THE IMPACT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ON VIETNAMESE TOURISTS' DESTINATION CHOICE

The 13th International Conference on Emerging Challenges: Business Dynamics in Disruptive Economy

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Abstract

The research identifies the impact of Information Technology (IT) factors on the destination choice decisions of Vietnamese tourists. By combining qualitative and quantitative analysis based on the processing of primary data collected from tourist surveys at famous destinations in Vietnam, the article clearly determines the level of influence of IT factors on tourists' destination choice, namely: website quality, social networks, online reviews, brand credibility, and AI support. From this, the research suggests policies to promote the role of IT in the business activities of enterprises in the tourism sector, thereby contributing to enhancing the competitiveness of Vietnam's tourism industry.

Research purpose:

The research aims to identify the impact of information technology (IT) factors on the destination choice decisions of Vietnamese tourists. Thereby, it suggests policies to promote the role of IT in the business activities of enterprises operating in the tourism industry, contributing to enhancing the competitiveness of Vietnam's tourism sector.

Research motivation:

In recent years, the development of information technology (IT) has contributed to enhancing competitiveness, helping Vietnamese tourism enterprises to grow and develop effectively. However, clearly identifying the extent of IT's influence on the destination choice decisions of Vietnamese tourists has not been common, especially in the context of Vietnam's tourism industry being in the stage of development. Therefore, the research aims to determine the impact of IT factors on the destination choice decisions of Vietnamese tourists.

Research design, approach, and method:

By combining qualitative and quantitative analysis, based on the processing of primary data collected from surveys of tourists at famous destinations in Vietnam with a sample size of 1,100, using technical analysis with SPSS 20 software.

Main findings:

The research clearly identified the extent of the influence of IT factors on the destination choice decisions of Vietnamese tourists, including: website quality, social networks, online reviews, brand credibility, and AI support. Among these, website quality is the most influential factor, while the research also highlights the differences in demographic factors such as educational level, income, marital status, and participation in organizations that affect the destination choice decisions of Vietnamese tourists.

Practical/managerial implications:

The research suggests a number of policies to promote the role of IT, focusing on the factors influencing the destination choices of Vietnamese tourists in the business activities of enterprises operating in the tourism industry, thereby contributing to enhancing the competitiveness of Vietnam's tourism sector.

Keywords: Online Tourism, Information Technology, Decision-making, Destination choice, Vietnamese tourists

1. INTRODUCTION

Information Technology (IT) is increasingly being applied in the tourism sector. Many opinions suggest that the tourism industry can achieve new breakthroughs through the adoption of modern technological solutions. Recent studies indicate that the integration of IT into the management and business operations of the global tourism industry is expected to generate significant growth compared to the past. This development is related to the operational efficiency of the tourism and travel industry, while also being influenced by the emergence of new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), social networks, and other technological factors. This transformation process has the potential to affect the industrial environment as well as the operational processes of tourism enterprises. The application of AI is also predicted to create many new job opportunities in the industry.

Online reviews have become a factor influencing tourists' decisions regarding destinations and services, while also impacting the brand image of tourism enterprises. Social networks contribute to enhancing interaction, transparency, and the sharing of information about the quality of tourism services. Understanding the influence of such reviews helps enterprises build appropriate competitive strategies.

Jeong et al. (2003) defined website quality as the effectiveness of conveying information and intentions to users. Aladwani and Palvia (2002) stated that website service quality reflects users' satisfaction with website features and the extent to which their needs are met. According to Macias (2003), interactivity enables visitors to easily search for information and enhances satisfaction. A professional, comprehensive, and reliable website increases customers' trust and confidence in their destination decisions.

