

Enhancing Knowledge and Photography Experience for Tourists in Ho Chi Minh City through Edu-tourism Model

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Abstract

As a dynamic tourist environment, Ho Chi Minh City continually introduces various new tourism business models to meet the needs of different customer segments. Edu-tourism has emerged in the world and Vietnam, however, the majority of educational content selected in Vietnam still relates to history and culture, lacking diverse and appealing models for tourists. To overcome this limitation and provide an attractive and practical edu-tourism product, this study has developed a photography tourism model for a group of tourists who enjoy learning how to use vintage cameras and film cameras while visiting destinations. This integrates learning about the beauty of Vietnamese landscapes and creativity in their photography works. A qualitative approach through in-depth interviews (n=15), combined with participant observation employed in this study. The research team also approached 11 travel organizations conducting photography tourism activities in Ho Chi Minh City for tourists. The data collection was processed and managed by using N-Vivo software. The results show that photography tourism program was comprised of three main elements: tourism, photography knowledge and skills, and cultural experience. This combination creates a unique and memorable experience for tourists. The study also contributes to affirming the interdisciplinary nature of tourism phenomena and the diversity of tourism products to enhance the quality of edu-tourism in Vietnam.

Keywords: Educational tourism, photography tourism, travel experience, tourism in Ho Chi Minh City

1. INTRODUCTION

The travel experience of tourists is a journey away from the daily routines of an individual (Mossberg, 2007). Tourism businesses today are increasingly focusing on providing memorable experiences through their service offerings. Additionally, novelty or unique experiences that satisfy tourists are considered to influence their decision to revisit tourist destinations or purchase other products from the organization that arranged their travel program (Bello & Etzel, 1985; Petrick & Backman, 2002). Therefore, enhancing the tourist experience is crucial for individuals and tourism businesses amidst the current competitive landscape.

Aho (2001) asserts that the tourism experience relates to emotions, learning, execution, and interpretation of the outcomes of these experiences. Educational tourism refers to when an individual or group travels to a destination primarily to engage in learning experiences directly related to that area (Bhuiyana et al., 2010). Similarly, according to Ritchie et al. (2003), educational tourism can be experienced in various ways, whether it be in environments created by humans or in natural environments. Thangthonga and Khuanmuang (2021) argue that learning is the foremost factor in creating a travel experience. The process of learning about a new culture is facilitated by using active learning methods (Canadian Tourism Commission, 2004).

Recently, educational tourism has emerged in Vietnam; however, the current educational tourism products in Vietnam are still lacking in innovative ideas and lack high levels of update. For example, educational tourism in Hue only develops as a version of cultural tourism, guiding groups of tourists to historical and

cultural relics characteristic of Hue such as the Temple of Literature Hue, Van Thanh, Vietnam Buddhist Academy in Hue, Quoc Hoc High School, Hai Ba Trung High School, Hue University, etc. (Tran Huu Tuan et al., 2019). The educational tourism model in Hanoi also suffers from a shortage of creating tourist experiences, still following the conventional short-term tourism programs to learn about the history and culture of the locality.

Photography tourism is one of the new tourism models in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), providing tourists with knowledge and skills in using vintage cameras while also giving them the opportunity to explore destinations and understand the history, culture, and local community. Film cameras in this tourism program are not just tools but also rare experiences; in the development of modern technology, people often use smartphones and digital cameras to take photos and videos on their trips. Using film cameras brings a sense of excitement with each click because flawed photos cannot be deleted and the number of films is limited, making participants more cautious with each shot. Consequently, tourists will have a deeper understanding of the value of each photo created. Moreover, holding a film camera gives tourists the feeling of turning back time, reliving moments of the past. In response to the saturation of educational tourism content, the photography tourism model was born. Instead of tourists only stopping at the level of observation when participating in tourism programs, with this new model, tourists can interact with the scenery, using technical means, specifically film cameras and vintage cameras.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 General Information about Edu-tourism

When conducted a survey on Scopus data with the keyword "Edu-tourism" on March 17, 2024, resulting in 50 articles with statistical figures as follows:

