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Factors Affecting International Tourists' Visit Intention to Vientiane City, Laos

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influencing factor of Service Quality, Destination Safety, Culture Allure, Destination Image, visit intention to Vientiane City, Laos and understand the factors that contribute to their visit intention. Design/Methodology/Approach – This study utilizes both primary and secondary data collection techniques to examine the influencing factor of Service Quality, Destination Safety, Culture Allure, Destination Image, Visit intention to Vientiane City, Laos. The data was gathered from 400 respondents, consisting of international tourist that have intention to visit Laos. Additionally, this research draws upon the theoretical framework from previous studies to construct a new conceptual framework. Findings – This study is intended to find the factors influencing tourist visit intention. Followed by investigating the role of Service Quality, Destination Safety, Culture Allure, Destination Image that effect Visit Intention to Vientiane City, Laos. Research Limitations/Implications – the limitations of the research displayed several element limits among the Factors Affecting International Tourists' Visit Intention to Vientiane City, Laos. Narrowly examining only these factors, it overlooks the potential influence of other variables that may impact tourists' choices of glamping locations. Originality/value – This study focuses on Factors Affecting International Tourists' Visit Intention to Vientiane City, Laos.

Keywords: Service Quality, Destination Safety, Culture Allure, Destination Image, Visit intention.

Introduction

The tourism industry is a significant contributor to economic growth and cultural exchange, with emerging destinations attracting increasing attention has been drawn to the significant expansion of cultural tourism, as indicated by the growing interest in academic research (Du Cros and McKercher, 2020; Richards, 2018). Vientiane city in Laos is one such destination, characterized by its rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, and a burgeoning tourism sector. This background of the study aims to investigate the relationship between facilities management which includes Service quality, Destination Safety, Destination Image, Cultural Allure and international tourists' visit intentions in Vientiane city.

Tourism holds a significant position in the economies of various nations, serving as a pervasive tool for economic growth and a foundational element in economic development policies (Al-Hazmi, 2020; Castellani et al., 2020). As the capital city of Laos, Vientiane has experienced a rise in international tourist arrivals, drawn by its historical significance, vibrant local culture, and picturesque landscapes. In the evolving landscape of Vientiane's tourism industry, it is essential to understand the factors influencing tourists' satisfaction and their intention to visit. Facilities management, encompassing the quality of accommodation, amenities, and overall infrastructure, emerges as a critical aspect that directly impacts tourists' experiences (Amaratunga, 2000).

The World Tourism Organization defines tourism as the collective activities of individuals who journey to and reside in locations beyond their habitual environment for various reasons, including leisure and business (UNWTO, 2008). In this context, the quality of facilities and services offered to tourists plays a pivotal role in shaping their perceptions and influencing their decision to visit a destination. Understanding the interplay between facilities management is crucial for destination managers and policymakers in Vientiane to enhance the overall tourism experience.

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Laos is experiencing a tourism boom, with the last quarter of the year expected to contribute significantly to a total of 2.9 million to 3.3 million foreign visitors in 2023. The tourism industry's strong recovery is evident in the 285 percent increase in foreign tourists during the first nine months compared to the same period last year. Key contributors to this surge include the China-Laos Railway, the Vientiane-Vangvieng expressway, and direct flights offered by Lao Airlines, making travel faster and more convenient (Xinhua, 2023). The Lao government has prioritized tourism as part of its economic revitalization efforts, setting a goal to attract at least 1.4 million foreign tourists in 2023. Furthermore, preparations are underway for Visit Laos Year 2024, with ambitious expectations to draw in at least 4.6 million visitors, generating an estimated revenue of 712 million U.S. dollars. These developments underscore the country's commitment to leveraging its tourism potential for economic growth and recovery (Huaxia, 2023).

