ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH (EWOM) AND THE TRAVEL INTENTION OF SOCIAL NETWORKERS POST-COVID-19: A VIETNAM CASE

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Purpose: The purpose of this study is to quantitatively determine the impact of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) on the travel intention of Vietnamese social network users. The study proposes solutions to develop online marketing strategies in tourism to quickly restore the tourism industry after the COVID-19 pandemic. **Theoretical framework:** This study combines two theoretical models, the Information Acceptance Model (IAM) and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), to explore how electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) impacts travel intentions in Vietnam, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. IAM focuses on factors like information quality and credibility, while TRA addresses additional behavioral factors. By integrating these models, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of eWOM's influence on travel intentions among social media users in Vietnam during the pandemic. **Design/Methodology/Approach:** The study was conducted in Vietnam. The questionnaire was administered to respondents via an online survey. The results were 262 valid feedback forms conducted in 2023. Linear structural modeling (SEM) was used to measure the relationship between factors in the research model. **Findings:** Research results show that all factors have a positive impact on travel intention through other factors, or will directly impact travel intention of social network users in Vietnam. **Research, Practical & Social implications:** It is critical to focus on building marketing channels that support electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in order to successfully promote trip ambitions. The Tourism Office has adopted digital marketing as a cutting-edge strategy for promoting the region's tourism potential (Burhan, 2023). Furthermore, because travel intentions are positively related to information acceptance, these channels must prioritize improving the quality and dependability of eWOM information. Furthermore, channel managers should keep a careful eye on customers' opinions regarding eWOM-related concerns. Finally, administrators should create unique, context-based solutions that might increase travel intentions among social network members while taking Vietnam's cultural context into consideration. This proactive strategy enables rapid revisions and customized solutions to successfully engage with the Vietnamese audience. **Originality/Value:** The unique contribution of this paper lies in its innovative introduction of a modified theoretical model of rational action. This model aims to elucidate factors influencing tourist travel behavior in a way that has not been explored in previous research. Specifically, it amalgamates elements from three existing models (TRA, IAM, and TPB) and introduces an additional eWOM factor to enhance the

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understanding of behavioral intentions. This novel factor, devised by the authors in their research model, holds particular relevance for a country like Vietnam, characterized by its developing technological landscape and strong traditional culture. This novelty significantly enhances our ability to analyze the impact of eWOM on travel intentions among social media users in Vietnam, especially during the prolonged effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

O BOCA A BOCA ELETRÔNICO (EWOM) E A INTENÇÃO DE VIAGEM DAS REDES SOCIAIS PÓS-COVID-19: UM CASO DO VIETNÃ

RESUMO

Objetivo: O objetivo deste estudo é determinar quantitativamente o impacto do boca a boca eletrônico (eWOM) na intenção de viagem dos usuários de redes sociais vietnamitas. O estudo propõe soluções para desenvolver estratégias de marketing online no turismo para restaurar rapidamente a indústria do turismo após a pandemia da COVID-19.

Enquadramento teórico: Este estudo combina dois modelos teóricos, o Modelo de Aceitação de Informação (IAM) e a Teoria da Acção Racionalizada (TRA), para explorar como o Word-of-Mouth electrónico (eWOM) impacta as intenções de viagem no Vietname, particularmente no contexto de a pandemia de COVID-19. O IAM concentra-se em factores como a qualidade e credibilidade da informação, enquanto o TRA aborda factores comportamentais adicionais. Ao integrar estes modelos, o estudo visa fornecer uma compreensão abrangente da influência do eWOM nas intenções de viagem entre os utilizadores das redes sociais no Vietname durante a pandemia.

Desenho/metodologia/abordagem: O estudo foi realizado no Vietname. O questionário foi aplicado aos entrevistados por meio de uma pesquisa online. Os resultados foram 262 formulários de feedback válidos conduzidos em 2023. A modelagem estrutural linear (SEM) foi usada para medir a relação entre os fatores no modelo de pesquisa.

Resultados: Os resultados da investigação mostram que todos os factores têm um impacto positivo na intenção de viagem através de outros factores, ou terão um impacto directo na intenção de viagem dos utilizadores de redes sociais no Vietname.

Implicações de investigação, práticas e sociais: É fundamental concentrar-se na construção de canais de marketing que apoiem o boca-a-boca eletrônico (eWOM), a fim de promover com sucesso as ambições de viagem. O Posto de Turismo adotou o marketing digital como estratégia de ponta para promover o potencial turístico da região (Burhan, 2023). Além disso, como as intenções de viagem estão positivamente relacionadas com a aceitação da informação, estes canais devem priorizar a melhoria da qualidade e fiabilidade da informação eWOM. Além disso, os gestores de canal devem ficar atentos às opiniões dos clientes relativamente às preocupações relacionadas com o eWOM. Finalmente, os administradores devem criar soluções únicas e baseadas no contexto que possam aumentar as intenções de viagem entre os membros das redes sociais, tendo em consideração o contexto cultural do Vietnam. Esta estratégia proativa permite revisões rápidas e soluções personalizadas para interagir com sucesso com o público vietnamita.

Originalidade/valor: A contribuição única deste artigo reside na introdução inovadora de um modelo teórico modificado de ação racional. Este modelo visa elucidar os fatores que influenciam o comportamento de viagem do turista de uma forma que não foi explorada em pesquisas anteriores. Especificamente, combina elementos de três modelos existentes (TRA, IAM e TPB) e introduz um fator eWOM adicional para melhorar a compreensão das intenções comportamentais. Este factor inovador, concebido pelos autores no seu modelo de investigação, tem particular relevância para um país como o Vietname, caracterizado pelo seu cenário tecnológico em desenvolvimento e pela sua forte cultura tradicional. Esta novidade aumenta significativamente a nossa capacidade de analisar o impacto do eWOM nas intenções de viagem entre os utilizadores das redes sociais no Vietname, especialmente durante os efeitos prolongados da pandemia da COVID-19.

Palavras-chave: eWOM, Online, Rede Social, Intenção de Viagem, Vietname.

EL BOCA ELECTRÓNICO (EWOM) Y LA INTENCIÓN DE VIAJE DE LAS REDES SOCIALES POST-COVID-19: UN CASO DE VIETNAM

RESUMEN

Propósito: El propósito de este estudio es determinar cuantitativamente el impacto del boca a boca electrónico (eWOM) en la intención de viaje de los usuarios de redes sociales vietnamitas. El estudio propone soluciones para

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desarrollar estrategias de marketing online en turismo para restaurar rápidamente la industria turística después de la pandemia de COVID-19.

