IDENTIFYING URBAN ATTRACTION FACTORS OF HO CHI MINH CITY
NHẬN DIỆN CÁC YẾU TỐ HẤP DẪN CỦA THÀNH PHỐ HỒ CHÍ MINH

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Abstract - Significant emphasis has been placed on the matter of a city's aesthetic appeal. Pattern language and form language, which are derived from the language of geometry and human interaction with the surrounding environment, have been utilized in numerous endeavors to construct an aesthetically pleasing city. Concurrently, numerous studies have been conducted on the elements that inspire visits; however, these studies remain broad in scope and exclusively concentrate on the viewpoint of travelers. A comprehensive analysis of the research outcomes identified 134 influential elements that contribute to the allure of Ho Chi Minh City. These findings should serve as a resource for tourism and cultural managers, authorities, urban planners, and designers, as well as regulators, to improve the quality of urban life and establish an appealing urban setting that appeals to both local inhabitants and tourists.

Key words - Staycation; tourism; urban attractiveness; Ho Chi Minh; urban identity

Tóm tắt - Sự hấp dẫn đô thị là một vấn đề nhận được nhiều quan tâm. Trong phạm trù xây dựng môi trường, nhiều nỗ lực nhằm xây dựng một đô thị hấp dẫn và có bản sắc thông qua ngôn ngữ kiểu mẫu, ngôn ngữ hình thức, tuy nhiên, các ngôn ngữ này phát triển dựa trên ngôn ngữ về hình học và dựa trên cách mà con người tương tác. Trong khi đó các yếu tố tạo nên động lực thu hút du khách ghé thăm một nơi chốn nào đó cũng đã nhận diện, tuy nhiên các nghiên cứu này còn khá chung chung, và chủ yếu tập trung ở góc nhìn của khách du lịch. Nghiên nhận diện được 134 yếu tố tạo nên sự hấp dẫn của Tp Hồ Chí Minh giúp hỗ trợ những người quản lý, quy hoạch, thiết kế, quản lý về du lịch, văn hoá trong việc nâng cao chất lượng sống đô thị, tạo ra một môi trường đô thị hấp dẫn cho cả du khách lẫn người dân địa phương.

Từ khóa - Du lịch tại chỗ; du lịch; sự hấp dẫn đô thị; Hồ Chí Minh; bản sắc đô thị

1. Introduction

Undoubtedly, human lifestyles have been directly impacted by the unprecedented changes ushered in by the Covid-19 pandemic, which may be regarded as beneficial or detrimental. Blockades and movement restrictions were among the most memorable occurrences of that era.

Movement restrictions, and even blockades, are purported to have detrimental effects on individuals' lives, particularly by bringing attention to concerns related to the economy and mental well-being [1–5].

Indeed, natural exposure and social interactions are significantly correlated with the mental and physical health of various age groups. [6–8]. The significance of verdant environment exposure in consistently enhancing an individual's attentional capacity and mitigating psychological and physiological manifestations of stress is further emphasized by Stress Reduction Theory and Attention Recovery Theory [9].

Staycation, which is a portmanteau of "stay" and "vacation," refers to a period during which individuals remain at home and engage in day-trip-capable recreational pursuits that do not necessitate overnight lodging. A worldwide phenomenon since 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, this term was prevalent in the United States throughout the 2007-2010 economic crisis [5, 10]. By fostering sustainable tourism, staycations not only foster the growth of the local economy but also catalyze the rejuvenation of local leisure activities [5]. In recent times, the notion that staycations contribute to the enhancement of participants' psychological well-being through brief local excursions has been bolstered by the findings of

Wong [11]. Moreover, this study elucidates the psychological values of a staycation as a novel manifestation of mental sustainability [11].

The significance of urban areas and cities in the context of modern international tourism has grown substantially since 1980. There has been evidence of a progressive urbanization of the tourist experience as well as an incremental touristification of numerous cities [12]. Cities have, in other words, gained increased appeal as tourist destinations.