Vientiane, with its unique charm and cultural allure, provides a distinctive context for studying the impact of Service quality, Destination Safety, Destination Image, Cultural Allure, have a direct effect on the tourists' visit intention. The provision of high-quality facilities, such as accommodation, transportation, and recreational amenities, contributes to positive customer experiences. facilities management, as a key determinant in tourists' decision-making process, is well-established (Bigné et al., 2005). Satisfied tourists are more likely to express positive sentiments about their experiences, influencing others' perceptions and potentially encouraging repeat visits.

Purposes

1) To investigate, international tourists visit intention Vientiane city, Laos.

2) To explore factors associated with the visit intentions of international tourists in Vientiane city, Laos.

3) To identify and examine the key factors that exert the most significant effect on the visit intentions of international tourists in Vientiane city, Laos.

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Visit Intention

Moutinho (1987) characterizes intention as the outcome of evaluative beliefs, normative beliefs influenced by social factors, and situational factors that tourists can anticipate while strategizing their vacation. The concept of intention signifies the readiness of tourists to explore a destination or acquire products within that destination. Specifically, the intention to visit a destination is described as the aspiration or desire to experience that particular destination (Chen et al., 2014). Awareness of destinations, stemming from past experiences or alternative sources of information, has the potential to shape subsequent travel intentions (Chi et al., 2020). The articulation of the intention to visit is intricately woven into the fabric of travel planning behavior, recognized as a pivotal element in the decision-making process and multifaceted behavior. This intention demonstrates a significant correlation with individual perceptions and the perceived value, with individuals acting as consumers who evaluate the outcomes or products (services) they encounter. This interplay between intention, perception, and perceived value underscores the complexity of the dynamics involved in the decision-making process within the realm of travel planning (Juliana et al., 2022)

Service quality on Visit intention

The quality of service plays a crucial role in determining the success of a service-oriented business by influencing customers' decisions to travel to their intended destination (Rahman et al., 2017) The selection of a tourism destination is influenced by two primary factors: motivating or pull stimulus factors and psychological or personal factors. Motivating or pull factors refer to specific elements that prompt tourists to fulfill their needs, including the destination image, services, and entertainment facilities (Uysal and Hagan, 1993). According to Alexandris et al. (2002) The quality of service is a predictive factor for substantial changes in behavioral intentions, as well as intentions to choose or make a purchase. Gaining a deeper understanding of individuals' perceptions, with a focus on perceived service quality is crucial for explaining their intention (Rahman et al., 2017). Tourists' perceptions of a destination can be highly individualized, shaped by their subjective appreciation such as service quality of the location and influenced by their thoughts and emotions at that particular moment (Huete-Alcocera and Hernandez-Rojas, 2022). Previous research shows support for the positive correlation between service quality (SQ) and intention (Zeithaml et al., 1996).

Destination Safety on Visit intention

Safety and security rank as significant considerations for the majority of travelers visiting foreign tourist destinations, and these concerns have been the focal point of research designs in recent decades (Spencer and Tarlow, 2021; Wang et al., 2019). Safety perception plays a crucial role in determining the choice of a destination (Prideaux, 2005). Destinations that convey a sense of safety often exhibit greater competitiveness compared to

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those that do not (De Nardi and Wilks, 2007). Travelers actively seek information on various aspects such as sightseeing sites, gastronomy, accommodation, traffic, shopping, amusement, and more, as part of their decision-making process before embarking on their journeys (Hu and Jiang, 2014). Safety has been a focal point in tourism literature, encompassing various dimensions such as food safety, natural hazards, medicine safety, terrorism and crime, corruption, and war and political instability (Buda, 2016; Farmaki et al., 2019). Kauppinen-Raisanen (2012) discovered that the perceived safety ensured by security forces had a notable positive impact on visit intention, the connections between safety, risk perception, and other outcome variables, such as satisfaction and the intention to visit These studies suggest that tourists tend to steer clear of destinations perceived as high-risk (Kozak et al., 2007) and are inclined to visit locations where they feel a sense of safety (Somez and Graefe,1998).
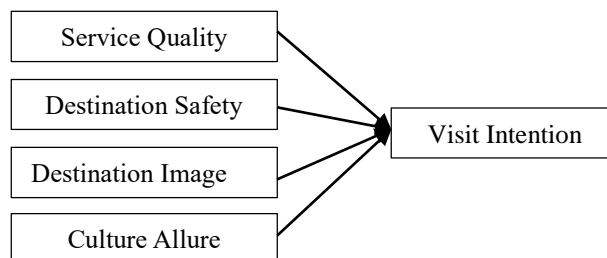
Destination Image on Visit intention

