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An Extended Model of In-Situ Trip Satisfaction Formation

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Abstract *Tourists' satisfaction with their trips has two elements: affective (emotional impressions) and cognitive (rational evaluations). The former often depends on the latter (which includes the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual sub-elements). Trip satisfaction, nevertheless, is usually measured after the trip has finished. Thus, a lag effect may have certain impacts on the evaluations. In addition, the influences of the current COVID-19 pandemic on tourists' satisfaction, in general, and their emotions, in particular, have not yet been considered. The purpose of this study is to examine tourists' in-situ emotions by tracing their antecedents, including the above-mentioned factors and those beyond them. Using data collected from one young tourist sample (n = 298) in Vietnam, this study found that the intrapersonal element of "nonverbal communication skills," the interpersonal element of "relationship satisfaction," and the contextual elements of "destination attributes" and "symbolic values" were influencers of these tourists' positive emotions. The situational elements of "COVID-19 self-efficacy" and "COVID-19 fear" did not have positive impacts. Theoretical contributions to the literature, and practical implications for trip operators and tourists are discussed.*

Keywords: *In-Situ Trip Satisfaction, Communication Skills, Destination Attributes, Relationship Satisfaction, COVID-19*

INTRODUCTION

Trip satisfaction is the contentment or positive feelings that tourists have with the trips, in general, and with the details of the trips, in particular. Trip satisfaction is sought for by participants on both the demand and supply sides of the tourism sector. On the one hand, tourists want to enjoy their trips to get compensation for all the constraints and demotivating factors they had to overcome, and to achieve a certain level of subjective well-being (Stodolska, Shinew & Camarillo, 2020; Su, Swanson & Chen, 2018). On the other hand, destination managers and trip operators want their customers to be happy, because satisfied tourists tend to be more positive when speaking of their trips, and to be more likely to return to the destinations in the future (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019; Eid, El-Kassrawy & Agag, 2019). However, tourist loyalty, in terms of destination revisit intentions, seems to be an overstated indicator (Choi, Lu & Cai, 2015). In fact, to have tourists return to a destination several times is not an easy task since many of them are variety seekers (Martenson, 2018). Thus, trying to ensure that tourists will pass on positive comments and that their subjective well-being is increased through trip satisfaction seem to be a more reasonable task.

Trip satisfaction, nevertheless, is often measured after people have finished their trips. Thus, a lag effect may have certain impacts on their evaluations (Clark, Diener, Georgellis & Lucas, 2008). A measurement of in-situ satisfaction (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015) seems to be necessary to provide people in the tourism industry with the kind of information they really need.

Structurally, trip satisfaction has two distinct yet interrelated components: affective and cognitive (del Bosque & San Martín, 2008). The affective component of trip satisfaction reflects tourists' feelings or emotions, while the cognitive component denotes their rational evaluations of the trip components. The former is often dependent on the latter, which may include three main factors: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual (Gao & Kerstetter, 2018).

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Specifically, within themselves, tourists may consciously self-regulate their emotions in order to maximize their positive feelings (Fox & Calkins, 2003). Concerning their interactions with others, tourists may avoid or compromise with certain contacts or relationships to obtain a similar effect (Agate, Agate & Birchler, 2015; Durko & Stone, 2017). Also, the fulfilment of certain internal values (e.g., utility, hedonism and symbolism) by making use of external factors available at a destination may also lead to tourists' emotional satisfaction (Ryu, Han & Jang, 2010).

