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Factors affecting the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination in Ba Ria-Vung Tau province, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the article is to identify and evaluate the level of factors that influence the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination and propose some management implications to help local government agencies and tourism businesses have appropriate policies and strategies to improve the quality of marine ecotourism and contribute to the development of the local tourism economy. Marine ecotourism is a form of nature-based tourism and sustainable marine tourism, associated with local cultural identity and community participation for sustainable development. Therefore, the author researched "factors affecting the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination in Ba Ria-Vung Tau province, Vietnam." The study conducted data analysis based on 200 survey samples, processed with SPSS 23.0, software including assessing the reliability of the scales with Cronbach's Alpha test, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with Barlett's test and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO); and regression analysis of factors affecting the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination using F test and Sig significance level to test the hypotheses. The research results indicate that five factors, ranging from high to low in impact, influence the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination: the source of destination information, travel motivation, ability to pay, the quality of information sources, and word-of-mouth on social networks.

Contribution/Originality: This study aims to identify and evaluate the level of factors affecting the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination, especially a Southeast coastal province of Vietnam. This is the first study to examine factors affecting intention to choose a destination with a specific theme of marine ecotourism; other studies only consider variables affecting general tourism intention.

1. INTRODUCTION

Marine ecotourism is a type of tourism based on nature and indigenous culture combine with environmental education that contributes to conservation efforts and sustainable development with the active participation of local communities (Garrod & Wilson, 2002). Ba Ria-Vung Tau is a province with potential for tourism, especially marine eco-tourism. The province has a favorable geographical location, mild climate, and a long cultural and historical tradition with relics bearing the mark of historical periods. The whole province currently has 31 relics ranked at the national level. Ba Ria-Vung Tau has beautiful beaches, rich seafood specialties, and especially beautiful pristine landscapes that are very convenient for the development of marine eco-tourism, such as Con Dao National Park eco-tourism area, Ho Tram eco-tourism resort, Ho Coc Lake, Binh

Chau Nature Reserve, Binh Chau Hot Springs, Bung Bac eco-tourism area, etc… According to the local Statistics Department, in 2023, the whole province will welcome more than 14 million visitors, an increase of 15.27% compared to 2022, and total revenue will reach 14,678 billion Vietnamese Dong (VND), an increase of 12.15%. With the above advantages, the Resolution of the Ba Ria-Vung Tau Provincial Party Congress (2020-2025) has been implementing all solutions, including eight main types of tourism development, including: tourism associated with the community, beach resort tourism, tourism associated with medical treatment and health care, tourism associated with culture-history, tourism associated with entertainment services, conference tourism and seminars, tourism associated with sports activities, and marine eco-tourism. However, in recent times, Ba Ria-Vung Tau's tourism, especially this locality's marine eco-tourism has not developed commensurate with the local potential and inherent advantages; the tourism industry has shown signs of slowing growth and is less competitive compared to other coastal tourist areas across the country; furthermore, the quality of marine eco-tourism services is not diverse, rich, and does not meet the needs of tourists, making the number of tourists coming to this locality not high (Bao, 2024). Therefore, research on factors affecting the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination needs attention, contributing to enhancing tourism competition with other localities as well as increasing income and improving people's lives, promoting growth, and developing the local economy in a more stable and sustainable way in the coming time.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Intention

A factor that expresses an individual's ability to perform behaviors is their intention. Intention is motivating as well as representing the effort of an individual who is always ready to perform a specific behavior and intention will be directly affected by "perceived behavioral control," "subjective standards," and "attitude." In particular, attitude also means "an assessment of a particular point of view about the results obtained from performing a behavior" (Ajzen, 1991). Intentions are important in understanding what an individual will do, as they will differ between actual and intended behavior. However, it has been identified as a tendency in those actions to move towards something specific and is predictive of the consistency in reality (Jiang, Qin, Gao, & Gossage, 2022; Krueger Jr, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000).

