

## Influential factors of domestic tourists' intention to choose wellness-tourism destination in Vietnam

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** Determine the impact of influential factors on the intention to choose wellness tourism destination in Vietnam of domestic tourists.

**Method:** The research used mixed methods which include quantity and quality methods. Desk research was firstly used to synthesize research background and develop research model. After that, a survey was implemented to collect data to test the hypothesis. Finally, focus group discussion was used to collect opinions of policy makers, tourism specialists on solutions to enhance domestic tourists' intention to choose wellness tourism destination in Vietnam.

**Result:** The result of the study shows that there are 4 factors affects the intention of domestic tourists' in choosing wellness tourism destination in Vietnam: Attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control and destination image. In which perceived behavioral control has the strongest impact and destination image is the only factor that has negative impact. Some solutions have been proposed to optimize the impact factors, contributing to the promotion of sustainable development of wellness tourism in Vietnam.

**Contribution:** The study makes contribution to clarifying the factors influencing domestic tourists' intention to choose wellness-tourism destinations in Vietnam which are attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control and destination image. Based on the analysis results, some practical solutions to enhance domestic tourists' intention to choose wellness tourism destination in Vietnam were proposed: raising awareness of behavioral control by providing detailed information, developing flexible service packages, and improving infrastructure so that tourists feel autonomous and comfortable when deciding; enhancing subjective norms by encouraging sharing of travel experiences on social networks, cooperating with KOLs, and organizing group travel programs to take advantage of community influence; improving tourists' attitudes by diversifying and improving the quality of tourism products, building a positive environment at the destination, and promoting the benefits of wellness tourism; and improving the destination's image through strong communication campaigns, developing unique experience programs, and cooperating with international organizations to certify quality, create prestige, and attract tourists.

**Keywords:** wellness tourism, wellness tourism destination, tourists' intention

### Introduction

People's needs for pleasant and sophisticated lifestyles are growing and has driven the information technology sector to advance and grow more firmly. Information technology not only has been making life more convenient but also becoming an effective tool to transmit information and enhance businesses' efficiency. Countries all over the world are increasingly aware of the importance of information technology to the national economic development and have been more integrated into information technology to make proper economic development decisions. In hospitality and tourism industry, information technology is considered as a competitive advantage factor (Buhalis, 2003; Buhalis & Song, 2007; Castaneda-Garcia & Frias-Jamilena (2010). It has been integrated in the operation system to improve hotel's efficiency and competitive ability (Buhalis, 2003), and provide more added value to



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customers, particularly those who are tech-savvy and enjoy engaging in digital experiences. In near future, technologies such as: 5G technology, internet of things (IoT), cloud computing, artificial intelligence (AI), big data, augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR) experiences... are believed to be adopted and flourish in many sectors including tourism and hospitality industry. Due to the rapid advancement of information technology in the digital age, hotel businesses must raise their level of technological proficiency to keep up with current development trends as hotels are becoming more competitive in the market by using information technology in their operational procedures, which makes businesses more efficient. In the era of digital technology, information technology is a need and one of the most effective tools to enhance business competitive ability, especially for 2- and 3-star hotels in Vietnam which are mostly the small and medium enterprises with limited resources.

The topic of information technology's impact on businesses' competitive ability has been mentioned in several former studies. However, the topic about the impact of information technology on the factors constituting the competitive ability of 2- and 3-star hotels in Hanoi has not been covered in prior studies.

With all the practical and theoretical status, the research team decided to choose the topic "Impact of information technology on the factors constituting the competitive ability of 2- and 3-star hotels in Hanoi" for the scientific research project.

## Literature review

### *Wellness tourism*

Mueller & Kaufmann (2001) believe that wellness tourism is all the relationships and phenomena that arise from the journey of people whose primary motivation is to preserve or enhance their health. Tourists stay in specialized accommodations that provide personalized care. They require a comprehensive package of services that include physical fitness/beauty care, nutrition/healthy diet, relaxation/meditation and spiritual activity/education". Myers, Sweeney & Witmer (2005) propose a holistic approach, in which wellness tourism is a way of life that aims at the well-being of mind, body and spirit, and that results in supporting people to live well in their natural and social contexts. Bushell & Sheldon (2009) define that "Wellness tourism is a holistic form of travel that integrates the search for physical health, beauty or longevity and the enhancement of spiritual consciousness or awareness as well as a connection to community, nature or sacred mystery. It encompasses a range of travel experiences in destinations with appropriate wellness products, infrastructure, facilities and health resources."

