



## FROM MEMORY TO BEHAVIOR: THE ROLE OF MEMORABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCES AND DESTINATION IMAGE IN SHAPING REVISIT INTENTION THROUGH EMOTIONS

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>DOI: 10.52932/jfmr.v3i4en.1047</p> <p><i>Received:</i> July 28, 2025</p> <p><i>Accepted:</i> September 08, 2025</p> <p><i>Published:</i> November 25, 2025</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Destination image; Emotion experience; Memorable tourism experiences; Revisit intention; SOR model.</p> <p><b>JEL codes:</b> L83, M10, Z32</p>	<p>This study investigates the impact of memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) and destination image (DI) on international tourists' intentions to revisit Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), with a focus on the mediating effect of post-trip emotional experiences. 27 in-depth interviews were conducted, using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, to investigate how personal memories and emotional connections drive revisit behavior. The results indicate that MTEs and DI do not immediately contribute to revisit intention. Instead, emotions such as a sense of nostalgia, attachment, and the desire to share experiences are recognized as a powerful psychological motivator. Negative emotions, such as annoyance or alienation, on the other hand, reduce the desire to return, even when some encounters are favorable. A notable contribution of this study is its identification of an emotional state that does not shape behavioral intentions, in which visitors maintain meaningful memories but are hesitant to return because of fearing upsetting idealized memories. The study offers practical implications for urban locations, such as Ho Chi Minh City, to promote emotional connections beyond surface attractions, with authentic encounters and ordinary local life serving as strong emotional drivers.</p>

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## 1. Introduction

As the tourism industry shifts strongly towards experience and sustainability, it's increasingly important to understand the factors that make travelers return to a destination. In particular, post-trip emotions and emotional states that form and are recalled after the journey ending play a key role in maintaining connection and shaping return behavior (Kim et al., 2012; Otto & Ritchie, 1996). Retained positive emotions can strengthen long-term attachment and promote post-trip behaviors such as positive word-of-mouth and return intent (Hosany et al., 2017; Prayag et al., 2017).

In Vietnam, the rate of returning international tourists is still low. In 2023, fewer than 10% of international visitors returned, significantly lower compared to countries in the region, such as Thailand or Japan (Le, 2023). This situation requires further research into the role of post-trip experiences and emotions in promoting revisiting behavior.

In that context, HCMC, the largest urban tourism destination in Vietnam, is a typical case. Despite its advantages in terms of culture, cuisine, and dynamic urban life, the city has not yet achieved the expected rate of return. This raises the question: Is the emotional journey after the trip deep enough to spark a desire to come back?

Most current studies focus on satisfaction or quality of service as predictors of post-trip behavior (Stylos et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2011). Meanwhile, the intrinsic emotional state – the mediating factor that reflects the level of internalization of the experience – has not received enough attention. Moreover, the link between MTEs, DI, and revisit intentions remains insufficiently integrated, especially in the context of developing cities.

On this basis, this study proposes to apply the S–O–R model, in which MTEs and destination

images are stimuli (S), post-trip emotional experiences are intrinsic responses (O), and revisit intentions are behavioral responses (R). The model helps clarify the mechanism of mediating emotions and expand the empirical application in the study of tourist behavior in Vietnam. From the above analysis, the study raises three main questions:

1. How do memorable tourism experiences and destination images affect the post-trip emotional experience of international tourists who have come to Ho Chi Minh City?
2. What role does the post-trip emotional experience play in forming the intention to revisit the destination?
3. Does the emotional experience mediate the relationship between the memorable tourism experience, the destination image, and the intention to revisit?

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Stimulus–Organism–Response model

In the study of post-trip traveler behavior, the S–O–R model is considered a suitable theoretical framework for explaining the process of forming and transforming emotions into behavior. Proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), S–O–R holds that human behavior is the result of a chain of effects, where stimuli from the environment (S) affect the intrinsic psychological state (O), which in turn leads to an external reaction (R). Unlike linear models that only emphasize satisfaction or service quality, S–O–R allows for a deeper analysis of the mediating role of emotions – an increasingly recognized central factor in travel behavior shaping (Hosany et al., 2017; Loureiro, 2014). In travel research, the S–O–R model has been widely applied to analyze post-experiential behaviors such as satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth, or return intent (Loureiro, 2014; Jang & Namkung, 2009). This model is particularly

relevant to the modern travel context, where personal emotions and subjective perceptions play a central role in shaping behavior (Hosany et al., 2017).

