The Impact Of Spiritual Tourists' Satisfaction On Their Loyalty In The Mekong Delta Of Vietnam

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Abstract:
The current article tries to investigate the impact of spiritual tourists' satisfaction on their loyalty in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. The variable "Tourist satisfaction" is composed of 4 observed variables, which are (1) According to your experience, the tourist destination meets your travel needs well- HLDK1, (2) According to you, traveling at the tourist destination is a great experience for you- HLDK2, (3) Do you think that the tourist destination is one of the best tourist destinations you have ever been to - HLDK3, (4) In general, you feel satisfied with traveling to the tourist destination - HLDK4. The research data was collected from 568 spiritual tourists in the provinces and cities in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam they are (1) Tien Giang, (2) Can Tho, (3) Soc Trang, (4) Kien Giang, (5) Dong Thap, (6) An Giang, and (7) Bac Lieu. The scales were first evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis method. Scales that meet reliability requirements will be included in exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to reduce a set of many variables used to test the conceptual value of the scale. Then, the linear regression analysis method is used to test the appropriateness of the proposed research model and test the research hypothesis. The research results indicate that all of the 4 components of spiritual tourists' satisfaction have statistical effects on their loyalty to spiritual tourism destinations in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. The current research work sheds light on the casual correlation from tourists' destination satisfaction to their destination loyalty to spiritual tourism destinations in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam.
Key Word*: Spiritual tourist; Satisfaction; Loyalty; Mekong Delta; Vietnam.*

I. Introduction

Tourist satisfaction is reflected by their loyalty or intention to return to their destination. This view is confirmed in many foreign assessments of tourism (Huang & Hsu, 2009). Loyalty to a tourist destination is often determined by many factors. In particular, perceived value, performance quality, service quality, destination image, as well as satisfaction level are factors that affect tourist loyalty (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008). In addition, tourists will feel bad about a tourist destination if they receive negative feedback about that place zby the media or receive recommendations from the host government. Negative things in the tourism industry that tourists sometimes encounter are theft or fraud at tourist destinations. Domestic projects mostly focus on establishing models to analyze tourist satisfaction. In addition, the number of studies assessing tourists' intention to return to destinations analyzed in Vietnam is still modest. Only a few works analyzing tourist loyalty have been carried out (Khuong & Ha, 2014; Hồ Thanh Thảo, 2014).

Tourist loyalty is considered one of the important research areas in tourism. The revenue of the tourism industry depends on the return and loyalty of tourists. Some authors suggest that when tourists return to their destination, they often stay longer than usual (Oppermann, 2000). In particular, they often provide positive word-of-mouth about the destination (Petrick, 2004). In general, in recent times, many works related to tourist loyalty have been carried out to predict and explain the behavior of tourists regarding their travel decisions (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Um et al., 2006; Tian-Cole et al., 2002). Um et al. (2006) argue that destination satisfaction only has an impact on tourists' intention to return and their loyalty in the short term, while there has not been any evidence to confirm tourists' intention to return and their loyalty to the destination in the medium and long term. Therefore, more research is needed on the impact of satisfaction on tourist loyalty. In addition, spiritual tourism is a type of tourism that relies on tourists' spiritual beliefs towards spiritual tourist destinations. To develop spiritual tourism in a sustainable way, tourist destinations as well as tourism businesses and resident communities as well as local governments should create attractiveness, as well as build separate labels for tourist destinations there.

Spiritual tourism in Vietnam, especially in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, is becoming an increasingly popular trend. Over recent years, the tourism industry in Vietnam has developed strongly, in which spiritual tourism has made an important and stable contribution to this growth. The Mekong Delta of Vietnam is a land that converges and develops many forms of religion and belief, including Buddhism, Christianity, Mother

Goddess worship and national heroes. This is not only a rich cultural treasure, but also a strong foundation for promoting spiritual tourism in this area. However, in recent times, the Mekong Delta of Vietnam has not really exploited the full potential of spiritual tourism based on the unique tourism resources that this region possesses. (Huynh Duc Dung et al., 2016). To attract tourists to a destination is not only based on the beliefs of tourists but also on their loyalty. Therefore, the research on " The impact of spiritual tourists' satisfaction on their loyalty in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam" has much significance for the development of spiritual tourism destinations in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam.

