

EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF TOURIST SATISFACTION AMONG DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN VISITORS WITH CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES IN HUE CITY, VIETNAM

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This paper presents the findings from the empirical investigation of comparison on tourist satisfaction among domestic and international visitors with cultural heritage sites in Hue city, Vietnam. Interviews were equally made to a total sample of 120 international and domestic tourist respondents. Statistical paired-sample tests, factor analysis and multiple regressions were conducted to identify the difference as well as the relationship between the expectation and overall satisfaction among the international and domestic tourists with the four cultural heritage sites of Citadel; Thien Mu Pagoda; Tu Duc; and Khai Dinh King Tombs at Hue city. The research reveals that the satisfying attributes were different among domestic and foreign tourists and demographic characteristics had an impact on the overall satisfaction. Implications were drawn and future research was proposed.

Tourist satisfaction, Hue city, Vietnam

INTRODUCTION

Tourism brings economic development and the creation of direct and indirect jobs (Antonio, 2004). In recent years, there is a trend toward an increased specialization among travelers and cultural heritage tourism is the fastest growing segment of the industry, and this trend is expected to continue (Silberberg, 1995). This is also the case for the city of Hue which is rich in monuments and historical relics as well as cultural heritages. This is reflected in the UNESCO recognition of Hue City as the World's Cultural Heritage which has been assumed as the main reason for the recent influx of domestic and international visitors into Hue city. So far, Hue city has successfully organized the three cultural festivals as a promotion to boost the local tourism industry. The success of these recent cultural festivals has attracted a large number of foreign and domestic tourists to this culturally rich city of Hue (Thua Thien Hue Provincial Department of Tourism 2003). As the purchasing power and disposable income differs among domestic and international visitors, the understanding of the satisfaction still need a proper empirical research. From a marketing perspective, this will assist in better serving these two kinds of customers. It is timely to investigate which attributes satisfy tourists who visit cultural/heritage destinations and what is the difference in satisfaction

between domestic and international visitors. The insights derived from this empirical research are meaningful for both practitioners and policy makers in an effort to develop the tourism industry.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUNDS FOR THE RESEARCH

People have an inclination to seek out the novelty (Huh and Uysal, 2002). As such, the travelers and adventure-takers spend a lot of money and time, flying across the globe just to see the tourist destinations which are new to them in terms of culture and heritage values. With this, exploring the traditional cultures is also the major interest for many tourists and it is undeniable that cultural heritage tourism has become a major “new” area of tourism demand, which almost all policy-makers are now aware of and anxious to develop. Cultural heritage tourism, as a part of the broader category of “cultural tourism” is now a major pillar of the nascent tourism strategy of many countries (Antonio, 2004; Richard, 1996).

As this research focuses on identifying the cultural/heritage destination attributes which influence tourists’ satisfaction. Therefore, it is appropriate to put this research upon a basis of consumer behavior model, which postulates that consumer satisfaction is a function of both expectations related to certain attributes, and judgments of performance regarding these attributes. (Clemons and Woodruff, 1992) One of the most commonly adopted approaches used to examine the satisfaction of consumers is the expectancy-disconfirmation theory which postulates that the evaluation of a product is based on a cognitive process in which consumers compare their prior expectations of product outcomes (e.g., product performance and other important attributes) to those actually obtained from the product (Oliver, 1980). In nature, the expectancy-disconfirmation theory consists of two sub-processes having independent effects on customer satisfaction: the formation of expectations and the disconfirmation of those expectations through performance comparisons. That is, consumers first form expectations of products’ or services’ (the cultural/heritage destination attributes in this study) performance prior to purchase or use. Subsequently, purchase and use contribute to consumer beliefs about the actual or perceived performance of the product or service. The consumer then compares the perceived performance to their prior expectations (Clemons & Woodruff, 1992). Moreover, a consumer’s expectations are: (a) confirmed when the product or service performance matches prior expectations, (b) negatively disconfirmed when product or service performance fails to match expectations, and (c) positively disconfirmed when perceived the product or service performance exceeds expectations. Dissatisfaction comes about when a consumer’s expectations are negatively disconfirmed, meaning that the product performance is less than expected. (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Oliver & Beardon, 1985; Patterson, 1993). This comparative research also measures the overall satisfaction of tourists, while visiting cultural/heritage destinations. This is because it would be useful to evaluate the various experiences with each attribute of the tourist destinations (Pizam, Neumann, and Reichel, 1978).

