

INTENTION TO RETURN TO NATIONAL PARK: THE ROLE OF PERCEIVED QUALITY, PERCEIVED VALUE, AND TOURIST SATISFACTION

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Abstract: Understanding and predicting tourists' intention to return to a destination is a fundamental factor for the success of a tourism destination. The objective of this study is to demonstrate the influence of perceived quality, perceived value, and satisfaction on the intention to return to the national park of tourists. The research utilizes a convenient sampling method with direct interview techniques to collect research data. The achieved sample size is 308 tourists who have visited and experienced tourism services at national parks in the Mekong Delta region, Vietnam. Applying a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, the study has proven that perceived quality positively influences satisfaction, enhancing the intention to return to national parks of tourists. Additionally, perceived value also has a positive impact on satisfaction, contributing to promoting the intention to return to national parks. Finally, the research has revealed a positive correlation between satisfaction and the intention to return to national parks of tourists.

Key words: perceived quality, perceived value, satisfaction, intention to return, national park

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INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism tends to rely heavily on the return behavior of tourists to tourism destinations (Thuy and Tuan, 2018). To ensure the success of a tourism destination, maintaining tourists' intention to return is an important task for planners (Chen and Tsai, 2007). The return of tourists to a destination is significant for increasing revenue at tourist spots and saving costs. Even a 2% increase in returning tourists can result in a corresponding profit efficiency equivalent to a 10% cost reduction (Som et al., 2011). Located in the southernmost part of Vietnam, the Mekong Delta has an area of 40 thousand km², and diverse ecosystems, serving as the largest rice bowl in Vietnam and offering many attractive tourist destinations. In recent years, eco-tourism in national parks in the Mekong Delta has been a focus of attention, and investment, and has achieved significant results. Some national parks have unique eco-tourism products, such as Mui Ca Mau National Park and U Minh Ha National Park (Ca Mau Province), U Minh Thuong National Park (Kien Giang Province), and Tram Chim National Park (Dong Thap Province). The development of eco-tourism is closely linked to the exploitation and conservation of resources, contributing to the environmental protection of national parks, which is an important task. Additionally, attracting tourists and enhancing the intention to return to the destination are crucial factors in the success of national parks.

In recent decades, there have been many studies on tourists' intention to return to a destination. Researchers have pointed out that tourists' intention to return is influenced by various factors, including perceived value (Allameh et al., 2015; Carla et al., 2017; Khuong and Duyen, 2017; Juliana et al., 2022; Libre et al., 2022; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023), perceived quality (Allameh et al., 2015; Carla et al., 2017; Pivac et al., 2019; Hermann and Nemaorani, 2023; Sung and Noh, 2023), satisfaction (Loi et al., 2017; An et al., 2019; Nguyen Viet et al., 2020; Atmari and Putri, 2021; Čulić et al., 2021; Chin et al., 2022; Libre et al., 2022; Hermann and Nemaorani, 2023; Shatnawi, 2023), national image (De Nisco et al., 2015; Soonsan and Sukahbot, 2019), destination image (Stylidis et al., 2017; Prayogo and Kusumawardhani, 2017; Soonsan and Sukahbot, 2019), etc. The majority of studies have only focused on demonstrating the relationship between perceived quality and its impact on satisfaction and intention to return to destinations (Pivac et al., 2019; Hermann and Nemaorani, 2023; Sung and Noh, 2023) or perceived value and its impact on satisfaction and intention to return to destinations (An et al., 2019; Juliana et al., 2022; Libre et al., 2022; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023).

Few studies have demonstrated the simultaneous impact of perceived quality and perceived value on satisfaction, and intention to return to destinations among tourists (Allameh et al., 2015; Carla et al., 2017; Khuong and Duyen, 2017). Specifically, there has been no study demonstrating the influence of perceived quality and perceived value on satisfaction, and intention to revisit national parks among tourists. Therefore, this study is conducted to demonstrate the simultaneous influence of perceived quality and perceived value on satisfaction, and intention to revisit national parks among tourists, in the case of national parks in the Mekong Delta region, Vietnam.

