

CRUISE TOURIST SATISFACTION AT THE NGUYEN DYNASTY TOMBS IN HUE, VIETNAM: A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: This study examines how cruise tourists evaluate their visit to the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs in Hue, Vietnam. The tombs belong to the Complex of Hue Monuments, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and are associated with royal history, architecture, landscape, and cultural memory. For cruise visitors, however, the visit is shaped not only by the cultural importance of the site but also by the limited time available during a shore excursion. The study identifies the main dimensions of satisfaction and suggests improvements for managing cruise visits to heritage sites. A structured questionnaire was administered to international cruise tourists at the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs, and 129 valid responses were retained for analysis. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, reliability testing, and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The results identified several satisfaction dimensions, including heritage and cultural value, accessibility and transportation, interpretation, site amenities, and souvenir-related services. The findings show that visitors valued the tombs' historical atmosphere, architecture, and landscape setting. Some practical aspects of the visit were rated less strongly, including multilingual information, accessibility, restroom facilities, and concise interpretation. These issues matter because cruise tourists usually have limited time ashore and need information that is clear, accessible, and easy to follow. The study suggests that Hue should focus on site-level improvements, including visitor flow, multilingual interpretation, updated QR-code-based information, basic facilities, and culturally relevant souvenir products. These measures could improve cruise excursion experiences while supporting the conservation of Hue's heritage assets.

Keyword: cruise tourism, tourist satisfaction, sustainable heritage tourism, Nguyen Dynasty Tombs, Hue city, shore excursions

Introduction

Cruise tourism has become an important part of international travel, allowing tourists to visit several destinations within one itinerary and join organised shore excursions (Papathanassis, 2017). In Southeast Asia, the growth of cruise routes has created new opportunities for port cities and nearby cultural destinations. Vietnam has also benefited from this trend, and Hue is one of the heritage destinations that can be reached from cruise ports in central Vietnam.

Hue is internationally recognised for the Complex of Hue Monuments, a UNESCO World Heritage site that includes the Imperial City, royal palaces, temples, and the tombs of the Nguyen emperors. The Nguyen Dynasty Tombs are historical and architectural landmarks. They also express royal ideology, landscape design, spiritual symbolism, and local cultural memory through built heritage. For cruise tourists, these tombs provide a focused encounter with Hue's imperial past, but this encounter takes place within the limited time of a shore excursion. Cultural value alone does not guarantee tourist satisfaction. Cruise tourists usually follow fixed

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schedules, depend on organised transport, and have less flexibility than independent travellers. Their experience is shaped by the cultural value of the site as well as practical conditions such as access, safety, interpretation, amenities, and supporting services. At the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs, visitor movement, interpretive information, physical access, and service readiness may therefore influence how tourists evaluate their visit.

Although heritage tourism in Hue has received academic attention, cruise tourist satisfaction at heritage sites remains less clearly examined. Existing research often focuses on general heritage tourism, destination image, or cultural resources. The situation of cruise tourists is different because their visit is short, guided, and strongly influenced by transport and excursion arrangements. This makes it necessary to examine whether the heritage experience can be organised and communicated effectively within a limited visit.

To address this gap, this study examines how international cruise tourists evaluate their visit to the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs in Hue. It identifies the main dimensions of satisfaction, including heritage value, accessibility, safety, interpretation, amenities, and supporting services. It also considers how satisfaction is reflected in tourists' intention to recommend the site or revisit it in the future. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What factors shape cruise tourists' satisfaction at the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs?
2. How do cruise tourists evaluate the heritage value, accessibility, safety, interpretation, and service conditions of the tombs?
3. How is tourist satisfaction related to recommendation intention and revisit potential?
4. What practical measures could improve cruise tourists' experiences while supporting sustainable heritage management in Hue?

By focusing on cruise tourists as a specific visitor segment, this study contributes to a more context-sensitive understanding of heritage tourism management in Hue. Rather than treating the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs only as cultural attractions, it examines how their heritage value is experienced under the actual conditions of a short cruise excursion. The findings may support heritage site managers, tour operators, and local tourism authorities in improving visitor experience while maintaining the cultural value of the tombs.

