

# The impact of commercialization on tourists' satisfaction at the Huong pagoda festival

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**ABSTRACT:** *The commercialization of traditional festivals is an inevitable consequence of tourism development, providing economic benefits while also raising concerns about its impact on visitor satisfaction. This study examines the influence of commercialization on tourist satisfaction at the Huong Pagoda Festival, one of Vietnam's most significant spiritual and cultural events. A conceptual framework was developed based on the theory of tourist experience and prior research on festival commercialization. The study employs a quantitative research approach, with data collected from 125 visitors using a structured questionnaire. The research model explores the relationships between commercialization, festival space perception, service price appropriateness, spiritual experience, vendor interactions, and overall tourist satisfaction. The findings indicate that commercialization affects tourist satisfaction both directly and indirectly through mediating variables. While commercialization provides convenience and accessibility, excessive commercial activities can reduce the spiritual and cultural authenticity of the festival, leading to lower satisfaction levels. The study highlights the need for balanced commercialization strategies that optimize economic benefits while preserving the cultural and spiritual essence of festivals. The results contribute to the literature on festival tourism and provide practical insights for policymakers and festival organizers seeking to enhance visitor experience and ensure sustainable festival tourism development.*

**Key word:** *Festival commercialization, tourist satisfaction, Huong Pagoda Festival, visitor experience, cultural tourism, sustainable tourism.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Huong pagoda festival is one of the largest and most influential spiritual-cultural festivals in Vietnam, held annually at the Huong Son scenic complex in My Duc district, Hanoi. With a long historical tradition, the festival not only carries profound religious significance but also serves as a crucial destination on Vietnam's pilgrimage tourism map, attracting millions of visitors each year. Spanning from the first to the third lunar month, the festival comprises various religious rituals and traditional cultural activities, combined with eco-tourism and local heritage experiences. However, alongside the rapid development of tourism, commercialization has increasingly penetrated the festival space, with the proliferation of business activities, goods trading, and tourism services catering to visitors' demands.

Commercialization in festival tourism is an inevitable trend in the context of market-driven economic growth and the expansion of the tourism industry. From an economic perspective, commercialization plays a vital role in driving tourism revenue, creating employment opportunities for local communities, and improving infrastructure to better serve visitors [1], [2]. However, if not managed appropriately, commercialization may lead to adverse consequences, affecting the spiritual space, diminishing the cultural value of the festival, and negatively impacting the visitor experience [3], [4]. Common issues include aggressive solicitation, inflated service prices, widespread street vending, and the encroachment of commercial activities into sacred spaces.

Tourist satisfaction is a critical indicator for evaluating the success of a tourism destination. Previous research suggests that satisfaction is not solely determined by service quality but also by intangible factors such as cultural authenticity, spatial management, and traditional preservation [5]. In the context of festival tourism, commercialization can affect tourist satisfaction in multiple ways. On the one hand, a diverse range of services, including accommodation, dining, transportation, and shopping, can enhance the overall visitor experience [6]. On the other hand, excessive commercialization can lead to overcrowding, inflated prices, diminished sacredness, and a decline in cultural authenticity, negatively affecting tourist satisfaction.

While existing studies have examined commercialization in festival tourism, most have focused on economic benefits [7], cultural preservation [1] or service quality satisfaction [8]. However, there is limited research on the direct relationship between commercialization and overall tourist satisfaction at the Huong Pagoda Festival - a unique event that integrates spiritual traditions with commercial services. Understanding the impact of commercialization on visitor satisfaction is crucial for identifying management challenges and developing sustainable strategies for festival tourism in Vietnam.

Therefore, this study aims to assess the impact of commercialization on tourist satisfaction at the Huong Pagoda Festival. Specifically, it investigates the degree of commercialization and its influence on various dimensions of visitor experience, including overall satisfaction, perceptions of festival space, pricing fairness, quality of interaction with vendors, and spiritual experience. By employing an empirical research approach with both quantitative and qualitative analysis, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the commercialization-satisfaction relationship.

The findings of this study contribute to both academic literature and practical applications. Theoretically, it provides empirical evidence on the effects of commercialization on tourist satisfaction in festival tourism, complementing existing research on sustainable tourism development. Practically, the results can inform festival organizers, policymakers, and tourism businesses in developing commercialization strategies that optimize economic benefits while preserving cultural and spiritual values. These insights are essential for enhancing visitor experience and ensuring the long-term sustainability of festival tourism in Vietnam.

## II. DATA AND RESEARCH METHODS

The study was conducted at Huong Pagoda, with primary data collected from December 2023 to April 2024 and secondary data from 2020 to 2024.

This study employs a quantitative research approach to assess the impact of commercialization on tourists' satisfaction at the Huong pagoda festival. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, with observed variables developed based on a synthesis of previous studies and adjusted to fit the research context. The data analysis methods include descriptive statistics, reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and multiple regression analysis to examine the relationships between research variables.

