Impact of integrated marketing communications on Generation Z tourists' revisit intention, with destination satisfaction as a mediating factor: A case study of Vung Tau, Vietnam

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

This study examines the influence of integrated marketing communications on the intention of Generation Z tourists to revisit Vung Tau, with destination satisfaction as a mediating factor. The research focuses on tourists from Ho Chi Minh City. Data were collected from a sample of 310 respondents using a convenience sampling method. The analysis was conducted using SPSS 25.0 and SmartPLS 4.1.0.0. Hypothesis testing through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) revealed that key components of integrated marketing communications—personal selling, sales promotion, advertising, public relations, and direct marketing—directly impact destination satisfaction and indirectly influence revisit intention through satisfaction. Additionally, advertising, public relations, and direct marketing have both direct and indirect effects on revisit intention. The findings offer practical insights for Vung Tau's tourism sector, emphasizing the need for tourism businesses and destination managers to implement integrated communication strategies to attract tourists, particularly younger generations. Furthermore, enhancing service quality and recognizing the role of tourism satisfaction through well-planned marketing communication initiatives are crucial for increasing visitor retention.

1. Introduction

The rapid development of tourism and the increasing number of tourist destinations have made competition between destinations more intense (Guo et al., 2023; Shi et al., 2022). Destinations need to position themselves and market their image more effectively (Zhong et al., 2023) to attract tourists (Satar et al., 2024). Destination marketing has become a crucial activity to capture tourists' attention (de Souza et al., 2020). Enhancing the effectiveness of advertising for the Vung Tau destination is a critical issue that the tourism industry must address. Vung Tau has been awarded the "ASEAN Clean Tourist City" title for the third consecutive time by the Southeast Asia Tourism Forum in 2024. Vung Tau's geographical location and climate are favorable for tourism development, particularly in attracting domestic tourists. Vung Tau's transportation infrastructure has been increasingly modernized, connecting with nearby regions, making it convenient for tourists to visit. According to the Ba Ria–Vung Tau Department of Tourism, the tourism industry saw significant growth in 2023, with both domestic and international tourist arrivals increasing considerably, leading to a substantial rise in tourism revenue compared to the previous year, thus contributing significantly to the socio-economic development of the province. Despite its potential, Vũng Tàu's tourism has yet to develop fully, partly due to issues in destination promotion. According to Decision No. 2538/QĐ-UBND regarding the master plan for tourism development in Ba Ria – Vung Tau Province until 2025, with orientations to 2030, priority is given to funding for tourism promotion and branding; developing strategies and promotional plans in stages, with specific responsibilities assigned to stakeholders, including non-tourism entities in the area; and promoting the socialization of tourism promotion activities to enhance the province's tourism image. Clearly, there is a growing focus on tourism promotion activities in Vung Tau to enhance its image and foster tourism development. Generation Z represents an increasingly significant portion of consumers

worldwide, and the influence of this age group is becoming more important, especially concerning the future of tourism (İlhan et al., 2022). Through technological advancement and social media, Generation Z has become the first generation to be globally shaped in their travel behaviors. Generation Z has attracted considerable research in the tourism sector, with topics such as their needs, behaviors as tourists (Skinner et al., 2018; Entina et al., 2021), and their concern for sustainable consumption at tourist destinations (Butnaru et al., 2022). Generation Z shaped the trajectory of mass tourism development in the latter half of the 20th century and remains a significant tourism market today (Patterson, 2006; Chen and Shoemaker, 2014). In recent years, the mature members of Generation Z have begun participating in the global tourism market. Various forecasts and expectations have been made about the influence of this generation on tourism (Robinson and Schänzel, 2019). In addition to recognizing the importance of all generations in the tourism ecosystem, the industry acknowledges the shaping influence of young tourists (Robinson and Schänzel, 2019). Understanding how generational changes affect tourist behavior can help predict and effectively adapt to future tourism trends. This study focuses on the impact of integrated marketing communications on Generation Z's intention to revisit Vung Tau.

2. Theoretical basis of research

2.1. Research concept

Generation Z (born in the late 1990s to 2010) was exposed to the internet, social media, and mobile systems from a very early age, shaping them into a generation with characteristics distinct from previous generations. The behaviors of Generation Z are centered around seeking truth (both on personal and social levels), are highly capable of setting trends and early adopters of new trends, and are comfortable with new technologies, optimistic, and creative problem-solvers. This generation is regarded as a significant demographic group because they are gradually taking central roles and becoming key customers in the travel and tourism industry (Robinson and Schänzel, 2019). Generation Z represents potential future decision-makers and has both direct and indirect influences on their family's decision-making processes. Various factors can influence Generation Z tourists' destination choices; this study focuses on integrated marketing communications.

Customer satisfaction refers to the cognitive-emotional state that tourists derive from their experiences at a destination (San Martín et al., 2019). Customer satisfaction plays a crucial role in the sustainability and growth of tourism products and services (Gursoy et al., 2002). Kim and Richardson (2003) argued that customer satisfaction is a form of post-purchase attitude, representing the comparison between product quality and customer service.

