International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Systems
Volume 17 Issue 2 2024
ISSN: 0974-6250 (Print)
©Copyright IJHTS
® Exclusive Marketing Rights: Publishing India Group

Hospitality & Tourism Systems

The Impact of Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Intention to Choose Sa Pa as a Tourist Destination in Lao Cai, Vietnam

Nguyen Thị Quynh Huong*, Bui Thi Quynh Trang**

Abstract *This study aims to investigate the impact of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on the intention to choose Sa Pa as a tourist destination in Vietnam. Drawing upon the persuasive communication theory, social judgment theory, planned behavior theory, and information acceptance theory, this study identified the influence of eWOM on the intention to choose a tourist destination through six factors: Understanding of the receiver, Receiver's Involvement, Relationship between the receiver and the sender, Credibility of the eWOM information, The quality of eWOM information, The quantity of eWOM. A survey was conducted with a sample of 238 local and international tourists who sought information about tourist destinations through online channels and intended to choose and use services in Sa Pa as their tourist destination. The collected data were cleaned and subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and a structural equation model (SEM) was employed to evaluate the relationships in the research model. The results of the study revealed that all six factors significantly influenced eWOM acceptance and the intention to choose Sa Pa as a tourist destination. Among these factors, "Understanding of the receiver" had the strongest impact with the highest path coefficient (-0.338), while the "The quantity of eWOM information" had the lowest influence (0.106).*

Keywords: *WOM, eWOM, Tourist Destination, Intention, Behavior*

INTRODUCTION

Word-of-Mouth (WOM) is a communication method described as sharing opinions and comments about products and services that people are interested in. However, the emergence and development of the Internet have brought about significant changes in consumer behavior, purchase intentions, and decision-making processes. Consumers have embraced and exploited the importance of 4.0 technology tools in exchanging opinions, posting online reviews, evaluations, and criticisms. Consequently, WOM has evolved into an entirely new form - electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM).

eWOM is regarded as a digital marketing tool with significant influence on businesses and consumers (Kumar & Benbasat, 2006; Zhang et al., 2010; Bataineh, 2015). Consumers can easily access and monitor the thoughts and experiences of others through their comments, reviews, and evaluations of products and services on platforms such as websites, blogs, forums, and social media. As a result, consumers have a basis for comparison, evaluation, and optimal selection of products and services.

In the field of tourism, WOM plays a crucial role as an important source of information, with 50.7% of users considering travel information from the WOM of family and friends as the most reliable (Vinaresearch, 2013). According to Dimitrious and Walter Schertler (1999), the destination selection behavior involves three steps: (1) tourists form initial perceptions of the destinations; (2) based on individual characteristics and travel purposes, they eliminate destinations that do not meet their expected needs; and (3) they choose the most suitable destination from the remaining options. Most tourists have limited knowledge, understanding, and experience in selecting and using products and services at a tourist destination during their first visit. Furthermore, due to the intangible nature of tourist products and the inability to evaluate them without experiencing them, many tourists consider products to

* Faculty of Hospitality – Tourism, Thuongmai University, Hanoi, Vietnam. Email: huong.ntq@tmu.edu.vn
** Faculty of Hospitality – Tourism, Thuongmai University, Hanoi, Vietnam. Email: trang.btq@tmu.edu.vn

carry a high risk when making purchase decisions (Lewis & Chambers, 2000). Therefore, eWOM will impact the intention to choose a destination by creating an image of the destination in the minds of tourists. According to Bataineh (2015), eWOM communication about quality, quantity, and credibility can influence tourists' behavioral intentions. Lin, Wu and Chen (2013) suggest that eWOM communication about quality, quantity, and sender knowledge can affect behavioral intentions. Additionally, expert evaluations of certain products or services demonstrate that authentic and reliable information can influence consumer purchase intentions and trust (Wangenheim & Bayo'n, 2004; Wang, Teo & Kok, 2015).

Therefore, the objective of this study is to determine the impact of eWOM on tourists' intention to choose a tourist destination, thereby identifying the relationships between the quality of eWOM, quantity of eWOM, Credibility of the eWOM information, understanding, Receiver's Involvement, and Relationship between the receiver and the sender on the acceptance of eWOM.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Electronic Word-of-Mouth

The importance of eWOM in business operations has been widely researched, especially since the application of Internet technologies (Goldenberg, Libai & Muller, 2001). The Internet has enabled new communication platforms that empower providers and consumers, allowing information and opinions to be shared from businesses to consumers, and from consumers to consumers. Hennig Thurau et al. (2004) defined eWOM as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, current, or former customers about a certain product or company, which is made available to many people and organizations through the Internet." This is the most commonly used concept in current eWOM research. eWOM can be regarded as an extension of WOM between individuals in the modern era (Yolanda & Colleagues, 2011), and can overcome the limitations of WOM in terms of social contact range, communication, and information shared in private conversations (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004). eWOM changes consumer behavior and opinions in the online environment. Therefore, eWOM has become an influential and persuasive online communication tool for the consumer community when making purchase decisions (Chu, 2009).