Questionnaire Development and Back Translation

A structured questionnaire was developed earlier in English version in order to collect the data on the variables under investigation. The items used to measure the variables in the present research were adopted from the literature mainly with the previous instrumentation developed by Kozak & Rimmington (2000), Heung & Cheng (2000); Huh and Uysal (2002); and Nuryanti (1996). The first section of the questionnaire explored various destination attributes affecting tourists’ expectations, perceptions, and satisfaction levels in relation to a cultural/heritage destination. Respondents were requested to give a score to each of the 26 attributes on the levels of expectations and satisfactions separately using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from very low expectation (1)

to very high expectation (5) and from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5). The second section consisting of the questions to gather the overall level of satisfaction with the four cultural heritage destinations on that similar 5-point Likert scale. The last section was developed to gather the respondents' demographic and travel behavior characteristics. The distinctive feature of this empirical study was the French version of questionnaire was developed on the basis of this English version, and used in the survey to get information from the French visitors who make up 44% of the international visitors in Hue (Thua Thien Hue Department of Tourism, 2003).

Because most of instrumentation is designed in the West, the evidence of cross-cultural validity is scant (Brislin, 1970; Douglas and Craig, 1983). Therefore, a major concern with cross-cultural research is the ability to effectively transfer the intent of measurements to other cultures and languages. Items and concepts may not be easily translated between cultures, because they occasionally trigger different effectiveness or conceptual responses. For example, "ambitious" has a positive connotation in the U.S., a high achievement culture (Trompenaars, 1996). However, "ambitious" can also be understood in Vietnamese language as a directly borrowed word from English. The meanings of the exactly similar word might be culturally embarrassing due to negative psychological connotation for Vietnamese respondents. To overcome this, the back-translation technique, which had been much discussed in the other studies of Brislin, 1970; Sexton and Bouman, 1991; Swierczek and Ha, 2003; was taken in order to ensure that the Vietnamese and French versions of questionnaire are equivalent to the English version, so that data to be gathered should be sufficiently reliable across the nationalities of the respondents.

Questionnaire Testing

Cooper and Shindler (2001) suggest that a pilot test be conducted to detect weaknesses in design and the operationalization of the attributes. Therefore, a pilot questionnaire-testing, involving the administration of the survey to a random sample of 5 foreign tourists and 5 Vietnamese tourists at the four tourist destinations (i.e. Imperial City; Thien Mu Pagoda; Tu Duc Tomb; Khai Dinh Tomb) was conducted so that the weakness, or hard-to-understand wordings from each question could be identified. Based on the feed-back received from this field testing, the questionnaire was revised and validated with the replacement of easier-to-understand wordings. By doing this, the questionnaire was finalized, duplicated and officially used in the field survey for data collection.

SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

To ensure the consistency of the research and the potential respondents who should actually visit the four cultural heritage sites Citadel; Thien Mu Pagoda; Tu Duc Tomb; Khai Dinh Tomb, tour package operators were contacted in advance so that the target respondents must be identified. The respondents interviewed were both domestic and foreign tourists who visited to Hue City in the period of March and May 2004. This period was believed to be the peak season for the tourist industry in Hue as many tourists pay visit to the city of Hue on a tour package (Thua Thien Hue Provincial Department of Tourism, 2003). Then, the respondents were approached and informed about the purpose of the survey before they were given a questionnaire to fill in. The interviewers were the Hue College of Economics fourth-year students with the background in tourism and hospitality management were asked to solicit participation in the field survey. The benefits of using tourism students was that they know the concept, and are familiar with this kind of survey, thus reducing the time set aside for training activities. Student-interviewers were provided with several question-raising techniques to make the data collection more efficient and precise.

THE RESULTS

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Out of 150 questionnaires collected from the interviews, 120 questionnaires were usable and coded into SPSS for data processing and analysis. This number of usable fully filled-in questionnaires were believed to be sufficient for multivariate data analysis techniques as mentioned by the study of Hair et al, 2002. These 120 usable questionnaires comprised an equal quantity of 60 Vietnamese visitors and 60 international visitors who were French tourists (17%); American tourists (13%); and other foreign tourists (20%). Male respondents made up 46% while female respondents accounted for 64%, therefore, the gender balance could be considered as acceptable in this empirical research. Respondents with university degree made up the largest percentage (66%) out of the total sample.