### *Measurement scale and questionnaire development*

This study adopts a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) to measure the variables. The observed variables in the measurement scale are derived from previous studies and adapted to the context of the Huong Pagoda Festival.

The questionnaire consists of three main sections:

- + Demographic information: Gender, age, occupation, and number of festival visits.
- + Assessment of commercialization level: Factors related to business scale, prevalence of goods/services, and the impact of commercial activities on the festival space.
- + Tourists' satisfaction assessment. Observed variables measuring satisfaction: perception of festival space, perceived fairness of service pricing, spiritual experience, and quality of interaction with vendors.

### *Sample size and data collection method*

According to Hair et al. (2010), the minimum sample size required for factor analysis and multiple regression analysis follows the principle of  $n \geq 5 \times k$ , where  $k$  is the number of observed variables. In this study, the questionnaire consists of 25 observed variables, so the minimum required sample size is  $n = 5 \times 25 = 125$ . To enhance reliability and generalizability, a total of 300 samples were collected, ensuring sufficient data for exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and multiple linear regression analysis.

Data were collected through on-site surveys conducted at the Huong pagoda festival during the 2024 festival season. The target respondents were festival attendees, selected using a convenience sampling method, combined with quota sampling to ensure diversity in age, gender, occupation, and number of festival visits.

### *Data analysis method*

The collected data were processed and analyzed using SPSS 23, following these steps:

Descriptive statistics: Analyzing the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Scale reliability testing: Using Cronbach's Alpha to evaluate the reliability of measurement scales.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA): Examining the factor structure of measurement scales and eliminating low-weighted observed variables.

Multiple regression analysis: Testing the relationships among research variables and validating the proposed hypotheses.

### *List of Observed Variables*

**Table 1. Measurement scale of the impact of commercialization on tourist satisfaction**

Level 1 variable	Code	Level 2 variable description
Degree of commercialization (TH)	TH1	Commercial activities are prevalent at the festival.
	TH2	Business and commercial services appear in most areas of the festival.
	TH3	Commercial activities affect the spiritual space of the festival.
	TH4	The increase in commercial activities alters the traditional essence of the festival.
	TH5	Commercialization creates an imbalance between spiritual and commercial spaces.
Perception of festival space (KG)	KG1	The festival space is well-organized and structured.
	KG2	The spiritual space is preserved and not affected by commercialization.
	KG3	The spatial arrangement of the festival provides a comfortable experience for visitors.

	KG4	The density of commercial stalls does not interfere with festival activities.
Service price appropriateness (GC)	GC1	Service prices at the festival are clearly listed.
	GC2	The prices of goods and services at the festival are reasonable.
	GC3	There is no overcharging or aggressive sales tactics.
	GC4	Service prices are commensurate with the quality provided.
Spiritual experience (TL)	TL1	I feel a sense of sacredness when attending the festival.
	TL2	The rituals at the festival are conducted according to tradition.
	TL3	The festival space fosters a deep spiritual connection.
	TL4	Commercialization does not diminish my spiritual experience.
Quality of interaction with vendors (TTB)	TTB1	Vendors are friendly and polite to visitors.
	TTB2	Transactions with vendors are transparent and fair.
	TTB3	There is no coercion or disturbance from vendors.
	TTB4	I feel comfortable shopping and using services at the festival.
Visitor satisfaction (HL)	HL1	I am satisfied with my experience at the Huong Pagoda Festival.
	HL2	I appreciate the organization and management of the festival.
	HL3	I am willing to recommend the Huong Pagoda Festival to others.
	HL4	My overall experience at the Huong Pagoda Festival is positive.

(Source: Compiled by the author)

### III. THEORETICAL BASIS AND RESEARCH MODEL

#### 3.1. Commercialization in festival tourism

##### *The concept of commercialization*

Commercialization is a widely recognized concept in economic, social, and cultural fields, referring to the process of transforming non-economic values into products or services with exchange value in the market [6]. This process occurs when cultural or traditional elements are exploited to generate financial benefits through production, marketing, and distribution in the consumer market. In the tourism industry, commercialization often emerges when cultural elements, heritage, natural landscapes, and experiential activities are converted into marketable tourism products [7].

Commercialization can bring certain benefits by optimizing resources, expanding service scales, and enhancing customer accessibility to products and services. However, the downside of this process lies in the risk of altering the original nature of cultural and social elements, leading to the fading or even complete distortion of traditional practices under economic profit pressure [9]. Therefore, assessing the impacts of commercialization in specific contexts is crucial to ensuring sustainable development.

##### *Commercialization in festival tourism*

Festivals serve as significant cultural expressions, playing a vital role in preserving national identity and connecting communities across generations. In tourism, festivals are regarded as attractive cultural products that draw large numbers of visitors interested in exploring, experiencing, and interacting with traditional values. However, the rapid development of festival tourism has also led to an increase in commercialization activities, which have altered the nature of festivals in various ways [10].