The current research tries to analyze the causal relationship between spiritual tourists' satisfaction and their loyalty to spiritual tourism destinations in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam to find out how spiritual tourists' satisfaction affects their loyalty to spiritual tourism destinations there. The current research goes on to review and link spiritual tourists' satisfaction to their loyalty to spiritual tourism destinations. It next explains how the research variables are calculated and the way the research data is collected and analyzed, followed by empirical results. Lastly, the conclusion is given.

II. Research hypothesis

Numerous studies have demonstrated the important link between customer satisfaction and loyalty. Satisfaction directly and positively affects customer loyalty (Zeithaml et al., 1996; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007; Kim et al., 2003; Chen, 2008 ; Choi & Chu, 2001; Chi & Qu, 2008; Ladhari et al., 2008).
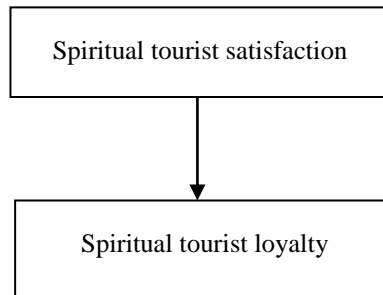
Bigne et al. (2001) developed a model to evaluate tourists' revisit intention based on the indirect influence of destination image. The study provides clear evidence of the impact of destination image on perceived service quality and tourist satisfaction, and that these factors influence revisit intention and tourist's willingness to travel. This study explains that tourist behavior can change based on their expectations about the image of the tourist destination, whether that image is positive or not. Tourists' perceptions or expectations begin to form from the initial stage of the destination selection process, related to the natural and social factors of the destination. In the process of choosing a travel destination, tourists' positive evaluation of a particular destination compared to other destinations will increase the chances of choosing that destination of tourists. The perception of the destination's image is not only limited to the selection process but also affects other behaviors during the experience and even after the trip.

The research by Um et al. (2006) also shows that tourist satisfaction depends on perceptions of the transactions that have taken place and perceptions of the service experience. The visual elements of satisfaction are determined based on both the "why" (cause) and "how" (how the service is delivered) in relation to the effectiveness of the service. Tourist satisfaction comes from their experiences as well as how they are treated and served at the destination. At the same time, tourist satisfaction also defines a quality experience, related to the mental and emotional state after exposure to an experiential opportunity. A tourism destination is considered a collection of infrastructure and services - similar to other service product groups, consisting of many attributes, which play an important role in making the destination attractive.

Tourist satisfaction is therefore founded on how the destination serves its visitors, including its ability to provide services and products. This study confirms a direct correlation between attractiveness and monetary value, as well as satisfaction and loyalty. In particular, money value evaluates the possibility of loss and financial loss to gain tourism services, it helps tourists form expectations about the service. Sun et al. (2013) relied on the theory of destination image combined with perceived familiarity. The level of familiarity with the destination is determined to influence the formation of destination image in tourists, which in turn continues to influence the perceived value and satisfaction of tourists. In addition, perceived value and tourist satisfaction are also considered important factors that lead to destination loyalty. The model also suggests a relationship between perceived value and tourist satisfaction.

In addition, customers' satisfaction is alo defined as tourists' assessments and their positive responses to specific services or products (Oliver et al., 1997). Therefore, the study can present the following research hypothesis: H1: Tourists' satisfaction has a positive influence on their loyalty to spiritual tourism destinations in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam.

The aforementioned hypothesis can lead to the research model as displayed in Figure 1, where tourists' satisfaction has a positive influence on their loyalty to spiritual tourism destinations in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. Having developed the hypothesis derived from the reviewed literature, the current research conjectures the research model in Figure 1. Next, the research methodology, which is utilized to guide the data collection and facilitate the data analysis in the subsequent part.

