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*Original Paper*

# Factors Affecting Tourists' Intention to Revisit a Cultural Tourism Destination: The Case of Soc Trang Province, Vietnam

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## Abstract

Cultural tourism has always been a trend throughout the ages. Tourists' intentions to revisit are one of the indicators reflecting the sustainability of cultural tourism destinations. Investigating the relationship between these two factors can provide valuable insights for various stakeholders. This study aims to analyze the factors of a cultural tourism destination that influence tourists' intention to return, focusing on a significant cultural tourism destination in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam. The research employs reliability testing of measurement scales, exploratory factor analysis, and multivariate linear regression with a sample size of 120 observations, yielding several noteworthy findings. A cultural tourism destination is composed of factors such as local residents, cultural attractions, tourism infrastructure, tourism service quality, tourism safety, and perceived service pricing. All these factors have significant and positive impacts on tourists' intention to revisit. Among these influencing factors, local residents, tourism safety, perceived service pricing, and tourism infrastructure have a stronger impact on tourists' intention to return compared to the other two factors.

**Keywords:** Cultural tourism, tourism destination, tourists, intention to revisit, Soc Trang Province, Vietnam

## 1. Introduction

Cultural tourism is one of the oldest forms of tourism in the world (Tighe, 1986). It is considered one of the most significant segments of tourism and increasingly serves as a primary channel for cultural consumption in general (Richards, 2013). Not only does cultural tourism experience robust growth (McKercher & du Cros, 2012; Smith, 2003), but it also plays a crucial role in international tourism consumption (Richards, 2018). Cultural tourism involves the movement of individuals to places that exhibit cultural expressions far from their usual residence, to gather information and new experiences to satisfy their cultural needs (Smith, 2003). When effectively managed, cultural tourism provides substantial financial resources for the economy and supports cultural preservation (McKercher & du Cros, 2012), while also serving as a means to regenerate and reinforce cultural identity and traditions (Smith, 2003).

Tourists' intentions to revisit are fundamental perceptions with significant implications for destinations and businesses. This perception reflects the likelihood that tourists will return to a specific destination or business based on their previous experiences (Karakan & Birdir, 2023). Recognizing the factors influencing tourists' intentions to return is crucial because managers can modify the quality of these factors to facilitate frequent visits to a location and enhance repeat business potential (Sangpikul, 2018). Tourists who feel an emotional attachment to a destination are more likely to wish to return. Their emotional connection creates a sense of longing and anticipation for experiencing the destination once again, leading to higher intentions to revisit (Mathew et al., 2024). Several studies (Gregoriades et al., 2023; Zulfiqar et al., 2024) suggest that returning tourists tend to spend more, stay longer, and

contribute positively to word-of-mouth marketing, which is vital for sustainability and destination marketing strategies.

Soc Trang is one of the 13 provincial administrative units in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam, covering an area of 3,298.2 km<sup>2</sup> with a population exceeding 1,406,800. As a residence for three ethnic groups such as Kinh, Chinese, and Khmer, and many others, Soc Trang boasts a distinctive and rich culture. The province hosts numerous festivals throughout the year, notably the Mekong Delta Traditional Boat Racing Festival. Beliefs and religions play an indispensable role in the lives of its residents; thus, besides temples and churches, Soc Trang is home to over 200 pagodas representing the heritage of Kinh, Chinese, and Khmer cultures. Notable local pagodas include Mahatup/Ma Toc Pagoda, Dat Set/Buu Son Tu Pagoda, Khleang Pagoda, Salon/Chen Kieu Pagoda, Quan Am Linh Ung Pagoda, and Som Rong Pagoda. Soc Trang is also recognized for its diverse culinary culture. In its resolution approving the comprehensive tourism development plan for the province during the period from 2022 to 2025 with a vision toward 2030, the Provincial People's Council identified spiritual cultural tourism, culinary-festival cultural tourism, belief cultural tourism, and floating market cultural tourism as four out of ten key tourism products that need development (People's Council of Soc Trang Province, 2022).

