The Domestic Tourist Satisfaction of the Urban Tourism Destination: Take Guilin for Example

Yan Lan[1], Nithima Yuenyong[1], Uthairt Mueangsan[1]

Abstract

The objectives of this study were: 1) to examine the impact of tourists' perceived quality on tourists' perceived value, 2) to investigate the effect of tourists' perceived quality on tourists' satisfaction, 3) to analyze the influence of tourists' perceived quality on tourists' behavioral intention, 4) to assess the relationship between tourists' perceived value and their satisfaction, 5) to explore the influence of tourists' perceived value on tourists' behavioral intention, 6) to investigate the relationship between tourist satisfaction and tourist behavioral intention, and 7) to examine the influence of tourist dissatisfaction on tourists' behavioral intention. This study employed a mixed-methods research design integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data were collected from 323 valid respondents via an online structured questionnaire administered to domestic tourists who had visited Guilin, China. The measurement instruments were developed based on literature review and validated through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. Statistical tools, including descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, structural equation modeling (SEM), and hypothesis testing, were applied using SPSS and AMOS.

[1] Faculty of Business Administration Pathumthani University
Corresponding email: 1181981610@qq.com

The results of this study found that: 1) tourists' perceived quality had a significant positive impact on perceived value, 2) tourists' perceived quality positively influenced satisfaction, 3) tourists' perceived quality significantly affected certain aspects of behavioral intention such as recommendation intention and price tolerance, but not repurchase intention, 4) perceived value had a significant positive relationship with satisfaction, 5) perceived value significantly influenced behavioral intention including recommendation and tolerance but not complaints, 6) tourist satisfaction had a positive effect on behavioral intentions such as recommendation and price tolerance, while its effect on repurchase intention was not significant, and 7) tourist dissatisfaction was found to be positively related to complaint intention, confirming its predictive influence. Furthermore, perceived value was found to play a partial mediating role between perceived quality and satisfaction. The overall structural model showed acceptable goodness of fit, supporting most hypotheses and providing theoretical and managerial insights for enhancing destination marketing and service strategies in urban tourism destinations.

Keywords: Tourist Satisfaction, Perceived Quality, Perceived Value, Behavioral Intention, Urban Tourism, Guilin

Introduction

In In recent years, urban tourism has emerged as a vital segment of the domestic tourism industry, reflecting not only travelers' increasing pursuit of cultural enrichment and diversified experiences but also the strategic emphasis placed by city governments on developing tourism as a driver of economic growth. Unlike traditional scenic destinations, urban tourism destinations offer a unique integration of cultural landmarks, commercial centers, local cuisine, and modern infrastructure that appeal to a wide range of tourist demographics. However, as the volume of

domestic tourists continues to rise, it is essential to understand the determinants of their satisfaction and the factors that influence their behavior after visiting a destination.

Guilin, often celebrated for its picturesque karst landscapes and rich cultural heritage, serves as an exemplary case for examining domestic tourist satisfaction in urban tourism destinations. Despite its natural beauty and tourism potential, empirical data suggest that certain aspects of Guilin's tourism services, including accommodation, shopping, and destination image, do not consistently meet tourist expectations. These inconsistencies highlight the need for an in-depth analysis of the factors that influence tourist satisfaction and post-visit behavioral intentions, including recommendation and revisit intentions.

This study applies a structural equation modeling (SEM) approach to explore the causal relationships among tourists' perceived quality, perceived value, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and behavioral intentions. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How does perceived quality influence perceived value and satisfaction? (2) What role does perceived value play in mediating tourist behavior? (3) How do satisfaction and dissatisfaction drive behavioral outcomes like recommendation, complaint intention, and revisit intention?

