction, was calculated with four items employed by Chi and Qu (2008); Lin et al. (2017). In Part five, behaviour intention was measured with four items under two subdimension, including loyalty and willingness to pay, cited by Chan et al. (2015). And finally, based on the above calculating elements, the questionnaire was prepared using a Likert-type scale of seven points.

Pilot Test

The content validity for all survey questions has been assessed by two academic experts familiar with the theoretical subject matter of the study. As a result, one item in the tour guide's performance was deflected because of overlapping meaning and replaced by another. And because of the duplication of other sections, one thing in the tour guide standard service was removed. Survey questionnaires were first translated into English, then blinded translation-back-translation was used to translate them into Vietnamese. And then, a pre-test was conducted on 20 Vietnamese students who have taken part in tour programs with tour guides. Participants were encouraged to fill in the survey and present their contact details in explaining the questions. Specifically, specific and significant problems were defined for the study's purpose, but only a minor review was carried out of the topic of monthly income based on the information gained.

Data Collection

The data collection method adopted in this research was a purposive sampling approach. The survey was distributed at three attractions in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam (Independence Palace, Immaculate Conception Cathedral, and Nguyen Thuan Walking Street, the three most popular tourist spots in Vietnam). Only people who participated in tour programs were selected, so those with travel experience took part in the survey. First, respondents answered whether they took part in tours after deciding to participate in the survey. After verifying that they engaged in tour programs, the questionnaire was offered to them. The first selection question was: "Have you previously taken a domestic package tour with a tour guide performance before?" If the response was no, the survey was closed. The respondents clarified the purpose of the research before beginning the questionnaire.

Furthermore, if the participants did not understand, they were explained everything in the interview. A total of 450 questionnaires, 378 of which were compiled, have been circulated. Of these, 61 answers were removed because they were incomplete and not consistent with the research requirements. Therefore, the final review used a total of 317 replies.

Data Analysis

This paper included confirmatory factor analysis, descriptive analysis, structural equation modelling, and the Sobel test. In the first place, tour guide performance, quality of service provided by tour guides, tourist satisfaction, and travel intention were measured as the mean and standard deviation. Confirmatory factor analysis was analysed using statistical software analyses SPSS 23.0 and AMOS 23.0 to check the validity of the calculating tool. Finally, validating the hypotheses in the study relied on structural equation modelling and Sobel tests.

Results

Demographic Description

To explain sample results, sample structure analyses were conducted using 317 relevant questionnaires. Among the eligible questionnaires, 167 (52.7%) were completed by males and 150 (47.3%) by females. Unmarried individuals accounted for 269 (84.9%), and 209 (65.9%) were college students. In terms of age, the group aged 20–30 years was the highest (79.5%). The income levels of respondents vary, but nearly half (48.9%) reported having a monthly income of less than 10 million VND. Most respondents have participated in more than two group tours (81.1%).

Measurement Properties

The connections between tour guide performance, tour guide service, tourist satisfaction, and behaviour intention were investigated in this study. According to the reliability measurements for each scale (Table 1), the composite reliability (CR) of all variables varied from 0.93 to 0.97, above 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010). These findings demonstrated the satisfactory reliability of the questionnaire.

Table 12: Confirmatory Factor Study Findings Results

Constructs	Factor Loading	CR	AVE
Tour guide performance		0.97	0.63
Tour guides are familiar with the culture of the destination	0.80		
Tour guides know about tourist attractions	0.80		
Tour guides are familiar with the local way of life	0.77		
Tour guides are hilarious	0.73		
Tour guides look after the needs of their clients	0.74		
Tour guides are excellent at providing comments	0.80		
Tour guides are helpful for the contact between individuals	0.80		
Tour guides can cope adequately with consumer demands	0.84		
In terms of presentation and treatment, tour guides are neat and professional	0.70		
Tour guides can collaborate with various service employees	0.77		
Tour guides are helpful for handling time	0.83		
Tour guides can plan events related to the tour.	0.82		
The tour guides' health is fine	0.72		
Tour guides should fulfill the psychological needs of consumers	0.81		
In some instances, tour guides show good judgment	0.90		
Tour guides are serious about their jobs	0.79		
Tour guides can overcome challenges and disputes with tour arrangements	0.85		
Tour guides are familiar with the past of the destination	0.78		
Service quality of tour guiding		0.93	0.76
Tour guides can give a friendly and unique service	0.86		
Tour guides can be very clearly explained	0.89		
Tour guides can answer tourists' needs immediately	0.83		
Tour guides can provide detailed and well-organized descriptions.	0.89		
Tourist Satisfaction		0.97	0.89
It is prudent to join the Travel Agency's GPT.	0.93		
It is out of my belief that I will take part in the GPT	0.95		
I'm still happy whether I engage in the GPT again	0.95		
Next time, I can participate again in this GPT	0.94		
Behavior intentions		0.95	0.83
I'm trying to spread the positive word about the operator.	0.90		
I'm trying to invite friends and family to join tour operators	0.93		
I'll continue to follow this operator's tour while the prices grow marginally	0.91		
In this operator, I will join higher-priced tours.	0.90		