Number of articles per year:

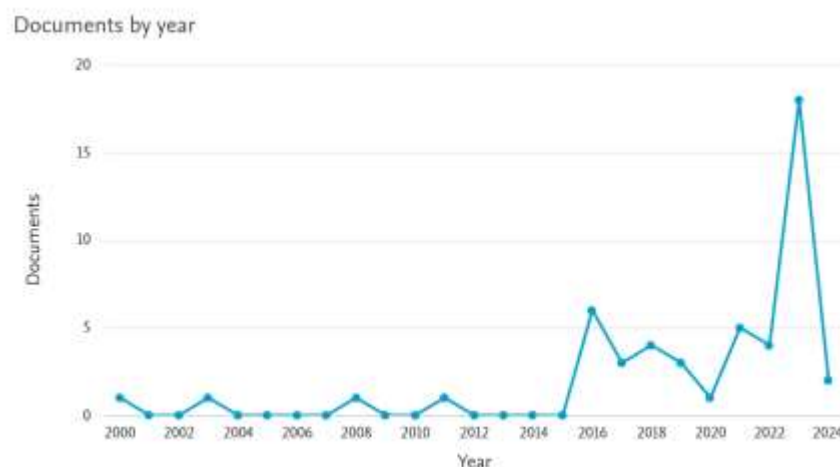


Figure 1. Number of articles related to edu-tourism in Scopus database counted per year

Articles about educational tourism began to appear in the early years of the 21st century but were not abundant. The number of published research studies increased from 2014 to 2024.

- *Number of articles by country:*

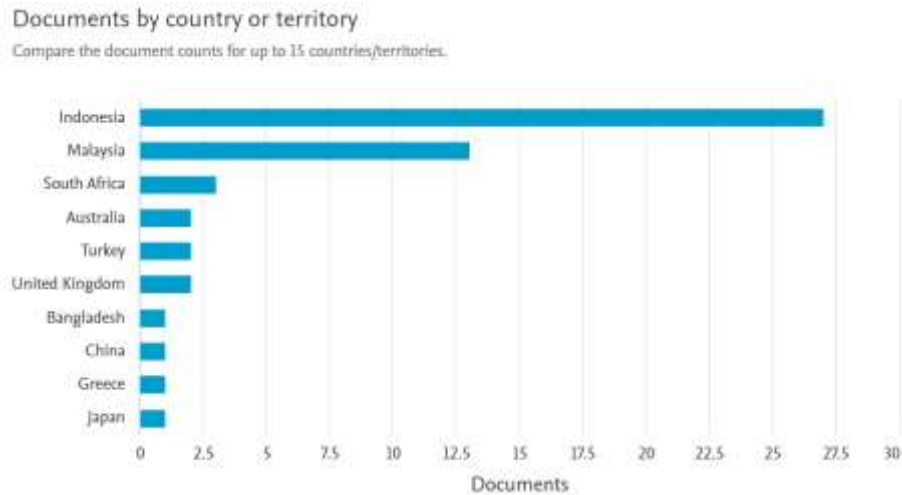


Figure 2. Number of articles related to edu-tourism in Scopus database counted by country.

Surprisingly, the number of research articles on educational tourism appearing in the Southeast Asian region is highest in Indonesia and Malaysia (27, 13 articles); South Africa, Australia, and Turkey are also countries with a high number of articles.