Marco teórico: Este estudio combina dos modelos teóricos, el Modelo de Aceptación de Información (IAM) y la Teoría de la Acción Razonada (TRA), para explorar cómo el boca a boca electrónico (eWOM) impacta las intenciones de viaje en Vietnam, particularmente en el contexto de la pandemia de COVID-19. IAM se centra en factores como la calidad de la información y la credibilidad, mientras que TRA aborda factores de comportamiento adicionales. Al integrar estos modelos, el estudio tiene como objetivo proporcionar una comprensión integral de la influencia de eWOM en las intenciones de viaje entre los usuarios de redes sociales en Vietnam durante la pandemia.

Diseño/metodología/enfoque: El estudio se realizó en Vietnam. El cuestionario se administró a los encuestados a través de una encuesta en línea. Los resultados fueron 262 formularios de retroalimentación válidos realizados en 2023. Se utilizó un modelado estructural lineal (SEM) para medir la relación entre los factores en el modelo de investigación.

Hallazgos: Los resultados de la investigación muestran que todos los factores tienen un impacto positivo en la intención de viaje a través de otros factores, o afectarán directamente la intención de viaje de los usuarios de redes sociales en Vietnam.

Implicaciones de investigación, prácticas y sociales: es fundamental centrarse en la creación de canales de marketing que respalden el boca a boca electrónico (eWOM) para promover con éxito las ambiciones de viaje. La Oficina de Turismo ha adoptado el marketing digital como una estrategia de vanguardia para promover el potencial turístico de la región (Burhan, 2023). Además, debido a que las intenciones de viaje están relacionadas positivamente con la aceptación de la información, estos canales deben priorizar la mejora de la calidad y confiabilidad de la información eWOM. Además, los administradores de canales deben estar atentos a las opiniones de los clientes sobre las inquietudes relacionadas con eWOM. Finalmente, los administradores deberían crear soluciones únicas basadas en el contexto que puedan aumentar las intenciones de viaje entre los miembros de las redes sociales y al mismo tiempo tomar en consideración el contexto cultural de Vietnam. Esta estrategia proactiva permite revisiones rápidas y soluciones personalizadas para interactuar con éxito con la audiencia vietnamita.

Originalidad/valor: La contribución única de este artículo radica en su innovadora introducción de un modelo teórico modificado de acción racional. Este modelo tiene como objetivo dilucidar los factores que influyen en el comportamiento de los viajes turísticos de una manera que no se ha explorado en investigaciones anteriores. Específicamente, fusiona elementos de tres modelos existentes (TRA, IAM y TPB) e introduce un factor eWOM adicional para mejorar la comprensión de las intenciones de comportamiento. Este factor novedoso, ideado por los autores en su modelo de investigación, tiene particular relevancia para un país como Vietnam, caracterizado por su panorama tecnológico en desarrollo y su fuerte cultura tradicional. Esta novedad mejora significativamente nuestra capacidad para analizar el impacto de eWOM en las intenciones de viaje entre los usuarios de redes sociales en Vietnam, especialmente durante los efectos prolongados de la pandemia de COVID-19.

Palabras clave: eWOM, Online, Red Social, Intención de Viaje, Vietnam.

INTRODUCTION

Users typically access social media services through web-based technologies on desktop and laptop computers or download services that provide social media capabilities for mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets (Khoa, 2022). In recent times, the world has witnessed the rapid development of social networking in the online realm, which has brought subsequent impact on our daily lives transforming the way people exchange information. Compared to traditional media, social media not only provides users with the ability to view and access information, but also enables the sharing, participation, and creation of private, semi-private, and multimodal content. Such content is privately or publicly released through a network of friends, followers, and users (Law et al., 2018). Today tourism information and activities are

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communicated more conveniently and quickly with the internet. Besides using traditional sources of information, from friends, magazines, or travel agents, those planning to travel can access information globally via the web. According to (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008) and (Bilal et al., 2020), intending tourists quickly find the necessary information about the destination through online reviews on social networking platforms. Such easy and contemporary access to information proceeds and assists their decision-making. Accordingly, several studies (Zhang et al., 2010) reflect eWOM as a powerful marketing tool that influences purchase intention. Social networks provide consumers with a useful tool for obtaining travel-related information and advice from other travelers, as well as from travel service providers. Tourists can post opinions, comments, and reviews of places, share personal experiences without restriction on forums, review websites, news, and social networking of others, which creates a rich, diverse eWOM community. The explosion of social networking platforms together with the continuous development of internet technology is eagerly adopted in Vietnam through platforms such as Facebook, Zalo, Tictock, YouTube, Fange, and Viber. Additionally, attraction-specific tourism websites help users access information much faster than ever. Such platforms enable user-generated content as a primary tool to assist online consumers (López & Sicilia, 2014). As a result, eWOM has become an important part of social commerce.

The information communicated through eWOM includes personal experiences shared reviews, discussions, and recommendations about products, services, and corporate brands. According to (Zhao et al., 2020) this contemporary media is preferred for retail information search and feedback. The use of eWOM as a product marketing information channel is also increasingly appreciated and used by the tourism industry. Therefore, the tourists themselves will become co-makers, co-designers, co-producers, and co-consumers of travel experiences. According to (Kotler, 2017), personal communication channels appear when two or more subjects communicate in the form of: face-to-face meetings, phone calls, emailing, or online messaging and comments. Today, major social networking sites, often helping to verify online information, insist on the use of real names to control/moderate content. Such protocols limit misinformation transmission via eWOM and make the source more credible and thus appreciated (Chu & Kim, 2011). However, the quality of information conveyed by eWOM can be a double-edged sword. Low-quality information can make consumers feel at a disadvantage leading to their mistrust. While users can intentionally provide information about brands and products or services that they experience, they can also unintentionally provide referral information to others. They do so by expressing preferences, such as an invitation to become a

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subscriber/member interacting with brand-related articles by clicking "like" and commenting, or posting content related to the brand that is not for commercial advertising purposes. Most importantly, marketers can also reverse-interact by submitting re-direction information to their official accounts on social media sites (Alboqami et al., 2015). Users may share their opinions through comments, photos, videos, or a simple "like" to certain information. Furthermore, by forwarding (sharing) articles, social networks facilitate the spread of eWOM to a large number of users (Chu & Kim, 2011). With such features and convenience, more and more people are using social networks to gather information and consult about products/services (Barreda et al., 2015). Within Vietnam, even though the Covid-19 pandemic continues to subside, and remains under relative control, the tourism industry is slow to claw back market share as they try to rebuild consumer confidence to pre-Covid levels. For example, Nielsen (2017) reports that 85% of users indicate that they trust consumer opinions posted online. In a further study, 57% of users read other users' online reviews about electronic products before purchasing; 40% read comments on garments; 42% not only view other people's information but also actively post comments; 29% post reviews, movies commenting on products (Newman et al., 2015). Consumers today are savvy; they look to their friends and reviews as they do not always believe in direct advertising. Through eWOM, they directly receive believable information from relatives, friends, and the broader online community through social exchanges on e-platforms. Vietnam's post-Covid recovery can benefit from building back consumer confidence in eWOM.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of eWOM