Therefore, customer satisfaction can be viewed as "the customer's subjective evaluation of the consumption experience, based on the relationship between the customer's perception and the objective characteristics of the product" (Pizam et al., 2016; Prayag et al., 2017). Other studies show that customer satisfaction increases repeat purchasing behavior and the intention to recommend (Prayag et al., 2017), while dissatisfied tourists are reluctant to revisit previous destinations (Alegre and Garau, 2010). Battour et al. (2014) also confirmed that tourist satisfaction provides valuable information to tourism authorities and companies, serving as a basis for improving product and service quality to meet tourists' needs and expectations.

The intention to revisit a tourist destination refers to a type of tourist behavior in which individuals visit the same destination multiple times, and it involves repeating or returning to a destination (Baker and Crompton, 2000). If tourists have a positive evaluation of a destination, they are more likely to visit the place again or recommend it to others (Chen and Tsai, 2007). In the context of marketing, the intention to revisit is an important indicator as it reflects how satisfied customers are with their previous experiences and whether they intend to return or purchase the product or service. Many studies indicate that tourists who frequently visit a destination tend to stay longer, engage more in consumption activities, feel more satisfied, spread positive information, and the marketing cost for this group is significantly lower than for first-time visitors (Zhang et al., 2014).

2.2. Integrated marketing communications

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) is a model that has evolved over several decades and has become standard for effective marketing activities. IMC integrates various marketing channels and elements to create a consistent and coherent message, distributing it across multiple available media channels. According to the American Marketing Association, IMC is the concept of marketing communication planning that evaluates the strategic role of various communication tools such as advertising, public relations, personal selling, and sales promotion in a comprehensive program; it seeks to maximize positive messages and minimize negative ones by integrating communication tools to enhance the impact of marketing communications (Kotler and Keller, 2016). According to Chenini and Cherif (2016), the concept of IMC in the tourism industry requires further in-depth research. Kotler and Keller (2016) identified five elements of IMC: Advertising, Sales Promotion, Public Relations, Personal Selling, and Direct Marketing. Through IMC, the brand message and value, in this context, the destination image, are communicated uniformly to the target audience via multiple channels, creating a stronger impact compared to using individual communication channels. IMC also involves coordinated planning, integrated performance

measurement, and a deep understanding of consumer behavior. This study approaches IMC from the perspective of Kotler and Keller (2016). Understanding the impact of each IMC dimension on customer loyalty not only helps improve the performance and competitiveness of business entities but also contributes valuable knowledge to marketing management.

2.3. Overview of related research

Research on the intention to revisit tourist destinations in Vietnam remains limited. Affection toward the destination directly influences satisfaction and attachment, thereby positively affecting the intention to revisit. Ngoc and Trinh (2015) identified the key factors influencing tourist satisfaction and the intention to revisit Vung Tau. The findings reveal that destination image, infrastructure, pricing, natural and cultural environments, and satisfaction influence tourists' intention to return, while safety and security had a significantly negative impact. However, none of these studies addressed how IMC (Integrated Marketing Communications) influences the intention of Generation Z to revisit tourist destinations.

Previous studies on the behavior of Generation Z tourists reveal that this age group seeks adventure, fun, and an escape from their daily routines (Haddouche and Salomone, 2018). Generation Z looks for experiences, engagement, and social interaction at the destinations they visit (Monaco, 2018). Born in a technologically advanced era, Generation Z is proficient with digital devices and constantly connected when planning trips and accessing destinations (Femenia-Serra et al., 2019), sharing their travel experiences online (Haddouche and Salomone, 2018). They are also described as environmentally conscious (Monaco, 2018), sensitive to biodiversity (Robinson and Schänzel, 2019), and interested in nature at travel destinations (Giachino et al., 2021). Research on the impact of IMC on Generation Z's intention to revisit tourist destinations is still quite limited.

IMC is a tool aimed at maximizing positive messages and minimizing negative ones by integrating various communication tools to optimize the impact of marketing communications (Kotler and Keller, 2016). Studies by Wantara and Prasetyo (2023) and Oluwafemi and Adebiyi (2018) explored the effects of IMC on tourists' intentions to revisit, with tourist satisfaction as a key factor. Their results show that personal selling, sales promotions, advertising, public relations, and direct marketing influence customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is crucial for achieving loyalty, not only in physical products but also in service contexts such as tourism. Um et al. (2006) suggested that the intention to revisit is an extension of satisfaction. Many other studies also confirm that tourist satisfaction positively affects the intention to return (Assaker and Hallak, 2013). Fitriana et al. (2021) focused on evaluating the impact of IMC on customer

image, satisfaction, and loyalty. Their research shows that IMC directly and indirectly influences customer loyalty through image and satisfaction. The more accurate and clear marketing communications are executed, the better the customer response, ultimately leading to customer satisfaction. Thaichon et al. (2016) explored the influence of IMC, primarily advertising and sales promotions, on customers' switching intentions in the mobile telecommunications sector. Their findings reveal an inverse relationship between customer satisfaction and switching intentions, meaning that when customers are satisfied with their current provider, they are less likely to switch to another provider.

