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Research on Domestic Tourists' Satisfaction When Visiting Tourist Attractions in the Red River Delta

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Abstract

The study aims to identify the factors that directly influence the satisfaction of domestic tourists visiting tourist destinations in the Red River Delta region. Based on 475 survey samples, quantitative analysis methods were employed, including reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha, exploratory factor analysis, correlation analysis, and linear regression conducted with SPSS 26 software. The results indicate that eight factors have a direct impact on domestic tourists' satisfaction when visiting tourist sites in the Red River Delta: Local Characteristics, Trust, Service Capacity, Price, Responsiveness, Tangibles, Security-Safety, and Empathy. Based on these findings, several managerial implications are proposed to help improve the quality of domestic tourism experiences while simultaneously promoting tourism development in a more professional, sustainable, and closely aligned manner with tourists' actual needs.

Keywords: *Satisfaction, Domestic Tourists, Red River Delta.*

Introduction

In the strong recovery of Vietnam's tourism industry following the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic tourism is emerging as a strategic pillar, both driving economic growth and laying a foundation to strengthen the industry's internal resilience in the face of global fluctuations. In recent years, domestic tourism has increasingly affirmed its role as an important driving force for the development of Vietnam's tourism industry, as the need to explore, experience and find traditional cultural values of the people is increasing, domestic destinations, especially in the Red River Delta region, have become the top choice of many tourists.

The Red River Delta, a place where many tangible and intangible cultural heritages converge, associated with the depth of national history, possesses great potential for sustainable tourism development. From famous scenic spots such as Trang An (Ninh Binh), Keo Pagoda (Thai Binh), to the space of Hanoi's Old Quarter or unique traditional craft villages in Hung Yen, Nam Dinh..., this area can meet the diverse needs of domestic tourists, from cultural, spiritual to ecological and resort tourism. However, these tourism potentials have not been effectively exploited without ensuring the quality of experience for tourists, in which satisfaction is the key measure. Domestic tourist satisfaction not only reflects the extent to which a destination meets initial expectations but also directly affects the intention to return, share experiences, and promote the local image. Many tourist destinations in the Red River Delta, although attracting a significant number of visitors, have not yet made a deep impression on visitors, partly due to the lack of consistent investment in service quality, tourism information, infrastructure, or personalized

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experience factors. On the other hand, although there have been a number of studies on tourist satisfaction at major tourist destinations, in-depth studies focusing on domestic tourists in the Red River Delta have not received much attention. Based on practical requirements and gaps, it is extremely necessary to study the satisfaction of domestic tourists when visiting tourist destinations in the Red River Delta, to identify key factors affecting tourist satisfaction, measure the impact of each factor, thereby providing management implications and practical solutions for destinations in the region, contributing to improving the quality of domestic tourism experiences, while promoting tourism development in a more professional, sustainable and connected direction with the actual needs of tourists.

Theoretical Framewords and Research Model

Tourist Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is one of the important topics in tourism research, reflecting the level of satisfaction after experiencing a destination. The term “tourist satisfaction” in tourism research originates from the term “customer satisfaction” in the field of marketing. According to Pizam et al. (1978), tourist satisfaction is the result of the interaction between the perceived value and the expectations of tourists about the destination. Oliver (1980) believes that the difference between the expected value and the perceived value of a tourism product affects the emotional state of tourists will determine the level of satisfaction with that service product. According to the World Tourism Organization, tourists are “people who travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for more than 24 hours and not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity conducted by an organization engaged in tourism”. According to the Law on Tourism of Vietnam, tourists are people who travel or combine travel, except for those who go to school, work, or do paid work at the destination. In addition, tourists are divided into 2 types: i) Domestic tourists are Vietnamese people and citizens, including foreigners residing in Vietnam and participating in tourism activities within the territory of Vietnam; ii) International tourists include: people from other countries, Vietnamese people residing abroad coming to Vietnam for tourism and Vietnamese people and foreigners residing in Vietnam going abroad for tourism.