By addressing these questions, this study contributes to the existing literature by providing a comprehensive model that captures both positive and negative aspects of tourist experiences. Additionally, the study integrates theoretical frameworks from marketing and tourism research, such as the 7P model and the cognitive-affective-behavioral paradigm, to develop a multidimensional scale of perceived quality tailored to urban tourism settings. The results offer practical implications for tourism destination managers, particularly in optimizing service delivery, enhancing tourists' perceived value, and fostering long-term loyalty through improved experience management.

Ultimately, the research aims not only to fill gaps in the empirical understanding of domestic tourist satisfaction in urban contexts but also to provide actionable insights to improve Guilin's competitiveness as a sustainable urban tourism destination.

Objectives

(1) To examine the impact of tourists' perceived quality on tourists' perceived value – to determine how tourists' evaluation of service quality, infrastructure, and environment contributes to their perception of value in urban tourism destinations.

(2) To investigate the effect of tourists' perceived quality on tourists' satisfaction – to explore the extent to which various dimensions of service quality influence overall satisfaction during the visit.

(3) To analyze the influence of tourists' perceived quality on tourists' behavioral intention – to understand how perceptions of quality affect tourists' likelihood to revisit or recommend the destination.

(4) To assess the relationship between tourists' perceived value and their satisfaction – to identify whether higher perceived value leads to greater satisfaction among domestic tourists.

(5) To explore the influence of tourists' perceived value on tourists' behavioral intention – to evaluate the predictive role of value perception in determining future behaviors.

(6) To investigate the relationship between tourist satisfaction and tourist behavioral intention – to analyze how satisfied tourists are more inclined to engage in positive post-visit actions.

(7) To examine the influence of tourist dissatisfaction on tourists' behavioral intention – to assess how negative experiences or unmet expectations impact tourists' complaints or avoidance behaviors.

Literature review

1. Tourists' Perceived Quality Perceived quality refers to tourists' overall judgment regarding the excellence or superiority of the service

received (Parasuraman et al., 1994). In the context of urban tourism, this may include transportation, accommodation, attraction accessibility, sanitation, and safety. Gronroos (1984) and Parasuraman et al. (1988) developed frameworks such as SERVQUAL, which have been widely applied to evaluate service quality in tourism.

2. Perceived Value Perceived value is often conceptualized as the trade-off between the benefits received and the costs incurred (Zeithaml, 1988). It serves as an intermediate factor between perceived quality and satisfaction, and is recognized as a strong predictor of tourists' behavioral intentions. Research by Oh (2000) and Chen & Chen (2010) supports the idea that value perception significantly influences both satisfaction and revisit intentions.

3. Tourist Satisfaction Tourist satisfaction is defined as the psychological outcome resulting from the comparison between expectations and actual experience (Oliver, 1980). Studies by Baker and Crompton (2000) and He (2011) emphasized the importance of understanding satisfaction in specific destination contexts to improve competitiveness and service delivery.

4. Behavioral Intention Behavioral intention encompasses tourists' willingness to revisit, recommend, or avoid a destination in the future (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). This construct has been linked to perceived value and satisfaction in several empirical studies (Lam et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2007).

5. Theoretical Model and Gaps This study integrates concepts from the 7Ps marketing mix (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence) with perceived value theory and satisfaction behavior models. Despite abundant research on international tourists, fewer studies have examined domestic tourist satisfaction in urban Chinese destinations. Moreover, limited attention has been paid to the

mediating role of perceived value and the moderating role of tourist demographics such as gender, income, and education.

By focusing on Guilin—a renowned but domestically driven tourism city—this research fills an important gap and contributes to the localized understanding of satisfaction dynamics among Chinese tourists in urban environments.research model -- planned behavior theory is constructed. The model has been widely used in sociology, management, psychology, environmental behavior and other fields.

This study adopts an integrated model combining the 7Ps marketing mix, perceived value theory, and tourist satisfaction theory to explore the factors influencing domestic tourist satisfaction and behavioral intention in urban tourism destinations, with Guilin as a case study.