Šerić et al. (2014) emphasized the need for tourism marketers to coordinate all communication messages and organizational resources through the application of IMC. Dinnie et al. (2010) pointed out that IMC plays a crucial role in national branding strategies, as it pursues multiple goals and targets various stakeholders. Šerić and Gil-Saura (2011) studied IMC in the hotel industry from a customer perspective, significantly contributing to paving the way for IMC application in hospitality services (Šerić et al., 2015; Šerić, 2017). IMC has also been studied in other fields; Navarro-Bailón (2012) examined IMC in the FMCG sector in Spain, and Einwiller and Boenigk (2012) conducted research in the Swiss financial sector. IMC has been found to affect sales volume, revenue growth, and market share (Reid, 2005; Luxton et al., 2017); financial outcomes (Zahay et al., 2004); and the optimization of communication budgets. Duncan and Mulhern (2004) highlighted that IMC positively relates to favorable customer attitudes, greater satisfaction, loyalty, and customer retention. Customer-related outcomes also emerged as significant impacts of IMC implementation (Rust et al., 2004; Reid, 2005). This study focuses on the influence of IMC on Generation Z tourists' intention to revisit Vũng Tàu.

2.4. Research hypothesis and model

2.4.1. Research hypothesis

Personal selling refers to the direct interaction between the seller and the customer, where the seller provides information, advice, and support to help the customer make a purchase. Comer and Drollinger (1999) suggested that modern personal selling is about selling the benefits of the product to best meet the customer's needs. Paddison and Biggins (2017) indicated that IMC can influence brand performance, which, in turn, may affect consumer loyalty. When personal selling is effectively carried out, it significantly increases customer satisfaction. This forms the basis for the following hypotheses:

H1a: Personal selling positively affects satisfaction.
H1b: Personal selling positively affects the intention to revisit.

Sales promotion involves marketing activities used by marketers to communicate with the target market (Kotler et al., 2018). Oluwafemi and Adebiyi (2018) showed the relationship between sales promotions and customer satisfaction. Reid (2005) suggested that customer satisfaction is a crucial tool when evaluating the outcomes of IMC implementation. According to Eagle and Kitchen (2000), sales promotion was an important marketing tool in a constantly changing environment. To increase competition, businesses must be able to satisfy their customers. Nawaz (2018) argued that through promotions and offers, customers feel a sense of trust and closeness with the brand. Das et al. (2019) demonstrated that sales promotions have a strong impact on customer satisfaction. Tourists often learn about services through promotional advertisements conducted by destination managers, influencing their satisfaction with the information obtained from the promotions. This forms the basis for the following hypotheses:

H2a: Sales promotion positively affects satisfaction.
H2b: Sales promotion positively affects the intention to revisit a destination.

Destination advertising is a key channel through which tourists search for travel-related information (de Souza et al., 2020). Many tourism studies emphasize the importance of advertising in destination development and in promoting tourists' behavioral intentions (Chu et al., 2020; Tong et al., 2023). Oluwafemi and Adebiyi (2018) showed the relationship between advertising and customer satisfaction. According to Porcu et al. (2019), consistent advertising across multiple channels enhances customer satisfaction. Advertising helps the destination build a unique image, and tourists recognize the destination's products and services (Yang et al., 2021). The rise of social media has increased opportunities for advertisements to engage and attract consumers (Chu et al., 2020). This leads to the following hypotheses:

H3a: Advertising positively affects satisfaction.
H3b: Advertising positively affects the intention to revisit a destination.

Public relations (PR) play a key role in communicating and interacting with stakeholders, helping build relationships with various groups to achieve desired promotional goals and a positive destination image. Consistent and coherent messaging across multiple channels enhances customer satisfaction and profitability (Šerić et al., 2020). Zhang and Jiang (2024) argued that PR is essential in promoting tourism development, enhancing tourist satisfaction, and is a safeguard for the sustainable and healthy growth of the tourism industry. Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4a: Public relations positively affect satisfaction.

H4b: Public relations positively affect the intention to revisit a destination.

Direct marketing is considered a useful marketing approach that helps organizations build strong relationships with their customers. Oluwafemi and Adebiyi (2018) revealed the relationship between direct marketing and customer satisfaction. Iqbal et al. (2013) emphasized that direct marketing uses one or more media to create a quality relationship between an organization and its customers. By delivering personalized and relevant messages, direct marketing can enhance customer satisfaction, identify customer needs and desires, and indirectly stimulate their intention to revisit. Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5a: Direct marketing positively affects satisfaction.
H5b: Direct marketing's positive influence on intention to revisit.