In the tourism industry, Moutinho et al. (1998) pointed out that satisfaction is a function of the variation of tourists' expectations before traveling and what tourists feel after traveling. The actual travel process brings experiences and emotions that are better or equal to tourists' expectations, they will feel satisfied with the products and services that service providers bring to them (Truong and Foster, 2006). In agreement with the above studies, Kotler (2016) emphasized the determination of tourist satisfaction as the positive feelings achieved after traveling. Tourists have many different levels of satisfaction, and if the result is higher than the expectation, the tourist is satisfied and vice versa, if the result is lower, the tourist is not satisfied. This is the reason why the tourism industry has decided to highlight tourist destinations to create tourist satisfaction. According to Truong and Foster (2006), satisfaction is the result of a comparison between expectations and actual experiences. Ho Thi Chau's research (2020) emphasizes that when tourists' actual experiences are equal to or higher than expectations, they will be pleased, meaning that customers are satisfied with the product or service. Tourist satisfaction reflects the difference between perceived value and tourists' expectations when using products and services at the destination.

Hypothesis and Proposed Research Model

To determine customer satisfaction, Cronin and Taylor (1992) proposed the SERVPERF model consisting of five components: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. These are also the five factors frequently used in later studies when referring to customer satisfaction in the field of tourism and services (Jain et al, 2004). Inheriting and developing the SERVPERF model, Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) added the price factor and tested that price has a strong correlation with customer satisfaction. In addition, a number of domestic and foreign studies have proposed different factors that directly affect tourist satisfaction, as shown in Table 1.

TT	Author name	Factors
Foreign projects		
1	Naidoo et al. (2011)	Infrastructure, prices, local culture, safety, and natural resources.
2	Ababneh (2013)	Facilities: destination convenience, destination attractiveness.
3	Sofi et al. (2014)	Natural environment, accessibility, facilities, and infrastructure.
Domestic projects		
4	Vu (2012)	Accommodation facilities, means of transport, tour guide attitude, infrastructure, and tour guide form.
5	Ha and Le (2013)	Reliability; assurance.
6	Nguyen (2013)	Natural conditions and facilities; Environment; Entertainment, shopping, and dining services; Accommodation; Cultural heritage
7	Nguyen (2013)	Tourism infrastructure; Accommodation facilities; Sightseeing transportation; Food, shopping, and entertainment services; Security and safety; Tour guides; Prices of services
8	Nguyen (2015)	Responsiveness; Reliability; Service Competence; Locality; Tangibles
9	Thai and Dang (2019)	Understanding ; Trust ; Tangibles ; Service Pricing
10	Cao and Pham (2021)	Empathy, Trust, Responsiveness, Service competence, Local specificity, Tangibles.
11	Bui and Nguyen (2021)	Food, shopping, and entertainment services; Price perception; Tourist scenery; Security and safety; Means of transport
12	Le et al. (2024)	Environmental landscape; Infrastructure ; Destination tourism products; Human factors; Security - safety; Prices of services
13	Hoang et al. (2025)	Cultural resources; Landscape; Friendliness of the people; Safety of the destination; Tourism infrastructure; Quality of service.

Table 1: Summary of Studies Related to Tourist Satisfaction

(Source: Synthesis of the author group)

Through the process of reviewing previous research works and based on theoretical foundations, along with practical observations, the author selects and proposes the main factors affecting domestic tourist satisfaction and proposes a research model with the following hypotheses:

H1: Trust has a positive influence on domestic tourists' satisfaction when visiting tourist attractions in the Red River Delta.

H2: Responsiveness has a positive impact on domestic tourists' satisfaction when visiting tourist attractions in the Red River Delta.

H3: Empathy has a positive influence on domestic tourists' satisfaction when visiting tourist attractions in the Red River Delta.

H4: Service capacity has a positive impact on domestic tourists' satisfaction when visiting tourist attractions in the Red River Delta.

H5: Tangibles have a positive influence on domestic tourists' satisfaction when visiting tourist attractions in the Red River Delta.

H6: Local characteristics have a positive impact on domestic tourists' satisfaction when visiting tourist attractions in the Red River Delta.

H7: Price has a positive impact on domestic tourists' satisfaction when visiting tourist attractions in the Red River Delta.

H8: Security and safety have a positive impact on domestic tourists' satisfaction when visiting tourist attractions in the Red River Delta.