To enhance the quality of life for its inhabitants, academics investigate and develop hypotheses regarding the construction of aesthetically pleasing and unique urban environments. Kevin Lynch categorised the components of urban spatial layout, which consist of nodes, paths, districts, landmarks, and borders, according to the visual perception of urban images as described in his book The Image of City [13]. This theory emphasizes the construction of aesthetically pleasing cities using a form language comprised of geometrical principles for assembling matter. In the interim, Christopher Alexander established the language framework for design known as the "pattern language" in his book A Pattern Language [14]. Pattern languages comprise regulations for constructing the structures that govern human interaction with constructed environments [15, 16].

According to motivation theory, draw and push factors contribute to individuals' decision to select a particular travel destination over others [17, 18]. The allure of a municipality is demonstrated by its identity, which consists of both tangible and intangible characteristics.

Both residents' and travelers' perceptions of a particular location within a city have a significant impact on its appeal for staycations. Understanding the attractiveness or identity of urban areas requires an appreciation of the interdependence between tourist-perceived attractiveness and that which is rooted in the relationship of residents with the location.

1.1. Research Status

A study examining the appeal of a city through the lens of tourism or staycations was conducted. Urban attractions were conventionally identified by Alhazzani [19] via the notion of road network sites of interest. This study additionally identified attraction patterns by analyzing visitor numbers, visitor distance distribution, and visitor origin spatial dispersion. Nevertheless, the aforementioned methodology may introduce imprecision when attempting to identify urban attractions due to the restricted capability of identifying sites of interest in situations involving traffic congestion caused by visitors traversing the street network [19]. In addition, specific attractiveness factors have not yet been identified in this research.

An additional study conducted by Kobi Cohen-Hattab investigated the influence of a location's past on its aesthetic appeal. Supply and demand, as stated in the article, contribute to the development of tourism infrastructure [20]. However, this study is limited to a historical perspective and does not examine every facet of an ordinary city.

A series of additional studies identified the factors that attract tourists to a city. Gabriela Sirkis conducted a study that focused on the recognition of various attractions by tourists. She identified four primary factors that influence the appeal of a city to tourists: (1) the tourism ecosystem; (2) the nucleus; (3) meetings, incentives, conventions, exhibitions, and shows (MICE); and (4) related services [12]. However, the scope of this study was limited to cities in Latin America and not the entire globe. Additionally, the research findings identified only the general characteristics of the attraction factors of a city. Boivin examined the perceptions of tourists regarding a city on four distinct levels: nucleus, context, tourist corridor, and complementary attractions [21]. These findings cannot be generalized, however. Undoubtedly, distinct cities possess unique attributes and appeal.

Regarding the objectives and disciplines at play, literature explains the identity and allure of a location in a variety of ways. Some believe that the aesthetic appeal of a city is predominately determined by its physical attributes, such as its layout and physical components. Some proponents contend that the allure of a municipality is influenced not solely by its physical attributes, but also by recollections and historical significance. The concept of identity, as understood by individuals, pertains to the attributes of a particular location [22].

Numerous studies on the tourism attractiveness variables of a city have concluded that historic structures, urban districts, and special events are the primary factors that attract visitors. In contrast, secondary variables pertain to the infrastructure offered by the municipality to its visitors [23–27]. The research focuses exclusively on visitors rather than examining the perspectives of all users.

Regarding research on staycations, Pawlowska examined tourism products and evaluated the relationship between staycations and the present needs of locals. The natural environment and the local cultural heritage are regarded as fundamental to the formulation of urban attractiveness [28]. Jeuring investigated the relationship between perceived attractiveness and touristic behavior in locations close to home, elucidating subjective conceptions of distance and proximity [29]. In addition, the research revealed that proximity and distance are significant factors in staycation tourism. Nevertheless, the focus of these studies is solely on the distance component of staycation decision-making.

1.2. Objective and Significance of Research

The research outcomes furnish a foundational conceptual classification that can be utilized by urban managers, tourism managers, urban designers, and urban planners to cultivate a visually appealing and unique municipality. Additionally, the research results establish a scientific foundation for the identification of an urban area's appealing features. The findings provide an answer to the query of which factors influence individuals' perceptions of a location or its desirability. This study delineates the appealing characteristics of Ho Chi Minh City, thus elucidating the primary dilemmas that arise when attempting to preserve and enhance the distinctiveness and allure of a municipality.

2. Materials and Methods

In order to identify the primary aspects of urban attractiveness, an early literature review was conducted. Subsequently, surveys were undertaken to ascertain the factors that contribute to the appeal of urban staycations, building upon the primary dimensions identified in the initial phase.