Literature Review

Research on cruise tourism, heritage tourism, and destination management provides a useful basis for examining visitor satisfaction at heritage attractions. These areas are often discussed separately. Cruise tourism studies tend to focus on ports, itineraries, passenger flows, and economic impacts, while heritage tourism research often emphasises authenticity, conservation, interpretation, and cultural value. Less attention has been given to the point where these two fields meet: the short, organised visit of cruise tourists to a heritage attraction.

This distinction matters because cruise tourists do not experience heritage sites in the same way as independent travellers. Their visits are usually shorter, more structured, and more dependent on transport, guiding, route design, and available interpretation. Satisfaction in this context should

therefore be understood not only as appreciation of heritage value, but also as the result of how clearly and efficiently that value is made accessible during a limited shore excursion.

2.1 Cruise Tourism Behaviour

Cruise tourism has become an important form of tourist mobility, especially for destinations connected to regional cruise routes. Cruise passengers often visit several places within one journey, and their experience at each destination is usually shaped by shore excursions rather than independent travel. Previous studies show that cruise tourists' movements are influenced by fixed schedules, tour operator arrangements, port logistics, and selected attraction packages (Dowling, 2006; Papathanassis et al., 2012).

These conditions make cruise tourists a distinct visitor segment. They may seek cultural experiences, but they usually have limited time to interpret the destination by themselves. This creates a tension that is especially relevant to heritage sites. Cruise tourists expect a meaningful encounter with local culture, yet the visit is often compressed into a short and carefully managed itinerary. In such circumstances, accessibility, timing, guiding quality, and interpretive clarity are not secondary service issues. They become part of how the heritage experience is formed.

Much of the cruise tourism literature explains the wider role of cruise activity in destination development. Less attention has been given to how cruise passengers evaluate specific cultural sites after leaving the port. This gap is relevant to heritage destinations where the quality of the visit depends not only on arrival at the destination, but also on how the on-site experience is organised.

2.2 Tourist Satisfaction in Heritage Sites

Tourist satisfaction in heritage settings is shaped by cultural, emotional, and practical factors. Heritage tourism studies highlight the importance of authenticity, personal meaning, interpretation, and the ability of a site to communicate its historical narratives (Poria et al., 2006; Timothy & Boyd, 2006). Visitors are not simply viewing monuments; they are trying to understand why those monuments matter.

At the same time, satisfaction also depends on the conditions that support the visit. Accessibility, signage, safety, rest areas, toilets, guiding, and visitor services influence how comfortably tourists engage with a site. For international cruise tourists, these conditions may be more important because limited time reduces their ability to deal with unclear routes, weak interpretation, or inadequate facilities. A heritage site with strong cultural value may still produce uneven satisfaction if visitors cannot easily understand, navigate, or connect with it.

Previous research often treats cultural value and service quality as separate dimensions of tourist experience. This separation is useful, but it may be too limited for heritage shore excursions. In short-stay cruise visits, cultural appreciation and practical site conditions are closely linked because visitors' understanding of a heritage site depends partly on how the site is interpreted and organised during the visit.

2.3 Destination Attractiveness and Competitiveness

Destination attractiveness refers to the features that make a place appealing to visitors, such as cultural richness, uniqueness, landscape, history, and the possibility of a memorable experience (Hu & Ritchie, 1993). From this perspective, heritage attractions can be highly appealing because they offer historical depth, cultural identity, and distinctive landscape or architectural features.

However, attractiveness does not necessarily guarantee competitiveness. Destination competitiveness concerns a destination's ability to deliver satisfactory visitor experiences through infrastructure, accessibility, service quality, management, and stakeholder coordination (Buhalis, 2000; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Vengesai, 2003). This distinction is important for heritage destinations receiving cruise tourists. A site may have strong cultural appeal, but its competitiveness as a cruise excursion depends on more operational matters, such as transfer arrangements, visit sequencing, information provision, and basic visitor services.

Existing studies on destination attractiveness explain why tourists may be drawn to a place, but they do not always show how short-stay visitors evaluate the actual conditions of the visit. This study therefore applies the attractiveness–competitiveness distinction to a specific heritage excursion context.