Simons (1976) defined persuasion as "human communication designed to influence others by modifying their beliefs, values, or attitudes." The persuasive communication theory was developed and expanded by Lasell (1948), Hovland and colleagues (1949), and McGuire (1985), in which the components of persuasive communication include the communicator, message, and receiver. Alongside the persuasive communication theory, the social judgment theory by Muzafer Sherif and Carl Hovland (1980) also claims that message and communication channels lead to changes in consumer behavioral intentions.

eWOM is evaluated as a communication tool with significant influence on businesses and consumer acceptance (Kumar & Benbasat, 2006; Zhang & Colleagues, 2010; Bataineh, 2015). Therefore, based on the integration of the persuasive communication theory and social judgment theory, the components of eWOM are identified to include the communicator, message, and receiver. The communication channel in eWOM is the online context, the digital environment, and consumers or tourists who actively choose information channels to search for knowledge.

Behavioral Intention

In the theoretical framework of eWOM, behavioral intention is one of the most common outcome variables of eWOM (Sherif & Hovland, 1980; Sher & Lee, 2009). Numerous previous studies have also affirmed that eWOM influences consumer behavioral intentions (To & Ho, 2014). Behavioral intention predicts the likelihood of an individual's future behavior (Gebauer, 2022). To explain issues related to human behavioral intentions in general, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) was chosen as the foundation to understand the reason people exhibit certain specific behaviors and the factors required to change behavioral intentions. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) stated that the intention to perform a behavior is influenced by attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms. With this perspective, the TRA suggests that behavioral intentions can be entirely controlled by reason. This limitation restricts the application of the TRA theory to study specific behaviors. Therefore, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was developed as an extension of TRA (Ajzen, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The TPB proposes that behavioral intentions are influenced by three factors: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. These factors indicate the willingness or effort each individual is willing to exert to perform a behavior. Furthermore, behavioral intention represents the perceived readiness for executing a behavior, the outcome of comparison, and the most accurate tool for predicting behavior in reality (Kalwani & Silk, 1982). It is a factor used to evaluate the ability to perform a behavior in the future (Blackwell & Colleagues, 2001).

Acceptance of Electronic Word-of-Mouth

The acceptance of eWOM is a psychological action that influences online consumers through social norms or evaluations, and comments, within the online environment (Fan & Miao, 2012). However, the impact of information in eWOM can vary when transmitted from one person to another, with the same content, but potentially different reception, thus leading to differences in perceptions and understanding among information recipients (Cheung et al., 2008). The level of influence of eWOM information is diverse, and not all online WOM information on social media platforms influences purchase intentions (Yang, 2012). Sherif and Hovland (1980) demonstrated that human perception of attitude, value, trust, and behavioral intention changes exist on a continuum that includes the scope of rejection, non-commitment, and acceptance. Persuasive messages are most likely to be successful when they fall within the acceptance range of an individual.

Sussman and Siegal (2003) investgated the acceptance scope of an individual based on the Information Adoption Model (IAM), a theoretical model used extensively in online communication studies to explain how individuals are influenced in the process of receiving and using information (Cheung et al., 2008; Chen et al., 2011; Li, 2013). The researchers claim that for an individual to accept certain information, they must evaluate its usefulness, ease of use, and compatibility with the user. The IAM is highly regarded for its applicability in eWOM studies (Tapanainen, Dao & Nguyen, 2021). When applied in the context of online communication, IAM has two main assumptions: (1) it considers argument quality (information quality) as the central orientation; and (2) the credibility of the information source is viewed as an external factor (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). If consumers perceive an evaluation or comment as reliable and useful, they will accept the information and gain motivation and confidence to use eWOM before making purchasing decisions (Sussman & Siegel, 2003; Li, 2013).