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Theoretical framework

Perceived quality

Perceived quality is defined as the customer's evaluation of a product's overall excellence compared to substitute brands (Aaker, 1996). It is the consumer's assessment of the overall quality of a product/service (Zeithaml, 1988). According to Dawa (1999), perception quality encompasses the customer's overall opinions and evaluations regarding the excellence, perfection, or different degrees of a product/service. Grönroos (1984) identified service perceived quality with two aspects: technical quality (what customers receive) and functional quality (the processes or ways customers receive). In tourism, perception quality is formed by service delivery processes (friendliness, politeness, efficiency, reliability, staff competence) and service outcomes (accommodation, dining, entertainment facilities) (Žabkar et al., 2010).

Perceived value

Perceived value occurs at different stages of the purchasing process, including pre-purchase, during purchase, and post-purchase (Woodruff, 1997; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). It is the consumer's overall evaluation of the utility of a product/service based on the comparison between the perceived benefits and the costs incurred to obtain the product/service (Zeithaml, 1988). Customers' perceived value is the emotional relationship established between the customer and the provider after the customer has used a product/service and found that it adds value (Butz and Goodstein, 1996). According to Pandža Bajs (2015), perceived value provides a solid theoretical foundation for evaluating an eco-tour from the perspective of tourists. Perceived value is a reliable concept for predicting tourist behaviors (Eid and El-Gohary, 2015) and offers practical meanings for marketing eco-tours (Kim and Park, 2017).

Satisfaction

Satisfaction is the degree of an individual's emotional state derived from comparing the results obtained from a product/service with their expectations (Kotler, 2001). It results from the fulfillment of a customer's expectations through their experience with a product/service (Hume and Mort, 2010).

According to Chen and Tsai (2008), customer satisfaction measures all levels of a customer's happiness with the service provider after all encounters and interactions. Tourist satisfaction is their emotional state regarding the tourism product/service, determined based on the perception from the experience compared to their expectations before using that product/service (Oliver, 1980; Um et al., 2006; Han et al., 2011). Additionally, tourist satisfaction can be reflected in their retention of beautiful memories after the trip ends (Reisinger and Turner, 2012).

Intention to return

Intention plays a crucial role in predicting consumer behavior, being a significant expression in the decision-making process (Bagozzi and Phillips, 1982). According to Ajzen (1991), there is a strong connection between intention and actual behavior, making determining intention the best way to predict an individual's actual behavior. Tourists' intention to return can generate a flow of international tourism, providing positive motivation for tourists to revisit the destination in the future (Um et al., 2006). Intention to return to a tourism destination is defined as tourists repeating an activity or revisiting a destination (Baker and Crompton, 2000). It is related to the tourist's evaluation of the likelihood or plan to revisit the same destination (Stylos et al., 2016) or the willingness to recommend the destination to others (Chen and Tsai, 2007). The important premise of the intention to revisit stems from satisfaction, perceived value, and tourism experiences (Pandža Bajs, 2015; Lee et al., 2011).

Research hypotheses

The relationship between perception quality, satisfaction, and intention to return

When service quality is perceived at a high level, it enhances customer satisfaction (Saravanan and Rao, 2007). Perceived quality is a precursor to customer satisfaction (Rajaratnam et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2017; Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2021; Hermann and Nemaorani, 2023). Several studies have argued and demonstrated the positive impact of perceived quality on customer satisfaction and the intention to return to the destination (Žabkar et al., 2010; Allameh et al., 2015; Carla et al., 2017; Pivac et al., 2019). Therefore, the study poses the following hypotheses: H1: Perceived quality positively influences tourist satisfaction; H2: Perceived quality positively influences the intention to return to national parks.

The relationship between perceived value, satisfaction, and intention to return

According to Williams and Soutar (2000), there is a positive relationship between emotional perceived value and customer satisfaction. Studies by Pandža Bajs (2015) and Libre et al. (2022) have shown that perceived value positively impacts tourist satisfaction. Recently, many studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between perceived value, satisfaction, and the intention to return to the destination of tourists (Allameh et al., 2015; Carla et al., 2017; An et al., 2019). Thus, the study proposes the following hypotheses: H3: Perceived value positively influences tourist satisfaction; H4: Perceived value positively influences the intention to return to national parks.