A review of research and recent trends in cultural tourism reveals themes such as cultural consumption, motivations for cultural travel, economic aspects of cultural tourism, heritage conservation, creative economies, and emerging identities documented across various literature. However, there remains limited understanding regarding the factors influencing tourists' intention to revisit a cultural tourism destination (Richards, 2018). This study aims to contribute additional insights into the body of knowledge concerning cultural tourism at a specific destination. Furthermore, several management implications are proposed to enhance the quality of cultural tourism factors and increase tourists' intention to return.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

Cultural tourism has always been a crucial element of tourism products, significantly contributing to the formulation of action plans supporting tourism in many countries (Richards, 1994). This unique form of tourism is characterized by the pursuit and engagement in new and profound cultural experiences, whether aesthetic, intellectual, emotional, or psychological. Factors attracting tourists to this type of tourism include museums, galleries, festivals, architecture, historical sites, artistic performances, heritage (Stebbins, 1996), food, language, and religion (Stylianou-Lambert, 2011). Cultural tourism represents a highly complex segment of the tourism industry, with both supply and demand being diverse and flexible (Csapo, 2012). Today, cultural tourism focuses on the interplay between production and consumption, enhancing the connection between providers and consumers to better meet tourists' needs and create high-quality experiences at destinations (Jovicic, 2016). Understanding cultural tourists is essential for better managing cultural tourism destinations (Chen & Rahman, 2018). According to Smith (2003), cultural tourists prefer authentic cultural experiences; they wish to visit multiple destinations during their journeys and enjoy interactions with local residents while avoiding overt cultural commodification and artificial experiences.

A cultural tourism destination is composed of several factors including local tour guides, safety, infrastructure, tourism resources, service pricing, tourist facilities, and supplementary services (Nhan & Dua, 2019). Research by Nguyen & Cao (2014) indicates that service pricing, human resources, amenities, safety, goods quality, environmental protection, transportation, and facilities constitute attributes of a spiritual-cultural tourism destination. Bui & Nguyen (2015) further elaborate that the quality of services at a cultural tourism destination encompasses professionalism, impression management, service attitude and safety, cultural value comprehension, and staff uniforms. Based on these findings, this study identifies the factors of a cultural tourism destination including cultural attractions, service quality in tourism, perceived service pricing, tourism infrastructure, travel safety, and local residents.

Cultural attractions encompass all human and social elements that can draw tourists (Dong & Vuong, 2001). They provide a foundation for numerous tourism activities and are essential tools for many destinations competing for visitors (Richards, 2001). This factor has a significant positive impact on

tourists' intentions to revisit (Liang & Zuo, 2022). Service quality in tourism refers to how well the services provided by suppliers meet the expectations of target market tourists (Nguyen & Tran, 2004). Service quality is key to success and depends on the producer's ability to deliver consistent services that align with customer expectations (Rahmawati et al., 2021). Rahmawati et al. (2021) found that service quality influences tourists' intentions to return. Perceived pricing refers to the price perceived by customers. It is one of the critical factors for customers evaluating the quality of tourism services and affects customer loyalty (Bei & Chiao, 2001). Studies by Liu & Lee (2016) and Long & Nguyen (2018) have shown that perceived service pricing also impacts tourists' intentions to revisit. Tourism infrastructure includes transportation facilities not constructed by tourism organizations but rather by society as a whole. It encompasses road systems and utilities such as electricity and water supply; these are foundational elements for tapping into tourism potential and enhancing product quality (Nguyen & Tran, 2004). Tourism infrastructure is one of the factors influencing tourists' intentions to return (Giao et al., 2020). Travel safety is a pressing global issue affecting both tourists and destinations (Zou & Meng, 2020). The competitiveness of a tourist destination is related to safety and security concerns (Gajić, 2015). Factors related to travel safety may include aspects such as social orderliness, health crises like pandemics, and resistance movements (Nguyen & Tran, 2004). In this study context, travel safety is described as a condition ensuring no threats from begging or aggressive sales tactics. Research by Amalia et al. (2023) and Long & Nguyen (2018) indicates that safety plays a role in shaping tourists' intentions to revisit. Local residents are vital components of the tourism industry; they create a unique cultural environment for the destination where they live and work (Long & Nguyen, 2018). Tourists continuously interact with local residents during their travels; thus their behavior significantly influences the attractiveness of the destination (Vengesayi et al., 2009) as well as tourists' intentions to return (Long & Nguyen, 2018; Suhartanto et al., 2021). Based on evidence from the literature review presented above, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H<sub>1</sub>): Cultural attractions in Soc Trang Province significantly and positively influence tourists' intention to revisit.