Impact of Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Travel Destination Choice Intention

EWOM is considered an important source of information that influences travel behavior and destination choices of tourists (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) studied the impact of online information on travel destination choice intention and found that online communication significantly affects attitudes toward the destination and travel intentions. Fan and Miao (2012) applied an extended model of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) by Petty and Cacioppo (1981) to investigate eWOM, and found that attitude, quality, and quantity of eWOM indirectly influence behavioral intentions through the acceptance of eWOM. Attitude is determined by the tourist's understanding, involvement, and relationship between the receiver and the sender. Acceptance of eWOM in the form of online reviews is considered the level of awareness needed so that tourists can accept online reviews after intentionally considering their validity and using them to form behavioral intentions (Zhang & Watts, 2008). Sussman and Siegal (2003) and Zhang and Watts (2008) argue that the two antecedents of eWOM acceptance are information quality and source credibility.

Travel destination choice intention is the primary motivation for behavior, and the three main determinants of destination choice intention are attitude, social influence, and perceived behavioral control of tourists (Ajzen, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). By examining attitude, social influence, and perceived behavioral control, researchers can understand whether an individual tourist intends to engage in the behavior and whether the eWOM factors need to fall within the range of information acceptance for the decision-making behavior of travel destination choice. Based on the theories and previous research findings, this article aims to investigate the impact of eWOM on information acceptance and the impact of information acceptance on travel destination Sa Pa choice intention. The proposed research framework is as follows:

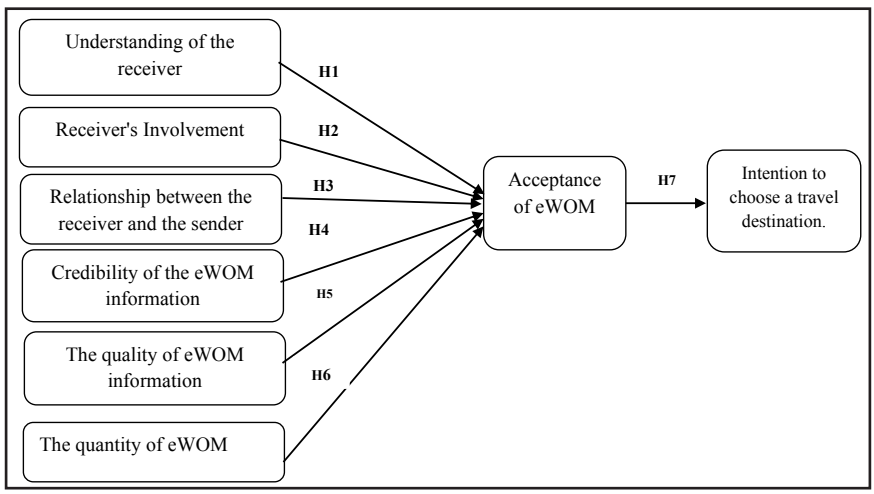

Fig. 1: The Model of the Impact of eWOM on Destination Choice Intention

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

H1: The higher the Understanding of the receiver, the lower the level of eWOM acceptance.

H2: The higher the Receiver's involvement, the higher the level of eWOM acceptance.

H3: The stronger the relationship between the recipient and the sender, the higher the level of eWOM acceptance.

H4: The higher the credibility of the eWOM information, the higher the level of eWOM acceptance.

H5: The higher the quality of the eWOM information, the higher the level of eWOM acceptance.

H6: The larger the quantity of the eWOM information, the higher the level of eWOM acceptance.

H7: The higher the level of eWOM acceptance, the greater the travel destination choice intention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Context

Sa Pa is continuously mentioned as a bright spot in Vietnamese tourism and is voted as one of the most attractive destinations in the world. Sa Pa has a series of landscapes, climate, and cultural identity advantages. Tourism plays a significant role in Sa Pa's total income and contributes significantly to the overall income of Lao Cai province. Sa Pa is gradually developing its potential to become a key national tourist area in the Northwest mountainous region of the country.

According to statistics from the Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of Lao Cai province, Sa Pa currently has 711 tourist accommodation establishments (392 guesthouses and hotels and 321 homestays) with a total of over 8,000 rooms and more than 14,000 beds, ensuring a capacity of 20,000 to nearly 40,000 guests per night. Among them, there are 2 five-star hotels, 6 four-star hotels, 11 three-star hotels, and the rest are hotels with a rating of 2 stars or lower that meet the standards. In addition, there are 25 units, including 16 international travel companies, 3 domestic travel companies, and 6 branches and representative offices with a total of nearly 300 tour guides and narrators.

In terms of tourist volume, according to statistics from the Department of Tourism of Lao Cai province, in 2022, the number of tourists visiting this area reached 4,477,000, equal to 111.9% of the annual plan, an increase of 219% compared to the same period in 2021. The total revenue from tourists is estimated to reach about 15,840 billion VND, equal to 104.7% of the annual plan, an increase of 258% compared to the same period in 2021. The number of tourists visiting Sa Pa town is about 107,000.