Destination image plays a pivotal role in consumer behavior and the field of tourism studies (Alvarez-Díaz et al., 2022; Quoquab et al., 2021). The destination image is perceived as the storehouse of positive associations linked to the destination. Consequently, its significance in the decision-making process of tourists influences their choice to visit (Pike and Bianchi, 2016; Pratt and Sparks, 2014). In the study of Han and Hwang (2018) discovered that tourists establish a cognitive image derived from their overall perception. This cognitive image, in turn, shapes the affective image, with the latter playing a significant role in triggering the intention to visit. Photography not only serves as trip memorabilia (Yeh, 2009) but also serves as evidence of visits and activities during those visits. This is a prevalent factor that impacts visit intentions (Jenkins, 2003). According to Urry (1992) research contends that photography exhibits a positive connection with visit intentions, characterizing it as the process of acquiring, possessing, or transcribing the reality of a subject.Through a selective approach to historical events and prioritizing specific interpretations, a film has the potential to enhance the appeal of a heritage destination's customs and culture for contemporary consumption (Murphy et al., 2017). Induced images are generated by the destination area itself and stem from marketing and promotional materials, such as brochures and magazines designed to entice tourist's intention. (Jenkins, 1999). Hamdy and Eid (2023) asserted that the Destination Image (DI) directly influences the intention to visit.

Cultural Allure on Visit intention

Regional and national cultures play a significant role as content providers in the tourism sector and have garnered attention within regional trading schemes (Anastasiadou, 2011; Crotts, 2004; Gravari-Barbas et al., 2019; Richard, 2019).Cultural city tourism comprises essential components that can be categorized into two main aspects: heritage tourism, focusing on the cultural legacy of the past, and arts tourism, centered around contemporary cultural expressions like performing and visual arts, modern architecture, literature, and more. Additionally, secondary components of cultural city tourism can be divided into lifestyle elements, encompassing beliefs, cuisine, traditions, folklore, and similar aspects, as well as the creative industries (European Travel Commission Research Group, 2005). Experiencing religious cultural heritage digitally creates a desire to visit the actual heritage site in person or it usually leads to visit intention (Carreira et al., 2022). Opting for a cultural destination can be greatly influenced by the prospect of rich cultural experiences. Moreover, the conceptual formation of cultural attractions often stems from a traveler's pre-trip awareness and recognition, shaped by their personal interests, knowledge, available information, and content (McKercher, 2002; McKercher and du Cros, 2003).

Conceptual Framework

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Hypotheses

Hypothesis H1o: Service quality has not affecting international Tourists' Visit Intention to Vientiane City, Laos

Hypothesis H2o: Destination safety has not affecting international Tourists' Visit Intention to Vientiane City, Laos

Hypothesis H3o: Destination image has not affecting international Tourists' Visit Intention to Vientiane City, Laos

Hypothesis H4o: Culture allure has not affecting international Tourists' Visit Intention to Vientiane City, Laos

Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research approach to gather primary data. Initially, the researcher collected data from 40 respondents to assess the questionnaire's reliability. Respondents were chosen using convenience sampling and snowball sampling methods. The questionnaire utilized a Five Point Likert Scale, where respondents rated their opinions on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating varying degrees of agreement or disagreement. Reliability testing was conducted using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient through the Jamovi software. This analysis was cross-referenced with the Rule of Thumbs to assess the consistency of questionnaire items within variables. Descriptive analysis was then applied to summarize the characteristics of the respondents. Furthermore, multiple linear regression was employed to explore the relationships between independent and dependent variables, as well as to test hypotheses.