Hypothesis 2 (H<sub>2</sub>): The quality of tourism services at cultural tourism sites in Soc Trang Province significantly and positively influences tourists' intention to revisit.

Hypothesis 3 (H<sub>3</sub>): The perception of service pricing at cultural tourism sites in Soc Trang Province significantly and positively influences tourists' intention to revisit.

Hypothesis 4 (H<sub>4</sub>): Tourism infrastructure at cultural tourism sites in Soc Trang Province significantly and positively influences tourists' intention to revisit.

Hypothesis 5 (H<sub>5</sub>): Tourism safety at cultural tourism sites in Soc Trang Province significantly and positively influences tourists' intention to revisit.

Hypothesis 6 (H<sub>6</sub>): Local residents at cultural tourism sites in Soc Trang Province significantly and positively influence tourists' intention to revisit.

The research model is illustrated in Figure 1.

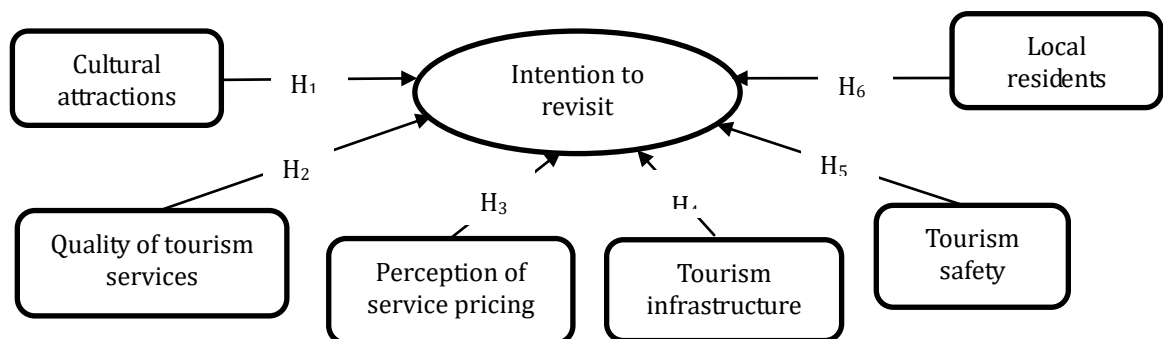


Figure 1. Research Model

Source: Authors 2024

### 3. Research Methods

**Measurement Scales and Questionnaire Design:** This study employs six independent measurement scales representing factors of a cultural tourism destination, namely cultural attractions, service quality, perceived service pricing, tourism infrastructure, travel safety, and local residents. Additionally, one dependent scale is used to measure tourists' intention to revisit the destination. The cultural attraction scale consists of four observed variables adapted from the study by Liang & Zuo (2022). The structure for service quality in tourism includes four observed variables referenced in Nhan & Dua (2019). The latent variable of perceived service pricing is measured by three observed variables inherited from Nguyen & Cao (2014). The tourism infrastructure factor encompasses four observed variables utilized by Nhan & Dua (2019). Travel safety is represented by three observed variables derived from Nhan & Dua (2019). Local resident scale is measured by four observed variables referenced from Bui & Nguyen (2015) and Suhartanto et al. (2021). The internal structure measuring tourists' intention to revisit is assessed through one observed variable inherited from Suhartanto et al. (2021). All variables are measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire is structured into three sections. Section 1 gathers information about the respondents' demographics. Part 2 is tourists' evaluations of the quality of various factors related to a cultural tourism site. Section 3 focuses on measuring tourists' intention to return to the destination.

