

How does electronic word of mouth influence Gen Z tourists' booking intention in the hospitality industry? The case of mountainous areas

Hoang Van Hao^{1*}, Pham Thu Thao², Vu Thi Quynh Chi², Le Van Phuc²

¹Electric Power University, Hanoi, Vietnam

²Phenikaa University, Hanoi, Vietnam

*Corresponding author: haohv@epu.edu.vn

ARTICLE INFO

DOI:10.46223/HCMCOUJS.
econ.en.16.2.3971.2026

Received: January 10th, 2025

Revised: March 10th, 2025

Accepted: March 28th, 2025

JEL classification code:

M31; Z32; Z33

Keywords:

booking intention; eWOM;
gen Z tourist; goal-directed
behavior; mountainous regions

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to explore the influence of electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) on the booking intention of Gen Z tourists, and mountain tourism was chosen as the context. In addition to examining the direct influence, the study will evaluate the mediating role of variables in the Model of Goal-directed Behavior (MGB) model in the relationship between eWOM and booking intention. Two hundred eighty-three usable responses were analyzed in SPSS 27.0 and SmartPLS 4.0. The results indicated that eWOM has a considerable direct influence on Gen Z tourists' intentions. Subjective norms and desire also play a mediating role in the relationship between eWOM and booking intention. In addition, the indirect influence of eWOM on booking intention is also through the mediating role of perceived behavioral control and desire. Notably, with the collected data set, the mediating role of the remaining variables in the MGB, including attitude, positive emotions, and negative emotions in the relationship between eWOM and booking intention, is not statistically significant. This study provides a deeper insight into Gen Z tourists' booking intentions and practical recommendations for hospitality managers in mountainous areas to leverage eWOM as a valuable tool to encourage their intentions.

1. Introduction

Thanks to the significant technological growth, online comments and judgments are becoming increasingly prevalent, thus having a significant impact on consumer behavior. Cheung (2014) stated that electronic word-of-mouth, which can break down time and space barriers, allows consumers to receive, share, and select information effectively. Thanks to eWOM, consumers can share their own experiences, product evaluations, and personal recommendations on digital platforms on the Internet. In tourism and hospitality, eWOM is integral to consumer behaviors and tourists' intention to choose destinations and accommodations. A review site is considered a primary tool in social media usage that can change the relationship between hoteliers and customers (Pérez Aranda et al., 2017). With various eWOM data, reliable information sources are created and provided to tourists, which can negatively or positively impact consumer perceptions of products or services. In addition,

Park et al. (2011) affirmed that online opinions on tourism activities can bring tourists indirect experiences and offer them valuable recommendations. Hence, it is stated that eWOM is one of the most vital factors in forming tourists' intentions, especially for Gen Z tourists. According to Ramgade and Kumar (2021), Generation Z grew up in a world of creative technology. Most of them were born after the advent of Google and smartphones. Perhaps that is why young people are accustomed to using the Internet to look up and search for information.

Tourism growth in mountainous areas can play a significant role in the primary goal of improving locals' living standards, generally through programs for sustainable economic development and environmental preservation (Nepal & Chipeniuk, 2005). Mountains are among the most well-known tourist destinations due to their breathtaking views, majestic beauty, and precious value. These areas are renowned for rich biodiversity, mild climate, and other distinct geological features. Besides a good reputation for their natural tourism resources, mountainous regions are considered the cradle of ethnic minorities' culture with distinctive and unique traditional characteristics and precious national historical value. This can bring a variety of national cultures, which can attract domestic and foreign tourists. Due to the potential for Vietnamese tourism, mountainous regions develop different types of tourism, such as eco-tourism, adventure, cultural and leisure tourism, etc. Consequently, the lodging sector is also diversifying into various kinds, such as hotels, bungalows, resorts, tourist villages, etc.

Young generations who expect their vacations to meet their new social demand can shape tourism trends in a new way (Monaco, 2018; Robinson & Schänzel, 2019). Curious young travelers seek encounters with life's differences and explore various cultures that align with their preferences. Perhaps this is why Gen Z tourists prefer unique experiences and unusual destinations. Additionally, they desire to connect with local people and other travelers during their journeys (Ozdemir-Guzel & Bas, 2021). Therefore, with the natural and cultural tourism potential, mountainous regions have increasingly developed diverse and unique forms of tourism, attracting young people to experience and explore new things. However, in some mountainous areas, these regions have not been widely promoted in the media for specific objective reasons (e.g., infrastructure, terrain). Therefore, eWOM plays a crucial role in information search and decision-making for tourists. Consequently, accommodations in mountainous regions need to leverage eWOM as an effective tool to promote the booking intentions of Gen Z - one of the potential customer bases - thereby successfully converting intentions into actions.

Additionally, in terms of economic benefits, thanks to local, natural, and cultural resources, tourism can bring destinations the opportunity for locals to increase their income (Silva et al., 2013). Furthermore, since the primary goal of tourism is boosting sustainability, it can enhance and contribute to preserving biological and cultural resources (Lama & Sattar, 2004). On the other hand, due to some of its recreational, healing, disconnecting, and sports capabilities, tourists can gain social and educational advantages when visiting mountainous zones (Bacos & Gabor, 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to examine the intention of Gen Z tourists to book in mountainous regions.

As eWOM has spread rapidly and has strongly impacted consumer decision-making processes (Pourabedin & Migin, 2015), it has gained considerable attention from researchers.