Table 1
Demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	65	46%
Female	55	64%
Nationalities of tourists		
French	24	20%
American	12	10%
Other foreign nationalities	24	20%
Vietnamese	60	50%
Education		
Primary & secondary school	31	26%
University	79	66%
Post-graduate	10	8%

To test the difference in tourist satisfaction among domestic and international visitors to the four cultural heritage sites in Hue, paired-sample tests were applied to expectation and satisfaction of SPSS. The 26 attributes for cultural heritage sites in Hue were broken down into satisfaction, indifference, and dissatisfaction categories, using the paired-sample test. That is, “satisfying” is meant as those attributes with satisfaction scores above the expectation scores, leading to positive mean difference and with t-value which is statistically significant. Indifferent attributes implied as those with a non-significant t-value, regardless of a positive or negative mean difference, while dissatisfying attributes were defined as those which have expectation scores exceeding the satisfaction scores, leading to the negative mean score with a statistically significant t-value.

The presentation from Table 2 - 3 indicated that Vietnamese tourist respondents were satisfied with “sceneries”; “traditional arts”; “Museums”; “Handicrafts”; “religious places”; “food”; “festival and events”; “guides”; and “historical building”. The Vietnamese tourist respondents were dissatisfied with such attributes as “theater”; “Festival and events”; “Cultural Villages”; “Galleries”; “Information Center”; “Expensiveness”; “Souvenirs”; and “theme park”; Indifferent are the Vietnamese visitors with “monument”; “architecture”; “historical people”; “shopping places”; “atmosphere/people”; “indoor facility”; “accessibility”; “climate/weather” and “tour package”

For the foreign tourists, the results indicated that they were satisfied with “sceneries”; “traditional arts”; “architecture”; “foods”; “atmosphere/people”; “Accessibility”; and “guides”. The international visitors were dissatisfied with “cultural villages”; “galleries”; “theaters”; “festival and events”; “shopping places”; “accommodation”; and “theme park”. The findings on indifference with the

cultural heritage sites among foreign tourists included the attributes such as “monuments”; “historical building”; “handicrafts”; “religious place”; “indoor facility”; “expensiveness” and so on, as can be seen from Table 2 - 3.

Table 2
Pared-sample test - Analysis of expectation-satisfaction differences
among Vietnamese and international visitors
at four cultural heritage sites in Hue

Foreign Visitors				
Attributes	Expectation mean	Satisfaction mean	Mean Difference	t-value
Satisfying				
Sceneries	4.87	5.62	0.75	-4.69***
Traditional Arts	4.48	4.8	0.32	-2.00*
Architectures	4.92	5.34	0.42	-2.56**
Foods	4.62	5.66	1.04	-5.56***
atmosphere/people	4.98	5.74	0.76	-4.59***
Accessibility	4.87	5.54	0.67	-5.18***
Guides	5.14	5.48	0.34	-2.70**
Indifferent				
Monuments	4.76	4.97	0.21	-1.13
Historical building	4.86	5.02	0.16	-0.85
Handicrafts	4.74	4.92	0.18	-1.36
Religious places	4.62	4.97	0.35	1.92
indoor facility	4.53	4.74	0.21	-1.37
Expensiveness	4.59	4.72	0.13	-0.68
climate/weather	4.83	4.88	0.05	-0.23
tour packages	4.66	4.68	0.02	-0.13
Museums	4.76	4.51	-0.25	1.93
Historical people	4.75	2.61	-2.14	-0.11
Information centers	4.58	2.54	-2.04	0.28
Souvenirs	4.93	4.45	-0.48	0.85
Dissatisfying				
Cultural villages	4.71	2.36	-2.35	2.19*
Galleries	4.99	4.45	-0.54	4.19**
Theaters	4.56	2.22	-2.34	3.31***
Festival and events	4.76	4.27	-0.49	5.04***
shopping places	4.12	2.4	-1.72	-2.34*
Accommodations	4.3	2.83	-1.47	-2.79**
theme parks	4.12	3.8	-0.32	3.05***
Grand Mean	4.69	4.37		

Note: Sig. (2-tailed) * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

To test the difference in satisfaction among the foreign and Vietnamese tourists with the four cultural heritage sites at Hue city (i.e. the Citadel; Thien Mu Pagoda; Tu Duc King Tomb; and Khai Dinh King Tomb), independent sample t-tests were used and presented in Table 4.

It was revealed that Vietnamese tourist respondents were more satisfied with the Citadel; Thien Mu Pagoda; Tu Duc King Tomb; and Khai Dinh King Tomb than the international tourist respondents since the t-test values were statistically significant at 0.05 level.