**Data Collection and Analysis:** Data for this study was collected through a questionnaire survey method. The total number of independent observed variables in the research model is 22, adhering to the guideline of at least one variable corresponding to five observations (Hair et al., 2010), which necessitates a minimum sample size of 110. A sample of 120 observations was conducted to meet this requirement. Participants were selected using convenience sampling, and they self-completed the questionnaires. The interviews were conducted during August and September 2024. The survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability testing of measurement scales, exploratory factor analysis, and multivariate linear regression, utilizing IBM SPSS Statistics version 20.

### 4. Results

**Description of the Study Sample:** This study utilized various variables to measure the demographic characteristics of respondents, including gender, age, educational level, occupation, income, frequency of visits, and purpose of travel. Due to the extensive nature of these variables, a comprehensive analysis of all the information may be overly lengthy. Therefore, this section focuses specifically on the gender, age, and occupation of the respondents. The data analysis results indicate that there is not a significant difference in the ratio of male to female respondents. The two most represented age groups in the survey were 15-24 years and 35-44 years. Among the respondents, students, civil servants, and state employees were interviewed more frequently than other demographic groups (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Summary of Respondent Demographic Characteristics**

Variable	Attribute of variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	58	48.3
	Female	62	51.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>
Age	15-24 years	43	35.8
	25-34 years	24	20
	35-44 years	34	28.3
	45-54 years	16	13.3
	55 years and older	3	2.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

Occupation	Office staff	15	12.5
	Business	17	14.2
	Students	33	27.5
	Homemakers, retired	13	10.8
	Workers	20	16.7
	Civil servants, state officials	22	18.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Data analysis results of the study 2024

**Reliability Testing of Measurement Scales:** This study employed multiple measurement scales, and since the concepts were quantified using various observed variables, it was essential to test the reliability of these scales. The purpose of reliability testing is to assess how well the observed variables correlate with one another and how they contribute to measuring a particular concept. A scale is considered reliable when Cronbach's alpha is equal to or greater than 0.7, and the item-total correlation coefficients are greater than 0.3 (Hair et al., 2010). The data analysis presented in Table 2 indicates that Cronbach's alpha for the six independent scales ranged from 0.792 to 0.865, with all item-total correlation coefficients for the observed variables exceeding 0.552, confirming that all constructs are reliable. Consequently, these six scales, comprising 22 observed variables, were utilized for exploratory factor analysis in subsequent steps.

**Table 2. Results of Reliability Testing for Measurement Scales**

Scale	Symbol	Observed variables	Item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha
Cultural attractions	Ca	4 (Ca1, Ca2, Ca3, Ca4)	0.582 – 0.646	0.801
Quality of tourism services	Qts	4 (Qts1, Qts2, Qts3, Qts4)	0.675 – 0.655	0.807
Perception of service pricing	Psp	3 (Psp1, Psp2, Psp3)	0.590 – 0.747	0.812
Tourism infrastructure	Ti	4 (Ti1, Ti2, Ti3, Ti4)	0.588 – 0.675	0.815
Tourism safety	Ts	3 (Ts1, Ts2, Ts3)	0.673 – 0.682	0.792
Local residents	Lr	4 (Lr1, Lr2, Lr3, Lr4)	0.552 – 0.796	0.865

Source: Data analysis results of the study 2024

**Exploratory Factor Analysis:** The procedure of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is employed to condense a set of numerous observed variables into a smaller set of more meaningful factors. In social science research, where concepts are often abstract and complex, the unidimensionality of measurement scales is assessed through EFA. Several indices are utilized to evaluate the suitability of the data for factor analysis. The analysis indicates that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is 0.740, which exceeds the minimum threshold of 0.5, confirming that the data is appropriate for factor analysis (Hair et al., 2010). Additionally, Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded a p-value of 0.000, indicating that the observed variables are correlated in the population and thus suitable for factor analysis (Hair et al., 2010). The total variance explained by the data is 70.04%, which is greater than the minimum acceptable level of 50%, ensuring that the variables meet an acceptable level of explanatory power (Hair et al., 2010). Using principal components extraction and Varimax rotation, with Eigenvalues greater than 1 and a minimum factor loading coefficient of 0.5, the

data was grouped into six factors as shown in Table 3. Through exploratory factor analysis, Soc Trang's cultural tourism destination is constituted by six factors: local residents, cultural attractions, tourism infrastructure, quality of tourism services, tourism safety, and perception of service pricing.