For this reason, research articles on eWOM have emerged in different fields, including the hospitality context (Elseidi & El-Baz, 2016; Lee et al., 2021; Shin et al., 2018; Zhao et al., 2015). MGB and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) have also been seen as salient frameworks in numerous studies to predict behavioral intention based on electronic word-of-mouth (Shin et al., 2018; Soliman, 2019; Zhao et al., 2015). Nevertheless, little previous literature has examined mediating variables in the relationship between eWOM and behavioral intention, especially in booking intention. Moreover, the MGB has been applied in little research to investigate young tourists' booking intentions in accommodations in mountainous zones. Besides examining the direct influence of eWOM on the booking intention of Gen Z, this study analyzes the indirect influence of eWOM on their intentions through the mediating role of constructs in the MGB. Mountainous tourism was chosen as the context of this study to evaluate the impact of eWOM on Gen Z's booking intention.

2. Theoretical basis

2.1. eWom and Gen Z tourist

According to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), eWOM is referred to as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (p. 39). Different empirical research demonstrated the importance of eWOM in consumers' behavior, especially in the hospitality sector. This can explain why intangible products in the hospitality industry are difficult to evaluate before consumption; hence, eWOM is a valuable tool for understanding these products (Litvin et al., 2008). It is suggested that positive comments can significantly increase the number of bookings in a hotel (Ye et al., 2009).

Although Gen Z has been investigated in previous studies, no clear and consistent definition exists. The age range of Gen Z is identified between 1995 and 2010. They were born and raised in an ever-changing environment with the rapid development of technology. Besides, Gen Z tourists not only represent potential customers in the future but also significantly influence their family decision-making process. Family members often seek their opinions before embarking on a trip. Before traveling, they intend to primarily gather information by searching travel guide apps visit websites (Ozdemir-Guzel & Bas, 2021; Popşa, 2024) because they would like to find adventure and novelty that can impact their visit intention (Robinson & Schänzel, 2019). As a result, young tourists are looking for meaningful travel experiences that can bring them opportunities to acquire their own culture, discover local heritage and crafts, try new cuisines and specialties, learn the local language, pursue outdoor activities, or do wellness activities (Popşa, 2024).

2.2. Gen Z tourists' booking intention in the hospitality industry

As Ajzen (1991) referred, intentions indicate how hard people are ready to do and how much effort they dedicate to perform their behaviors. If the intention to do a particular activity is stronger, the behavior should be more likely to be performed. Hence, intention is the primary element of an individual's mental willingness to act in some social psychological models of behavior, and the intention construct has been used widely to comprehend social and applied issues (Sheeran, 2002). Booking intention is the tourists' willingness to book the hotel (Casalo et al., 2015). In this study, Gen Z tourists' booking intention is considered to be the level of their willingness to book rooms in accommodation establishments in the

hospitality industry.

The hospitality sector is increasingly developing, with various options in different budgets. Therefore, accommodation preferences in general, as well as those of Gen Z, are diverse. Since Gen Z tourists appreciate unique experiences and authenticity, accommodation should offer more than just a place to sleep. They expect hotels to provide opportunities for them to feel connected and be a part of the local culture and community (Tata et al., 2023). Therefore, eWOM is vital for them to seek out the little-known novel and unique experience.

2.3. The MGB

The TPB built by Ajzen (1991) has been applied extensively in various fields. While the value of this model is recognized, it is doubtful because of the lack of factors to predict consumers' intentions, such as unconscious motivations, impulsive decisions, and influential variables in the individuals' decision-making process (Yuzhanin & Fisher, 2016). As a result, Perugini and Bagozzi (2001) proposed that the MGB address these problems. Accordingly, individuals' intention is directly driven by desires, which transform the motivational content to act involving un Attitudes toward the act (Aact), Expected Emotions (AE), Subjective Norms (SN), and Perceived Behavior Control (PBC). Furthermore, the frequency of past behavior is a new index to forecast desires, intentions, and behavior; meanwhile, the recency of prior behavior merely predicts behavior. Hence, the MGB was considered the extended TPB model because an independent variable as a parallel predictor was added besides established predictors (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001). Thanks to better predictive abilities in comparison to the TPB model, MGB has been interested by researchers to explain different human behaviors. Specifically, it has been successfully used in hotel scenarios and has been shown to demonstrate a variety of human behaviors (Han & Ryu, 2012; Lee et al., 2012; Song et al., 2012). As a result, this study proposed a research model based on the MGB framework to explain Gen Z tourists's booking intentions in mountainous areas.

2.4. Hypothesis development

2.4.1. eWOM and booking intention

There has been considerable empirical research indicating that eWOM significantly influences tourists' intentions (Alsheikh et al., 2021; Ladhari & Michaud, 2015; Uslu, 2020). Suggestions from those who have experienced it can be considered the most reliable source of information for potential tourists (Jalilvand et al., 2012). Particularly in the hospitality industry, tourists are interested in eWOM to shape their intentions. This explains that booking rooms in a hotel is an experiential decision, which is hard to guess; thus, particular information about each preselected choice can help tourists imagine their experience (Gavilan et al., 2018). As a result, tourists' use of social media, such as feedback, comments, views, and ratings posted online by hotel customers, are key elements affecting tourists' decisions (Sebastian et al., 2016). For example, Ladhari and Michaud (2015) suggested that comments from friends on Facebook greatly impact tourists' booking intentions. As a result, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H1: eWOM has a positive direct influence on booking intention

2.4.2. eWOM and attitude, subjective norm, emotions, and perceived behavior control

In the study by Lai Ying and Chung (2007), the research results demonstrated that positive eWOM can contribute to a more favorable attitude and increase guests' intention compared to negative eWOM. Similarly, in the tourism industry, according to Jalilvand and Samiei (2012), eWOM significantly and directly impacts tourists' attitudes towards visiting Isfahan. Based on previous research, eWOM significantly influences tourists' attitudes.