This research focuses on analyzing the role of IT in influencing the destination choices of Vietnamese tourists. The research results aim to identify the factors and the extent of their influence on the destination choice process of Vietnamese tourists.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Literature review

Concept of Online Tourism

Many scholars have introduced definitions of tourism. According to Wu (2010), tourism occurs when people travel to places outside their place of residence for less than one year and not for livelihood purposes. Buhalis (2003) stated that online tourism is the application of digital technology in tourism industry processes in order to optimize operational efficiency. Alghafri (2009) pointed out that online tourism consists of three elements: management, information technology, and tourism administration. This form creates strong interaction between enterprises and customers through web platforms. According to Buhalis (2010), online tourism involves the use of applications or websites to search, book, and purchase tourism services. Ho and Lee (2007) argued that service quality depends on information quality, security, web functionality, customer relationships, and responsiveness.

Concept of Tourist Destination

A tourist destination is a place with attractive resources, appropriate services, and strict management, meeting the requirements of the Vietnam Tourism Law. The concept of a destination varies depending on the research, but all emphasize the coordination among producers, local communities, and tourists to create quality tourism products and services. Destination choice begins with individual awareness of available options and depends on attitudes as well as the level of confidence in carrying out the trip. According to Satghare (2021), the destination decision takes place after considering the options, when tourists officially become tourism consumers.

The Impact of Information Technology on Tourists' Destination Choice

Studies on the impact of information technology (IT) factors on the destination choice process of tourists have been conducted in a context where online platforms are increasingly becoming an essential business environment for tourism enterprises. Cyberspace serves as a bridge between tourists and enterprises. Therefore, many scholars both domestically and internationally have carried out research to explore different aspects, providing theoretical and scientific evidence that helps managers have a basis for developing more effective business approaches in the current context.

Smith (2022) conducted a quantitative research testing the factors influencing tourists' destination choice decisions, thereby identifying four main factors: information quality, social networks, tourist reviews, and website quality. Similar studies include Johnson & Chen (2023). Kim et al. (2020) asserted that brand trust has a significant impact on tourists' destination choice decisions, based on an analysis of the influence of brand on destination choice behavior. Destination attributes such as sightseeing spots, safety, cultural activities, and accessibility are also considered important factors in the decision-making process of tourists (Chen et al., 2019). A positive destination image and greater familiarity contribute to promoting the decision to choose a specific destination.

Zhang & Li (2019) indicated that social media factors - including advice from friends and family as well as online reviews - have a significant influence on destination choice. Brown & Davis (2022) found that support from artificial intelligence (AI) tools, together with website quality, enhances accessibility and significantly affects tourists' destination choice decisions. Wang et al. (2023) emphasized the important role of destination marketing strategies on social media platforms in influencing tourists' decisions. Kim et al. (2022) argued that a strong destination brand positively affects the decision-making process by building a favorable image and reputation.

These research findings highlight the key factors shaping tourists' destination choice decisions, including motivation, information sources, destination attributes, social influence, travel barriers, marketing efforts, risk perception, personal values, and destination brand. Understanding these factors will assist destination marketing organizations, agencies, and tourism enterprises in developing appropriate strategies to attract and meet the needs of potential tourists.

2.2 Hypothesis development

The research employs the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) developed by Venkatesh et al. (2003). UTAUT is a model that integrates several previous models of user acceptance of new systems, including the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). From a theoretical perspective, UTAUT provides insights into how factors influencing intention and behavior evolve over time. UTAUT has been tested and shown to outperform other competing models (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Venkatesh & Zhang, 2010), and it identifies key determinants such as Effort Expectancy, Performance Expectancy, Social Influence, and Facilitating Conditions, as well as moderating factors such as Gender, Age, Experience, and Voluntariness of Use. Effort Expectancy is defined as the degree of ease associated with system use; Performance Expectancy is defined as the degree to which an individual believes that using the new systems will help them achieve productivity gains; Social Influence refers to the extent to which an individual perceives the importance of being influenced by others' opinions that they should use the new system; and Facilitating Conditions are defined as the degree to which an individual believes that the organizational and technical infrastructure exists to support the system.

Research Hypotheses:

H_1: "*Website Quality*" has an impact on "*Destination Choice*."

H_2: "*Social Media*" has an impact on "*Destination Choice*."

H_3: "*Online Reviews*" have an impact on "*Destination Choice*."