**Table 3. Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis**

Factor	Observed variables	Factor loading
1 (Local residents)	Lr1, Lr2, Lr3, Lr4	0.723 – 0.897
2 (Cultural attractions)	Ca1, Ca2, Ca3, Ca4	0.736 – 0.789
3 (Tourism infrastructure)	Ti1, Ti2, Ti3, Ti4	0.632 – 0.829
4 (Quality of tourism services)	Qts1, Qts2, Qts3, Qts4	0.652 – 0.855
5 (Tourism safety)	Ts1, Ts2, Ts3	0.762 – 0.847
6 (Perception of service pricing)	Psp1, Psp2, Psp3	0.812 – 0.884

Source: Data analysis results of the study, 2024

**Multivariate Linear Regression Analysis:** The purpose of conducting this analysis is to test the proposed hypotheses. The fit of the research model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), the p-value (Sig.) from the F-test, the Durbin-Watson statistic, and the variance inflation factor (VIF). The data analysis revealed an  $R^2$  value of 0.329 (greater than 0.3), a p-value for the F-test of 0.000 (less than 0.05), a Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.09 (greater than 1 and less than 3), and a VIF of 1 (less than 2), all of which meet the requirements for multivariate regression analysis (Hair et al., 2010; Nguyen & Huynh, 2024). Specifically, the independent variables are significantly correlated with the dependent variable, explaining 32.9% of the variance in the dependent measure. There is no evidence of first-order autocorrelation or multicollinearity.

**Table 4. Results of Multivariate Linear Regression Analysis**

Factor	Hypothesis	B	$\beta$	t	Sig.	VIF	Decision
Constant		4.217		79.826	0.000		
Local residents	H6	0.215	0.313	4.062	0.000	1.0	Accepted
Cultural attractions	H1	0.120	0.174	2.258	0.026	1.0	Accepted
Tourism infrastructure	H4	0.155	0.225	2.916	0.004	1.0	Accepted
Quality of tourism services	H2	0.118	0.171	2.222	0.028	1.0	Accepted
Tourism safety	H5	0.180	0.262	3.400	0.001	1.0	Accepted
Perception of service pricing	H3	0.157	0.228	2.965	0.004	1.0	Accepted

Source: Data analysis results of the study, 2024

## 5. Discussion and Implications

A cultural tourism destination is composed of several factors, including local residents, cultural attractions, tourism infrastructure, quality of tourism services, tourism safety, and perception of service pricing. These factors have a significant and positive impact on tourists' intention to revisit the destination. Specifically, the analysis shows that cultural attractions positively influence tourists' intention to return, with a p-value of 0.026,  $\beta = 0.174$ , and  $t = 2.258$ ; thus,  $H_1$  is accepted. This finding

aligns with the research conducted by Liang & Zuo (2022). Quality of tourism services was also found to significantly and positively contribute to tourists' intention to revisit ( $p$ -value = 0.028,  $\beta$  = 0.171,  $t$  = 2.222), leading to the acceptance of  $H_2$ . This result is consistent with the study by Rahmawati et al. (2021). Furthermore, tourists' intention to revisit the destination is significantly and positively related to their perception of service pricing ( $p$ -value = 0.004,  $\beta$  = 0.228,  $t$  = 2.965), thus accepting  $H_3$ . This relationship has been documented in various studies (Bei & Chiao, 2001; Liu & Lee, 2016; Duong et al., 2022).  $H_4$  is accepted as tourism infrastructure significantly and positively affects tourists' intention to revisit ( $p$ -value = 0.004,  $\beta$  = 0.225,  $t$  = 2.916). This finding is supported by Giao et al. (2020). Additionally, tourism safety contributes significantly and positively to tourists' intention to return ( $p$ -value = 0.001,  $\beta$  = 0.262,  $t$  = 3.400), leading to the acceptance of  $H_5$ . This empirical evidence is consistent with studies by Amalia et al. (2023) and Long & Nguyen (2018). With a  $p$ -value of 0.000,  $\beta$  = 0.313, and  $t$  = 4.062, local residents significantly and positively influence tourists' intention to return; hence  $H_6$  is accepted. This finding corroborates research by Long & Nguyen (2018) and Suhartanto et al. (2021). In light of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), these results suggest that the factors associated with the destination provide tourists with enjoyable experiences or evoke positive feelings that enhance their likelihood of revisiting.