In the research examining the intention to visit locally sourced restaurants, after analyzing results, Shin et al. (2018) stated that eWOM significantly impacts subjective norms. Customers who frequently use online reviews are likelier to perceive that their significant others, such as parents and friends, can encourage them to visit locally sourced restaurants. This is consistent with Soliman (2019), who found that eWOM directly influences tourists' subjective norms.

Positive and negative emotions are new factors added to the MGB to address the limitations of the TPB model. The emotions mentioned are not experienced during the use process but rather anticipated emotions that consumers consider before making decisions (Hunter, 2006). According to Shin et al. (2018), emotions are influenced considerably by eWOM. With reviews from online platforms, guests' intentions will arise as they explore those reviews.

Perceived behavior control is one of the variables that significantly depend on the impact of eWOM. Soliman's (2019) research shows that eWOM positively influences perceived behavior control. The study by Lee et al. (2021) also demonstrated the direct influence of eWOM on SNS on Gen Y perceived behavioral control to book luxury hotels.

As a result, the hypotheses are proposed:

H2: eWOM has a positive direct influence on attitude

H3: eWOM has a positive direct influence on subjective norm

H4: eWOM has a positive direct influence on positive emotion

H5: eWOM has a positive direct influence on negative emotion

H6: eWOM has a positive direct influence on perceived behavior control

2.4.3. attitude, subjective norm, emotions, perceived behavior control, and desire

The desire to use tourism and hospitality services can be further stimulated when tourists evaluate product outcomes positively (Chiu & Cho, 2022). In the study on the intention to book Peer to Peer (P2P) accommodation services investigated by Kurillová and Marciánová (2021), the research results demonstrated that customer attitude influences desire, especially attitudes expressed regarding social benefits and the authenticity of the experience are crucial factors in predicting the willingness to use P2P accommodation services. In addition, based on previous studies (Lee et al., 2012; Grady & Sihombing, 2022; Shin et al., 2018), it can be assumed that attitudes reinforce the tourists' booking desire.

Numerous previous studies have affirmed the significant impact of subjective norms on intention. In the survey of international travel intentions, Kim et al. (2012) found that Korean tourists' desires rely on subjective norms. Additionally, through data analysis

investigating intentions to choose environmentally responsible accommodations, Han and Yoon (2015) demonstrated that subjective norms influence desire. Similarly, when examining the formation of slow tourists' intentions, Meng and Choi (2016) proved that subjective norms were one of the most vital variables of desire.

The previous literature identified that desire depends on positive and negative emotions (Qiao et al., 2021; Song et al., 2017). According to the study conducted by Chiu et al. (2018) to predict consumers' intention to buy sporting commodities online, the results showed that the key determinants of desire were the positive and negative anticipated emotions. In particular, Chiu and Cho (2022) applied the MGB in the tourism and accommodation sector and discovered that emotional factors, including positive and negative anticipated emotions, influence desire. Specifically, positive emotions have the most significant impact on desire, while negative emotions have the least impact. Therefore, they argue that high expectations of positive experiences can enhance tourists' willingness to purchase tourism and accommodation services.

Perceived behavioral control is an essential prediction of tourists' intentions, directly influencing desire. This has been demonstrated in numerous previous research studies. According to the survey by Meng and Choi (2016), data analysis suggested that desire depends on perceived behavioral control. In another study of intention to visit locally sourced restaurants, Shin et al. (2018) also found that perceived behavioral control significantly impacts desire.

Therefore, there are the following hypotheses proposed below:

H7: Attitude has a positive direct influence on desire

H8: Subjective norm has a positive direct influence on desire

H9: Positive emotion has a positive direct influence on desire

H10: Negative emotion has a positive direct influence on desire

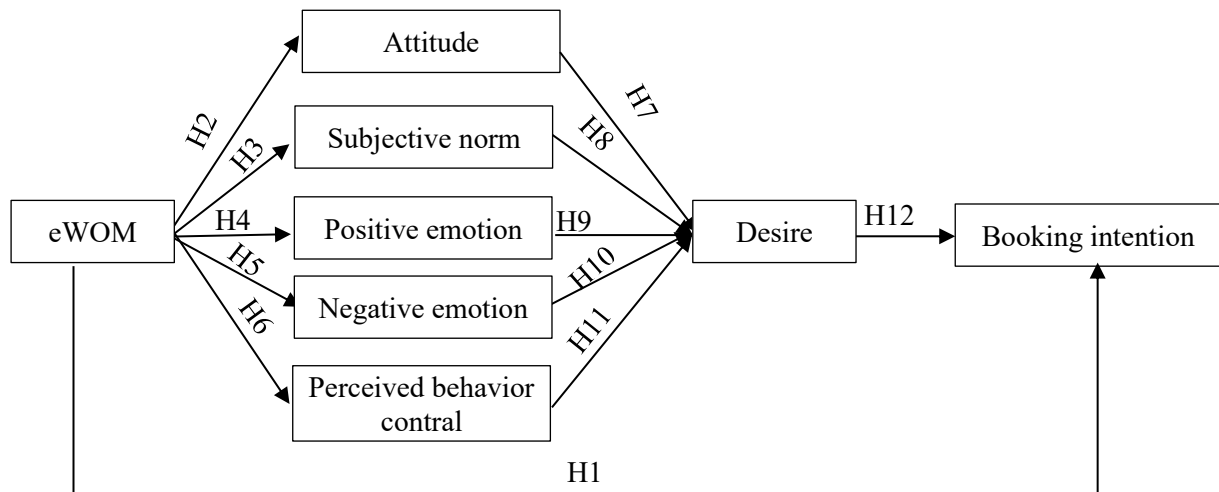
H11: Perceived behavior control has a positive direct influence on desire

2.4.4. Desire and booking intention

Desire can be defined as a mental state in which an individual has the motivation to take action or reach a goal. These motivations are based on integrating evaluations from various factors (e.g., emotions, assessments, social factors) and represent the first step toward making decisions after forming intentions (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2004). Thus, desires are considered to provide sufficient motivation in shaping intentions and transmitting the impacts of antecedents. Therefore, desire is a key motivation in decision-making (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001).

