Understanding Revisit Intention through Destination Attributes: The Mediating Mechanism of Tourist Satisfaction among Local Visitors to Cameron Highlands, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study examined whether tourist satisfaction plays a partial or full mediating role in the relationships between value perception, safety and security, destination accessibility, and revisit intention among 200 local tourists visiting Cameron Highlands. The structural equation modelling results showed an acceptable model fit, with all three destination attributes significantly influencing tourist satisfaction. Tourist satisfaction also had a significant effect on revisit intention. The mediation results, however, showed that the three attributes did not work in the same way. Value perception and safety and security continued to have significant effects on revisit intention even after satisfaction was considered, while also influencing revisit intention through satisfaction. This indicates partial mediation. For destination accessibility, its direct effect was no longer significant when satisfaction was included in the model, suggesting full mediation. In simple terms, tourists may be willing to return because they see good value and feel safe, even if these factors do not greatly increase their satisfaction. Accessibility is different because its effect on revisit intention seems to depend more on how tourists experience the destination. For destination managers, this means that improving roads, parking, transport, or other forms of access may not be enough on their own. Such improvements are more likely to encourage repeat visits when tourists also feel that their overall experience has become easier, more comfortable, and more satisfying.

Keywords: Mediation Analysis, Tourist Satisfaction, Revisit Intention, Tourism Management, Destination Attributes, Cameron Highlands

INTRODUCTION

Deciding where to focus on limited resources is not always straightforward, especially for tourism managers and policymakers. Destination priorities such as perceived value, safety and security, and accessibility may all appear important because of their relationship with tourists' intention to revisit, however, a significant relationship does not necessarily mean that each destination attribute influences revisit intention in the same way (Nguyen & Bui, 2025; Zhifu & Jebbouri, 2025). Some attributes may encourage tourists to return through a direct effect, whereas others may influence their decision mainly by creating a more satisfying travel experience (Nguyen & Bui, 2025; Yacoub et al., 2025; Linking accessibility, transportation satisfaction, and destination satisfaction, 2026). The distinction between partial and full mediation provides a useful way to understand these different pathways and their implications for destination management (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes, 2022).

Under partial mediation, a destination attribute can influence revisit intention through two routes: directly and indirectly through tourist satisfaction. In practical terms, this means that the attribute may continue to encourage tourists to return even when its contribution to satisfaction is relatively limited. Full mediation, however, suggests that the influence of the destination attribute is largely dependent on tourist satisfaction.

Therefore, improvements to a destination attribute are more likely to encourage repeat visits when tourists recognise those improvements as contributing to a better overall experience (Wang et al., 2025; Nguyen & Bui, 2025). For instance, better accessibility may not necessarily lead to stronger revisit intentions if tourists do not perceive the destination as more convenient, comfortable, or enjoyable (Alqraini & Alasim, 2026; Linking accessibility, transportation satisfaction, and destination satisfaction, 2026).

Building on this perspective, the present study investigates whether tourist satisfaction mediates the interrelationships between perceived value, safety and security, destination accessibility, and revisit intention. The study specifically examines whether these relationships involve partial or full mediation, allowing the different pathways through which destination attributes influence revisit intention to be compared. By examining the direct and indirect effects within a single structural model, the study provides a more comprehensive view of how each destination attributes contribute to tourists' decisions to return (Wang et al., 2025; Nguyen & Bui, 2025).

The findings are expected to offer practical value for destination managers and tourism policymakers by demonstrating that destination attributes should not be viewed as having identical effects on tourist loyalty. Instead, their influence may occur directly, through tourist satisfaction, or through a combination of both pathways (Nguyen & Bui, 2025; Alqraini & Alasim, 2026). Recognizing these differences can help decisionmakers make more informed choices about resource allocation and design improvements that not only strengthen destination attributes but also create experiences that encourage tourists to revisit (Wang et al., 2025; Nguyen et al., 2026).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourist Satisfaction as a Mediating Mechanism

Tourist satisfaction refers to the extent to which the experience tourists receive meets or exceeds what they expected from their trip. When their expectations are fulfilled, tourists are more likely to develop positive feelings towards the destination and consider returning in the future (Oliver, 1999; Wang & Li, 2023). Beyond this, satisfaction can also serve as an important link between destination-related factors and tourists' behavioral intentions. For instance, Qiu et al. (2024) found that satisfaction helped explain the relationship between perceived value and tourist loyalty at industrial heritage sites, while Seow et al. (2024) reported a similar mediating role between perceived value and revisit in wellness tourism. In Jordan, Darabseh et al. (2024) further showed that accessibility and safety influenced revisit intention both directly and through tourist satisfaction, highlighting the role of satisfaction as an important pathway through which destination characteristics shape tourists' decisions to return.