Commercialization in festival tourism manifests in several forms, including:

**Festival market zones:** Large festivals often feature market stalls selling a variety of goods, ranging from souvenirs and spiritual artifacts to specialty foods.

**Transportation and accommodation services:** As visitor numbers increase, demand for transportation (boats, ferries, cable cars) and accommodation also rises, prompting the involvement of private enterprises and government investment in infrastructure.

**Spiritual services:** Some traditional rituals have been commercialized through fee-based practices such as offering ceremonies, fortune telling, and prayers for blessings, generating significant revenue but also raising debates about the authenticity of spiritual practices.

Studies have shown that excessive commercialization can diminish the spiritual and sacred values of festivals, leading visitors to perceive their experiences as being driven more by economic factors than by cultural appreciation [10]. Conversely, a reasonable level of commercialization can help optimize resources, facilitate visitor participation, and contribute to local economic development [11]. Thus, balancing economic growth with cultural preservation in festival tourism remains a key challenge for destination managers.

#### 3.2. Visitor experience in the festival context

##### *The concept of visitor experience*

Visitor experience is a fundamental concept in tourism research, reflecting the interaction between visitors and destinations through sightseeing, engagement, and service consumption [12]. Visitor experience extends beyond information acquisition to encompass emotional, cognitive, and personal value aspects gained throughout the journey. According to Quan & Wang, visitor experience can be classified into two main types [13]:

**Core experience:** Directly related to the main activities of the trip, such as visiting sacred sites, participating in traditional rituals, or venerating religious symbols.

Supporting experience: Indirect elements that play a crucial role in enhancing visitor comfort and satisfaction, such as accommodation services, cuisine, shopping, and interactions with the local community.

In the context of festival commercialization, visitor experience can be affected in multiple ways. If commercial factors become too dominant, core experiences may be overshadowed, causing a disconnection from the original cultural values of the festival. Conversely, well-managed commercialization can create favorable conditions for visitors to access and experience festivals more conveniently [14]:

*Factors influencing visitor experience*

According to studies by Kim et al. and Zeithaml, visitor experience in festivals is influenced by several factors, including [15], [6]:

Festival space and context: The spatial arrangement affects visitor comfort and accessibility to festival activities. Excessive commercialization can lead to overcrowding, diminishing the solemn atmosphere of the festival.

Pricing and service quality: Unreasonable pricing or significant price discrepancies relative to actual value can negatively impact visitor experience.

Attitudes of local vendors and service providers: Negative attitudes or aggressive sales tactics, such as overpricing or persistent solicitation, can leave a poor impression and reduce visitors' likelihood of returning.

By understanding and managing these factors, festival organizers and tourism managers can enhance the overall visitor experience while ensuring the cultural integrity of festivals.

### **3.3. The relationship between commercialization and tourist satisfaction**

*The impact of commercialization on perception of festival space*

Festival space plays a crucial role in shaping tourist experiences. According to Getz, festivals are not merely cultural events but also spaces intertwined with history, beliefs, and community identity [7]. Any changes to these spaces can directly influence visitors' perceptions of the event.

Commercialization can alter festival space in various ways. One common negative impact is the encroachment of commercial stalls into ceremonial areas, making spiritual spaces crowded and less solemn [16]. Moreover, the expansion of temporary markets, parking lots, or tourism services can lead to disorder and lack of planning, making visitors feel uncomfortable [9].

Conversely, some studies suggest that commercialization can enhance festival space if properly managed. For example, establishing designated commercial zones can prevent the encroachment of sacred spaces, creating a clear separation between spiritual and service areas. Additionally, revenue from commercial activities can be reinvested in infrastructure improvements, enhancing the festival environment and providing a better experience for tourists [8].

*The impact of commercialization on service pricing*

Service pricing is a crucial factor in tourists' perceptions of fairness and value at festivals. According to Zeithaml tourists tend to compare the value received with the amount spent, and if they perceive overpricing or unfair pricing, their satisfaction significantly decreases [15].

In the festival context, commercialization can lead to inflated service prices. This may result from increased demand during the festival period or service providers taking advantage of the opportunity to maximize profits. Research by Nguyen & Tran highlights that at many traditional festivals in Vietnam, prices for food, souvenirs, parking, and cable car services often rise by 2-3 times compared to regular days [1].

However, if pricing is controlled and maintained at reasonable levels, commercialization can contribute positively to the visitor experience. Premium services such as guided tours, comfortable accommodations, and exclusive experiences can provide added value, enriching the tourist experience [9]. Therefore, establishing transparent and fair pricing mechanisms is essential to maintaining tourist satisfaction in a commercialized environment.

*The impact of commercialization on spiritual experience*

Spiritual experience is a crucial element in festival tourism, particularly for visitors seeking cultural connection and religious fulfillment. According to Getz, festivals are not merely entertainment events but also sacred spaces where visitors can engage in rituals, prayers, and unique spiritual experiences [17].