H_4: "*Brand credibility*" has an impact on "*Destination Choice*."

H_5: "*AI Support*" has an impact on "*Destination Choice*."

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Preliminary research

This research was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research. First, the author carried out in-depth interviews with several participants, including scholars, senior leaders, middle-level managers, experts, and employees from tourism corporations in Vietnam such as Saigontourist, IHG, Vietravel, Marriott International, Vinpearl, and Sun World. The purpose of these interviews was to adjust the model, refine the measurement scales, develop the questionnaire, and identify new insights compared to existing theoretical research models worldwide, while also recognizing specific differences in the Vietnamese context. Subsequently, the author conducted a quantitative research at representative destinations in Vietnam's tourism industry - Vinpearl in Nha Trang and Phu Quoc - before carrying out the main research. The results tested the reliability of the measurement scales, the suitability of the model, as well as the correlations between dependent and independent variables.

3.2 Official Quantitative research

Sample size: According to Lee & Song (2003), the sample size is determined as N = k x V; where k is the experiential coefficient, usually ranging from 5 to 30; V is the total number of variables and parameters. In this research, there are 5 independent variables, 1 dependent variable with 30 observations, sample size n = 875 (k = 27, V = 30). Therefore, the sample size of this research is 1100 samples, conducted at tourist destinations in three major cities across the three regions North, Central, and South, namely Hanoi, Da Nang, and Ho Chi Minh City, with the following proportions:

Table 1. Proportion of Survey Questionnaire Allocation

Total samples distributed: 1100	Hanoi	Da Nang	HCMC
Allocation ratio	40%	20%	40%
Number of samples distributed	440	220	440
Number of valid samples collected	430	208	425

Source: Author's data analysis synthesis (2024)

Data Processing Method: After collecting data through questionnaires from respondents, the questionnaires were screened, invalid responses removed, the scales coded, data entered, and technical analysis conducted using SPSS 20 software through the following steps: (1) Descriptive statistics, (2) Reliability assessment of the scales, (3) EFA factor analysis, (4) Correlation and multiple linear regression analysis, (5) ANOVA & T-test.

Scale Development and Coding: A five-point Likert scale was chosen for this research. The scales were developed based on measurement scales from previously published research works worldwide, adjusted and supplemented to fit the research context at tourism destinations in Vietnam. In addition, some scales were identified and constructed during the preliminary research process.

Table 2: Scale Origin and Coding Table

Scale content	Number of scales	Scale origin
Website quality	5	Smith (2022), Johnson & Chen (2023), Satghare and Sawant (2021)
Social media	5	Smith (2022), Wang et al. (2023), Pop et al. (2022)
Online reviews	5	Zhang & Li (2019), Huerta-Álvarez et al. (2020)
Brand credibility	5	Kim et al. (2020)
AI support	5	Brown & Davis (2022)
Destination choice	5	Loureiro (2015), Bigne et al. (2019)

Source: Author's data analysis synthesis (2024)

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Results research

The descriptive statistical results of the sample are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of the Research Sample

Sample characteristics		Quantity	Proportion in the sample
Education level	*University and above*	446	42%
	Below university	617	58%
Employment in organizations	*Not employed*	308	29%
	Freelance work	489	46%
	Currently employed	266	25%
Income	*10 million VND and above*	424	42%
	Below 10 million VND	578	58%
Marital status	*Married*	722	68%
	Single	341	32%
Gender	*Male*	563	53%
	Female	500	47%
Age	*40 and above*	150	14%

	25 to 40 years old	596	56%
	Under 25 years old	319	30%

Source: Author's data analysis synthesis (2024)

Reliability assessment of the scale using Cronbach's alpha analysis technique: The results show that all scales of both independent and dependent variables have Cronbach's alpha coefficients greater than 0.8, which is very good. The item-total correlation coefficients are all greater than 0.3, so no scale was eliminated. This indicates that the variables in the scales ensure very high reliability and are closely correlated with each other, meeting the requirements for further analysis.