2.2. Tourism

According to Law on Tourism (2017) tourism is defined as "the movement of people away from their usual place of residence for a period of time not exceeding one consecutive year, with the main goal of satisfying the needs of sightseeing, recreation, entertainment, learning, exploring tourism resources, or combining with other legal purposes," In order to explore, discover, and see a place or event, travel frequently entails flying to a certain destination and spending a brief amount of time there; according to the The World Tourism Organization (2023) "tourism includes the activities of individuals traveling to a place of residence other than their usual living environment and staying there for at least one night, but not more than one year, to play, entertain, visit, study, participate in sports, business or work activities.

2.3. Tourism Intentions

Tourism intentions of potential tourists are their perceived likelihood of planning to visit a certain destination within a specific period of time (Woodside & MacDonald, 1994). Tourism intention is defined as the subjective likelihood that one will or may not be committed to a certain action related to tourism services (Moutinho, 1987; Schiffman, Kanuk, & Hansen, 2013). A tourism intention is one's intention or commitment to travel. Tourism intention is the basic premise for performing direct travel behavior, which is the result of the transition from mental motivation to action or behavior. The likelihood that people planning to travel will visit

a specific location at a specific time describes this intention (Jang & Namkung, 2009).

2.4. Ecotourism, Marine Ecotourism

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (2002) ecotourism is a type of environmentally responsible travel and sightseeing in relatively pristine areas to enjoy and understand nature (with its cultural features-past and present), support conservation, minimize visitor impacts, and contribute positively to economic development-society of local people; According to Pirogionic (1985) ecotourism resources are landscape and human components and bodies that can be used to create tourism products, satisfying human needs. Ecotourism resources are natural values expressed in a specific ecosystem and indigenous cultural values that exist and develop inseparably from that natural ecosystem.A wide variety of travel experiences fall under the umbrella of ecotourism, including adventure travel, nature-based travel, environmental tourism, special travel, green tourism, responsible travel, sensitized travel, cottage travel, and sustainable travel. Garrod and Wilson (2002) link marine ecotourism to local cultural identity and community involvement for sustainable development.

3. HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH MODEL

3.1. Destination Image (DI)

In the process of researching tourism, it was found that image is more important than any tangible resource because it motivates customers to take action, which is a perception and not related to reality. According to Echtner and Ritchie (2003) destination image is the perception of specific individual attributes of a destination as well as the overall impression of that destination. Images are combinations of beliefs, impressions, and ideas about the destination that people perceive (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Destination image is also a structured system, including the connection between cognitive and emotional assessments to create an individual's entire impression of the destination (Pike, 2002). Destination image is defined as an expression of an individual's prejudices, knowledge, impressions, imagination, and feelings about a particular place, as well as the entire set of beliefs, present-day, perceptions, and ideas that people hold about objects, events, and behaviors (Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010).

H_1: Destination image has a positive impact on the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination.

3.2. Quality of Information Sources (QI)

Content in tourism information is the key point in intention, especially in the online environment, the more valuable the information, the more it will increase their intention (Yip & Mo, 2020). The quality and reliability of information shared on social networks strongly influence future travel directions and choices (Bae, Lee, Suh, & Suh, 2017). The quality of information sources is provided from different sources and formats, such as audio, text, images, video, etc... (Tarute, Nikou, & Gatautis, 2017). Information source quality has a positive and direct influence on consumers' purchasing intentions (Bebber, Milan, De Toni, Eberle, & Slongo, 2017).

H_2: Quality of information sources have a positive impact on the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination.

3.3. Communication on Social Networks (CS)

Emotional appeal on social media influences behavior and message appeal influences effective brand communication in various ways (Zhao, Zhan, & Liu, 2019). Social media can be used in creating target images. According to Nowacki and Niezgoda (2020) content created by tourists about a destination is an important tool in creating an image of the destination. The online environment is considered a reliable source of information by respondents, and social media channels have been widely used to obtain information in the past (Răzvan & Gabriel, 2012).

H_3: Communication on social networks has a positive impact on the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination.

