



## **AN ANALYSIS OF TRAVEL PUSH AND PULL MOTIVATIONS: AN EMPIRICAL CASE OF DOMESTIC TOURISTS IN CAN THO CITY, VIETNAM**

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### **Abstract**

This study was conducted to shed light on travel motivations of domestic tourists to Can Tho City, which would be used to help attract more visitors and develop local tourism. This study employs a five-level Likert scale to evaluate the significance of the travelers' motivations, together with the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Discriminant Analysis by using designed questionnaires to interview 140 local travelers visiting Can Tho city recently. As revealed in the findings, tourists coming to Can Tho City are likely to be influenced by seven travel motivations, which could be categorized into push motivations and pull motivations. The former includes (1) relaxation and self-affirmation, (2) prestige, (3) entertainment, (4) social contact. The latter comprises (5) accessibility and reasonable prices, (6) resources and entertainment, (7) history, culture, and gastronomy. Besides, the author also suggests some solutions based on the evaluations of the significance of the push and pull motivations.

**Keyword:** Travel motivations, Domestic tourists, Exploratory factor analysis, Discriminant analysis, Can Tho city

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Can Tho City is one of the economic hubs in the Mekong Delta region. According to the statistics from Can Tho City Tourism Association (CANTA), in

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2018, Can Tho City welcomed 8,480,968 tourist arrivals, rising by 12.5% compared to the same period in 2017 and fulfilling 106% of that year's annual plan. The total revenue from the tourist industry in 2018 was 3,785 billion VND, increasing by 30.6% compared to that of 2017. This has reflected the increasing extent to which Can Tho tourism has developed after each year, contributing a great amount of turnover to the economy of the Mekong Delta and even the nation.

As society has grown tremendously, human consumption also becomes increasingly challenging, which leads to customers' hesitancy when deciding on tourist destinations within a limited budget. Businesses have to gain a profound insight into the customers' travel motivations to thoroughly understand those demands to better understand the domestic travelers' needs and what they are expecting. In this way, they could also devise effective plans to impact the travelers' motivations by developing their tourist facilities, which would also improve the image of Can Tho tourism as a result. A limited number of studies have been conducted on the motivations of travelers coming to Can Tho City. In addition, they mostly focused on foreign tourists. The domestic ones' did not seem to come under much spotlight.

As reported by the General Statistics Office before 2018, the density of domestic tourists visiting Can Tho had been much higher than that of the foreign counterparts. Therefore, to study the motivations influencing the domestic travelers' decision to visit Can Tho is truly essential. Because of the aforementioned reasons, this study was conducted to explore the travel motivations of domestic visitors coming to Can Tho City and suggest some solutions to attract tourists.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Pull motivation is a theoretical concept that aims to explain behaviors. It offers people a reason to take actions, harbor desires, and express needs. Push motivations could be described as a person's orientation to a certain behavior, or something that urges them (not) to maintain a behavior. In other words, motivations are subjective targets of human activities to fulfill the aroused and also the strongest needs at a specific moment which determines that human action.

Travel motivation, which is a subjective factor encouraging people to take actions, refers to the psychological cause which makes a person decide to travel to a place and decide what type of travel to employ. The psychological causes are elements related to a person's conception, psychological status, traveling needs or personalities. This internal force pushes and maintains one's activities, as well as launches them on the predesigned path towards the target. Hence, travel motivations are the cause of purchasing behavior, the result from the tourist services purchasing behaviors, and the

catalyst of activities which are well attached to the fulfillment of individual traveling needs.

In brief, travel motivations are a set of properties which causes an individual to be engaged in a tourist activity to achieve their target and expect satisfaction (A.Pizam, Y.Neuimann & A.Reichel).

### **2.1 Method for measuring travel motivations**

The decision on a tourist destination is made not only based on the holidaymaker's internal needs but also thanks to the features and attraction available there. Lam and Hsu (2006) confirmed that people decide to travel because they are "pushed" by their internal motivations and "pulled" by the external features of the destinations. Thus, travel motivations are measured using push motivations (i.e. internal motivations) and pull motivations (i.e. external motivations). Particularly, push motivations are refined, taking the tourist career ladder (TCL) proposed by Pearce (1988) into consideration, and pull motivations are measured by the attraction of the destinations.