2.4 Sustainable Heritage Tourism

Sustainable tourism in heritage contexts involves balancing visitor use, cultural conservation, community benefit, and long-term site management (Garrod & Fyall, 2000; UNWTO, 2013). The UNESCO Historic Urban Landscape approach also suggests that heritage should be managed within its wider social, spatial, and development context, rather than as isolated monuments (UNESCO, 2011).

For cruise tourism, sustainability creates a specific management challenge. Cruise visits are usually short and concentrated. Even when the visit is brief, repeated groups can place pressure on transport, facilities, interpretation, and visitor flow. Sustainable management in this setting is therefore not only about protecting monuments from physical damage. It is also about organising the visitor experience so that tourists can understand the site without overcrowding, confusion, or superficial consumption of heritage.

At heritage sites visited by cruise tourists, sustainability should therefore be considered at site level. It includes whether international visitors can follow the route, access interpretation, use basic facilities, recognise the cultural meaning of local products, and complete the visit within the time available for a shore excursion.

2.5 Research Gap and Justification

The reviewed literature shows that cruise tourism, heritage satisfaction, destination attractiveness, and sustainable tourism are well-established research areas. However, three limitations remain. First, cruise tourism studies tend to focus on ports, cruise operations, economic outcomes, and passenger mobility, while the on-site experience at heritage attractions receives less attention. Second, heritage tourism studies often examine authenticity, cultural meaning, and conservation, but give less attention to visitors who arrive under fixed schedules and pre-arranged itineraries. Third, satisfaction studies

measure visitor perceptions, but do not always explain how cultural value and practical site conditions interact during a short heritage visit.

These gaps are relevant to the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs in Hue. The issue is not simply whether the tombs have heritage value, but how that value is delivered to cruise tourists within the practical limits of a shore excursion. Existing studies provide useful concepts, but they do not sufficiently explain the combined effects of time constraint, organised movement, interpretation, accessibility, and service readiness on cruise tourist satisfaction at a specific heritage site.

This study addresses the gap by examining cruise tourist satisfaction at the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs through an integrated framework linking cruise tourist behaviour, heritage satisfaction, destination competitiveness, and sustainable site management. It positions cruise tourist satisfaction as a heritage management issue, not only a service evaluation issue. Methodologically, the study uses survey data and Exploratory Factor Analysis to identify satisfaction dimensions relevant to a short-stay heritage excursion. Practically, it provides evidence for heritage managers, tour operators, and local tourism authorities seeking to improve cruise visitor experiences while protecting the cultural integrity of the tombs.

Methodology

This study used a quantitative research design to examine international cruise tourists' satisfaction with their heritage experience at the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs in Hue, Vietnam. The design was suitable because the study focused on tourists' evaluations of different aspects of the visit and on how these evaluations formed broader satisfaction dimensions. It also matched the cruise tourism context, where visitors follow fixed shore excursion schedules and have limited time at the destination.

3.1 Research Context

Hue City, located in central Vietnam, is internationally recognised for the Complex of Hue Monuments, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The tombs of the Nguyen emperors, including Tu Duc, Minh Mang, and Khai Dinh, are among the city's major heritage attractions. These sites combine imperial history, architecture, landscape design, and cultural symbolism.

Cruise tourists commonly reach Hue through Chan May Port, approximately 45 kilometres from the city. Since shore excursions are time-limited, access, transport, interpretation, and site organisation can affect how tourists evaluate their visit. Data were collected during the peak cruise season in March and April 2025 from passengers on four vessels: Queen Elizabeth, Ovation of the Seas, Viking Orion, and Mein Schiff 6.

3.2 Research Design and Sampling

A structured questionnaire survey was used. Convenience sampling was adopted because cruise tourists were available only within a short period before or after their organised visits to the tombs. Probability sampling was not feasible, as passengers travelled in groups, followed pre-arranged itineraries, and had limited time at the heritage sites.

A total of 162 questionnaires were initially collected. After screening for completeness and usability, 129 valid responses were retained for analysis, giving a valid response rate of 79.6%. All statistical analyses were based on these 129 valid responses. Because of the sampling approach, the findings should be interpreted as context-specific evidence rather than generalised to all cruise tourists visiting Vietnam or Southeast Asia. The final sample was considered adequate for EFA, following the guideline of at least five respondents per observed variable (Hair et al., 2010).