Table 3
Pared-sample test - Analysis of expectation-satisfaction differences
among Vietnamese and international visitors at four cultural heritage sites in Hue

Vietnamese visitors				
Attributes	Expectation mean	Satisfaction mean	Difference mean	t-value
Satisfying				
Sceneries	5.61	5.66	0.05	1.90*
Traditional Arts	4.98	5.22	0.24	1.99*
Museums	5.07	5.11	0.04	2.94**
Handicrafts	5.21	5.32	0.11	2.70**
Religious places	4.45	4.94	0.49	2.52**
Foods	5.51	5.55	0.04	1.99*
Festival and events	4.96	5	0.04	2.16*
Guides	5.49	5.5	0.01	2.30*
Historical building	5.58	5.99	0.41	2.68**
Indifferent				
Monuments	4.98	4.54	-0.44	1.85
Architectures	5.68	5.36	-0.32	1.44
Historical people	4.83	4.55	-0.29	0.43
shopping places	4.55	4.46	-0.09	0.63
atmosphere/people	5.52	5.32	-0.2	0.96
indoor facility	4.91	4.62	-0.28	1.38
Accessibility	5.28	5.23	-0.05	0.34
climate/weather	5	4.79	-0.21	1.81
tour packages	4.79	4.68	-0.1	0.8
Dissatisfying				
Theaters	4.79	4.49	-0.29	1.99*
Accommodations	5.12	4.75	-0.38	2.68**
Cultural villages	5.05	4.4	-0.65	3.54***
Galleries	5.15	4.58	-0.57	4.07***
information centers	5.19	4.88	-0.31	1.93*
Expensiveness	5.15	4.65	-0.5	2.49*
Souvenirs	5.07	4.35	-0.72	4.84***
theme parks	5	4.36	-0.64	3.81***
Grand Mean	5.11	4.93		

Note: Sig. (2-tailed) * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

Table 4
Satisfaction with four cultural heritage sites in Hue

Group Statistics	Mean	t-value
<i>Satisfaction with Citadel</i>		-2.99*
Foreigner	5.42	
Vietnamese	5.47	
<i>Satisfaction with Thien Mu Pagoda</i>		-4.12**
Foreigner	5.19	
Vietnamese	5.22	
<i>Satisfaction with Tu Duc King tomb</i>		-3.44**
Foreigner	5.72	
Vietnamese	5.79	
<i>Satisfaction with Khai Dinh king tomb</i>		-3.33**
Foreigner	6.11	
Vietnamese	5.92	

Table 5
Principal Component Factor analysis of expectation attributes
for cultural heritage destinations
with the use of Varimax rotation

Expectation Attributes	Factor loadings				communality
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	
Factor 1- tour attraction					
Theaters	0.783				0.49
Tour packages	0.728				0.74
information centers	0.679				0.51
cultural villages	0.595				0.52
Museums	0.572				0.44
indoor facility	0.554				0.61
shopping places	0.544				0.41
Handicrafts	0.509				0.72
Factor 2 - comfortability					
climate/weather		0.722			0.51
Expensiveness		0.707			0.68
Accommodation		0.684			0.72
atmosphere/people		0.551			0.47
Accessibility		0.544			0.48
Food		0.536			0.62
theme parks		0.531			0.53
Factor 3- Maintenance					
historical building			0.836		0.66
Architecture			0.743		0.59
Guides			0.578		0.54
Monuments			0.534		0.65
Souvenirs			0.677		0.6
Factor 4 - Heritage attraction					
religious place				0.652	0.61
festival and events				0.642	0.57
Historic people				0.609	0.47
Galleries				0.51	0.35
Sceneries				0.494	0.43
traditional arts				0.408	0.49
Eigen Value	2.7	2.2	1.5	1.3	
Cumulative variance %	36%	45%	52%	57%	
Cronbach Alpha	0.72	0.69	0.71	0.68	

Principal Component Factor Analysis

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. 0.856

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square

1504.457

at sig.

0.000

To reduce the cultural heritage attributes into a smaller set of factors, reflecting the dimensions of the expectation variable, principal component factor analysis was adopted with the use of the Varimax rotation method. The advantage of Varimax rotation is that it maximizes the sum of variances of loadings of factor matrix (Hair et al, 2002). Results from Table 5 indicate that assumptions for principal component factor analysis were satisfied since the 26 attributes were loaded on 4 factors with the Eigenvalues exceeding 1.0, thus perfectly meeting the Kaiser threshold (Kaiser, 1958).

