

EXPLORING THE DETERMINANTS OF COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM DESTINATION CHOICE IN HUE CITY, VIETNAM

Le Chi Hung CUONG ^{1*}, Hoang Dung HA ¹, Nguyen Tien DUNG ¹,
Nguyen Van CHUNG ¹, Tran Thi Quynh TIEN ¹

¹ University of Agriculture and Forestry, Hue University, Hue, Vietnam; lchcuong@hueuni.edu.vn (L.C.H.C.); hoangdungha@hueuni.edu.vn (H.D.H.); nguyentiendung@huaf.edu.vn (N.T.D.); nguyenvanchung@huaf.edu.vn (N.V.C.); tranthiquynhtien@huaf.edu.vn (T.T.Q.T.)

Citation: Cuong, L.C.H., Ha, H.D., Dung, N.T., Chung, N.V., & Tien, T.T.Q. (2026). Exploring the determinants of community-based tourism destination choice in Hue city, Vietnam. *Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites*, 65(2), 674–681. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.65205-1710>

Abstract: Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in Hue City, Vietnam, offers unique cultural and natural experiences but struggles with visitor consistency, threatening long-term sustainability. Understanding tourists' destination choice is vital for developing resilient CBT models. The primary aim of this study is to empirically investigate the determinants influencing tourists' choice of CBT destinations in Hue by analyzing the causal relationships among Destination Quality (DQ), Destination Image (DI), Perceived Value (PV), and Word-of-Mouth (WOM) on Satisfaction (SAT) and Post-visit Behavioral Intention (PVBI). This research highlights the critical mediating role of SAT and the stronger influence of social and image factors over destination quality. The study adopts a quantitative approach using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Data were collected via surveys from 238 tourists across Hue's three diverse CBT regions: coastal lagoons, central plains, and midland mountainous zones. Results confirm all hypothesized relationships are statistically significant. WOM ($\beta = 0.382$) and DI ($\beta = 0.318$) were identified as the strongest predictors of SAT, significantly outweighing Destination Quality (DQ, $\beta = 0.111$). This indicates that the appeal of authentic culture and positive endorsements are more influential than infrastructure in the CBT context. SAT exerts a strong influence on PVBI ($\beta = 0.721$). The model demonstrates strong explanatory power, accounting for 66.7% of SAT variance and 51.8% of PVBI variance. This pioneering PLS-SEM analysis in Hue's CBT context validates SAT's mediating role and suggests that managerial efforts should prioritize leveraging digital Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) and enhancing destination image via social media to foster visitor loyalty and ensure sustainable CBT development.

Keywords: Community-based tourism, destination choice, behavioral intention, Hue CITY, PLS-SEM

* * * * *

INTRODUCTION

Community-based tourism (CBT) embodies a sustainable tourism approach that emphasizes local participation, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship while delivering meaningful economic and social benefits to communities (Goodwin, 1998; Tosun, 2006; Palacios-Florencio et al., 2021). In Hue, Vietnam, CBT is primarily concentrated in areas rich in natural landscapes and cultural heritage, such as the coastal Tam Giang - Cau Hai lagoon, traditional craft villages like Thuy Xuan (incense making) and Phuoc Tich (pottery), and the midland mountainous regions of A Luoi. These sites offer visitors authentic experiences, including traditional fishing, craft workshops, and interactions with ethnic minority communities, reflecting a unique blend of nature and culture. The value of CBT lies in its capacity to channel tourism revenue directly to residents, strengthen community bonds, and promote responsible travel practices, particularly in the post-COVID-19 recovery phase, where travelers increasingly seek meaningful and eco-friendly experiences.

Despite these strengths, CBT destinations in Hue face significant hurdles in achieving long-term sustainability. The region boasts diverse geographical locations, encompassing the biodiverse brackish waters of the lagoon, the intricate wooden houses in the central plains, and the pristine forests in the highlands. Consequently, sites face challenges with uneven development, which results in inconsistent visitor numbers stemming from inadequate infrastructure or subpar service quality. Without repeat visits or positive endorsements, local incomes dwindle, exacerbating poverty and driving out-migration, which undermines cultural traditions and environmental responsibility. In Hue, where post-pandemic travelers prioritize safe and authentic experiences, addressing these issues is critical to developing resilient CBT models.