In tourism, numerous studies have confirmed the positive influence of satisfaction on the intention to revisit a destination (Chen and Chen, 2011). Antón et al. (2014) found that tourist loyalty to a destination is shaped by satisfaction, which influences visit intensity and the motivation to return. Bowen and Chen (2001) suggest that further research is needed to clarify how satisfaction influences tourists' intention to revisit. Enrique Bigné et al. (2009) identified variety-seeking tendencies as a key factor in determining tourists' intention to revisit the same destination for their next holiday, with satisfaction being the strongest long-term predictor of revisit intention. Kozak (2001) showed that satisfaction is one of the most dominant factors in explaining revisit intention. Numerous other studies also confirm the positive relationship between satisfaction and the intention to revisit (Nguyen et al., 2019). Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: Satisfaction positively affects intention to revisit.

The theoretical foundation of this study is the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model. The S-O-R theory suggests that the transmission mechanism can mediate the effect of a stimulus on a response (Wu and Li, 2018). The S-O-R theory has been widely used in consumer behavior studies (Chang et al., 2011). Gounaris et al. (2010) argued that integrated marketing communications (IMC) can influence customer satisfaction and loyalty. Um et al. (2006) suggested that the intention to revisit is an extension of satisfaction. Olsen (2002) proposed a model where satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and loyalty. According to this model, consumer evaluations of perceived quality determine satisfaction, which then strengthens the intention to repurchase. Based on the S-O-R theory, this study conceptualizes IMC as the stimulus, the intention to revisit as the response,

and satisfaction as the transmission mechanism (organism). From these arguments, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1c: Personal selling positively affects the intention to revisit through the mediating role of satisfaction.
**H2c:** Sales promotion positively affects the intention to revisit through the mediating role of satisfaction.
H3c: Advertising positively affects the intention to revisit through the mediating role of satisfaction.
H4c: Public relations positively affect the intention to revisit through the mediating role of satisfaction.
H5c: Direct marketing positively affects the intention to revisit through the mediating role of satisfaction.

2.4.2. Research model

Based on the research hypotheses, the research model is proposed in Fig. 1.
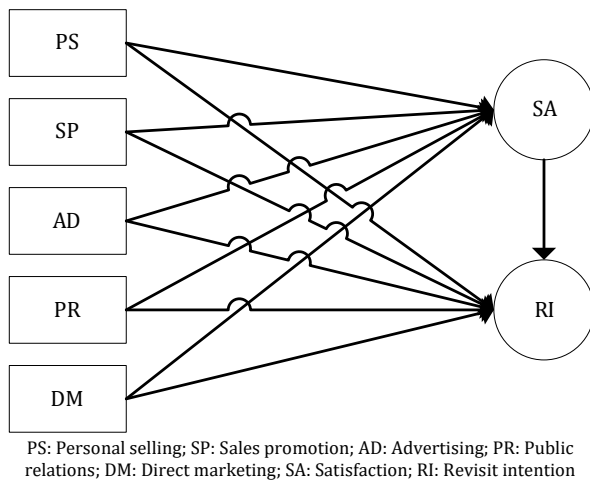
PS: Personal selling; SP: Sales promotion; AD: Advertising; PR: Public relations; DM: Direct marketing; SA: Satisfaction; RI: Revisit intention
Fig. 1: Theoretical research model

3. Research methodology

3.1. Measurement scales

The measurement scales for the research concepts were adapted and adjusted to fit the research context and target respondents. The scale for Direct Marketing was adapted from Sulistiani and Syarifuddin (2024); the scale for Personal Selling from Peterson (2019); the scale for Sales Promotion from Mishra et al. (2024); the scales for Advertising and Public Relations from Thaichon and Quach (2016) and Wang et al. (2009); the scale for Satisfaction from Rasoolimanesh et al. (2023) and Li et al. (2023); and the scale for Return Intention from Song et al. (2012).

3.2. Data collection method

The survey targeted young people studying, living, and working in Ho Chi Minh City, aged 18 to 29. The study used a convenience sampling method, combining both online and face-to-face surveys to enhance respondent accessibility. Observed

variables related to the research concepts were measured using a 5-point Likert scale. The research team accessed respondents through universities in the area and via member referrals from those who had already participated in the survey. After data collection, the responses were entered into a database and reviewed to eliminate incomplete responses (surveys with more than 5% missing data or non-random answers). The final dataset included 310 valid responses for analysis.

3.3. Data analysis method

This study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze the theoretical model and test the research hypotheses. The SPSS 25.0 software and SmartPLS 4.1.0 were used for data analysis. SPSS 25.0 was used for data entry and descriptive statistical analysis, while SmartPLS 4.1.0 was used to assess the measurement model and test the structural model hypotheses. The measurement model was assessed in terms of convergent and discriminant validity. The evaluation criteria include Outer Loadings, Composite Reliability, Cronbach's Alpha, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Discriminant Validity. The general rule is that outer loadings (standardized) should be 0.708 or higher, as the standardized coefficients relate to variance; latent variables should explain at least 50% of the variance of the observed variables. Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha should both be greater than 0.7, and AVE should exceed 0.5 (Henseler et al., 2014). Discriminate validity indicates that the two constructions are theoretically distinct. Discriminant validity was tested using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), the HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait) ratio of correlations (Henseler et al., 2015), and cross-loadings. The Fornell-Larcker criterion specifies that a construct should have a lower correlation with other constructions than the square root of its AVE (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). According to the HTMT ratio of correlations, a construct demonstrates discriminant validity when its HTMT value is less than 0.850 (Henseler et al., 2015).