In the context of international tourists who have experienced HCMC. This model helps explain how post-trip factors such as memorable experiences and destination images – which are already stored in memory – can trigger emotional states, such as nostalgia, connection, or emotion, which in turn influence the intention to return. Specifically, memorable experiences and destination images serve as stimuli (S), intrinsic emotions are intermediate psychological responses (O), and return intentions are final response behaviors (R). S–O–R allows for better identification of these metabolic mechanisms, especially when emotions are not only the result, but also the bridge between memory and re-engagement behavior. With its versatility in application and ability to interpret complex emotional processes, the S–O–R model was chosen as the main theoretical basis for this study to shed light on how travelers form their intention to return from their experiences.

## **2.2. Destination image**

Destination image (DI) is understood as the sum of travelers' perceptions, impressions, and emotions about a tourist destination, formed through direct and indirect experiences (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). In the context of post-trip behavior, destination images are not only a product of the experience but also serve as an important stimulus that affects the traveler's psychological and emotional state (Agapito et al., 2013; Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010).

Destination images can be divided into two main components: cognitive images and affective images. In particular, the cognitive factor reflects characteristics such as scenery, security, and facilities, whereas the emotional

factor is associated with feelings of joy, relaxation, or attachment when recalling a destination (Lin et al., 2007; Kim & Yoon, 2003). When cognitive and emotional images coexist in harmony, they create a destination symbol that easily triggers the traveler's intrinsic emotional experience (Basaran, 2016; Lin et al., 2007).

In the S–O–R model, destination images are the visitors' intrinsic emotional stimuli. Images that are positively preserved and evaluated after the trip – such as the city atmosphere, the friendliness of the people, or the uniqueness of the local culture – when recalled, evoke positive emotions such as nostalgia, pride, or a sense of belonging (Nguyen & Duong, 2025; Rasoolimanesh & Lu, 2024; Hosany et al., 2022). Therefore, destination images not only reflect what has been experienced, but are also emotional anchors that help maintain the connection between the traveler and the destination in long-term memory (Prayag & Ryan, 2012).

In addition to reflecting past experiences, destination images can also trigger autobiographical memory, especially when recalled through visual media such as travel photos. These memories help to evoke the positive emotions that visitors have experienced, catalyzing deep emotional connections with the destination (Zhang et al., 2021). When destination images are remembered clearly and positively, they not only enliven the emotional experience but also amplify the influence of MTEs on the intrinsic emotional state (Rasoolimanesh & Lu, 2024; Agapito et al., 2013), thereby facilitating the formation of post-trip behaviors, such as revisiting or positive sharing.

## **2.3. Memorable tourism experiences**

In the context of post-trip traveler behavior research, MTEs are an important stimulus that

tends to be retained in memories and continues to influence emotions and ultimately behaviors (Hosany et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2012). Not all travel experiences are memorable; instead, MTEs are special moments, often brief but profound, highly personal and emotional, that make travelers tend to reminisce over long periods of time (Anaya & Lehto, 2023; Stone et al., 2018).

In the S-O-R model, MTEs act as stimulus (S) and are stored as emotional memories (Chen et al., 2020). These experiences not only reflect the content of the trip but also enliven the image of the destination in the minds of travelers. When an experience is recalled as positive, it can reinforce DI, while also evoking corresponding emotions such as pride, nostalgia, or a desire to return (Kim & Chen, 2019; Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018).

Moreover, MTEs do not exist in isolation from the destination image, but are one part of that image. Factors such as cultural identity, hospitality, urban space, and even specific social interactions – when experienced and evaluated as positively – contribute to the formation of a vivid and in-depth destination image (González-Reverté et al., 2025; Kim, 2018). From there, images and experiences are intertwined, having an impact on the internal emotional state – that is, the “Organism” component in the model.