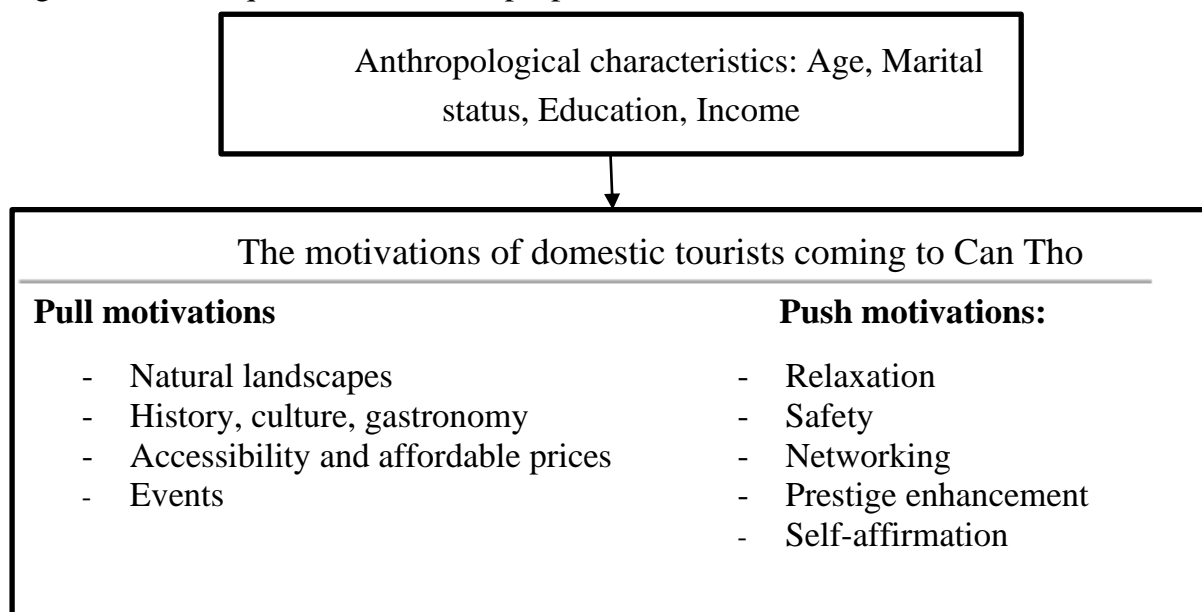
Pull motivations are elements that encourage or create tourists' intangible or internal desire during their vacation (Dann, 1977). These pull elements have been recognized as the initial step and a useful tool for explaining the need for traveling and understanding tourists' behaviors. Distinctive features and the popularity of a destination contribute greatly to the accumulated need for traveling. This can be explained by the assumption that humans innately crave for knowledge and new experiences, which could be achieved through traveling. At the most basic level, the push motivations are interpreted as internal elements which urge individuals to travel, thus represent individual socio-psychological needs.

As ascertained by Crompton (1979), push factors are the tourists' conception and expectation about features, attractions, or properties of the destinations, so they play a pivotal role in the decision-making of these tourists. Dincer et al. (2003) pointed out that elements related to tourist destinations, such as the attraction of culture and nature, geographic adjacency, and security, have a positive impact on travel needs. Therefore, these elements should be considered when evaluating travel needs.

### **2.2 Analytical framework**

Based on the TCL model by Pearce (1988), related past studies, and the status quo of the tourism industry in Can Tho City, the author suggested 5 sets of push motivations, which are relaxation, safety, networking, prestige, self-affirmation. Four sets of pull motivations, which have a direct impact on the tourists' decision to visit

Can Tho, namely natural landscapes, historical, cultural, and gastronomical attractions, accessibility, reasonable prices, as well as events and festivals, were also proposed. These factors were evaluated on the scale from 1 (least significant) to 5 (most significant) in a questionnaire. The proposed framework is as follows.