Table 4. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

Variables in the research model	Cronbach's alpha coefficient	Number of observations
Website quality (QW)	0.817	5
Social media (SN)	0.953	5
Online reviews (OR)	0.867	5
Brand credibility (BC)	0.815	5
AI support (AI)	0.857	5
Destination choice (CD)	0.910	5

Source: Author's data analysis synthesis (2024)

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA): The KMO value = 0.968 > 0.05, which is within the acceptable range where KMO lies between $0.5 \leq KMO \leq 1$, and Bartlett's test has a significance level of sig < 0.05, indicating that the data is suitable for factor analysis and that there are correlations among the variables. The extraction method used was "Principal Component" with "Varimax" rotation.

Table 5. Factor Analysis Results - Scale of Independent Variables

Independent variables	Minimum factor loading	Observed variable
Website quality (QW)	0.725	5
Social media (SN)	0.678	5
Online reviews (OR)	0.693	5
Brand credibility (BC)	0.731	5
AI support (AI)	0.695	5
Eigenvalue of the 5th factor = 1.385	Extracted variance: 69.194%	

Source: Author's data analysis synthesis (2024)

In Table 5, there are 25 observed variables in the research model grouped into 5 categories. The total extracted variance is 69.194% > 50%, satisfying the permissible condition of Hair et al. (2006), meaning that these 5 factors explain 69.19% of the data variation. The Eigenvalues of all factors are high (>1) according to Hoang Trong & Chu Nguyen Mong Ngoc (2008), with the 5th factor having the lowest Eigenvalue at 1.385 > 1.

The rotated matrix shows that all factor loadings are high, greater than 0.5, and each observed variable appears in only one factor, with very good correlations between observed variables and their factors. Therefore, the factors ensure both convergent and discriminant validity. Moreover, there is no mixing among factors, which proves that the scale of one factor is not confused with the scale of another. In conclusion, after conducting factor analysis (EFA), these independent factors remain unchanged, without any increase or decrease in the number of factors.

Validation of the dependent variable scale

The dependent variable in the research model is "*Destination choice*" with 05 observed variables. The null hypothesis H0, posed in the scale validation test using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), states that the 05 observed variables in the population have no correlation with each other. The test results show KMO = 0.956 > 0.5 and Bartlett's test with a significance level of sig < 0.05. The results reject the null hypothesis H_0, meaning that the observed variables in the population are correlated with each other, making them suitable for EFA.

The extraction method "Principal Component Analysis" with "Varimax" rotation (Table 6) yielded two factors with Eigenvalue = 1.009 > 1 and a total extracted variance of 68.055% > 50%, satisfying the analysis condition. In addition, the factor loadings of the observed variables CD1 to CD5 are all very high, greater than 0.5, confirming that the scale has been validated as appropriate.

Table 6. Factor Analysis Results - Scale of Dependent Variables

Dependent variable	Factor loading	Observed variable
Destination choice (CD)	0.702	5
Eigenvalues =1,004	Extracted variance: 68.055%	

Source: Author's data analysis synthesis (2024)

Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis at a significance level of sig < 0.01 with a two-tailed test (two-tail). The correlation coefficients range from r = 0.552 to 0.760 with sig = 0.00, indicating that the relationships among variables in the model are positively linear, with no multicollinearity. The independent variables are closely correlated with each other. Thus, the research sample results meet the conditions for conducting multiple linear regression analysis.

Hypothesis testing on the impact of IT factors on tourists' destination choice

Multiple regression analysis using the (enter) method. The adjusted R^2 value is 0.727 and Sig. F = 0.000, indicating that the 5 independent variables in the research model explain 72.3% of the variance in the dependent variable. According to Hair et al. (2006), $R^2 > 50\%$ is considered a good evaluation for a research. Therefore, the multiple linear regression model fits the sample dataset. The F-test in the ANOVA section with F = 501.656 and Sig = 0.000 < 5% shows that the overall R^2 is valid, hence the regression model fits the population. Thus, the regression model is appropriate for the population, and no multicollinearity occurs since all independent variables have VIF < 2 (Table 7). The regression results demonstrate that all 5 independent variables have a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable in the model, as the Sig value of the t-test for each independent variable is less than 0.05.