#### ***2.4. Emotional experience in the travel journey***

Emotions are the subjective internal reactions of tourists when receiving and processing factors from the destination. In the travel experience, emotions are not merely an instantaneous state but an accumulation of sequences, reflecting the level of personal connection to what has been experienced. Otto and Ritchie (1996) believe that the mental state of tourists during the use of services is the foundation for forming a comprehensive memory and evaluation of the destination.

Research indicates that travelers’ emotional responses play an important mediating role, clarifying the link between destination images and behavioral intent (Stylidis et al., 2017).

Memorable experiences, especially emotional, unexpected, and meaningful moments, often elicit strong emotional responses such as surprise, excitement, or emotional states that tend to be remembered for a long time and are easily recalled (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018; Kim et al., 2012). Similarly, DI destination images, especially when clearly shaped with positive emotional elements, can also reactivate emotions through visual memory and cultural symbols (Zhang et al., 2021; Agapito et al., 2013). The relationship between emotions and destination images is complex, with visual stimuli evoking both conscious and unconscious emotional responses that impact behavioral intent (Zoëga Ramsøy et al., 2019). These findings underscore the importance of creating images that evoke positive emotions to enhance travelers’ ability to act

More importantly, it is the emotions that are positively recalled after the trip that are likely to promote post-experience behaviors. Many studies indicate that emotions are a direct precursor to satisfaction, attachment, and the intention to return to the destination (Prayag et al., 2017; Bigné et al., 2005). The presence of symbolic emotions helps visitors not only remember the destination, but also tends to recreate emotional connections in the future, through repetitive travel behavior or positive sharing.

#### ***2.5. Intention to return to the destination***

The intention to return to the destination is a specific expression of travel loyalty, reflecting the level of satisfaction, engagement, and desire on the part of the traveler to recreate the experience. This is a strategic indicator for the sustainable development of the tourism

industry, as it helps to reduce marketing costs and maintain a steady flow of visitors (Jang & Feng, 2007; Baker & Crompton, 2000).

Unlike spontaneous behaviors, the intention to return is often formed based on memory, emotions, and personal connection to the destination. Many studies have proven that memorable travel experiences positively preserve destination images, and deep experiential emotions are the three fundamental factors that create motivation to return (Prayag et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2012). In particular, emotions play a vital role: positive emotions are recalled after the trip, strengthen attachment, and lead to return behavior (Zhang et al., 2021).

In addition, many recent studies have emphasized that revisit is not just a passive outcome but a deliberate, strategic behavior associated with rediscovering positive feelings, or further exploring unfinished aspects of a previous trip (Ramkissoon, 2020; Stylos et al., 2016). More deeply, visitors can develop a sense of “belonging” at the destination – thereby turning

the intention to return into highly personalized repetitive behavior (Tonge et al., 2015).

2.6. Proposed research model

The research model applies the S–O–R framework to explain tourist behavior after the trip. In particular, memorable experiences and destination images serve as stimuli (S) that impact the emotional experience of visitors (O), thereby forming the intention to return to the destination (R). The core of the model lies in the response – revisit intention, which is defined as the final behavioral outcome and the key endpoint of the research process. Emotional experience is considered a psychological bridge, helping to transform memories and impressions of destinations into specific behaviors. Emphasizing revisit intention as the central response clarifies the comprehensiveness of the S–O–R framework and underscores the study’s significant academic contribution to explaining and predicting tourist behavior. The model is shown in Figure 1.