**Figure 1: Proposed research model**

### **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

#### **3.1 Data Collection**

Secondary data: Most of the secondary data utilized in this study were the total number of tourists, the total revenue from tourist activities in Can Tho. The data collected from relevant reports, statistics, studies, etc., which could be accessed on the Internet, were also taken into account.

Primary data: The primary data of this study was collected by interviewing domestic tourists at some destinations in Can Tho City, using a questionnaire. This questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part includes questions concerning tourists' traveling behaviors, whereas the second part aims to evaluate the significance of tourists' travel motivations to Can Tho. The last part is reserved for the respondents' general information.

The samples of this research comprised interviews with 140 domestic tourists visiting famous destinations in Can Tho, using the convenience sampling method. Among them, 85 respondents were interviewed with a physical questionnaire on the spot and 55 participants took the online survey.

#### **3.2 Data Analysis**

To analyze the travel motivations of domestic tourists coming to Can Tho City, the primary data were collected using a questionnaire which includes 3 parts.

Part 1 and part 3 were evaluated by the nominal scale, which uses marking numbers, letters, or even symbols to classify and identify objects. This scale is used as a dummy in statistics and regression analysis.

The factors in part 2 were measured by a ratio scale from 1 (least significant) to 5 (most significant). As pointed out by some researchers that a scale of 5 or 6 levels is the most suitable (Luck & Rubin, 2005), this study employs the Likert 5-level scale to evaluate the significance of tourists' travel motivations.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is a statistical analysis method used to reduce a set of reciprocal observed variables to a smaller set of variables (called factors) so that they could be more significant but still contain most of the information of the original (Hair & et al., 1998).

Discriminant analysis is a data analysis technique employed when dependent variables are the classified ones and independent variables are quantitative ones (interval or ratio scale). Discriminant can do the following tasks:

- Construct discriminant functions to discriminate the signs of dependent variables.
- Investigate whether there is a significant difference among sets when considering independent elements.
- Confirm that the independent variables are the major reason for the differences among sets.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

##### 4.1 The status of tourist activities in can tho city from 2016-2018

In recent years, as Vietnam welcomes more tourists, the number of visitors to Can Tho has also increased. Tourism of the city has made comprehensive changes, which is vividly shown in the following records:

**Table 1. Total number of arrivals in Can Tho, the Mekong Delta, and Vietnam from 2016 to 2018**

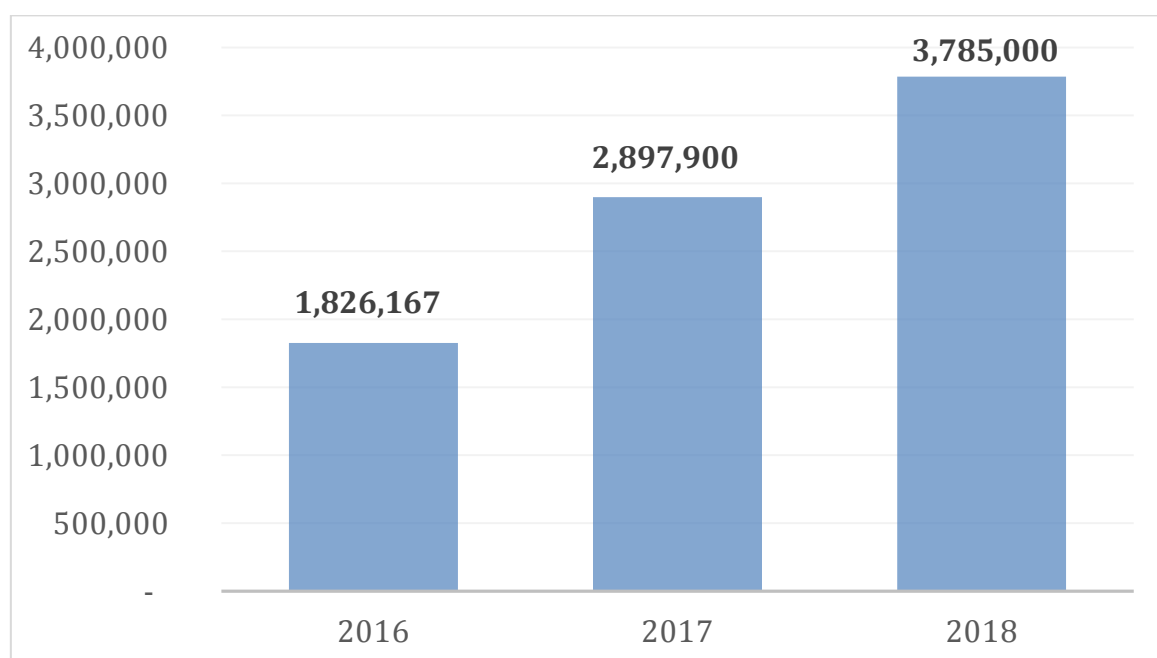
Total number of tourists' arrivals	Years		
	2016	2017	2018
Can Tho	5,349,817	7,539,221	8,480,968
The Mekong Delta	28,000,000	34,877,247	40,000,000
Vietnam	72,012,735	86,122,151	95,600,000