With its attractiveness in terms of landscapes, climate, and cultural identity, Sa Pa always leaves an impression on every traveler's journey. Therefore, the WOM information about tourist attractions, accommodation facilities, cuisine, etc. has been regularly shared by travelers through online channels such as dulich.net, cuongdl.com, kenhriviu.com, or on social media platforms such as Sa Pa travel experience, with 425 thousand followers, and Sa Pa reviews with 338 thousand followers. Each share from tourists receives significant interaction from the participants in these groups. This demonstrates that eWOM information about Sa Pa as a tourist destination has a significant impact on the destination choice intention of travelers.

Questionnaire Construction

The questionnaire was constructed with a structure consisting of 3 parts: (i) introduction to the purpose of the questionnaire; (ii) content of the questions, and (iii) demographic information. The measurement scales in the questionnaire were inherited and developed from previous studies on the impact of eWOM. To test the appropriateness and ensure the reliability of the research model, the researchers conducted interviews and consulted the opinions of nine experts in the field of marketing and communications. Most of the observed variables were taken from foreign studies, and a pilot survey with 35 samples was conducted to improve the expression, readability, clarity, and comprehensiveness of the questionnaire. After feedback from experts and respondents, some questions were revised, and the final questionnaire consisted of 25 questions for 8 factors, using a 5-point Likert scale (Level 1: Strongly disagree, Level 5: Strongly agree).

Data Collection

The subjects participating in the study were international and domestic tourists who intended to choose and use services at the tourist destination of Sa Pa by searching for information about the destination on online channels. A convenience sampling method was used, and data collection took place over a period of 6 months from October 2022 to March 2023. A total of 300 surveys were distributed through both direct and indirect methods via the Google Forms application. The total number of valid questionnaires collected from the two survey methods was 238, achieving a response rate of 79.3% (Table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Research Sample

Characteristics	Indicator	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	108	45.38
	Female	130	54.62
Age	18-24	44	18.49
	25-34	79	33.19
	35-44	53	22.27
	45-54	41	17.23
	Trên 55	21	8.82
Income	< 10 million VND	62	26.05
	10-15	83	34.87
	15-20	45	18.91
	> 20	48	20.17

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Evaluation of the Measurement Model Fit

To assess the fit of the measurement model, this study used a structural model. When the indicators and latent variables were successfully linked together in SmartPLS, the path modeling process was used to report the reliability and validity of the measures, with a total of 8 measurement scales for the latent variables in the model: Understanding of the receiver (KNO), Receiver's Involvement (JOI), Relationship between the receiver and the sender (COH), Credibility of the eWOM information (REL), eWOM Information Quality (QUAL), eWOM Information Quantity (QUAN), eWOM Acceptance (ACC), and Destination Selection Intention (INT). Table 2 summarizes the loadings in the PLS-SEM model.

Table 2: Factor Loading Matrix of Observed Variables in the Model

	KNO	QUAL	REL	ACC	JOI	COH	QUAN	INT
KNO1	0.890							
KNO2	0.887							
KNO3	0.874							
KNO4	0.868							
QUAL1		0.843						
QUAL2		0.844						
QUAL3		0.843						
REL1			0.803					
REL2			0.855					
REL3			0.833					
ACC1				0.784				
ACC2				0.731				
ACC3				0.793				
JOI1					0.871			
JOI2					0.836			
JOI3					0.743			
COH1						0.644		
COH2						0.692		
COH3						0.834		

	KNO	QUAL	REL	ACC	JOI	COH	QUAN	INT
QUAN1							0.838	
QUAN2							0.700	
QUAN3							0.804	
INT1								0.887
INT2								0.858
INT3								0.802

The results of factor analysis using SmartPLS software showed that the factor loading coefficients of the indicators were all greater than 0.6 (Table 2). This indicates that the observed variables of each measurement component met the required criteria.

Evaluation of the Reliability of the Measurement Scale

To assess the reliability and appropriateness of the research concepts (measurement scale) in the research model, the authors evaluated the measurement model. In the research model, the measurement scale consists of 8 latent constructs inherited from the scale that the authors developed based on a comprehensive review of the existing literature. The results obtained using PLS-SEM analysis with the measurement model showed that the measurement scales achieved the necessary reliability and appropriateness (reached the required value).

The analysis results showed that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of all 8 latent constructs ranged from 0.659 to 0.903 (all higher than 0.6), the rho_A coefficients ranged from 0.609 to 0.906 (all higher than 0.6), the composite reliability coefficients ranged from 0.770 to 0.932 (all higher than 0.7), and the average variance extracted of all the latent constructs in the extended model were above 0.5 (Table 3). This indicates that the observed variables used to measure the latent concepts of the research model are reliable.