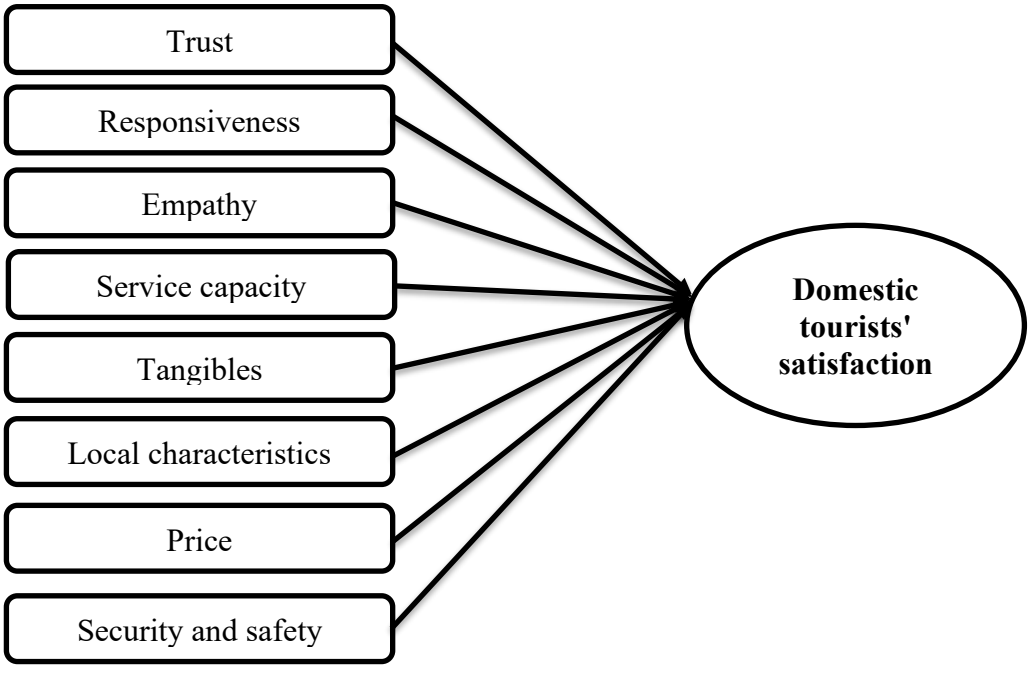

Figure 1. Proposed Research Model

Source: Author's proposal

From the proposed research hypotheses and models, the general research equation is determined as follows:

DS = β0 + β1*TR + β2*RE + β3*EM + β4*SE + β5*TA + β6*LO + β7*PR + β8*SS +ε

In there:

DS (dependent factor): Domestic tourist' satisfaction

Independent factors include (Xi): Trust (TR); Responsiveness (RE); Empathy (EM); Service capability (SE); Tangibles (TA); Local characteristics (LO); Price (PR); Security-safety (SS).

βk: Regression coefficient (k = 0, 1, 2,..., 8).

ε: error.

Research Methods

The preliminary scale of the study was built based on domestic and foreign studies by Cronin and Taylor (1992), Zeithaml and Bitner (2000), Ha and Le (2013), Nguyen (2015), Thai and Dang (2019), Cao and Pham (2021), Bui and Nguyen (2021) including 45 observed variables corresponding to 8 independent factors and 1 dependent factor. For the preliminary scale to meet the requirements of reality and be suitable for the research purpose, before being included in the official survey, the author conducted a group discussion with several domestic tourists visiting the destination in the Red River Delta and interviewed experts in the tourism field to consider the influencing factors, the relationship between the factors, and at the same time, re-calibrate the observed variables in the preliminary scale to avoid confusing the survey subjects. The conversation was recorded for analysis and construction of the official scale. The results showed that the participants all agreed with the factors and preliminary scale in the proposed research model, however, some words need to be edited and changed to make the questions simpler and more suitable for the local style.