In the study predicting domestic tourists' intentions to travel, Grady and Sihombing (2022) affirmed that intentions depend on desire. A person's wish and desire to go on vacation will set the goal of having a holiday in the future. Additionally, in a study on the decision-making process of tourists taking cruises, Xu et al. (2021) recognized that desire strongly predicts tourists' intentions during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

H12: Desire has a positive direct influence on booking intention

Figure 1*Research Model*

Source. Authors' own work

3. Methodology

3.1. Measurement

The survey included two parts (multiple-item scales and demographics). In the multiple-item scales, eWOM (with 07 items) was adopted from Jalilvand et al. (2012). Besides, 06 constructs variables in the MGB (attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, positive and negative emotions, and desire) were modified from 18 items in different empirical research (Ajzen, 2002; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Lee et al., 2012; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001). Behavioral intention includes 03 items adapted from Ajzen (2002). On the other hand, some demographic information was collected (gender, occupation, and living place of respondents).

3.2. Data collection

Through the purposive sampling methodology, the survey was designed and sent to Gen Z tourists (above 18 years old) concerned about accommodations in mountainous areas in Vietnam, especially those with booking intentions through Google Forms. The participants were found through Facebook groups related to tourism and hotels. The respondents were selected using the snowball sampling method. In terms of demographic data, 283 valid answers were collected for analysis. There are 194 females, 87 males, and two others, accounting for 68.6%, 30.7%, and 0.7% respectively. Besides, most participants are students, with 82.7%, and the others working comprise 17.3%. Additionally, 63.6% live in urban areas, while 36.4% live in rural places.

3.3. Data Analysis

Data was collected and analyzed in SmartPLS 4.0 and SPSS 27. In particular, SPSS 27 was used to analyze demographic results. In addition, thanks to SmartPLS 4.0, this study used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to see the direct and indirect relationship among variables in the proposed model. In particular, the reliability and validity of the collected data were verified, and then the hypotheses were checked with the standard value at a 5% significance level. Furthermore, the causal relationships in the model were assessed when Bootstrap was analyzed with a sample of 5,000.

4. Result and discussion

According to Table 1, all item loadings were above the standardized loadings (> 0.708 ; Hair et al., 2019). In addition, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), which are used to measure the reliability values, were greater than the criteria (> 0.7 ; Hair et al., 2019). Meanwhile, the convergent validity is evaluated by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The results showed that all AVE values exceed the suggested thresholds (> 0.5 ; Hair et al., 2019). Besides, because all the VIFs were between 1.000 and 2.521 (smaller than 3; Hair et al., 2020), there were no multicollinearity problems.

Table 1

Convergent Validity Results

Construct	Code	Factor loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
<i>EWOM</i>	EWOM1	0.914	0.949	0.950	0.798
	EWOM2	0.910			
	EWOM3	0.877			
	EWOM4	0.902			
	EWOM5	0.861			
	EWOM6	0.895			
<i>Attitude (AT)</i>	AT1	0.883	0.860	0.888	0.779
	AT2	0.854			
	AT3	0.909			
<i>Subjective Norm (SN)</i>	SN1	0.943	0.935	0.935	0.884
	SN2	0.932			
	SN3	0.947			
<i>Positive Emotion (PE)</i>	PE1	0.938	0.940	0.940	0.893
	PE2	0.956			
	PE3	0.941			
<i>Negative Emotion (NE)</i>	NE1	0.918	0.905	0.912	0.840
	NE2	0.907			
	NE3	0.925			
<i>Perceived Behavior Control (PBC)</i>	PBC1	0.859	0.858	0.860	0.779
	PBC2	0.904			
	PBC3	0.883			

Construct	Code	Factor loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
<i>Desire (DES)</i>	DES1	0.910	0.946	0.946	0.860
	DES2	0.940			
	DES3	0.935			
	DES4	0.924			
<i>Intention (INT)</i>	INT1	0.936	0.935	0.935	0.884
	INT2	0.942			
	INT3	0.943			

Source. Authors' own work

The Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) method is used to assess discriminant validity. Table 2 indicated that all HTMT scores were below 0.9, as a recommended value by Henseler et al. (2015). Therefore, it is confirmed that the discriminant values were adequate for the model's fit.

Table 2

Discriminant Validity Results

	AT	DES	EWOM	INT	NE	PBC	PE	SN
AT								
DES	0.460							
EWOM	0.281	0.499						
INT	0.419	0.831	0.477					
NE	0.354	0.657	0.518	0.606				
PBC	0.433	0.766	0.619	0.769	0.662			
PE	0.379	0.621	0.693	0.539	0.656	0.775		
SN	0.424	0.773	0.502	0.768	0.642	0.710	0.528	

Source. Authors' own work

With a 5% significance level, bootstrap analysis with sample 5,000 revealed the relationships in the proposed research model. In terms of direct effects, the results in Table 4, the relationship between eWOM and behavioral intention was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.458$, $p = 0.000$). Similarly, eWOM also had considerable positive impacts on attitude ($\beta = 0.266$, $p = 0.000$), subjective norms ($\beta = 0.473$, $p = 0.000$), and perceived behavioral control ($\beta = 0.559$, $p = 0.000$), positive emotions ($\beta = 0.655$, $p = 0.000$) and negative emotions ($\beta = 0.485$, $p = 0.000$). In addition, desire was affected by attitude ($\beta = 0.093$, $p = 0.026$), subjective norms ($\beta = 0.403$, $p = 0.000$), and perceived behavioral control ($\beta = 0.255$, $p = 0.002$). Nevertheless, the desire was not dependent on positive emotions ($\beta = 0.094$, $p = 0.176$) and negative emotions ($\beta = 0.134$, $p = 0.058$). Furthermore, desire substantially affected behavioral intention ($\beta = 0.733$, $p = 0.000$). As a result, it is demonstrated in Table 2 that ten out of twelve hypotheses were supported.