Table 3: Evaluation Results of the Reliability of the Multidimensional Measurement Scale in the Research Model

Latent Structure	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Understanding of the receiver (KNO)	0.903	0.906	0.932	0.774
The quality of eWOM information (QUAL)	0.797	0.799	0.881	0.711
Credibility of the eWOM information (REL)	0.776	0.784	0.870	0.690
Relationship between the receiver and the sender (COH)	0.665	0.609	0.770	0.530
The quantity of eWOM (QUAN)	0.690	0.721	0.825	0.613
Receiver's Involvement (JOI)	0.807	0.808	0.886	0.722
Acceptance of eWOM (ACC)	0.659	0.662	0.814	0.594
Intention to choose the destination (INT)	0.752	0.764	0.858	0.670

Source: Calculation by the authors using SmartPLS software.

Convergence Validity Assessment of Measurement Scales

The results of the factor analysis using SmartPLS software support the convergence validity of the observed variables in the latent constructs, as all factor loadings were greater than 0.5 (Average Variance Extracted – AVE column), with the lowest being 0.530 (> 0.5). Therefore, each latent construct in the model demonstrates good convergence validity.

Discriminant Validity Assessment of Measurement Scales

The discriminant validity indicates the uniqueness or distinctiveness of a construct when compared to other constructs in the model. According to Ringle, Wende and Becker (2015), both the criteria proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981) and the Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio method should be used to determine the discriminant validity of latent variables. Following the recommendation of Fornell

and Larcker (1981), the discriminant validity of latent variables is confirmed when the square root of AVE for each latent variable is higher than the correlation values with other latent variables within the model.

Table 4: Fornell-Larcker Criterion for Discriminant Validity Assessment

	KNO	QUAL	REL	ACC	JOI	COH	QUAN	INT
KNO	0.880							
QUAL	-0.334	**0.843**						
REL	-0.271	0.605	**0.831**					
ACC	-0.570	0.639	0.683	**0.770**				
JOI	-0.118	0.427	0.395	0.439	**0.818**			
COH	-0.331	0.653	0.678	0.676	0.417	**0.728**		
QUAN	-0.345	0.489	0.542	0.551	0.179	0.463	**0.783**	
INT	-0.230	0.374	0.423	0.485	0.426	0.575	0.236	**0.850**

The table above shows that the discriminant validity has been achieved for all 8 latent constructs as the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values (highlighted in bold) are higher than the correlations outside the diagonal. For the "Acceptance of eWOM" (ACC) construct, the square root of the AVE (0.770) is higher than the correlations in its column (0.439, 0.676, 0.551, and 0.485) and its row (0.570, 0.639, and 0.683). Similarly, for the remaining constructs, the square root of the AVE is higher than the correlations outside the diagonal. These results indicate that each construct has achieved discriminant validity as the AVE values are higher than the correlations with other constructs.

Results of Structural Equation Model (SEM) Testing

Testing for Multicollinearity using VIF Coefficients

The SmartPLS software output the variance inflation factor (VIF) coefficients for the structural equation modelshown in the VIF table below. The inner and outer VIF values are displayed.

Table 5: Outer VIF Values

	VIF
KNO1	2.891
KNO2	2.689
KNO3	2.591
KNO4	2.505
QUAL1	1.620
QUAL2	1.767
QUAL3	1.725
REL1	1.577
REL2	1.660
REL3	1.570
ACC1	1.310
ACC2	1.299
ACC3	1.250
COH1	1.152
COH2	1.152
COH3	1.197
QUAN1	1.357
QUAN3	1.295
QUAN2	1.389
JOI1	1.783
JOI2	1.647
JOI3	1.342
INT1	2.358
INT2	2.235
INT3	1.423

According to Lowry and Gaskin (2014), multicollinearity issues exist when the VIF values are greater than 5 or its inverse is less than 0.2 between corresponding exogenous and endogenous variables. Looking at both Tables 5 and 6, all the VIF coefficients are below the threshold of 5. This indicates that there is no multicollinearity issue among the latent variables.

Table 6: Internal VIF Values

	AH	CLTT	DTC	EWOM	SGK	SL	TG	YD
AH				1.205				
CLTT				2.092				
DTC				2.251				
EWOM								1.000
SGK				2.327				
SL				1.575				
TG				1.301				
YD								

Path Coefficients in the Structural Model

The evaluation of path coefficients in the structural model is conducted using the bootstrap method. According to Hair Jr, Hult et al. (2016), bootstrapping is a resampling

technique that estimates the standard errors without relying on distributional assumptions. The bootstrap results closely approximate the distributional properties of the data. It is used to calculate the significance of T-statistics related to the path coefficients (Wong, 2013).