- *Articles classified by research field:*

Documents by subject area

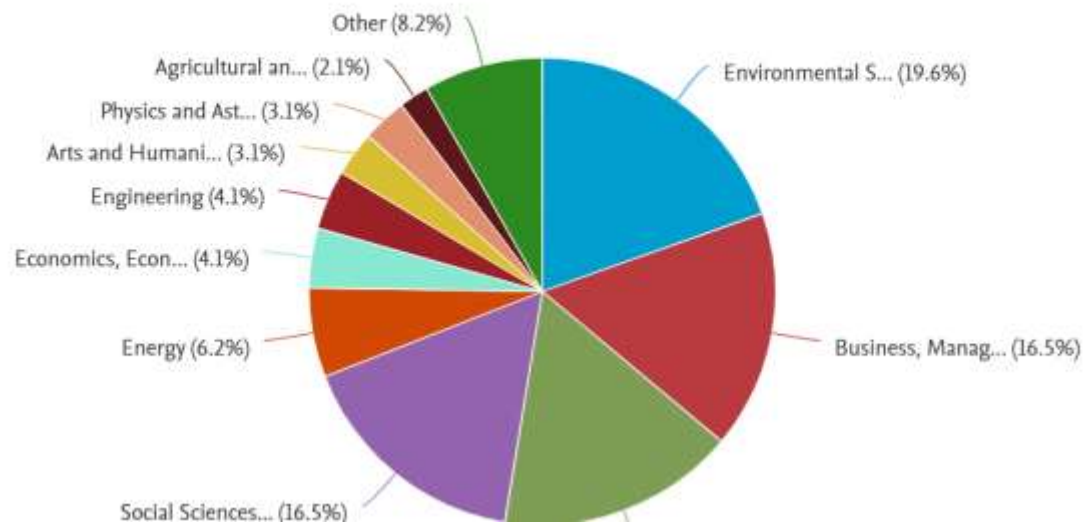


Figure 3. Number of articles related to edu-tourism in Scopus database counted by subject area.

2.2 Educational Tourism (combining travel and learning)

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2019) defines educational tourism as products and services related to academic research, skill-enhancing holidays, study trips, sports training, vocational development courses, language courses, etc. Educational tourism is recognized not only to enrich tourists' knowledge but also to enhance tourism products for the local tourism industry (Wang & Li, 2008). The desire for tourism

linked with experiencing and learning about cultural and indigenous community elements is not new. However, in the form of photography educational tourism, this need is often associated with urban tourism spaces. Specifically, urban architectural features, landscapes, influenced by various factors, most notably urbanization. The need for educational tourism is evident in tourists experiencing and visiting architectural and cultural sites associated with the city's urbanization process. This includes understanding history, educating consciousness in preserving cultural sites affected by urbanization's negative impacts. The value of educational tourism is also demonstrated in tourists interacting with the community, with local residents sharing stories about history, local lifestyle items, and silent figures of the region they live in.

2.3 Photography Tourism

Tourism and photography have been intertwined since photography was introduced worldwide in 1839 for commercial purposes (Garlick, 2002; Lo et al., 2011). The use of cameras for photography activities has become an integral part of daily life (Garlick, 2002; Lo et al., 2011; Picard & Robinson, 2016; Suharyanto et al., 2020). Gogoi (2014) emphasizes two important, indispensable characteristics of photography tourism: "the purpose behind visiting a location" and "the uniqueness of the subjects being photographed." The subjects that tourists want to capture must have unique features regarding landscapes, animals, people and culture, or local customs and attire at tourist destinations. This stimulates the desire for exploration, and tourists want to capture these moments. He Yi and Yu Le (2009) argue that photography tourism is a unique tourism product or a special tourism product, with distinctive characteristics compared to other types of tourism. Firstly, it has high engagement and is consistent with the tourism industry's development trend. Each tourist taking photos can experience the joy of choosing locations, angles, adjusting equipment, and taking photos during their trip. Through the lens, they can observe social changes and experience folk customs. Secondly, professionalism is evident. Tourists need to have a certain level of knowledge about photography to fully experience photography tourism. Only when relevant management departments and staff have knowledge of photography can photography tourism be developed scientifically. Thirdly, comprehensiveness is outstanding. Photography tourism can easily combine with patriotism education, tourism profession teaching, and other tourism methods. Additionally, photography tourism features off-peak seasons, high safety, low cost, and supportive scientific investigations. However, introducing and organizing educational tourism products still pose challenges for the tourism industry due to its interdisciplinary nature. Herwina, Rosnan, Nuraisyah, Chua, Abdullah (2018) argue that a major challenge for organizing Educational Experience Tourism is the lack of strong collaboration from universities to provide scientific and quality programs and guidance teams. The low level of university cooperation weakens educational tourism product initiatives.