Note: CR: Composite Reliability; AVE: Average Variance Extracted

The confirmatory analysis was presented to evaluate the model's fit and ensure that each scale measured the structure correctly. This study's structural equation model employed the maximum likelihood estimate probability to find the links between tour guide performance, tourist satisfaction, and travel intention. The fit indices for modelling the study data shows the validity of the structural model ($\chi2$ = 327.52, df = 104, $\chi2$/df = 3.15, AGFI = 0.91, GFI =

0.92, CFI = 0.92, IFI = 0.92, NFI = 0.93, RMR = 0.045, and RMSEA = 0.085). Hair et al. (2010) showed that the fit indices of each model (χ^2/df < 5, AGFI ≥ 0.90, GFI ≥ 0.90, CFI ≥ 0.90, IFI ≥ 0.90, NFI ≥ 0.90, RMR ≤ 0.05, and RMSEA ≤ 0.08). In addition, all the variables' average variance extracted (AVE) ranged from 0.63 to 0.83 (>0.5), suggesting that the measured variables were of strong convergence validity in the sample (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The correlation coefficient between pairs of structures was less than the square root of each structure's AVE, indicating that the scales had acceptable discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Therefore, according to Kline (2005), the chosen measurements were valid and internally consistent.

Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis discovered a significant positive link between tour guide performance and tour guide service quality ($r = 0.84$; $p < 0.01$). Tour guide performance also had a substantial positive correlation with tourist satisfaction ($r = 0.74$; $p < 0.01$) and tourist behaviour intentions ($r = 0.61$; $p < 0.01$). In addition, there was a substantial positive correlation with tour guide's service quality in terms of tourist satisfaction ($r = 0.78$; $p < 0.01$) and in tourist behaviour intentions ($r = 0.60$; $p < 0.01$). Moreover, tourist satisfaction has positive correlation with tourist behaviour intentions ($r = 0.65$; $p < 0.01$). The correlation results offered an initial interpretation of the correlations between the research variables on which further research was based.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 13. The Model Of Structural Equations Was Developed And Tested

Path relationships	β	t-value	Conclusions
H1: Tour guide performance ☐ Tourist satisfaction	.46**	4.38	Accepted
H2: Tour guide performance ☐ Tourist behaviour intentions	.33**	4.11	Accepted
H3: Tour guide performance ☐ Service quality of tour guiding	.83**	29.76	Accepted
H4: Tourist satisfaction ☐ Tourist behaviour intentions	.45**	5.74	Accepted
H5: Service quality of tour guiding ☐ Tourist satisfaction	.32*	3.13	Accepted
H6: Service quality of tour guiding ☐ Tourist behaviour intentions	-0.28	0.38	Not accepted

**p< 0.01
*p<0.05

The standardized route coefficients of the pathways connecting tour guide performance to tourist satisfaction indicated significant positive connections (β = 0.46, p < 0.01), tour guide performance to tourist behaviour intentions (β = 0.33, p < 0.01), tourist satisfaction to tourist behaviour intentions (β = 0.81, p < 0.01), and service quality of tour guiding to tourist satisfaction (β = 0.45, p < 0.05), Therefore, all the hypotheses were supported except hypothesis 6.