Key factors influencing tourists' choices of CBT destinations include destination quality (DQ), reflected in infrastructure and genuine interactions; destination image (DI), shaped by the allure of cultural and natural assets; perceived value (PV), balancing benefits against costs; and word-of-mouth (WOM), amplified through social media

* Corresponding author

<http://gtg.webhost.uoradea.ro/>

platforms (Wang et al., 2025; Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Huang et al., 2025; Pham et al., 2025). These elements drive tourist satisfaction (SAT), which in turn influences post-visit behavioral intentions (PVBI), such as revisiting or recommending the destination (Nguyen et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2024).

In Hue, the interplay of cultural heritage and natural beauty enhances these factors, yet prior research in Vietnam has largely overlooked CBT-specific behaviors, focusing instead on mass or heritage tourism.

The primary aim of this study is to empirically investigate the determinants influencing tourists' choice of CBT destinations in Hue City, Vietnam, by analyzing the causal relationships among DQ, DI, PV and WOM on SAT and PVBI. Specifically, this research seeks to: (1) Identify and quantify the direct effects of DQ, DI, PV, and WOM on tourist satisfaction (SAT) within the Hue CBT context. (2) Test the mediating role of Satisfaction (SAT) in the relationship between the perceptual factors (DQ, DI, PV, WOM) and Post-visit Behavioral Intention (PVBI). (3) Provide data-driven managerial recommendations based on the PLS-SEM analysis to enhance the appeal, foster visitor loyalty and support the sustainable development of Hue's diverse CBT sites (coastal lagoons, central plains, and mountainous areas) post-COVID-19.

This study addresses these gaps by employing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine how DQ, DI, PV, and WOM shape SAT and PVBI at Hue's CBT destinations. Its novelty lies in providing a pioneering PLS-SEM analysis of CBT destination choices in Hue post-COVID-19, highlighting the mediating role of SAT and offering data-driven strategies for sustainable development. Identifying these determinants is crucial for Hue's CBT sites, enabling managers to craft approaches that enhance appeal, foster visitor loyalty, and ensure equitable benefits, ultimately supporting cultural preservation, economic growth, and sustainable tourism amid global challenges.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND PROPOSED RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Theoretical Foundation

Community-based tourism (CBT) represents a sustainable tourism model that prioritizes the integration of local communities, focusing on their active role in preserving cultural heritage and providing authentic, memorable experiences for visitors while promoting economic empowerment and environmental conservation (Goodwin, 1998; Tosun, 2006; Nguyen et al., 2024). Central to understanding tourist behavior in CBT settings are key constructs: Destination Quality (DQ), Destination Image (DI), Perceived Value (PV), Word-of-Mouth (WOM), Satisfaction (SAT), and Post-visit Behavioral Intention (PVBI). This framework is grounded in four foundational theories, which we integrate to form a comprehensive model for Hue's CBT context.

- Destination Image Theory views a destination's image (DI) as a composite of beliefs and impressions guiding destination choices, significantly influencing the positive emotional connections that contribute to SAT (Crompton, 1979; Zuo et al., 2023). The study by Duong & Pham (2024) also emphasizes that tourist expectations (regarding experience, quality) are a key determining factor in selecting a CBT destination in Vietnam. Destination Quality (DQ), reflecting infrastructure, services, and cultural offerings, further enhances these initial impressions. DQ reflects the extent to which a destination's infrastructure, services, and cultural offerings meet visitors' expectations, directly enhancing SAT by delivering reliable and impactful experiences that foster loyalty and recommendations (Wang et al., 2025; Nguyen et al., 2024). DI, on the other hand, captures tourists' comprehensive perceptions of a destination's cultural, scenic, and reputational attributes, significantly influencing SAT by forging positive emotional connections and indirectly driving PVBI through elevated satisfaction (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Zheng & Rahman, 2025).