The Practical Distinction between Partial and Full Mediation

Baron and Kenny's (1986) framework helps distinguish between partial and full mediation as partial mediation occurs when a predictor still has a significant direct effect on the outcome even after the mediator is considered. While full mediation occurs when this direct effect is no longer significant, the indirect effect remains significant. This distinction is not only important from a statistical perspective but also helps explain what the findings mean in practice, particularly in destination management. When partial mediation occurs, a destination attribute can influence revisit intention both directly and through tourist satisfaction. This suggests that improving the attribute may encourage tourists to return even if the improvement does not substantially increase their satisfaction. In contrast, full mediation indicates that the effect of a destination attribute on revisit intention depends entirely on tourist satisfaction, meaning that an improvement in the attribute may not increase tourists' intention to revisit unless it also enhances their overall satisfaction (Hayes, 2022; Wang et al., 2025).

Value Perception and the Case for Dual-Channel Investment

Perceived value reflects how tourists judge what they receive from a destination against what they spend or give up during their visit. Research has shown that this perception can influence tourist loyalty both directly

and indirectly through satisfaction (Wang & Li, 2023; Qiu et al., 2024; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023). Rasoolimanesh et al. (2023) found that different dimensions of perceived value influenced tourist satisfaction and revisit intention, with satisfaction mediating some of the relationships between perceived value and revisit intention. In other words, tourists who feel that a destination offers good value may be more likely to develop positive attitudes towards it and consider returning. At the same time, feeling that the visit is worthwhile can increase their satisfaction, which may further strengthen their intention to revisit (Seow et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2024).

H1: Value perception has a significant direct effect on revisit intention, independent of tourist satisfaction (partial mediation).

Safety and Security and the Case for Dual-Channel Investment

Safety and security may affect tourists' behaviour both directly and through their satisfaction with the destination. Darabseh et al. (2024) found that safety and security have a direct effect on revisit intention among tourists in Jordan. In contrast, Chi and Qu (2008) showed that safety-related perceptions can influence revisit intention indirectly through destination image and tourist satisfaction, while Nguyen and Bui (2025) further explained that safety may play two related roles. First, as a hygiene factor where poor safety conditions can discourage tourists from returning regardless of their satisfaction, and second as a source of comfort and trust, where a safe environment enhances satisfaction and, consequently, tourists' willingness to revisit.

H2: Safety and security have a significant direct effect on revisit intention, independent of tourist satisfaction (partial mediation).

Destination Accessibility and the Case for Single-Channel Investment

Destination accessibility may influence revisit intention indirectly, as its effect depends on whether ease of reaching and moving around a destination translates into greater convenience and enjoyment. Nur et al. (2025) found that destination accessibility played an important role in shaping tourist satisfaction, which subsequently influenced revisit intention. Similarly, Sabban et al. (2025) found that destination accessibility had both direct and indirect significant effects on revisit intention through memorable tourism experience. Wantara et al. (2024) found that accessibility is more likely to encourage revisit intention when it enhances tourists' enjoyment of the destination.

H3: Tourist satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between destination accessibility and revisit intention, such that accessibility's direct effect becomes non-significant once satisfaction is accounted for.

From Mediation Pattern to Resource Allocation

H4: The mediation pattern differs systematically across the three destination attributes, such that value perception and safety and security exhibit partial mediation while destination accessibility exhibits full mediation, with corresponding implications for resource-allocation strategy.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the study's analytical framework, explicitly distinguishing the direct and satisfaction-mediated pathways for each of the three destination attributes examined.