In the context of the factors influencing tourists' intention to revisit the destination, local residents emerged as the most significant factor ( $\beta$  = 0.313). This finding aligns with research by Suhartanto et al. (2021), which also highlighted the substantial impact of local communities on tourists' loyalty to Halal tourism destinations. The knowledge, skills (such as agility, flexibility, and professionalism), and attitudes (including friendliness, politeness, and hospitality) of local residents play a crucial role in enhancing tourists' intention to return. The second most influential factor in tourists' intention to revisit is tourism safety ( $\beta$  = 0.262). Destinations that maintain a safe environment (free from begging, harassment, and overpricing) are more likely to enhance tourists' likelihood of returning. Additionally, the perception of service pricing significantly contributes to revisit intention ( $\beta$  = 0.228). Tourists are more inclined to return to destinations where dining, sightseeing, entertainment, and shopping prices are perceived as reasonable. Tourism infrastructure also has a notable impact on tourists' intention to return ( $\beta$  = 0.225). Destinations equipped with efficient transportation systems, reliable utilities (electricity and water), clean restrooms, and well-maintained parking facilities are more likely to encourage repeat visits. Cultural attractions were found to have a less significant effect on revisit intention ( $\beta$  = 0.174). This may be attributed to limitations in experiential activities, the appeal of cultural spaces, architecture, festivals, and religious events in the area. Finally, the factor with the least impact on tourists' intention to revisit Soc Trang's cultural tourism destination is the quality of tourism services ( $\beta$  = 0.171). This suggests that the quality of accommodations, entertainment options, dining experiences, and shopping facilities in the study area is not strongly connected to tourists' revisit intentions. Based on these findings, several strategies can be implemented to enhance tourists' likelihood of returning to the destination: (i) Training and capacity building for local residents, (ii) Strengthening safety measures, (iii) Regulating service pricing, (iv) Improving tourism infrastructure, (v) Cultural preservation and innovation, and (vi) Enhancing service quality.

## 6. Conclusion

Cultural tourism is a significant component of international travel consumption, regarded as a form of cultural consumption that plays a vital economic role and supports the preservation of cultural heritage (Richards, 2018). Numerous factors contribute to the formation of a cultural tourism destination, including local residents, cultural attractions, tourism infrastructure, quality of tourism services, tourism safety, and perception of service pricing. Tourists' intentions to revisit are considered one of the indicators of sustainable destination development (Long & Nguyen, 2018). All these factors have a significant and positive influence on tourists' intention to return. The importance of these factors is ranked as follows: local residents, tourism safety, perception of service pricing, tourism infrastructure, cultural attractions, and quality of tourism services. Theoretically, this study identifies the components that constitute a cultural tourism destination and examines how these factors impact tourists' intention to revisit. Consequently, it expands the literature and understanding surrounding this topic. Practically, the research highlights the degree of influence each factor has, enabling managers, businesses, and destinations to recognize the significance of these issues. Furthermore, based on several

recommendations, stakeholders gain practical insights for making informed decisions. The study acknowledges several contributions while also recognizing its limitations, particularly the absence of important measurement scales such as "tourism experience" and "tourism motivation" (Richards, 2018). Additionally, the measurement of revisit intention relies on a single variable. This presents an opportunity for future research to explore these dimensions further.

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