Besides, according to the Global Wellness Tourism Economy report (2017), wellness tourism is referred to as a type of tourism that is associated with maintaining or enhancing one's personal health. In 2021, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the European Tourism Commission (ETC) redefined this form of tourism as follows: "Wellness tourism includes fundamental elements that help an individual improve physical, mental & spiritual health through specific activities; to satisfy needs and improve the quality of life better than the current environment and society."

This study used the concept of wellness tourism proposed by UNWTO to develop the content of the research: "Wellness tourism is a type of tourism activity which aims to improve and balance all of the main domains of human life including physical, mental, emotional, occupational, intellectual and spiritual".

### *Wellness tourism destination*

There are many concepts of wellness tourism destinations that have been proposed. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) describes wellness tourism destinations as "a tourist destinations where tourists seek to improve their health and mental well-being through participation in wellness activities and experiences, including spas, fitness, yoga, physical and mental care". Hjalager & Richards (2002) also defined wellness tourism destinations in a way that is somewhat similar to the above definitions: "Wellness tourism destinations are tourist destinations where tourists can engage in activities related to physical and mental health care, such as exercising, practicing yoga and meditation, and relaxing in a peaceful environment to

improve their health and well-being". Cohen (2014) offers a more specific definition of a wellness tourism destination, as "a destination designed to create an environment that promotes health and well-being for tourists, often located in a natural environment and featuring amenities such as spa and fitness centers, healthy dining options, and spiritual and stress-reducing activities".

Praprom & Laipaporn (2023) also introduced the concept of wellness tourism destination in their study on potential wellness tourism destinations in Southern Thailand: "The destination needs to have health tourism services including various tourism activities, such as visiting cultural and natural sites, learning about local customs and health care services at hotels or accommodation such as massage and therapy, spa". While, in Vietnam, the Institute for Tourism Development (2022) defined a wellness tourism destination as "a tourist destination that provides two main types of services: medical/health care services/ products/ infrastructure; and tourism services (guiding, accommodation, transportation and entertainment)".

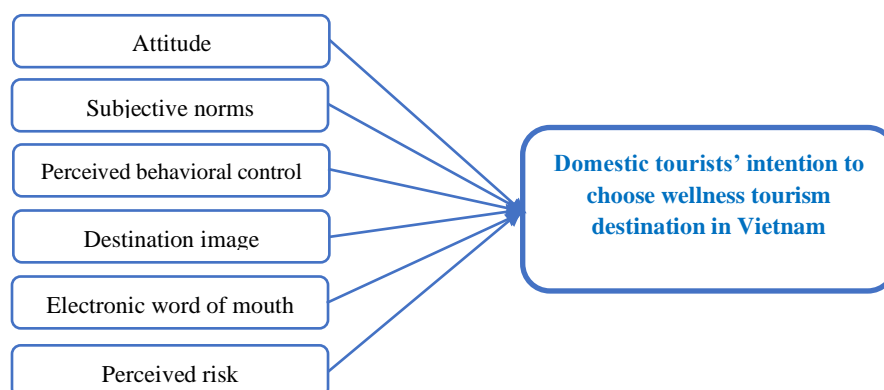
Synthesize these above concepts, wellness tourism destination can be understood as tourist destination where tourists can engage in activities related to physical and mental health care.

#### *Behavioral intention*

Ajzen & Fishbein (1975) defined behavioral intention as the expression of each person's readiness to perform a prescribed behavior, and it is considered a direct antecedent leading to behavior. Intention is based on estimates including: Attitude leading to behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. With the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Fishbein & Ajzen (1967) pointed out that the most important factor determining human behavior is the intention to perform that behavior. Behavioral intention is governed by two factors: A person's attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms related to the behavior. This theory was supplemented by Ajzen (1985) by proposing the additional factor of perceived behavioral control indicating that the individual has a plan in advance for performing the behavior to describe the scale for the factor of intention leading to behavior. The TPB model later became a theoretical foundation applied to research in many different fields on the aspect of behavioral intention. The behavioral intention scale was developed by Taylor & Todd (1995) based on the concept proposed by Ajzen (1985). Taylor and Todd (1995) argued that behavioral intention is expressed when customers intend to use the product and will use the product in the nearest possible time. While the study of Limayem, Khalifa, & Frini (2000) added the factor of expectation to perform the customer's behavior.