(Source: General Tourism Statistics Office, 2018)

As reflected in Table 1, it could be seen that in the past three years, the number of tourist arrivals in Can Tho City rose considerably thanks to recent considerable investment in tourist facilities and infrastructure, as well as the development of sustainable tourist products, which are not only unique but also environmental-friendly. This has contributed greatly to the local socioeconomic status, helping Can Tho live up to the role expectations as a major city in the Mekong Delta. Especially, in 2017, the city witnessed a remarkable rise in the number of tourist arrivals thanks to a year of consecutive events and festivals, such as APEC's Food Security Week, the International Beach Volleyball Tournament, the Conference on Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Development of the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, together with a great number of featured cultural events in districts of the city.

Nevertheless, looking at the ratio of tourists coming to Can Tho City compared to that of the Mekong Delta, it could be stated that this ratio only increased slightly from 2016 to 2017, and stayed unchanged in 2018. This means that tourism in other provinces in the Mekong Delta has become more and more developed, which attracted a considerable number of people. Consequently, the ratio of holidaymakers coming to Can Tho could not maintain its upward trend as in previous years. In fact, some provinces in the Mekong Delta are boosting their tourism activities enthusiastically, particularly Long An, An Giang, Kien Giang and Bac Lieu.

The tourist revenue of Can Tho City during the 2016-2018 period rose significantly. The detailed revenue for each year is shown in the following figure.



*Source: Can Tho Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism*

**Figure 2: Tourist revenue of Can Tho City from 2016 to 2018 in millions VND**

As shown in figure 2, the revenue in 2017 and 2018 surged compared to those of the two previous years. The reasons are as follows: (1) the innovations and improvements at tourist destinations like Cai Rang Floating Market, Phong Dien, My Khanh Orchard, in eco-tours along the waterways, and (2) the effective collaboration between Can Tho Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism and other governing bodies to ensure the safety of tourists visiting Can Tho. Thus, the number of tourists has increased specifically and contributed an enormous revenue to Can Tho City in the past two years. Besides, that the improvements went hand-in-hand with the project “Creating and developing featured tourist products” has partly improved the number of travelers coming to Can Tho, which led to higher tourist revenue in particular and better economy of the city in general.

Thanks to the leadership of the authorities of all levels, together with the support from local people, and the indispensable role that the businesses play, Can Tho tourism has been aiming at new paragons. It has been affirmed to be the key sector contributing to the socio-economic development, transforming the city into the center and dynamics of Mekong Delta’s growth, the position it well-deserves.

#### **4.2 Analysis of push factors influencing tourists’ travel motivations**

After three times testing the reliability coefficient and eliminating violated variables, 16 variables were kept for the EFA. Based on EFA results, the author eliminated variable TG2. EFA was implemented a second time with 15 observed variables. Moreover, 4 sets of push motivations were also renamed as follows.