- Perceived Value Theory highlights the balance between multidimensional benefits and costs, influencing satisfaction in experiential contexts like rural CBT, where emotional and cultural rewards are prominent (Zeithaml, 1988; Loedphacharakamon & Choibamroong, 2025; Huang et al., 2025). Perceived Value (PV) plays a critical role in boosting SAT and PVBI, particularly in CBT where deep community interactions create unique, high-value experiences.

- Word-of-Mouth (WOM), through sharing experiences via personal networks or social media, serves as a powerful social validator, influencing SAT by shaping expectations and trust. The study by Pham et al. (2025) utilizing PLS-SEM in Vietnam affirmed that eWOM not only affects SAT but also significantly impacts PV, reinforcing the dual role of social influence on both value and satisfaction. WOM exerts a powerful direct impact on SAT and an indirect effect on PVBI, especially in the digital era where authentic endorsements shape travel decisions (Pham et al., 2025).

- All these perceptual factors (DQ, DI, PV, WOM) converge to determine Satisfaction (SAT). Customer Satisfaction Theory suggests that satisfaction arises from the alignment of expectations with actual experiences, serving as a conduit for repeat behaviors and endorsements, with tourism applications emphasizing SAT's mediating role between perceptual factors and loyalty (Nguyen et al., 2021). SAT serves as a pivotal mediator, encapsulating overall trip fulfillment and driving PVBI, such as intentions to revisit or promote the destination (Nguyen et al., 2021).

- Finally, SAT serves as the pivotal mediator driving future actions. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) explains behavioral intentions through attitudes, norms, and perceived control, extended in tourism to predict revisit intentions amidst post-pandemic uncertainties (Ajzen, 1991; Pahrudin et al., 2021; Teng et al., 2025). Ultimately, PVBI represents the desired outcome, reflecting future actions like return visits or advocacy that ensure CBT's sustainability (Dai et al., 2025).

This integration illuminates the causal chain where destination attributes (DQ, DI), experiential benefits (PV), and social influence (WOM) collectively drive SAT, which ultimately leads to PVBI. This framework is grounded in four foundational theories to illuminate the relationships among these factors within Hue's CBT context. By integrating these theories, the model builds on prior research, incorporating in-depth interviews to tailor variables for Hue's CBT context, ensuring robust measurement scales as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Observed Variables for Measurement Constructs (Source: Collected by authors)

Components	Observed Variable	References
Destination Quality (DQ)	DQ1: The natural scenery and environment at CBT destinations in Hue are very attractive/beautiful DQ2: Tourism products/services (food, souvenirs, activities) at CBT destinations in Hue are unique and of high quality DQ3: Infrastructure and facilities (roads, restrooms, accommodations) at CBT destinations in Hue adequately meet needs DQ4: Local people at CBT destinations in Hue are friendly, hospitable, and share their culture authentically DQ5: I am satisfied with the interactive experiences with the local community at CBT destinations in Hue.	Wang et al. (2025) Nguyen et al. (2024) Huang et al. (2025) Duong & Pham (2024)
Destination Image (DI)	DI1: I have a positive impression of the natural beauty and cleanliness of CBT destinations in Hue DI2: CBT destinations in Hue have a rich and unique cultural and historical heritage DI3: Local people at CBT destinations in Hue are perceived as friendly and authentic DI4: CBT in Hue offers a unique and memorable experience compared to other forms of tourism.	Afshardoost & Eshaghi (2020) Zheng & Rahman (2025) Zuo et al. (2023)
Perceived Value (PV)	PV1: The CBT experience in Hue provides significant practical benefits PV2: I feel joyful, relaxed, and experience positive emotions when visiting CBT destinations in Hue PV3: I have opportunities to learn, explore culture, and connect with the local community at CBT destinations in Hue PV4: The cost of the trip to CBT destinations in Hue is reasonable and worth the experience	Huang et al. (2025) Loedphacharakamon & Choibamroong (2025); Nguyen et al. (2024); Pham et al. (2025)
Word-of-Mouth (WOM)	WOM1: My decision to visit CBT destinations in Hue was influenced by recommendations/sharing from friends or family WOM2: I was attracted by posts or images on social media/forums about CBT destinations in Hue WOM3: Information from newspapers, television, or reputable tourism websites encouraged me to visit CBT destinations in Hue	Pham et al. (2025) Nguyen et al. (2024)
Satisfaction (SAT)	SAT1: Overall, I am very satisfied with my trip to CBT destinations in Hue SAT2: My experience at CBT destinations in Hue exceeded my initial expectations SAT3: I felt very happy and comfortable while at CBT destinations in Hue	Nguyen et al. (2021) Nguyen et al. (2024)
Post-visit Behavioral Intention (PVBI)	PVBI1: I will definitely return to CBT destinations in Hue in the near future PVBI2: I will actively recommend/encourage friends and family to visit CBT destinations in Hue PVBI3: I will share positive experiences about CBT destinations in Hue on social media platforms PVBI4: I will prioritize choosing CBT destinations when planning to travel to Hue again	Dai et al. (2025) Na et al. (2024)