#### **Research Method**

The main objective of this study is to examine the influential factors of intention to choose wellness tourism destination in Vietnam of domestic tourists. To achieve the research objective, the study builds a theoretical background for the research. Based on the systematization of theoretical background, the study proposed a research model with 6 hypotheses:



**Figure 1:** Research model

**Source:** Research result

- Attitude: Attitude, as defined and explained by previous studies (Tonglet et al., 2004; Al-Nahdi et al. 2015; Al-Nahdi, 2015), is a person's liking or disliking towards an action, i.e. attitude is a psychological tendency expressed through evaluating a particular entity with a certain degree of liking or disliking. According to (Yusliza & Ramayah, 2011), it is also defined as the way an individual reacts and has a favorable attitude towards an object (Al-Nahdi et al., 2015). Attitude is the degree to which a person has a positive or negative evaluation of the behavior of interest. It involves considering the consequences of performing a behavior (LaMorte, 2022).
- Subjective norms: Ajen (1986) argues that subjective norms are beliefs that others around a person believe a person should do and that influence that person's behavior. Subjective norms reflect the extent to which an individual thinks that influential people want him or her to perform a behavior, and he or she feels motivated to perform according to those social norms (Drew, 2023). Ardaani et al. (2020) define subjective norms as "an individual's perception of the social pressures that apply to performing a particular behavior" (Drew, 2023).
- Perceived behavioral control is understood as an individual's perception that performing or completing a particular behavior is within their control (Wallston, 2001). Perceived behavioral control can be measured through a person's assessment of the difficulty of a particular behavior relative to their own ability to perform it (Drew, 2023; Tran Thu Phuong, 2023).
- Destination image is the synthesis of tourists' perceptions of a destination through the process of receiving information from different sources (Beerli & Martín, 2004). The image of a tourist destination is the tourists' comments about the destination based on their beliefs, attitudes and opinions, which is the decisive factor in the behavior of tourists and local residents at the tourist destination (Chen & Tsai, 2007). A good destination image helps attract tourists to travel, increase spending (Chi & Qu, 2008), promote decision making (Bigne & Sanchez, 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007), affect satisfaction (Ibrahim & Gill, 2005; Lee, 2009) and indirectly affect loyalty (Lee, 2009).
- Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is defined as positive or negative comments from potential customers about a product or company, stored in the present or past and available to many people and organizations for reference via the internet (HennigThurau et al., 2004). Through social networks, customers can form virtual communities, communicate or interact online and create customer power with businesses (Jeong & Jang, 2011). eWOM allows consumers to synthesize negative opinions about products and services from past, current and potential future customers.
- Perceived risk can be defined as the loss that consumers may incur in the pursuit of the most favorable outcome (Stone & Grønhaug, 1993). The level of loss is purely cognitive, as it is based on consumers' predictions about outcomes that they can or cannot control (Peter & Ryan, 1976). Risk is also multidimensional, including financial risk, operational risk, physical risk, psychological risk and social risk (Hsu & Lin, 2006). Furthermore, the tourism "product" is vulnerable to specific risk factors such as bad weather, unfriendly locals, strikes, unsuitable local food, terrorism, individual crime, political instability, disease and natural disasters, as well as dishonest and inconsiderate treatment (Fuchs & Reichel, 2011, Tran Thu Phuong, 2023).

To test the hypothesis, a survey was conducted at 3 tourist destinations in the north, central and south of Vietnam, to collect feedback of 210 domestic tourists who used sharing accommodation services. After filtering junk data, 179 responses were included in coding. Then, SPSS 20.0 software was used to process the coded data.