The relationship between satisfaction and tourists' intention to return

One of the crucial factors in the successful marketing of a destination is tourist satisfaction, which influences destination choice and the decision to return (Yoon and Uysal, 2005). Tourist satisfaction is a significant factor influencing the behavioral intention of tourists (Chenini and Touaiti, 2018). In the field of tourism, many researchers have argued and demonstrated the positive impact of satisfaction on the intention to return to the destination of tourists (Carla et al., 2017;

Loi et al., 2017; An et al., 2019; Soonsan and Sukahbot, 2019; Atmari and Putri, 2021; Ćulić et al., 2021; Chin et al., 2022; Libre et al., 2022; Hermann and Nemaorani, 2023; Shatnawi, 2023). Therefore, the study proposes hypothesis H5: Satisfaction positively influences the intention to return to national parks.

Based on the literature review and the hypotheses set, the research model (Figure 1) depicting the influence of perceived quality, perceived value, and satisfaction on the intention to return to national parks is established as follows:

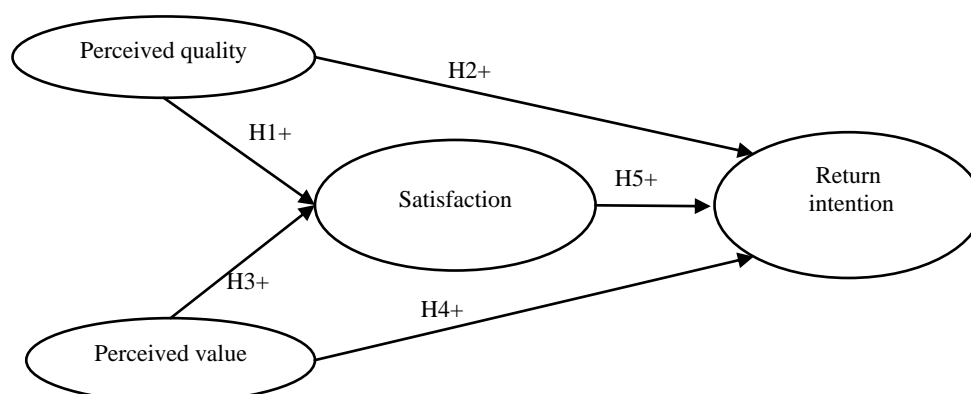


Figure 1. Proposed research model

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research scale

The research scales were adjusted through qualitative research to better fit the research context. A group discussion method was employed to identify suitable scales for the research model. A group discussion session was organized with the participation of 8 tourists who visited national parks and 2 tourism research experts. The results of the group discussion led to the refinement on 4 scales with 18 observable variables inherited from previous research authors (Table 1).

Table 1. Interpretation of observed variables in the research model

Factor	Observed variable	Scale	References
Perceived Quality	PQ1: National parks in the Mekong Delta have unique and attractive cuisine.	Likert 1-5	Žabkar et al. (2010), Hai (2022)
	PQ2: National parks in the Mekong Delta have beautiful natural landscapes.	Likert 1-5	
	PQ3: National parks in the Mekong Delta have fresh and cool air.	Likert 1-5	
	PQ4: National parks in the Mekong Delta have interesting activities.	Likert 1-5	
	PQ5: I feel safe and comfortable at national parks in the Mekong Delta.	Likert 1-5	
Perceived Valued	PV1: The trip to national parks in the Mekong Delta gives me a pleasant feeling.	Likert 1-5	Gallarza and Saura (2006), Quintal and Polczynski (2010),
	PV2: I enjoy relaxation during my trip to national parks in the Mekong Delta.	Likert 1-5	
	PV3: I feel what I gave (pay) is in accordance with what I received.	Likert 1-5	
	PV4: The experience of traveling to national parks in the Mekong Delta is what I want.	Likert 1-5	
	PV5: Overall, I appreciate the value of the experience during the trip to national parks in the Mekong Delta.	Likert 1-5	
Satisfaction	SA1: I enjoy the trip to national parks in the Mekong Delta.	Likert 1-5	Chen and Chen (2010), Nguyen Viet et al. (2020)
	SA2: I feel satisfied with my decision to choose national parks in the Mekong Delta.	Likert 1-5	
	SA3: I like traveling to national parks in the Mekong Delta more than other places.	Likert 1-5	
	SA4: For me, a trip to national parks in the Mekong Delta is an interesting trip.	Likert 1-5	
Return intention	RI1: I will come back to national parks in the Mekong Delta in the future.	Likert 1-5	Loi et al. (2017), Soonsan and Sukahbot, (2019)
	RI2: I will choose national parks in the Mekong Delta more often.	Likert 1-5	
	RI3: Traveling to national parks in the Mekong Delta is my most favorite destination.	Likert 1-5	
	RI4: If I had to choose, I would prioritize choosing national parks in the Mekong Delta next time.	Likert 1-5	