2.4 Significance and Implications of Photography Tourism

Ana (2016) suggests that tourism and photography are closely related, as during a vacation, everyone wants to capture the best photos in new places they visit. Tourism companies or scenic spot managers can also leverage feedback from tourists' photos of destinations. Therefore, equipping tourists with photography knowledge and skills during their travels will bring interesting experiences, helping tourists eagerly learn and accumulate knowledge and experience and immediately use it to take photos at destinations to improve their techniques and produce quality photos, as well as evaluate satisfaction, impressions, and perceptions of the destination. Additionally, in the process of teaching photography, issues about destinations can be developed, which is valuable for improving the destination's image. Cynthia (2014) emphasizes that photography should be considered a core subject in training tourism students. Project-based teaching is the best way for students to take beautiful photos in evaluation and exploration during tourism. This will help tourism students have

The popularity of photography also influences tourism marketing activities, especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when tourism companies like the Photographic Travel Association (PTA) transitioned from using photo-based images to mixed media, including drawings and graphic design (Herwina, 2014). Furthermore, photography plays a unique role in tourism, as it is used to capture experiences and attractions that tourists visit, thereby linking with exploration and becoming tourists themselves (Brian & Garrod, 2009).

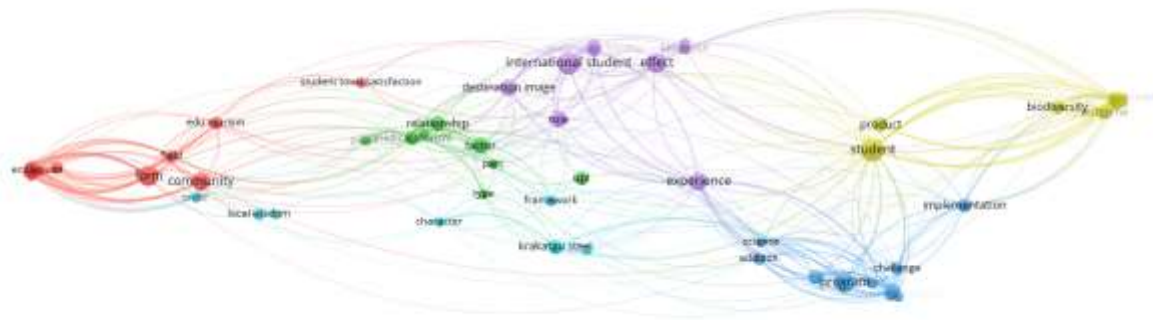


Figure 5. Bibliometric analysis by abstracts and keywords related to edu-tourism on WOS database.

From the data above, it is evident that for an educational tourism model to succeed, there needs to be a flexible program combining tourism visits and educational experiences, ensuring both scientific rigor and practicality, while being closely connected and interactive with the natural environment or local community. The educational content and experiences must be carefully selected and designed, streamlined to ensure the implementation of the tourism process and the learning outcomes are closely aligned with the tour objectives and strongly impact visitor satisfaction.

Another point to note is that educational tourism programs are often chosen by international students, so to be attractive and suitable, program content needs to be diverse to cater to participation from various cultural backgrounds, enhancing experiential learning and interaction with the community, contributing to brand elevation and local values. The choice of destinations for educational tourism is often rural areas or iconic tourist destinations closely linked to the educational content of the program.

Additionally, the program needs to pay attention to tourists' behaviors towards the ecological environment, natural resources, conservation of cultural heritage, and local values to contribute to brand dissemination and promote sustainable development of destination economies based on the three pillars: Economic - Cultural - Social. The educational tourism model always requires special conditions for learning to take place during the natural tourism process effectively, with the support of a professional team and experts to ensure student satisfaction.

2. METHODOLOGY

To identify the components that make up the experiential combination in the photography educational tourism model, the research team conducted participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

The authors developed a participant observation model by participating in educational tour programs organized by entities offering this type of activity in HCMC.

During this stage, in-depth interviews were conducted to explore information related to motivational factors, tourist needs, profits generated from activities, and future development directions.