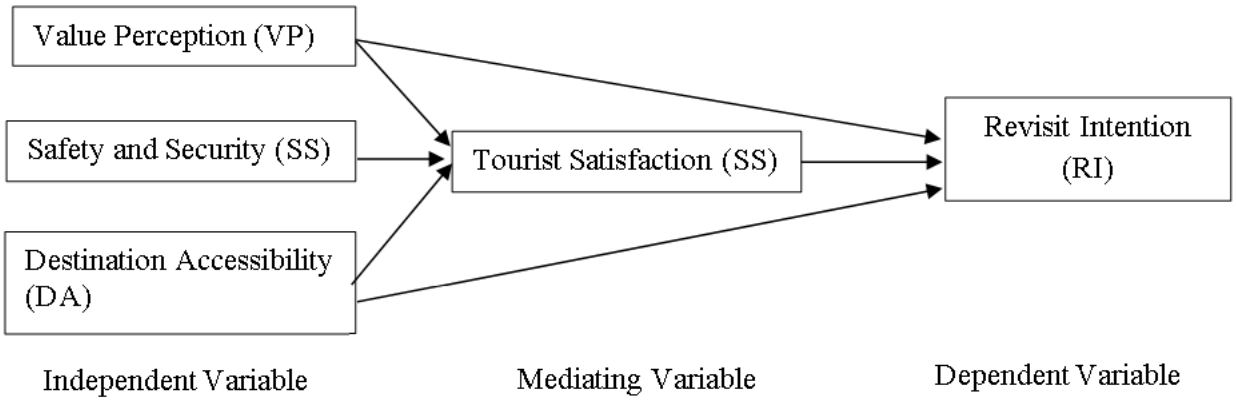

Figure 1. Conceptual and structural framework of the study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to examine the proposed mediation relationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data were collected from 200 local tourists who had visited Cameron Highlands within the previous year using purposive and convenience sampling, consistent with established sample size guidance for structural equation modelling (Hair et al., 2019, 2021; Sekaran & Bougie, 2019; Roscoe, 1975). Value perception, safety and security, and destination accessibility were measured using seven items each, while tourist satisfaction and revisiting intention were measured using five items each. All constructs were assessed on a five-point Likert scale using items adapted from validated tourism instruments. Pilot testing with 30 respondents indicated acceptable to excellent reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .740 to .944.

Table 1. Pilot Test Reliability Analysis (n = 30)

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Value Perception	.867	7
Safety and Security	.944	7
Destination Accessibility	.913	7
Revisit Intention	.876	5
Tourist Satisfaction	.740	5

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess the adequacy of the measurement model, followed by structural equation modelling to estimate the full structural model. The model included the direct effects of each destination attribute on revisit intention, their effects on tourist satisfaction, and the effect of satisfaction on revisit intention.

Mediation was assessed based on the criteria of Baron and Kenny (1986) and the product-of-coefficients approach recommended by Hayes (2022). Partial mediation was established when both direct and indirect effects remained significant in the presence of the mediator, whereas full mediation was indicated when the direct effect became non-significant while the indirect effect remained significant.

RESULTS

Table 2 demonstrates that the study sample of 200 respondents was heterogenous, consisting of respondents from different age groups, genders, occupations, and levels of visit frequency. Most of the respondents were

between 20–40 years, in which female respondents slightly outnumbering males. Besides, the private-sector and government servants represented the largest occupational groups. Regarding of visitation, most respondents were repeat visitors, particularly those who visited several times a year. Thus, this data highlights the sample respondents with multiple levels of experience with the destination, providing a suitable basis for examining tourists' perceptions and behavioral intentions.

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 200)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age	20-30	56	28.0
	31-40	60	30.0
	41-50	33	16.5
	51-60	32	16.0
	61 and above	19	9.5
Gender	Male	85	42.5
	Female	115	57.5
Occupation	Student	46	23.0
	Government sector	55	27.5
	Private sector	60	30.0
	Self-employed	22	11.0
	Retiree	17	8.5
Visit frequency	First time	57	28.5
	Once a year	36	18.0
	Several times a year	64	32.0
	Monthly or more	43	21.5

Measurement Model

All five constructs achieved Composite Reliability above 0.80 (Table 3), supporting the adequacy of the measurement model for subsequent mediation testing.

Table 3. Measurement Model Summary

Construct	**AVE**	**CR**
Destination Accessibility	0.655	0.907
Value Perception	0.533	0.884

Safety and Security	0.469	0.891
Tourist Satisfaction	0.463	0.812
Revisit Intention	0.507	0.838

Structural Model Fit

The structural model demonstrated good fit to the data (Table 4): CMIN/DF = 1.031, RMR = 0.035, GFI = 0.880, AGFI = 0.859, PGFI = 0.752, all within recommended thresholds (Hair et al., 2021; Kline, 2023).