Research data and analytical methods

Analytical method: to validate the research hypotheses, quantitative analytical methods were employed, including testing internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM). Research sample size: when using the SEM method, a reasonable sample size should be a minimum of 200 observations (Hoelter, 1983). However, a larger sample size increases the study's reliability, and CB-SEM requires a large sample size (Raykov and Widaman, 1995). Therefore, the study determined a minimum sample size of 200. Data collection method: a survey was conducted from July 2023 to September 2023. Due to difficulties in accessing the survey subjects, the study used a convenience sampling method. The direct interview method was employed to gather information from respondents. The surveyed subjects were tourists who visited national parks in the Mekong Delta region (Figure 2), including Tram Chim National Park (85 tourists), Ca Mau Cape National Park (80 tourists), U Minh Ha National Park (75 tourists), and U Minh Thuong National Park (68 tourists). The total number of survey responses collected was 308, which was deemed sufficient for testing the research hypotheses.

Survey respondent characteristics: out of the 308 valid survey responses, domestic tourists accounted for 64.41%, while international tourists made up the remaining 35.39%. Regarding gender distribution, male respondents constituted 49.35%,

and female respondents were 50.65%. In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents were aged 31 to 45 (40.58%), followed by the age group 16 to 30 (25%), the age group 46 to 60 (21.1%), and the age group 60 and above (13.31%). Regarding education, the majority had college and university degrees (51.95%), followed by high school graduates (31.49%), secondary school graduates (11.04%), and postgraduate degree holders (5.52%). In terms of occupation, officers had the highest proportion (35.06%), followed by laborers in industrial areas (24.68%), management/executive group (20.45%), and finally, freelancers (19.81%).

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evaluating scale reliability

The development of scales was carried out following a standardized two-step process to assess the reliability of the measures (Narasimhan and Jayaram, 1998), including the Cronbach’s alpha test and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). As shown in Table 2, the results of the tests indicate that all scales have Cronbach’s alpha values greater than 0.8, ensuring internal consistency reliability (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Additionally, the results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) achieved the following statistical indices: (1) Factor loadings of observed variables > 0.5; (2) Adequacy of the model confirmed ($0.5 < KMO = 0.881 < 1.0$); (3) Bartlett’s test of sphericity (Sig.) = 0.000 < 0.05. Cumulative variance test = 69.832%, exceeding the prescribed threshold of 50% (Hair et al., 1998). This indicates that the research scales achieved internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.



Figure 2. Location map of the survey area

Table 2. The testing result of research scale reliability

Scale	Sign	Cronbach’s alpha	Factor			
			1	2	3	4
Perceived Quality (PQ)	PQ1	0.862	0.700			
	PQ2		0.765			
	PQ3		0.769			
	PQ4		0.809			
	PQ5		0.677			
Perceived Valued (PV)	PV1	0.886		0.806		
	PV2			0.779		
	PV3			0.771		
	PV4			0.811		
	PV5			0.728		
Satisfaction (SA)	SA1	0.872			0.701	
	SA2				0.804	
	SA3				0.843	
	SA4				0.807	
Return Intention (RI)	RI1	0.876				0.760
	RI2					0.817
	RI3					0.812
	RI4					0.788
KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) = 0.881; Sig. = 0.000; Cumulative % = 69.832%						

Table 3. Correlation matrix between conceptual constructs

	CR	AVE	PQ	PV	SA	RI
PQ	0.863	0.558	0.747			
PV	0.887	0.610	0.351***	0.781		
SA	0.873	0.634	0.357***	0.340***	0.796	
RI	0.877	0.641	0.427***	0.392***	0.537***	0.800
Chi-square/df = 1.789; P-value = 0.000; TLI = 0.959; CFI = 0.965; RMSEA = 0.051; Note: *** statistical significance level of 1%						