Regarding the method of in-depth interviews, the sample size was 15 individuals. This enabled the research to gather important qualitative information, including the experiences, perspectives, and attitudes of participants when engaging in photography educational tourism activities. Additionally, the study recorded the knowledge and interest of inexperienced participants to assess the potential of this form of tourism. The research team sought to diversify the interview subjects, including the following main groups: (1) Direct organizers of photography educational tourism activities (1 person); (2) Collaborating entities, support,

sponsorship for photography educational tourism activities (1 person); (3) Supply chain entities related to photography educational tourism activities (1 person); (4) Tourists who have experienced photography educational tourism activities (5 people); (5) Tourists who have not experienced photography educational tourism activities (4 people); (6) Experts with expertise in the tourism field in general and niche tourism markets in particular (3 people).

3.2. Photography Tour Organizers in HCMC

The research team has studied and approached 10 organizations that organize programs combining travel and photography. Most of these are founded by foreigners who have previously implemented such programs in several countries around the world and are currently choosing Vietnam as a potential destination to develop this model (see Table 1)

Table 1: Some organizations currently organizing photography tour models in HCMC

Stt	Organizers	Nationality	Customer market	Destinations
1	Saigon's Photography Walking Tour	Vietnamese	Foreign tourists, few Vietnamese, mostly aged 20 - 50	HCM City (1 & 5 District)
2	Anh T. (Saigon Film Photowalk)	Người Việt Nam	Vietnamese tourists (mostly young people aged 18 - 30), foreign tourists visiting Vietnam	Quận 1, Quận 5, Quận 8, Quận Bình Thạnh Districts: 1, 5, 8, Bình Thạnh
3	Anh Kha	Người Việt Nam	Mostly young to middle-aged foreign tourists	District 1
4	An Bui Photography	Người Việt Nam	Foreign tourists, mostly photographers	Long trips in Ho Chi Minh City and other provinces/cities
5	Vietnaminfocus (Giang Phạm)	Người Việt Nam	Journalistic photographers, documentary filmmakers, and street photographers	
6	Vietnam Photo Adventures	Foreigner	Tourists aged 14 - 84, mostly aged 30 - 50, mainly foreign tourists or overseas Vietnamese	HCM City (District 1, 3, 5); Mekong Delta, Northern of Vietnam
7	Saigon Photography Tours	Foreigner	Only foreign tourists aged 18 - 60	HCM City (District 5, 1)
8	Voyage	Foreigner		HCM City
9	Vietnaminfocus (Paul Green)	Foreigner	Photographers, documentary film producers	District 8
10	Viatnaminfocus (William Hamilton)	Foreigner	Photographers	HCM City, Hà Nội

Source: Author's team

4. RESULTS

4.1 Building "Learning Content and Experiences from Photography Tourism"

In addition to the photography learning component, this study also shows that it is a unique factor contributing significantly to creating distinctive experiences in tourism activities. The photography learning activities during the trip were analyzed based on two main aspects: learning about photography equipment and techniques, and understanding the characteristics of the locality.

4.1.1 Learning about Photography Equipment

In photography tourism activities, film cameras are preferred over digital cameras. According to explanations from the organizing units, there are three main reasons for choosing film cameras. Firstly, it stems from the individual capabilities and experiences of the personnel. Secondly, it meets the current trend of "going back" to film photos among the target customer base. Thirdly, it offers different experiences to users. Additionally, film cameras have become scarce due to inflation in film prices and somewhat outdated usage methods.

Film cameras are evaluated to be simple to use; however, even for those familiar with digital or film cameras, different models require different operations. Therefore, in photography tourism activities using film cameras, the organizers conduct detailed instruction sessions on camera usage before each trip. This activity generates excitement for tourists, especially for first-time participants. It is also one of the decisive factors for the quality of the trip and receives positive feedback from participants.

Film cameras are not just tools; they provide a unique experience in the context of digital technology advancement. With their rudimentary construction, film cameras limit the number of shots and do not allow users to immediately review captured images but require complex processing steps afterward. This partly brings about a unique experience and encourages tourists to pay more attention to each photo they decide to take.