However, commercialization can diminish spiritual experience if commercial activities dominate sacred spaces. One common negative impact is the excessive presence of commercial stalls in worship areas, reducing the solemnity and tranquility necessary for religious practices [1]. Noise from sales activities, advertisements, and tourist services may distract visitors and create an atmosphere inconsistent with spiritual reflection.

Additionally, commercialization can lead to overcrowding, as increased visitor numbers without proper management may result in congestion at religious sites. Research by Park et al. indicates that many tourists feel disconnected from their spiritual experience when traditional festivals become overly commercialized, prioritizing business opportunities over cultural and religious significance [10].

On the other hand, if well-managed, commercialization can support spiritual experiences by providing useful services such as spiritual tour guides, appropriate rest areas, and religious souvenirs. Some festivals have

successfully balanced commercialization and sacredness by clearly separating ritual areas from commercial zones, ensuring respect for cultural and spiritual spaces [17].

In summary, the impact of commercialization on spiritual experience largely depends on festival management and spatial planning. Without proper control, commercialization can erode the sacred nature of festivals. Conversely, if regulated effectively, it can enhance the overall festival experience while preserving its cultural and spiritual essence.

#### *The Impact of experience on revisit intentions*

Revisit intention is a key indicator of a destination's success in attracting and retaining visitors. According to Baker & Crompton, tourists with positive experiences are more likely to return in the future and recommend the destination to others [21].

In the festival context, visitor experiences are shaped by multiple factors, including overall satisfaction, spatial quality, service pricing, and vendor interactions. If these elements are well-managed, tourists may develop positive impressions and a desire to attend the festival in subsequent years [6].

However, if commercialization leads to negative impacts such as disorderly festival environments, unreasonable pricing, or unmet visitor expectations, tourists may be reluctant to return and might even share negative feedback on online platforms [16].

Balancing commercialization and cultural preservation is crucial to ensuring that tourists not only have a fulfilling experience but also develop a long-term connection with the festival.

#### *The relationship between festival space and tourist satisfaction*

Festival space plays a crucial role in shaping the overall visitor experience. According to Getz, festival space is not merely the location where events take place but also a reflection of the cultural, spiritual, and historical values of the festival [17]. A well-organized space, free from excessive commercialization, enhances the visitor experience by maintaining the sanctity and solemnity of the event.

Research by Wang et al. indicates that a well-structured spatial layout, ensuring a balanced distribution between commercial zones and sacred areas, positively impacts tourist satisfaction [18]. Conversely, when festival space is encroached upon by an excessive number of stalls, disorderly commercial activities, or an overwhelming presence of trade overshadowing cultural elements, the visitor experience is negatively affected.

#### *The relationship between service pricing and tourist satisfaction*

Service pricing is a critical factor in shaping tourist perceptions and experiences at festivals. According to Zeithaml's perceived value theory, visitors assess their level of satisfaction based on the balance between the cost they incur and the value they receive [15]. When tourists perceive service pricing as reasonable relative to quality, they tend to express higher satisfaction.

However, within the festival context, commercialization often leads to increased prices for services such as food, accommodation, transportation, and souvenirs. A study by Nguyen & Tran on traditional festivals in Vietnam revealed that sharp price hikes, particularly in cases where price transparency is lacking, are a major cause of visitor dissatisfaction [1].

On the other hand, when service pricing is fair and accompanied by high-quality offerings, tourists are more willing to pay and report greater satisfaction with their experience. Therefore, regulating and ensuring fair pricing is essential to maintaining a positive visitor experience at festivals.

#### *The relationship between spiritual experience and tourist satisfaction*

Festivals are not only cultural events but also hold profound spiritual significance for many visitors. According to Cohen, spiritual tourism experiences can lead to higher levels of satisfaction compared to other forms of tourism, as they are closely linked to emotions, beliefs, and personal spiritual values [19].

Spiritual experiences at festivals are influenced by several factors, including the sacred atmosphere, the solemnity of rituals, and the extent to which traditional values are preserved. Research by Sharpley & Sundaram suggests that when tourists feel a deep spiritual connection during a festival, they are more likely to rate their overall experience positively and report higher levels of satisfaction [20].

Conversely, when spiritual elements are overshadowed by commercialization - such as the presence of street vendors, excessive noise from trading activities, or a lack of reverence in festival spaces - tourists may feel disconnected from the sacred aspects of the festival, leading to lower satisfaction levels.

#### *The relationship between quality of interaction with vendors and tourist satisfaction*

The quality of interaction between visitors and vendors plays a crucial role in shaping the overall festival experience. In festival tourism, vendor interactions encompass various aspects, including communication clarity, service attitude, fairness in pricing, and responsiveness to visitor needs. Positive interactions contribute to a sense of hospitality and authenticity, which are key factors influencing visitor satisfaction [22].