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Figure 1: Research Model

III. Research methodology

To conduct research data analysis, first the measurement scale for two main research variables in the model must be established. A 5-level Likert scale is used to measure analytical variables in the research model; In which, level 1 corresponds to "completely disagree" and level 5 corresponds to "completely agree" for the statements for the observed variables, other levels correspond in between. The variable "Tourist satisfaction - HLDK" is measured according to 4 observed variables, which are (1) According to your experience, the tourist destination meets your travel needs well- HLDK1, (2) According to you, traveling at the tourist destination is a great experience for you- HLDK2, (3) Do you think that the tourist destination is one of the best tourist destinations you have ever been to - HLDK3, (4) In general, you feel satisfied with traveling to the tourist destination - HLDK4. The variable "Tourist loyalty - TTDK" is structured by 5 component variables.

The survey subjects of this study are a number of spiritual tourists in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. There are 13 provinces and cities in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. The provinces and cities selected for the survey include: (1) Tien Giang, (2) Can Tho, (3) Soc Trang, (4) Kien Giang, (5) Dong Thap, (6) An Giang, (7) Bac Lieu. These provinces and cities were chosen because they have many spiritual tourism destinations. A total of 600 travelers were surveyed for this study. However, in the end, only 568 responses provided complete information for the data analysis of this research project. The scales were first evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis method. Scales that meet reliability requirements will be included in exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to reduce a set of many variables used to test the conceptual value of the scale (Hair & al., 2010). Then, the linear regression analysis method is used to test the appropriateness of the proposed research model and test the research hypothesis.

IV. Result

All of the 9 observed variables in the research model were included in reliability and EFA analysis. Results from reliability analysis are presented in Table 1. The variable correlation coefficient – sum of the observed variables in the scale is more than 0.5. This result shows that the observed variables in a scale are similar (Hair et al., 2010). In addition, Cronbach's Alpha results show that the components of the scale all have high and good reliability coefficients, which is larger than 0.7 (Hair & al., 2010). In addition, Cronbach α, if variables are eliminated, are all smaller than the factor's Cronbach α. Therefore, all of the 9 observed variables meet reliability requirements, so are included in the EFA. EFA results, with factor coefficients less than 0.3 not shown, are presented in Table 2.

Table 1: Shows metabolic parameters of patients of the three groups before treatment.

Main variable	Observed variables	Total correlation	Cronbach α, if the variable is eliminated	Cronbach α
Tourist satisfaction HLDK	HLDK1	0.675	0.675	0.855
	HLDK2	0.702	0.702	
	HLDK3	0.735	0.735	
	HLDK4	0.677	0.677	
Tourist loyalty TTDK	TTDK1	0.648	0.867	0.877
	TTDK2	0.611	0.872	
	TTDK3	0.748	0.841	
	TTDK4	0.765	0.846	
	TTDK5	0.813	0.823	

The observed variables in EFA are grouped into two main factors, consistent with the original theoretical model. Specifically, the variable "Tourist satisfaction" is made up of 4 observed variables; while the variable "Tourist loyalty" is formed from 5 observed variables. All 9 observed variables have factor coefficients greater than 0.5, which satisfies the convergence of each factor (Hair et al., 2010). Besides, the factor coefficient of an observed variable between the main factor and the remaining factors is greater than 0.3, which meets the divergence between factors (Hair et al., 2010). The common coefficient of variation of all observed variables is greater than 0.5, so they satisfy the conditions of EFA (Hair et al., 2010). The P_{value} is 0.000 less than 1% and KMO more than 0.7, proving that EFA is appropriate and reaches statistical significance at the 1% level. All of the above criteria show that the data set used for this study meets the reliability level according to statistical requirements.