Overall, the organizing units provide tourists with knowledge about film cameras in the following areas: i) the history and development process of cameras, ii) the structure and functions of camera components, iii) camera usage methods and procedures. (See Table 2).

Table 2: Summary table of information on photography equipment provided to tourists

Content Category	Details	Delivery Time	Advantages	Disadvantages
History of Cameras	+ History of camera invention, film cameras, and some notable camera brands. + Production time, development history, and unique features of film cameras provided to tourists. + Pros/cons of the camera model provided to tourists compared to other models. + General information and distinguishing features of the film rolls provided to tourists.	Before the trip	Provides tourists with new information, helping them understand the basics of cameras.	Information is relatively vague, source reliability not guaranteed. Content is not very engaging and doesn't leave a profound impression on tourists.
Structure and Functionality of the Camera	+ Structure of the parts on the camera provided to tourists. + Functions of each part on the camera provided to tourists. + Parts on camera provided to tourists. + Coordination of adjusting these	Before and during the trip	Tourists become familiar with the structure of the parts, serving the	Without proper coordination with the provision of technical knowledge, this content may feel empty.

	parts to capture images according to the user's desire.		usage effectively.	process	Some camera models are complex, and tourists may misinterpret the process of disassembly/assembly, affecting image quality after processing.
				Tourists observe the organizer's direct execution	
Method and Procedure of Using the Camera	+ Procedure for loading film into the camera. + Rules for adjusting and coordinating the use of camera parts. + Procedure for removing and preserving the film roll after shooting.	Before, during, and after the trip	and practice immediately afterward. Creates interest and individual experience.		Some camera models are complex, and tourists may misinterpret the process of disassembly/assembly, affecting image quality after processing.

(Source: Author's team)

4.2. Learning about Photography Techniques

In addition to equipment such as cameras and film rolls, photography techniques are also provided to tourists at a foundational level by the organizing unit. Photography techniques serve as supplementary content, ensuring that tourists can capture images that meet their desires while satisfying certain agreed-upon rules among camera users.

Regarding techniques, tourists are generally introduced to and equipped with knowledge about several parameters in photography, composition and subjects in photography, and color in photography. (See Table 3).

Table 3: Summary table of information on photography techniques provided to tourists

Content Category	Details	Delivery Time	Advantages	Disadvantages
Some Parameters in Photography	+ Shutter speed. + Aperture in photography. + ISO sensitivity. + Theory of light metering and white balance.	Before the trip	Tourists are provided with information from experienced photographers, especially film photographers. This content can be important reference information, shaping the photography style of tourists.	Overall, this information is mostly conveyed with the subjective opinions of the organizing unit. Additionally, technicalities are sufficient conditions, not necessary conditions in photography, so they are fundamentally unimportant.
Structure and Function of Parts on the Camera	+ Focus mode. + Focus method. + Theory of photography composition. + Theory of main and secondary subjects in photography.	During the trip		

Content Category	Details	Delivery Time	Advantages	Disadvantages
Color in Photography	+ Real color and color on film. + Theory of color coordination in photography.	During and after the trip		

(Source: Author's team)

4.3. Knowledge and Experiences Shared by Participants

In addition, during the trip, participants are supported and provided with knowledge from the organizers on effective photography techniques and methods. This knowledge includes: how to use the camera, technical specifications, basic photography techniques, creative photography techniques, outdoor photography techniques, and knowledge about photography locations (beautiful photography spots, things to note when taking photos at those locations, etc.). Sharing this knowledge helps participants enhance their photography skills, enabling them to capture more beautiful and impressive photos. This activity helps participants develop skills and gain interesting and beneficial photography experiences.

"During the tour, when I started using film cameras, we would have a session to take photos. How to use the camera and operate it properly, as well as how to take photos by yourself, would be explained during that session. Also, after taking photos, we would have workshops to practice developing film. I get to know the outcome of my photos, and I think I will also gain some basic knowledge about film cameras." (PVS on March 15, 2023).