The structural model in PLS-SEM was evaluated based on empirical standards for model predictability. The main criteria for evaluating the structural model in PLS-SEM include the significance of path coefficients, the value of R^2, and the f^2 effect size. Multicollinearity was tested using the VIF value, where a VIF greater than 5 indicates multicollinearity issues in the research constructs (Becker et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2017). The bootstrap method was used to test regression parameters. The bootstrap standard errors allow for the calculation of T-values and P-values for all path coefficients in the structural model. The critical values for the two-tailed test are 1.65 (α = 10%), 1.96 (α = 5%), and 2.57 (α = 1%). R^2 values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating better predictive accuracy. R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, or 0.25 for endogenous latent

variables are described as substantial, moderate, or weak, respectively. The f^2 effect size is used to evaluate the predictive impact of exogenous variables on endogenous variables. The f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively. An f^2 value below 0.02 indicates that the independent variable does not have an impact on the dependent variable.

4. Research results

4.1. Measurement model analysis

The research sample is presented in Table 1. The results indicate that 65.2% of the respondents were female. The age group 18-22 accounted for the largest proportion (85.8%), which is consistent with the sampling process conducted at universities in the area, facilitated by the relationships among students through the convenience sampling method. The most frequent travel pattern was once every six months (50.3%), followed by once every three months (21.9%). This can be explained by the fact that young people are focused on their studies and tend to travel during summer vacations, with financial constraints being another contributing factor.

Most young respondents traveled without prior planning (46.5%), typically traveling on weekends (20.3%) or during annual holidays and festivals (27.7%). Social media advertisements had the most significant influence on their travel decisions (46.8%), which is understandable given the heavy reliance of young people on digital communication and information gathering through online platforms. The influence of other channels was relatively similar, with personal selling having the smallest impact (3.5%). The preferred type of tourism among the youth was beach tourism (76.5%), which aligns with the focus of this study on Vung Tau, a popular beach tourism destination.

The cross-loading analysis results are presented in Table 2. The observed variables DM5, SP1, PS1, and PS3 were removed due to their factor loadings not meeting the required threshold (<0.708).

The reliability and validity of the main constructs are presented in Table 3, with Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) coefficients all exceeding the standard threshold of 0.7, indicating high reliability of the scales. All scales also demonstrated Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values greater than 0.50, meeting the required criteria.

The discriminator validity testing results are presented in Table 4. The absolute values of the correlations between any two constructs were consistently lower than the square root of the AVE values (shown on the diagonal). The results indicate that the scales achieved discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

In addition to the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion, which is used to assess discriminant validity, the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion, which has a stricter requirement, was also applied (Henseler et al., 2015). The calculated HTMT values, presented in Table 5, are significantly lower than the 0.85 threshold, providing further confirmation of the discriminant validity of the measurement scales used in the research model.

4.2. Structural model analysis

The results of the structural model analysis using PLS-SEM are presented in Fig. 2. The results presented in Table 6 show that all factors in the theoretical model have VIF values less than 5, indicating no multicollinearity issues. The R^2 values for Satisfaction (SA = 0.427) and Return Intention (RI = 0.510) indicate that the independent variables in the model explain the dependent variables at a moderate level.

Table 1: Description of the research sample

Criteria		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	108	34.8
	Female	202	65.2
Age	14 - 17	15	4.8
	18 - 22	266	85.8
	23 - 29	29	9.4
Travel frequency	Every 2 weeks	7	2.3
	Once a month	26	8.4
	Once every 3 months	68	21.9
	Once every 6 months	156	50.3
	Other	53	17.1
Travel plans	Weekend	63	20.3
	Holidays	86	27.7
	No planning ahead	144	46.5
	Other	17	5.5
Factors influencing destination choice	Social media advertisements	145	46.8
	Promotions	36	11.6
	Direct marketing	43	13.9
	Public relations channels	49	15.8
	Personal selling	11	3.5
	Other	26	8.4
Favorite type of tourism	Sea	237	76.5
	Mountain	39	12.6
	Ecotourism	32	10.3
	Other	2	0.6
Total		310	100.0

Table 2: Cross-loading coefficients of the measurement model

	AD	DM	PR	PS	RI	SA	SP
AD1	0.806						
AD2	0.777						
AD3	0.771						
AD4	0.797						
DM1		0.803					
DM2		0.753					
DM3		0.798					
DM4		0.814					
PR1			0.753				
PR2			0.806				
PR3			0.745				
PR4			0.863				
PS2				0.830			
PS4				0.816			
PS5				0.836			
RI1					0.775		
RI2					0.744		
RI3					0.741		
RI4					0.785		
SA1						0.781	
SA2						0.743	
SA3						0.836	
SA4						0.735	
SP2							0.844
SP3							0.722
SP4							0.834
SP5							0.756