3.3 Survey Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of three parts: cruise and excursion characteristics, tourists' evaluation of the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs, and personal information. The first part collected information on cruise experience, trip duration, travel companions, purpose of visit, attractions visited in Hue, shore excursion arrangements, purchase channels, and information sources before arrival.

The second part measured tourists' evaluation of the tombs using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1, completely disagree, to 5, completely agree. The items covered six thematic areas: sustainable accessibility, cultural heritage value, landscape and amenities, sightseeing and cultural experiences, souvenir products and responsible services, and security and safety. These areas reflected both previous tourism studies and the actual conditions of cruise excursions to the tombs, including port access, transport, signage, interpretation, amenities, local products, and safety.

The questionnaire also included items on overall satisfaction, revisit opportunity, and willingness to recommend the tombs. The final part collected personal information, including country, gender, age group, and occupation. The questionnaire was pilot-tested with 12 international tourists, and minor wording and sequencing adjustments were made before the main survey.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Surveys were conducted on-site at the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs immediately after participants completed their visits. This timing was chosen to capture tourists' impressions while the experience was still recent. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Respondents were informed about the academic purpose of the study, and no personally identifying information was collected.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 28. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise respondents' profiles, travel behaviour, satisfaction levels, and behavioural intentions. Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's alpha.

Exploratory Factor Analysis was applied to identify the main dimensions of cruise tourist satisfaction. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .715, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at $p < .001$, confirming that the data were suitable for factor analysis. Five factors were extracted, explaining 66.29% of the total variance. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from .714 to .981, indicating acceptable to strong internal reliability.

EFA was used because the study aimed to identify satisfaction dimensions in a specific heritage excursion context. The analysis also reported descriptive patterns of overall satisfaction, recommendation intention, and revisit intention. The study did not test causal relationships between satisfaction dimensions and behavioural intentions. Future research could extend the analysis by using correlation or regression models to examine how each satisfaction dimension influences recommendation and revisit intention.

4. Results

4.1 Sample Profile

The final sample included 129 international cruise tourists who visited the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs in Hue City during March and April 2025. Most respondents were older visitors. Those aged 61–79 accounted for 57.4% of the sample, while respondents aged 80 and above represented 16.3%. More than half of the respondents were retired (55.0%), which reflects the profile often found among long-haul cruise passengers. In terms of gender, 45.7% identified as male, 41.1% as female, and 13.2% as other.

The largest nationality group was Germany (41.9%), followed by Australia (19.4%), the United States (14.7%), and the United Kingdom (13.9%). This composition suggests that the sample was mainly drawn from Western cruise markets. Such a profile is relevant because these visitors may bring particular expectations regarding interpretation, site organisation, comfort, and service standards.

4.2 Travel Characteristics

Respondents were generally experienced cruise travellers. In total, 40.3% had taken more than three cruises. Most were travelling on extended itineraries, with 68.2% reporting cruise durations of more than 10 days. Regarding travel companions, 43.4% travelled with family, 29.5% travelled alone, and 27.1% travelled with friends.

Most respondents experienced Hue through organised shore excursions rather than independent visits. Shore excursions were arranged through tour operators for 97.7% of respondents, and 93.0% made

their bookings through shipping lines. These figures show that access to the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs was strongly shaped by formal cruise and tour arrangements. This is important for site management because tourists' experience depends not only on the tombs themselves, but also on transport, timing, guiding, and the organisation of the excursion.

4.3 Visitor Motivations and Site Preferences

Heritage engagement was the main motivation reported by respondents, with 98.4% selecting visits to relic sites. Cultural immersion (53.5%) and historical exploration (49.6%) were also common motivations. Countryside visits were selected by 21.7% of respondents, while other activities accounted for 3.1%. Site preferences were concentrated on Hue's main heritage attractions. All respondents visited the Imperial City (100%), followed by the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs (99.2%) and Thien Mu Pagoda (87.6%). Other sites were selected by only 0.8% of respondents. These results show that Hue's imperial heritage forms the core of cruise itineraries in the city.