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is any positive or negative statement made by a customer (potential, actual, or former) about a product or company, made available to many people and organizations through the internet (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). It is generally a set of factors that drive behavior through multiple motivations such as socializing interactions, maintaining social relationships, gaining recognition, demonstrating support, to obtaining pleasure through activities available online (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). The quality of eWOM about a particular product, service, or attraction refers to the persuasive power of comments mentioned in an informational message(Bhattacherjee et al., 2006). Consumers' purchasing decisions can be based on several criteria or requirements that satisfy their needs. A gauge of their willingness to buy depends on their perception of the quality of the information they

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receive (C. Cheung et al., 2008). Therefore, it is important to identify consumers' perceptions of information quality as a factor in evaluating their potential purchase decisions. The number of eWOM referrals is considered the total number of comments posted (C. M. Cheung & Thadani, 2010). A product's popularity is determined by the number considered representative of the product's market performance (J. Chevalier et al., 2003). Consumers also need independent references to reinforce the product's popularity. Consumer confidence reduces feelings of making a mistake or risk when shopping, hence volume speaks to the popularity and importance of the product. In other words, consumers may perceive that more reviews represent a higher popularity and importance of the product (Park et al.,2009)

Concept of eWOM in the field of travel

(Frederick et al., 2015) show that the Internet has facilitated the search for information related to tours. Park and Lee (2009) argue that eWOM is more effective after a good or service is consumed rather than when it is sought, essentially suggesting that the effect of eWOM becomes stronger post-purchase/consumption (Gruen et al., 2006). Various motivations are displayed to cause eWOM, such as pre-purchase expectations, customer enjoyment, satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and general consumption behaviors. The credibility and reliability of eWOM serve to help other consumers and travelers make informed decisions (Bronner et al., 2011). In the study of (Albarq, 2014), eWOM had a positive impact on consumer intention to travel and attitude towards Jordan as a destination. Further, the research suggests marketers can use different aspects of eWOM to promote tourist trust in visiting Jordan and even re-visit intention.

(Huong et al.,2020), using the theory of planned (intended) behavior (TPB) measures the influence of eWOM on tourists' intention to choose specific attractions in Da Nang City, Vietnam. Her research explains the influence of eWOM on consumer choice. Accordingly, eWOM demonstrates a positive and direct impact on the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control of tourists. Through those factors, a strong impact is made on the intention to visit. This result supports previous studies (Filieri et al., 2018, Ismagilova et al., 2020; Le-Hoang, 2020). Furthermore, research of (Fakharyan et al., 2012) investigates the relationships between eWOM, tourist attitudes, and travel intentions toward Muslim destinations based on theoretical and empirical evidence. The results show that eWOM positively affects tourists' attitudes towards Muslim destinations and travel intentions.

The Travel Daily News (2012) reports, 87% of interviewed individuals believe that TripAdvisor reviews help them choose a hotel more confidently and 98% believe that the

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reviews on this website are accurate. Further, eMarketer (2013) showed that consumers prefer to get inspiration and travel plans from Internet media, with third-party online travel intermediaries being the first choice, followed by Facebook. TripAdvisor.com has gained a reputation as one of the leading global travel information consulting websites, based on a database of independent customer testimonies and reviews of their actual experiences with hotels and other tourism-related products Gretzel & Yoo, 2008.

Applying virtual world technology to encourage interaction and engagement between hotels and consumers aims to generate a great number of positive eWOMs (J. Kim & Hardin, 2010). Still, others have discussed the influence of eWOM value on hotel attitudes based on hotel perceptions and expertise of reviewers Vermeulen et al., 2009 and the effect of eWOM on booking intention based on the product knowledge and the gender of the readers (Chu & Kim, 2011). Further studies discuss how customer expectations and the value of reviews are related in addition to hotel management staff answering consumer questions on the websites and whether unregistered sites (such as TripAdvisor and Lonely Planet) are appropriate (Mauri & Minazzi, 2013).

Many hotels or their booking websites provide online forums where consumers interact with each other and share information or previous experiences about hotels (Yang, 2017). Moreover, with the increasing trend of mobile technology, people are always ready to write a review within minutes of their arrival at the hotel (Law et al., 2018). Earlier studies (C. M. Cheung & Thadani, 2010; Chu & Choi, 2011; Teng et al., 2014) identified different precursors of eWOM for many industries such as tourism, body care products, etc.

(Casaló et al., 2010) analyzed the need for consumer participation in online travel groups and observed community characteristics, perceived usefulness, and ease of use of the online forum that serve as the premise of eWOM. Research by (Jeong & Jang, 2011) points out three distinct motivations of tourists to write a positive eWOM including positive emotions, caring for others, and helping the company. In such a case, the reviewed literature shows that in different contexts of consumption experience, the motivation or stimulus to write eWOM will be different.

Thus, potential customers tend to refer to the reviews, comments, and experiences shared online by other consumers before they make a product purchase or travel booking decision (Hussain et al., 2017). There is also evidence of the tourism industry being strongly affected by eWOM, particularly within the hotel sector (Cantallops & Salvi, 2014). Therefore, hotels need further special research attention (Ladhari & Michaud, 2015; Jeong & Jang, 2011).

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According to (González-Rodríguez et al., 2022), there is a relationship between the reliability of eWOM, perceived risk, usefulness of information, and how each factor affects social network users' destination visit intention. At the same time, he also pointed out that the reliability of the eWOM information source reduces the perceived risk for tourists related to their destination visit. The lower level of perceived risk translates from higher perceived usefulness of information thus boosting the tourist's intention to engage through visiting a destination.

Related Theoretical Model and Research Hypotheses

This study uses a combination of two theoretical models IAM (Information Acceptance Model) and TRA (Theory of Reasoned Action) to explain the impact of eWOM on intention to travel in Vietnam.