According to Pine and Gilmore's experience economy theory, customer experience is shaped not only by the physical attributes of a destination but also by the emotional and social connections established through service encounters [23]. Vendors act as service facilitators, and their ability to engage visitors in meaningful and

pleasant interactions enhances the perceived value of the festival experience [24]. Conversely, negative interactions, such as aggressive selling tactics, overpricing, or lack of responsiveness, may lead to visitor dissatisfaction and negatively impact the festival's reputation [25]

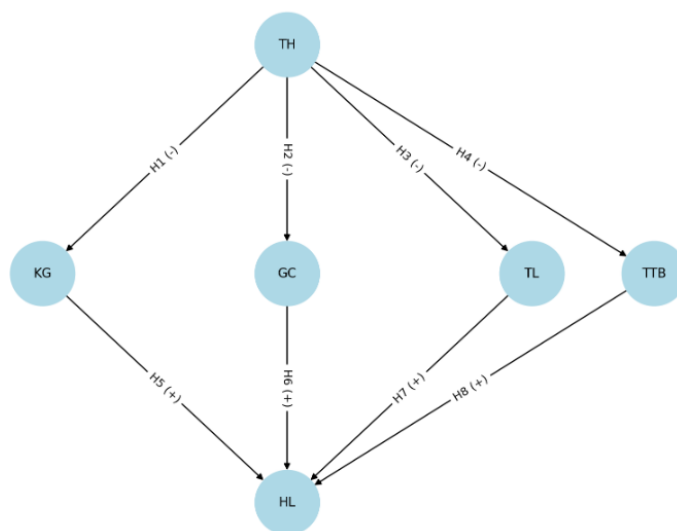
Empirical research on festival tourism suggests that high-quality interactions with vendors contribute to visitor trust, perceived fairness, and overall enjoyment of the festival environment [26]. Visitors who experience warm and transparent interactions are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the festival, leading to higher satisfaction and revisit intentions. Therefore, improving vendor training programs, ensuring ethical sales practices, and fostering a customer-centric approach are essential strategies for enhancing visitor satisfaction in festival tourism.

### 3.4. Research model and hypotheses

The proposed research model is based on the theory of tourist experience [12] and studies on the impact of commercialization in festival tourism [1], [2]. The research model consists of the independent variable: Degree of Commercialization (TH); the mediating variables: Perception of Festival Space (KG), Service Price Appropriateness (GC), and spiritual experience (TL), affects the quality of interaction with vendors (TTB); and the dependent variable: Visitor Satisfaction (HL).

The key research hypotheses are as follows:

- H1: The degree of commercialization (TH) negatively affects the perception of festival space (KG).
- H2: The degree of commercialization (TH) negatively affects the appropriateness of service pricing (GC).
- H3: The degree of commercialization (TH) negatively affects the spiritual experience (TL).
- H4: The degree of commercialization (TH) negatively affects the quality of interaction with vendors (TTB).
- H5: The perception of festival space (KG) has a positive impact on visitor satisfaction (HL).
- H6: The appropriateness of service pricing (GC) has a positive impact on visitor satisfaction (HL).
- H7: The spiritual experience (TL) has a positive impact on visitor satisfaction (HL).
- H8: The quality of interaction with vendors (TTB) has a positive impact on visitor satisfaction (HL)



**Figure 1. Proposed research model**  
(Source: Proposed by the author)

## IV. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Survey sample description

The research sample for this study comprises 125 visitors to the Huong Pagoda Festival, representing a diverse range of demographic characteristics, including gender, age, educational background, income, and travel purpose. This dataset provides a comprehensive overview of the visitor profile, allowing for an in-depth analysis of how commercialization influences their satisfaction.

Regarding gender, the survey results indicate that 67 respondents were male, accounting for 53.6% of the total sample, while 58 respondents were female, representing 46.4%. Although the proportion of male visitors is slightly higher, the difference is not significant, suggesting a relatively balanced interest in the festival between genders. The analysis of gender differences allows for an exploration of whether males and females perceive commercialization and satisfaction levels differently.

Regarding age, the survey reveals a broad distribution across various age groups, reflecting the diverse visitor demographics of the festival. The youngest group, under 18 years old, had the lowest representation, with only two respondents (1.6%), indicating that the festival is not particularly popular among minors, possibly due

to its spiritual and cultural nature. The 18–25 age group comprised 15 respondents (12%), suggesting a relatively low level of interest among young adults. The largest proportion of visitors belonged to the 25–45 age group, with 46 respondents (36.8%), highlighting the engagement of individuals in their prime working years who are interested in cultural and religious tourism. The 45–60 age group accounted for 23 respondents (18.4%), demonstrating a continued interest among middle-aged individuals. Notably, the group aged over 60 constituted 39 respondents (31.2%), indicating that the festival attracts a substantial number of elderly visitors who may be particularly drawn to its spiritual and traditional aspects. Understanding visitor age distribution is crucial in assessing different expectations and satisfaction levels across age groups, as commercialization may affect each demographic differently.