The findings of previous studies have recommended several methods to improve tourists' in-situ emotions. However, at least three issues still remain largely unaddressed. First, the relative contribution of each of the three cognitive factors (intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual) has not yet been detailed. Hence, what managers and providers at the destinations should focus on has not been identified. Second, the causes of each of these factors, if there are any, have not been taken into account. As a consequence, the root of the problem is still undefined. Third, impacts of the current COVID-19 pandemic on tourists' emotions, including their fear on the one hand (Ahorsu et al., 2020) and their confidence on the other (Kock, Nørfelt, Josiassen, Assaf & Tsionas, 2020), have not been considered. The exclusion of these situational factors would be better avoided.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine tourists' in-situ emotions by tracing their antecedents. A theoretical model which helps explain the formation of tourists' in-situ emotions is proposed and empirically tested. Findings of this study will help enrich the existing literature about tourist satisfaction. They will also provide practical implications for helping to ensure tourists' positive emotions during their trips, which should influence their constructive comments and benefit their personal well-being.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-Regulation and Emotions

An emotion is a brief affective state which is activated by a specific event or cause, and will lead to certain behavioural and expressive consequences. Since individuals are aware of the causes and consequences of their emotions, they are able to regulate them (Beedie, Terry & Lane, 2005; Gross, 1998). The ability to regulate can significantly influence emotions. The stronger this ability is, the more a given emotion can be maintained (Ehring & Ehlers, 2014).

However, the emotion regulation ability will differ among individuals due to differences in personalities, cognitive abilities, social and developmental situations, and biological, clinical and health conditions (Gross, 1998). In addition, Eisenberg, Sadovsky and Spinrad (2005) found that verbal language ability and emotion regulation ability share a mutual correlation. Moreover, Luber, Cotton, McLeish, Mingione and O'Ban (2014) discovered a correlation between nonverbal language ability and emotion regulation ability. Thus, as the literature suggests, interpersonal communication skills, including verbal and nonverbal skills, may play the role of an antecedent of emotion regulation.

Based on the above discussion, the first two hypotheses (H) are proposed.

H1. Tourists' communication skills (a: nonverbal, and b: verbal) can significantly affect their emotion regulation (self-regulation).

H2. Tourists' self-regulation can significantly affect their emotions.

Relationship Satisfaction and Emotions

Many tourists go on a holiday to strengthen the relationships with their family members and acquaintances. However, others may choose to avoid or compromise such relationships. Durko and Stone (2017), for example, observed that many women travelled without their partners to escape from personal constraints imposed by these people, and to attain some amount of individuality. Similarly, Agate, Agate and Birchler (2015) discovered that some parents sent their children to a day program when on holiday to avoid stressful situations and to enjoy some adult time alone. In addition, other people participating in the trip may also influence tourists' emotions. For example, in a rainforest context, while Japanese tourists prefer having other tourists with them, Westerners would like few or no other people (Yagi & Pearce, 2007). In certain border areas between the US and Mexico, tourists who have more emotional solidarity with local residents may feel safer about their visits (Woosnam, Shafer, Scott & Timothy, 2015). In China, tourists' satisfaction is found to be affected by the performance of tourism staff, such as tour guides and hotel workers (Heung, 2000; Huang, Hsu & Chan, 2010).Thus, the literature has already suggested that relationship satisfaction is a determinant of tourists' emotions. Moreover, the satisfaction level is also influenced by participants' communication skills (Egeci & Gencoz, 2011).

Therefore, based on the literature, the next two hypotheses are proposed.

H3. Tourists' communication skills (a: nonverbal, and b: verbal) can significantly affect their relationship satisfaction.

H4. Tourists' relationship satisfaction can significantly affect their emotions.

Motivational Values and Emotions

Tourists go on holidays because they are motivated by many external/extrinsic and internal/intrinsic factors (Dean & Suhartanto, 2019). On the one hand, external/extrinsic motivations are those related to the destinations or the holiday processes that entice tourists to go there. On the other hand, internal/intrinsic motivations are those embedded inside the individuals, which urge them to try new experiences. The fulfilment of these motivations will lead to satisfaction, in general, and positive emotions, in particular (Albayrak & Caber, 2018).

Internal/intrinsic motivations have or are determined by certain value domains (Brophy, 1999). These values, when they are met, also lead to satisfaction or positive emotions, and vice versa. For example, utilitarian (e.g., cost and options) and hedonic (e.g., enjoyment and entertainment) values are found to have direct impacts on both emotions and satisfaction (Ryu, Han & Jang, 2010). In addition, symbolic values (e.g., approval and acceptability) also are significant antecedents of satisfaction (Luna-Cortés, 2017).