Figure 1. Information acceptance model (IAM)
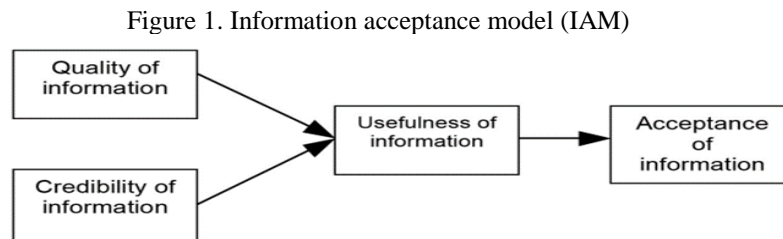


Source: Sussman & Siegal (2003)

The information acceptance model (IAM) of (Sussman & Siegal, 2003) is widely used in online communication research (Eberle et al., 2013). Such authors believe that to accept certain information, they must first recognize the usefulness of that information. In the following, the factors in IAM applied in this study are quality of information, the creditability of information, usefulness of information, and acceptance of information as common modeling among scholars interested in researching eWOM. However, considering each aspect of the model, it remains incomplete to analyze the impact of eWOM on behavioral intentions, specifically in situating behavior alongside the subjectivity of social network users to the information given. In addressing this deficiency, this paper introduces a rational action theoretical model to explain other factors related to behavior. The combined models enable a better analysis of eWOM's impact on the intention to travel for social media users during Vietnam's COVID-19 longtail.

Research by Anant, 2022 has shown that tourists' behavior affects the factors that make intentions/decisions to visit tourist destinations when they also visit a country. The theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), a prefix of behavior, is influenced by attitudes and subjective norms

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(Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975). This theory is shown as effective when looking at the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention (C. M. Cheung & Thadani, 2010). However, scholars tend only to use two components of the TRA model - attitudes and behavioral intentions - with subjective normative factors. Such concepts assess how individuals perceive those around them when they perform a behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975), but receive mixed reviews. (Miller & Lynam, 2003) argues that if an individual's personality is not influenced by other people's thoughts, then the impact of subjective norms on intention is low. Miller's assessment is based on two factors: the quality of the arguments and other out-of-the-box suggestions in the same message (subjective norm). The quality of the reasoning is seen as the spontaneity of the information while the out-of-the-box suggestions relate to issues that are not the main theme of the message. When an individual is willing to perceive and be able to understand the arguments and words in the message, the quality of the reasoning will determine the influence of the information. Conversely, when an individual is unmotivated or incapable of understanding the reasoning in the message, other out-of-the-box cues will determine the degree of influence of the information (Hussain et al., 2017). Referring to out-of-the-box suggestions is tantamount to assessing the source's attractiveness, interest, and credibility. (Erkan & Evans, 2016) also support this view and have ignored the role of subjective norms on word-of-mouth intention. However, Hansen et al., 2014, when studying online purchase intention, confirmed the relationship between subjective norm and purchase intention. In some recent studies, the element of the need for information is included to increase the completeness of the model (Chu & Kim, 2011; Wolny & Mueller, 2013). Such scholars suggest that the information that influences online purchase intention can be classified as "experience information" (Srivastava, 2021) and that in an information economy, customers are few.

Online experiences will, thus, tend to follow the guidance of friends or relatives. Within a Southeast Asian country that emphasizes community culture, the phenomenon of individual behavioral intentions influenced by those around them is highly probable. Therefore, this study proposes to consider three variables in the TRA model, as shown in Figure 2. They are Attitudes towards acts or behavior; Subjective norms towards information; and, Behavioral intention, which leads to final Behavior.

Figure 2. Theory of Reasoned Action Model (TRA)
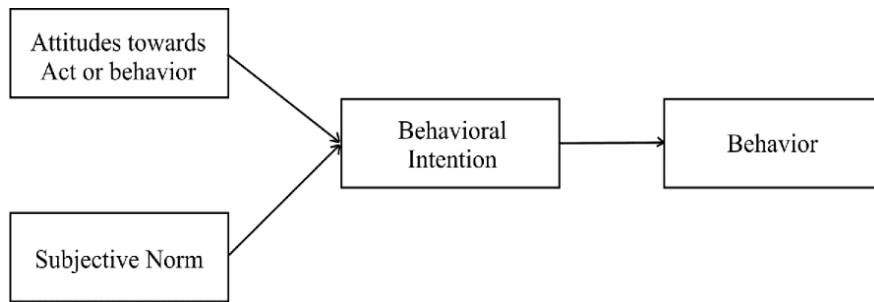
Source: (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975)

Previous studies adopting various approaches and theoretical models mainly focus on the impact of eWOM on consumer purchase intention or tourist destination choice intention. However, none have applied a combination of IAM and TRA models to examine the travel intentions of eWOM users, not least in Vietnam. This is a new and highly practical combination, suitable for the current situation when social media has become one of the most aggressive, popular, and effective advertising channels. Its popularity is further shown as Vietnam's tourism industry strives to recover from the Covid-19 lockdowns. Based on the theoretical models presented and reference to previous studies the authors propose a novel research model as presented in Figure 3, inclusive of six factors: Travel eWOM content quality; Credibility source of information from eWOM travel; Motive to use eWOM ravel; Attitude to information from eWOM travel; Subjective normal from eWOM tourism; and Usefulness of information.

Figure 3. Research framework
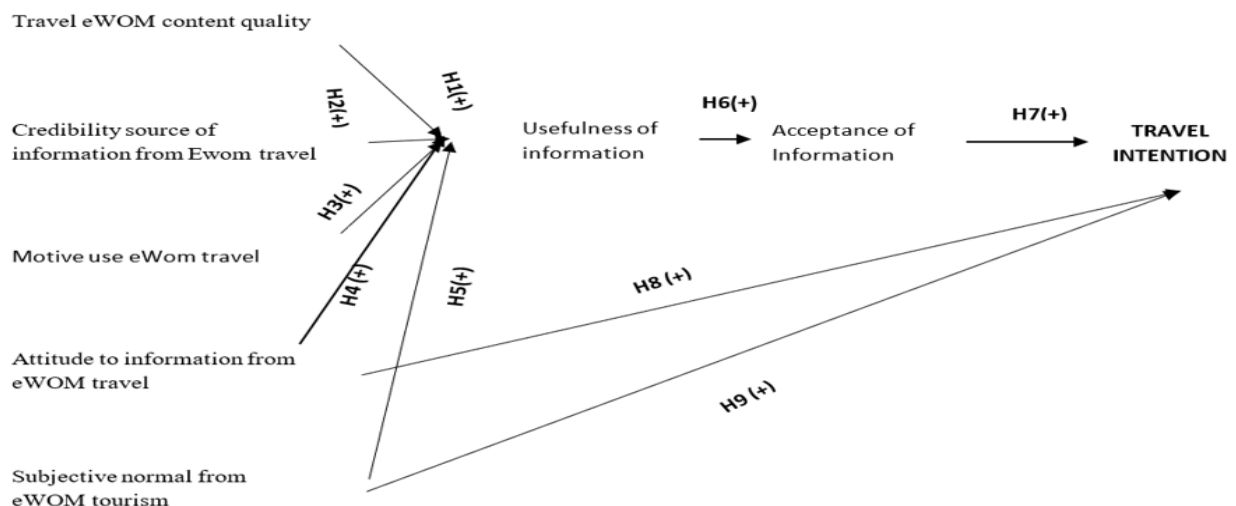
Source: Proposed by the authors

The quality of information is demonstrated as an important predictor of the success of an information system (DeLone & McLean, 2003). According to (Bhattacherjee et al., 2006;

Lin & Foster, 2013), the quality of eWOM is the quality of the content evaluated by consumers about goods/services on the e-commerce platform. In this study, the quality of tourism eWOM is the quality of reviews and comments on tourism products and services on online platforms. As consumers perceive the higher quality of eWOM, the easier it is for them to accept eWOM. (Matute et al., 2016) suggest that online review quality has a positive influence on information usefulness and purchase intention, therefore, eWOM information quality may be one of the determining factors for the usefulness of information and indirectly affect the purchase intention of consumers (Erkan et al., 2016). From that, the authors make the first hypothesis.