2.1. Research Area

The survey was conducted in the central region of Ho Chi Minh City, an area renowned for its extensive development history and accommodating a diverse population of travelers and locals. Considering that locals as well as tourists find staycation attractiveness factors appealing, the designated region (Figure 1) is appropriate for identifying those aspects of Ho Chi Minh City that are deemed attractive.

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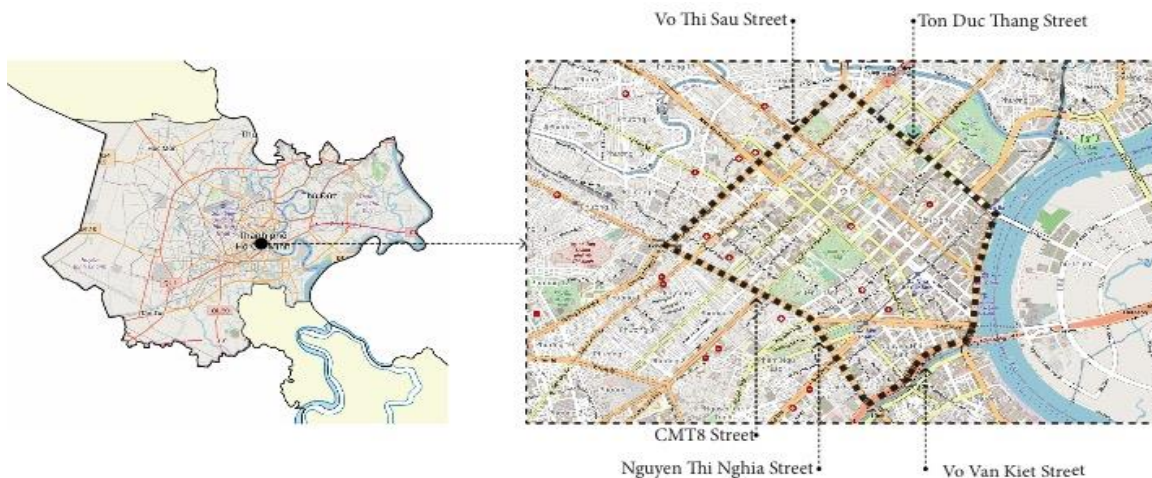
Figure 1. Research location and its boundary for Ho Chi Minh city case study

2.3. Capture Evaluation Method Survey

Koga implements the CEMs method, which is founded upon Noda's PPM (photo projective method) and Sanui and Inui's "Evaluation Grid Method" [30, 31]. Noda's photo projective method is a psychological technique that utilizes the photographs taken by survey participants to ascertain their perceptions. This approach has become increasingly prevalent in the domain of urban architecture over time [32].

This technique enables participants to immerse themselves in the authentic setting and autonomously uncover elements or factors that pique their interest or come across. Participants circulate unrestrictedly throughout the survey area situated in the heart of Ho Chi Minh City. Employing their cameras, they capture images of a perceived attraction or determinant that piques their interest. Subsequently, they complete a report card that provides a detailed description of said attraction.

Figure 2. CEMs report card was extracted and semantically interpreted

The responses were gathered from a sample of 25 individuals, consisting of architectural experts and students (8F, 17M). Among the 25 people, 15 people (5F and 10M) are local students and experts; the rest, 10 people (3F and 7F), are freshmen students from other places. Certain researchers hold the assumption that the evaluation of attractiveness and urban characteristics by laypeople and architects is not significantly different [33, 34],

consequently, selecting participants from the discipline of architecture is appropriate. From the 17th of February to the 9th of March 2023, CEMs were conducted during the arid season, characterized by little precipitation and low average humidity. The weather is currently optimal for tourists and locals to participate in a variety of activities.

The semantic interpretation and classification of 485 report cards into groups based on similarity was

accomplished using an Affinity Diagram (also referred to as the KJ method). This method aids in the identification of elements or factors that contribute to the attractiveness of urban staycations in Ho Chi Minh City (Figure 2).