Results

A total of 400 respondents successfully completed all questionnaire items via Google Form. These individuals were residents of Bangkok who had installed home broadband internet services, aligning with the intended target sample size. Descriptive analysis was then employed to elucidate the characteristics of the respondents, focusing on demographic variables such as gender, age, educational level, occupation, traveling behavior, and nationality.

The demographic profile of the respondent cohort provides crucial insights into its composition. Of the 400 participants, a plurality, comprising 50.7% of the sample, identified as female. The dominant age group within the cohort was between 25 to 35 years old, encompassing 86.5% of respondents. Notably, a significant proportion, totaling 68.5%, reported possessing Bachelor's degrees. Moreover, a substantial segment, constituting 60.3% of the sample, identified themselves as employed individuals. Furthermore, approximately 43.8% of respondents indicated membership in traveling families, while the overwhelming majority, accounting for 75.5% of the cohort, were of Thai nationality. These demographic findings offer a comprehensive portrayal of the respondent base, underscoring its diversity and potential ramifications for the study's outcomes.

Multiple Linear Regression

In this research, multiple linear regression (MLR) was used to evaluate the causal relationship between independent factors and dependent variable. The study examined the affecting factors, including service quality, destination safety, destination image, and cultural allure, and the dependent variable of visit intention.

Table1: The Summary Results of Multiple Linear Regression

Variables	B	SE B	β	t	p	VIF	Results
Service quality	0.4032	0.0479	0.4579	8.401	<0.001	1.97	Rejected
Destination safety	0.1818	0.0587	0.1906	3.096	0.002	2.92	Rejected
Destination image	-0.0261	0.0602	-0.0272	-0.433	0.665	2.82	Fail to reject
Culture Allure	0.1378	0.0485	0.1465	2.844	0.005	2.20	Rejected
Note: $R^2 = 0.470$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.464$, p <0.05, Dependent Variable = Visit Intention							

Presents a concise overview of the results obtained through hypothesis testing. The provided table encapsulates the outcomes of a rigorous multiple linear regression analysis aimed at elucidating the multifaceted determinants shaping international tourists' visit intention to Vientiane City, Laos. Each hypothesis delineates a distinct dimension under scrutiny, meticulously examining the purported influence of diverse factors on visit intention. Commencing with Hypothesis 1 (H1o) scrutinizing service quality, the analysis unfolds a robust positive linkage, underscored by a substantial coefficient (β) of 0.4032, indicative of an appreciable elevation in visit intention consequent to heightened service quality. This assertion gains further credence through the significant standardized coefficient (β) of 0.4579 and the notably high t-value of 8.401 (p < 0.001), thereby unequivocally refuting the null hypothesis and affirming the pivotal role of service quality in shaping tourists' visit intentions.

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The examination of multicollinearity through the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) reveals a value of 1.97, suggesting no substantial concerns in this regard.

Transitioning to Hypothesis 2 (H2o) examining destination safety, the findings elucidate a similar trajectory, with the coefficient (β) of 0.1818 signifying a positive association, albeit marginally less pronounced than service quality. Nevertheless, the statistically significant t-value of 3.096 (p = 0.002) unequivocally substantiates the dismissal of H2o, thereby underscoring the salience of destination safety in influencing visit intentions. The VIF analysis for this hypothesis yields a value of 2.92, indicating no noteworthy multicollinearity issues.

Conversely, Hypothesis 3 (H3o) exploring destination image unveils a nuanced insight, with the coefficient (β) of -0.0261 suggesting a marginal impact on visit intention. This observation finds validation in the non-significant t-value of -0.433 (p = 0.665), culminating in the retention of the null hypothesis and hinting that destination image may not wield significant sway over visit intention in this context. The examination of multicollinearity through the VIF reveals a value of 2.82, indicating no substantial concerns in this regard.