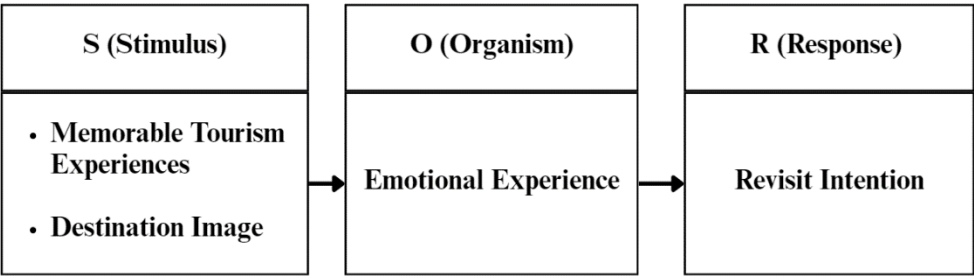


Figure 1. Research Model

3. Method

Approach

The study uses qualitative methods to gain an depth-understanding of the post-trip emotional journey of international tourists in HCMC. This approach is appropriate for exploring personal and emotional experiences associated with a specific context (Creswell, 2013). In tourism research, emotions are considered a subjective

phenomenon and are difficult to quantify if we do not delve into the exploitation of materials from insiders.

Research sample

The research sample was selected using purposive sampling; target respondents included international tourists who had been in HCMC within the past 12 months and could communicate in English. The use of English



aims to ensure consistency in emotional expression and reduce semantic errors. (Rashid et al., 2019). Subjects are selected from diverse countries and cultural backgrounds. To enhance methodological transparency, the sample selection criteria were clearly defined: (1) international tourists aged 18 or above, (2) who had stayed in HCMC for at least two nights, and (3) who could reflect on their experiences within 12 months of the trip. The collection ended when thematic data saturation was reached, meaning no new codes or themes emerged after the 24th interview, and the last three interviews confirmed redundancy of insights (Guest et al., 2006).

#### ***Data collection techniques***

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews to ensure flexibility in exploring personal emotions and memories (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The question revolves around the outstanding experience, post-trip emotions, preserved destination images, and the desire to return.

To ensure feasibility and convenience in reaching international tourists, the researcher used a direct approach at popular tourist destinations (Ben Thanh market, Nguyen Hue walking street, etc.) and through tourism social networks. These are easy-to-access channels, which help contact tourists directly during and after the trip, while creating diversity in sample sources.

The interview process was conducted offline and partly via online form (Zoom/Google Meet), depending on the location of the participant's residence. Each interview lasts 30 - 45 minutes, is recorded (when permitted), and fully transcribed. Non-verbal elements such as intonation, hesitation, and emotion are also noted during the observation process to aid in contextual analysis.

#### ***Data analysis***

Data analysis employs a thematic analysis method, which is consistent with research that explores travel experiences and emotions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The study followed Braun and Clarke's six-step framework: (1) familiarization with data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report.

The data is coded manually using NVivo 15 software, which facilitates systematic and transparent management, organization, and extraction of related topics (Zamawe, 2015).

#### ***Ensuring reliability and ethics***

Reliability is strengthened through cross-coding checks, confirming information with participants (member checking), and keeping tracking the entire analysis process (Coleman et al., 2024). In terms of ethics, all participants are clearly informed about the research objectives and the right to withdraw at any time. Identity is completely confidential (Orb et al., 2001).

### **4. Research results**

#### ***4.1. Descriptive statistics***

The survey was conducted with 27 respondents of diverse nationalities, representing four continents: Asia (10), Europe (10), North America (5), and Oceania (2). In terms of gender, the sample consisted of 16 males and 11 females. The respondents' ages ranged from 26 to 52 years; the majority were 31–50 years old (19 respondents), followed by those aged 18–30 (6 respondents) and over 50 (2 respondents). Regarding the frequency of visits to Ho Chi Minh City, 11 respondents had visited once, 10 respondents twice, 5 respondents three times, and only one respondent had visited more than three times (*see Appendix 2 online*).

## 4.2. Themes

The thematic analysis of 27 interviews revealed that tourists' post-trip emotions and revisit intentions in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) are largely shaped by the degree of personal connection, the depth of everyday experiences, and the presence of positive or negative affective triggers. Six overarching themes emerged from the data, supported by illustrative quotations from respondents.

### 4.2.1. When experiences are internalized into vivid memories

#### *Personalized moments triggering deep emotions*

A prominent finding is that personalized encounters foster strong emotional bonds with the destination. Respondents emphasized that experiences involving intimate interaction with locals often created a sense of belonging or familial attachment.