Push set 1: Relaxation and self-affirmation, which includes 6 elements:

- TG4: Reduce stress
- TG3: Relax
- TG1: Get away from routine habits
- KĐ2: Know more about the local culture at the target destination
- KĐ1: Experience a destination that one has never been to before
- KĐ3: Enhance the quality of life

Push set 2: Prestige, which includes 3 elements:

- UT1: Self-affirm
- UT2: Impress family and friends with that destination
- UT3: Choose a popular destination

Push set 3: Entertainment, which includes 3 elements:

- AT1: Entertain
- AT2: Experience new and interesting things
- QH1: Spend time with friends

Push set 4: Social contact, which includes 3 elements:

- QH2: Meet those who share similar hobbies
- QH3: Meet the networking needs
- KĐ5: Widen the knowledge about a certain place

**Table 2: Rotated factor matrix of push motivations impacting the domestic tourists' decision to choose Can Tho as their destination**

Code	Observed variables	Factor loading			
		1	2	3	4
TG4	Reduce stress	0.752			
TG3	Relax	0.718			
KĐ2	Know more about the local culture at the target destination	0.664			
TG1	Get away from routine habits (go to work, go to school, etc.)	0.615			
KĐ3	Enhance the quality of life	0.577			
KĐ1	Experience a destination that one has never been to before	0.565			
UT2	Impress family and friends with that destination		0.847		
UT3	Choose a popular destination		0.790		
UT1	Self-affirm		0.765		
AT1	Entertain			0.802	
QH1	Spend time with friends			0.756	
AT2	Experience new and interesting things			0.669	
QH2	Meet those who share similar hobbies				0.71
QH3	Meet the networking needs				0.66
KĐ5	Widen the knowledge about a certain place				0.62
KMO Coefficient: 0.771					
Sig.F Coefficient: 0.000					
Cumulative of Variance: 60.95%					

*Source: Analyzing figures from 140 domestic travelers, 2019*

#### 4.4 Analysis of pull factors impacting tourists' travel motivations

After testing the reliability coefficient, all 14 variables were kept for the EFA.

The EFA results showed that the variable SK1 violated the discriminant value. Therefore, from 13 variables, a second EFA underwent with the other 12 observed variables. After the factor rotation method was deployed, the matrix established from 12 observed variables was as follows.

Based on this rotated matrix of 12 factors, the author renamed 3 sets of pull motivations as follows.

Pull set 1: Accessibility and reasonable prices, which includes 5 elements:

- TC1: Convenient transportation
- TN3: Favorable weather and climate



- TC3: Services worth their prices
- TC2: Diverse means of transports to get to the destination
- TC4: Acceptable service prices compared to personal income

Pull set 2: Tourist resources, which includes 4 elements:

- SK3: Various shopping and entertaining activities
- TN4: A great variety of supporting equipment in entertaining activities
- TN2: Many types of tourism (eco-tourism, cultural tourism, waterways-  
featuring tourism, etc.)
- TN1: Beautiful and attractive landscapes

Pull set 3: History, culture, and gastronomy, which includes 3 elements

- LV2: Unique cultures
- LV1: Destinations featuring historical stories of the country
- LV3: Diverse gastronomy, which is distinctive to the region of waterways

**Table 3: Rotated factor matrix of pull motivations impacting the domestic tourists' decision to choose Can Tho as their destination**

Code	Observed variables	Factor loading		
		1	2	3
TC1	Convenient transportation	0.770		
TN3	Favorable weather and climate	0.686		
TC3	Services worth their prices	0.640		
TC2	Diverse means of transport to the destination	0.522		
TC4	Acceptable service prices compared to personal income	0.505		
SK3	Various shopping and entertaining activities		0.746	
TN4	A great variety of supporting equipment for entertaining activities		0.688	
TN2	Many types of tourism (eco-tourism, cultural tourism, waterway-featuring tourism, etc.)		0.683	
TN1	Beautiful and attractive landscapes		0.623	
LV2	Unique cultures			0.811
LV1	Destinations featuring historical stories of the country			0.691
LV3	Diverse gastronomy distinctive to the region of waterways			0.583
KMO Coefficient: 0.791				
Sig.F Coefficient: 0.000				
Cumulative of Variance: 56.672%				