5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and completely agree). The sample size was selected according to the best ratio of 10:1 in the EFA exploratory factor analysis, according to Hair et al. (2010). The total number of observed variables in this study is 45 variables, so the required sample size is 45*10 = 450 and to ensure that invalid ballots do not affect the analysis results, 500 ballots were actually issued. A convenient non-probability survey method was used through the form of direct distribution of ballots to domestic tourists at tourist destinations in the Red River Delta during the period from January 2025 to March 2025. The results obtained 4 75 valid ballots, the data was processed using SPSS26 software through Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient testing; exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and descriptive statistics, and regression analysis with a statistical significance level of 5%.

Research Results

The statistical results describing the characteristics of 475 domestic tourists participating in the survey showed that: In terms of gender, women accounted for a higher proportion with 56.8%, while men accounted for 43,2%. In terms of age, the majority of respondents were between 26 and 35 years old (35,4%) and between 18 and 25 years old (23,6%), indicating that the young

customer group is the main target in domestic tourism activities in this area. The group from 36 to 45 years old and over 45 years old accounted for 21,7% and 16,2% respectively, while the group under 18 years old accounted for only 3,2%. In terms of educational level, 48,8% of survey participants had a university degree, 18,9% had a postgraduate degree, while the proportion with a high school degree or below was 12,2% and college/intermediate level was 20%. In terms of occupation, the highest proportion belongs to the group of office workers (26,5%), followed by the group of self-employed (21.5%), state officials/public employees (19.8%) and students (17.9%). The remaining group belongs to other occupations, accounting for 14,3%. In terms of travel frequency, 38,3% of tourists said they travel domestically about 1–2 times per year, 32,8% travel 3–4 times per year, and 19,4% travel more than 4 times per year. Only 9.5% of survey participants said they travel less than once per year. In terms of travel organization, the majority of tourists choose to organize their own trips (55,4%), while 30,1% go through a travel agency and 14,5% choose a combination of both.

Elements in the research model	**Encryption**	**Number of observed variables**	**Cronbach's Alpha**
Trust	TR	5	0,823
Responsiveness	RE	5	0,791
Empathy	EM	5	0,818
Service capability	SE	4	0,784
Tangibles	TA	7	0,802
Local characteristics	LO	8	0,820
Price	PR	5	0,811
Security–safety	SS	3	0,797
Domestic tourist satisfaction	DS	3	0,835

Table 2: Results of Scale Reliability Test

Source: Author's data processing results

Analysis results show that the Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the scale is greater than 0.7 and the total item correlation coefficient is greater than 0,3. At the same time, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient if the variables of all 45 observed variables are eliminated is smaller than the total Cronbach's Alpha, so no variables are eliminated (Hair et al., 2010). Therefore, the scale has both reliability and discriminant validity, satisfying the requirements for inclusion in the EFA exploratory factor analysis.

Group of factors	**Factor loading**	**Value**	**Total variance extracted (%)**
Trust	[0,814 – 0,752]	7,856	35,502
Responsiveness	[0,796 – 0,742]	4,291	52,867
Empathy	[0,803 – 0,781]	6,553	40,213
Service capability	[0,826 – 0,759]	5,214	47,831
Tangibles	[0,788 – 0,747]	3,960	61,514
Local characteristics	[0,835 – 0,760]	3,105	68,979
Price	[0,811 – 0,775]	2,787	76,103

Security – safety	[0,799 – 0,763]	1,369	80,562
KMO = 0,825			
Sig. (Bartlett's Test of Sphericity) = 0.000			

Table 3. Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis of Independent Factors

Source: Author's data processing results

The results of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) showed that the KMO coefficient reached 0,825 and Bartlett's Test had a value of Sig. = 0,000, reflecting that the data was completely suitable for factor analysis, and the observed variables were closely correlated with each other in the data set. At Eigenvalue greater than 1 had 8 factors were extracted, with Total variance extracted reaching 80,562% shows that these eight groups of factors explain most of the variation in the data and represent the proposed research concepts well. At the same time, the factor loading coefficients are all in the range of 0,7 to 0,8, reflecting a high level of convergence between observed variables in the same factor, and there is no interference between groups.