## Result and Discussion

### Results

#### ❖ Respondents' characteristics

The subjects of the survey are domestic tourists that experienced sharing accommodation in Vietnam. The main characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Survey respondents' characteristics**

N = 179	Frequency	Percentages
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<b>Gender</b>		
Male	30	3,4 %
Female	143	79,9%
Other	6	3,4%
<b>Age</b>		
18 – 25	84	46,9 %
26 – 45	32	17,9 %
46 – 60	58	32,4 %
Above 60	05	2,8 %

**Source:** Research Result

❖ *The scale's reliability*

**Table 2: Reliability Statistic**

No	Factors	Cronbach's Alpha	Numbers of Items
1	Attitude	0.782	5
2	Subjective norms	0.642	4
3	Perceived behavioral control	0.739	3
4	Destination image	0.674	8
5	Electronic word of mouth	0.806	5
6	Perceived risk	0.838	7
7	Domestic tourists' intention to choose wellness tourism destination in Vietnam	0.624	3

**Source:** Research Result

All the Cronbach's alpha coefficients are greater than 0.6 and has a total item correlation coefficient of the observed variables greater than 0.3. Besides, no variable has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient greater than 0.95. Therefore, it is concluded that all observed variables are suitable for further testing.

❖ *Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)*

- For the independent variable

**Table 3: Rotated component matrix**

**Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
PR5	,880					
PR4	,872					
PR2	,866					
PR3	,841					
PR6	,766					
PBC3		,804				
PBC 2		,781				
PBC 1		,719				
eWOM2			,781			
eWOM 3			,780			
eWOM 4			,665			
eWOM 1			,649			
SN2				,755		
SN 3				,753		
SN 4				,733		
SN 1				,673		
ATT2					,859	
ATT1					,778	
ATT3					,675	

TDI6						,874
TDI 3						,861
TDI 8						,561

**Source:** Research Result

The studies implemented EFA twice to get the results that meet the requirements. The result is shown in table 3.

The results of KMO and Bartlett's Test shows that:

- KMO coefficient = 0.721 > 0.5
- Sig.= 0.000 so using factor analysis is appropriate
- Eigenvalues - 1.009 > 1
- Cumulative % = 68.560% > 50%
- All variables have loading factors > 0.5

EFA only extracts a single factor from the observed variables, meaning that the scale ensures unidimensionality, the observed variables of the dependent variable converge quite well.

- For the dependent variables:
- KMO coefficient = 0.825 > 0.5
- Sig.= 0.000 so using factor analysis is appropriate
- Eigenvalues > 1
- Cumulative variance = 63.909% > 50% so it meets the requirements.
- All variables have loading factors > 0.5

EFA only extracts a single factor from the observed variables, meaning that the scale ensures unidimensionality, the observed variables of the dependent variable converge quite well.

❖ *Multiple regression analysis*

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.753 <sup>a</sup>	.124	.568	.48977	1.762
a. Predictors: (Constant), PBC, TDI, SN, eWOM, PR, ATT					
b. Dependent Variable: INT					

**Source:** Research Result

- The R value is 75.3%, showing that the relationship between variables in the model is quite closely correlated.
- Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> (Adjusted R Square) reflects the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable. In this case, the 4 independent variables influence 56.8% of the change in the dependent variable, the rest is due to variables outside the model and random errors.
- Autocorrelation testing

**ANOVA**

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	50.857	6	8.476	35.316	<.001 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	41.259	172	.240		
	Total	92.116	178			
a. Dependent Variable: YD						
b. Predictors: (Constant), PBC, TDI, SN, eWOM, PR, ATT						

**Source:** Research Result

Sig. = 0.001 < 0.05: There is at least one independent variable that affects domestic tourists' intention to choose a wellness tourism destination in Vietnam.

- Multicollinearity testing

The VIF values of the independent variables all have a VIF index < 2. Therefore, the relationship between these independent variables is guaranteed not to significantly affect the results of explaining the regression model.