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Staycation Attractiveness Factors of Ho Chi Minh City

The survey data collected from CEMs showed 134 factors that contribute to the attractiveness of urban staycations. The factors were divided into nine main groups, as shown in Figure 3: *(1)Architectural & Built Environment, (2)Natural, (3)Works of Art & Humanity, (4)Folklore, (5)Community Civilization, (6)Green& Blue Infrastructure, (7)Sense of Place, (8)Services, and (9)Others*. The details of the elements constituting each main category are shown in Figure 3.

In group 1 (Architectural and Built Environment), there are 9 factors related to Heritage and Identity, which include Historic Buildings, Old Buildings, Traditional Buildings, Traditional Markets, Monuments, Shophouses/ Localshops, Co-housing, Local Material/ Technology, and Landmarks. Additionally, there is one factor related to Publicness and Natural elements, such as Street Market. Furthermore, there are nine factors related to Daily Life and Hospitality, which include Houses/homes, Workplaces, Sacred Places, Leisure Places, Indoor Sports, Educational Places, Food Node/Spots, Accommodation, and Restaurants. There are 17 factors in the Local Economy and Creativity Dimension that contribute to urban attractiveness. These factors include Pop-up Urban Spaces, Mini Buses Decoration, Galleries, Interactive Spaces, Temporary use of vacant places/buildings, Walking Streets, Cultural Centers, Handicraft & Art Shops, Workshop Places, Street Vendors, Street Stalls, Burden Streets, Grocery Stores, Shopping Malls, Cafe Shops, Bars, and Beauty Salons.

Architectural and Built Environment	Natural	Works of Art and Humanity	Folklore	Community Civilization	Green & Blue Infrastructure	Sence of Place	Services	Other
Pop-up Urban Space Historic Building Mini Bus Decoration Old Building Gallery Traditional Building Traditional Market Interactive Space Monument Temporary use of vacancy place/ building Shophouse/ Localshop Co-housing Walking Street Local Material/ Technology Cultural Centers Landmarks	Handicraft & Art Shop Workshop place Street Vendor Street Market Street Stalls Houses/home Burden Street Workplaces Grocery store Sacred place Shopping mall Leisure place Cafe shop Indoor sports Bars Educational place Beauty salons Food node/Spot Restaurants Accommodation	Geomorphological Topography Natural landscape Equitable climate	Local Craftsmanship Local Artist Local Fashion Local Products Poster Street Art Painting/Picture Sculpture Antiquity Graffiti	Traditional Food Traditions/ Legends History Events/ Local Festival Traditional Music/ Folk music Ceremonies Worshiping custom Belief/Religion Multicultural Society Multi Religion Relaxation and Enjoyment Open Mindedness Being Friendly Guides	Language Indigenous knowledge Ideology Culture of Agriculture Traditional Beauty Standard Coffee/Tea Culture Stories/gossip Local Broadcast Competition Quality Label/ Mark/ Brand Value Perennial Brand Marketing Skills Online Presence Advertisement	Alleyway Sidewalks Public Building Public Square/Plaza Street Park Courtyard Public Transport Open Space Green Space Greenery Tree Species Bus Station Transport and Mobility	Sound Smell Crowded Safety/unsafety Cleanliness Tidiness Comfort/Disco mfort Huge Intensity of space Friendly Alley Friendly Neighborhoods	Evening Activities Commercial Activities Various Function Freely Access Community Cohesion Clean Air Recreation Equitable Climate Trading Internet Beverage Street Performance Communication with people Interaction in the streets Social Interaction Pedlars Shipper Local Tour Guides	Garbage Jobs

Figure 3. Ho Chi Minh city urban staycation attractiveness factors

In category 2 (Natural), there are three elements, namely *Geomorphological Topography, Natural landscapes, and Climate*.

Group 3 has 10 factors, which are factors related to works of art and humanity. The majority of the elements in this category originate from the Heritage and Identity Dimension, including *Local craftmanship, Local artists, and Local fashion, Local products, Posters, Street art, Paintings/Pictures, Sculptures, Antiquities;Graffiti* is the only factor that falls under the Local Economy and Creativity Dimension.

Group 4 (Folklore) consists of 14 factors, including nine factors related to Heritage and Identity Dimension. These factors include *Traditional food, Traditions/Legends, Historical events/Local festivals, Traditional music/Folk music, Ceremonies, Worship customs, Beliefs/Religions*. The Daily Life and Hospitality Dimension consists of seven factors, which include Multicultural societies, *Multi religions, Relaxation and enjoyment, Beverages, Open-mindedness, Being friendly, and Guides*.