P26: *"I feel like I am sitting and eating with my family."*

P09: *"That day I got lost at Ben Thanh market, luckily a motorbike taxi driver showed me the way. He didn't even take any money, just smiled and left. I was very impressed, he was very friendly and cute."*

P23: *She said, "Are you going to visit home again?", a small gesture that evoked familiarity and warmth.*

These examples indicate that direct, personalized contact transformed ordinary situations into lasting emotional memories.

#### *Everyday city images shaping post-trip emotions*

Respondents frequently highlighted mundane urban scenes, street cafés, local music, or communal activities as more memorable, even than iconic attractions. Such moments were described as deeply immersive and emotionally resonant.

P01: *"In the morning, sitting in a roadside café watching the traffic go by, I feel like I am living in a movie about this city."*

P21: *"HCMC reminds me of the past, motorbikes weaving through the streets, low-rise buildings... but at the same time it's very lively. I find it both nostalgic and modern."*

P14: *"I watched the old men playing chess, listening to the birds singing, and felt strangely peaceful."*

P24: *"At night on Nguyen Hue walking street, there is live music, lights, and slowly walking people... I just sit there and feel like I am truly 'alive'."*

Even minor details, such as streetlights, the sound of horns, or elderly people playing chess, were described as triggers of peace and nostalgia.

#### *Surface-level experiences*

In contrast, several respondents reported experiences that were novel but emotionally superficial. These encounters lacked opportunities for meaningful interaction and, therefore, did not remain salient in memory.

P06: *"At the night market and sidewalk cafes, I found everything strange and interesting, but no one talked to me, and I didn't know how to start a conversation. I just observed from the outside without really participating."*

P17: *"I went to many places, from markets to museums. But when I left, I had nothing to really remember. Everything passed quickly, leaving no trace."*

Such cases highlight the distinction between passive consumption and active engagement in shaping memorable tourism experiences.

#### *Negative experiences and barriers*

Adverse impressions related to traffic, communication, or social exclusion emerged

as barriers to forming positive emotional memories. Respondents expressed the feeling of discomfort, stress, or insecurity, which at times overshadowed otherwise enjoyable experiences.

P10 (Singapore): *"I am afraid to step out on the road because there are too many motorbikes."*

P27 (Korea): *"When I entered the restaurant, I didn't understand the menu, and no one helped me. Then a little girl used Google Translate to help, but the overall feeling was still very confusing and unfamiliar."*

P03: described feeling ignored when ordering food, which resulted in a sense of exclusion.

P07 and P19: criticized *"The city is too noisy, I can't find a quiet corner to rest."*

These narratives suggest that even subtle negative affect can dominate the overall emotional evaluation of a destination.

#### 4.2.2. Afterglow emotions as drivers of revisit intentions

Several respondents expressed post-trip emotions such as nostalgia, incompleteness, or a desire to share their experiences with significant others. These emotions were associated with a stronger intention to revisit.

P02: *"I found myself missing Saigon more than I thought."*

P04 and P15: expressed the wish to return to *"understand more deeply"* or *"go slower."*

P08: *"I want to bring my mom to eat at the right place where I ate that day. I believe she will love the taste and atmosphere there, just like I did."*

P18: *"Next time, I want to come with my partner. This city feels pleasant, not only from the sights, but also from the atmosphere."*

P26: *"If I have a child in the future, I want to take him to that place to feel the atmosphere and feeling that I used to have that day."*

These examples demonstrate how afterglow emotions extend beyond personal reflection to motivate future travel with companions or family.

#### 4.2.3. Positive memories with uncertain revisit intention

Finally, some tourists, despite recalling positive emotions, did not establish a revisit intention. Their hesitation was often linked to fear of losing the originality of the first experience or competing travel priorities.