Motivational values, however, are affected by certain internal/personal characteristics of the individuals, and by several external attributes of the goods/services and their providers (Allard, Babin & Chebat, 2009; Kim & Han, 2011). However, these interactions seem to be more associated with the utilitarian and hedonic values. The symbolic values, otherwise, must be achieved when or if the attributes available at the destinations have their symbolic meanings (Gazley & Watling, 2015). In a chronological order, there are attributes related to the old days, which help create a nostalgic atmosphere (Shaw, 1992). There are also attributes of the present days, which give tourists a sense of familiarity (Lacey, Flueckiger, Stilla, Lava & Sathian, 2010). Finally, there are new attributes, which cause tourists to have novel experiences (Chang, Wall & Chu, 2006). Customers' evaluation of product or service attributes, in a general sense, can significantly affect their perceived values (Schuitema & de Groot, 2015). Thus, there is a possibility that tourists' evaluation of destination attributes may have certain impacts on their perceived symbolic values.

Based on the findings of previous studies, the next two hypotheses are proposed.

H5. Tourists' evaluation of destination attributes can significantly affect their perceived symbolic values.

H6. Tourists' perceived symbolic values can significantly affect their emotions.

COVID-19 and Emotions

Since its appearance, COVID-19 has impacted tourism activities tremendously. Individuals who still consider going on a vacation have to take into account many unordinary and unprecedented factors, such as COVID-19 infectability. An evaluation of this particular factor can significantly affect potential tourists' perception of the targeted destinations, and preference for trips, among others (Kock, Nørfelt, Josiassen, Assaf & Tsionas, 2020).

COVID-19 and its induced fear, in general, has negatively influenced the emotions of people (Chen & Eyoun, 2021; Khattak, Saeed, Rehman & Fayaz, 2021). This situational fear has also doubtlessly increasedthe travel anxiety of tourists (Yang & Wong, 2021). However, self-efficacy, people's confidence of protecting themselves from the risks of COVID-19, can help reduce the negative emotions and probably improve the positive ones (Sui, Gong & Zhuang, 2021). A high level of self-efficacy may help tourists to avoid or control travel burnout and other negative emotions (Yousaf, 2021).

Based on the evidence found in recent studies, it is further hypothesized that:

H7. Tourists' perceived COVID-19 fears can significantly affect their emotions.

H8. Tourists' perceived COVID-19 self-efficacy can significantly affect their emotions.

All the hypotheses are combined in the theoretical model presented in Fig. 1.

METHOD

Setting

Vietnam was selected as the setting of this study. In 2020-2021, it was expected that approximately 82 million domestic trips and approximately 7.5 million outbound trips would be made by Vietnamese people (Statista, 2019; The World Bank, 2019). However, the response to COVID-19 has negated all of these optimistic forecasts. In 2020, only approximately 56 million domestic trips were actually made, down approximately 34% compared to 2019 (General Statistics Office, 2021).