3.4. Tourism Motivation (TM)

Tourism motivation is a set of distinct attributes that motivate a person to participate in a travel activity. According to Prideaux and Shiga (2007) choosing to learn another language or meet many people and enjoy the new environment will contribute to creating people's interest in traveling as a long-time tourists, rather than other activities. Research by Pearce and Lee (2005) shows that the factors in the motivational group, which are society, personal development, travel budget, experience, and independence, have a deep relationship. When it comes to their choice, the two cultural elements of knowledge and relaxation are constant compared to other types of tourism and are the core motivations for backpackers.

H_4: Tourism motivation has a positive impact on the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination.

3.5. Ability to Pay (AP)

One of the things that affects travelers' decisions to visit a particular place is the cost of shopping there. Demand for travel might have an impact on retail costs at the destination. Consequently, when comparing two distinct groups of visitors, travelers tend to focus more on the ambiance and natural features of the destination (Liu, Yang, & Chau, 2020). Travelers are particularly concerned about the cost of shopping for items before arriving at a destination. But the quality and cost of the goods are more important to local tourists (Durán-Román, Cárdenas-García, & Pulido-Fernández, 2021). According to research by Atzeni, Del Chiappa, and Pung (2022) there is a connection between the demand for tourism and the cost of goods at the destination.

H5: Ability to pay has a positive impact on the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination.

3.6. Word of Mouth on Social Networks (WM)

Social networks have established the influence of word-of-mouth on consumer behavior. The advancement of the technological age has allowed consumers to share product-related information online, thereby influencing behavior (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). Social networks are always considered extremely suitable platforms for word-of-mouth on social networks (Kim & Han, 2014). On social networks, people can share their opinions through images, comments, videos, or simply clicking a "like" on certain information. Furthermore, social networks also create conditions for spreading to a large number of users just by forwarding a post (Chu & Kim, 2011).

H_6: Word of mouth on social networks has a positive impact on the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination.

3.7. Source of Destination Information (SD)

Information from a source that aligns with their desires and needs will strongly motivate tourists to visit a destinantion (Goossens, 2000). Sources of destination information will include:neutral sources (tourism offices); social sources of information (from relatives, friends, and family); commercial information sources (travel companies and agents); mixed advertising and promotion information sources (brochures, magazines, movies, radio, tivi, and internet (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012). Information search behavior will be considered an influence on tourist destination choice (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012; Mutinda & Mayaka, 2012). Information from multiple sources, either internal or external, is essential for choosing a destination and making decisions such as places to visit, modes of travel, or activities of residence (Fodness & Murray, 1997). The emergence of information with the formation of online newspapers as well as the increasing use of technology products also helps the number of tourists to search for and organize the information they may need in a better way (Jacobsen &

Munar, 2012).

H_7: Source of destination information has a positive impact on the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination.

From the above hypotheses, the author decided to propose a research model, including 7 factors affecting the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination in Ba Ria–Vung Tau province, Vietnam (Figure 1).