According to the results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) in Figure 3 and Table 3, statistical indices were as follows: Chi-square/df = 1.789 < 2.0 with P-value = 0.00 ≤ 0.05; TLI and CFI indices with values of 0.959 and 0.965, respectively, both > 0.9; RMSEA coefficient = 0.051 < 0.08. This demonstrates that the model fits well with the research data (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). Based on Table 3, both Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) met the conditions, with the minimum CR value being 0.863 and the minimum AVE value of 0.558 (Fornell and

Larcker, 1981). Additionally, the test results indicated that the correlation between conceptual structures achieved discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Thus, the research data aligns with market data, demonstrating convergent validity, unidimensionality, discriminant validity, and reliability.

Testing research hypotheses

Based on the results of hypothesis testing in Figure 4 and Table 4, all research hypotheses were accepted at a significance level of 1%. This indicates that perceived quality positively influences satisfaction and the intention to revisit national parks. Besides, perceived value positively influences satisfaction and the intention to revisit national parks. Moreover, tourist satisfaction positively affects tourists' intention to revisit national parks.

DISCUSSION

The study has demonstrated the positive influence of perceived quality on tourist satisfaction and the intention to revisit national parks with 99% confidence. This indicates that when tourists perceive the beautiful natural landscapes, fresh air, interesting activities, and distinctive cuisine of the national parks, their satisfaction will be enhanced. The study's results further affirm that perceived quality is a crucial precursor to tourist satisfaction (Rajaratnam et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2017; Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2021; Hermann and Nemaorani, 2023). Additionally, perceived quality contributes to enhancing satisfaction and promoting the intention to revisit the tourist destination. The research findings align with several studies proposed by Žabkar et al. (2010), Allameh et al. (2015), Carla et al. (2017), and Pivac et al. (2019).

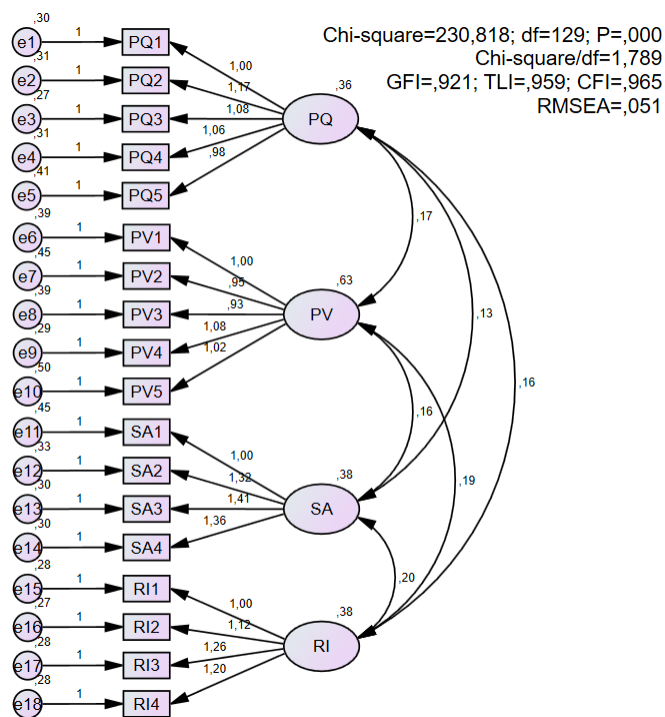
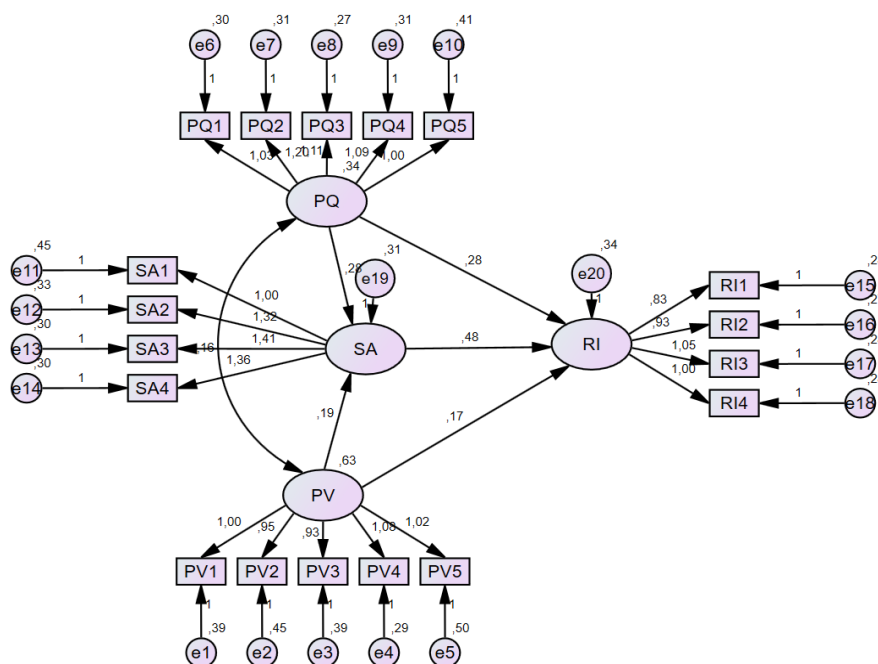