Regarding educational background, visitors with an education level below university comprised the majority, with 76 respondents (60.8%). This reflects the festival's broad appeal, attracting visitors from various educational backgrounds, particularly those with moderate levels of formal education. University graduates accounted for 46 respondents (36.8%), representing a significant proportion of attendees with higher education. Meanwhile, only three respondents (2.4%) held postgraduate degrees, indicating limited participation from highly educated individuals. Educational background can play a role in shaping perceptions of commercialization, particularly concerning service pricing and the overall festival experience.

Regarding income levels, the survey categorizes respondents into three income groups based on their average monthly earnings. The largest proportion of respondents, 65 individuals (52%), reported earning between 5–10 million VND per month, indicating that a majority of visitors belong to the middle-income segment. The second-largest group, consisting of 38 respondents (30.4%), had a monthly income exceeding 10 million VND, representing individuals with greater financial flexibility who may have different expectations regarding service quality and pricing. Meanwhile, 22 respondents (17.6%) reported earning less than 5 million VND per month, suggesting that a notable segment of visitors is more price-sensitive and may be more affected by commercialization-driven cost increases. The analysis of income levels provides insights into how different financial groups perceive the commercialization of festival services and whether pricing policies align with visitor expectations.

Regarding travel purpose, the majority of respondents, 89 individuals (71.2%), visited the Huong Pagoda Festival primarily for sightseeing. This finding underscores the festival's appeal beyond religious activities, as many visitors seek to experience the cultural and natural attractions. Pilgrimage was the second most common reason for attendance, with 21 respondents (16.8%), emphasizing the festival's spiritual significance. A smaller segment, comprising seven respondents (5.6%), attended for cultural research purposes, suggesting scholarly interest in the festival's heritage and traditions. Additionally, eight respondents (6.4%) cited other reasons, which may include combined travel purposes or personal motivations. Understanding travel purposes is essential for assessing visitor expectations and how commercialization influences their overall experience.

In summary, this research sample provides essential insights into the demographic characteristics and behavioral patterns of visitors attending the Huong Pagoda Festival. Differences in gender, age, education, income, and travel purpose influence how commercialization is perceived and its subsequent impact on visitor satisfaction. Further analysis of these relationships will help clarify the effects of commercialization on festival experiences, offering valuable recommendations for balancing cultural preservation with the economic benefits of festival tourism development.

#### **4.2. Reliability analysis of measurement scales (Cronbach's Alpha)**

To ensure the reliability of the measurement scales, Cronbach's Alpha analysis was conducted to identify and eliminate low-reliability variables. A measurement scale is considered acceptable if its Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is  $\geq 0.6$ . Any observed variable with a corrected item-total correlation of less than 0.3 was removed to improve scale reliability (Hoang Trong & Chu Nguyen Mong Ngoc, 2008).

In the first round of analysis, two observed variables (TH1 and KG3) had item-total correlations lower than 0.3, indicating weak consistency with their respective constructs. These variables were eliminated, and a second round of Cronbach's Alpha analysis was conducted.

**Table 2. The results of the Cronbach's Alpha reliability test**

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha (first round)	Cronbach's Alpha (second round after item removal)	Number of remaining observed variables
Degree of Commercialization (TH)	0,652	0,765	4
Perception of Festival Space (KG)	0,638	0,786	3
Service Price Appropriateness (GC)	0,740	-	4
Spiritual experience (TL)	0,738	-	4
Affects the quality of interaction with vendors (TTB)	0,762	-	4
Visitor Satisfaction (HL)	0,786	-	4

*(Source: Statistically processed data from survey questionnaires)*

After removing TH1 and KG3, the second-round Cronbach's Alpha analysis demonstrated improved reliability across all scales. All six constructs maintained Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.7, confirming strong internal consistency. Additionally, all retained variables had corrected item-total correlations above 0.3, ensuring their suitability for further statistical analyses.

With five independent and mediating variables and one dependent variable, a total of 23 observed variables were retained for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) in the subsequent step. This ensures a robust and reliable measurement framework for assessing the impact of commercialization on visitor satisfaction at the Huong Pagoda Festival.

#### **4.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)**

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to assess the underlying structure of the measurement scales and validate the factor loadings of observed variables. This technique helps identify the most significant latent constructs while eliminating variables with weak contributions. The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method was applied with Varimax rotation to extract distinct factors. The suitability of the dataset for EFA was confirmed through Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy.

*- EFA for independent and mediating variables*

EFA was performed on 19 observed variables related to the independent variable (Degree of Commercialization - TH) and mediating variables (Perception of Festival Space - KG, Service Price Appropriateness - GC, Spiritual Experience - TL, and Quality of Interaction with Vendors - TTB). The analysis yielded five distinct factors, as indicated in Table 3.