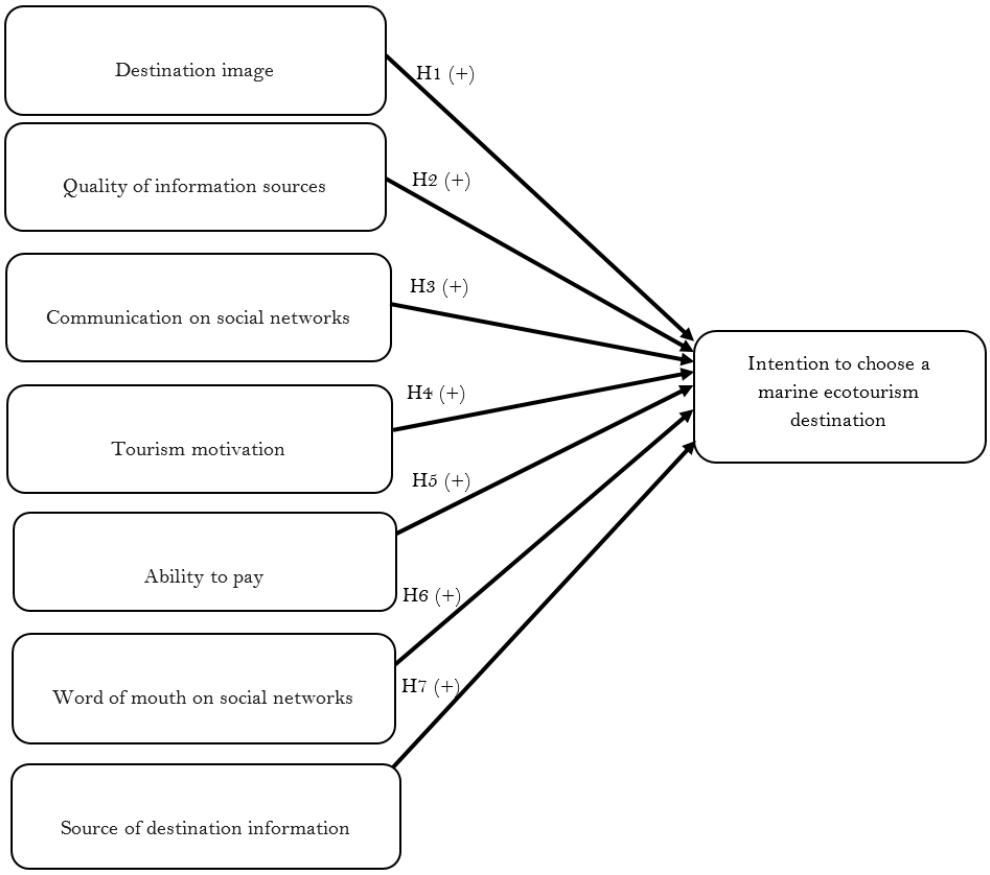

Figure 1. Research model.

4. DATA RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

4.1. Research Data

The study conducted a survey at 8 marine eco-tourism areas in Ba Ria-Vung Tau province, Vietnam. Interview locations were at tourism companies, hotels, restaurants, beaches, and marine eco-tourism areas. The study uses a Likert scale with 5 levels to measure the impact of factors affecting the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination(1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree agree, (3) average, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. The number of observed variables used for question groups is 31. According to Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998) the minimum number of samples of analysis for questionnaires using the Likert scale is 5*m (m is the number of observed variables). Therefore, the minimum sample size in this study was calculated as 5*31 = 155 samples. Based on the characteristics of the marine ecotourism destination, the research team conducted interviews with 215 people. The interview period was from January 2024 to February 2024. The results were 210 responses, reaching 98% of the overall response rate. After checking the 210 answer sheets received, there were 10 that did not meet the requirements due to many blank boxes. Ultimately, 200 answer sheets satisfied the requirements for this study, thereby meeting the criteria for a research sample size of 200 samples.

4.2. Research Methods

The author collects and processes information using SPSS 23.0 software. After collecting 200 valid answer

sheets, the author conducted coding and data analysis using SPSS 23.0 application to test Cronbach's Alpha (CA) reliability. After that, the author began to do formal quantitative research. The author analyzed descriptive statistics of the survey sample, variables and tested Cronbach's Alpha to evaluate the reliability of the scale; EFA exploratory factor analysis with Barlett's and KMO tests; and regression analysis of influencing factors and the degree of influence of factors on the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination using F test and Sig significance level to test the hypotheses.

5. RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1. Respondent Demographic Profile

The author collected data from 215 answer sheets. The results were 200 valid votes, with the following general information:

Table 1. Sample demographic characteristics.

Details	Categories	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	75	37.5
	Female	125	62.5
	Total	200	100.0
Age	15 – 20 years old	67	33.5
	Over 20 – 25 years old	51	25.5
	Over 25 – 30 years old	52	26.0
	Over 30 years old	30	15.0
	Total	200	100.0
Education	High shool	19	9.5
	College	27	13.5
	University	33	16.5
	Other	121	60.5
	Total	200	100.0
Occupation	Business	45	22.5
	State officials	21	10.5
	Office workers	38	19.0
	Other	96	48.0
	Total	200	100.0
Income	Under 10 million VND	85	42.5
	10 – 20 million VND	68	34.0
	Over 20 – 30 million VND	28	14.0
	Over 30 million VND	19	9.5
	Total	200	100.0