Respondents were allowed to select more than one motivation, so the total number of responses exceeds the sample size. The results suggest that cruise tourists were interested not only in monument-based sightseeing, but also in cultural and historical engagement. This supports the need for interpretation that is short, clear, and suitable for visitors with limited time ashore.

4.4 General Satisfaction and Behavioural Intentions

Overall satisfaction with the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs was high. The descriptive results show that 73.6% of respondents were fairly satisfied, while 25.6% were very satisfied. Only 0.8% indicated dissatisfaction. These results suggest that the tombs generally met visitors' expectations as part of their shore excursion in Hue.

In terms of behavioural intentions, 82.9% of respondents stated that they would recommend the tombs to others. However, only 42.6% expressed a clear intention to revisit, while 46.5% remained uncertain. This difference should be interpreted in relation to the nature of cruise tourism. For cruise tourists, a positive experience does not always lead to a strong intention to revisit, since future travel choices are often shaped by cruise itineraries, route availability, and the desire to visit new destinations. In this context, recommendation intention may be a more suitable indicator of positive behavioural response than revisit intention.

4.5 Exploratory Factor Analysis and Reliability Testing

EFA was conducted to examine the underlying structure of cruise tourists' perceptions of the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs. The analysis was initially performed on 24 survey items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .715, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant, $\chi^2(171) = 1396.612$, $p < .001$. These results indicate that the data were suitable for factor analysis.

Five items were removed because their factor loadings were below .50. The remaining 19 items were grouped into five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. Together, these factors explained 66.29% of the total variance. The extracted factors were labelled as Destination Setting and Heritage Value, Security and Safety, Visits, Sightseeing and Cultural Experiences, Sustainable Accessibility, and Souvenir Products and Responsible Services.

Reliability was acceptable across all five factors. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .714 to .981, indicating acceptable to strong internal consistency. The highest reliability was found for Security and Safety. Sustainable Accessibility and Souvenir Products and Responsible Services also met the acceptable level for exploratory research.

The EFA results also show that items related to cultural heritage value, landscape, and amenities loaded within the same factor. This suggests that respondents did not evaluate the tombs only as historical monuments. They also considered the physical setting, landscape, and site atmosphere as part of the same heritage experience. For cruise tourists, this combined perception is important because the visit is short and the overall impression is formed quickly.

Table 3. Exploratory Factor Analysis and Reliability Testing Results

Factor	Variables	Factor loading	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha	Eigenvalue	Total variance explained (%)
Destination Setting and Heritage Value	Scenic landscape representing Hue's imperial identity	0.868	0.762	0.806	4.342	22.851
	Unique architecture reflecting local and intercultural influences	0.826	0.729			
	Cultural events and historical storytelling that engage visitors	0.71	0.547			
	Recognition of cultural value	0.687	0.509			
	Harmony between natural and architectural elements	0.624	0.492			
Security and Safety	Absence of theft or pickpocketing	0.967	0.967	0.981	2.911	38.171
	General safety and security at the site	0.966	0.942			
	Absence of harassment or aggressive solicitation	0.963	0.967			
Visits, Sightseeing and Cultural Experiences	Hue Royal Court Music Performances	0.872	0.785	0.839	1.98	48.593
	Performance and experience of Hue royal costumes	0.86	0.781			
	Incense offering ceremony in commemoration of the Nguyen emperors	0.779	0.575			
	Thematic interpretation and guided experiences	0.715	0.586			
Sustainable Accessibility	Clear, multilingual, and inclusive signage and explanations	0.788	0.472	0.714	1.74	57.752
	Availability of eco-friendly transport	0.7	0.396			
	Quality and sustainability of transport routes from port to tombs	0.689	0.419			
	Location suitability for cruise	0.637	0.384			

	schedules and port access					
Souvenir Product and Responsible Services	Cultural uniqueness and ethical sourcing of products	0.819	0.533			
	Attractive and sustainable product display	0.76	0.417	0.716	1.622	66.287
	Costume rental and photography services	0.672	0.398			

Source: Authors' survey data, 2025.