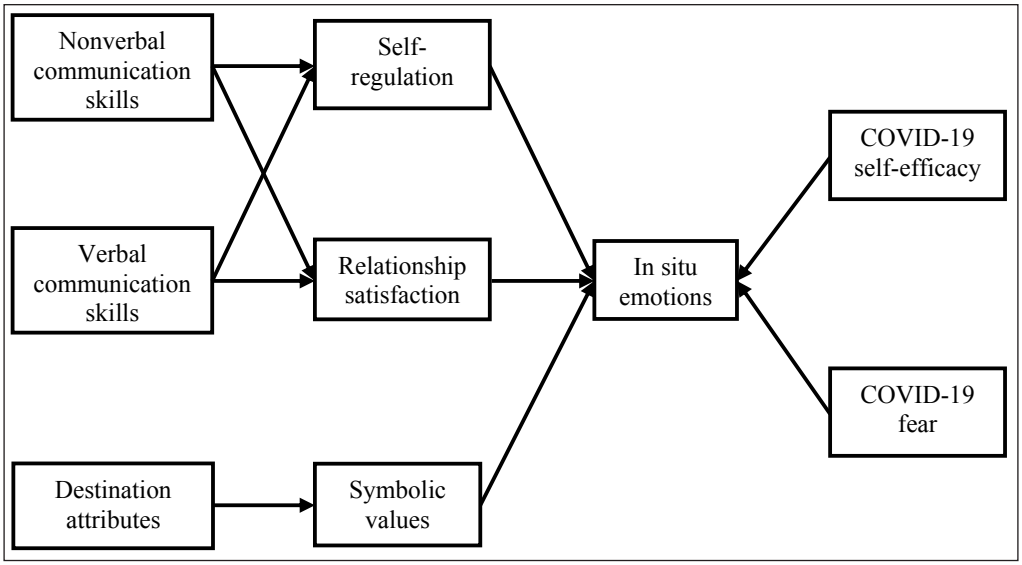

Fig. 1: Theoretical Model

Since the discovery of the first COVID-19 patient in January 2020, Vietnam has been through four waves of the pandemic with more than 1 million infection cases discovered as of November 2021 (VnExpress, 2021). Different from the majority of countries around the world, Vietnam applied a very strict preventive policy, which aimed at maintaining a non-COVID-19 condition within its borders (Duong, Le & Ha, 2020). International tourists have not been allowed to enter the country, but local tourists can go on domestic holidays in between the waves. Only until recently, the non-COVID philosophy has been relaxed, and restrictions have carefully been removed where the rate of vaccination is high. The collection of the data was undertaken in April 2021, right after the third wave (January – March 2021) and before the fourth way (May 2021 onward).

Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was developed which included the following constructs.

Emotions: Five positive emotions were adopted from Ebesutani et al. (2012). They were evaluated on a five-point scale: very slightly or not at all (1), a little (2), moderately (3), quite a bit (4), and extremely (5).

Self-Regulation: A six-factor scale to measure difficulties in emotion regulation was developed by Gratz and Roemer (2004). In this study, seven items (score reversed) of the "emotion regulation strategies" factor were employed, and the original five-point scale was adopted, including almost never (0-10%) (1), sometimes (11-35%) (2), about half the time (36-65%) (3), most of the time (66-90%) (4), and almost always (91-100%) (5).

Relationship Satisfaction: Six items were selected based on the review of the literature (e.g., Agate, Agate, and Birchler, 2015; Al-Ansi & Han, 2019; Eid, El-Kassrawy & Agag, 2019; Huang, Hsu & Chan, 2010), including family members or friends, other tourists, tour guides, hotel staff, and restaurant staff. The five point-scale ranged from totally unsatisfied (1) to totally satisfied (5).

Symbolic Values: Four items were chosen from Sweeney and Soutar (2001). The five point-scale-ranged from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (5).

Communication Skills: Six nonverbal items and eight verbal items were adapted from Trower, Bryant and Argyle's (1978) original proposal. They were evaluated on a five-point scale of very good (1) to very bad (5).

Destination Attributes: Seven broad and representative items were selected from the list created by Beerli and Martín (2004). A four-point scale was developed in accordance with the purpose of the study, including "I am not sure" (uncertainty) (1), "I have a feeling that I have experienced it somewhere in the past" (nostalgia) (2), "I have a feeling that I am experiencing it regularly in my daily life" (familiarity) (3), and "I have a feeling that I have never experienced it anywhere" (novelty) - (4).

COVID-19 Fear: Seven items were developed by Ahorsu, et al. (2020). The scale included five points from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (5).

COVID-19 Self-Efficacy: Four items were presented by Kock, Nørfelt, Josiassen, Assaf and Tsionas (2020). They were also evaluated on a five-point scale from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (5).

The original measures were written in English. To prepare the Vietnamese version, one researcher of the research group initially made the translation following a translation – back translation process with the help of Google Translate. After that, two independent researchers who are fluent in both languages checked and approved the translated version.