These four factors explained 57% of common variance extracted with all the factor loadings surpassing the cut-off point of 0.5. Based on the nature of attributes loaded, the factors were named as “Tour attraction”; “Comfortability”; “Maintenance”; and “Heritage Attraction”. They would be used further in multivariate data analysis in order to explore the relationship between the expectation and satisfaction among domestic tourists and foreign tourists.

Table 6
Relationship between overall satisfaction and demographic characteristics and expectations

Dependent Variable: Overall satisfaction			
	Standardized Coefficients	t-value	Sig.
Type of tourists	-0.06	-4.36**	0
Sex	-0.12	-0.83	0.37
Age	0.09	0.93	0.35
Income	-0.06	-4.38**	0
Education	-0.02	-4.23**	0
Tour attraction	0.24	1.72	0.09
Comfortability	0.11	0.86	0.39
Maintenance	-0.09	-2.77*	0.04
Heritage attraction	0.01	2.04*	0.04

Notes: Foreign tourist respondents were coded as 1.0 while Vietnamese as 0.0
Male coded as 1; Female coded as 0.0
R square = 0.64
F ratio = 16.12 (p < 0.01)
* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01

To explore the relationship among the overall satisfaction; demographic characteristics; and the expectation variables, multiple linear regression method was employed with overall satisfaction to be used as the dependent variable. To identify the extent to which the expectation variables and demographic characteristics could exert an impact on the overall satisfaction, the type of tourists and gender of respondents were used as dummy variable in this multiple regression. Table 6 indicates that the multiple linear regression model was robust with $R^2 = 0.64$ and F ratio = 16.12 at a statistically significant level of 0.01. Control variables such as type of tourist; gender; age; and income were entered into this multiple regression. It was revealed that dummy variable “type of tourist” was negatively correlated with the overall satisfaction which meant the international visitors was less satisfied as compared with the Vietnamese tourist respondents while gender had no statistically significant impact on the overall satisfaction. Income and education also had a negative correlation with the overall satisfaction (significant at 0.001 level). Concerning the expectation, it was shown that maintenance and heritage attraction factors are the main reason to bring about the overall satisfaction for both international and domestic visitors as these expectation variables had a positive correlation with overall satisfaction. Tour attraction and comfortability factors had no statistically significant influence on the overall satisfaction of both types of visitors.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings from this empirical research revealed several interesting facts. First, of all, the domestic visitors were more satisfied with these four cultural heritage sites (Citadel; Thien Mu Pagoda; Tu Duc; and Khai Dinh tombs). While this research did not focus on the purchase involvement, which could play a moderating role as studied by George (2004), it was worth mentioning that the tourist

products or services in the city of Hue were the same for both of domestic and foreign tourists. Kotler (2001) suggested that market must be segmented on the basis of the customer profile in an attempt to satisfy them. The findings of difference in tourist satisfaction among domestic and foreign tourists could imply that the market segment of foreign tourists were overlooked or neglected in one way or another. While the wide-spread notions among tourist marketers in Hue indicates that whatever satisfies Vietnamese visitors could be sold to foreign tourists, the differences in satisfaction attributes among foreign and domestic tourists could also be another source of implications for policy makers in Thua Thien Hue province to modernize their decision-making process. For example, historical building attribute was still missing in the satisfying attributes for the international visitors. The “dissatisfying” attributes could also be another source of improvement for the policy-makers. As the findings revealed, theaters; cultural villages; shopping places; accommodation; and theme parks were the main factors that made both foreign visitors dissatisfactory.

Based on the findings from this empirical investigation, some recommendations could be drawn in order to increase the tourist satisfaction with the cultural heritage sites in the city of Hue. Practically, these facilities were still very poor in quality, not to say, very few of them still not in existence. Expectation-satisfaction analysis showed that the tourist marketers should pay attention to these issues in order to improve the dissatisfying factors by designing the appropriate marketing campaigns with timely theme to better attract foreign visitors.

Future research to be suggested are the one which explore deeper into the relationship between tourist satisfaction and intention to revisit a cultural heritage destination. Also, according to George (2004), the Expectation-Disconfirmation and Tourist Satisfaction have much things to do with the moderating role of purchase involvement, another comparative research is worth of conducting, so that better insight into the customer profiles could be obtained. This would help the tourist marketers to provide right tourists with right products or service. As the city of Hue is now designated as one of the cities of cultural festivals and events, the similar research could be proposed to assess the tourist satisfaction with festival and event tourism in such a developing country as Vietnam in order to improve the quality of the cultural festival and to better satisfy the visitors.

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