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed research model, depicting the hypothesized relationships among destination quality (DQ), destination image (DI), perceived value (PV), word-of-mouth (WOM), satisfaction (SAT) and Post-visit behavioral intention (PVBI) in the context of community-based tourism in Hue City.

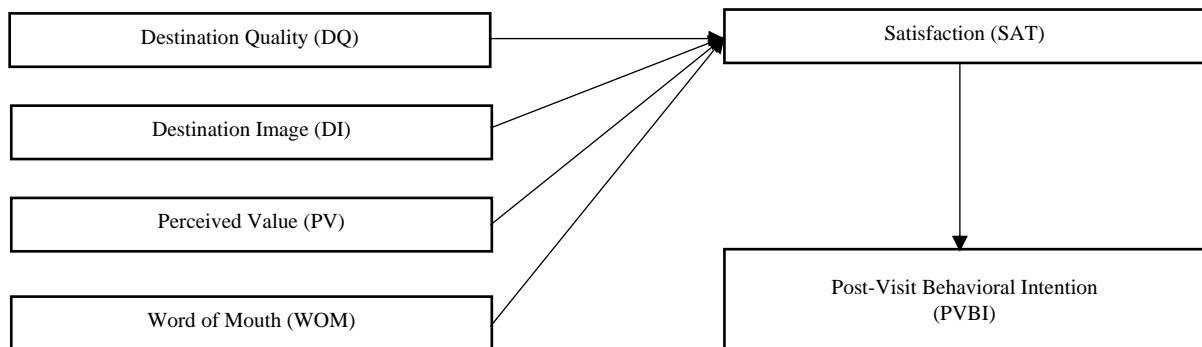


Figure 1. Proposed Research Model (Source: proposed by the authors)

Hypotheses

- H1:** Destination Quality (DQ) positively influences Satisfaction (SAT).
- H2:** Destination Image (DI) positively influences Satisfaction (SAT).
- H3:** Perceived Value (PV) positively influences Satisfaction (SAT).
- H4:** Word-of-Mouth (WOM) positively influences Satisfaction (SAT).
- H5:** Satisfaction (SAT) positively influences Post-visit Behavioral Intention (PVBI).
- H6:** H9: DQ, DI, PV, and WOM indirectly influence PVBI through SAT.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study adopts a quantitative approach, utilizing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze relationships between key constructs. PLS-SEM was chosen for its suitability in handling complex models and small to medium sample sizes (Sarstedt et al., 2021). Data were gathered through both in-person and online surveys from tourists engaging in CBT activities in Hue. The survey sample comprised 238 tourists across three regions: coastal lagoon areas, central plains, and midland mountainous zones. Data collection occurred from April to August 2025 via direct interviews at the destinations or indirectly through social media and tourism-related groups. A convenience sampling

method was employed due to the specialized nature of CBT. The questionnaire was developed using validated measurement scales, employing a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The data were carefully cleaned, with invalid responses removed to ensure the reliability and quality of the analysis.