Table 4. Testing research hypotheses

Relationship	Unstandardized			Standardized Estimated Value	Significance	Hypotheses
	Estimate	Standard Error S.E	Critical Ratio C.R			
PQ → SA	0.285	0.073	3.879	0.272	0.000	H1: accepted
PQ → RE	0.283	0.082	3.462	0.222	0.000	H2: accepted
PV → SA	0.189	0.052	3.625	0.244	0.000	H3: accepted
PV → RI	0.168	0.058	2.911	0.179	0.004	H4: accepted
SA → RI	0.482	0.082	5.864	0.397	0.000	H5: accepted



The study has proven that perceived value positively influences tourist satisfaction and the intention to revisit national park tourist destinations with 99% confidence. Indeed, if the national park tourism program provides tourists with exciting, relaxing, and comfortable experiences that meet their expectations, tourist satisfaction will be improved. Perceived value is a driving factor for customer satisfaction; in other words, satisfaction is the result of perceived value (Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Eid and El-Gohary, 2015). The research results confirm that perceived value positively contributes to tourist satisfaction (Pandža Bajs, 2015; An et al., 2019; Libre et al., 2022) and the intention to revisit the tourist destination (Allameh et al., 2015; Carla et al., 2017; Alkhawaldeh, 2022).

Finally, the study has demonstrated a positive correlation between tourist satisfaction and the intention to revisit national parks with 99% confidence. This indicates that if tourists highly evaluate the service quality, their intention to revisit national parks will be higher. The research results have shown that tourist satisfaction plays a crucial role in the success of the tourist destination (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000) as it influences the intention to revisit the tourist destination (Nguyen and Mai, 2021). In the field of tourism, these research findings align with studies proposed by Carla et al. (2017), Loi et al. (2017), An et al. (2019), Soonsan and Sukahbot (2019), Atmari and Putri (2021), Čulić et al. (2021), Chin et al. (2022), Libre et al. (2022), Hermann and Nemaorani (2023) and Shatnawi (2023).

CONCLUSION

The study has proven that perceived quality positively influences tourist satisfaction and the intention to revisit national parks. Additionally, perceived value has a positive impact on satisfaction and the intention to revisit the tourist destination. Moreover, the study has revealed a positive correlation between satisfaction and the intention to revisit national parks. The research results contribute to suggesting policy implications for enhancing perceived quality, perceived value, and tourist satisfaction, and improving the intention to revisit national parks in the Mekong Delta region, Vietnam. Although the study has achieved its objectives, it still has limitations.

First, the study's sample size is limited in terms of the diversity of tourist subjects, focusing only on surveying English-proficient international tourists.

Second, the study has not examined the role of moderating variables (gender, education level, occupation, type of tourist) in the relationship between perceived quality, perceived value, satisfaction, and the intention to revisit national parks.

Third, there are still some factors that could influence tourists' intention to revisit but have not been included in the research model, such as the country's image and the destination's image.

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