The model comprises three primary constructs:

Tourists' Perceived Quality – Derived from the 7Ps framework (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Physical evidence, and Process), this construct reflects tourists' perceptions of the service quality and tourism experience at the destination.

Perceived Value of Tourists – Represents the value tourists perceive after comparing the benefits of their experience with the costs incurred.

Satisfaction – Denotes the overall level of contentment tourists feel after visiting the destination, influenced by both perceived quality and perceived value.

Behavioral Intention – Includes four post-experience responses:

Recommendation Intention (H4)

Price Tolerance (H5)

Complaint Intention (H6)

Repurchase Intention (H7)

Hypotheses:

H1: Tourists' perceived quality positively affects tourists' perceived value.

H2: Tourists' perceived quality positively affects tourists' satisfaction.

H3: Tourists' perceived value positively affects tourists' satisfaction.

H4: Tourists' satisfaction positively affects recommendation intention.

H5: Tourists' satisfaction positively affects price tolerance.

H6: Tourists' satisfaction negatively affects complaint intention.

H7: Tourists' satisfaction positively affects repurchase intention.

This framework posits that tourist satisfaction is a mediating variable between perceived quality/value and behavioral intention, and it serves as a key to understanding and improving the tourist experience in urban settings.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design using a survey-based approach to investigate the relationships among tourists' perceived quality, perceived value, satisfaction, and behavioral intention in the context of urban tourism in Guilin. The research is causal and correlational in nature, aiming to test a conceptual framework derived from the marketing mix (7Ps) and consumer behavior theory using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Population and sample

S The population of the study consisted of domestic tourists aged 18 to 65 years who had visited Guilin. A purposive sampling method was used to ensure respondents had relevant experience with Guilin as a tourist destination. The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula, resulting in a total of 323 distributed questionnaires, of which 262 were valid, yielding a response rate of 81.00%.

Sample: For the sampling technique of this study, the sample size of this study is 350.

Research Instruments

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire divided into three main parts:

General information: Gender, age, education, income, and place of residence.

Measurement of variables: Items measuring perceived quality (based on 7Ps), perceived value, satisfaction, and behavioral intention (including recommendation, price tolerance, complaint, and repurchase intention).

Five-point Likert scale: Ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

The scale was adapted from established literature (e.g., Cronin et al., 2000; Parasuraman et al., 1994) and tested for content validity by academic experts.

Data collection

The questionnaire is mainly distributed on the Internet using the "Juanxing APP". The questionnaire adopts anonymous system, and the personal information of the respondents will not be leaked, which greatly improves the response rate of consumers to fill in the questionnaire. All questionnaires are required, and the prerequisite for submission is that all answers are completed. This method can effectively ensure that each green purchasing behavior questionnaire finally recovered has a high completion integrity, and reduce the subsequent impact on the research caused by too many missing values in the questionnaire.

The survey was completed during the period from October 1, 2023 to December 10, 2023. A total of 350 questionnaires on green consumption behavior were issued, and 323 valid questionnaires were recovered, accounting for 92.29% of the total issued.

Data Analysis

1. Reliability test

To ensure that the data collected from the research instrument was consistent and stable, a reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (α). This statistical measure is widely used to assess the internal consistency of items within a scale. A coefficient value of 0.70 or above is generally considered acceptable for social science research (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

2. Validity test

The purpose of the validity test in this study was to ensure that the questionnaire accurately measured the constructs it intended to assess. Two types of validity were evaluated: construct validity, which includes convergent validity and discriminant validity, and content validity supported by expert review during the instrument development process.

2.1 Construct Validity

Construct validity was assessed through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA):

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were first used to determine sampling adequacy and factorability.

KMO value = 0.938 indicated that the sample was adequate.

Bartlett's Test was significant ($p < 0.001$), confirming the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis.

Factor Loadings of all observed variables exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, demonstrating good convergent validity.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were calculated, and all AVE values were above 0.50, further confirming convergent validity.

