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**DOCTORAL THESIS:**

**THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING, VISITOR ENGAGEMENT ON LOYALTY TO CRUISE DESTINATIONS IN CENTRAL VIETNAM**

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# The need for research problems (the necessity of the research)

## Theoretically

A traveler's commitment to a destination, also known as destination loyalty, is considered the foundation of travel destination brand equity, which determines a destination's competitiveness [144]. In the tourism industry, destination loyalty has long received significant attention in empirical studies [6, 11, 53, 61, 63, 65-67, 84, 93, 102, 127, 138, 153, 154, 165, 195, 225, 230, 234, 239,

240, 256, 271, 275, 276]. This can be explained by two reasons: From a practical standpoint, it may be due to the important role destination loyalty plays, especially in contributing to the bottom line of the business. For example, some authors have predicted that a 5% increase in customer retention could generate profit growth of 25–95% across a range of industries [61]. Another study has shown that by reducing customer churn by 5%, a service company can increase profits by up to 85% [111]. This problem is also found in the hospitality industry, such as in restaurants, hotels and luxury tours [50, 111, 188]. Loyal customers will help businesses maintain lower costs than those associated with acquiring new customers [21, 188, 239].

Theoretically, creating a distinct destination image is considered an effective measure to enhance traveler loyalty [61]. In reality, however, even destinations with a positive image and successful branding can face challenges in understanding what contributes to loyalty, not all due to novelty-seeking behavior. Indeed, there seems to be no consensus in the literature on the extent and direction of the relationship between the different components of the destination image (cognitive or emotional) and destination loyalty of the traveler [275].

Destination loyalty studies indicate that one of the most determining factors for a traveler's future visit to a destination is their satisfaction with previous stays [11, 13, 42, 61, 65, 67, 95, 122, 127, 142,

143, 148, 197, 237, 246, 249, 271, 276]. Therefore, in this study, the author also uses traveler satisfaction with the destination as an intermediate variable that impacts traveler destination loyalty.

Plus, today's customers expect brands/businesses to connect with them and do more for them than just sell them a product, indicating the shift from transactional marketing to relationship marketing, which has occurred over the last decade or so.[68] 71, 115, 223, 235, 259]. Of particular interest in relationship marketing is the concept of customer engagement (CE), which is considered an important program that marketers today must actively pursue if they want to build long-term relationships and interactions with customers as well as reinforce customer loyalty to their brand They [145, 160, 161, 223]

Through the literature review, the author found that a number of previous studies have shown a significant positive impact of CE (Customer *Engagement)*  on brand loyalty using the CE scale [219] or the hotel and airline brand engagement scale [235]. Prebensen and Foss (2011)[210] have shown that: Tourist engagement (TE) is more likely to have special and unforgettable experiences, which is positively correlated with behavioral intentions after their visit. These studies have further confirmed the positive impact of TE on DL.

Theoretically, as the main structure for highlighting the interactive, co-creative experience between the customer and the service provider, the term "[customer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/customer_engagement)  [engagement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/customer_engagement) ([CE)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/customer_engagement)" has been widely used and mentioned in discussions related to the service sector[37] and the expanded field of relationship marketing [259]. Academic studies have gradually realized the important role of CE in predicting customer emotions and behavior, such as customer trust [103, 135], customer advocacy [181], co-creation of customer value [119], customer satisfaction [198", 199] and customer loyalty [25, 97, 116]. Global professional marketing agencies such as the Institute of Marketing Science[168] have also put customer engagement (CE) on the research priority list for the period 2022 – 2024 to assist marketing professionals in identifying effective and long-term strategies to build sustainable engagement with their customers [168], this further proves the importance of CE research at the present time.

Recognizing the importance of customer engagement to the branding of your products/services, many researchers have conducted research into their impact on brand trust, brand values, and customer loyalty to the brand. However, in the field of tourism, the study of the impact of tourist engagement on customer behavior and decisions is quite modest, especially for marine tourism destinations in Vietnam.

Besides, in today's digital era, technological advancements and the popularity of [social](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/social_media) media marketing have revolutionized the way businesses promote their products and services [57]. Statistics indicate that the use of social networks is one of the most popular online activities, and the number of social media users is expected to reach 40.41 billion by 2025 ([www.statista.com/statistics).](http://www.statista.com/statistics)) [Among the most popular social media platforms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/social_media)  worldwide, Facebook ranks first with the number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide is 2.989 billion as of Q1 2023 ([www.statista.com/statistics](http://www.statista.com/statistics)), in Vietnam by June 2023 according to Data Analysis for Marketing statistics, there are 85,200,000 facebook users in Vietnam (accounting for 84.1% of the nation's population) [183]. Social media plays a huge role in influencing consumer behavior and perception in society

today [182]. What's unique about [social media](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/social_media)  marketing is that the interactive feature allows businesses to incorporate and facilitate building customer relationships with brands, leading to brand love and  [brand loyalty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/brand_loyalty) [59, 99]. The term "social media marketing[" was coined due to the fact that businesses use](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/social_media) social media platforms [as their primary communication channel to market their products and services [60].](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/social_media)

In addition, [social media platforms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/social_media) are the main source of consumer information when making purchasing decisions [167]. [Social media platforms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/social_media) dominate as a new marketing communication tool for brands to refocus on experiential interaction [128]. Since the emergence of COVID-19, businesses have experienced a drastic shift in the discovery of digital media channels, which has led to an increase in the use of [social media marketing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/social_media) to promote and advertise their products and services [23]. At the same time, One report demonstrates that [social media](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/social_media) advertising is more popular than paid search [20]. According to some studies, a brand's [social media](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/social_media)  marketing (SMMA) activities have a significant impact on consumer reactions [12, 87, 94, 112, 117, 134, 137, 182, 189, 231, 268]. However, how SMMA's cognitive mechanisms affect customer engagement (CE) and destination loyalty (DL), especially cruise destinations, has yet to be explored synchronously. As such, this study aims to fill the gap by proposing a multi-sequence mediation model to explain the relationship between SMMAs, the engagement of visitors to loyalty to marine tourism destinations.

## In practical terms

Tourism is known to be a fast-growing industry in all countries and is a major source of wealth, livelihoods and income [158, 164]. In Vietnam, tourism is identified as 1 of 3 key economic sectors that the State focuses on infrastructure investment, constantly developing and contributing greatly to the country's economy. Besides, with the advantage of a country with a coastline of more than 3,260 km, more

3,000 large and small islands, up to 125 beaches, most of which are beautiful beaches, beautiful bays, clear blue water stretching to the sea, and lush and cool tropical islands all year round are favorable conditions for sea tourism to develop. In particular, Danang beach has been voted by Forbes magazine as 1 of the 6 most charming beaches on the planet, Vietnam is also 1 of 12 countries with the most beautiful bays in the world such as Ha Long Bay, Nha Trang Bay.... Vietnam's 28 coastal provinces and cities cover an area of 41.3% of the country's total area, where 49.2% of the total population is concentrated, with a population density higher than the national average [4]. Marine tourism is identified as an important sector in Vietnam's overall marine economy, not only contributing greatly to the national GDP, but also creating jobs for a large number of workers, including professional workers in the tourism industry and indirect social workers. Tourism is an important type of livelihood, contributing to diversification and raising the income of coastal people [3].

Recognizing the advantages and potentials of socio-economic development based on marine resources, Resolution No. 09-NQ/TW, dated February 9, 2007, of the 4th plenum of the X session, *"On Vietnam's maritime strategy to 2020*"; Resolution No. 36-NQ/TW, dated October 22, 2018, of the 8th Central Conference of the XII session*, "On the strategy for sustainable development of Vietnam's marine economy to 2030, vision to 2045*" emphasizes the central task of making Vietnam a strong maritime country with sustainable development, prosperity, ensuring security and safety of the marine economy; in which, it is determined that by 2030, pure marine economic sectors will contribute to the country's GDP of about 10%; the economy of 28 coastal provinces and cities is estimated at 65-70% of the country's GDP; marine economic sectors develop sustainably according to international standards...

In addition, in *the "Master Plan for tourism development of the South Central Coast to 2020, vision to 2030*" approved by the Prime Minister together with Decision No. 2350/QD-TTg issued on 24/12/2014, which emphasizes the top task of this region is to develop sea-island tourism to become the leading strength of Vietnam's tourism [1].

With the importance of marine tourism for national tourism development and sustainable socio-economic development identified as a strategic direction in the nation's development, many authors have also studied tourist behavior, especially loyalty of visitors to destinations. However, no studies have been found analyzing the simultaneous impact of the link between social media marketing, visitor engagement and loyalty to destinations, especially coastal tourism destinations in the South Central Coastal Region - Vietnam.

Therefore, the study ***"The impact of social media marketing, visitor engagement on loyalty to marine tourism destinations in Central Vietnam - Vietnam"*** is essential both scientifically and practically.

# Overview of the research situation of the topic

## Theories used in the study

## Consumer behavior theory in tourism

* + - 1. The concept is related to consumer behavior in tourism

According to Kotler (2007) [139], consumer behaviors are defined as the specific behaviors of an individual when making decisions to purchase, use, and dispose of a product or service.

Consumer behavior is the process of allowing an individual or group of consumers to select, purchase, use, or discard a product/service in order to satisfy their needs or desires.[236]

Consumer behavior in tourism is understood as the behavior that travelers exhibit in the search to buy, use, evaluate and discard tourism products that they desire to satisfy their needs during the trip. Behavioral travel consumption focuses on how individuals make decisions about the use of existing resources (time, money)

silver, effort) and the consumption of related tourism products during the trip. From this perspective, tourism consumer behavior answers the question of what tourism products do travelers buy? Why did they buy that product? Where to buy travel products? How often do I buy travel products? What is the evaluation of tourists' tourism products before/during/ and after purchasing the product? How does that assessment affect travel product buying behavior for subsequent purchases? [2].