Data Collection

Given the resources available, the survey was done with students at a tourism faculty who were taking a fieldtrip as part of their academic requirement in the second week of April 2021. A total of 298 complete answers were collected. Seventy-five of them were from male students (25.2%), and 222 from female students (74.5%). One person did not reveal their biological sex. Eighty-eight of the students (29.5%) were below 20 years old, while 210 (70.5%) were above 20. All of the students were living in Hanoi at the time of the survey, and the major destinations of their trips included Da Nang, Hue, and Son La. They were enrolled in the faculty where one of the researchers was working.

Data Analysis

The data was analysed in two major steps. In the first step conducted in IBM SPSS, the characteristics of the dataset were explored (Table 1). Initially, the descriptive analyses showed that the dataset was normally distributed, with skewness < 3.0 and kurtosis < 7.0 (Kim, 2013). Next, the principal component analyses advised that all constructs were singly structured. Initially, there was one exception, the "verbal communication skills" construct, in which two factors with eigenvalues exceeding 1 were observed. However, after addressing the cross-loading items (Matsunaga, 2010), the one-factor solution was finally obtained. After that, Cronbach's alphas were calculated for all of the constructs. The outcomes demonstrated that all the items of one construct closely correlated with one another (Corrected Item-Total Correlation or CITC values > 0.30) and all the measures could be considered reliable (α> 0.70) (Leech, Barrett & Morgan, 2005). Given the fact that all of the constructs were unidimensional (one factor) instead of multidimensional (two factors or more) and they had good internal consistencies, their average values were calculated and used in the following analysis.

Table 1: Description of the Measures

	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	Std.	CITC
Nonverbal communication skills			3.43	0.52	0.85[α]
Eye contact	0.31	0.45	3.35	0.68	0.68
Facial expressions	0.13	-0.20	3.50	0.72	0.72
Gestures	0.16	-0.19	3.47	0.69	0.72
Posture	0.15	0.26	3.37	0.68	0.66
Keeping an appropriate space	0.37	-0.56	3.64	0.65	0.49
Keeping an attractive appearance	0.20	0.47	3.24	0.72	0.57
Verbal communication skills			3.42	0.50	0.79[α]
Questioning	0.26	0.27	3.19	0.76	0.51
Giving instructions and directions	0.17	0.22	3.31	0.76	0.62
Giving comments and suggestions	0.13	0.22	3.42	0.75	0.59
Engaging in informal chat or gossiping	0.10	-0.01	3.41	0.80	0.49
Expressing emotions and feelings	0.20	0.01	3.49	0.74	0.58
Giving latent messages	0.43	0.78	3.26	0.72	0.45
Performing social routines (e.g., greetings, farewells and thanks)	0.16	-1.04	3.87	0.74	0.34
Destination attributes			3.00	0.67	0.85[α]
Scenery	-0.66	-0.97	3.17	0.96	0.63
Climate	-0.31	-0.76	2.95	0.86	0.58
Architecture	-0.70	-1.01	3.20	0.98	0.55
Transportation	-0.31	-0.25	2.88	0.81	0.57
Hotel	-0.35	-0.84	2.85	0.95	0.67
Food	-0.50	-0.87	3.08	0.90	0.65
Souvenirs	-0.25	-1.32	2.85	1.06	0.59
Self-regulation			2.05	0.79	0.92[α]