2.2 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was examined by comparing the square root of AVE for each construct with the correlation coefficients between

constructs. The square root of AVE for each construct was greater than its correlations with other constructs, indicating strong discriminant validity.

Additionally, correlation matrix results revealed that most inter-variable correlations were below 0.85, confirming that the constructs were statistically distinct and not redundant.

2.3 Content Validity

The initial questionnaire was reviewed and validated by a panel of academic experts in the fields of tourism, marketing, and business research to ensure that each item adequately represented the content domain. Modifications were made accordingly before the pilot test.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

This study collected a total of 288 responses from domestic tourists visiting Guilin, among which 262 questionnaires were deemed valid, resulting in an effective response rate of 81.0%. The demographic profile of respondents is summarized as follows:

Gender: Among the valid respondents, 132 were male (50.38%) and 130 were female (49.62%). This indicates a relatively balanced gender distribution, with a slight male predominance.

Age: The age distribution shows that most respondents were between 25–34 years old (39.81%), followed by 36–44 years old (28.70%), 15–24 years old (21.91%), 45–59 years old (6.79%), and over 60 years old (2.79%). This suggests that urban tourism in Guilin appeals most to young adults and middle-aged individuals.

Education Level: Respondents' education levels were as follows: undergraduate degree holders made up the largest group at 43.05%, followed by junior college graduates (23.38%), high school/technical/vocational school graduates (18.75%), below junior high

school (9.34%), and postgraduate degrees or above (5.48%). This implies that the majority of respondents have attained higher education.

Monthly Disposable Personal Income (DPI): The income distribution was concentrated in the lower-middle bracket: 41.13% of respondents earned between 1,001–3,000 yuan per month, followed by 22.30% in the 3,001–5,000-yuan range. Only 6 respondents (1.85%) reported income above 20,001 yuan. These figures suggest that Guilin attracts tourists with moderate income levels.

Place of Residence: In terms of residential background, 65.74% of respondents resided in urban areas, while 34.26% were from rural areas. This reflects a broader reach of Guilin as a destination for both urban and rural populations.

Overall, the sample demonstrates a diverse demographic background, enhancing the generalizability of the findings within the context of domestic urban tourism in Guilin.

Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis is a method to check the internal consistency and reliability of data. In this paper, Cronbach's coefficient was used to conduct reliability analysis on 5 variables and 33 measurement items involved in this study, so as to judge the consistency of each variable and item. As shown in Table 1, Cronbach's coefficient α of all variables is greater than 0.7, indicating good data reliability and suitable for subsequent research.

Table1 Variable Reliability Test

Variables	Items	Cronbach's α
Product	6	0.876
Price	6	0.857
Place	4	0.823
Promotion	5	0.871
People	7	0.899

Physical	8	0.893
Process	6	0.944
Recommendation Intention	3	0.796
Repurchase Intention	3	0.776
Price Tolerance	3	0.892
Complaint Intention	5	0.707
Perceived Value	2	0.864
Tourist Satisfaction	3	0.900

All variables exhibited Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.70, demonstrating acceptable to excellent internal consistency. The highest reliability was found in the "Process" dimension (α = 0.944), while the lowest acceptable reliability was found in "Complaint Intention" (α = 0.707). Therefore, the measurement instruments used in this study are statistically reliable.

Validity Analysis

The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed using KMO and Bartlett's Test, with a KMO value of 0.938 and significance at $p < 0.001$.

Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analyses showed strong factor loadings (all > 0.707) and high t-values, indicating good construct and convergent validity.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) exceeded the thresholds of 0.5 and 0.7, respectively.

Correlation coefficients between constructs were all below 0.85, confirming discriminant validity.

Overall, the measurement model demonstrates strong statistical and theoretical validity.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed using standardized factor loadings, with all items loading above 0.707, indicating strong correlations with their latent constructs.