Group 5 (Community Civilization) consists of 14 factors divided into different categories: there are five factors related to Heritage and Identity Dimension, which include *Language, Indigenous knowledge, Ideology, Culture of agriculture, Traditional beauty standards*; the only factor that falls under Daily Life and Hospitality Dimension is *Coffee/Tea culture*; The Local Economy and Creativity Dimension consists of eight factors: *Stories/gossip, Local broadcasts, Competitions, Quality label/ Mark/ Brand value, Perennial brands, Marketing skills, Online presence, Advertisements*.

Group 6 (Community Civilization) is identified by 25 factors, including aspects related to Heritage and Identity such as *Alleyways, Transport and mobility*; as well as factors related to Publicness and Nature such as *Sidewalks, Public buildings, Public squares/Plazas, Streets, Parks, Courtyards, Public transport, Open spaces, Green spaces, Greenery, Trees, Species, Bus stations*.

Group 7 (Sense of Place) consists of ten factors, the majority of which are derived from Publicness and Natural Dimension. These eight factors include *Sound, Smell,*

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Crowds, Safety/lack of safety, Cleanliness, Tidiness, Comfort/Discomfort, and *Huge intensity of space*. The remaining two factors, *Friendly alleys and Friendly neighborhoods*, fall under the Daily Life and Hospitality Dimensions.

Group 8 (Services) comprises 16 factors offered or provided by the city. Among them, Publicness and Natural Dimension have eight factors including *Evening activities, Commercial activities, Various functions, Freely accessible, Community cohesion, Clean air, and Recreation*. The factors of Daily Life and Hospitality Dimensions consist of *Trading, Internet, Street performances, Communication with people, Interaction in the streets, and Social interaction*. The Local Economy and Creativity Dimension consists of three factors: *Pedlars, Shippers, and Local tour guides.*

Lastly, group 9 (Other) solely documents two factors: *Garbage* and *Jobs*, which fall under the categories of Daily Life and Hospitality Dimension.

3.2. Implications for Livable Ho Chi Minh City

According to the results of research, Ho Chi Minh City possesses an adequate number of elements that contribute to its urban appeal. Hence, this urban center possesses a formidable allure for tourists of all nationalities and international origin.

Nonetheless, academics, policymakers, and authorities have yet to acknowledge the holistic nature of urban attractiveness as a system of elements [35]; Instead, they have concentrated on singular components such as the architectural heritage of waterfront urban landscapes, the vibrancy of local culture [36, 37]; and pedestrian life [38].

According to this study, the establishment of urban identity and appeal requires a simultaneous and consistent combination of various elements. In order to maximize the appeal of Ho Chi Minh City while preserving the 134 factors specified in section 3.1.

4. Conclusions

The explanation for urban attractiveness is comprised of numerous secondary concepts. Academics have endeavored to develop various theories that aid in the development of a more aesthetically pleasing city. While the theories proposed by C.Alexander and K. Lynch regarding pattern language and form language were initially intended to enhance the aesthetics of space and facilitate the construction of aesthetically pleasing cities, their current applicability is on a broad scale and lacks specificity. In the context of tourism, motivation theory, and similar theories assess the appeal of a location. This study investigated urban attractiveness from the points of view of various scientific disciplines.

Additionally, this research is an autonomous investigation that seeks to ascertain the variables that influence the urban appeal of Ho Chi Minh City. A total of 134 urban attractiveness factors were identified for the Ho Chi Minh City case study, demonstrating that the city possesses a wide range of qualities that contribute to its appeal. Nevertheless, urban administrators, planners, and

designers continue to concentrate on individual factors rather than consistently and comprehensively developing and renovating a system of factors. As a result, policies governing their consistent development are indispensable. With regard to limitations, this research has not yet investigated the distinction between demographics and perceptions regarding urban attractiveness factors in the Ho Chi Minh City case study. Furthermore, the assessment of individuals who are exposed to urban attractiveness factors remains unclear in this study. Subsequent research will concentrate on elucidating how individuals perceive elements of urban attractiveness.

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