P17: *"I felt like I had had enough. I didn't hate the city, but I didn't feel like going back. It didn't inspire me to go again."*

P25: *"I have many good memories here, but I am afraid that if I go back, I will not feel the same as the first time. I want to keep this memory intact instead of risking it fading."*

P21: *"For me, this trip is enough. I really like the atmosphere and the scenery, but I think I will just keep the images and feelings as they are now. Going back might change everything, and I don't want this beautiful memory to fade."*

P12: *"I like this city, but when I think about going back, I hesitate. There are so many places in the world I want to go. So even though I have feelings for Ho Chi Minh City, I am still not sure if I will prioritize it for my next trip."*

P11 and P20: similarly emphasized competing destinations as a higher priority.

This theme illustrates that positive emotions are not always sufficient to drive repeat visitation.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. How personal involvement builds strong memories

A prominent factor shaping post-trip emotions is personal and intimate experiences with local life. When tourists are involved in



everyday moments such as eating in a small alley, receiving warm help from locals, or chatting with a coffee shop owner, they often remember these experiences long-term and associate them with images of Ho Chi Minh City (Kim et al., 2012; Larsen, 2007). These experiences are emotionally rich, go beyond just visiting famous tourist attractions, and form a “living memory” of the city (Agapito et al., 2013).

In contrast, when the experience is limited to superficial observations, without personal connections or a sense of welcome, visitors find it is hard to form deep memories (González-Reverté et al., 2025; Kim, 2018). Even negative impressions, such as heavy traffic, communication difficulties, or safety concerns, can overshadow even positive moments (Hosany et al., 2022).

In short, memories become vivid and lasting when visitors not only see, but also truly participate and engage with the people and life at the destination.

### **5.2. Afterglow emotions and intention to return**

Research results show that tourists' intention to return arises not only from immediate satisfaction, but also from emotions evoked after the trip has ended. When recalling Ho Chi Minh City, many tourists feel engaged, want to continue learning more, or want to return with family and friends to share the experience (Zhang et al., 2021; Prayag et al., 2017). This is the process of memories being recalled over time, thereby creating new behavioral motivation.

However, negative experiences also have a strong impact in the opposite direction. Some tourists noted that the stress of traffic or language barriers made them less likely to return, despite having many other positive memories. This is consistent with the psychological phenomenon

that “negative impressions tend to be stronger than positive ones” (Baumeister et al., 2001).

Therefore, whether tourists return to the destination depends largely on how they recall and re-experience their emotions after the trip, not just on the level of satisfaction at that moment (Bigné et al., 2005).

### **5.3. Positive memories without intention to return**

The study also noted cases where visitors had positive memories of Ho Chi Minh City, but were still uncertain about their intention to return. This phenomenon appeared in three typical situations:

Some visitors remember Ho Chi Minh City as a place that provides an enjoyable experience. However, because they only experience superficial activities and have little personal connection, this memory gradually fades over time. Without a deep connection with the people or local life, positive memories are not strong enough to translate into motivation to return (Kim & Chen, 2019).

Another group of tourists falls into the opposite situation: their experience in Ho Chi Minh City leaves an excellent impression, but because of that satisfaction, they hesitate to return. They are concerned that the return visit may not retain the same special feeling as the first time, or even change the good memories they have. This phenomenon reflects the desire to preserve the original experience as a “standard” that is difficult to repeat (Zhao et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2021).

In addition, some tourists who highly appreciate Ho Chi Minh City and have many great memories still choose to go to new destinations instead of returning. The main reasons come from the desire to expand their travel experiences and the limitations of

resources such as time and finances. Therefore, even if Ho Chi Minh City leaves a positive impression, the decision to return is still influenced by the need to diversify the itinerary and competition with other destinations (Prayag et al., 2017).

These results suggest that the relationship between positive memories and revisit intentions is not always linear. Positive emotions can be motivating, but they can also be just “memory retention” without translating into revisit actions (Hosany et al., 2022; Yin et al., 2017; Servidio & Ruffolo, 2016).

The findings indicate that memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) and destination image (DI) do not directly translate into revisit intention, but rather operate through the internalization of post-trip emotions. This discovery contributes to extending the S-O-R framework in a non-linear direction. While traditional models often assume a direct causal relationship between stimulus (S), organism (O), and response (R), this study shows that post-trip emotions can both foster and inhibit behavior, depending on personal context and the depth of emotional engagement. This suggests the need to consider intermediate psychological states such as nostalgia, concerns about losing a cherished impression, or the allocation of limited travel resources (Zhao et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2021; Kim & Chen, 2019; Prayag et al., 2017).