Linear regression results are presented in Tables 3 & 4. The numbers in Table 3 show that the coefficient of determination R^2 is 0.184. This means that the independent variables on "Tourist satisfaction - HLDK" explain 18.4% of the variation of the variable on "Tourist loyalty - TTDK". The Durbin-Watson coefficient is 1.891, ranging from ($D_U \rightarrow 4-D_U$), with a significance level of 1%; Therefore, it can be concluded that the research model does not suffer from autocorrelation (Hair et al., 2010). The Fisher coefficient of the model is equal to 127.262 with a significance level at 1%, which implies that the research model is appropriate at the 1% significance level. Table 3 also proves that "Tourist satisfaction - HLDK" has a positive influence on "Tourist loyalty - TTDK" at the 1% statistical significance level. Thus, linear regression analysis results support the research hypothesis: "Satisfaction has a positive influence on tourist loyalty to spiritual tourism destinations in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam." Continuing linear regression analysis of the influence of the components of "Tourist satisfaction - HLDK" on "Tourist loyalty - TTDK". The results of analysis are given in Table 4.

Table 2: Exploratory factor analysis.

Main variable	Observed variable	Factor coefficient		General coefficient of variation
		1	2	
Tourist satisfaction: HLDK	HLDK1		0.792	0.669
	HLDK2		0.816	0.702
	HLDK3		0.841	0.742
	HLDK4		0.807	0.677
Tourist loyalty: HLDK	TTDK1	0.748		0.596
	TTDK2	0.724		0.549
	TTDK3	0.822		0.721
	TTDK4	0.835		0.739
	TTDK5	0.889		0.810
Number of observed variables	∑=9	∑=5	∑=4	∑=9
KMO	0.887			
P value	0.000			

Table 3: Linear regression analysis.

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	P value	VIF
	B	Standard error	Beta			
Constant	1.850	0.105		17.564	0.000	
Tourist satisfaction: HLDK	0.384	0.034	0.429	11.281	0.000	1.000
Model fit: F/P_F	127.262/0.000					
R^2	0.184					
Durbin-Watson	1.891					

Dependent variable: Tourist loyalty (TTDK)

The results show that the components of "Tourist satisfaction - HLDK" - (1) The tourist destination meets the travel needs of tourists well - HLDK1, (2) Tourism at the tourist destination is a great experience for tourists - HLDK2, (3) The tourist destination is one of the best tourist destinations tourists have ever been to - HLDK3, (4) The feeling of satisfaction with traveling in tourist destination - HLDK4, explains 18.5% of the variation in "Tourist loyalty - TTDK". The variance inflation factors are all less than 8, so multicollinearity does not occur in this research model. The Durbin-Watson coefficient is 1.892, in the range from ($D_U \rightarrow 4-D_U$), with a significance level of 1%, this means that autocorrelation does not exist in the research model (Hair et al.,

2010). The Fisher coefficient of the model is equal to 31.959, with a significance level at 1%, demonstrating that this linear regression analysis is appropriate at the 1% significance level. The results also show that the components of "Tourist satisfaction" have a statistical influence on "Tourist loyalty" at the 1% significance level. However, each component has a different level of influence on "Tourist loyalty" to spiritual tourism destinations in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. The variable: "Tourism destination meets the travel needs of tourists well - HLDK1" plays the most important role in "Tourist loyalty" with a coefficient of 0.125 at the 1% significance level, followed by "Traveling at a tourist destination is a great experience for tourists - HLDK2" with an impact coefficient of 0.104 at the 5% significance level.

Table 4: Linear regression analysis.