**A tourism consumer** is understood as a person who buys tourism products in order to satisfy personal needs and desires. Tourism consumers have some basic characteristics as follows: (1) Being large-scale and frequently increasing demand; (2) Abundance and diversity in desire, purchasing power and other characteristics while purchasing and consuming tourism products; (3) Constantly changing tastes in the consumption of tourism products (new products) due to the impact of the environment and living conditions [2].

* + - 1. Consumer buying decision-making process

According to Kotler and Keller (2013) [141] there are many factors that affect consumer buying behavior, some behaviors come from within the consumer himself, but there are also behaviors that come from external stimuli. These stimuli will affect the psychology of consumers (motivation, perception, learning) plus personal characteristics (cultural, social, personal), thereby shaping the decision-making process (problem awareness, information search, evaluation of options, purchasing decisions, etc post-purchase behavior), after going through this process the consumer comes to a purchase decision (Figure 1).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Các kích thích của marketing*** | ***Tác nhân kích thích khác*** |  |
|  |
| * Sản phẩm/ dịch vụ (Product) * Giá cả (Price) * Phân phối   (Place)   * Truyền thông (Promotion) | * Nền kinh tế * Công nghệ * Chính trị * Văn hóa |
|  |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Tâm lý NTD** |  |
|  |
| * Động cơ * Nhận thức * Học hỏi * Ký ức |
|  | |
| **Đặc điểm NTD** |  |
|  |
| * Văn hóa * Xã hội * Cá nhân |



* Lựa chọn sản phẩm
* Lựa chọn thương hiệu
* Lựa chọn đại lý
* Tổng số tiền mua hàng
* Xác định thời gian mua hàng
* Phương thức thanh toán

***Quyết định mua***

* Nhận thức vấn đề
* Tìm kiếm thông tin
* Đánh giá

lựa chọn

* Quyết định mua hàng
* Hành vi sau mua hàng

***Quy trình ra quyết định mua***

*Source: Kotler and Keller (2013)[141]*

## Figure 1: Patterns of consumer behavior

* + - 1. Consumer behavior research model in tourism

Travelers' decision-making patterns are similar to other types of goods/services, including the pre-purchase, during, and post-purchase periods. Through the overview of the research literature that has been implemented, there have been quite a few different models

Referring to consumer behavior in tourism, in which researchers focus on using some models as follows as a basis for developing consumer behavior studies in tourism.

* + - * 1. *The general model of consumer behavior in tourism* emphasizes the individual aspect of making consumption decisions in tourism that depend on two groups of factors:
* *The first* group is external stimuli gathered from the business environment (economic environment, political-legal environment, socio-cultural environment and natural environment). At the same time, this group also includes actors from the tourism business unit through Marketing Mix strategies (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) of them [2].
* *The second group*, is the factors inside the travel consumer. This group is also divided into two components that include factors belonging to individual characteristics such as culture, society, personality and psychological characteristics. The second component refers to psychological developments of tourism consumers such as perception processes, interest, search for tourism product information, assessment of the quality of tourism products/services, attitudes towards selected tourism products, and decisions on selection of tourism products [2].
  + - * 1. *The detailed tourism consumer behavior model*  refers to the consumption decision making in tourism of tourists influenced by four groups of factors at the level from general to specific [2]:

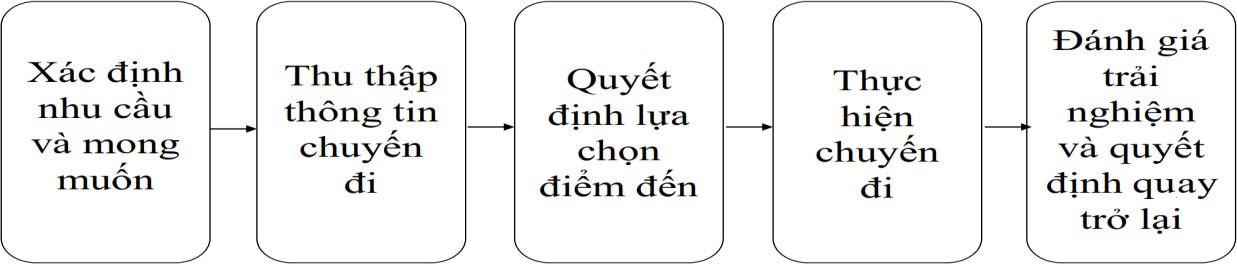
*The first group of factors* overarching all are influences from the cultural environment: national culture, destination, social class; department culture.

*The second group* refers to relevant social aspects such as: the reference group (friends, colleagues), family and the position of the individual in society.

*The third group* describes in detail to individuals such as their demographic characteristics such as: age, occupation, income, marital status, gender, health status.

*Finally, the fourth group* deals more deeply with the inner psychological development of each individual through travel motivations, awareness of the importance of travel, life/travel experiences and their attitude towards buying travel products/services.

* + - * 1. *Patterns of consumer behavior of visitors [171]*

In their research, Mathieson and Wall (1982) proposed modeling traveler behavior through five stages as follows:

***Figure 2: Patterns of consumer behavior in tourism (Mathieson & Wall, 1982)***

* + - * 1. *Patterns of stimulation and response by visitors [178]*

In the study of travel consumer behavior, Middleton (1994) proposed a model that indicates the interaction of four different components with the central component being the characteristics of travelers and their decision-making process. The model considers travel motives as the main determinant in travel consumer behavior. The author emphasizes the important impacts that an organization can make in the traveler's buying process using communication channels (advertising, service introductions, direct sales, etc.). The study also developed a model that hypothesizes that travelers' decisions are the result of four groups of factors:

*The first group*, the stimulus for tourists to travel, includes: guidebooks, introductions from other tourists, advertising and promotion programs of enterprises of enterprises/tourism industries.

*In the second group*, personal and social determinants include: travel motivations, travelers' needs and desires to travel.

*The third group*, a group of external factors, includes destination image, trust in tourist trade intermediaries and cost and time constraints.

*The fourth group*, the characteristics and features of tourist destinations such as perceptions of the link between cost and value as well as attractiveness and amenities offered.

Thus, just like other service industries, consumer behavior research is a very important aspect that must be considered in the marketing activities of businesses/business organizations in the tourism sector in particular and service businesses in general. In particular, identifying factors influencing tourism consumer behavior not only helps researchers and managers better understand the needs of visitors in their purchasing decisions about tourism products and post-purchase decisions. Post-purchase decisions usually involve assessing satisfaction with the quality of travel services in destinations as well as plans to return to travel, intention to introduce others to travel. This is one of the important contents to help tourism business managers at different levels understand to have appropriate policies to build loyalty of tourists. At the same time, basic theories of consumer behavior in tourism will guide the theoretical framework of access to traveler loyalty to tourist destinations.

**Stimulation of input**

**Communication channels**

**Customer psychological characteristics & decision-making process**

**Media filters**

**Purchase output (feedback)**

Investigate

Feel

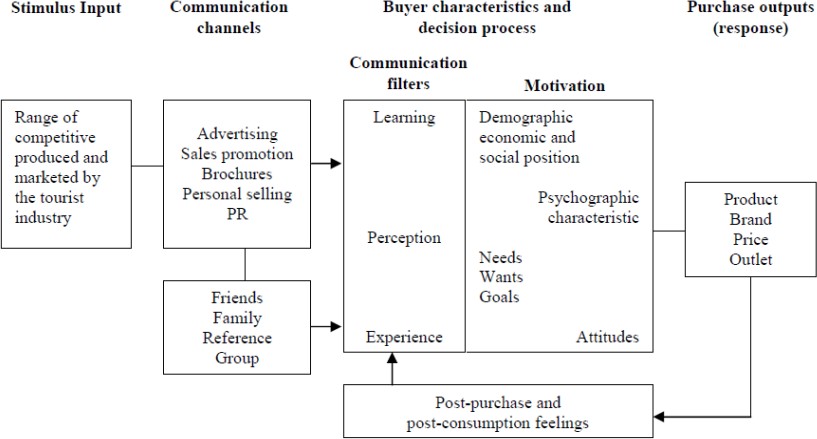
Experience

Demographics, economy and social position

Psychological characteristics

Target Desired Needs

## Figure 3: Patterns of arousal and response of visitors [178]



Cảm xúc sau khi mua và sau khi tiêu dùng

Thái độ

Bạn bè Gia đình

Mối liên hệ Nhóm

Sản phẩm Thương hiệu Giá

Thị trường

Vùng cạnh tranh được sản xuất và marketing bởi ngành du lịch

Quảng cáo Xúc tiến bán hàng

Brochures Bán hàng cá nhân

Quan hệ công chúng

**Động cơ**

## Loyalty

* + 1. Customer Loyalty
       1. Notion

In today's dynamic business landscape, the market is flooded with different types of products to meet customer needs. It is clear that the success of a company largely depends on its ability to attract consumers to its brand and ensure its survival by retaining customers and making them loyal to the brand [176]. Customer retention is very important for a company, because acquiring a new customer costs much more than keeping an existing customer [5, 140, 274]. In order to retain customers, their needs and desires must be fully met, because a highly satisfied customer will stay loyal longer, speak well about the company's products and services, pay less attention to more competitive brands and, in particular, less sensitive to prices and offers of competing brands [5, 35, 140]. Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000)[130] define loyal customers as "customers who purchase from the same service provider whenever *possible and continue to recommend or maintain a positive attitude towards the service provider*".