*Source: Analyzing figures from 140 domestic visitors, 2019*

After the EFA and the Cronbach's Alpha were conducted, the framework was modified to form a new one which features 4 push motivations and 3 pull motivations. The details are as follows.

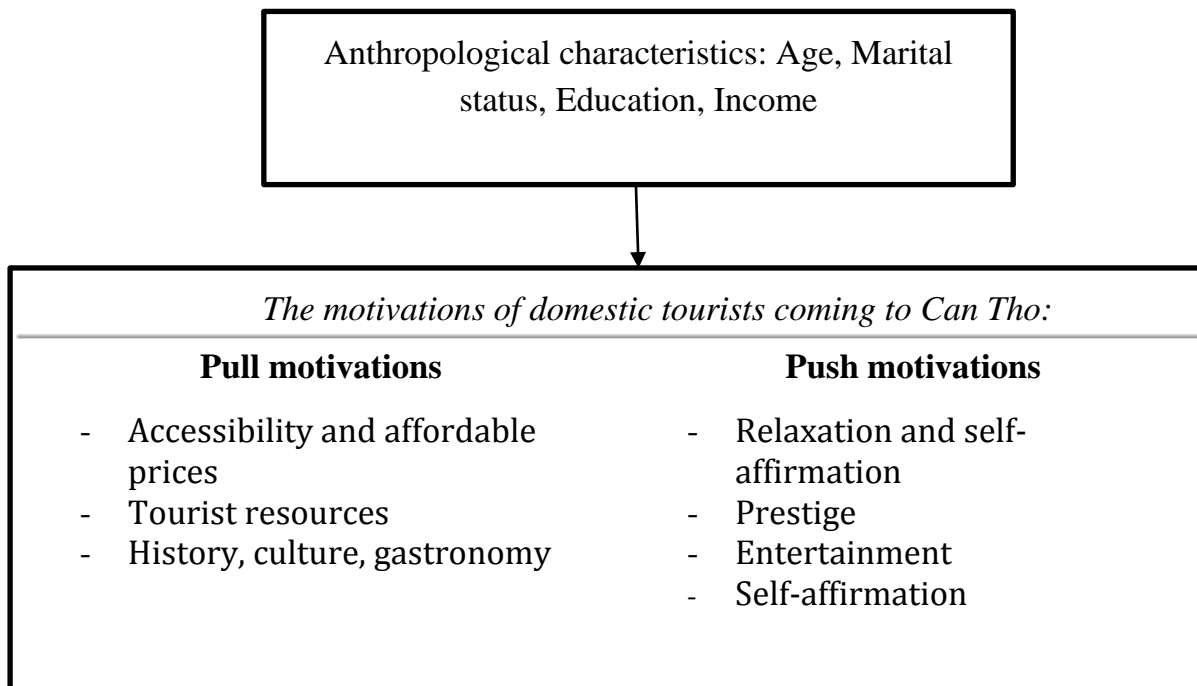


Figure 3. Modified framework

#### 4.4 Discriminant Analysis

Discriminant analysis was implemented with dependent variable Y, which signified the experience of traveling to Can Tho City. It was divided into two groups - the tourists coming to Can Tho for the first time and those coming back (which meant they had been to Can Tho for more than once). This analysis was conducted to better understand what motivations had a greater impact on the returning tourists' decisions. Accordingly, the author offered some solutions to increase the number of domestic returns to Can Tho City.

$H_0$ : There was no discrimination between the motivations of first-time and returning tourists.