Moreover, the results were used to assess the prediction level of the structural model. In particular, 64.5% of the variance of desire was explained by attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and positive and negative emotions ($R^2 = 0.645$). Meanwhile, the desire explained 61.9% ($R^2 = 0.619$) of the variance of the behavioral intention.

Table 3*Results of Testing Direct Effects*

H	Concept (X)	Concept (Y)	Effect Factor (X→Y)	Level of significance	Result
H1	EWOM	INT	0.458	0.000	Supported
H2	EWOM	AT	0.266	0.000	Supported
H3	EWOM	SN	0.473	0.000	Supported
H4	EWOM	PE	0.655	0.000	Supported
H5	EWOM	NE	0.485	0.000	Supported
H6	EWOM	PBC	0.559	0.000	Supported
H7	AT	DES	0.093	0.026	Supported
H8	SN	DES	0.403	0.000	Supported
H9	PE	DES	0.094	0.176	Not supported
H10	NE	DES	0.134	0.058	Not supported
H11	PBC	DES	0.255	0.002	Supported
H12	DES	INT	0.733	0.000	Supported

Source. Authors' own work

Table 4*Results of Testing Indirect Effects*

Indirect effects	Original Sample (O)	Level of significance	Conclusion
EWOM → SN → DES → INT	0.140	0.000	Impact
EWOM → PE → DES → INT	0.045	0.176	No Impact
EWOM → PBC → DES → INT	0.105	0.005	Impact
EWOM → NE → DES → INT	0.048	0.076	No Impact
EWOM → AT → DES → INT	0.018	0.072	No Impact

Source. Authors' own work

Besides the direct effects, the results of data analysis were presented with the indirect effects. The significance level is smaller than 0.05, as shown in Table 4, and subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and desire co-mediate the relationship between eWOM and behavioral intention. Meanwhile, positive and negative attitudes have insignificant mediating effects on behavioral intention.

5. Discussion and Implications

As the H1 hypothesis was proven, it was confirmed that eWOM directly influences the booking intentions of Gen Z in mountainous areas. The finding aligns with previous literature examining the relationship between eWOM and consumers' intentions (Alsheikh et al., 2021; Farzin & Fattahi, 2018; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Shin et al., 2018). This emphasizes the importance of eWOM in forming the Gen Z tourists' booking intentions.

Overall, H2, H3, H4, H5, and H6 were supported, consistent with previous literature (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Lee et al., 2021; Shin et al., 2018; Solidman, 2019). In particular, the attitude was found to rely on eWOM significantly. This is because when searching online reviews about accommodations on various channels, Gen Z forms their initial perceptions. In other words, the more positively accommodation is assessed, the more favorable Gen Z's impression will increase. In addition, it was revealed that eWOM influences subjective norms. The reason is that when Gen Z accesses online shared information from peer establishments in mountainous regions, they tend to pay attention and feel confident booking rooms in those accommodations.

Furthermore, the study results indicated that eWOM substantially impacts emotional factors, including positive and negative emotions. It is explained that eWOM tends to convey positive meanings; thus, it can provide Gen Z tourists with favorable emotions if they can get their intention as expected and vice versa. Besides, eWOM also influences perceived behavioral control. This can be caused by the hotel industry delivering intangible values or service-related products. Therefore, eWOM plays a crucial role in shaping tourists' indirect experiences via online reviews and evaluations and increasing awareness of their perceived ability to purchase these products (Lee et al., 2021).

According to the findings, H7, H8, and H11 agreed with empirical research. As the results indicated, attitude is the key index to form the Gen Z tourists' desire, which is demonstrated in previous studies on evaluating factors influencing desire (Bui & Kiatkawsin, 2020; Das & Tiwari, 2021). As a rule, people are more likely to desire something if they have a positive attitude (Bui & Kiatkawsin, 2020). Additionally, the subjective norm has a significant influence on desire. This derives from Gen Z's trust in reviews shared by peers, which can lead them to desire to book these accommodations they have reviewed positively and powerfully. Similarly, positive and negative factors also considerably impact desire (Chiu & Cho, 2022; Meng & Choi, 2016). This highlights the importance of emotional factors in the decision-making process and in forming desire in particular. Moreover, there is a positive direct relationship between desire and perceived behavioral control, which is affirmed in previous research (Grady & Sihombing, 2022; Shin et al., 2018; Song et al., 2017). Accordingly, Shin et al. (2018) stated that customers' trust in their ability to perform behaviors (timing, knowledge, pricing, etc.) can boost their desire.