H1: Quality of eWOM information has a positive impact on the usefulness of eWOM information

According to Wathen & Burkell, 2002, for an information source, credibility has the greatest impact on an individual's receptive attitude, and this is the initial factor in the persuasion process influencing the usefulness of the information. Research by Teng et al., 2014 suggests eWOM reliability is the assessment of recipients of information messages regarding the reliability of articles and online reviews. Moran & Muzellec, 2017 argue that the reliability of the message is proven through the content of communication and how it resonates with the recipient. In our research, trust eWOM is understood as the trust of people posting online reviews and comments for products and services on shopping platforms. With the characteristics of the platforms' e-commerce, consumers can exchange information with anyone through representative accounts. Representative accounts do not provide details of the personal information of clients. In this way, consumers can leave reviews, product experiences, and products in the most authentic way without worrying avoid the risks of leaving negative feedback. From that, the authors make the second hypothesis.

H2: Credibility of eWOM information has a positive effect on the usefulness of eWOM information

The motivations for using social networks are desires in the process of seeking information, seeking advice (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), and seeking opinions (Chu & Kim, 2011). According to (Erkan et al., 2016), individuals seeking information will search for their needs on social media hoping to find more useful information. The acceptance, or not, of that information may affect their intention to travel. Therein, we propose the third hypothesis.

H3: Usage motivation has a positive effect on the usefulness of information

In previous studies, when an individual effectively uses educational mobile apps without much effort, they perceive high usefulness from the app and even enjoyment. Such 'fun' tends

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to promote application use to a higher degree (S. Kim et al., 2016). However, the research of (Sun et al., 2021) confirms that serious information-perceiving attitudes will deliver a higher value on the usefulness of information than the opposite direction, especially when it comes to information for utility products and services. The flexibility and usability of mobile applications create enjoyment and excitement, thereby enhancing users' attitudes about the usefulness of products (Alalwan, 2018; Pousttchi & Goeke, 2011). Users are not always rational or logical, and emotions play an often-overlooked role in users' acceptance of a particular technology (Zhang et al., 2010). Research by (Moon & Kim, 2001) extends the TAM model to technology services products and subsequent studies have identified perceived attitudinally as a personal trait and a state psychological state. Currently, social network users often post a lot of information on networking sites or give opinions and comments about products that they have been and are intending to experience. However, not all eWOM information on social networks has an influence on purchase intention. Additionally, the degree of impact is very diverse depending on the audience, perception, and attitude (Hussain et al., 2017), subsequently, the authors propose the fourth hypothesis.

> *H4: Attitude towards information has a positive effect on the usefulness of the information*

Subjective norms and social pressures bring awareness to perform or not perform on an individual's behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In e-commerce activities, information generated by eWOM hugely affects consumers. Such opinion points are usually created by acquaintances, colleagues and relatives, so-called influencers, and peer-to-peer contacts. The impact on consumers has the potential to modify personal behavior. Especially for eWOM, the information shared by relatives, friends, and colleagues has a great influence on their perception of information. They will be influenced by the thoughts and behaviors of the informants. (Schepers & Wetzels, 2007) when studying standards, confirm consumers are subjectively influenced by word of mouth in the field of technology applications. (Soliman, 2021) also found word of mouth to have a positive effect extreme to the subjective norm. Therefore, within e-WOM research where key standards are essential, the authors propose the fifth hypothesis.

> *H5: Subjective norm has a positive effect on the usefulness of information*

The relationship between information usefulness, information acceptance, and intention to travel is worthy of further explanation. Information usefulness affects information acceptance where usefulness refers to an individual's judgment that the use of new information contributes to effective improvement of intention or behavior (C. Cheung et al., 2008).

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According to (Lee et al., 2015) information usefulness is a prerequisite for information acceptance because people tend to combine information that they think is useful to make informed intentions behavior. Such thinking evokes the sixth hypothesis.

H6: Information usefulness has a positive impact on the acceptance/application of eWOM information

Based on the research developed by (Erkan et al., 2016), this study proposes the hypothesis that customers with a high level of eWOM information application also have higher purchase intention. Acceptance of information is considered a value that social network users will consider whether the source of that information, quality, and product cost affect purchase intention (Clement Addo et al., 2021). Such shows the attitude and behavior of consumers when intending to buy a product or service predicated on the evaluation of previous buying experience (Liang et al., 2018). From those foundations, the authors develop the seventh hypothesis.

H7: Acceptance of eWOM information has a positive effect on the intention to travel

Attitude toward behavior is the degree to which a person rates favorably or unfavorably toward the behavior in question (Ajzen, 1991). On e-commerce platforms, attitudes refer to negative or positive perceptions of using online platforms to purchase goods or services (To et al., 2007). Attitude is a long-term and stable assessment of a service or product. This is an important psychological construct in predicting behavior thus eWOM is recognized to play an important role in influencing and shaping consumer attitudes, intentions, and behavior J. A. Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Liang et al., 2018) Attitude toward the behavior of e-WOM-related consumers is shown important by (T. Park, 2020; Prendergast et al., 2010). Therefore, the eighth hypothesis arises.

H8: Attitude towards information has a positive effect on the travel intention of social network users.