- Regression model

Model	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics
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		Beta			Tolerance
1	(Constant)		8.978	<.001	
	TDI	-.150	-2.057	.041	.958
	PR	-.193	-2.275	.204	.710
	SN	.085	.838	.043	.499
	eWOM	.137	1.735	.085	.815
	ATT	.030	.299	.005	.496
	PBC	.248	3.158	.002	.822

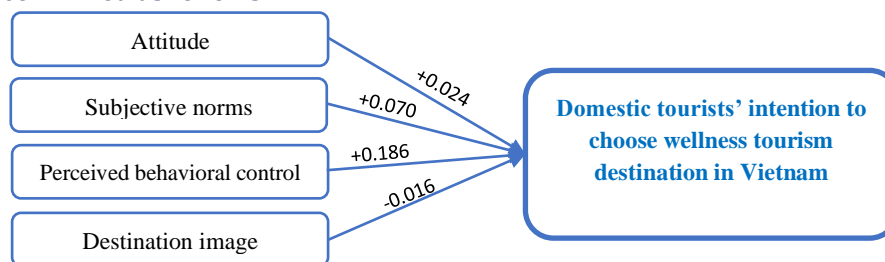
**Source:** Research Result

As the sig value of PR is 0.204 > 0.05 and the sig value of eWOM is 0.085 > 0.05, these two variables are not meaningful in the model and should be eliminated from the regression model. The regression model now has 4 independent variables left (with Sig. t-test values less than 0.05, so they are meaningful in the model) which are: TDI, SN, ATT, PBC.

Basing on the standardized coefficients of the variables in the model, the regression equation is determined as follows:

$$YD = -0.116*TDI + 0.070*SN + 0.024*ATT + 0.186*PBC$$

This shows that there are 4 factors affecting domestic tourists' intention to choose a wellness tourism destination in Vietnam. After testing the research hypotheses, the proposed research model is confirmed as follows:



**Source:** Research Result

## Discussion

The study shows that the factors influencing on the intention of choosing wellness tourism destination in Vietnam of domestic tourists are attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control and destination image. In which, Perceived Behavioral Control has the strongest impact with a standardized coefficient of 0.186, indicating that tourists' decisions are minimally hindered by external factors. Subjective Norms is the second most influential factor with a coefficient of 0.070, showing that tourists are influenced by opinions from family and friends. With a coefficient of 0.024, Attitude Towards the Destination is the third influential factor, that if tourists feel positive and comfortable, they are more likely to choose the destination. Destination Image is the only factor with a negative impact (coefficient of -0.116), indicating it does not significantly influence tourists' intention.

In the study results, the negative impact of destination image on domestic tourists' decision to choose a wellness tourism destination is a unique finding as destination image is often considered to have positive impact on tourists' intention to choose a tourism destination. This finding may stem from the following reasons: (i) Different expectations and reality: Tourists may have formed an unrealistic or overly optimistic image of wellness tourism destinations in Vietnam, based on inaccurate advertising or communication. When the actual experience does not meet or match this expectation, tourists may become disappointed, leading to a decrease in their intention to choose the destination. (ii) Lack of differentiation and appeal: Another reason could be that the image of healthcare destinations in Vietnam is not outstanding or not clearly different from other types of tourism. If these destinations do not create a strong impression or do not bring newness and uniqueness, their image may not be convincing enough for tourists. (iii) Competition and comparison with international destinations: The image of domestic healthcare destinations may be compared with

international destinations that have a higher reputation and quality. When tourists perceive domestic destinations as not meeting standards or not having many similar high-end facilities and services, they may tend to decrease their intention to choose.

To enhance the intention to choose wellness tourism destinations of domestic Vietnamese tourists, several synchronous solutions based on key influencing factors can be considered. First, raise awareness of behavioral control by providing detailed information, developing flexible service packages, and improving infrastructure so that tourists feel autonomous and comfortable when deciding. Next, enhance subjective norms by encouraging sharing of travel experiences on social networks, cooperating with KOLs, and organizing group travel programs to take advantage of community influence. In addition, it is necessary to improve tourists' attitudes by diversifying and improving the quality of tourism products, building a positive environment at the destination, and promoting the benefits of wellness tourism. Finally, enhance the destination's image through strong communication campaigns, developing unique experience programs, and cooperating with international organizations to certify quality, create prestige, and attract tourists. These solutions aim to optimize the impact factors, thereby promoting the sustainable development of wellness tourism in Vietnam.

## Conclusion

The result of the study shows that there are 4 factors affects the intention of domestic tourists' in choosing wellness tourism destination in Vietnam: Attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control and destination image. In which perceived behavioral control has the strongest impact and destination image is the only factor that has negative impact. Some solutions have been proposed to to optimize the impact factors, contributing to the promotion of sustainable development of wellness tourism in Vietnam.

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