Table 3: Reliability and construct validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
AD	0.796	0.797	0.621
DM	0.803	0.805	0.628
PR	0.804	0.814	0.629
PS	0.769	0.771	0.684
RI	0.759	0.759	0.580
SA	0.777	0.783	0.600
SP	0.799	0.810	0.625

Table 4: Discriminant validity testing using Fornell and Larcker criterion

	AD	DM	PR	PS	RI	SA	SP
AD	0.788						
DM	0.214	0.792					
PR	0.153	0.475	0.793				
PS	0.174	0.400	0.172	0.827			
RI	0.468	0.489	0.504	0.259	0.762		
SA	0.444	0.464	0.463	0.329	0.616	0.775	
SP	0.153	0.299	0.402	0.174	0.269	0.362	0.791

Table 5: Discriminant validity test using HTMT criteria

	AD	DM	PR	PS	RI	SA	SP
AD							
DM	0.262						
PR	0.191	0.586					
PS	0.223	0.509	0.225				
RI	0.600	0.621	0.640	0.339			
SA	0.564	0.577	0.578	0.427	0.799		
SP	0.190	0.371	0.510	0.219	0.344	0.451	

Table 7 presents the f^2 effect sizes, which represent the predictive impact of exogenous variables on dependent variables at moderate levels ($0.02 < f^2 < 0.15$). The mediation analysis was conducted using a bootstrap method with 5,000 iterations, and the results are presented in the following Tables 8 and 9.

Table 6: Multicollinearity and R^2

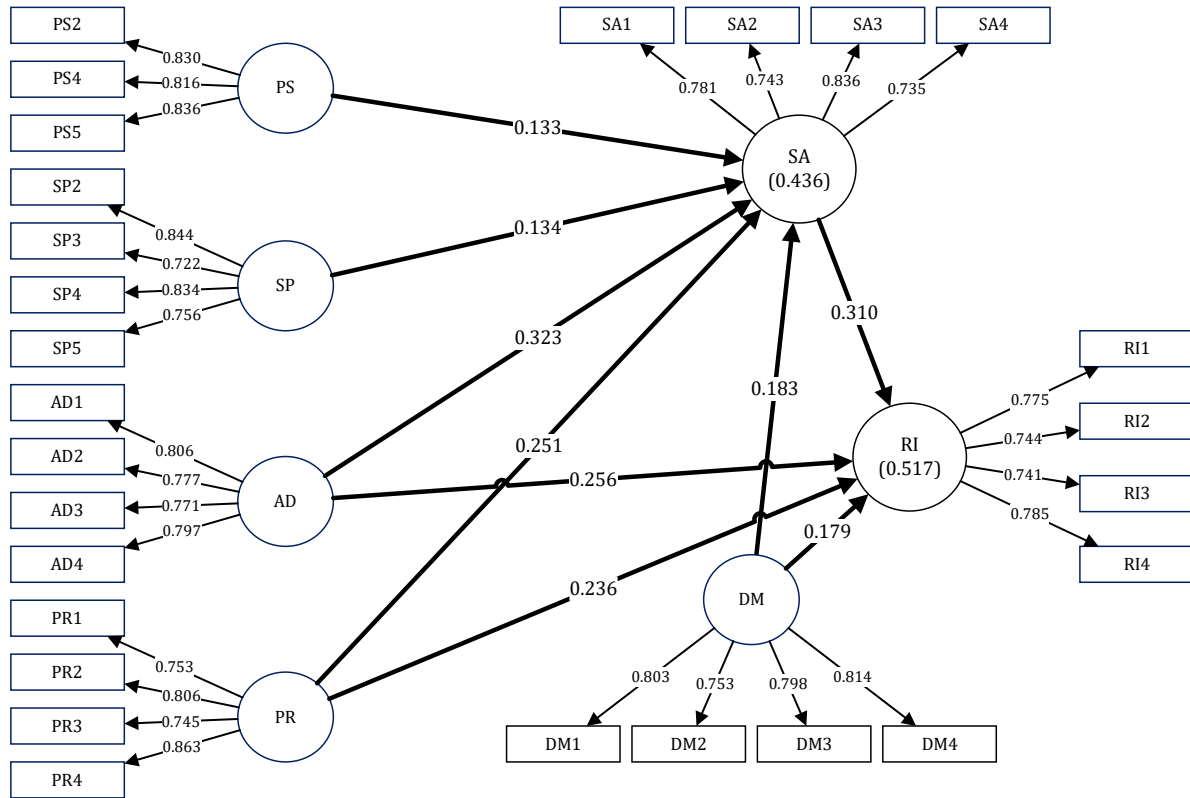| Relationship	Inner VIF	R^2 adjusted
AD → RI	1.252	
AD → SA	1.068	
DM → RI	1.433	
DM → SA	1.525	
PR → RI	1.438	
PR → SA	1.432	
PS → SA	1.208	
SA → RI	1.681	
AD → RI	1.252	
SA		0.427
RI		0.510