This suggests that the concept of customer loyalty is of immense importance to a business and is used in the field of marketing to describe a customer's willingness to continue to support a company in the long term. Table 1 describes different views of customer loyalty, in chronological order:

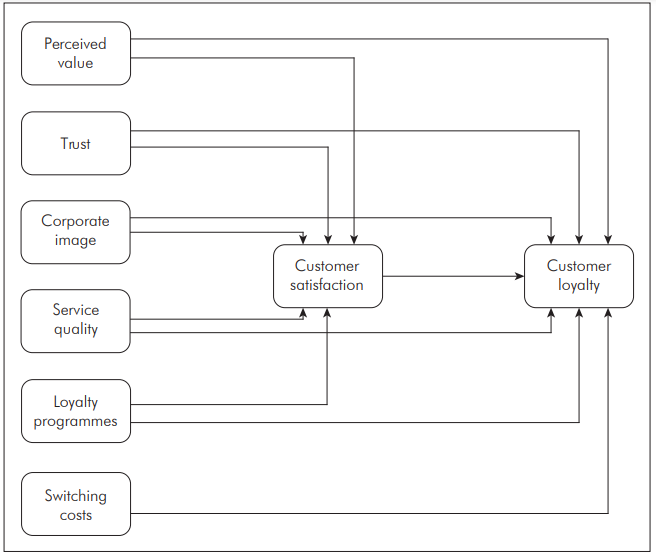
# Table 1: Summary of views on customer loyalty

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Attitude** | **Author** |
| Loyalty is referred to as a biased behavioural response expressed over time by some decision-making unit, with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands, and is a function of the psychological (decision-making evaluative) process.  *Loyalty is referred to as a biased behavioral response expressed over time by several decision-making units, to one or more alternative brands within a set of those marks, and as a function*  *capacity of psychological processes (assessment of decision-making).* | Jacoby and Chestnut (1978)  [121] |
| Loyalty is viewed as a measure of the attachment that a customer has to a brand.  *Loyalty is seen as a measure of the engagement a customer has*  *yes with a brand.* | Aaker (1991)[5] |
| Loyalty is viewed as the strength of the relationship between an individual’s relative attitude and repeat patronage.  *Loyalty is considered the strength of the relationship between an attitude*  *relativity of the individual and repeated patronage.* | Dick and Basu (1994)[73] |
| Loyalty implies consistent repurchase of a brand, resulting from a positive affection of the consumer towards that brand.  *Loyalty implies the consistent acquisition of a brand, stemming from a positive consumer sentiment towards*  *that brand.* | Mellens et al. (1996)  [176] |
| Customer loyalty means an intended behaviour towards the product. *Customer loyalty means an intended behavior towards the product*. | Andreassen and Lindestad (1998)  [14] |
| Building customer loyalty is not an easy task, because loyalty operates in a psychological and competitive context.  *Building customer loyalty is not an easy task, because loyalty works in a psychological and competitive context.* | Chakrapani (1998)[46] |
| Loyalty is a deeply held commitment to rebuy or re-patronise a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour. *Loyalty is a deep commitment to consistently acquire or re-patronize a preferred product/service in the future, thus resulting in repeated purchases of the same brand or the same set of trademarks, despite the effects of circumstances and efforts*  *Marketing has the potential to cause conversion behavior.* | Oliver (1999)  [192] |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Attitude** | **Author** |
| Customer loyalty is about much more than repeat purchases; loyal customers talk favourably about the company and its offers through positive word-of-mouth communication with their family members, colleagues, and business partners.  *Customer loyalty is more than just repeat purchases; loyal customers speak well about the company and its offers through active word-of-mouth communication with family members,*  *their colleagues and business partners.* | Reichheld (2003)  [220] |
| Customer loyalty is repeated purchase of a particular product or service during a certain period of time.  *Customer loyalty is the repeated purchase of a product*  *specific products or services for a certain period of time.* | Yi and Jeon (2003)[270] |
| Loyalty means faithfulness which means unswerving devotion.  *Loyalty means fidelity, unwavering devotion.* | Nunes and Drèze  (2006) [191] |
| Customer loyalty is treated as a focal point of interest for marketing researchers and practitioners.  *Customer loyalty is considered the focus of interest of*  *marketing researchers and practitioners.* | Russell-Bennett et al. (2007)[224] |
| The customer loyalty concept has its roots in consumer behaviour theory and is something that consumers may exhibit towards brands, services or activities.  *The concept of customer loyalty is rooted in the theory of consumer behavior and is something that consumers can express towards*  *with brands, services, or activities.* | Boohene and Agyapong (2011)  [33] |
| Customer loyalty is a collection of attitudes aligned with a series of purchase behaviours that systematically favour one entity over competing entities.  *Customer loyalty is the set of attitudes that align with a range of buying behaviors that systematically favor an entity over competing entities.* | Watson et al. (2015)  [261] |

Thus, we can see that customer loyalty has been defined in many ways. *The first definition of loyalty* is attitude [5, 46, 121, 176]. Customers' trust in the value received leads to their overall attitude toward a product or service, such as acquisition intent [83, 100]. *The second defines loyalty as* behaviors, including continued purchases and recommended actions [14, 33, 121, 176, 270]. An alternative concept is the integration of two perspectives, defining customer loyalty as the relationship between relative attitudes and repeat purchase behavior [73, 192, 261].

* + - 1. Factors affecting customer loyalty and their impact on customer loyalty



*Niềm tin*

*Chi phí*

*chuyển đổi*

*Các chương trình KH trung thành*

*Chất lượng dịch vụ*

*Lòng trung thành*

*Sự hài lòng*

*Hình ảnh*

*công ty*

*Giá trị cảm nhận*

# Figure 4: Summary of determinants and influences on customer loyalty

The determinants of customer loyalty are not fixed, they are complex, change and evolve over time [125]. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the main factors that determine customer loyalty and how each factor affects loyalty. Accordingly, *customer satisfaction*  [35, 79, 169, 192], perceived value  *[162, 263], trust*  [16, 30, 49, 85, 221*], company image* [14, 33, 187*],* substance

*The amount of service*  [22, 215, 274*], loyalty programs [156, 177, 222] and* switching costs *[126, 132, 152, 196, 200] have been identified as the seven main determinants affecting customer loyalty.*

The comprehensive consideration of the determinants of customer loyalty helps to confirm that customer loyalty is significantly influenced by a number of factors, such as customer satisfaction, perceived value, trust, company image, service quality, etc loyalty program and switching costs. The conceptual framework (Fig. 4) has been developed to synthesize the determinants of customer loyalty, describing the relationship between these influences. Accordingly, perceived value, trust, company image, service quality, loyalty program and conversion cost have been identified as core influencing factors

core to customer loyalty. However, customer satisfaction serves as a major determinant of customer loyalty, where it directly impacts loyalty and mediates the relationship between customer loyalty and other determinants of customer loyalty.

* + 1. Tourist Loyalty

Visitor loyalty has been considered an extension of customer loyalty in the tourism environment [17, 18]; That is, if the destination experience is considered a product, the traveler may choose to return or recommend it to friends and relatives [61, 271]. In particular, traveler loyalty has been conceptualized in one of the following approaches: behavioral loyalty, attitudinal loyalty, and aggregate loyalty [121]. Behavioral loyalty focuses on behavioral outcomes, such as repeat consumption. This approach often fails to reveal the prerequisite factors affecting customer loyalty [271]. Attitudinal loyalty refers to a traveler's psychological manifestation such as the intention to return to the destination or make referrals to other potential travelers. The integrated or combined approach of loyalty shows an integration of both attitudes and behaviors [17, 118]; That is, travelers who show behavioral loyalty to specific destinations tend to have positive attitudes towards those destinations. At the activity level, intention to return and recommend to others is the most commonly used metric for traveler loyalty [10, 105, 110, 195]. Repeat consumption by travelers represents a desirable market segment for many travel products and destinations [150]. They tend to stay longer at a destination [193], spread their mouths positively [195, 233], and engage in more intense consumption activities [157]. Repeat consumers are also cost-effective as they incur much lower marketing costs than first-time consumers [233].

According to Le Chi Cong (2017) [2] concepts related to tourist loyalty based on the synthesis of prior research in various fields and the statement of traveler loyalty to a tourist destination are approached on three main aspects:

*First*, behavioral loyalty is expressed as the set of travelers' reactions that can be observed through the frequency of their return to travel during a specified period of time (the number of times they return to travel at a destination within a specified period of time) and the length of travelers' stay at that destination (the number of days of stay stay on a trip).

*Second*, attitudinal loyalty is understood as a traveler's preference/intention to return to travel at a destination (measured through statements such as: will/intent/desire/possibility) and intention to introduce others to the travel destination (measured through statements related to word-of-mouth intent such as: will/intended/desired...).

*Tuesday*, aggregate loyalty is viewed as a traveler's commitment to or frequency of return to travel stemming from their positive attitude towards a particular tourist destination.



**Trung thành thái độ Trung thành hành vi**

**Trung thành tổng hợp**

## Figure 5: Loyalty structure

* + 1. Destination Loyalty
       1. Notion

Destination loyalty is an important research concept in destination management and marketing because understanding its basic elements and putting them into practice gives organizations a competitive advantage [239].