Table 4. Structural Model Fit Indices

Fit index	**Value**	**Threshold**
CMIN/DF	1.031	< 3.0
RMR	0.035	< 0.05
GFI	0.880	>= 0.80
AGFI	0.859	>= 0.80
PGFI	0.752	>= 0.50

Direct and Indirect Effects: The Full Picture

Table 5 present the structural path coefficients used to assess the relationships among the destination attributes, tourist satisfaction, and revisit intention.

All three destination attributes significantly predicted tourist satisfaction, while tourist satisfaction significantly predicted revisit intention ($\beta = 0.204$, $p = .013$). These significant paths establish the structural relationships required to examine the mediating role of tourist satisfaction in H1 through H3.

Table 5. Structural Path Coefficients

Path	**Beta**	**p-value**
Value Perception -> Tourist Satisfaction	0.215	.006
Destination Accessibility -> Tourist Satisfaction	0.182	.005
Safety and Security -> Tourist Satisfaction	0.195	.007
Value Perception -> Revisit Intention (total effect)	0.233	.009
Destination Accessibility -> Revisit Intention (total effect)	0.151	.002
Safety and Security -> Revisit Intention (total effect)	0.178	.011
Tourist Satisfaction -> Revisit Intention	0.204	.013

Path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
Value Perception → Revisit Intention	0.233	0.0439	0.2769
Destination Accessibility → Revisit Intention	0.051	0.0371	0.0881
Safety and Security → Revisit Intention	0.178	0.0398	0.2178

Mediation Analysis: Partial Versus Full

Table 6 presents the mediation results for each destination attribute by examining the direct and indirect effects on revisit intention after tourist satisfaction was included as the mediator. For value perception, the indirect effect through tourist satisfaction was 0.0439, while the direct effect remained significant (β = 0.233, p = .009), indicating partial mediation and supporting H1. Similarly, safety and security produced an indirect effect of 0.0398, while its direct effect remained significant (β = 0.178, p = .011), indicating partial mediation and supporting H2. In contrast, destination accessibility produced an indirect effect of 0.0371, whereas its direct effect was non-significant (β = 0.051, p = .502). This pattern indicates full mediation and supports H3.

Table 6. Mediation Analysis: Direct and Indirect Effects

Attribute	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect (via TS)	Total Effect	Mediation Type
Value Perception	0.233 (p = .009)	0.0439	0.2769	Partial mediation
Safety and Security	0.178 (p = .011)	0.0398	0.2178	Partial mediation
Destination Accessibility	0.051 (p = .502)	0.0371	0.0881	Full mediation

Hypothesis Testing Summary

Table 7 summarizes the outcomes of all four hypotheses, each of which was supported by the data. The results demonstrate that the mediating role of tourist satisfaction varies across the three destination attributes. Value perception and safety and security retain significant direct effects on revisit intention alongside their indirect effects through tourist satisfaction, indicating partial mediation. In contrast, the direct effect of destination accessibility becomes non-significant after tourist satisfaction is included, while its indirect effect remains evident, indicating full mediation. These findings support H4, which proposes that the mediation pattern differs across destination attributes.

Table 7. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Result	Decision
H1: Tourist satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between value perception and revisit intention.	Direct effect: β = 0.233, p = .009; indirect effect = 0.0439	Supported
H2: Tourist satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between safety and security and revisit intention.	Direct effect: β = 0.178, p = .011; indirect effect = 0.0398	Supported
H3: Tourist satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between destination accessibility and revisit intention.	Direct effect: β = 0.051, p = .502 (ns); indirect effect = 0.0371	Supported
H4: The mediating role of tourist satisfaction differs across value perception, safety and security, and destination accessibility.	VP and SS: partial mediation; DA: full mediation	Supported

DISCUSSION

The Practical Meaning of Partial Mediation for Value and Safety Investment

The partial mediation of value perception and safety and security by tourist satisfaction have important practical implications. Investments in these areas can enhance tourist loyalty through both direct and satisfaction-mediated pathways. This means that efforts to improve perceived value and safety can still encourage tourists to revisit, even if they do not lead to a noticeable increase in satisfaction. For example, clear and transparent pricing can make tourists feel that they are being treated fairly, although it may not necessarily make their overall trip more enjoyable. Similarly, good security measures can make tourists feel safe and comfortable without directly adding to their enjoyment of the destination. The significant direct effects of value perception and safety and security support this finding. It is also consistent with Rasoolimanesh et al.'s (2023) finding that perceived value influences both tourist satisfaction and revisit intention, as well as Al Masud and Yusof's (2023) observation that safety can serve both as a basic condition and as a factor that contributes to satisfaction. For destination managers, this suggests that improving value and safety can encourage repeat visits, even when these improvements do not result in a large increase in tourist satisfaction.