Fig. 2: Results of PLS-SEM model analysis

Table 7: Effect size of exogenous constructs

Structure	Effect size (f^2)	Effect size (f^2)
	RI	SA
AD	0.108	0.173
DM	0.046	0.039
PR	0.080	0.078
PS		0.026
RI		
SA	0.118	
SP		0.026

Table 8: Results of the analysis of intermediate relationships

Relationship	Regression weights	Standard error	T-value	P-values	Intermediary relationship
R → SA → RI	0.078	0.027	2.890	0.004[a]	Partial
PS → SA → RI	0.041	0.020	2.057	0.040[b]	Full
SP → SA → RI	0.041	0.017	2.461	0.014[b]	Full
AD → SA → RI	0.100	0.030	3.338	0.001[a]	Partial
DM → SA → RI	0.057	0.031	1.819	0.069[c]	Partial

a: p-value < 1%; b: p-value < 5%; c: p-value < 10%

The results in Table 8 show statistically significant mediation relationships at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, with the relationship DM → SA → RI being significant at the 10% level.

The results from Tables 8 and 9 show that advertising (AD, β = 0.356), direct marketing (DM, β = 0.235), and public relations (PR, β = 0.314) have both direct effects on return intention (RI) and indirect effects through satisfaction (SA). Meanwhile,

personal selling (PS, β = 0.133 + 0.041 = 0.174) and sales promotion (SP, β = 0.134 + 0.041 = 0.175) only have indirect effects on return intention through satisfaction. Satisfaction has a strong influence on return intention (β = 0.310). The hypothesis testing results show that advertising, direct marketing, and public relations strongly affect young people's return intention to Vung Tau, both directly and indirectly.

Table 9: Results of total impact analysis

Relationship	Regression weights	Standard error	T-value	P-values
AD → RI	0.356	0.055	6.519	0.000
AD → SA	0.323	0.061	5.272	0.000
DM → RI	0.235	0.064	3.660	0.000
DM → SA	0.183	0.076	2.413	0.016
PR → RI	0.314	0.060	5.219	0.000
PR → SA	0.251	0.068	3.693	0.000
PS → RI	0.041	0.020	2.057	0.040
PS → SA	0.133	0.062	2.166	0.030
SA → RI	0.310	0.069	4.500	0.000
SP → RI	0.041	0.017	2.461	0.014
SP → SA	0.134	0.051	2.597	0.009

5. Results and discussion

The demand for improving the effectiveness of communication strategies has become increasingly important, particularly in the tourism sector. Based on the findings of this study, Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has a positive and significant effect on satisfaction and return intention to Vung Tau for Generation Z. Specifically, the components of IMC—Personal Selling, Sales Promotion, Advertising, Public Relations, and Direct Marketing—directly affect satisfaction and indirectly affect return intention through satisfaction. Among these, Advertising, Public Relations, and Direct Marketing also have direct effects on return intention. These findings are consistent with the research by Fitriana et al. (2021), which showed that IMC has a direct impact on customer satisfaction.

The more accurately and clearly marketing communication is executed, the better the customer feedback, ultimately leading to greater customer satisfaction. Other studies also show similar results (Šerić et al., 2015; Porcu et al., 2019). Advertising is not merely a marketing tool but also a bridge between tourists and the destination, capable of creating lasting impressions and encouraging return intentions. Public Relations (PR) is more than just communication; it is a process of building and maintaining positive relationships between an organization and its stakeholders, including customers. PR is seen as an effective tool to satisfy customers and earn their trust. This is also aligned with the studies by Ekakitie-Emonena and Sado (2023), which show that PR has a moderate relationship with customer loyalty. Other IMC components, like Personal Selling, Sales Promotion, and Direct Marketing, also have significant effects on the research results. From this, it can be concluded that stakeholders need to strengthen their marketing strategies and focus on long-term marketing development. Promoting Vung Tau as an attractive tourist destination should be featured on various communication channels: advertising, PR, digital marketing, and even traditional and online TV channels, as well as international events, to introduce Vung Tau to domestic and international tourists.