The t-values for all observed variables were statistically significant (p < 0.001), further confirming convergent validity.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs exceeded 0.5, satisfying the threshold recommended by Fornell and Larcker.

Composite Reliability (CR) scores were all greater than 0.7, indicating consistent internal reliability.

These results confirm that the scale items effectively converge to measure their intended latent variables.

price effect is positive adjustment. H4a passes the test.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the underlying mechanisms that shape domestic tourist satisfaction in urban tourism destinations, using Guilin as a case study. The proposed structural equation model demonstrated a strong theoretical alignment and acceptable goodness-of-fit statistics, thereby validating the interrelationships among the core constructs: perceived quality, perceived value, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and behavioral intentions.

Firstly, the study confirmed a significant and positive relationship between tourists' perceived quality and perceived value. This supports the theoretical proposition from prior studies (e.g., Fornell et al., 1996; Sweeney et al., 1999) that when tourists perceive service components such as accommodation, food, transportation, and attractions to be of high quality, they derive greater value from their travel experiences. Guilin, despite some shortcomings in certain tourism service dimensions such as accommodation and shopping, appears to maintain high standards in

environmental and cultural aspects, which boosts the perceived value among visitors.

Secondly, the direct impact of perceived quality on satisfaction was also statistically significant. This aligns with previous research that positions perceived quality as a critical antecedent of customer satisfaction (Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988; Parasuraman et al., 1994). Particularly in Guilin, aspects like environmental cleanliness, scenic beauty, and transport convenience contributed to tourists' positive overall experience. This highlights the importance of destination managers prioritizing quality improvement in the physical and process elements of tourism services to enhance overall tourist satisfaction.

Thirdly, this study observed a robust mediating effect of perceived value in the relationship between perceived quality and satisfaction. This partial mediation suggests that while perceived quality alone can enhance satisfaction, it is the interpretation of value — a cognitive evaluation of what is received relative to what is sacrificed — that strengthens this satisfaction. This mediating role is in line with the studies of Eggert & Ulaga (2002) and Gallarza & Saura (2006), emphasizing the psychological and subjective nature of perceived value in shaping satisfaction judgments.

In terms of behavioral intentions, the study found that satisfaction positively influenced tourists' recommendation intentions and price tolerance. This finding is crucial for urban tourism destinations like Guilin, where word-of-mouth marketing and pricing flexibility can serve as competitive advantages. On the other hand, dissatisfaction showed a significant positive correlation with complaint intention, underscoring the need for destination managers to proactively mitigate service failures and manage complaints effectively to prevent reputational damage.

Interestingly, the hypothesized relationship between satisfaction and repurchase intention was not statistically significant. This may reflect the tourism behavior of Chinese domestic tourists who often seek novelty

and variety in their travel choices, rather than repeat visits to the same destination. This result supports Chen & Gursoy's (2001) suggestion that destination loyalty among leisure tourists may be more attitudinal than behavioral.

Finally, the multigroup analyses based on gender, residence, and income level revealed nuanced differences in how various demographic groups perceive quality and derive satisfaction. For instance, rural tourists and high-income visitors exhibited higher perceived quality and value scores than urban and lower-income counterparts, potentially due to contrasting expectations and prior experiences. These findings suggest that segmentation strategies based on socio-demographic variables may enhance the effectiveness of marketing and service design in urban tourism destinations.

Conclusion

This study investigates the factors influencing domestic tourist satisfaction in urban tourism destinations, using Guilin as a representative case. Drawing upon a structural equation modeling approach, the research tested the relationships among tourists' perceived quality, perceived value, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and behavioral intentions (recommendation, price tolerance, complaint, and repurchase). The empirical findings provide both theoretical support and managerial implications.