Subjective norms, according to (Ajzen, 1991)refer to the perceived social effects on the performance or non-performance of the behavior. Subjective norm can be defined as an individual's subjective perception that people important to them expect them to act (or not act) in a certain way. In other words, the subjective norm is the social pressure to perform the behavior perceived by an individual. Subjective norms are based on the preferences of those the decision maker relies on, as well as individuals who wish you to act in accordance with these preferences. The influence of others - family, friends, and significant others - is thus an important factor in the determinants of behavior (S. S. Hansen et al., 2014). Further, (Ajzen,

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1991) claims attitude is the expression of goodwill or displeasure towards a particular behavior. Attitude towards information from eWOM affects the intention to travel. The more highly intentioned the more the intention to perform a certain behavior (Hoffmann et al., 2014). Furthermore, when a person's consumer attitudes about consumption behavior are positive, they are more likely to engage in that consumption behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In other words, when customers have a positive attitude towards information from eWOM, it will increase their intention to travel. Therefore, social media users are more likely to plan travel. User attitudes regarding eWOM have received prior scholarly attention (Seo et al., 2020). However, the subjective norm is almost ignored and has not been evaluated. Based on (T. Hansen et al., 2004), it is determined that subjective norm is a factor that has a special influence in countries like Vietnam that practice community culture, prompting the final hypothesis.

H9: Subjective normal from eWOM tourism has a positive effect on the travel intention of social network user

In nutshel, the authors propose nine hypotheses based on the inheritance and development of research models and theoretical foundations of previous researchers. The hypotheses are tested by the authors in the next sections.

RESEARCH METHOD

With the aim of testing the impact of eWOM on the travel intention of social network users, the proposed research model is based on clear theoretical foundations using qualitative and quantitative research methods. Quantitative, to measure the research variables, informing the correlation between the relationship with test given results. To obtain measurement data, research uses a survey to collect information. The objective of qualitative research is to explore, screen, and consider what/how/when relationships form between variables in the theoretical model to inform a context-specific research model. In addition, scope exists to identify or correct scales inherited from previous studies to suit the research context. To achieve the above goals within a Vietnamese context, during March 2023 the authors conducted twenty purposive, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with experienced and frequent social network users of Da Nang City with subsequent data processing. The qualitative results show that besides the acceptance of information, the intention to travel also depends on the behavior and attitude towards the information before the travel intentions.

- Measurement scale: Scales of previous studies are found to be redundant in some cases and insufficient in others, hence selective measures are adopted Specifically, "the quality of

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information content from eWOM (TQ) " is measured by four indicators (Alhemimah, 2022); "credibility of source information from eWOM travel (CI)" is measured by three indicators of (Zhao, Y et al., 2020); "motive use eWOM travel (MT)" is measured by six indicators of Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold, (2011); "attitude to information from EWOM travel (AT)" is measured by three indicators (Chu & Kim, 2011);"subjective normal from eWOM travel (ST)" is described by three indicators (Arifani & Haryanto, 2018), "usefulness of information (UI)" is described by five indicators (Erkan et al., 2016), "acceptance of information" is described by two indicators and, "travel intention (TI)" is described by four indicators (C. Lin et al., 2013), 5-point Likert scale is applied to measure all the questions in the survey.

- *Quantitative research:* The questionnaire was developed based on the research overview above and adapted to the research context in Vietnam. Scales used to measure variables in the social media context are considered likely to have a significant impact on people's post-COVID-19 travel actions and intentions. Before conducting a large-scale survey, questionnaires were sent to several customers for testing (20 respondents). The accepted questionnaire only had some semantic problems that needed to be adjusted to avoid the respondents misinterpreting the question and to refine the answer. An online survey was conducted. The process obtained 312 responses, of which 50 were invalid due to lack of information or inappropriate for research subjects. All 50 responses were screened out before data processing, leaving 262 valid responses. The respondents to the questionnaire are Vietnamese people currently living in different provinces/cities, with priority given to those who have experience in eWOM. Therefore, the appropriate respondents are those who spend time on the Internet and engage in tourist activities. The questionnaire was released in two main phases. The first stage is a pre-check to correct any errors. In the second stage, the questionnaire was surveyed online by sending it directly via email, message, or Zalo to customers. Because the respondents were eWOM users, the release of the questionnaire and sample selection were narrowly targeted. We sent online questionnaires to travel agents, agencies, hotels, and restaurants, asking them to send them to the email and Zalo addresses of customers who have used or intend to use such services. Cronbach's Alpha tool is used to check the reliability of the scale, while the convergent value and discriminant value of the scale were tested through the EFA and CFA factor analysis steps. Finally, the research hypotheses are tested through the SEM linear structural model supported by SPSS 26.0 and Amos 26.0 software.

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RESEARCH RESULTS

The demographic profile of the respondents, as shown in Table 1, indicates there were 126 female and 136 male respondents. People mainly converse through the popular Facebook social network (54.20%). Most respondents are from the age group of 18-25 years, and 28.24% stated their occupation as a university student. Most respondents (30.22%) stated they're familiarity with social media was greater than 5 years. Further, 33.21% of respondents said their frequency of using social media is 2-3 hours per day.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Frequency of social network used			*Gender*		
Facebook	132	54.20	Male	136	51.91
Ticktok	58	22.14	Female	126	48.09
Twitter	31	3.82			
Instagram	21	11.83			
Youtube	31	8.02			
Total	262	100		262	100
Frequency of using the internet (Hours/day)			Age		
Under 1 hours	21	8.02	18-25	87	33.21
1-2 hours	47	17.94	26-35	74	28.24
2-3 hours	87	33.21	36-45	56	21.37
3-4 hours	56	21.37	45-55	33	12.60
Over 4 hours	51	19.47	Above 55	12	4.58
Total	262	100		262	100.00
Participation level eWOM (1. very little, 2. Little, 3. Medium, 4. Much, 5. Very much)			Occupation		
		Mean	Business	67	25.57
Virtual community		2.67	Govt. Service	42	16.03
Instant message		2.81	Private Service	56	21.37
Travel review website		2.10	Student	74	28.24
Travel news website		2.31	Other	23	8.78
Email		4.12	Total	262	100.00
Other		2.12			

Source: The results of surveyed questionnaires in Vietnam in 2023, n=226

The results of CFA analysis, after removing some invalid variables, as described in Table 2 show that all factor loading coefficients are from 0.626 or higher, reaching the standard of greater than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010). Hence, the scale has a convergent value. The square root of the extracted mean variance is compared with the outliers (r) to check the discriminant validity of the scale. $\sqrt{AVE}$ of TQ is 0.781; CI is 0.789; MT is 0.785; AT is 0.782; ST is 0.793; UI is 0.791, AI is 0.794, TI is 0.792, which are respectively larger than the largest external correlations. This result shows that the scale achieves discriminant value.