In contrast, H9 and H10, which indicated emotional variables have inconsiderable effects on desire, were not supported. Specifically, desire is not affected substantially by negative emotions, which aligns with several previous studies (Fry et al., 2014; Grady & Sihombing, 2022; Meng & Han, 2016). This can be explained by the fact that when the youth have negative emotions towards accommodation, Gen Z often has no desire to minimize dissatisfaction during the trip. Moreover, the study also revealed that positive emotions do not affect the desire variable. This new finding was in contrast to the previous literature (Das & Tiwari, 2021; Fry et al., 2014; Hunter, 2006; Lee et al., 2012; Song et al., 2017). Thanks to the growing popularity of e-WOM, the form of electronic word-of-mouth conveyed by Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) and Key Opinion Consumers (KOCs) is more prevalent. However,

the disadvantage is that many KOLs/KOCs exploit their reputations to provide misleading information about accommodations. Therefore, Gen Z has no desire to avoid high expectations, leading to disappointment. It is also explained that due to the different individuals' desires for unique personal experiences and self-gained knowledge, Gen Z's desire cannot be influenced by negative or positive emotions.

The study demonstrated H12 that desire significantly and positively influences Gen Z tourists' intention to book accommodations. In other words, the greater the desire, the higher the intention. This finding further agrees with previous research (Das & Tiwari, 2021; Fry et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2012; Song et al., 2017). This can be clarified by the notion that when individuals recognize their desires, they are motivated to form intentions (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001).

The mediating role is analyzed thoroughly to have a deeper insight into predicting the booking intention. eWOM not only directly influences but also indirectly impacts the booking intentions of Gen Z through variables including desire, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In other words, attitude negative and positive emotions do not mediate between eWOM and booking intention. In particular, it is explained that both emotional variables do not directly impact desire and indirectly impact booking intention. However, eWOM has a negligible direct effect on emotions. This could be because emotions are easily transient; the feelings generated by eWOM do not have a considerable direct and indirect impact on intention. Besides, with the data scale of 283 usable responses, attitude also has a nonsignificant influence on booking intention. This explains that because Gen Z preferences are usually discovering the novelty, they do not allow their attitude, which may be formed by one-sided evaluation, to prevent them from exploring new lands. Therefore, it can be concluded that attitude and emotions do not significantly affect booking intention.

The findings contribute to the hospitality field by analyzing the data results. From a theoretical perspective, the MGB was applied successfully to determine the direct and indirect relationship between eWOM and Gen Z tourists' intention to book in mountainous zones. In the day and age, with the widespread global popularity of the Internet, eWOM is increasingly influential among Gen Z tourists who have grown up in the technology era. Analyzing the MGB in mountainous areas, which are new contexts absent in empirical literature, can contribute to the novelty of MGB applications. In mountainous regions, there are various forms of tourism, such as community-based, resort, cultural, etc. Therefore, eWOM is crucial in choosing different accommodations in these regions.

Regarding practical aspects, the study offers accommodation businesses some recommendations to enhance their use of eWOM and attract the attention of Gen Z. Firstly; it is necessary to build a strategy for advertising eWOM on social media and online review platforms. Thanks to rich natural resources and cultural diversity in mountainous areas, tourist establishments should leverage various communication channels as valuable tools to disseminate knowledge and promote the unique tourism potential. Secondly, promoting essential information such as price, location, safety, and service quality is important. Because of the lack of knowledge, experience, and financial budget, Gen Z tourists must search for detailed information to ensure their trip is safe and memorable. Lastly, accommodation businesses should increase more positive attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control than emotional factors when using eWOM to connect with Gen Z tourists, as the results demonstrated that without negative and positive emotions, the others are key

determinants of Gen Z tourists' desire to book rooms in mountainous areas.

6. Conclusions

With the increasing availability and popularity of various online platforms allowing consumers to review and rate products they have purchased or experienced, eWOM has become a prominent tool that plays an increasingly important role in consumer purchasing decisions (Filieri & McLeay, 2014; Mauri & Minazzi, 2013; Sparks & Browning, 2011). This study has highlighted the influence of eWOM on Gen Z's choice of lodging accommodations in mountainous regions. By uncovering new findings on the impact of eWOM on intermediate factors, the research has provided deep insights into how these factors affect the behavior of Gen Z in selecting lodging facilities. Through synthesizing and analyzing research results, it is evident that eWOM not only directly influences but also indirectly affects booking intentions by creating or enhancing desire among Gen Z. This clarifies the intricate relationship between eWOM and consumer behavior.

Although this study succeeded in providing a theoretical understanding of the relationship between eWOM and Gen Z tourists' booking intentions and recommending practical strategies, some existing limitations need to be improved in future research. Firstly, comparing Gen Z to other generations can identify different factors that affect booking intention. Due to differing generational demands, comparing and identifying the differences in factors influencing booking intentions through eWOM can offer businesses proper suggestions to leverage eWOM for each specific demographic effectively. Secondly, new variables should be added to the future research model. Currently, the study is applying but not extending the MGB, which may reduce the ability to determine the eWOM's influence on Gen Z's intentions in mountainous contexts. In the forthcoming period, it is necessary to evaluate new variables such as curiosity, risk perception, and brand image. Finally, the research aims to examine the influence of eWOM on Gen Z tourists' intention to book specific types of accommodations due to a range of tourist establishments in mountainous zones. In the current study, booking intentions are investigated generally and do not address particular kinds of accommodations, which limits accuracy and effectiveness in implications for different types.

SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTION

The manuscript contributes to the literature; the manuscript provides new datasets or empirical evidence; the manuscript presents statistically and practically significant findings.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

CRediT: [**Hoang Van Hao**]: Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Data curation, Investigation, Project Administration, Supervision, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - review & editing; [**Pham Thu Thao**]: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data curation, Resources, Software, Validation, Supervision, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - review & editing; [**Vu Thi Quynh Chi**]: Data curation, Visualization, Writing - Original Draft; [**Le Van Phuc**]: Data curation, Writing - original draft.

FUNDING

This research received no external funding.