	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	Std.	CITC
When I'm upset, I believe that I'll end up feeling very depressed.	0.34	-0.50	2.10	0.83	0.72
When I'm upset, I believe that I will remain that way for a long time.	0.61	-0.14	2.03	0.93	0.79
When I'm upset, I believe that wallowing in it is all I can do.	0.73	-0.22	1.93	0.92	0.79
When I'm upset, it takes me a long time to feel better.	0.55	-0.25	2.15	0.97	0.75
When I'm upset, I believe that there is nothing I can do to make myself feel better.	0.94	0.07	1.92	1.02	0.71
When I'm upset, my emotions feel overwhelming.	0.96	0.37	1.98	1.01	0.73
When I'm upset, I start to feel very bad about myself.	0.59	-0.27	2.26	1.07	0.69
Relationship satisfaction			4.10	0.57	0.85 $^{\alpha}$
Family members or friends	-0.39	-0.52	4.12	0.75	0.64
Tour members	-0.24	-0.53	3.97	0.76	0.71
Tour guides	-0.65	0.06	4.35	0.66	0.59
Hotel staff	-0.17	-0.56	4.04	0.70	0.70
Restaurant staff	-0.24	-0.45	4.02	0.72	0.69
Symbolic values			3.65	0.54	0.80 $^{\alpha}$
This tourism experience improves the way I am perceived.	-0.40	0.82	3.66	0.69	0.61
This tourism experience makes a good impression on other people.	-0.76	2.01	3.75	0.68	0.63
This tourism experience gives me social approval.	0.10	0.08	3.60	0.69	0.61
This tourism experience helps me to feel acceptable.	0.09	0.07	3.59	0.70	0.59
COVID-19 self-efficacy			4.01	0.64	0.89 $^{\alpha}$
I am confident that I can understand health instructions about COVID-19 infection prevention.	-0.85	2.73	4.08	0.69	0.79
I am confident that I am able to take action to prevent contracting COVID-19.	-0.84	2.45	4.14	0.68	0.79
I am able to identify the symptoms of COVID-19.	-0.41	0.11	3.76	0.85	0.67
I know what to do if I suspect I am exposed to COVID-19.	-0.84	1.64	4.04	0.77	0.74
COVID-19 fear			2.88	0.89	0.90 $^{\alpha}$
I am most afraid of COVID-19.	-0.35	-0.62	3.46	1.15	0.58
It makes me uncomfortable to think about COVID-19.	0.05	-0.23	3.14	0.98	0.68
My hands become clammy when I think about COVID-19.	0.31	-0.36	2.62	1.09	0.74
I am afraid of losing my life because of COVID-19.	0.22	-0.65	2.75	1.16	0.77
When watching news and stories about COVID-19 on social media, I become nervous or anxious.	-0.11	-0.78	3.01	1.16	0.74
I cannot sleep because I'm worrying about getting COVID-19.	0.38	-0.72	2.41	1.14	0.69
My heart races or palpitates when I think about getting COVID-19.	0.08	-0.87	2.75	1.21	0.72
Emotions			3.84	0.86	0.90 $^{\alpha}$
Joyful	-0.63	-0.35	3.85	1.03	0.80
Cheerful	-0.85	0.07	4.03	0.93	0.82
Happy	-0.65	-0.12	3.85	1.01	0.81
Lively	-0.44	-0.24	3.64	1.02	0.72
Proud	-0.85	0.01	3.84	1.13	0.56

Note: Std. = Standard Deviation; CITC = Corrected Item-Total Correlation; α = Cronbach's alpha.

In the second step implemented in IBM SPSS Amos, the hypotheses were tested through structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis. Amos was selected as the analysis platform because the sample size met the criteria of a valid undertaking (Kline, 1998). Specifically, with nine variables, the respondent-to-variable ratios were approximately 33:1, which well exceeded the recommended threshold of 10:1. In addition, the analysis software could provide modification

indices to help improve the fit of the theoretical model. In the analyses, the measurement errors of the two communication skills variables were correlated, and several new paths were added to the original model. Since all of the constructs were singly structured, criteria used when evaluating the validity of multifactor constructs, such as convergent and discriminant validity, were not examined.

FINDINGS

The results of the SEM analyses revealed that the adjusted model fit well with the datasets (Table 2). All the selected fit indices satisfied the suggested thresholds, including CMIN/DF < 2.0, GFI > 0.95, AGFI > 0.90, NFI > 0.95, CFI > 0.97, SRMR < 0.05, and RMSEA < 0.05 (Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger & Müller, 2003).