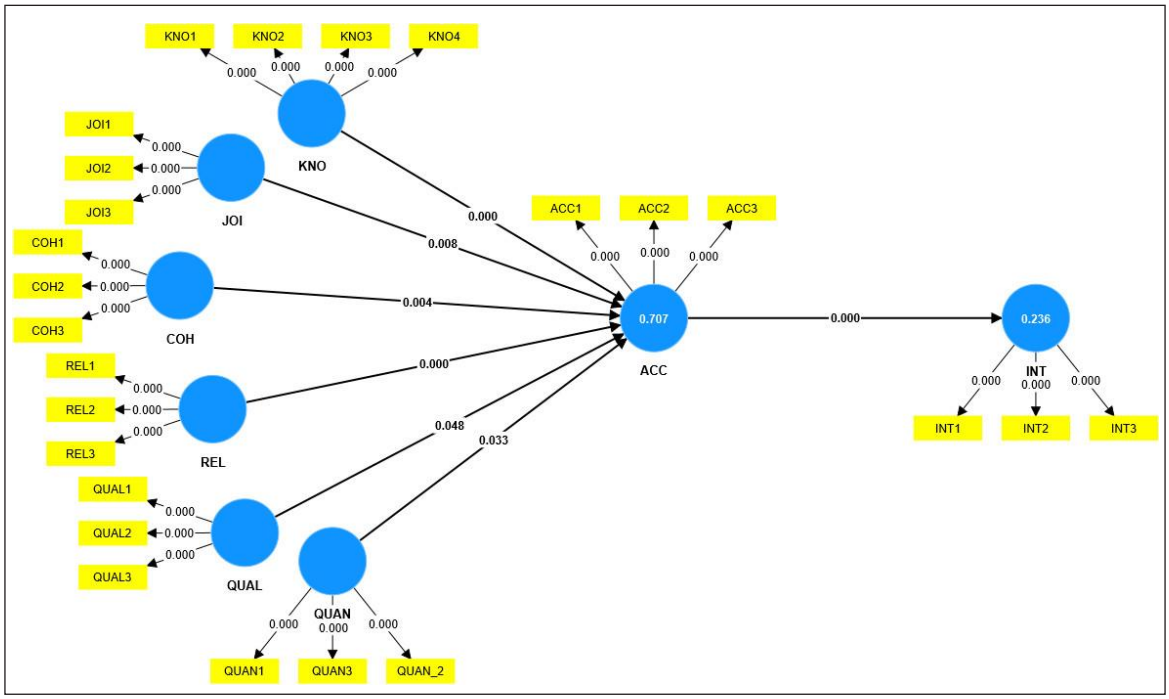

Fig. 2: Structural Equation Model Diagram

Table 7: SEM Model Estimation Results

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P-Values
KNO ->ACC	-0.338	-0.335	0.050	6.728	0.000
QUAL -> ACC	0.127	0.129	0.064	1.982	0.048
REL -> ACC	0.277	0.274	0.059	4.727	0.000
ACC -> YD	0.485	0.489	0.056	8.629	0.000
COH -> ACC	0.187	0.187	0.065	2.875	0.004
QUAN -> ACC	0.106	0.109	0.050	2.128	0.033
JOI -> ACC	0.134	0.134	0.051	2.637	0.008

The results from the above statistical table indicate the significance of the path coefficients determined through the bootstraping process. All seven hypotheses and their relationships in the structural equation model are evaluated as follows:

For Hypothesis H1: The results from the table show that the higher the Understanding of the receiver, the lower the Acceptance of eWOM; with a regression weight of -0.338 and a null p-value (0.000). Therefore, Hypothesis H1 is supported.

For Hypothesis H2: The results from the table indicate that the higher the Quality of eWOM information, the higher the Acceptance of eWOM (+); with a regression weight of 0.127 and a small p-value (0.048). Hence, Hypothesis H2 is supported.

For Hypothesis H3: The results from the table suggest that the higher the Credibility of the eWOM information, the higher the Acceptance of eWOM (+); with a regression weight of 0.277 and a null p-value (0.000). Therefore, Hypothesis H3 is supported.

For Hypothesis H4: The results from the table demonstrate that the higher the Relationship between the receiver and the sender, the higher the Acceptance of eWOM (+); with a regression weight of 0.187 and a small p-value (0.004). Hence, Hypothesis H4 is supported.