Table 14. Indirect Effects Of Service Quality Of Tour Guiding

Path	The test statistic (z)	Std. Error	p-value
H7: Tour guide performance ☐ Service quality of tour guiding ☐ Tourist satisfaction	3.10**	0.039	0.000
H8: Tour guide performance ☐ Service quality of tour guiding ☐ Tourist behaviour intentions	1.46	0.032	0.714

Note: **p < 0.01

In the Sobel test, the quality of service was found to mediate the correlation between tour guide performance, tourist satisfaction, and behaviour intention (Preacher et al., 2007). Based on Table 3, tour guides' performance and tourist satisfaction are highly mediated by the service quality of tour guiding (z = 3.10 > 1.96, p < 0.01). Nevertheless, the relationship between behavioural intention and tour guide performance was not significantly influenced by the service quality of tour guiding (z = 1.46 <1.96, p > 0.05). In order to contribute to tourism satisfaction, H7 has been supported, which proposes that tour guide service quality mediates the correlation between tourist satisfaction and tour guide performance. And H8 had not been helped.

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

The performance of tour guides may be used to assess service quality and build the future direction of the field's research in both conceptual and operational areas, as provided by Huang et al. (2010). Huang et al. (2010) also suggested that future research needs to analyse the

factors that affect tourism and hospitality, especially the impact on tourist satisfaction and behaviour. Considering the above suggestions, the study found that tour guides significantly impact tourist satisfaction and behaviour intentions. In addition, a positive correlation was found between the quality of service provided by the tour guide and their performance. The tourism decision-making theory can be understood better by exploring the relationship between tour guide performance, tour guide service quality, tourist satisfaction, and tourist behaviour intention in Ajzen (1991).

According to the study, tourist satisfaction was initially positively influenced by tour guide performance. At the stage where tour guides direct visitors during tour programs, they should have exhibited their expertise to meet the demands of different kinds. This result supports the tourist satisfaction context (Petrick, 2003) and is related to the previous studies (Chan et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2017). Regarding tour programs, this study established efficiency as a critical antecedent variable influencing tourist satisfaction.

Secondly, this research also illustrated that the tour guides' performance influenced the tourists' intentions. More specifically, the performance tour guide can increase tourists' satisfaction and engage tour programs to increase tourists' willingness to do future acts. Thus, its performance can significantly positively affect tourist intention behaviours (Alazaizeh et al., 2019; Chan et al., 2015). The finding is consistent with tourist decision-making theory (Ajzen, 1991).

Thirdly, the findings demonstrate that the quality of tour guide services is positively impacted by tour guide performance. Tour guide performance is a psychological function, affecting both external behaviour and tour service performance. This corresponds to the previous research (Lin et al., 2017). The research maintains that the tour guides' performance is essential for establishing a norm for tour guide services. In other words, tourist satisfaction positively affects tourists' intentions. Satisfaction contributes to customer trust growth (Murray & Howat, 2002). When tourists are delighted with their trips, they willingly engage in loyalty and willingness to pay for the next trip. This research agreed with the tourist decision-making theory (Ajzen, 1991). And this research also had similar findings to previous studies (Alazaizeh et al., 2019). The study found that tourists' satisfaction was positively influenced by tour guides' service quality. More specifically, the higher tourist satisfaction is, the higher service quality is. Moreover, this finding agrees with the satisfaction theory (Oliver, 1980) and is similar to the previous study (Hwang & Lee, 2019). The study suggests that the quality of service provided by tour guides contributes significantly to tourist satisfaction (Kang et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2011). On the other hand, there is no reasonable correlation between the quality of the tour guide service and the tourist's behavioural intention. Tourist intention behaviour can be affected by many variations, such as hotel service, restaurant, attraction, food, etc. Besides that, the service quality of tour guiding could not be a critical effect on tourist behaviour intention. Furthermore, the findings are consistent with earlier studies (Chan et al., 2015; Hwang & Lee, 2019). The relationship between tour guide service quality and word of mouth was not significant, according to Hwang and Lee (2019). Chan et al. (2015) also had not seen the importance between tour guiding service and behaviour intention.

Finally, the study found that tour guides' performance is associated with tourists' satisfaction, which is mediated by their service quality. Tour guides are required to present service quality to tourists in order to establish a strong connection with them. Providing high-quality service to tourists actively contributes to their satisfaction and performance as tour guides. The findings of this study confirm the satisfaction theory (Oliver, 1980) and expand the results of Huang et al. (2010); Kang et al. (2004).