Factor	**Factor loading**	**Value**	**Total variance extracted (%)**
Domestic tourist satisfaction	[0,810 – 0,783]	1,985	81,246
KMO = 0,815			
Sig. (Bartlett's Test of Sphericity) = 0.000			

Table 4: Results of Factor Analysis To Explore Dependent Factors

Source: Author's data processing results

The results of factor analysis of the dependent factor scale, Domestic tourist satisfaction, show that the KMO coefficient reaches the value of 0,815 (greater than 0,5 and less than 1). Bartlett's Test has a Sig. Value of 0,000 (less than 0,05). At Eigenvalue = 1,985 (greater than 1), the three observed variables converge into one group; the total variance extracted is 84,001% (greater than 50%). Thus, the data collected for the scale meets the requirements (Hair et al., 2010).

	DS	**TR**	**RE**	**EM**	**SE**	**TA**	**LO**	**PR**	**SS**
DS	1								
TR	0,617**	1							
RE	0,704**	0,328**	1						
EM	0,739**	0,297**	0,270**	1					
SE	0,785**	0,211*	0,151*	0,312**	1				
TA	0,624**	0,340**	0,373*	0,378*	0,163**	1			
LO	0,657**	0,109*	0,190**	0190**	0,287*	0,173*	1		
PR	0,793**	0,267**	0,302**	0,273**	0,172**	0,253**	0,227**	1	
SS	0,721**	0,187*	0,196*	0,212*	0,257 *	0,263*	0,175*	0,188**	1
, Correspond to p < 0,05 and p < 0,01*									

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Analysis Results

Source: Author's data processing results

There is a positive correlation between the independent factors and the dependent factors and

the correlation is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. At the same time, there is no suspicion of multicollinearity between the independent factors that can be included in the regression analysis.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0,822[a]	0,807	0,796	0,353	1,842

Table 6: Model Summary

Source: Author's data processing results

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis using the Enter method, the independent factors were included in the analysis at the same time, showing that the research model achieved high suitability and statistical significance, with the correlation coefficient R reaching 0,822, reflecting the close relationship between the independent factors and the dependent factor. In particular, the coefficient of determination R^2 reached 0.807 and the adjusted R^2 reached 0,796, proving that the independent factors in the model explained up to 79,6% of the variation of the dependent factor. The analysis results also showed that the Durbin-Watson coefficient reached 1,842, ranging from 1,5 to 2,5, so there was no residual autocorrelation in the regression model.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	50,317	8	4,796	115,675	0,000
Residual	18,275	466	0,034		
Total	68,592	474			

Table 7: ANOVA

Source: Author's data processing results

The results of ANOVA analysis and F test show that the statistical value of Sig is 0.000, so the linear regression model is suitable for the data file and can be used.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	Beta	Std.Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0,215	0,037		5,745	0,000		
TR	0,359	0,021	0,366	3,925	0,001	0,746	1,734
RE	0,292	0,030	0,304	4,869	0,003	0,524	1,687
EM	0,211	0,019	0,248	5,714	0,002	0,621	1,834
SE	0,321	0,025	0,340	4,353	0,001	0,743	1,787
TA	0,267	0,017	0,285	5,192	0,001	0,733	1,748
LO	0,373	0,022	0,391	5,367	0,000	0,564	1,651
PR	0,318	0,034	0,327	4,805	0,005	0,797	1,712
SS	0,246	0,029	0,263	5,778	0,000	0,682	1,808
a. Dependent Variable: DS							

Table 8: Results Of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Source: Author's data processing results

Testing the research model shows that the Sig. the coefficients of the t-test all satisfy the requirement of being less than 0,05, so the model is statistically significant. The VIF values are all greater than 1 and less than 2, so the model does not have multicollinearity. In addition, regression diagnostic tests such as Scatterplot, Histogram, and PP plot show that the residuals are randomly distributed, approximately normal, and do not violate the assumptions of the multivariate linear regression model, specifically: Scatterplot plots showing the residuals compared to the predicted values show that the points are randomly scattered around the mean = 0, not forming a regular geometric shape, proving that the assumptions of linear relationship and constant variance (homoscedasticity) are guaranteed; The Histogram of the residuals shows that the residuals are approximately normally distributed, with the normal distribution curve roughly coinciding with the histogram when the Mean value is approximately 0 and the standard deviation is close to 1 reflecting the residuals are normally distributed. The P–P Plot of the standardized residuals shows that the observation points are distributed close to the 45-degree diagonal, confirming that the assumption of normal distribution of the residuals is not violated. Thus, all the hypotheses are accepted, and the standardized linear regression equation is determined as follows:

SHL = 0,391*LO + 0,366*TR + 0,340*SE + 0,327*PR + 0,304*RE + 0,285*TA + 0,263*SS + 0,248*EM +ε

Through the equation, all 8 independent factors have a positive impact on the dependent factor in decreasing order: Local characteristics, Trust, Service capacity, Price, Responsiveness, Tangibles, Security-safety, and Empathy. The research results obtained show similarities with the results of studies by Cronin and Taylor (1992), Zeithaml and Bitner (2000), Ha and Le (2013), Nguyen (2015), Thai and Dang (2019), Cao and Pham (2021), Bui and Nguyen (2021). However, the coefficients and order of impact of the factors are different from the above studies, which shows that the satisfaction of domestic tourists in each locality is different. In addition, the t-test and ANOVA analysis of variance showed that there was no statistically significant difference between demographic factors and domestic tourists' satisfaction when visiting tourist attractions in the Red River Delta.

Management Implications

Firstly, to enhance and preserve local characteristics, the factor that has the strongest impact on tourist satisfaction. Management agencies and businesses need to focus on developing tourism products associated with regional cultural identity, such as traditional festivals, craft villages, typical cuisine, ancient architecture, and folk beliefs. Along with that, it is necessary to invest in building highly interactive experiential products such as "a day as a farmer" tours, handicraft experiences, or folk art performances. In addition, it is necessary to increase the promotion of information about local characteristics through leaflets, signs, videos at hotels, restaurants, bus stations, and public places.

Second, increase trust in service quality and consistency. Tourism service businesses need to make clear commitments on product quality, compliance with advertising, listed prices, and service policies. Management agencies need to monitor regularly, especially on weekends and peak seasons, to promptly detect and handle the phenomenon of "price gouging" and unreasonable price increases at tourist attractions, restaurants and hotels, especially in big cities

like Hanoi and Ninh Binh. At the same time, it is necessary to establish and publicize a hotline to promptly receive and handle feedback from tourists.

Third, improve the service capacity of tourism personnel. Local authorities and businesses need to proactively organize short-term training courses and seminars to improve expertise, service skills, communication and handling of situations for frontline staff at tourist destinations. During peak seasons, it is necessary to proactively mobilize trained seasonal workers to ensure stable and professional service capacity, meeting the diverse needs of tourists.

Fourth, control and create transparency in prices, a sensitive factor in domestic tourism. Service providers, from accommodation, food, transportation to shopping, need to list prices clearly, consistently and publicly. The government needs to coordinate with market management forces, police, and tax authorities to inspect and handle souvenir and service outlets that show signs of "price inflation", especially in areas with a large number of tourists.

Fifth, enhance responsiveness by optimizing service processes, minimizing waiting times, and responding quickly to visitors' requests. Destinations should apply digital technology in managing visitor numbers, dividing tours, and booking services in advance to avoid overload. At the same time, proactively collect visitors' opinions at the destination to improve services in real time.

Sixth, improve and invest in tangible means, including facilities, infrastructure and service spaces. Public sanitation systems, parking lots, signs, rest areas, and green landscapes at tourist destinations need to be upgraded regularly. In particular, attention should be paid to environmental sanitation, urban aesthetics and synchronous architecture at destinations to enhance the visual impression of visitors.

Seventh, ensure security and safety for tourists throughout the tour. Local authorities need to coordinate closely with the police to organize patrols and promptly handle acts of fraud, pickpocketing, and soliciting customers. In addition, food hygiene and safety need to be strictly controlled; restaurants and eateries should be periodically assessed and clearly announced information about safety certification should be provided so that tourists can feel secure in their choices.

Eighth, enhance empathy in the service process. This is a factor that creates positive emotions for tourists, helping them feel listened to and respected. Service staff at tourist destinations need to be friendly, ready to support, show sincere concern and understand the needs of each group of tourists. This will create "personalized" experiences, increase customer loyalty and the ability to return.

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