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Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity

Cod variable	Variable	AVE	$\sqrt{AVE}$	Cronbach's Alpha	CFA	EFA
The quality of information content from eWOM *(TQ)*		0.610	0.781	0.812		
TQ1	The information from eWOM is easy to understand				0.872	0.712
TQ2	The information from eWOM is correct				0.721	0.832
TQ3	The content of the eWOM accurately represents the current tourism information, updated regularly				0.814	0.712
TQ4	The information content from eWOM timely				0.704	0.691
Credibility source of information from eWOM travel (CI)		0.622	0.789	0.694		
CI1	I assume that eWOM participants are all knowledgeable in evaluating tourism services.				0.882	0.642
CI2	I think eWoM reviews are often created by experts assessing the quality of tourism services.				0.834	0.751
CI3	I think the reviewers on eWOM are honest				0.626	0.613
Motive use eWOM travel *(MT)*		0.617	0.785	0,721		
MT1	I often use eWOM to compare travel brands.				0.831	0.612
MT2	I often use information from eWOM to ensure the right selection of quality travel destinations.				0.864	0.641
MT3	I often consult eWOM before choosing to travel				0.715	0.752
MT4	I often aggregate eWOM to get information before choosing a certain travel service				0.738	0.723
MT5	The information from eWOM gives me confidence when I intend to travel				0.721	0.651
MT6	The information from eWOM motivates me to make travel decisions.				0.831	0.775
Attitude to information from eWOM travel *(AT)*		0.612	0.782	0.829		
AT1	I always read information shared on social networks about travel products I want to use				0.832	0.712
AT2	The information shared on social networks is useful to help me make travel decisions				0.751	0.753
AT3	Information shared on social networks helps me feel confident when intending to travel				0.762	0.851
Subjective normal from eWOM travel *(ST)*		0.629	0.793	0.748		
ST1	My relatives think I should consult information on social networks				0.832	0.761
ST2	My friends and colleagues often search for information online when making travel intentions				0.762	0.864
ST3	Persons I respect advised me to consult information on social networks when intending to travel				0.831	0.814
Usefulness of information (UI)		0.622	0.791			
UI1	I find eWOM information reviews very helpful in decision-making				0.831	0,672
UI2	I find the information from the eWOM review platform to be helpful.				0.657	0,673
UI3	Using eWOM reviews of any particular product or service allows me to make my product choice faster.				0.635	0.782
UI4	Using information from eWOM about any particular product or service will make it easier for me to make the right choice.				0.852	0.861
UI5	I found the information from eWOM very beneficial.				0.761	0.872

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Acceptance of Information (AI)		0.631	0.794		0.710	0.791
AI1	Information from eWOM makes it easier for me to intend to travel				0.692	0.801
AI2	Information from eWOM helps me to effectively intend to travel				0.703	0.795
Travel intention (TI)		0.628	0.792	0,692		
TI1	After reading reviews/reviews online, makes me look forward to traveling.				0,737	0,852
TI2	I want to choose a tourist place after I read reviews/reviews online.				0.779	0.841
TI3	I plan to pick the tourist spot discussed in the online reviews/reviews				0.792	0.651
TI4	In the future, I plan to look for the tourist spot discussed in the online reviews/reviews				0.831	0.810

Source: The results of surveyed questionnaires in Vietnam in 2023, n=262

The values in Table 3 all show that the model's fit index is strong and meets the required general principles of statistics to further conduct SEM analysis. To test the research hypotheses, the SEM technique was used. The results again show that the model has a good fit index, meeting the required criteria.

Table 3. Model fit criteria and final SEM model's results

Exponential fit	Chi-square/df	TLI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA
Result	2.319	0.952	0.903	0.972	0.051
Standard	<3.00	>0.95	>0.85	>0.95	<0.08
Source	*Ullman and Bentler, (2003)*	*Hu and Bentler, (1999)*	*Hair et al., (1995)*	*Hu and Bentler, (1999)*	*MacCallum et al., (1996)*

Source: The results of surveyed questionnaires in Vietnam in 2023, n=262

Table 4 shows that the variables TQ, CI, MT, ST all have a positive impact on the usefulness of information, the β weights are 0.563, 0.312, 0.291, 0.175, respectively, with the P-value reaching the statistical standard list. This means that H_1, H_2, H_3, and H_5 are accepted.

Table 4. Hypothesis test results

Hypothesis	Hypothesis test results	Coefficient	S.E.	C.R.	Sig.	Result
H_1	TQ →UI	0.563	0.023	1.302	0.000***	Accepted H_1
H_2	CI →UI	0.312	0.081	2.021	0.000***	Accepted H_2
H_3	MT →UI	0.291	0.020	0.802	0.001**	Accepted H_3
H_4	**AT →UI**	**0.189**	**0.092**	**4.821**	**0.182**	**Rejected H_4**
H_5	ST →UI	0.175	0.021	2.019	0.032*	Accepted H_5
H_6	UI →AI	0.221	0.082	5.392	0.048*	Accepted H_6
H_7	AI →TI	0.318	0.084	4.029	0.008*	Accepted H_7
H_8	AT →TI	0.282	0.091	3.021	0.003**	Accepted H_8
H_9	ST →TI	0.310	0.081	2.023	0.000***	Accepted H_9
Note:	*Notes: ***p < 0.001, **p < 0.005, **p < 0.01*					

Source: The results of surveyed questionnaires in Vietnam in 2023, n=262

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However, there is not enough evidence to show the relationship between AT and UI due to P-value > 0.05. Hypothesis H_4 therefore is not accepted. The results also show that AT and landscape have an impact on TI with landscape having a higher impact coefficient than AT with a coefficient β = 0.310. Consequently, the hypothesis H_8 and H_9 is accepted. The results of SEM analysis showed that UI affects TI through the variable CN with the coefficients β = 0.221, β = 0.318, respectively and both have a positive effect on TI, so the hypothesis H_6, H_7 is accepted.