NO CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

All authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

References

- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179-211.
- Ajzen, I. (2002). *Constructing a TPB questionnaire: Conceptual and methodological considerations*. University of Massachusetts Amherst, Office of Information Technologies.
- Alsheikh, D. H., Abd Aziz, N., & Alsheikh, L. H. (2021). The impact of electronic word of mouth on tourists visit intention to Saudi Arabia: Argument quality and source credibility as mediators. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 10(4), 1152-1168.
- Bacos, I. B., & Gabor, M. R. (2021). Tourism economy - Mountain tourism: Quantitative analysis of winter destinations in Romania. *Economics*, 9(1), 143-159.
- Bui, A. N., & Kiatkawsin, K. (2020). Examining Vietnamese hard-adventure tourists' visit intention using an extended model of goal-directed behavior. *Sustainability*, 12(5), Article 1747.
- Casalo, L. V., Flavian, C., Guinaliu, M., & Ekinci, Y. (2015). Do online hotel rating schemes influence booking behaviors? *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 49, 28-36.
- Cheung, R. (2014). The influence of electronic word-of-mouth on information adoption in online customer communities. *Global Economic Review*, 43(1), 42-57.
- Cheung, C. M. Y., Sia, C. L., & Kuan, K. K. (2012). Is this review believable? A study of factors affecting the credibility of online consumer reviews from an ELM perspective. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 13(8), Article 2.
- Chiu, W., & Cho, H. (2022). The model of goal-directed behavior in tourism and hospitality: A meta-analytic structural equation modeling approach. *Journal of Travel Research*, 61(3), 637-655.
- Chiu, W., Kim, T., & Won, D. (2018). Predicting consumers' intention to purchase sporting goods online: An application of the model of goal-directed behavior. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 30(2), 333-351.
- Das, S. S., & Tiwari, A. K. (2021). Understanding international and domestic travel intention of Indian travellers during Covid-19 using a Bayesian approach. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 46(2), 228-244.
- Elseidi, R. I., & El-Baz, D. (2016). Electronic word of mouth effects on consumers' brand attitudes, brand image and purchase intention: An empirical study in Egypt. *The Business & Management Review*, 7(5), Article 268.
- Farzin, M., & Fattahi, M. (2018). eWOM through social networking sites and impact on purchase intention and brand image in Iran. *Journal of Advances in Management Research*, 15(2), 161-183.
- Filieri, R., & McLeay, F. (2014). EWOM and accommodation: An analysis of the factors that influence travelers' adoption of information from online reviews. *Journal of Travel Research*, 53(1), 44-57.

- Fry, M. L., Drennan, J., Previte, J., White, A., & Tjondronegoro, D. (2014). The role of desire in understanding intentions to drink responsibly: An application of the model of goal-directed behaviour. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 30(5/6), 551-570.
- Gavilan, D., Avello, M., & Martinez-Navarro, G. (2018). The influence of online ratings and reviews on hotel booking consideration. *Tourism Management*, 66, 53-61.
- Grady, E., & Sihombing, S. O. (2022). Cognitive, affective, and desire factors in predicting domestic tourism intention: Application of the model of goal-directed behavior. *Journal of Tourism Sustainability*, 2(3), 105-119.
- Hair, J. F., Howard, M. C., & Nitzl, C. (2020). Assessing measurement model quality in PLS-SEM using confirmatory composite analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 109, 101-110.
- Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*, 31(1), 2-24.
- Han, H., & Ryu, K. (2012). The Theory of Repurchase Decision-making (TRD): Identifying the critical factors in the post-purchase decision-making process. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 31(3), 786-797
- Han, H., & Yoon, H. J. (2015). Hotel customers' environmentally responsible behavioral intention: Impact of key constructs on decision in green consumerism. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 45, 22-33.
- Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., Walsh, G., & Gremler, D. D. (2004). Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet? *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18(1), 38-52.
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43, 115-135.
- Hunter, G. L. (2006). The role of anticipated emotion, desire, and intention in the relationship between image and shopping center visits. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 34(10), 709-721.
- Jalilvand, M. R., & Samiei, N. (2012). The impact of electronic word of mouth on a tourism destination choice: Testing the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). *Internet Research*, 22(5), 591-612.
- Jalilvand, M. R., Samiei, N., Dini, B., & Manzari, P. Y. (2012). Examining the structural relationships of electronic word of mouth, destination image, tourist attitude toward destination and travel intention: An integrated approach. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 1(1/2), 134-143.
- Kim, M. J., Lee, M. J., Lee, C. K., & Song, H. J. (2012). Does gender affect Korean tourists' overseas travel? Applying the model of goal-directed behavior. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 17(5), 509-533.
- Kurillová, A., & Marciánová, P. (2021). Factors influencing millennials intention to use peer to peer accommodation. *Economic Research - Ekonomika Istraživanja*, 34(1), 1323-1341.
- Ladhari, R., & Michaud, M. (2015). eWOM effects on hotel booking intentions, attitudes, trust, and website perceptions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 46, 36-45.