Figure 2. Study Area (Source: GADM, Open Development Vietnam, 2025)

The data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0 software, employing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) due to its suitability for small sample sizes and non-normal data (Sarstedt et al., 2021). The measurement model was evaluated through outer loadings (>0.7), Cronbach’s Alpha (>0.7), Composite Reliability (>0.7), Average Variance Extracted (AVE >0.5), the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the Survey Respondents

The survey results from Table 2 highlight the diversity in respondent demographics and travel behaviors. In terms of gender, females slightly outnumbered males, with 127 respondents (53.36%) compared to 111 males (46.64%), indicating relatively balanced participation with a slight female tilt. The majority of respondents were under 25 years old (42.02%, n = 100), suggesting that CBT in Hue strongly attracts younger generations, likely due to their interest in cultural exploration and social media interactions. Regarding income, the group earning 5 million to under 15 million VND was the most represented (38.24%, n = 91). The predominance of middle- and low-income groups indicates that CBT in Hue is a cost-effective tourism option suitable for most visitors. Residency data shows that the majority of respondents were from within Hue City (78.99%, n = 188). The most frequently chosen destinations were coastal lagoon areas (39.92%, n = 95), followed by midland and mountainous regions (35.29%, n = 84), highlighting the appeal of natural landscapes and distinctive cultural features in suburban areas. The frequency of CBT participation was relatively evenly distributed, with a significant proportion of repeat visitors (49%, n = 119), reflecting the long-term development potential of CBT in Hue.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (Source: Summary of Authors' Data)

Criteria	Frequency	Percentage	Criteria	Frequency	Percentage
Gender			Residency		
Male	111	46.64	Within Hue City	188	78.99
Female	127	53.36	Outside Hue City	50	21.01
Age			Destination		
Under 25 years old	100	42.02	Coastal lagoon areas	95	39.92
25-40 years old	79	33.19	Midland and mountainous areas	84	35.29
Over 40 years old	59	24.79	Central plains	59	24.79
Income			Frequency of CBT		
Under 5 million VND	81	34.03	First time	53	22.27
5 million to under 15 million VND	91	38.24	Occasionally (1-2 times/year)	66	27.73
15 million to under 30 million VND	66	27.73	Frequently (3-5 times/year)	57	23.95
Over 30 million VND	0	0	Very frequently (over 5 times/year)	62	26.05

Evaluation of the Measurement Model

Outer Loadings

The analysis results indicate that the observed variables for the constructs of Destination Quality (DQ: 0.759-0.860), Destination Image (DI: 0.830-0.850), Perceived Value (PV: 0.816-0.861), Word-of-Mouth (WOM: 0.835-0.853), Satisfaction (SAT: 0.864-0.873), and Post-visit Behavioral Intention (PVBI: 0.845-0.868) all have outer loadings >0.7 after removing DQ5 and DI4 due to their failure to meet the threshold (Hair et al., 2019). This confirms that the measurement scales are statistically significant and suitable for the measurement model.

Table 3. Outer Loadings of Observed Variables (Source: results processed by SmartPLS 4.0 by researchers)

Observed Variable	DQ	DI	PV	PVBI	SAT	WOM
DQ1	0.823					
DQ2	0.784					
DQ3	0.759					
DQ4	0.860					
DI1		0.850				
DI2		0.830				
DI3		0.832				
PV1			0.817			
PV2			0.816			
PV3			0.861			
PV4			0.852			
PVBI1				0.865		
PVBI2				0.868		
PVBI3				0.845		
PVBI4				0.852		
SAT1					0.864	
SAT2					0.873	
SAT3					0.865	
WOM1						0.835
WOM2						0.835
WOM3						0.853

Reliability and Convergent Validity

Table 4 confirms the reliability and convergent validity of the measurement scales. All constructs exhibit Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values greater than 0.7, with Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeding 0.5, meeting the criteria for reliability and convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Notably, Post-visit Behavioral Intention (PVBI: Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.880, CR = 0.917, AVE = 0.735) and Satisfaction (SAT: Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.836, CR = 0.901, AVE = 0.752) demonstrate the highest reliability.