The Practical Meaning of Full Mediation for Accessibility Investment

The finding that tourist satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between destination accessibility and revisit intention has an important practical implication. Since the effect of accessibility on revisit intention operates through tourist satisfaction, improvements in accessibility may not necessarily encourage tourists to return unless they also improve the overall visitor experience. For example, widening roads, increasing parking capacity, or introducing shuttle services may improve the physical accessibility of a destination, but these improvements alone may have limited influence on revisit intention if tourists do not perceive their visit as more convenient, comfortable, and enjoyable (Alqraini & Alasim, 2026). Therefore, destination managers should consider not only whether accessibility has improved in physical terms, but also whether these improvements make the tourist experience more satisfying. This finding is consistent with Sugiama et al. (2024), who characterized accessibility as functioning through both physical infrastructure and intangible perceived convenience, and with the Expectation-Confirmation Theory's emphasis on the experiential confirmation process as the necessary conduct for behavioral effects (Oliver, 1980). For destination managers, this implies a materially higher implementation risk for accessibility investments: such projects require explicit, deliberate attention to the visitor experience, potentially including complementary investments in signage, wayfinding, staff assistance, and real-time travel information, if they are to generate any return in terms of tourist loyalty at all.

A Framework for Anticipating Investment Risk

Taken together, these findings suggest a practical framework for anticipating the loyalty-generating risk profile of different categories of destination investment. Investments in domains exhibiting partial mediation, in this study, value perception and safety and security, carry a built-in loyalty dividend: their effects on revisit intention are, to some extent, robust to imperfect implementation. Investments in domains exhibiting full mediation, in this study, destination accessibility, carry no such built-in dividend: their entire loyalty-generating potential is contingent on successful translation into visitor satisfaction, and managers should treat satisfaction measurement as an integral, non-optional component of any accessibility improvement initiative, rather than a peripheral monitoring exercise.

Theoretical Implications

Beyond its practical contribution, this study's differentiated mediation findings contribute to a more nuanced theoretical understanding of how destination attributes relate to tourist behavior. Rather than treating all destination attributes as functionally interchangeable predictors within a generic satisfaction-mediation model, this study's findings suggest that attributes vary meaningfully in the structure of their relationship with behavioral intention, a distinction with implications extending beyond tourism to any applied domain in

which an organization must decide how to allocate resources among predictors that are all significantly, but not identically, related to a desired behavioral outcome.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study's cross-sectional design, reliance on purposive and convenience sampling within a single highland destination, and use of the product-of-coefficients approach to mediation testing (rather than bootstrap confidence intervals) each represent limitations that should temper the generalizability of these findings. Future research should apply bootstrap-based mediation testing (Rijnhart et al., 2021; Alfons et al., 2022) to provide more robust confidence intervals around the indirect effects reported here, and should extend this partial-versus-full mediation framework to other destination attributes, such as service quality, destination image, and technology adoption, to build a more comprehensive map of which categories of tourism investment carry an inherent loyalty dividend and which require deliberate, satisfaction-focused implementation.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of tourist satisfaction as a partial or full mediator in the relationships between value perception, safety and security, destination accessibility, and revisit intention among 200 local tourists visiting Cameron Highlands, Malaysia. The results show that these destination attributes do not influence revisit intention in the same way in which value perception and safety and security had both direct and indirect effects on revisit intention through tourist satisfaction, indicating partial mediation. In comparison, the effect of destination accessibility was fully mediated by tourist satisfaction, suggesting that access alone may not be sufficient to encourage tourists to return unless it contributes to a positive and satisfying travel experience. These findings offer useful insights for destination managers and tourism policymakers when deciding where to focus on their investments. Accessibility improvements should be assessed not only in terms of infrastructure and ease of access, but also in terms of how effectively they improve the overall tourist experience and satisfaction.

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