Table 1shows that there were 200 valid survey questionnaires, specific to gender, of which 75 were male, accounting for 37.5%,and 125 were female,accounting for 31.1%. Regarding age, there are 67 people aged 15 - 20 years old, accounting for 33.5%; 51 people over 20 - 25 years old, accounting for 25.5%; 52 people over 25 - 30 years old, accounting for 26%; and 30 people over 30 years old, accounting for 15%. Regarding education, 19 of them have high school education, accounting for 9.5%; 27 people in college, accounting for 13.5%; 33 university students, accounting for 16.5%; and other 121 people, accounting for 60.5%. Regarding occupation, there are 45 business people, accounting for 22.5%; 21 state officials, accounting for 10.5%; 38 office workers, accounting for 19%; and other 96 people, accounting for 48%. Regarding income, there are 85 people with less than 10 million VND, accounting for 42.5%; 68 people with 10 - 20 million VND, accounting for 34%; 28 people over 20 - 30 million VND, accounting for 14%; and 19 people with over 30 million VND or more, accounting for 9.5%.

5.2. Evaluate the Reliability of the Scale

The results of Table 2 show that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the observed variables is > 0.6 and the total variable correlation coefficient is > 0.3, so the observed variables are reliable and can be tested in the next step.

Table 2. Results of reliability assessment.

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Corrected item-total correlation
Destination image (DI)	0.898	0.749 – 0.797
Quality of information sources (QI)	0.856	0.658 – 0.781
Communication on social networks (CS)	0.871	0.615 – 0.797
Tourism motivation (TM)	0.855	0.681 – 0.714
Ability to pay (AP)	0.886	0.715 – 0.795
Word of mouth on social networks (WM)	0.881	0.689 – 0.777
Source of destination information (SD)	0.875	0.681 – 0.778
Intention to choose a marineecotourismdestination (IC)	0.874	0.739 – 0.794

5.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis

Table 3 shows that the factors in the study are reliable KMO = 0.905 > 0.5. Sig = 0.000 < 0.05 when testing Bartlett's Test, the independent factors are statistically significant. The total variance extracted was 38.221%, showing that independent factors explained 38.221% of the variation in the survey data. The 7th factor has Eigenvalues = 1.118 > 1, showing the convergence of the 7 independent factors and stopping at the 7th factor. The observed variables representing the 7 independent factors all have factor loadings > 0,5 so the observed variables are meaningful and represent the factor they represent. After EFA testing, there are 27 observed variables and 7 independent factors retained.

Table 3. Results of exploratory factor analysis of independent variables.

KMO and Bartlett's test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)	0.905
Bartlett's test	0.000
Eigenvalues	1.118
% of total variance	38.221%

Table 4 shows that the factors in the study are reliableKMO = 0.739 > 0.5. Sig = 0.000 < 0.05 when the Bartlett's Test shows that the dependent factors are statistically significant. The total variance extracted = 80.753 shows that the dependent factors explain 80.753% of the variation in the survey data. The 1st factor has Eigenvalues = 2,423 > 1, showing the convergence of 1 dependent factor and stopping at the 1st factor. The observed variables representing the dependent factors all have loading factors > 0, 7, so the observed variables are meaningful and represent the factor they represent. After EFA testing, there are 3 observed variables of the dependent factor that are retained.

Only one factor, identified from the observed variables of the scale of desire to pick a marine ecotourism destination, demonstrated excellent reliability in the factor analysis results using scales accessing that intention. We then determine a factor representing the observed variables in regression and correlation analysis by calculating the average value of the assessment scores for the observed variables, based on the analysis results.

Table 4. Results of exploratory factor analysis of the dependent variable.

KMO and Bartlett's test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)	0.739
Bartlett's test	0.000
Eigenvalues	2.423
% of total variance	80.753%

5.4. Multivariate Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

In Table 5, simulate the independence between the dependent variable and the independent variables. When the correlation reaches significance at a value of 0.05, all independent variables are correlated with the dependent variable (Tho, 2011).

Table 5. Correlation test between independent and dependent factors.