Destination loyalty derived from consumer loyalty literature[194]

# Table 2: Summary of views on destination loyalty

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Attitude** | **Author** |
| Destination loyalty is defined as the commitment and trust of customers in a specific tourist destination, based on their previous positive experiences.  *Destination loyalty is defined as a customer's commitment and trust to a particular travel destination, based on experiences*  *their previous positive experience.* | Fakeye and Crompton (1991)[80] |
| Destination loyalty is the willingness of customers to revisit and maintain a continuous relationship with a specific tourist destination, demonstrated through repeat choice and the ability to create attachment to the destination.  *Destination loyalty is a customer's willingness to return and maintain an ongoing relationship with a particular travel destination, as demonstrated by repeated choices and the ability to create engagement with the destination.* | Hu and Ritchie (1993)[108] |
| Destination loyalty is the stability and combination of loyalty and loyal behavior of customers towards a specific tourist destination.  *Destination loyalty is stability and a combination of loyalty*  *and customer loyalty behavior towards a particular travel destination.* | Oppermann (2000)[195] |
| Destination loyalty is defined as the degree of a tourist’s willingness to recommend a destination.  *Destination loyalty is defined as the willingness of*  *tourists to recommend a destination.* | Chen and Gursoy (2001)  [53] |
| Destination loyalty is the repeated behavior of customers to choose a particular tourist destination over others, based on their positive evaluation of the destination. | Beerli and Martin (2004)  [21] |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Attitude** | **Author** |
| *Destination loyalty is the repeated behavior of customers to choose a particular tourist destination over others, based on their positive reviews of the destination.* |  |
| Destination loyalty is defined as repeat purchases or recommendation of destination to other people.  *Destination loyalty is defined as repeat buying behavior*  *or recommend the destination to others.* | Yoon and Uysal (2005)[271] |
| Destination loyalty is defined as the whole of the feelings and attitudes that encourage tourists to revisit a particular destination.  *Destination loyalty is defined as the totality of emotions and*  *The attitude encourages tourists to return to a particular destination.* | Hsu et al. (2008)  [107] |
| Destination loyalty is defined as tourists’ intention to revisit the destination and recommend it to others.  *Destination loyalty is defined as a traveler's intention to return to a destination and recommend that destination to others.* | Chen and Myagmarsuren (2010)[51]  [51] |
| Destination loyalty is defined as a visitor's predisposition to choose a destination repeatedly and make recommendations to others based on positive experiences and satisfaction derived from previous visits.  *Destination loyalty is defined as the tendency of visitors to choose a destination multiple times and make recommendations to others based on positive experiences and satisfaction derived from previous visits.* | Gursoy et al. (2014)  [93] |
| Destination loyalty is defined as revisit intention and recommendation intention.  *Loyalty to the destination is defined as the intention to return and the intention to return*  *intended to introduce.* | Chen et al. (2020)  [54] |

Through the literature review, there have been various suggestions to conceptualize loyalty to the destination, but the widely accepted concept is the traveler's commitment to the destination to return to the destination in the future, recommending the destination to others, etc Positive and reliable word of mouth about the destination.

Although, destination loyalty is an extensively studied field, its theoretical and practical understanding remains elusive. Researchers and experimenters are unable to build consensus on the exact constituent elements of loyalty and how to implement it [174]. In addition, current literature suggests that measuring destination loyalty is challenging and controversial because different measures have been used by different authors [96, 153,

195]. These arguments show a lack of coherence in conceptualizing and measuring destination loyalty in existing literature and require further study.

* + - 1. *Destination loyalty construct and its indicators*

Through the literature review, it can be seen that the indicators used to measure the factors that constitute destination loyalty dependencies include: revisit intention, recommendation, liking and preferences, actual visits. Regardless of whether the dependent variable is named "destination loyalty" or "behavioural intention," studies using different combinations of these indicators to measure destination loyalty are summarized in Table 3.

# Table 3: Indexes used to measure destination loyalty

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Index** | **Index description** |
| Recommendation  *proposed*) | Intention to recommend . . . [127]  Tell others positive things about . . . [213]  Recommend to family, friends and acquaintances . . . [159] Spread positive WOM . . . [163]  Make positive comments on social media . . . [127] Advise other people to visit . . . [207]  I will convince . . . [163]  Speak positive/good about . . . [95]  Tell good/positive experiences to other . . . [260] |
| Revisit Intentions | Intention to revisit . . . [201] Intention to return . . . [179]  Intended to travel in next five years . . . [265] Higher possibility to travel again . . . [123]  I will keep visiting [266] Try to come back . . . [226] Visit in future . . . [154]  I plan to visit . . . [213]  I will make an effort to revisit . . . [138]  Still consider even if cost increased . . . [265]  If I have to choose, definitely I would . . . [229] |
| Liking and preferences | I like . . . more than other destinations [272] Enjoy visit to . . . [244]  Feel very good/better . . . [84] |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Index** | **Index description** |
| (*Favorites and favorites*) | I love staying in . . . [272] My first choice . . . [265]  This would be my preferred choice [207] I love visiting . . . [244]  Feel a sense of attachment . . . [262]  . . . . a lot to me [262]  I feel better when I stay in . . . [272] |
| Actual visits | No of visits to . . . [153]  How many times you have visited . . . [102] No. of repeat visits . . . [175] |

*Source: Singh et al. (2022)[234]*

The indexes in the studies reviewed for this study primarily reflect conative measurement, a method of psychometric measurement that focuses on the behavior of study participants rather than their thoughts or feelings. It measures the level of desire, willpower, motivation and behavior of participants in a particular situation. Conative measurement plays an important role in measuring customer loyalty, as it allows measuring specific customer actions such as intent to return, recommend, and buy back products or services. It is also used to measure the effectiveness of marketing and brand management strategies in various sectors, including the tourism and hospitality industry.

Researchers extensively use a two-index scale of return *intent and* referral intent  *because it is difficult to understand travelers' return to a particular destination because travelers are always looking for novelty and trying to experience a similar new destination [75].*

In this study, two single-item measures were used to assess travel destination loyalty as the ultimate dependency structure: travelers' intention to return to destinations and willingness to recommend favorable destinations to others, with a 7-level Likert scale.

* + 1. Factors affecting visitor loyalty

**Những tiền đề**

**Biến trung gian**

Sự hài lòng

**Tiêu chí đánh giá**

Hình ảnh điểm đến Sự gắn bó với nơi đến Niềm tin

Động lực

Sự quen thuộc với điểm đến Sự thống nhất cảm xúc

Thái độ của du khách

Cảm xúc của du khách

Sự mong đợi của du khách Phù hợp với bản thân Thành thật

Chi phí chuyển đổi Ấn tượng giác quan

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Tình trạng phổ biến CNTT & truyền thông

Sự hiện diện trên mạng xã hội Sự tương tác của du khách Sự tham gia của du khách Trải nghiệm của du khách

**Các đặc tính được nhận thức**

Giá trị được cảm nhận Rủi ro được cảm nhận

Chất lượng DV được cảm nhận Lợi ích được cảm nhận

CP chuyển đổi được cảm nhận Sự an toàn được cảm nhận Sự hấp dẫn được cảm nhận

**Đặc điểm khách du lịch**

Cách tổ chức kỳ nghỉ Người đồng hành Hình thức tour theo gói Thời gian lưu trú

Giới tính Độ tuổi

Trình độ văn hóa Công việc

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**Biến điều tiết (Moderators)**

Mức độ sùng đạo

Sự an toàn được nhận thức Tính chân thật của thương hiệu Việc sử dụng mạng xã hội Người ra quyết định & người không ra quyết định

Khoảng cách văn hóa Nhận thức về thương hiệu Liên kết với thương hiệu Thời gian lưu trú

Động cơ đẩy và kéo

Sự an toàn được cảm nhận Trải nghiệm trong quá khứ Văn hóa

Giới tính

**Hệ quả**

***Thái độ*** Sự ưa thích Lựa chọn

Yêu thích thương hiệu

***Hành vi***

Viếng thăm lập lại

Truyền miệng

Khả năng chuyển đổi Tần suất viếng thăm Tỷ lệ lượt truy cập

*Source: Singh et al. (2022)[234]*

## Figure 6: Premise and consequences of destination loyalty

The literature review shows that there are many factors that affect traveler loyalty, which are summarized in Figure 6. This study will categorize these factors into three distinct groups of factors. These groups are based on perceived characteristics, evaluation criteria and tourist characteristics. The perceived characteristics include premised elements such as perceived value [165], perceived quality of service [165], perceived risk [106], benefits felt[28], perceived switching costs[42], and perceived attractiveness [267]. Criterion elements

The assessment includes destination imagery [207], motivation [159], attachment to the place, authenticity, and many other factors. Traveler characteristics include demographic aspects and trip characteristics of tourists [242]. Satisfaction is considered an intermediate variable because, through a literature review, these premise factors influence destination loyalty through satisfaction. Furthermore, this study also extends regulatory variables.

## Tourist Engagement

* + 1. Customer engagement (Customer Engagement - CE)

1. Notion

The concept of engagement was incorporated into marketing literature in the mid-2000s [34, 37, 103, 146, 199, 250, 254, 259]. Notably, research on customer engagement/engagement focuses mainly in specialized service marketing journals such as: Journal of *Services Marketing (13%), Journal of Service Research (*8%),  *and Journal of Service* Theory and Practice (6%) *[186].*

To date, client engagement has mainly been considered from four broad perspectives: (i) as a *behavioral* expression, derived from the work done by Van Doorn et al. (2010)[250]; (ii) as a *psychological state* according to Brodie et al. (2011) [37]; as a *predisposition to action*  [238]; and (iv) as *a process consisting of multiple steps or stages in the client's decision-making process* [170].