Table 2: Relationships among Variables

	β	p
Hypothesized correlation		
H1a. Nonverbal skills --> Self-regulation	0.10	0.18
H1b. Verbal skills --> Self-regulation	-0.08	0.26
H3a. Nonverbal skills --> Relationship satisfaction	0.23	0.00
H3b. Verbal skills --> Relationship satisfaction	-0.09	0.19
H5. Destination attributes --> Symbolic values	0.23	0.00
H2. Self-regulation --> Emotions	0.01	0.89
H4. Relationship satisfaction --> Emotions	0.27	0.00
H6. Symbolic values --> Emotions	0.21	0.00
H7. COVID-19 self-efficacy --> Emotions	0.07	0.20
H8. COVID-19 fear --> Emotions	0.03	0.53
Non-hypothesized correlation		
Verbal skills --> Symbolic values	0.08	0.27
Nonverbal skills --> Symbolic values	0.17	0.01
Self-regulation --> Destination attributes	0.14	0.02
Destination attributes --> Relationship satisfaction	0.25	0.00
Nonverbal skills --> Emotions	0.15	0.02
Verbal skills --> Emotions	-0.11	0.09
Destination attributes --> Emotions	0.16	0.00
Nonverbal skills --> COVID-19 self-efficacy	0.12	0.08
Verbal skills --> COVID-19 self-efficacy	0.21	0.00
Self-regulation --> COVID-19 fear	-0.16	0.00
COVID-19 self-efficacy --> Symbolic values	0.12	0.04
COVID-19 self-efficacy --> Relationship satisfaction	0.12	0.04
Fit index		
Minimum Discrepancy/Degree of Freedom (CMIN/DF)		1.27
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)		0.99
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)		0.96
Normed Fit Index (NFI)		0.95
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)		0.99
Standard Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)		0.04
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)		0.03

Regarding the hypothesized correlations, it was found that "nonverbal communication skills" had a significant impact on "relationship satisfaction," and "relationship satisfaction" and "symbolic values" had significant impacts on "emotions." The sizes of the effects were small to medium (β = 0.191 – 0.321) (Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner & Barret, 2004). In addition, it was observed that "destination attributes" had an influence on "symbolic values" (β = 0.225, p = 0.000). Consequently, H3a, H4, H5, and H6 were accepted. The remaining hypotheses were not.

Concerning the non-hypothesized correlations, almost all the added correlations were significant ($p < 0.05$) or marginally significant ($p < 0.1$). There was only one exception: the association between "verbal communication skills" and "symbolic values" (β = 0.075, p = 0.270).

DISCUSSION

From an emotional approach, trip satisfaction includes the positive feelings that tourists have during their trips. The findings of this study revealed two different routes of positive emotions formation. In a sense, satisfaction with relationships during the trips was a direct influencer of positive emotions (Agate, Agate & Birchler, 2015; Durko & Stone, 2017). The former, on the other hand, was based on the nonverbal communication skills, but not the verbal communication skills, of the tourists themselves (Egeci & Gencoz, 2011). In another sense, the perceived symbolic values of the trips were another direct antecedent of the positive feelings (Luna-Cortés, 2017). The former was under the direct impact of perceived destination attributes (Gazley & Watling, 2015).

In addition to these pre-hypothesized relationships, this study also revealed other non-hypothesized associations. Specifically, it was observed that tourists' nonverbal communication skills could have a direct impact on their emotions, in addition to an indirect impact through relationship satisfaction. This outcome extended the findings of previous studies regarding the relationship between one's communication skills and others' emotions in medical and clinical contexts (Buckman, 2002; Finset, 2012) to the relationship between one's communication skills and one's own emotions in a tourism setting.

Moreover, it was found that perceived destination attributes could directly affect relationship satisfaction. This expanded the role of perceived destination attributes as a significant contributor of not only overall trip satisfaction (Eusébio & Vieira, 2013) but also of trip relationship satisfaction. Perceived destination attributes, however, were affected by self-regulation. Although the relationship between self-regulation and perception has been established (Negretti, 2012), this study added that this relationship might also be apparent in a tourism setting.