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	P value	VIF
	B	Standard error	Beta			
Constant	1.836	0.106		17.262	0.000	
Tourist satisfaction 1: HLDK1	0.125	0.040	0.163	3.152	0.002	1.856
Tourist satisfaction 2: HLDK2	0.104	0.041	0.136	2.534	0.012	1.983
Tourist satisfaction 3: HLDK3	0.092	0.042	0.122	2.166	0.031	2.177
Tourist satisfaction 4: HLDK4	0.066	0.037	0.093	1.797	0.073	1.853
Model fit: F/P_F	31.959/0.000					
R^2	0.185					
Durbin-Watson	1.892					

Dependent variable: Tourist loyalty (TTDK)

Tourists' satisfaction with traveling at a tourist destination - HLDK4 is the factor that has the least influence on "Tourist loyalty" with a coefficient of 0.066 at the 10% significance level, Next is "The tourist destination is one of the best tourist destinations tourists have ever been to - HLDK3" which has the second least influence on "Tourist loyalty" with a coefficient of 0.092 at the 5% significance level. So the research hypothesis in the research model has been proven with the subcomponents of the variable of "Tourist satisfaction". From the results of linear regression analysis above, the relationship between "Tourist satisfaction" and "Tourist loyalty" with spiritual tourism destinations in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam is shown by using the following equations: (1) TTDK = 1.850 + 0.384xHLDK + ε; (2) TTDK = 1.836 + 0.125xHLDK1 + 0.104xHLDK2 + 0.092xHLDK3 + 0.066xHLDK4 + e.

V. Conclusion

The study has academic and practical contributions in studying the satisfaction behavior of tourists with spiritual tourism destinations as well as their loyalty to these destinations. Theoretically, this study provides evidence for the relationship from satisfaction to tourist loyalty to spiritual tourism destinations. Research results demonstrate that the higher the satisfaction level of spiritual tourists, the greater their loyalty to destinations. For similar studies, this can be an important reference source to build research models in other tourist destinations. In practical terms, tourism plays an important role in the economic development of the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. However, to sustainably develop spiritual tourism, local authorities need to pay attention to the behavior, feelings and reactions of spiritual tourists to develop policies suitable to specific local conditions. Understanding the intentions and behaviors of spiritual tourists will assist in providing locally appropriate spiritual tourism development solutions. The results of the study provide useful references for tourism managers in building development strategies, based on the views and opinions of tourists when they visit spiritual tourism destinations in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. From the research results on the influence of spiritual tourists' satisfaction on their loyalty to spiritual tourism destinations in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, the implications can be proposed.

The factor "Tourism destination meets tourists' travel needs well - HLDK1" has the greatest impact on their loyalty, so leaders in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam need to prioritize improving tourist satisfaction by meeting their travel needs at local spiritual tourism destinations. The factor "Travel at a tourist destination is a great experience for tourists - HLDK2" also has a great impact on the loyalty of spiritual tourists. Local authorities in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam need to create memorable experiences for local spiritual tourists by taking advantage of the province's natural, climate, traditional culture and historical features. To satisfy tourists and communicate the destination to others, the Mekong Delta of Vietnam needs to invest in its public image to design tourism services that meet all visitors' needs, providing the best experiences and most impressive to them.

The factor "The tourist destination is one of the best tourist destinations tourists have ever been to - HLDK3" is also important for the loyalty of spiritual tourists, the governments of provinces and cities in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam need prioritize improving the image of spiritual tourism destinations by creating a special attraction and positive impression on spiritual tourists. Expanding and diversifying local spiritual tourism products will attract spiritual tourists to continue to explore other types of tourism in future trips. The factor "Tourists' satisfaction with traveling at the tourist destination - HLDK4" also affects the loyalty of spiritual tourists in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. Therefore, provincial governments need to focus on improving the satisfaction of spiritual tourists when they visit the locality. Spiritual tourists' satisfaction increases when experiences at destinations exceed their previously anticipated expectations. Therefore, the governments of provinces and regions in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam need to pay special attention to promoting the image of spiritual tourism locally.

The empirical findings offer governmental officials and tourism business managers as well as academics a detailed understanding of the relationship between the satisfaction of spiritual tourists and their loyalty to spiritual tourism destinations in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. Consequently, they could make better policies on improving tourists' satisfaction and their loyalty to local spiritual tourism destinations. There are some limitations in this paper. The current research was performed in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam and the research findings are expected to be applied in other areas. Nevertheless, business conditions among areas may be different, so one should generalize the research findings with care.

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