Below the author will synthesize 15 clear definitions from highly ranked (A\* on ABCD rankings) or highly cited (>100 citations)[69] published in leading journals such as Journal of *Service Research, Journal* of the Academy of Marketing Science*,*  *The Journal of Retailing and Industrial Marketing Management* is presented in the following table 4:

# Table 4: Summary of citation definitions from selected high-ranking articles since 2009

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Definition** | **Author** | **Magazine ratings** | **Number of citations** | **Type of participation**  **(Type of engagement)** | **Article type**  **(Type of paper)** |
| 2009 | CE is defined as “*a psychological process that models the underlying mechanisms by which customer loyalty forms for new customers of a service brand as well as the mechanisms by which loyalty may be maintained for repeat purchase customers of a service brand*”  CE is defined as "*a psychological process modeling the basic mechanisms by which customer loyalty forms towards new customers of a service brand as well as the mechanisms by which loyalty can be maintained towards repeat customers of a service brand*." | Bowden (2009) [34] | B | 2148 | Psychology | Notion |
| 2010 | CE is defined as “*a customer's behavioural manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers*”  CE is defined as "*customer behavioral expressions focused on the brand or company, which go beyond purchase behavior, derived from motivating motives*." | Van Doorn et al. (2010)  [250] | A\* | 4571 | Behavior | Notion |
| 2010 | CE is defined as “*active interactions of a customer with a firm, with prospects and with other customers, whether they are transactional or non-transactional in nature*”  CE is defined as "positive *interactions of clients with the company, with potential customers and with other customers, whether they are transactional or non-transactional in nature*" | Kumar et al. (2010)  [146] | A\* | 1822 | Behavior | Notion |
| 2010 | CE is defined as “*the behavioural manifestation from a customer toward a brand or a firm which goes beyond purchase behaviour*”  CE is defined as "*the expression of customer behavior towards a brand or a company that goes far beyond purchasing behavior*" | Bijmolt et al. (2010)[29] | A\* | 723 | Behavior | Notion |
| 2010 | CE is defined as “*active interactions of a customer with a firm, with prospects and with other customers, whether they are transactional or non-transactional in nature*” | Verhoef et al. (2010)  [254] | A\* | 1499 | Behavior | Notion |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Definition** | **Author** | **Magazine ratings** | **Number of citations** | **Type of participation**  **(Type of engagement)** | **Article type**  **(Type of paper)** |
|  | CE is defined as "*behavioral expressions of customers focused on a brand or company that, in addition to purchase, derive from motivating motives*" |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2011 | CE is defined as “*a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, cocreative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g., a brand) in focal service relationships*”  CE is defined as "*a psychological state that occurs as a result of a customer's interactive, co-creative experience with a focal agent/object (e.g., a brand) in focal service relationships*." | Brodie et al. (2011)[37] | A\* | 4622 | Psychology | Notion |
| 2012 | CE is defined as “*turning on customers by building emotional bonds in relational exchanges with them*”  CE is defined as "*the level of involvement of an individual and connection to the services or activities of the organization initiated by the customer or organization*" | Sashi (2012)  [228] | B | 2214 | Emotions/Relationships | Notion |
| 2012 | CE is defined as “*the intensity of an individual's participation in and connection with an organisation's offerings or organisational activities, which either the customer or the organisation initiates*”.  CE is defined as "*the level of involvement of an individual and connection to the services or activities of the organization initiated by the customer or organization*" | Vivek et al. (2012)  [259] | B | 2782 | Behavior/Emotions | Experimental |
| 2014 | CE is defined as “*behavioural manifestations of CE toward a firm, after and beyond purchase*”. *cf.* [van Doorn et al. (2010)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1441358220300392?ref=pdf_download&fr=RR-2&rr=7e5a9b8898e70977&bib0086)  CE is defined as "*the behavioral expressions of a customer's engagement with a company, after and after a purchase*" | Verleye et al. (2014)  [255] | A\* | 373 | Behavior | Experimental |
| 2014 | CE is defined as “*is a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive customer experiences with a focal agent/object such as a firm or brand*”. This study focuses on the behavioral manifestations of CE  CE is defined as "a *psychological state that occurs as a result of a customer's experience of interaction with a focal agent/object such as a company* | Jaakkola and Alexander (2014)  [119] | A\* | 1482 | Behavior | Experimental |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Definition** | **Author** | **Magazine ratings** | **Number of citations** | **Type of participation**  **(Type of engagement)** | **Article type**  **(Type of paper)** |
|  | *or brand*". This study focused on the behavioral manifestations of  CE |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2016 | CE is defined as “*the mechanics of a customer's value addition to the firm, either through director/and indirect contribution*”  CE is defined as "*a mechanism for adding customer value to a company, through direct and/or indirect contributions*" | Kumar and Pansari (2016)  [147] | A\* | 1251 | Behavior | Notion |
| 2016 | CE (in social media) is defined as “*the extent to which the organisation's important customers are active in using social media tools*”  CE (on social media) is defined as "*the degree to which the organization's key customers are active in using social media tools*" | Guesalaga (2016) [92] | A\* | 378 | Behavior | Experimental |
| 2016 | Actor engagement is defined as “*both the disposition of actors to engage, and the activity of engaging in an interactive process of resource integration within the institutional context provided by a service ecosystem*”  Participant engagement is defined as "*including the decision of the participants and the activity involved in the interactive process to integrate resources in the institutional context provided by a service ecosystem*." | Storbacka et al. (2016)  [238] | B | 817 | Decide | Notion |
| 2017 | CE is defined as “*the connection between the customer and retailer*”  CE is defined as "*the connection between customer and retailer*" | Grewal et al. (2017)[89] | A\* | 186 | Emotion | Notion |
| 2017 | CE is defined as “*a customer's voluntary resource contribution to a firm's marketing function, going beyond financial patronage*”  CE is defined as "*a customer's voluntary contribution of resources to a company's marketing function, beyond financial sponsorship*." | Harmeling et al. (2017)  [98] | A\* | 998 | Behavior | Experimental |

Through the overview of documents in table 4, we see that CE is essentially a multidimensional concept, emphasizing many cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects of the relationship between customers and brands / businesses. In particular, most of the documents focus on "customer engagement behaviors (CEBs)". Van Doorn et al. (2010)[250] define CEBs as behaviors that go beyond transactions and can be specifically defined as *"behavioral manifestations of customers focused on the brand or company, beyond purchase behavior, derived from motivations*" (see Table 4). While Kumar et al. (2010)

[146] arguing that CE should include transactional behaviors, most scholars [29, 119, 254, 255] concur with Van Doorn et al. (2010). Because behaviors can be easily observed and measured, this conceptualization is often used by industry practitioners to measure CE, such as customer activities such as online word of mouth, customer reviews, peer-to-peer information sharing, and customer-initiated activities with the company [32].

When conceptualized as a psychological state, CE reflects a multidimensional structure that includes behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement; Brodie et al. (2011)[37] defines it as *"a psychological state that occurs as a result of a customer's interactive, co-creative experience with a focal agent/object (e.g., a brand) in focal service relationships*" (p. 260). The authors recognize that customer engagement is non-linear and does not occur in "sequential, orderly progression of stages over time" [38]. Since CE is contextually oriented, the three-dimensionality of CE can occur in many different sequences [37]. For instance, a customer may be attracted to movie commercials or through conversations with friends, before going online to learn more (emotional + behavioral + cognitive interactions). Thus, this approach takes into account instances where the client interacts subconsciously or unintentionally, cognitively or emotionally, before demonstrating the behaviors initiated by the client. Thus, although behavior is an important expression of cohesion, comprehensive evaluations of CE require recognizing it as a multidimensional construct that includes cognitive and emotional aspects in addition to behaviors [43, 101]. However, concerns about the concept of psychological states have been raised by Abdul-Ghani et al. (2019)[7], who suggest that a state may be transitory and therefore does not reflect the concept of long-term attachment implicit in the literature.

The tendency to participate represents an internal state that indicates a willingness or tendency to participate [81, 238]. This tendency implicitly leads to behavioral manifestations, such as the involvement shown by both. For example, Storbacka et al. (2016)[238] conceptualize participatory engagement as *"both the placement of participants and activities involved in the interaction process to integrate resources within the institutional context provided by a service ecosystem".* Such activities can be assessed through observable participation behaviors.

Other researchers have found that engagement is represented by more than one distinct concept/stage in modeling consumer/agent behavior or decision-making processes. In addition to recognizing the cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects as identified above [37], some researchers conceptualize engagement as several stages of customer decision-making, thus adopting a "process" type model that does not restrict participation to a specific stage, but encompasses a wide range of interactions and experiences; For example, with a brand or company [170, 255].

While engagement research has matured over the past decade, no single concept or definition of customer engagement has emerged. Rather, this review suggests that there are four main streams of conceptualization in the literature to date (i.e. CE as a behavioral expression, psychological state, predisposition and process), which should be recognized and understood by scholars and practitioners of CE.

1. Background theories underpinning customer engagement (CE)

Three interrelated core theories appear in the review study by Ng et al. (2020) [186]: *Relationship marketing, SD logic, Value cocreation.*

**Relationship marketing** is defined as "*attracting, retaining, and enhancing customer relationships in multi-service organizations*" [26]. It is about creating extended or long-term relationships with customers, rather than transactional relationships [264]. Specifically, relationship marketing focuses on interactions between customers and companies from a micro perspective. From that foundation, it provides useful insights into how companies can impact the customer value creation process through couple interactions, such as in buyer-seller relationships [91]. As such, relationship marketing is particularly useful in explaining the drivers behind customer engagement at the micro level, which is central to much of the current CE research. Studies driven by this research focus on how customer engagement can enhance a company's marketing strategy [120].