Note: KMO = .715; Bartlett's test of sphericity: $\chi^2(171) = 1396.612$, $p < .001$. Items with factor loadings below .50 were removed.

Table 3 presents the results of the EFA and reliability testing. The retained 19 items were grouped into five factors, explaining 66.287% of the cumulative variance. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .714 to .981, indicating acceptable to strong internal consistency across the extracted factors.

4.6 Additional Analysis of Satisfaction Dimensions

Mean scores were calculated to provide a clearer interpretation of the five satisfaction dimensions. The highest-rated dimension was Destination Setting and Heritage Value ($M = 4.76$, $SD = 0.35$), followed by Security and Safety ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 0.48$) and Visits, Sightseeing and Cultural Experiences ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.52$). Lower mean scores were found for Sustainable Accessibility ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 0.31$) and Souvenir Products and Responsible Services ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 0.37$). These results show a clear pattern: visitors rated the cultural setting and safety of the tombs highly, but evaluated access-related and service-related aspects more moderately.

Additional group comparisons were conducted to examine whether satisfaction dimensions differed by selected respondent characteristics. Most differences were not statistically significant. By gender, however, Visits, Sightseeing and Cultural Experiences differed significantly, $F(2, 126) = 3.500$, $p = .033$, with the Welch test also confirming this difference, $p = .030$. Mean scores were higher among female respondents ($M = 4.27$) and respondents identifying as other ($M = 4.35$) than among male respondents ($M = 4.06$). By nationality, the Welch test indicated a significant difference for Destination Setting and Heritage Value, $p = .044$, although the standard ANOVA result was not significant. No significant differences were found by age or occupation across the five satisfaction dimensions.

Taken together, the results suggest that the overall pattern of satisfaction was relatively consistent across respondent groups. The main analytical point is therefore not demographic difference, but the contrast between highly rated heritage and safety dimensions and more moderate evaluations of accessibility and souvenir-related services.

5. Discussion and Implications

5.1 Interpretation of Key Satisfaction Dimensions

This study examined how international cruise tourists evaluated their experience at the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs in Hue, Vietnam. The results show a generally positive assessment, especially for Destination Setting and Heritage Value and Security and Safety. This finding is consistent with

heritage tourism studies that highlight historical meaning, cultural interpretation, and site atmosphere as important parts of visitor satisfaction (Yao, 2013; Rojas & Camarero, 2008).

The strong evaluation of Destination Setting and Heritage Value suggests that visitors appreciated the tombs' landscape, architecture, cultural value, and historical storytelling. In Hue, the tombs are not experienced only as separate monuments. They form part of a wider imperial landscape in which architecture, nature, and historical memory are closely connected. This result supports previous work on symbolic meaning and cultural narratives in heritage tourism (Geertz, 2017; Thurnell-Read, 2017). It also points to a practical issue for cruise tourism: because shore excursions are short, the heritage value of the tombs needs to be communicated clearly and without unnecessary complexity.

Security and Safety also received strong evaluations. This result is important given the profile of the respondents, many of whom were older cruise tourists travelling within organised schedules. For this group, a safe and orderly environment is not simply a background condition. It affects whether visitors can move through the site comfortably and pay attention to the cultural and historical meaning of the tombs.

The weaker evaluations are equally important. Sustainable Accessibility received more moderate scores, especially in relation to multilingual information, transport routes, site access, and the fit between cruise schedules and visit duration. Accessibility in this case should not be understood only as the distance between Chan May Port and Hue. At the site level, it also includes transport timing, route clarity, interpretive support, resting areas, and whether visitors can complete the visit without feeling rushed. This finding is consistent with Nguyen's (2025) discussion of Chan May Port, organised shore excursions, and stakeholder coordination in cruise tourism development in Thua Thien Hue Province. The present study adds a site-level perspective by showing that coordination matters not only before tourists arrive in Hue, but also during their movement through the tombs.

The results for Souvenir Products and Responsible Services also show a gap between the strong heritage value of the tombs and the supporting services around the visit. Previous studies suggest that souvenirs can strengthen heritage experiences when they are culturally specific and connected to place identity (Hitchcock & Teague, 2000). In this study, however, souvenir-related services were rated lower than heritage value and safety. This does not mean that souvenirs are unimportant. Rather, it suggests that their connection with Hue's imperial culture, local crafts, and the stories of the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs could be made clearer.