For Hypothesis H5: The results from the table indicate that the higher the Quantity of eWOM information, the higher the Acceptance of eWOM; with a regression weight of 0.106 and a small p-value (0.033). Therefore, Hypothesis H5 is supported.

For Hypothesis H6: The results from the table show that the higher the Receiver's Involvement, the higher the Acceptance of eWOM; with a regression weight of 0.134 and a small p-value (0.008). Hence, Hypothesis H6 is supported.

Lastly, for Hypothesis H7: The results from the table indicate that the higher the Acceptance of eWOM, the greater the Intention to select the destination; with a regression weight of 0.056 and a null p-value (0.000). Therefore, Hypothesis H7 is supported.

Furthermore, the structural path coefficients table also reveals that among the factors, the strongest influencing factor on Acceptance of eWOM is Understanding of the receiver (KNO); with the highest path coefficient (-0.338), followed by the Credibility of the eWOM information (REL), then Relationship between the receiver and the sender (COH), and subsequently the factors of Receiver's Involvement (JOI) (0.134), Quality of information (QUAL) (0.127), and Quantity of eWOM information (QUAN).

Model Fit

This study utilizes the R-square statistic to assess the fit of the structural model. As shown in the table below, the model fit is quite high, with adjusted R-square values of 0.707 and 0.698, respectively (both exceeding 50%). Therefore, it can be concluded that the structures have a significant impact on the research model.

Table 8: Assessment of the Model Fit in the Research

	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
ACC	0.707	0.698
INT	0.236	0.232

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study aimed to examine the impact of eWOM on the intention to choose SaPa as a tourism destination in Lao Cai, Vietnam. Based on the literature review and previous research, a model with 6 independent variables was proposed and tested, including: Receiver's understanding (KNO), Receiver's involvement (JOI), Relationship between the receiver and the sender (COH), Credibility of the eWOM information (REL), eWOM information quality (QUAL), and eWOM information quantity (QUAN). By applying SmartPLS software for data analysis, the research findings confirmed that all 6 factors (KNO, JOI, COH, REL, QUAL, QUAN) have a significant influence on the acceptance of eWOM information and the intention to choose the tourism destination. These results provide empirical evidence on the relationship between eWOM, eWOM acceptance, and the intention to choose a tourism destination, which is consistent with the findings of other researchers such as Bataineh (2015), Lin, Wu and Chen (2013), Wangenheim and Bayo'n (2004), and Wang, Teo and Kok (2015).

The research findings suggest that managers and tourism businesses in Sa Pa need to provide more online information to enhance understanding and encourage tourist participation in using eWOM. Additionally, they should create reliable information that includes high credibility, non-advertising content, clear and easily understandable information, and easy accessibility to gain eWOM acceptance and shape the tourists' intention to choose Sa Pa as their destination.

Despite the important findings of this study, there are some limitations to be acknowledged. Firstly, the survey sample consisted of international and domestic tourists who already had the intention to choose Sa Pa as a tourism destination through online information search, resulting in a non-probability convenience sampling method. Therefore, the sample may not be representative of the entire population. Secondly, the impact of eWOM on behavioral intention also has a significant influence on the destination branding factor (Godfrey et al., 2013), which was not addressed in this study. Thus, these limitations can be considered as gaps for future research.

Funding

The article is part of the product of the Ministry-level research project Science and Technology, code: B2023-TMA-03

REFERENCES

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *50,* 179-211.

Bataineh, A. Q. (2015). The impact of perceived e-wom on purchase intention: The mediating role of corporate image. *International Journal of Marketing Studies, 7*(1), 126-137.

Buhalis, D., & Schertler, W. (1999). Information and communication technologies in tourism. *Proceedings of the International Conference in Innsbruck, Austria.* Springer Science & Business Medi.

Cheng, T. C. E., David, Y. C. L., & Andy, C. L. Y. (2006). Adoption of internetbanking: An empirical study in Hong Kong. *Decision Support Systems*, *42*(3), 1558-1572.

Cheung, C. M. K., Lee, M. K. O., & Rabjohn, N. (2008). The impact of electronic word-of-mouth: The adoption of online opinions in online customer communities. *Journal of Internet Research, 18*(3), 229-247.

Chu, S. C., & Kim, Y. (2011). Determinants of consumer engagement in electronic Word-of-Mouth (EWOM) in social networking sites. *International Journal of Advertising*, *30*(1), 47-75.

Eck, J., & Gebauer, J. E. (2022). A sociocultural norm perspective on big five prediction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *122*(3), 554-575.