**SD logic** was first conceptualized in 2004 [251], providing an alternative prism at the metatheoretical level for the commodity-oriented economic exchange model. In contrast to the logic that governs goods where value is conceptualized as embedded in a product, tangible outputs, and discrete transactions, SD logic holds that services are the basis of exchange [252], where suppliers and customers jointly create value [78]. From this perspective, customers integrate resources, including their own, in the value creation process and in this way "*engage".* This view recognizes customers as active players rather than passive recipients [204, 208], a point that is very relevant to CE: It suggests that customers can get more value through such interactions by interacting with the company. Likewise, companies will have the opportunity to benefit from interacting with their customers if they handle those interactions carefully and define the customer experience

positively. The study [253] expanded the value co-creator's perspective from the customer to all agents, supporting a shift in focus from customer to service provider to a more general actor-to-actor (A2A) approach. Thus, the logical SD approach supports the transition from a couple relationship to a broader agent-to-agent (A2A) system perspective [120, 251].

Although SD logic represents abstraction at the metatheoretical level, participation has been argued to represent a mid-level theoretical level that is of great interest and relevant to practice, partly due to its observability [36]. Jaakkola et al. (2018)[120] explain how SD logic and theoretical processes of interactivity inform each other: "*metadata inform management activity by offering a lens through which to view the general logic of the market*" (p. 583). Further research into the process and implications of interacting between layers in the ecosystem will be important for practitioners creating engagement strategies that involve multiple stakeholders across platforms.

**Value** co-creation, a concept reinforced by SD Logic, is particularly useful in investigating the process of co-creation to create value. Value can not only be co-created through a "common process... where the service provider's (production) process and the customer's value-creating and consumption process merge into one directly interactive process"[90] from a micro-perspective [184, 185]. It can also be co-created by integrating resources through interaction and activity with collaborators in the customer's (broader) service network [173]. The application of a value co-creation lens in the CE context not only allows researchers to look at engagement from a couple perspective but also from a network/ecosystem perspective.

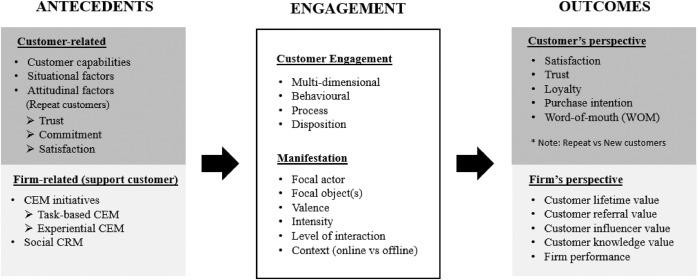
In addition, other CE-related theories identified through a review of previous authors' studies include social exchange theory, stimulus organism response, stakeholder theory, and resource exchange theory [186]. These theories relate to the role of agents in ecosystems, as well as the resources used in exchanges between different agents.

1. Methods for measuring customer engagement

While there are many methods for measuring customer engagement, some authors have drawn their methods based on rigorous conceptual and operational definitions. Researchers following behavior-focused engagement concepts have drawn specific forms of behavior such as loyalty or word of mouth [24, 172, 250], with Kumar and Pansari (2016)[147] measuring customer engagement by direct and indirect outcomes such as purchases, introduction, influence and value of knowledge. The latter method has gained traction in several follow-up studies focusing on participating behaviors [211].

Some researchers have used broader conceptualization and measurement of multiple dimensions, including emotional and cognitive aspects as well as behavioral aspects (104]) while others establish measures that deepen or expand the three aspects of engagement that have been documented. While Dessart et al. (2016)[72] develop 7 dimensions including enthusiasm, enjoyment (affection), attention, receptivity (awareness), as well as sharing, learning, and approving (behavior); The scale of So et al. (2016)[235] includes identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction. Finally, Vivek et al. (2014)[258] derive a customer engagement scale that includes some of the same aspects but introduces a stronger social factor, while recognizing both existing and potential customers; Aspects include conscious attention, enthusiastic engagement, and social connection.

1. Premise and results of CE

The premises and results are shown in [Figure 7,](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1441358220300392?fr=RR-2&ref=pdf_download&rr=7e5a9b8898e70977&fig0001) which provides an overview of CE manifestations, antecedents, and results.

*Source: Ng et al. (2020)[186]*

## Figure 7: Manifestation, antecedent, and results of CE

* + 1. Tourist engagement (TE) in ecotourism
       1. The concept and aspects of TE

The concept of traveler engagement is rooted in the broader realm of customer engagement [217, 259] described above. Tourist engagement is characterized by the psychological state of the traveler, interaction and co-creation through the traveler's experience with a primary activity or object (individual/attraction/action/experience) [37, 109]. Since traveler engagement consists of four dimensions such as (a) social interaction, (b) employee-traveler interaction, (c) relevance, and (d) activity-based engagement [241], therefore, in this study the author retains engagement consistent with these dimensions. In this study, however, social interaction was represented.

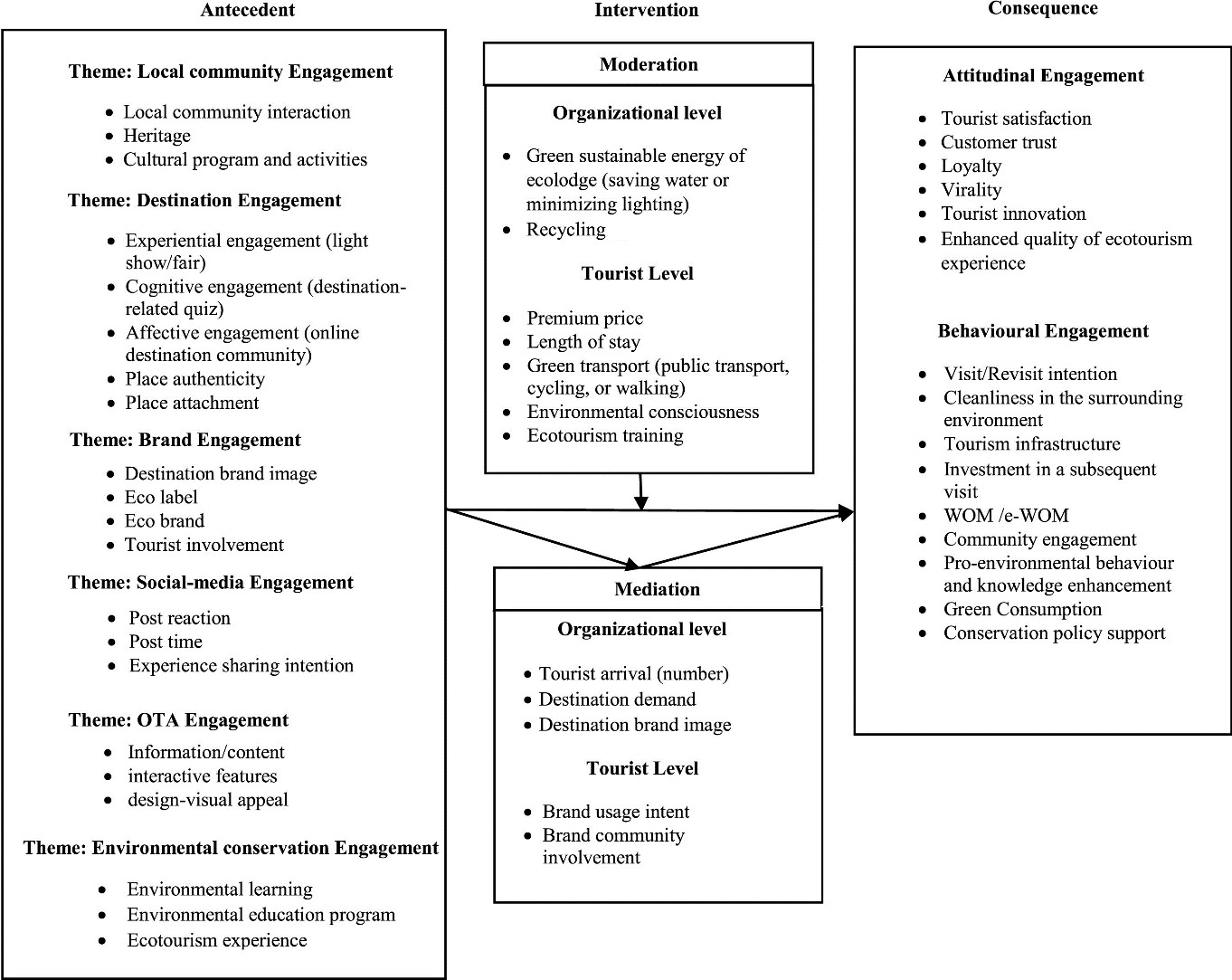
Stand for local community engagement and social media engagement. The aspect of interaction between employees and travelers is explained through the level of interaction with the brand and the level of engagement of online travel agents (OTAs). The participation-related aspect is representative of environmental conservation participation, and activity-based participation is representative of destination participation in this study. Although, previous literature on conventional travel has focused more on tourist engagement [56, 109]. However, tourist engagement in the context of ecotourism research is relatively new [232].

Ecotourism is recognized as responsible tourism to natural sites, regulates the environment and supports the sustainability of neighboring communities [44]. It can bring economic, social and environmental benefits to society [245]. Ecotourism is conceptualized in four possible aspects, defining ecotourism as nature-based, sustainably managed tourism that supports conservation and environmental education [40]. Sustainably managed ecotourism also supports the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), which emphasizes biodiversity conservation, natural levels, maintaining a good proportion of forest area and the openness of natural parks [218].