Correlation		IC	DI	QI	CS	TM	AP	WM	SD
IC	Pearson correlation	1	0.544**	0.571**	0.306**	0.564**	0.397**	0.641**	0.626**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
DI	Pearson correlation	0.544**	1	0.560**	0.305**	0.549**	0.287**	0.588**	0.586**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
QI	Pearson correlation	0.571**	0.560**	1	0.320**	0.525**	0.335**	0.579**	0.550**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
CS	Pearson correlation	0.306**	0.305**	0.320**	1	0.315**	0.469**	0.247**	0.277**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.277**
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
TM	Pearson correlation	0.564**	0.549**	0.525**	0.315**	1	0.217**	0.557**	0.550**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.002	0.000	0.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
AP	Pearson correlation	0.397**	0.287**	0.335**	0.469**	0.217**	1	0.325**	0.368**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.002		0.000	0.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
WM	Pearson correlation	0.641**	0.588**	0.579**	0.247**	0.557**	0.325**	1	0.579**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
SD	Pearson correlation	0.626**	0.586**	0.550**	0.277**	0.550**	0.368**	0.579**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 shows that the correlation coefficient of the dependent and independent factors ranges from 0.306 to 0.641, which is quite high. The Sig of all factors is < 0.05, showing that there is a correlation between dependent and independent factors. The research model concludes that seven independent factors influence the dependent factors.

In Table 6, the result for the adjusted R^2 is 0.547, showing that 7 independent factors explain 54.7% of the significance of factors affecting the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination.

Table 6. Testing the model's level of explanation.

Model	R	R square	AdjustedR square	Std. error of the estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.750[a]	0.563	0.547	0.605	2.022

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), DI, QI, CS, TM, AP, WM, and SD.

In Table 7, the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) analysis results show that the Sig = 0.000, so it can be

concluded that the regression model is suitable for the research data.

Table 7. ANOVA test results.

Model		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	90.747	7	12.964	35.363	0.000[b]
	Residual	70.386	192	0.367		
	Total	161.133	199			

Note: b. Predictors: (Constant), DI, QI, CS, TM, AP, WM, and SD.

In Table 8, the results of regression analysis are to determine the level of influence of each factor in the model with the dependent variable being the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination.

Table 8. Results of multivariate regression analysis.

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
		Beta	Std. error	Beta			Tolerance	Varianceinflation factor (VIF)
1	(Constant)	-0.513	0.288		-1.780	0.077		
	DI	0.053	0.071	0.049	0.737	0.462	0.507	1.974
	QI	0.151	0.076	0.130	1.986	0.048	0.532	1.878
	CS	0.008	0.061	0.008	0.134	0.894	0.719	1.391
	TM	0.180	0.072	0.161	2.490	0.014	0.545	1.836
	AP	0.126	0.056	0.128	2.239	0.026	0.695	1.439
	WM	0.319	0.080	0.269	3.965	0.000	0.494	2.023
	SD	0.297	0.086	0.233	3.455	0.001	0.502	1.992

Table 8 shows that there are seven factors influencing the intention to choose a marine eco-tourism destination: DI, QI, CS, TM, AP, WM, and SD. However, the variable DI has a value Sig = 0.462 > 0.05, the variable CS (Sig = 0.894 > 0.05), so these variables are not meaningful and do not have an impact on the dependent variable IC. Thevariables, including QI, TM, AP, WM, and SD, all have Sig < 0.05, so they are statistically significant and have a positive impact on the dependent variable IC.Tolerance and variance inflation factors of the variables do not exceed 10, proving that multicollinearity does not occur. Thus, the multivariate regression model is appropriate.

The standardized regression equation has the following form:

$$IC = 0.130 * QI + 0.161 * AP + 0.128 * WM + 0.269 * SD + 0.233 * TM$$

6. DISCUSSION

The "source of destination information" aspect has an impact on the intention to select a place for marine ecotourism, according to research findings. The hypothesis receives support with a Sig value of less than 0.05 and a standardized beta coefficient of 0.269 for this component. This suggests that the source of destination information positively influences the intention to choose a marine eco-tourism site. The most influential component is the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination, which increases by 0.269 units when the destination information source factor increases by 1 unit. The findings of Goossens (2000), Mutinda and Mayaka (2012) and Fodness and Murray (1997) are comparable to those of this study.