It can be seen that in photography tourism activities, the unique point that makes a difference for the trip is that tourists are provided with basic knowledge about equipment and techniques in photography. This knowledge is approached from an introductory perspective, aiming to enhance the experience during the trip, harmoniously combining the elements of tourism and photography. After each trip, tourists are also guided and directly involved in film development activities, combined with other related activities organized by the organizing unit.

"I think people will find it interesting (referring to film development activity), and also because of the nature of film cameras, not all cameras are the same, mostly each brand has its own type. At that time, most tourists might feel a bit confused, but the most important thing, the most emotional thing, will be the excitement, because you don't know if the photos will turn out after you take them." (PVS on April 10, 2023)

4.4. Learning about the Locality

Additionally, tourists will be provided with knowledge on various topics about the local culture, life, customs, history, geography, etc. They also experience interactive activities with the local residents to enhance the attractiveness of the trip and gain more knowledge about the locals' way of life. This activity generates interest for tourists, especially for those visiting the locality for the first time. This is also one of the factors determining the quality of the trip and receives positive feedback from participants through the following interview contents:

"...I feel that Saigon has places that people don't know much about or have been forgotten. When everything is modern, I feel like something classical is missing in that modernity. It's quite interesting and attractive to me. Like taking film photos, then developing the film and holding it in my hand, I preserve many memories of that day..." (PVS on March 15, 2023)

"I am interested in architectural structures because I quite like architecture. I have researched, but I haven't, it's like it won't, specifically by going there, being guided by a tour guide about that place. It will make me remember it more deeply than researching online, which is easy to forget." (PVS on March 23, 2023).

"I study marketing, and I'm only interested in this type of tourism, so I participate, and I also want to learn more about the rich history, geography of our country, as well as ancient architectural works through the destinations that the tour will visit, landmarks as well as locations in Saigon." (PVS on March 15, 2023).

Photography tourism also creates opportunities for tourists to exchange and share their photography products. This value enhances the confidence and passion for photography of the participants, making them feel proud of their abilities and continue to develop their photography passion. In addition, through the trip, tourists also get acquainted with new friends who share the same passion for film photography or local people, building communities on social media platforms to maintain and develop relationships beyond the scope of tourism activities.

5. Discussion

It can be observed that photography education activities in the educational tourism model in Ho Chi Minh City are in a phase of increasing connection and development into complete tourism products. The goal of this research is to identify the current situation, potential, and challenges in exploiting photography in the context of diversifying educational tourism products in the niche market in Ho Chi Minh City.

Research topics on photography activities when traveling in Vietnam are still limited, and this study contributes to improving the theoretical foundation for educational tourism. In addition, delving into the photography tourism business activities of some units in Ho Chi Minh City at present provides many insights for future studies, especially in exploring the limited factors, which are significant obstacles to the process of improving and enhancing the quality of tourism services, providing complete legal tourism products.

Photography tourism is evidence of the assertion that tourism is a multi-sector phenomenon because it intertwines many values of tourism, education, and photography. This combination of experiences helps increase tourists' positive perceptions of tourism service products. The model allows tourists to be co-creators during the program because they can create photography products, thus the value of perception generated can improve the quality of tourism experiences, thereby contributing to the comfort of tourists.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

In summary, the values of tourism, photography, and education complement each other, synergizing to create a unique experience combination not found in other forms of tourism due to the specialized nature related to photography education. However, in practice, not all organizing units focus on the educational aspect, mostly they use film cameras as a tool to attract tourists' curiosity, so pre- and post-tour training activities are not emphasized. Therefore, these tourism programs can only be called photography tourism instead of educational photography tourism.

Thus, it can be seen that in tourism business, units need to flexibly provide combined experiences instead of focusing on a specific product or service. However, the integration of experiential values needs to be carefully designed to support each other, avoiding forced combinations that make tourists uncomfortable. This study only stops at recognizing the experiential values of educational photography tourism, thereby showing the potential of this model. In the future, there needs to be more comprehensive research on related parties in educational photography tourism to develop appropriate development plans.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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