Furthermore, it was revealed that both sets of communication skills, if improved, might be able to strengthen tourists' self-efficacy amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Here, not only external communication efforts (Shahzalal & Font, 2018) but one's personal communication skills could also affect one's own self-efficacy (Tucker & McCarthy, 2001). Self-efficacy, on the other hand, could help enhance satisfaction with the trip relationships and the perceived symbolic values of the trips. Although the importance of self-efficacy in relation to satisfaction has been verified elsewhere (Sui, Gong & Zhuang, 2021), that of self-efficacy in relation to perceived values (self-efficacy vs. perceived values) seems to differ from the results of prior research (perceived values vs. self-efficacy) (Alam, Mohd, Kamaruddin & Nor, 2015). The difference might originate from the type of values measured. Specifically, while this study focused on the external symbolic values of the trips, previous studies emphasized the internal/personal values of individuals. The externality or internality of the values might affect the direction of the relationship between self-efficacy and perceived values.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study suggest several practical implications for both tourists and trip operators. On the one hand, tourists should consider improving their nonverbal communication skills to enjoy more positive feelings when holidaying. As prior research has suggested (Bishop et al., 2004; Roter, Frankel, Hall & Sluyter, 2006), people with better nonverbal communication skills may be blessed with better observation skills and emotional awareness abilities, and/or a higher level of mindfulness. This trait may help them become happy inwardly. Good nonverbal communication skills can also help tourists find more balanced and healthy relationships with other trip participants, and consequently become more satisfied with such relationships. This particular set of communication skills can further increase and improve tourists' perception of the trips' symbolic values and of their self-efficacy. In addition, tourists may consider controlling their verbal communication engagements because these activities, if they are excessively performed, may decrease their positive feelings, and hence their trip satisfaction.

On the other hand, trip operators can help improve tourists' satisfaction by effectively matching up trip participants, and paying attention to their mutual relationships during the trip (Matteucci, Volić, & Filep, 2019). A careful selection of trip participants may be a good tactic to consider. In addition, tour operators and destination managers must find ways to match the values (symbolism, nostalgia, familiarity, or novelty) that tourists are seeking with the offerings of the destinations. Again, a careful study of the tourists, and probably a value-based tourist segmentation (Mehmetoglu, Hines, Graumann & Greibrokk, 2010), may be another tactic to consider for future use.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study examined the formation of tourists' in-situ satisfaction when they actually are on their trips rather than after they have finished them. It found that the intrapersonal element of "nonverbal communication skills," the interpersonal element of "relationship satisfaction," and the contextual elements of "destination attributes" and "symbolic values" were influencers of these tourists' positive emotions. The situational elements of "COVID-19 self-efficacy" and "COVID-19 fear" did not have significant impacts.

These findings suggest that both trip operators and tourists must participate in the projection and delivery of tourist satisfaction. Trip operators and destination managers, on the one hand, must thoroughly understand the needs and desires of their customers. Tourists, on the other hand, must control their communication skills and behaviours when they are on their trips. Mutual understanding and cooperation will bring happiness for people involved with both taking and arranging for trips.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study, however, could not avoid some limitations. First, the original model did not include all the potential relationships between/among the variables. Fortunately, with the recommendations of the analysis platform, the latent associations were successfully extracted. Second, the context of this study, Vietnam, was safe with regards to COVID-19 at the time of the surveys. As a result, the impacts of the situational elements might be less than they would be under more dire conditions. Third, differences in tourist characteristics, especially the latent ones such as personality, were not taken into account. Consequently, the mechanism of in-situ satisfaction of tourists might not be fully understood. Fourth, the opinions were contributed by young tourists. These of the adult ones were not taken into account either.

Considering these limitations, future research may want to retest the theoretical model of this study, including the additional relationships, in other settings. In addition, a more diverse sample of tourists could be surveyed. Other tourists' characteristics could also be examined to see exactly how these may affect the formation of trip satisfaction of each type of tourist. Findings from these attempts will help better manage tourists' trip satisfaction, on the one hand, and further enrich the literature on in-situ trip satisfaction, on the other.

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