Although ecotourism is mostly recognized as responsible tourism, unfortunately, all tourists visiting an ecotourism site do not exhibit responsible tourism behavior [8]. Tourists' perception of the importance of responsible tourism is primarily governed by how they view ethical issues related to economic, socio-cultural, and environmental factors [151]. If a traveler values the environment more ethically, they will feel responsible and support nature-based tourism. Travelers' intentions to behave responsibly towards a nature-based site are well predicted by their environmental attitudes [203, 214]. Therefore, their positive or negative attitude can affect the outcome of their interaction with the destination.

* + - 1. Premise and consequences of engagement in the context of ecotourism

Paul and Roy (2023) [202] identify a synthesis of the premise and consequences of participation topics in the context of ecotourism, thereby developing an ACI framework (figure 8) to describe the motivations and reasons for participation in ecotourism as participation at the previous behavioral and attitudinal level as consequences and interventions (regulatory/ mediation) of travel decisions at the organizational and tourist level as intervention.



*Source: Paul and Roy (2023)[202]*

## Figure 8. ACI Framework for Visitor Engagement in Ecotourism

In the ACI framework (Figure 8), prerequisite elements such as destination brand image, eco label, eco-brand, and tourist engagement play an important role in driving engagement in terms of attitudes such as satisfaction, loyalty and trust towards ecotourism sites or eco-resorts [52, 166, 212, 218]. Personal values and attachment to place activate environmental attitudes, which help shape environmentally responsible behavior [203]. Social media posts about travel experiences became viral due to customers' constant reactions to those posts and the seasonality of demand for travel [129, 257]. On the other hand, premises such as environmental learning, environmental education programs, and ecotourism experiences in environmental conservation commitments influence travelers' behavioral engagement such as pro-environmental behavior, knowledge promotion, green consumption, and conservation policy support. However, participation in travelers' attitudes, such as enhanced quality of ecotourism experiences, can be adjusted by green transport (public transport, cycling or walking), environmental awareness, or training in ecotourism [58, 155]. Heritage tours and cultural activities in the local communities involved in tourism result in the cleanliness of

surroundings. However, sustained intelligence, emotional attachment are some of the antecedents of co-creation in delivering optimal travel experiences.

Interestingly, travelers intend to spend more time and resources on their next visit when there is cohesiveness and authenticity of the place. Experiential and cognitive interactions are also useful to speed up community engagement and thus help word of mouth (WOM) or e-WOM. Travelers also engage with travel service providers through the interactive features of their websites and visual appeal, which can be mediated by destination brand imagery or engagement with brand communities [202].

Through the literature review, the author found that visitor participation has been studied from many perspectives but is still fragmentary. Therefore, this study will explore visitor engagement in the context of ecotourism. Ecotourism research is a hot topic of interest to many scholars as this type of responsible tourism is in demand after the pandemic [212]. Therefore, this study may contribute to further research into the relationship between tourist attraction factors within the ACI framework (Figure 8).

## Social media marketing

* + 1. Notion

Social media is defined as "*a group of internet-based applications built on the ideological and technological foundation of Web 2.0, and enabling the creation and exchange of user-generated content*" ([131], p. 61). The power of social media stems from Web 2.0 platforms that provide a technical infrastructure that facilitates user engagement and enables content creation and distribution [27]. In an online context, both the terms social media and social networks are used interchangeably to talk about social networks, however, there are differences between them. Below, the author will summarize the concepts related to social media marketing that have been proposed by previous authors (table 5).

# Table 5: Definitions of Social Media Marketing

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Source** | **Definitions of Social Media Marketing** |
| Taubenheim et al. (2008)  [243] | “A way of using the Internet to instantly collaborate, share information, and have a conversation about ideas or causes we care about”  *A way of using the Internet to collaborate, share information instantly, and chat about ideas or causes that interest us* |
| Tuten (2008)  [247], p. 9 | “A broad category of advertising spending, including advertising using social network, virtual worlds, user-generated product reviews, blogger endorsement, RSS feeds of content and social news sites, podcasts, games, and consumer generated advertising”  *A broad type of ad spend, including ads using social networks, virtual worlds, user-generated product reviews, blogger endorsements, web feeds (Really Simple Syndication - RSS)* |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Source** | **Definitions of Social Media Marketing** |
|  | *of content and consumer-generated social news sites, podcasts, games, and ads* |
| Barefoot and Szabo (2009),  [19],  p. 13 | “A subset of online marketing activities that complete traditional web-based promotion strategies, such as e-mail newsletters and online advertising campaigns”  *A subset of online marketing activities complete the*  *traditional web-based advertising strategies, such as e-mail newsletters and online advertising campaigns* |
| Dann (2010)[70]; | “The commercial marketing events or processes that use social media in an attempt to positively influence consumers’ purchase behavior” |
| Chen and Lin (2019)[55] | *Trade marketing events or processes using media*  *Social media aims to try to positively influence consumer buying behavior* |
| Chan and Guillet (2011)[47],  p. 347 | “A social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through a set of Internet-based applications that enable interaction, communication, collaboration of user-generated content and hence, sharing of information such as ideas, thoughts, content, and  relationships" |
|  | *A management and social process whereby individuals and teams get what they need and want through a set of Internet-based applications that allow interaction, communication, content collaboration due to*  *Users create and, therefore, share information such as ideas, thoughts, content, and relationships* |
| Chi (2011)  [62], p. 46 | “Social media marketing provides meaning and connection between brands and consumers and offers a personal channel and currency for user-centered networking and social interaction”  *Social media marketing brings meaning and connection between brands*  *Brands and consumers, while providing a personal and monetary channel for user-centric networking and social interaction* |
| Dwivedi and | “A dialogue often triggered by consumers/audiences, or a business/product/ services that circulate amongst the stated parties to set in motion a revealing communication on some promotional information so that it allows learning from one another’s use and experiences, eventually benefitting all of the involved parties.”  *A dialogue is usually triggered by the consumer/audience or business/product/service circulating between the stated parties to initiate disclosure communications about certain promotional information to*  *It allows learning from each other's experiences and uses, ultimately benefiting all stakeholders* |
| Associates |
| (2015) |
| [76], |
| p. 5; |
| Alalwan and |
| Associates |
| (2017), [9], |
| p. 1179 |
| Chang et al. | “Social media marketing, which uses social networks such as Facebook to enable content sharing, information diffusion, relationship building, and fans cohesion” |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Source** | **Definitions of Social Media Marketing** |
| (2015),  [48],  p. 777 | *Social media marketing, which uses social networks like Facebook to enable content sharing, disseminate information, build relationships, and engage fans* |
| Pham and Gammoh (2015)  [206],  p. 325 | "Company's process of creating and promoting online marketing-related activities on social media platforms that offer values to its stakeholders |
| Choi et al. (2016)[64],  p. 772 | “Engaging with customers through SNSs is commonly known as social media marketing and brings several benefits to companies, such as creating word-ofmouth, positively affecting customer equity, enhancing customer loyalty to the company, and increasing purchase intention of the company’s products or services”  *Interacting with customers through social networking channels is often referred to as social media marketing and offers a number of benefits to companies, such as creating word-of-mouth, positive influence*  *to customer value, enhance customer loyalty to the company and increase the intent to purchase the company's products or services* |
| Felix et al. (2017),  [82],  p. 121 | “A pure communications tool to push content to customers, the community, or employees. This defender approach, which the informants did not generally recommend, typically focuses on one or a few stakeholder groups.”  *A pure communication tool for pushing content to customers, communities, or employees. In this approach, the bowmen*  *Information level is usually not recommended as a whole, but rather focuses on one or a few typical stakeholder groups* |
| Tuten và Solomon (2017)  [248] | “Is the utilization of social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have value for an organization’s stakeholders”  *The use of social media technologies, channels, and software*  *to create, communicate, deliver and exchange valuable services for organizational stakeholders* |
| Yadav and Rahman (2017)  [268], p. 3;  Yadav and Rahman (2018)  [269] | “A process by which companies create, communicate, and deliver online marketing offerings via social media platforms to build and maintain stakeholder relationships that enhance stakeholders’ value by facilitating interaction, information sharing, offering personalized purchase recommendations, and WOM creation among stakeholders about existing and trending products and services”  *A process by which companies create, communicate and provide online marketing services through social media platforms to build and maintain stakeholder relationships in order to enhance stakeholder value by facilitating interaction, share*  *inform, make personalized purchase recommendations, and create infusions* |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Source** | **Definitions of Social Media Marketing** |
|  | *oral (WOM) between stakeholders about existing products and services and prevailing trends* |
| Ismail (2017)  [117],  p. 137 | “Perceived social media marketing activities is an effective tool developing relationship with customers, and building brand loyalty within the social media-based brand community.”  *Social media marketing activities are perceived as an effective tool for developing relationships with customers and building hearts*  *Brand loyalty in a social media-based brand community* |
| Seo and Park (2018)  [231] | “It allows companies to communicate with consumers easily and quickly. From the company perspective, their mere participation on social media generates positive effects to the same extent as traditional advertisements. Interactions with potential as well as existing customers enable companies to communicate positive brand images”  *It allows companies to communicate with consumers easily and quickly. From a company's perspective, their mere engagement on social media produces a positive effect on the same level as traditional advertising. Interaction*  *With potential as well as existing customers allows companies to communicate a positive brand image* |

Through the overview in table 5, we see that there have been many attempts to come up with a definition of social media marketing, but no general consensus has been reached. First, social media marketing is defined as "*brand messages placed in the context of online social networking. It is characterized by the social connection and interaction of users in communicating with customers and prospects*" ([62] p. 48). In addition, Alalwan et al. ([76], p. 5) define social media marketing as "*a dialogue usually triggered by a consumer/spectator or business/product/service circulating between stated parties to initiate a disclosure communication about some promotional information so that it allows learning from each other's experiences and uses, ultimately benefiting all stakeholders."*  In general, social media marketing can be defined as the process of using technologies and social networks to create, communicate, and provide marketing incentives that enhance value for a company's stakeholders [248, 268, 269].