- Lai Ying, H., & Chung, C. M. (2007). The effects of single-message single- source mixed word-of-mouth on product attitude and purchase intention. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 19(1), 75-86.
- Lam, T., & Hsu, C. H. (2006). Predicting behavioral intention of choosing a travel destination. *Tourism Management*, 27(4), 589-599.
- Lama, W. B., & Sattar, N. (2004). *Mountain tourism and the conservation of biological and cultural diversity*. United Nations University Press.
- Lee, H., Min, J., & Yuan, J. (2021). The influence of eWOM on intentions for booking luxury hotels by Generation Y. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 27(3), 237-251.
- Lee, C. K., Song, H. J., Bendle, L. J., Kim, M. J., & Han, H. (2012). The impact of non-pharmaceutical interventions for 2009 H1N1 influenza on travel intentions: A model of goal-directed behavior. *Tourism Management*, 33(1), 89-99.
- Litvin, S. W., Goldsmith, R. E., & Pan, B. (2008). Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management. *Tourism Management*, 29(3), 458-468.
- Mauri, A. G., & Minazzi, R. (2013). Web reviews influence on expectations and purchasing intentions of hotel potential customers. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 34, 99-107.
- Meng, B., & Choi, K. (2016). The role of authenticity in forming slow tourists' intentions: Developing an extended model of goal-directed behavior. *Tourism Management*, 57, 397-410.
- Meng, B., & Han, H. (2016). Effect of environmental perceptions on bicycle travelers' decision-making process: Developing an extended model of goal directed behavior. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 21(11), 1184-1197.
- Monaco, S. (2018). Tourism and the new generations: Emerging trends and social implications in Italy. *Journal of Tourism Futures*, 4(1), 7-15.
- Nepal, S. (2005). Tourism and remote mountain settlements: Spatial and temporal development of tourist infrastructure in the Mt Everest region, Nepal. *Tourism Geographies*, 7(2), 205-227.
- Nepal, S. K., & Chipeniuk, R. (2005). Mountain tourism: Toward a conceptual framework. *Tourism Geographies*, 7(3), 313-333.
- Ozdemir-Guzel, S., & Bas, Y. N. (2021). Gen Z tourists and smart devices. In *Generation Z marketing and management in tourism and hospitality: The future of the industry* (pp. 141-165). Springer International Publishing.
- Park, C., Wang, Y., Yao, Y., & Kang, Y. R. (2011). Factors influencing eWOM effects: Using experience, credibility, and susceptibility. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 1(1), Article 74.
- Pérez Aranda, J., Anaya-Sanchez, R., & Ruizalba, J. (2017). Predictors of review sites usage in hotels. *Tourism & Management Studies*, 13(2), 52-59.
- Perugini, M., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2001). The role of desires and anticipated emotions in goal-directed behaviours: Broadening and deepening the theory of planned behaviour. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 40(1), 79-98.

- Perugini, M., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2004). The distinction between desires and intentions. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 34(1), 69-84.
- Popşa, R. E. (2024). Exploring the generation Z travel trends and behavior. *Studies in Business and Economics*, 19(1), 189-189.
- Pourabedin, Z., & Migin, M. W. (2015). Hotel experience and positive electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM). *International Business Management*, 9(4), 596-600.
- Qiao, G., Zhao, X. L., Xin, L., & Kim, S. (2021). Concerns or desires post-pandemic: An extended MGB model for understanding South Korean residents' perceptions and intentions to travel to China. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(5), Article 2542.
- Ramgade, A., & Kumar, A. (2021). Changing trends of hospitality industry: Emergence of millennials and gen Z as future customers and their influence on the hospitality industry. *Vidyabharati International Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 12(1), 336-342.
- Robinson, V. M., & Schänzel, H. A. (2019). A tourism inflex: Generation Z travel experiences. *Journal of Tourism Futures*, 5(2), 127-141.
- Sebastian, M., José Luis, X., Antonio, F., & Andres, C. (2016). Hotel assessment through social media: The case of TripAdvisor. *Tourism and Management Studies*, 12(1), 15-24.
- Sheeran, P. (2002). Intention - behavior relations: A conceptual and empirical review. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 12(1), 1-36.
- Shin, Y. H., Im, J., Jung, S. E., & Severt, K. (2018). An examination of locally sourced restaurant patronage intention. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 19(1), 126-149.
- Silva, C., Kastenholz, E., & Abrantes, J. L. (2013). Place-attachment, destination image and impacts of tourism in mountain destinations. *Anatolia*, 24(1), 17-29.
- Soliman, M. (2019). Extending the theory of planned behavior to predict tourism destination revisit intention. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, 22(5), 524-549.
- Song, H., Lee, C., Norman, W., & Han, H. (2012). The role of responsible gambling strategy in forming behavioral intention: An application of a model of goal directed behavior. *Journal of Travel Research*, 51(4), 512-523.
- Song, H., Lee, C. K., Reisinger, Y., & Xu, H. L. (2017). The role of visa exemption in Chinese tourists' decision-making: A model of goal-directed behavior. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 34(5), 666-679.
- Sparks, B. A., & Browning, V. (2011). The impact of online reviews on hotel booking intentions and perception of trust. *Tourism Management*, 32(6), 1310-1323.
- Tata, E., Sharrock, M., & Westerlaken, R. (2023). Generation Z consumer behaviour and hotel branding: Exploring the role of values, corporate identity and trust. *Research in Hospitality Management*, 13(1), 63-68.
- Uslu, A. (2020). The relationship of service quality dimensions of restaurant enterprises with satisfaction, behavioral intention, eWOM and the moderator effect of atmosphere. *Tourism & Management Studies*, 16(3), 23-35.
- Xu, W., Youn, H. J., & Lee, C. K. (2021). Role of non-pharmaceutical interventions for

Covid-19 in cruise tourists' decision-making process: An extended model of goal-directed behavior. *Sustainability*, 13(10), Article 5552.

Ye, Q., Law, R., & Gu, B. (2009). The impact of online user reviews on hotel room sales. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 28(1), 180-182.

Yuzhanin, S., & Fisher, D. (2016). The efficacy of the theory of planned behavior for predicting intentions to choose a travel destination: A review. *Tourism Review*, 71(2), 135-147.

Zhao, X., Wang, L., Guo, X., & Law, R. (2015). The influence of online reviews to online hotel booking intentions. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 27(6), 1343-1364.



© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Ho Chi Minh City Open University Journal of Science - Economics and Business Administration. This article is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.