The theoretical implication is that revisit behavior should not be understood merely as a repetitive consumption decision, but as a process of reconstructing emotional memories tied to personal identity. This study adds the temporal dimension and durability of emotions, aspects often overlooked in previous linear models. At the same time, it opens a pathway to connect tourism studies with psychological theories of memory and identity.

## **6. Conclusion**

### **6.1. Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that MTEs and DI do not directly lead to revisit intention, but rather operate through post-trip emotional internalization. Emotions such as connection, nostalgia, or the desire to reshare experiences are more influential than immediate gratification. Revisit intention is thus not simply a repetitive consumption act, but an effort to reconstruct emotional memories that have been integrated into one's personal identity.

Theoretically, the study contributes by clarifying intermediate emotional states that remain in tension before being translated into behavior. While tourists often recall positive memories, some refrain from returning because they fear the original impressions may fade, or because alternative destinations compete for their limited resources. This extends the traditional S-O-R framework beyond linear causality, highlighting how post-trip emotions may both encourage and inhibit behavioral outcomes, depending on the depth of inner connection and personal circumstances.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that to foster repeat visitation, Ho Chi Minh City should prioritize creating experiences that are authentic, emotionally engaging, and rooted in everyday interactions with local people. Ordinary moments often produce stronger emotional resonance than staged attractions. Tourism strategies should therefore focus on preserving genuine living spaces, training service staff in communication, and encouraging hospitable encounters, alongside conventional investments in infrastructure and image promotion.

### **6.2. Management implications**

The findings suggest that enhancing revisit intention requires more than offering

attractions or improving service quality; it requires intentionally designing experiences that foster emotional internalization and memory formation. The following managerial strategies are recommended:

Tourism activities should allow visitors to engage directly with local people, culture, and everyday life. For example, walking tours through neighborhoods, food experiences in small alleys, or participating in community events. These experiences help visitors remember the trip longer and feel a stronger connection to the destination. The focus is on creating moments where tourists actively participate, rather than just observing.

Staff training should go beyond standard hospitality skills and focus on enabling emotionally meaningful encounters. For instance, staff should be prepared to recognize opportunities to assist visitors in ways that generate positive affect and foster connection. Friendly gestures, small acts of kindness, and empathetic communication contribute directly to the formation of vivid, lasting memories, which are stronger predictors of revisit intention than functional service alone.

Marketing and communication strategies should highlight the everyday urban experiences that create lasting emotional impressions, such as street cafés, live music on pedestrian streets, local markets, or ordinary community interactions. By emphasizing authentic experiences rather than only iconic attractions, destinations can help tourists develop a deeper emotional connection and stronger attachment.

Even brief negative experiences, traffic chaos, language barriers, or feelings of insecurity can overshadow otherwise positive experiences and reduce the likelihood of return visits. City planners and tourism managers should prioritize creating a safe, navigable, and welcoming environment, as the absence of stressors is a prerequisite for forming positive memories and emotional internalization.

Tourism managers can deliberately design products and services that enhance post-trip reminiscence, such as guided cultural workshops, storytelling sessions, or sensory experiences that combine food, music, and spatial context. These strategies leverage the mechanism of “post-trip emotional internalization” to create meaningful and durable memories that can drive both repeat visitation and social sharing.

### 5.3. Limitation and future research

The research is exploratory, with a small and characteristic sample, so it can not be used to generalize to all international visitors. Relying on personal recollections can also skew memories. Further studies should combine quantitative, sample expansion, and testing of the emotion mediation model. In addition, a comparison between returning and non-returning visitors could be conducted to clarify the long-term role of post-production emotions.

Another limitation is that only English-speaking participants were included. While this reduced translation bias, it may restrict representativeness, and future studies should adopt multilingual approaches to capture broader perspectives.

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