Table 7. Multiple Linear Regression Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	-.581	.096		-6.075	.000		
QW	.316	.025	.389	12.759	.000	.518	1.781
SN	.199	.027	.256	6.721	.000	.521	1.773
OR	.225	.026	.275	7.788	.000	.544	1.786
BC	.170	.027	.189	5.261	.000	.573	1.757
AI	.329	.026	.369	12.512	.000	.515	1.863

Source: Author's data analysis synthesis (2024)

Hypothesis testing with regression results (Table 7) is as follows:

The independent variable "*Website quality*" has a positive effect on the dependent variable "*Destination choice*" ($\beta = 0.389$, $\rho < 0.05$), so hypothesis **H_1** is accepted. The positive effect of "*Social media*" on "*Destination choice*" ($\beta = 0.256$, $\rho < 0.05$) means that hypothesis **H_2** in the research model is supported. The standardized beta (β) coefficient of "*Online reviews*" in the multiple regression analysis results is ($\beta = 0.275$, $\rho < 0.05$), so hypothesis **H_3** is accepted, indicating statistically that "*Online reviews*" have a positive relationship with tourists' destination choice. "*Brand credibility*" also has a positive effect on "*Destination choice*" ($\beta = 0.189$, $\rho < 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis **H_4** is accepted in the research model. Hypothesis **H_5** is supported, since the relationship between "*AI support*" and "*Destination choice*" is positive, with the standardized beta (β) value from the regression result being ($\beta = 0.369$, $\rho < 0.05$).

In summary, the standardized regression equation describing the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable is as follows:

CD = 0,389 QW + 0,256 SN + 0,275 OR + 0,189 BC + 0,369 AI

Where: CD: Destination choice, QW: Website quality, SN: Social media, OR: Online reviews, BC: Brand credibility, AI: AI support.

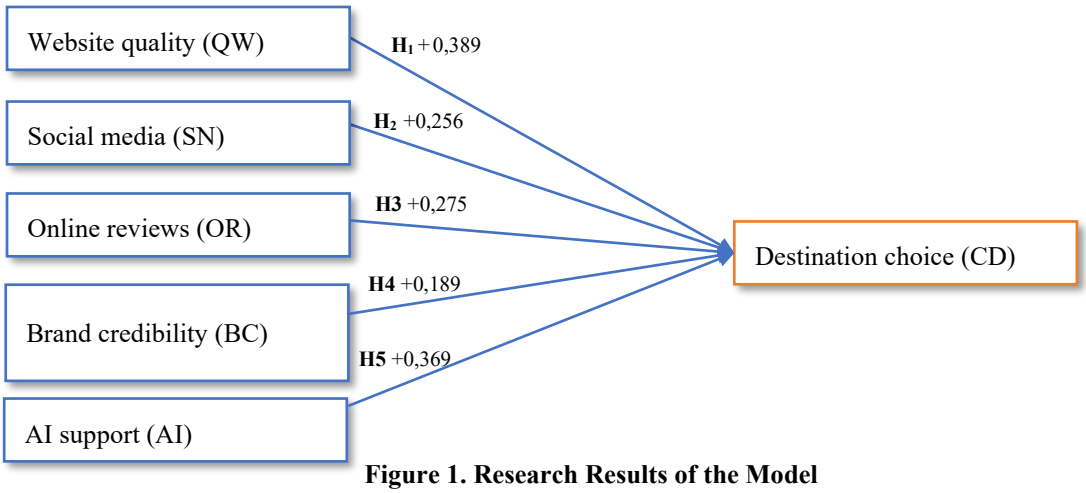


Figure 1. Research Results of the Model

Demographic Test Results

Demographics		**Tourists' destination choice**
Education level	University and above	There is a difference
	Below university	
Employment in organizations	Not employed	Freelance workers have a stronger impact on destination choice compared to other groups
	Freelance work	
	Currently employed	
Income	10 million VND and above	There is a difference
	Below 10 million VND	