Lastly, Hypothesis 4 (H4o) delving into culture allure reveals a substantial positive effect, underscored by the coefficient (β) of 0.1378 and the significant t-value of 2.844 (p = 0.005), compelling the rejection of H4o and accentuating the pivotal role of culture allure in shaping tourists' visit intentions. The VIF analysis for this hypothesis yields a value of 2.20, indicating no noteworthy multicollinearity issues.

Collectively, these findings, buttressed by the model's commendable goodness of fit ($R^2 = 0.470$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.464$), underscore the intricate interplay of service quality, destination safety, destination image, and culture allure in elucidating the visit intentions of international tourists to Vientiane City, Laos.

Discussion

The study's findings, drawn from both the demographic profile of the respondent cohort and the results of hypothesis testing concerning factors influencing international tourists' visit intention to Vientiane City, Laos, offer multifaceted insights deserving of extended discussion.

Beginning with the demographic characteristics, the respondent cohort's composition reveals a nuanced snapshot of the population under study. The predominance of female respondents, comprising over half of the sample, suggests potential gender-related nuances in tourist behavior and preferences. Moreover, the concentration of participants within the 25 to 35-year age bracket, representing a substantial majority, underscores the significance of this demographic segment in shaping tourism trends. Their relative youthfulness may signify a cohort predisposed to certain travel motivations or experiences, which could influence their visit intentions. Additionally, the high proportion of respondents holding Bachelor's degrees, coupled with a significant percentage identifying as employed individuals, reflects a cohort with a relatively high level of education and economic activity. Such demographics could imply discerning consumer behaviors and heightened expectations regarding service quality and destination offerings, thereby impacting their visit intention. Furthermore, the notable presence of individuals indicating membership in traveling families highlights the importance of understanding group dynamics and collective decision-making processes in shaping tourism choices.

Turning to the results of hypothesis testing, the study underscores several key determinants influencing tourists' visit intention to Vientiane City, Laos. Notably, both service quality and destination safety emerge as pivotal factors, exhibiting statistically significant relationships with visit intention. The robust positive associations between perceived service quality, destination safety, and visit intention suggest that tourists place substantial weight on these attributes when considering travel to Vientiane City. This underscores the importance of effective service delivery and destination management strategies in fostering positive tourist perceptions and encouraging visitation. Conversely, while destination image fails to exhibit a significant effect on visit intention, the emergence of culture allure as a significant factor highlights the profound influence of cultural appeal in shaping tourists' decisions. The finding suggests that the cultural richness and authenticity of Vientiane City serve as compelling draws for prospective visitors, contributing significantly to their visit intentions.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the study's comprehensive analysis sheds light on the complex interplay of demographic characteristics and influential factors shaping international tourists' visit intention to Vientiane City, Laos. The nuanced insights gleaned from both the respondent profile and hypothesis testing outcomes underscore the multifaceted nature of tourist decision-making processes. By understanding the diverse demographics and key determinants influencing visit intentions, destination stakeholders can tailor their strategies to effectively meet the needs and preferences of target markets, thereby enhancing Vientiane City's appeal as a tourist destination. However, further research endeavors may be warranted to delve deeper into specific demographic segments and

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explore additional factors that may influence visit intentions, thereby enriching our understanding of tourist behavior and preferences in this context.

The results of hypothesis testing shed light on the specific factors that significantly influence international tourists' visit intention to Vientiane City, Laos, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of tourist decision-making.

Firstly, the finding that service quality and destination safety emerged as significant determinants of visit intention underscores the critical role of these factors in shaping tourists' perceptions and preferences. The robust positive associations between perceived service quality, destination safety, and visit intention suggest that tourists prioritize these aspects when considering a visit to Vientiane City. High-quality service provision and assurances of safety not only enhance tourists' overall experience but also instill confidence and trust, ultimately motivating them to choose Vientiane City as their destination. This finding highlights the importance of effective destination management practices aimed at ensuring superior service delivery standards and maintaining a safe and secure environment, thus fostering positive perceptions among potential visitors.