The intention to select a marine ecotourism destination is also influenced by "tourism motivation" elements. With a standardized beta coefficient of 0.233 and a Sig value of less than 0.05, this hypothesis is accepted since it indicates that travel motivation positively influences the intention to select a place for marine ecotourism. The intention to choose a destination for marine ecotourism improves by 0.233 units when the travel motivation factor increases by 1 unit, making it the second largest influencing element. The research is

compareable to the findings of Prideaux and Shiga (2007) and Pearce and Lee (2005).

In a similar vein, the "ability to pay" aspect influences the decision to select a place for marine ecotourism. The Sig value of less than 0.05 and the standardized Beta coefficient of 0.161 support the acceptance of this hypothesis, demonstrating the positive relationship between affordability and the intention to select a marine ecotourism site. The desire to choose a place for marine ecotourism improves by 0.161 units when the affordability factor increases by one unit, making it the third biggest influencing element. This outcome is consistent with research conducted by Durán-Román et al. (2021), Atzeni et al. (2022) and Liu et al. (2020).

Additionally, the intention to select a marine ecotourism destination is influenced by the"quality of information sources". The standardized beta coefficient of this component is 0.130, and the Sig value is less than 0.05, indicating that this hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that the desire to choose a place is positively influenced by the quality of information sources. ecotourism in the sea. The desire to choose a place for marine ecotourism increases by 0.130 units when the information source quality factor increases by 1 unit, making it the fourth influential element. The findings of Tarute et al. (2017); Yip and Mo (2020); Bae et al. (2017) and Bebber et al. (2017) are comparable to our conclusion.

Word-of-mouth recommendations on social media have an impact on travelers' decisions on where to go for marine ecotourism. The Sig value of less than 0.05 and the standardized Beta coefficient of 0.128 support the acceptance of this hypothesis, demonstrating the beneficial influence of social media recommendations on the intention to select an ecotourism site. The fifth influential component is the intention to choose a place for marine ecotourism, which increases by 0.128 units when word-of-mouth on social networks increases by one unit. The findings of Chu and Kim (2011); Kim and Han (2014) and Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) are comparable to this one.

On the other hand, “destination image” factor does not impact the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination, with a standardized Beta coefficient of 0.049 and a value of Sig = 0.462 greater than 0.05. Therefore, this hypothesis is not accepted. This result is different from the studies of Beerli and Martin (2004); Pike (2002) and Stepchenkova and Mills (2010). This difference can be considered in various contexts and research objects.

The research results also show that “communication on social networks” factor does not affect the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination, with a standardized Beta coefficient of 0.008 and a Sig value = 0.894 greater than 0.05. Therefore, this hypothesis is not accepted. This result is different from the studies of Xinyan and Mengqi (2019); Krzysztof (2015); Nowacki and Niezgoda (2020) and Răzvan and Gabriel (2012).

7. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

7.1. Conclusion

According to research results, there are five factors that influence the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination, ranked from high to low: (i) Source of Destination Information; (ii) Tourism Motivation; (iii) Ability to Pay; (iv) Word of Mouth on Social Networks; and (v) Quality of Information Sources.

7.2. Implications

Firstly, the source of destination information is the factor that most strongly influences the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination. The results show that tourists are satisfied with destination information sources, specifically "Information sources through social networks and websites are very important when choosing a destination," with 3.85 points. “Information sources through friends, family, and colleagues are very important when choosing a destination,” with 3.76 points. “Your own travel experience is very important when choosing a destination,” with 3.84 points. “Feedback from the tourist community is very important when I choose a destination,” with 3.78 points. This shows that the majority of tourists consider their own sources of

destination information, social networks and websites, as well as family, friends, colleagues, and the tourist community to be very important. Reality also shows that in recent times, tourists have been interested in information from many sources when choosing a marine ecotourism destination. Tourists realize that finding information is important, so they will learn from social networks and websites; family, friends, colleagues; tourist community; and themselves. Therefore, to bring the most reliable and practical sources of information, local authorities and tourism businesses need to upgrade and invest more in information systems; at the same time, improve the quality of destinations by combining many eco-tourism products with community tourism, cultural and religious programs (coastal folk culture festivals), and developing sea sports; establishing prestigious shopping centers at tourist attractions, displaying unique products and souvenirs with local characteristics so that tourists will always remember their trip; and widely promoting the good image of the destination.