**Table 4. Factor loadings for independent and mediating variables**

Code	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
TH2	0.716				
TH3	0.772				
TH4	0.768				
TH5	0.752				
KG1		0.754			
KG2		0.733			
KG4		0.738			
GC1			0.734		
GC2			0.728		
GC3			0.738		
GC4			0.705		
TL1				0.710	
TL2				0.718	
TL13				0.759	
TL4				0.722	
TTB1					0.768
TTB2					0.752
TTB3					0.714
TTB4					0.737

*(Source: Statistically processed data from survey questionnaires)*

#### **Key Findings:**

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity showed a significance value of  $p < 0.001$ , confirming that the variables were correlated and suitable for factor analysis.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was 0.824, exceeding the threshold of 0.5, indicating that the sample size was adequate for EFA.



The total variance explained by the five extracted factors was 72.450%, which is above the acceptable level of 50%, confirming that the factors account for a substantial portion of the observed variance.

The eigenvalue for all five extracted factors was greater than 1, meeting the required criterion for retention.

All retained variables had factor loadings  $\geq 0.5$ , ensuring that they contributed significantly to their respective constructs.

*- EFA for the dependent variable*

A separate EFA was conducted for the dependent variable (Visitor Satisfaction - HL), which consisted of four observed variables. The results, presented in Table 4, indicate that all items loaded onto a single factor.

**Table 4. Factor loadings for the dependent variable (visitor satisfaction - HL)**

Code	Observed variable	Factor loading
HL1	I am satisfied with my experience at the Huong Pagoda Festival.	0,745
HL2	I appreciate the organization and management of the festival.	0,792
HL3	I am willing to recommend the Huong Pagoda Festival to others.	0,790
HL4	My overall experience at the Huong Pagoda Festival is positive.	0,816
Cronbach's Alpha		0,805
Sig		0,000
KMO		0,695
Eigenvalues		2,063
Variance extracted (%)		64,825

*(Source: Statistically processed data from survey questionnaires)*

*Key Findings:*

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity produced a significant value of  $p < 0.001$ , indicating the suitability of factor analysis.

The KMO measure was 0.695, confirming the adequacy of the sample.

The eigenvalue for the extracted factor was 2.063, exceeding 1, justifying its retention.

The total variance explained was 64.825%, indicating that the factor captured a substantial portion of the variance.

Cronbach's Alpha for Visitor Satisfaction (HL) was 0.805, confirming high internal consistency.

The EFA results confirm that the measurement scales exhibit strong convergent validity and discriminant validity, with all retained variables loading onto their respective constructs. These findings provide a solid foundation for further statistical analysis, including multiple regression analysis, to examine the relationships between commercialization, mediating factors, and visitor satisfaction at the Huong Pagoda Festival.

**4.4. Regression analysis and hypothesis testing**

To examine the relationships between commercialization, mediating factors, and visitor satisfaction at the Huong Pagoda Festival, multiple regression analysis was conducted. This statistical approach assesses the predictive power of independent and mediating variables on the dependent variable while validating the research hypotheses.

*Regression model summary*

The regression model was constructed using Visitor Satisfaction (HL) as the dependent variable and the mediating variables - Perception of Festival Space (KG), Service Price Appropriateness (GC), Spiritual Experience (TL), and Quality of Interaction with Vendors (TTB) - as independent predictors. The model was evaluated based on the R-squared ( $R^2$ ) value, Adjusted  $R^2$ , and ANOVA significance levels (p-value).

The regression model demonstrated an  $R^2$  value of 0.674, indicating that 67.4% of the variance in visitor satisfaction can be explained by the independent variables. The Adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.662 confirms the robustness of the model after accounting for potential overfitting. The ANOVA test yielded a p-value of  $p < 0.001$ , confirming the model's statistical significance.

*Hypothesis testing and regression coefficients*

The standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ -values) and significance levels (p-values) for each predictor variable are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. Regression results for the impact of mediating factors on visitor satisfaction**

Independent variables	Standardized $\beta$	t-value	p-value	Hypothesis support
Perception of festival space (KG)	0.321	5.876	< 0.001	Supported (H5)
Service price appropriateness (GC)	0.274	4.962	< 0.001	Supported (H6)
Spiritual experience (TL)	0.365	6.408	< 0.001	Supported (H7)
Quality of interaction with vendors (TTB)	0.295	5.214	< 0.001	Supported (H8)

(Source: Statistically processed data from survey questionnaires)

All four mediating variables demonstrated significant positive effects on Visitor Satisfaction (HL), with p-values below 0.001, confirming hypotheses H5, H6, H7, and H8. Among them, Spiritual Experience (TL) exhibited the strongest influence ( $\beta = 0.365$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), highlighting the crucial role of religious and cultural elements in shaping visitor satisfaction.