Fan, & Miao. (2012). Effect of electronic word-of-mouth on consumer purchase intention: The perspective of gender differences. *International Journal of Electronic Business Management*, *10*(3), 175-181.

Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention and behaviour: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *18*(1), 39-50.

Godes, D., & Mayzlin, D. (2004). Using online conversations to study word-of-mouth Communication. *Marketing Science, 23,* 545-560.

Goldenberg, J., Libai, B., & Muller, E. (2001). Talk of the network: A complex systems look at the underlying process of word-of-mouth. *Marketing Letters, 1*2, 211-223.

Hair Jr., J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C., & Sarstedt, M. (2016). *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P.,Walsh, G., & Gremler., D. D. (2004). Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the internet? *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *18*(1), 38-52.

Hovland, C. I., Lumsdaine, A. A., & Sheffield, F. D. (1949). *Experiments on mass communication* (Studies in social psychology in World War II). Princeton University Press.

Jalilvand, M. R., & Samiei, N. (2012). The effect of electronic word-of-mouth on brand image and purchase intention: An empirical study in the automobile industry in Iran. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning, 30*(4), 460-476.

Kalwani, M. U., & Alvin J. S. (1982). On the reliability and predictive validity of purchase intention measures. *Marketing Science*, *1*(Summer), 243-286.

Kumar, N., & Benbasat, I. (2006). Research note: The influence of recommendations and consumer reviews on evaluations of websites. *Information Systems Research*, *17*(4), 425-439.

Lasswell, H. D. (1948). The structure and function of communication in society. In L. Bryson (Ed.), *Communication of Ideas*. New York: Harper.

Lewis, R. C., & Chambers, R. E. (2000). *Marketing leadership in hospitality, foundations and practices* (3rd ed.). New York: Wiley.

Lin, C. H., Wu, Y. S., & Chen, V. J. C. (2013). *Electronic word-of-mouth: The moderating roles of product involvement and brand image.* Paper Presented at International Conference onTechnology Innovation and Industrial Management.

Lowry, P. B., & Gaskin, J. (2014). Partial least squares (PLS) structural equation modeling (SEM) for building and testing behavioral causal theory: When to choose it and how to use it. *Journals & Magazines*, 123-146.

McGuire, W. J. (1985). Attitudes and attitude change. In G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (Eds.), *Handbook of Social Psychology* (3rd ed., vol. 2, pp. 233-346.). Random House, New York.

Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). *Communication and persuasion: Central and peripheral routes to attitude change*. New York, U.S.: Springer-Verlag.

Ringle, C. M., Wende, S., & Becker, J. M. (2015). SmartPLS. SmartPLS GmbH, Boenningstedt. *Journal of Service Science and Management*, *10*(3).

See-To, E. W., & Ho, K. K. (2014). Value cocreation and purchase intentionin social network sites: The role of electronic word-of-mouth and trust – A theoretical analysis. *Computers in Human Behavior,* 31, 182-189.

Sher, P. J., & Lee, S. H. (2009). Customer skepticism and online reviews: An elaboration likelihood model perspective. *Social Behavior and Personality*, *37*(1), 137-144.

Sherif, M., & Hovland, C. I. (1980). Social judgment: Assimilation and contrast effects in communication and attitude change. *American Journal of Sociology, 68*(1).

Simons. (1976). *Persuasion: Understanding, practice, and analysis*. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Sussman, S. W., & Siegal, W. S. (2003). Informational influence in organizations: An integrated approach to knowledge adoption. *Information Systems Research*, *14*(1), 47-65.

Tapanainen, D., Dao, T. K., & Nguyen, T. T. H. (2021). Impacts of online word-of-mouth and personalities on intention to choose a destination. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *116*, 106656.

Wang, X. W., Teo, H. H., & Kwok, K. W. (2015). Simultaneity and interactivity of the effects of communication elements on consumers' decision making in eWOM system. *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research, 16*(3), 153-174.

Wangehheim, F., & Bayo'n, T. (2004). The effect of word-of-mouth on service switching. *European Journal of Marketing, 38*(9), 1173-1185.

Watts, S. A., & Zhang, W. (2008). Capitalizing on content: Information adoption in two online. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems, 9*(2), 73-94.

Yolanda, Y. Y., Chan, E. W., & Ngai, T. (2011). Conceptualising electronic word-of-mouth activity. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, *29*(5), 488-516.

Zhang, J. Q., Craciun, G., & Shin, D. (2010). When does electronic word-of-mouth matter? A study of consumer product reviews. *Journal of Business Research*, *63*(12), 1336-1341.