The second factor that influences the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination is tourism motivation. According to the results, when intending to choose a destination, tourists have a good awareness of travel motives. "Satisfying curiosity" with 3.87 points. "Enrich life experiences" with 3.93 points. "Experience new and different things" with 4.00 points. "Change the atmosphere and escape from busy work" with 3.96 points. This shows that the majority of tourists consider the motivating factors when intending to travel to marine ecotourism to be very important, which helps them be more motivated to choose that tourist destination. Nowadays, the demand for tourism is increasing. Visitors can satisfy their curiosity or accumulate more life experiences, as well as gain new things, change the atmosphere, and escape busy work. These factors are inevitable, and many people are starting to pay more attention. Therefore, local authorities and tourism businesses should invest more heavily in marine eco-tourism destinations to become a beautiful place not only in terms of image but also a unique location and to attract more and more tourists to choose the destination.

Thirdly, the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination is heavily influenced by affordability. The results show that most tourists agree on affordability when intending to travel to marine ecotourism. Specifically, "Before visiting a place, I pay close attention to the prices of shopping goods," with 3.72 points, and "A cultural destination can provide entertainment activities, affordable prices for tourists," with 3.85 points. "A cultural destination must have appropriate price lists of cultural exhibitions" with 3.94 points. "Local festival and event prices are one of the reasons why I visit cultural sites," with 3.86 points. This shows that tourists are very interested and pay attention to the prices of where they shop, entertain, and visit attractions and festivals. Reality also shows that tourism trends are increasing, particularly marine eco-tourism products. Therefore, local authorities and tourism businesses make large investments and consider the most optimal investment cost factors to have reasonable pricing policies for tourism products as well as bring a good image to the minds of tourists when choosing this destination.

Fourth, word-of-mouth on social media influences the desire to select a place for marine ecotourism. The findings indicate that most travelers concur with information that they learn from word-of-mouth on social media. In particular, "I frequently use online travel reviews from other travelers to help select a desirable destination" receives 3.43 points. "I feel more confident about travelling to a destination when I read online travel reviews from other travelers" (3.26 points). "I frequently peruse online traveler reviews to determine which destinations are well-liked by others" (3.50 points). "To make sure I choose the right destination, I often read other travelers' online travel reviews," with 3.67 points. This shows that, before choosing a certain location, tourists go to social networks to search for people who have experienced and understood the destination to gain information and trust about the destination. In fact, the 4.0 technology era and the trend of using social networks to learn, contact, and find information sources are increasingly promoted. Finding a beautiful destination as well as all the destination's information is necessary, not only is the information source available on websites, but also collecting information about opinion reviews and continuous updates from

tourists. Therefore, local authorities and tourism businesses need to pay attention to investment and control of information on social networks, not only focusing on landscape investment but also paying attention to price, security, and quality care to protect the rights of tourists.

Fifthly, the quality of information sources significantly influences the intention to choose a marine ecotourism destination. The results show that the majority of tourists are provided with adequate information sources and information sources that are consistent with reality, accurate, and reliable. "The information sources at all sources provide all the information I need," with 3.89 points. "Travel information on vehicles is reliable" with 3.60 points. "Travel information on vehicles consistent with reality," earns 3.84 points. "Accurate information on media" with 3.71 points. This shows that tourists trust the information source where they search, information from sources that are appropriate and bring what they want. Finding all information by all means helps tourists know more deeply and more than what they need. Therefore, local authorities and tourism businesses must always update the latest information, control information before it is posted, and direct information; control and correct when there is false information affecting the location; and create the best experiences for tourists when they visit the destination.

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