#### *Mediating Effects of KG, GC, TL, and TTB*

To assess whether the mediating variables (KG, GC, TL, TTB) fully or partially mediate the impact of commercialization (TH) on visitor satisfaction (HL), additional regression models were tested. The analysis followed Baron and Kenny's (1986) mediation framework, which evaluates:

- The direct effect of Commercialization (TH) on Visitor Satisfaction (HL)
- The effect of Commercialization (TH) on each mediating variable (KG, GC, TL, TTB)
- The indirect effect of TH on HL through mediators

The results indicate that TH significantly affects all four mediating variables ( $p < 0.001$ ), confirming hypotheses H1, H2, H3, and H4. When the mediators were added to the regression model predicting HL, the direct effect of TH on HL decreased but remained significant, suggesting partial mediation. This implies that while commercialization directly affects visitor satisfaction, its influence is largely channeled through the mediating factors.

#### *Interpretation:*

The findings underscore the complex interplay between commercialization and visitor satisfaction, emphasizing the indirect role of festival space perception, service pricing, spiritual experience, and vendor interactions. The positive effects of KG, GC, TL, and TTB indicate that effective management of commercial activities can mitigate the negative consequences of commercialization, ensuring a balanced and enriching festival experience. These insights align with previous research suggesting that spatial organization (Wang et al., 2019), fair pricing (Zeithaml, 1988), cultural authenticity (Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005), and vendor hospitality (Xu et al., 2017) contribute significantly to overall tourist satisfaction.

The next section will further discuss the practical implications of these findings for festival management, focusing on policy recommendations and strategies to balance commercialization and cultural preservation.

#### **4.5. Discussion of research findings**

The research findings indicate that commercialization significantly impacts tourist satisfaction at the Huong Pagoda Festival through mediating variables, including Perception of Festival Space (KG), Service Price Appropriateness (GC), Spiritual Experience (TL), and Quality of Interaction with Vendors (TTB).

Firstly, perception of festival space positively influences visitor satisfaction. This result aligns with the studies of Getz [17] and Wang et al. [18], which emphasize that a well-organized festival space with minimal commercial encroachment enhances visitors' ability to appreciate the solemnity and cultural significance of the event. Conversely, unregulated commercialization can diminish the sacredness of the space, negatively affecting the overall tourist experience.

Secondly, service price appropriateness also has a significant impact on visitor satisfaction. When service prices are transparent and reasonable relative to quality, tourists tend to report higher satisfaction. This finding is consistent with Zeithaml's research, which highlights that perceived fairness in pricing is a key determinant of tourist satisfaction [15]. However, the study also acknowledges that unreasonably high prices during the festival season can lead to dissatisfaction and reduce tourists' intention to revisit.

Thirdly, spiritual experience emerges as the most influential factor affecting visitor satisfaction. This confirms that the Huong Pagoda Festival is not merely a tourist attraction but a deeply spiritual event. Elements such as the sacred atmosphere, traditional rituals, and a sense of connection to religious beliefs contribute significantly to tourist satisfaction. These findings are consistent with previous studies by Sharpley & Sundaram [20] and Cohen [19], which suggest that spiritual experiences often generate higher satisfaction levels than other forms of tourism.

Finally, quality of interaction with vendors plays a crucial role in shaping visitor satisfaction. When tourists receive professional service, friendly attitudes, and fair transactions from vendors, they are more likely

to have a positive perception of their overall experience. Conversely, issues such as aggressive sales tactics, price manipulation, or unprofessional behavior negatively impact tourist satisfaction. This result supports the findings of Xu et al. [22] and Kim et al. [25] who emphasize that vendor-tourist interactions significantly influence tourists' perceptions of a destination.

Overall, these findings not only confirm the impact of commercialization but also highlight the importance of managing mediating factors effectively to ensure visitor satisfaction. This underscores the need for festival organizers to balance economic benefits from commercialization with the preservation of cultural and spiritual values to maintain a positive festival experience.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study assessed the impact of commercialization on tourist satisfaction at the Huong Pagoda Festival, examining the mediating effects of Perception of Festival Space (KG), Service Price Appropriateness (GC), Spiritual Experience (TL), and Quality of Interaction with Vendors (TTB). The results confirm that commercialization indirectly affects tourist satisfaction by influencing these mediating factors.

The findings contribute to both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study provides empirical evidence on the relationship between commercialization, tourist experience, and satisfaction in the context of traditional festivals. It also strengthens theories related to tourist experience and perceived value within festival tourism. Practically, the results offer valuable insights for festival organizers, policymakers, and tourism businesses in developing strategic commercialization approaches that maximize economic benefits while preserving cultural and spiritual integrity.

However, the study has certain limitations. First, the research sample mainly focuses on visitors to the Huong Pagoda Festival, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other festivals. Second, the study primarily adopts a quantitative approach, lacking an in-depth exploration of tourists' perceptions through qualitative methods. Future research could expand the scope to include other festivals and incorporate qualitative research techniques to gain a more comprehensive understanding of commercialization's impact on festival tourism.

In conclusion, this study provides critical insights into the relationship between commercialization and tourist satisfaction at the Huong Pagoda Festival. Effective management of commercialization—minimizing negative impacts while maximizing positive elements—will contribute to enhancing tourist experience, preserving cultural heritage, and ensuring the sustainable development of festival tourism in the future.

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