Conversely, while destination image did not exhibit a significant effect on visit intention, the emergence of culture allure as a significant factor offers intriguing insights into the unique appeal of Vientiane City. Despite destination image not directly impacting visit intention in this context, the significant influence of culture allure suggests that tourists are drawn to the city's cultural richness, heritage, and authenticity. This implies that while the overall perception of the destination may not be a decisive factor, the cultural experiences and offerings within Vientiane City play a crucial role in attracting and retaining tourists' interest. Therefore, destination stakeholders should focus on leveraging and promoting the city's cultural assets to enhance its appeal and competitiveness as a tourist destination.

Overall, the results of hypothesis testing underscore the multifaceted nature of tourists' decision-making processes and highlight the interplay of various factors in shaping visit intentions to Vientiane City, Laos. By understanding the specific drivers influencing tourists' choices, destination management organizations can formulate targeted strategies to enhance the city's attractiveness and cater to the diverse preferences of potential visitors. Additionally, these findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, businesses, and tourism stakeholders in developing initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable tourism growth and maximizing the city's tourism potential.

Recommendations

Based on the comprehensive insights garnered from the factors influencing international tourists' visit intention to Vientiane City, Laos, a set of strategic recommendations can be delineated to bolster the destination's allure and competitive edge. Primarily, recognizing the pivotal roles of service quality and destination safety in shaping visit intention, destination management entities should channel efforts towards elevating service standards and fortifying safety protocols. This endeavor entails instituting robust training programs for service providers, augmenting infrastructure to meet international standards, and implementing stringent safety measures such as surveillance systems and emergency response frameworks. By prioritizing these initiatives, Vientiane City can cultivate a reputation for unparalleled hospitality and safety, thereby augmenting its appeal to prospective tourists.

In discussing enhancing service quality and safety measures, leveraging the profound influence of cultural allure stands as a strategic imperative. Destination stakeholders should embark on a concerted effort to curate immersive cultural experiences that showcase Vientiane City's rich heritage and traditions. This may encompass the development of thematic cultural tours, interactive exhibitions, and cultural festivals that offer visitors a deeper understanding and appreciation of the city's cultural tapestry. By capitalizing on its cultural assets, Vientiane City can position itself as a magnet for culturally-curious travelers seeking authentic and enriching experiences.

Moreover, while destination image did not surface as a significant determinant, strategic marketing endeavors should persist in spotlighting Vientiane City's diverse attractions and intrinsic charm. Crafting compelling narratives that underscore the city's unique selling points, natural splendor, and cultural vibrancy can help shape a favorable perception among potential visitors. Through targeted advertising campaigns, social media engagement, and collaborations with key influencers, destination stakeholders can amplify Vientiane City's visibility on the global tourism stage, enticing travelers to explore its myriad wonders.

Furthermore, fostering collaborative partnerships between public and private sector entities is paramount for amplifying Vientiane City's appeal and competitiveness. By fostering synergistic alliances and joint initiatives,

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such as destination branding campaigns and cross-sectoral development projects, stakeholders can pool resources and expertise to enhance the destination's overall attractiveness. Additionally, embracing sustainable tourism practices is imperative for safeguarding Vientiane City's environmental and cultural heritage. Prioritizing initiatives that promote environmental stewardship, community engagement, and responsible tourism behaviors can ensure the destination's long-term viability and resilience amidst evolving global tourism dynamics.

Lastly, maintaining a pulse on evolving tourist preferences and market trends through ongoing research and monitoring initiatives is indispensable. Regular assessments of visitor satisfaction, perception, and behavior can furnish invaluable insights for refining marketing strategies, tailoring product offerings, and fine-tuning destination management approaches. By remaining agile and responsive to shifting consumer dynamics, Vientiane City can position itself as a dynamic and adaptive tourism destination capable of delivering exceptional experiences to travelers from across the globe.

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