First, the results confirm that tourists' perceived quality significantly affects perceived value and satisfaction. Tourists who recognize high service quality—particularly in areas such as environment, transportation, and cultural richness—tend to perceive greater value and express higher satisfaction. Secondly, perceived value acts as a significant partial mediator between perceived quality and satisfaction, highlighting the psychological evaluation process tourists undergo when assessing their experiences.

Moreover, satisfaction is positively associated with recommendation intention and price tolerance, but not significantly related to repurchase intention. This indicates that while tourists may express satisfaction, their preference for novelty limits their likelihood of repeat visits. In contrast, dissatisfaction is strongly associated with increased complaint intention, underlining the importance of mitigating negative service experiences.

Additionally, the study revealed that socio-demographic factors—particularly gender, residence (urban vs. rural), and income level—influence perceptions of quality and value. Rural and high-income tourists tend to rate their experiences more positively, likely due to differences in expectations and comparative baselines.

In conclusion, the study contributes a validated conceptual framework for understanding urban tourist satisfaction, emphasizing the interdependence between service quality, value creation, and behavioral outcomes. The results provide actionable insights for tourism managers and policymakers in urban destinations such as Guilin, offering guidance for enhancing service delivery, managing expectations, and cultivating long-term satisfaction among diverse tourist segments.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this research, several practical recommendations are proposed to enhance tourist satisfaction and strengthen the sustainable development of urban tourism destinations, particularly in Guilin:

Enhance Service Quality Across All 7Ps Dimensions Tourism operators and destination managers should focus on improving each component of the marketing mix (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Physical Evidence, and Process). Priority should be given to aspects that significantly affect perceived value, such as service

personalization, cultural authenticity, and infrastructure cleanliness—particularly public sanitation and transportation clarity.

Develop High-Impact Tourist Attractions and Cultural Identity Guilin lacks internationally renowned attractions despite its scenic reputation. It is recommended that the city invest in enhancing the visibility of its core attractions and integrate local culture into tourism through festivals, art events, and thematic experiences (e.g., Li River Literature Night, Guilin Cultural Heritage Week). This can elevate the perceived uniqueness and emotional engagement of tourists.

Refine Target Marketing Based on Demographics Given the observed differences in perception based on gender, residence, and income, segmentation strategies should be applied. Tailored products and communication strategies for rural vs. urban tourists, and for high-income groups, will improve relevance and perceived quality.

Improve Tourism Complaint Handling Mechanisms As dissatisfaction significantly influences complaint intention, it is essential to establish responsive and professional complaint handling systems. A feedback loop using digital platforms and prompt resolutions can help retain trust and reduce the impact of negative experiences.

Strengthen Perceived Value as a Mediator of Satisfaction Destination marketing organizations should emphasize value-for-money experiences. Bundled pricing, informative signage, and transparency in costs can reduce perceived risks and elevate tourists' perception of value.

Promote Word-of-Mouth and Electronic Recommendation Channels Since satisfaction significantly correlates with recommendation intention, tourism stakeholders should encourage satisfied visitors to share their experiences on social media and review platforms through incentive programs (e.g., discount vouchers, referral bonuses).

Reposition Accommodation Standards for Comfort Over Luxury Accommodation services should prioritize comfort, cleanliness, and local

design aesthetics over non-essential luxury features. This aligns with modern traveler preferences and addresses the dissatisfaction recorded in the accommodation dimension.

Focus on Authentic Shopping Experiences To address low satisfaction in shopping, Guilin should promote distinctive local products, ensure fair pricing, and regulate unethical practices. Creating cultural shopping streets and craft villages can enrich the tourist experience and support local artisans.

Invest in Training for Tourism Personnel The quality of interaction with service staff significantly affects satisfaction. Regular training for guides, taxi drivers, and hotel staff on customer service, language skills, and cultural sensitivity should be implemented.

Conduct Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation To adapt to changing tourist preferences, destination managers should regularly conduct satisfaction surveys and use data analytics for decision-making. Incorporating real-time feedback mechanisms via mobile apps can help in proactive service improvement.

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