Figure. 4 Results of the research hypotheses in the model

Source: The results of surveyed questionnaires in Vietnam in 2023, n=262
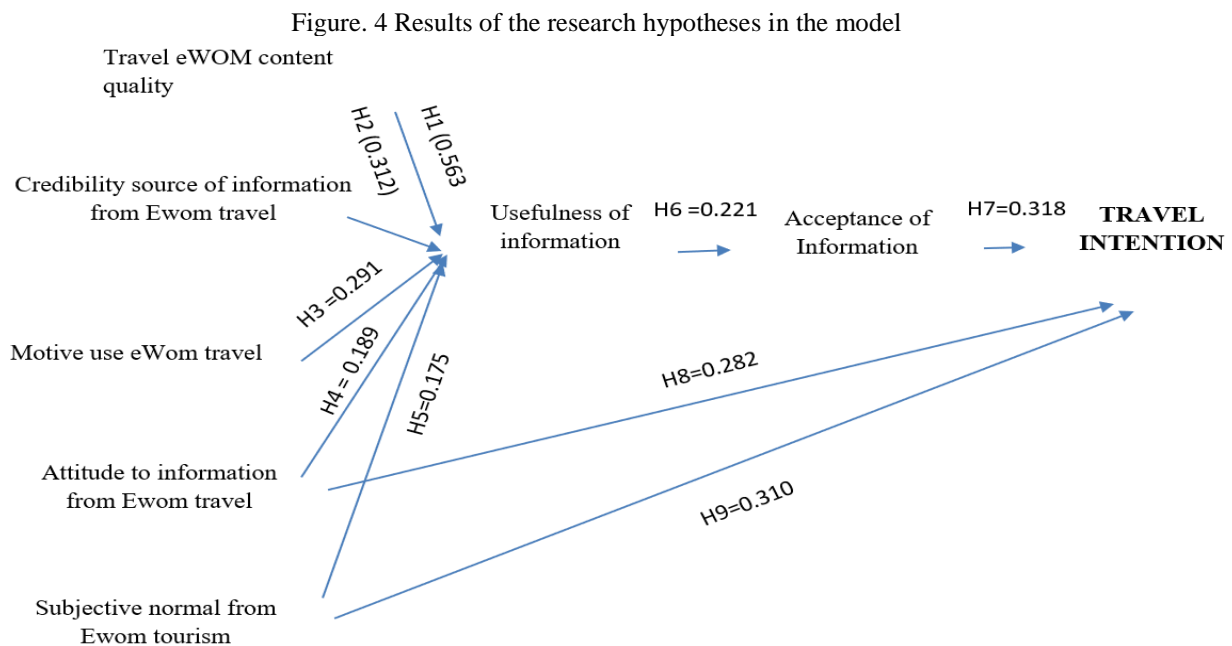
DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

There are many studies on eWOM, as well as its influence on the intention and behavior of social network users (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Bickart, 2001; Zhao, et al., 2020;Ahorsu et al., 2022). However, studies related to the impact of eWOM on the travel intentions of social network users are limited. Moreover, through this Covid-19 pandemic longtail when the tourism industry remains in recovery there are new turns to consider in business strategy. Consumer behavior and intentions have changed significantly. Therefore, this study can be considered a pioneer in exploring the impact of eWOM on the travel intention of social network users in Vietnam. Specifically, it not only combines the two theories of the information acceptance model IAM model (Sussman & Siegal, 2003) and the TRA model (Ajzen, 1991), but it also considers the motivational factor of using eWOM as a match to the cultural context in Vietnam. The results of the novel eWOM model testing through intention to travel show

feasible results, those consistent with many previous studies. The study examines the factors affecting the acceptance of eWOM and its influence on travel intention through mediating factors such as the usefulness of information and the acceptance of belief.

The analysis from the SEM semi-structured equation model proves that the multiple factors, specifically: Characteristics of information from eWOM and consumers' behavioral attitudes: Motivations for using eWOM, and Subjective standards for eWOM, each have a direct or indirect influence on travel intentions. With the combined approach of eWOM's message content, factors, behavioral attitudes towards eWOM, motivations, and subjective standards, the study contributes new knowledge to the general perception of the relationship between eWOM and travel intentions of social network users. Most hypotheses are accepted in consistency with previous studies.

The research results once again demonstrate the positive impact of eWOM information quality and eWOM information reliability from the IAM model on intention, through the usefulness factor of information ($\beta = 0.221$), and information acceptance ($\beta = 0.318$). Among the two factors of the model, "information quality" possesses an impact coefficient ($\beta = 0.563$) that is stronger than that of "reliability" ($\beta = 0.312$). Additionally, concerning the factors in the TRA model, there exists a positive relationship, specifically, the coefficient in the relationship between attitude towards information and subjective norm for the information, affecting the intention to travel, is $\beta = 0.282$ and $\beta = 0.310$, respectively.

Furthermore, the study expands upon the hypotheses of earlier scholars (Chu & Kim, 2011; T. Hansen et al., 2004; Arifani & Haryanto, 2018) by introducing more factors concerning the motivation to use eWOM that influence the travel intention of social network users, specifically through the usefulness of information ($\beta = 0.291$). The motivation to use the eWOM factor indirectly impacts the intention to travel through the usefulness of information and the acceptance of information. This is a new factor developed by the authors in the research model, this factor is particularly relevant for a country with a developing technological background and a strong traditional culture, such as Vietnam.

The research results confirm the appropriateness of the TRA and IAM models, as the hypotheses applied to the results align with (To et al., 2007) who demonstrate the positive influence of attitude towards information and subjective norm for information on the intention to travel. The positive relationship observed in our study between subjective norm and intention to travel also supports previous research (T. Hansen et al., 2004), and is consistent with (To et

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al., 2007) who shows the positive effect of attitude towards information on the intention to use the services of social network users.

As the internet is ubiquitous and pervades our lives, web content managers continuously focus on strategies to maximize the potential of the eWOM platforms within their business strategies. Subsequently, our study offers several practical recommendations:

First, as eWOM demonstrates a positive impact on the intention to travel managers need to concentrate on developing marketing channels that facilitate eWOM to support and promote the intention to travel. Digital marketing promotion is a modern step taken by the Tourism Office to showcase the tourism potential of its region (Burhan, 2023).

Second, as intention to travel exhibits a positive relationship with the factor of information acceptance it is imperative that channels enhance the quality and reliability of eWOM information.

Third, channel administrators must pay close attention to consumers' attitudes toward issues related to eWOM.

Finally, channel administrators must identify measurable context-specific solutions that contribute to increasing the travel intention of social network users facilitating prompt adjustment and solutions to suit the Viet cultural context.

This paper's contribution lies in its novel introduction of a modified rational action theoretical model to explain tourist travel behavior factors in a manner not explored via prior research. Specifically, it combines elements of three models (TRA, IAM, and TPB), and adds a further eWOM factor to further explain behavioral intentions. This new factor, developed by the authors in the research model, is particularly relevant for a country with a developing technological background and a strong traditional culture, such as Vietnam. Such novelty demonstratively enables better analysis of eWOM's impact on the intention to travel for social media users during Vietnam's Covid-19 longtail.

Notwithstanding such significant contributions, this study has the following limitations.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method and therefore has natural limitations when it comes to generalization. Additionally, it uses quantitative methods mainly to test the hypothesis. This style usually focuses on testing based on an inference process (Nguyen et al., 2020) to quantify and measure the relationships between variables. Subsequent studies may re-test our results in an inductive process-based approach (using qualitative methods) or a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

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Further, the study focused on intention to travel only without consideration of the user's decision to travel. In addition, future research may focus on the differences between groups of factors such as gender, level, age, to the intention/decision to travel of social network users. Consequently, room exists for future research to further consider such voids in balancing these shortcomings for eWOM research. Evidence from such endeavors will further support tourism businesses to develop appropriate business strategies to attract and hold their target markets in the right way and at the right time.

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