5.2 Behavioural Intentions in the Cruise Tourism Context

The difference between recommendation intention and revisit intention needs careful interpretation. Most respondents said they would recommend the tombs to others, but fewer expressed a clear intention to revisit. This pattern does not contradict the high satisfaction result. It reflects the travel logic of cruise tourism, where future destination choices are often shaped by cruise routes, itinerary availability, and the wish to visit new places.

For this reason, recommendation intention may be a more realistic indicator of a positive response than revisit intention in the cruise excursion context. In the case of the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs, a

visitor may value the site highly and still be uncertain about returning, not because the experience was weak, but because cruise travel often encourages movement to new ports and destinations.

5.3 Practical Implications for Heritage Site Management

For site managers, the results point to practical issues that are close to the visitor route: how tourists receive information, move through the tombs, rest during the visit, and connect what they see with Hue's imperial culture. Since cruise tourists have limited time at the tombs, interpretation should be clear, brief, and easy to follow. The existing interpretation and communication tools should therefore be further improved for international visitors, particularly through clearer multilingual content, concise audio explanations, regularly updated QR-code-based information, and storytelling panels placed at points where visitors need quick explanations.

Accessibility and basic facilities also require attention. The moderate evaluation of Sustainable Accessibility suggests that the issue is not only transport from Chan May Port to Hue, but also how visitors move through the site once they arrive. Restrooms, shaded resting areas, directional signage, accessible walking routes, and shuttle coordination should be improved, especially for older cruise tourists and visitors with mobility needs.

The lower evaluation of Souvenir Products and Responsible Services also suggests a need to connect retail services more closely with the heritage setting. Souvenir products should reflect Hue's imperial culture, traditional crafts, and the specific stories of the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs, rather than appearing as generic tourist goods. This would allow souvenir services to support the heritage experience more directly while also creating opportunities for local artisans and small businesses.

Overall, the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs already have strong cultural appeal for international cruise tourists. The main challenge is to make this heritage value easier to access, understand, and remember within a short shore excursion. Improvements in interpretation, facilities, accessibility, and souvenir services would help Hue offer a clearer and more comfortable visitor experience while protecting the cultural value of the tombs.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs in Hue, Vietnam, as a cultural attraction for international cruise tourists. Based on survey data from 129 respondents, the study identified the main dimensions of cruise tourist satisfaction. The results show that visitors valued the tombs for their cultural significance, distinctive architecture, landscape setting, and perceived safety.

The strongest evaluations were found for Destination Setting and Heritage Value and Security and Safety. This confirms that the tombs remain an important part of Hue's cruise tourism offer. At the same time, the lower scores for Sustainable Accessibility and Souvenir Products and Responsible Services show a more practical issue. For short-stay cruise tourists, the value of the tombs needs to be supported by clear access, useful interpretation, adequate facilities, smooth visitor movement, and relevant supporting services.

These findings point to several improvements at site level. The existing interpretation and communication tools at the tombs should be made more consistent for international cruise visitors. This may include clearer multilingual content, concise audio explanations, better-positioned storytelling panels, and regularly updated QR-code-based heritage information for visitors with

limited time ashore. Basic facilities, including restrooms, shaded resting areas, directional signage, and accessible walking routes, should also be improved, especially for older cruise tourists and visitors with mobility needs. Eco-friendly transport and better-coordinated shuttle services could further support access from cruise arrival points. Souvenir products should also be more closely connected to Hue's imperial culture, local crafts, and the stories of the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs.

The study has some limitations. Convenience sampling limits the generalisability of the findings. Data were collected during one cruise season, and the analysis relied on self-reported survey responses. Future research could compare cruise tourists with independent travellers, use mixed-method designs, examine visitor experience over time, and include other UNESCO heritage destinations in Southeast Asia.

Overall, the Nguyen Dynasty Tombs have clear potential within Vietnam's cruise tourism landscape. Realising this potential depends not only on conserving the cultural value of the tombs, but also on making the visit clearer, more accessible, and more meaningful for cruise tourists.

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