**Table 4: Standardized coefficients**

Push set 1	Relaxation and self-affirmation	0,443
Push set 2	Prestige	0,560
Push set 3	Entertainment	0,211
Push set 4	Networking	0,239
Pull set 1	Accessibility and affordable prices	0,515
Pull set 2	Tourist resources	0,915
Pull set 3	History, culture, and gastronomy	0,602
Eigenvalue: 0,416		

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Wilks' Lambda: 0,706

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*Source: Analyzing figures from 140 domestic travelers, 2019*

After the discriminant analysis was conducted on SPSS, the results in the correlation matrix of sets showed that the correlation among predicting variables is rather low, mostly  $\leq 0.3$ . Thus, it could be stated that the multicollinearity is not remarkable. The correlative Eigenvalue value of the function was 0.416 and accounted for 100% of the variance which could explain the causes. Besides, the canonical correlation coefficient was 0.542, which means 30% of the variance of dependent variables could be explained by this model.

Additionally, the Wilks' Lambda value of the function was 0.706, and its Chi-square value was 46.74. These two values ascertain that the two subject are different and distinctive. Moreover, the observed significance level was 0.000, much smaller than 0.05. Hence, it could be concluded that the significance of the statistically significant discrimination was at 5%. The results could be explained as follows:

The importance of factor sets was reflected by the absolute value of the standardized system (Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients Table). The variables with a higher absolute value of the standardized coefficients would contribute more to the discrimination of the functions. As shown in Table 4.13, "Pull set 2: Tourist resources" was the most important set of predicting factors for distinguish the tourists coming to the destination for the first time and those who came back. Following this set were "Pull set 3: History, culture, and gastronomy" and "Pull set 2: Prestige." This means that these three sets of factors could show most clearly the differences between first-time and returning tourists. The values of the coefficients of the predicting variables were all positive, which pointed out that the higher the evaluation of the pull and push motivations of the tourists coming to Can Tho got, the more tourists would come back and vice versa.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, domestic tourists chose to travel to Can Tho because of 4 pull motivations, i.e. Relaxation and self-affirmation, Prestige, Entertainment, Social Contact, and 3 pull motivations, i.e. Accessibility and affordable prices, Tourist resources, History, culture, and gastronomy.

Concerning the discriminant analysis results between new tourists and returning tourists, the order of variables reflected that the significant discrimination between those two groups of tourists were the sets (1) "Tourist resources", i.e. the variety of means for entertainment, with several shopping facilities, a great number of tourism types, and beautiful landscapes, (2) "History, culture, gastronomy", i.e. unique

cultures, destinations featuring historical stories of the country, and diverse gastronomy, which is distinctive to the region of waterways, and (3) “Prestige”, i.e. the motivations to show off, to go to a destination which would be impressive for family and friends, to go to a place where many people want to come.

However, due to the mismatch between the tourist industry workforce and the requirements in terms of both quantity and quality, there should be a combination of many types and formats of training to attract more qualified workers for prospective tourist activities in Can Tho City until 2020. The measures may include short training courses on essential knowledge for the unskilled workers as well as local people in the area of the tourist destinations, support for enterprises, vocational classes held by tourist agencies and on-the-spot training

Besides, tourist resources also have a profound influence on the travelers’ decision to come back to Can Tho, so there should be proper investment in cultural and sports facilities, such as museums, theaters, cinemas, libraries, parks, event halls, etc. to diversify products and develop its tourism strengths as the most important city of the region. Moreover, the focus should be put on tourist resources which attract much public interest, e.g. Ninh Kieu Quay, Truc Lam Zen Monastery, or Cai Rang Floating Market. Tourism should be innovative enough to encourage returning domestic tourists.

Last but not least, the majority of domestic tourists returned to Can Tho for a second time and stayed for one to two days. This result matched the reality that the number of tourists coming to Can Tho increased moderately, yet the length of their stay fell right under average. Accordingly, it would be challenging to lengthen their stay to the average level. Therefore, it is highly recommended that some unique tourist products be introduced to keep the visitors for a longer period, or work collaboratively with businesses at other destinations in the Mekong Delta.

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