From the various emerging definitions of social media marketing (SMM), it is possible to extrapolate that: *First*, SMM uses a social media platform and uses it as a marketing tool to create two-way communication in order to engage customers and provide valuable offers, thus attracting higher brand/product or service attention and encouraging consumer engagement. *Second,* SMM enables interaction, content sharing, and information dissemination [48]. *Third*, SMM addresses users' reactions to brands or social networking sites from trust or receipt

consciousness [62, 76], attitudinal responses such as satisfaction [227] or behavioral responses such as word-of-mouth (WOM), purchase intent, and loyalty [136, 137].

Therefore, social media marketing activities can be defined as effective marketing communication methods that aim to capture consumers' awareness and understanding of social media marketing activities in five aspects namely: entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization and word of mouth (WOM) [55, 136, 137, 269].

* + 1. Components of Social Media Marketing

The components of social media marketing have been addressed in a number of studies with different contexts. Kim and Ko (2012)[137] examine the relationship between SMM, the factors driving customer equity; Namely: value assets, brand assets and relationship assets and purchase intent of high-end fashion brands. In this study, SMM activities were identified as entertaining, customizable, interactive, word-of-mouth, and trending. The study results show the positive impact of just three social media marketing activities: entertainment, engagement, and word of mouth on purchase intent through factors that drive customer value; brand value and equity. SMM dimensions of luxury brands have been examined in various studies. In a similar context of haute couture brands, Gautam and Sharma (2017)[86] advocate the mediating impact of customer relationships on SMMs and purchase intent relationships [180]. In the study by Godey et al. (2016) [87], they assessed the influence of SMM activities on brand perception and brand image, which in turn impacted consumer behavior. The findings support a significant influence of entertainment, engagement, and trends on both brand image and brand awareness. However, the results varied between different groups from different countries. Finally, research supports the impact of SMM activities on building brand loyalty. Research by Bilgin (2018)[31] also looked at the relationship between SMM, brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty but across 5 brands scored highly on social media in Turkey. This study supports the findings of Godey et al. (2016)[87]; however, it argues that SMM may not be effective enough to create a positive brand image in consumers' minds and enhance brand loyalty. As consumers who are following brands on social media have a certain image in their minds and may even be loyal to that image. However, Ismail (2017)[117] revealed in his research that SMM activities can enhance customer loyalty to brands and influence brand sense and value.

In various contexts of the tourism industry, Sano (2014)[227] addresses the impact of SMM activities on consumer attitudes and behavior. SMM

Measured by four activities: interactions, trends, customization, and risk awareness. The results show that SMM activities, custom is the most important aspect, influencing customer satisfaction, which in turn has a great influence on purchase intent and word of mouth. This study also clarifies how SMM can impact consumer behavior, illustrated by behavioral intent to purchase or recommend services. Social media increases companies' relational capital through strengthening relationships with customers, which positively influences purchase intent [180]. Chan and Guillet (2011)[47] investigated the reasons behind companies' poor performance in social media marketing. Among these reasons are the lack of interaction between companies and their guests, inaccurate content and inaccurate information posted on social networking sites and non-responsiveness to customers as well as difficult accessibility. These factors lead not only to the underperformance of the company, but also to negatively affect its identity. Social media communication created by the company or user enhances the brand image and overall brand assessment more effectively than traditional marketing tools such as advertising [39].

Seo and Park (2018)[231] added an entertainment dimension to the four aspects identified by Sano (2014)[227] and assessed the impact of SMM activities on brand equity and consumer response, illustrated by electronic word of mouth and commitment to airlines. Their research supports the importance of the year of activity; However, the highest importance in it is trend, followed by customization, and significantly impacts both brand perception and brand image.

From previous studies, it can be concluded that aspects of social media marketing are five: entertainment, engagement, customization, trends, and word of mouth [86, 87, 137, 180]. Entertainment represents the hedonistic aspect; The fun and excitement that comes from using social media. The user's contribution to the brand on social media platforms is described in terms of interaction. Trends, which represent the level of information provided via social media is new and up-to-date. Custom represents the extent to which the service meets the different tastes of customers based on their needs [231]. Word of mouth refers to informal communication between users who exchange opinions and suggestions.[227] This last aspect of word-of-mouth has been replaced by perceived risk, which refers to the ability to alleviate consumer concerns and anxieties.[231] Meanwhile, Bilgin (2018)[31] adds advertising to represent advertising campaigns and online advertising as an important component of social media marketing activities. Yadav and Rahman (2017)[268] develop a scale that measures social media marketing activities in the e-commerce industry and the entertainment aspect is replaced by informational attribution. What counts is the relative importance of social media marketing activities is varied.

Thereby, it can be seen that the role of social media marketing activities in raising brand awareness and creating a positive brand image, thereby influencing consumer loyalty has been studied in several studies. However, these studies either focus on the luxury fashion industry or the tourism sector. In addition, there are only a handful of studies investigating the direct impact of social media marketing activities on consumer reactions and how it can change user behavior.

## Value Co-Creation Theory

Value co-creation has caught the attention of researchers as a broader concept describing collaboration between several interested parties [208, 216, 251]. The study of value co-creation has evolved to cover different contexts [205], themes and sectors, such as churches [88], open innovation[15], healthcare companies [190] and tourism [41, 74, 124] In the tourism industry, value co-creation is primarily studied in terms of active engagement of tourists with the service provider [273]. In this study, the author understands value co-creation as "*a positive, creative, and social process based on collaboration between organizations and stakeholders that creates benefits for all and creates value for stakeholders*" ([114] p. 9). The concept is based on use value, in which the roles of producer and consumer are not distinct, and value is co-created and reciprocal [209, 252].

# Proposed research model

The proposed research model (Figure 9) focuses on the relationship between social media marketing activities, visitor engagement and destination loyalty; and consider the mediating role of co-creation of value and visitor satisfaction.

Social media marketing is considered an effective tool for developing relationships with customers [64, 117]. In addition, such interactions will build trust and eliminate uncertainty that can prevent customers from interacting with the brand

[133] and conduct transactions online [45]. Social media is considered by consumers as a source of information, its reliability is functional for marketing activities. At the same time, companies are using social media platforms to communicate, interact and engage with customers, delivering value and experiences, which in turn enhance their behavioral responses to brands. Consumer awareness of marketing activities carried out on an online context can raise their profile. The positive impact of social media marketing activities on brand loyalty has been experimentally demonstrated [31, 77, 112, 113, 117, 269]. These online activities are brand stimuli that shape the consumer experience and strengthen their relationship with the brand, which in turn

Influencing their responses is described by participation, creative co-value, satisfaction, and loyalty [149].



Sự tham gia

Đánh giá/Hành vi

Đồng giá trị sáng tạo



Giá trị chức năng

**Sự hài lòng của du khách**

**Sự tham gia**

**của du khách**

Giá trị

cảm xúc

Giá trị xã hội

**Lòng trung**

**thành điểm đến**

**Marketing truyền thông xã hội**

**Biến kiểm soát:**

Income Age Gender Education

**Biến điều tiết:**

Kiến thức về biến đổi khí hậu

Trendiness

Customization

Interaction

Entertaiment

Word of mouth

Interaction

Absorption

Attention

Enthusiasm

Identification

## Figure 9: Proposed research model

At the same time, in this model, the author also examines the regulatory role of Climate Change Knowledge in the links between visitor engagement and satisfaction; between satisfaction to destination loyalty.

# Research objectives

## General objectives

The study aims to identify the relationship between social media marketing, visitor engagement to destination loyalty through co-creation of value and visitor satisfaction in the context of marine tourism destinations in the Central region – Vietnam, and examine the regulatory level of climate change knowledge for these contacts. Thereby proposing management implications related to the development of social media marketing activities and the participation of visitors to co-creation of value and satisfaction of tourists, thereby improving satisfaction and loyalty of tourists to marine tourism destinations in the Central region in particular and Vietnam generally in the future.

## Specific objectives

This project aims to achieve the following objectives:

***Objective 1:*** Review theoretical frameworks on traveler behavior, visitor engagement (TE), social media marketing (SMM), destination loyalty (DL) and analysis of relevant research. From there, build a model to study the impact relationship of SMM, TE factors to DL;

***Objective 2:*** Analyze the relationship between social media marketing, visitor engagement and destination satisfaction and loyalty of domestic tourists to cruise destinations in the Central region;

***Objective 3:*** Analyze the impact of climate change knowledge moderators on the relationship between visitor engagement to destination loyalty and visitor satisfaction to visitor loyalty to cruise destinations;

***Objective 4:*** Propose governance implications to improve satisfaction and promote destination loyalty of tourists to cruise destinations in Vietnam.

# Subjects and scope of research

## Subjects of study

Study the relationship between social media marketing, visitor engagement and cruise destination loyalty through co-creation of value and satisfaction of domestic visitors. Empirical study for marine tourism destinations in the Central region.

## Scope of research

1. *Study space:*

Sea tourism destinations in 4 provinces/cities in the South Central coastal region: Da Nang, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa, Ninh Thuan.

1. *Duration of study:*
   * Study duration: From 09/2023 to 12/2024.
   * Data collection period: from 08/2023 - 11/2023 (collecting information for the preliminary quantitative *research phase) and from 12/2023 - 05/2024 (*collecting information for the official quantitative research phase*).*
2. *Survey subjects:* To carry out this study, the author conducted a survey on domestic tourists to sea tourism destinations in the 4 provinces/cities mentioned above.

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