The research findings of Ngoc and Trinh (2015), Wantara and Prasetyo (2023), and Fitriana et al. (2021) are consistent with this study, showing that satisfaction positively affects tourists' return intention to a destination. It can be concluded that as tourist satisfaction increases, the likelihood of their return to their destination also rises. The IMC elements considered in the above studies—Advertising, Sales Promotion, Public Relations, Direct Marketing, and Personal Selling—all significantly influence return intention through satisfaction. The core idea of IMC is an interactive communication model, where marketing activities are no longer divided by the purpose and function of each department, but rather systematically integrated into promotional activities, combining the desires and needs of stakeholders, the community, and tourists, with the support of all stakeholders in the Vung Tau region. The research results show that integrated communication not only directly influences tourists' return intention but also does so through the important intermediary factor of satisfaction. When IMC campaigns are effectively implemented, they create certain expectations in tourists. If the quality of products and services exceeds tourists' expectations, their satisfaction increases. In other words, satisfaction acts as a bridge between IMC activities and Generation Z tourists' behaviors, driving them to return to Vung Tau. The intermediary role of satisfaction in this relationship is crucial; it shows that to encourage tourists to return, tourism managers must not only attract them initially but also ensure that they have excellent experiences to create long-term satisfaction. From the above issues, several directions need to be implemented to attract tourists in general and Generation Z tourists in particular to Vung Tau through IMC. Developing a strategic destination image, where IMC is applied as an effective tool, is essential. Building relationships between management agencies and businesses to develop large-scale, highly effective tourism marketing campaigns aimed at all age groups, especially Generation Z, who are fond of exploring and learning, is crucial. The government can facilitate legal, planning, and communication aspects, while private enterprises can participate in organizing and providing services. In addition to improving infrastructure, it is important to enhance the quality of tourism and promote types of tourism that highlight cultural and historical values alongside traditional beach tourism. To effectively promote the destination image, managers need to focus on restoring and embellishing historical and cultural relics; at the same time, regularly organize cultural and sports events to promote Vung Tau tourism to increase the ability to attract young tourists to return. Focus on building a tourism environment through themes such as "Clean Beach," "Clean Food," "Green Tourist Area" to create a positive impression in the hearts of tourists. Establish minimum standards for related businesses such as hotels, motels, inns, restaurants, beaches, etc. Disseminate tourism regulations to all groups and classes in society, encourage these groups to voluntarily and actively participate in protecting the environment and tourism resources, and build a movement of civilized and friendly behavior towards tourists. Travel companies play a critical intermediary role in connecting tourists with the destination and act as a bridge between service providers and customer needs. Young people love diverse forms of tourism, businesses need to build new tourism routes, visit historical sites, adventure sports, eco-tourism, traditional craft villages, homestay tourism, diversify outdoor activities, night tourism, link Vung Tau tourism with neighboring tourist destinations to create richness and improve business efficiency for stakeholders. Tourism businesses should develop

effective IMC marketing strategies, clearly identifying each target customer segment, then approaching customers to offer advice, provide information, and propose promotions and travel packages that match customers' budgets and needs. To implement effective integrated communication, travel companies need to launch appropriate and appealing marketing campaigns. Since Generation Z frequently engages with social media, using popular platforms like Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and email is suitable. Promotional content should be concise, to the point, and impactful, such as videos, blogs, images, and customer reviews of destinations. Additionally, traditional media channels like newspapers and television can be used, but it is crucial to ensure consistent messaging across all channels, which helps build a strong and trustworthy brand image in the eyes of tourists and increases their likelihood of returning to Vung Tau.

6. Conclusion

This study contributes a research approach to examining the influence of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) on Generation Z's return intention to Vung Tau, with satisfaction acting as a mediator within the context of Vung Tau, Vietnam, as a tourist destination. The research results demonstrate that the IMC components—Personal Selling, Sales Promotion, Advertising, Public Relations, and Direct Marketing—affect Generation Z's return intention to Vung Tau both directly and indirectly through satisfaction with the destination.

The study emphasizes the strategic role of IMC tools in building and maintaining a connection between tourists and the destination, thereby sustainably enhancing its appeal. The research findings not only provide valuable insights for managers and tourism businesses on how to improve tourists' experiences but also suggest specific communication activities to enhance the image of Vung Tau as a destination. Achieving the best outcomes in promoting tourism values and retaining returning tourists requires a tight and unified collaboration between authorities and tourism managers in organizing and executing tourism activities. This serves as a foundation to propose implications focusing on improving the five IMC components identified in this study to enhance tourist satisfaction. Among these, training human resources, particularly in relevant fields, and creating cohesive promotional campaigns are essential for ensuring that tourists clearly perceive the value that Vung Tau truly offers when they visit, aligning with what has been promoted.

7. Limitations and future research

Firstly, this study used a convenience sampling method, so the findings should be interpreted with caution. The survey data were cross-sectional and collected only in Vung Tau, a specific tourist destination. However, revisit intention is better understood through data collected over time. Therefore, future research should cover a wider geographical area and continue data collection over a longer period to better understand tourists' return behavior.

Secondly, young people are skilled in using mobile devices, and tourism agencies often rely on digital marketing to target them. This study did not examine how these digital factors influence young tourists' intention to revisit. Future research could include variables such as electronic word of mouth, social media, and short videos to better explore the behavior of young tourists.

List of abbreviations

IMC	Integrated marketing communications
PLS-SEM	Partial least squares structural equation modeling
SPSS	Statistical package for the social sciences
AVE	Average variance extracted
CR	Composite reliability
VIF	Variance inflation factor
HTMT	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio
S-O-R	Stimulus-organism-response
AD	Advertising
DM	Direct marketing
PR	Public relations
PS	Personal selling
RI	Return intention
SA	Satisfaction
SP	Sales promotion

Compliance with ethical standards

Ethical considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and national research committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study. Participation was voluntary, and responses were anonymized to protect participants' identities. No personal or sensitive data were collected.

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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