Demographics		Tourists' destination choice
Marital status	Married	There is a difference
	Single	
Gender	Male	There is no difference
	Female	
Age	40 and above	There is a difference
	25 to 40 years old	
	Under 25 years old	

Source: Author's data analysis synthesis (2024)

4.2 Discussion

Tourism business managers in Vietnam who want to improve their enterprises' effectiveness should pay attention to enhancing the following factors:

Website quality - This is the strongest influencing factor in the model of this research, with a significant impact on customers' destination choices. According to Chen (2014), website quality is the degree to which user needs are met and overall excellence is demonstrated. Tourism websites should focus on design, information, interactivity, and usefulness to increase customer satisfaction and purchase intentions. To improve effectiveness, businesses should optimize user-friendly interfaces, easy navigation, fast loading speed, clear layouts, and convenient search functions to enhance the browsing experience and attract both domestic and international tourists.

Social media - This has become an online platform with increasing influence on tourists' destination choices. Online platforms such as Facebook and TikTok allow users to search for, share information, review, and promote tourism products anytime, anywhere. Businesses can leverage social media to reach customers more effectively. To increase attractiveness, it is necessary to create engaging tourism content through authentic images, videos, and real customer experiences. In addition, combining promotions via Bloggers and Travel Vloggers across multiple platforms can expand reach, and results should be regularly evaluated.

Online reviews play an increasingly important role in helping customers choose tourist destinations, hotels, restaurants, or tour services. Most tourists tend to consult reviews before making decisions, making this factor indispensable for businesses operating in the tourism industry. Positive reviews contribute to enhancing brand image, increasing the ability to attract new customers, improving revenue, while also promoting service quality and strengthening customer trust. Conversely, negative feedback can adversely affect a business's reputation as well as its performance.

Brand credibility serves as an important intermediary in transforming online experiences into tourists' actual actions (Mahadin, 2020). As information spreads strongly across online platforms, the brand becomes a key factor influencing customers' psychology and emotions, thereby shaping their destination choices. Tourism business managers need to develop effective brand management strategies in the digital space while proactively planning responses to communication risks. In the context of rapid digitalization, trust in the brand is the "soul" that ensures sustainable business development.

AI support is increasingly being applied in the tourism industry, opening up many opportunities to enhance tourists' experiences. In this research, AI plays the role of a tool assisting tourists in searching for and evaluating destinations. The development of AI has transformed core processes of the tourism industry (Wang, 2023), while also leading tourists to change their perceptions of using AI in their journeys. This research provides managers with a new perspective on applying AI to improve the effectiveness of tourism businesses in Vietnam as well as the tourism industry in general.

5. CONCLUSION

The research on information technology factors influencing tourists' destination choices in Vietnam has shown that there are important groups of factors such as: (1) Website quality, (2) Social media, (3) Online reviews, (4) Brand credibility, and (5) AI support. Managers in the tourism industry need to pay attention and establish specific policies to support organizations, improve efficiency, and strengthen competitiveness in the context of a market where technology has shifted from being just a supporting tool to becoming a key strategy governing all activities of tourism businesses.

In addition, this research has certain limitations. *First*: The research scope should be expanded to other fields so that the results have higher representativeness across industries, providing scientific evidence for managers in different sectors to refer to. *Second*: The sampling scope should cover more localities and provinces, if conditions allow, in order to increase representativeness. *Third*: Additional IT factors affecting tourists' destination choices should be considered to further improve solutions and policies for stability, development, and enhancing business performance.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to sincerely thank the scientists, teachers, colleagues, senior leaders, middle managers, experts, and staff of tourism corporations in Vietnam such as Saigontourist, IHG, Vietravel, Marriott International, Vinpearl, and Sun World for their support, valuable contributions, and favorable conditions provided throughout the research and completion of this paper.

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