Conclusions

The study's purpose was to look at the link between tour guide performance, tourist satisfaction, and tourist behaviour intentions, as well as the role of the service provided by tour guide as a mediator. The participants were assessed in Ho Chi Minh city. According to a statistical study, the performance of tour guides has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction, behavioural intentions, and the quality of tour guide service. Tourist satisfaction is positively correlated with tourist behaviour intentions. It is also critical for tourists to be happy with the level of service provided by tour guides. Furthermore, the level of service provided by tour guides mediates the correlations between tourist satisfaction and tour guide performance.

Theoretical Implications

As a result of this study, contributions will be made to the literature on the tourism industry. First, this study responded to Huang et al. (2010) suggested that researchers should investigate the role of tour guide performance in different contexts and the service quality of tour guiding. The study analysed tourist behaviour intention and tour guide service quality in addition to generating quantitative data on tour guide performance and tourist satisfaction. In addition to tour guide performance, the quality of service provided by the tour guide also significantly affected tourist satisfaction. As a result, how tourists behave, and the quality of their service also influence their intentions.

Secondly, Chan et al. (2015) determined that tourists' behaviour intention predicts the quality of tours based on their satisfying experiences with tour guides. However, the study neglected to consider how to tour guiding affects tourist intention directly. The findings revealed that the quality of tour guiding services has a significant positive impact on tourist satisfaction; however, it does not correspond with tourist behaviour intention. The results of this study are compatible with those of Hwang and Lee (2019); Chan et al. (2015).

Third, the studies of Hwang and Lee (2019); Lin et al. (2017) were missing testing the role of service quality of tour guiding. As a result, this study added to the existing body of knowledge by identifying the significant mediating role of tour guide quality in the relationship between tourist satisfaction and tour guide performance.

Practical Implications

The study's findings provide some guidelines for management strategies. This study initially showed that the tour guide needs to do well on tours. Travel managers should also note that tour guide performance influences tourist satisfaction and behaviour intention. This study reported that tour guides had affected tourist satisfaction during the tour and post-tour program as tourist intention behaviours. Vietnam's tour managers and tour operators can continue to provide their tour guides with specific instructions. The training program can focus on expanding tour guides' understanding of the location, encouraging job ethics and conduct, and improving social communication, organization, collaboration, and problem-solving abilities.

Furthermore, the service quality of tour guiding plays a mediator variable in the correlation between tour guides' performance and the tourists' satisfaction. Vietnamese tour operators and agents can train tour guides to demonstrate their services professionally. The training content should focus on emulator situations to increase tour guides' experiences about providing

specific and friendly service, explaining to the tourists, and realizing tourists' needs before they ask for help, such as how to respond immediately and provide clear and organized explanations. Once travel companies recruit or hire tour guides, they are always concerned about the quality of tour guides with the best expertise and skills. An optimistic attitude and a good tour guide service can cross the differences between visitors, tour guides, and travel agencies. This is why some tour guides perform well, and professional service in guiding often has a full schedule for the whole year.

In addition, travel managers should consider the dynamic phenomena of visitor satisfaction. Various determinants of tourist satisfaction in different contexts also make a difference in the power of variety. During the tour program, tour guide performance is the main factor affecting tourist satisfaction because tour guides are representatives of tour operators or travel agencies. Moreover, the service of tour guiding can largely determine tourist satisfaction.

Tour operators and travel agencies also understand that tourist behaviour intention is the most complex phenomenon. In the decision-making process, tourist behaviour intention is influenced by many factors. In the tour program, tourist behaviour intention could be determined mainly by the tour guides' performance and the tourists' satisfaction. In some cases, the service quality of tour guiding was not directly determined by tourist behaviour intention. In addition, tourism behaviour intentions are heavily influenced by tourists' satisfaction with tour guiding, and tourist satisfaction is significantly affected by the tour guiding's quality.

Limitations and Future Research

As a result of this study, many theoretical and practical implications have been drawn, but there are also the following limitations. Firstly, this research is based only on domestic Vietnamese visitors, so the study's findings should be cautiously extended to other countries. Prospective studies should develop the model presented in this study to other studies can investigate the tour guide's performance in populations in different fields to address the limitations described above. Secondly, future studies can examine the tour guide's performance in a different context and verify the findings of this analysis simultaneously. In tour programs, the performance and service of tour guides are essential for tourist satisfaction with the tour. Nevertheless, tourists are also affected by various factors, such as transportation services, accommodation services, food, cultural elements, and weather. Prospective research on tourist satisfaction and behaviour intentions can investigate changes in more determinants other than the performance of tour guides.

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