Table 4. Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity (Source: results processed by SmartPLS 4.0 by researchers)

	Cronbach’s Alpha	CR	AVE
DQ	0.823	0.882	0.652
DI	0.787	0.875	0.701
PV	0.857	0.903	0.700
PVBI	0.880	0.917	0.735
SAT	0.836	0.901	0.752
WOM	0.794	0.879	0.708

Discriminant Validity

Table 5 demonstrates the discriminant validity of the measurement scales through the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). The square root of AVE for each construct exceeds the correlations with other constructs, and all HTMT values are below 0.9, ensuring discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). For instance, SAT shows a high correlation with PVBI (0.721), but the HTMT value of 0.839 (<0.9) confirms clear differentiation.

Table 5. Discriminant Validity (Source: results processed by SmartPLS 4.0 by researchers)

	DQ	DI	PV	PVBI	SAT	WOM
Fornell-Larcker Criterion	DQ	0.807	0.345	0.428	0.328	0.447
	DI		0.837	0.357	0.487	0.656
	PV			0.837	0.446	0.566
	PVBI				0.857	0.721
	SAT					0.867
	WOM					
Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)	DQ		0.427	0.500	0.378	0.530
	DI			0.434	0.585	0.807
	PV				0.513	0.668
	PVBI					0.839
	SAT					

Evaluation of the Structural Model

Table 6 indicates that all direct relationships are statistically significant (p < 0.05) based on bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples (Sarstedt et al., 2021). Word-of-Mouth (WOM → SAT: β = 0.382, p < 0.001) has the strongest impact on Satisfaction (SAT), followed by Destination Image (DI → SAT: β = 0.318, p < 0.001), Perceived Value (PV → SAT: β = 0.278, p < 0.001), and Destination Quality (DQ → SAT: β = 0.111, p = 0.022). Satisfaction (SAT → PVBI: β = 0.721, p < 0.001) exhibits the strongest influence on Post-visit Behavioral Intention (PVBI), confirming SAT’s critical mediating role.

The indirect effects through SAT are also statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). The path $WOM \rightarrow SAT \rightarrow PVBI$ ($\beta = 0.275, p < 0.001$) shows the strongest indirect effect, followed by $DI \rightarrow SAT \rightarrow PVBI$ ($\beta = 0.230, p < 0.001$), $PV \rightarrow SAT \rightarrow PVBI$ ($\beta = 0.200, p < 0.001$), and $DQ \rightarrow SAT \rightarrow PVBI$ ($\beta = 0.080, p = 0.022$). These results reinforce the mediating role of SAT in the relationship between perceptual factors and behavioral intention.

Table 6. Direct and Indirect Effects in the Structural Model (Source: results processed by SmartPLS 4.0 by researchers)

Relationship	β (Original Sample)	T Statistics	P Values
Direct Effects			
DQ \rightarrow SAT	0.111	2.294	0.022
DI \rightarrow SAT	0.318	7.330	0.000
PV \rightarrow SAT	0.278	6.058	0.000
WOM \rightarrow SAT	0.382	7.610	0.000
SAT \rightarrow PVBI	0.721	18.890	0.000
Indirect Effects (via SAT)			
DQ \rightarrow SAT \rightarrow PVBI	0.080	2.285	0.022
DI \rightarrow SAT \rightarrow PVBI	0.230	7.027	0.000
PV \rightarrow SAT \rightarrow PVBI	0.200	5.735	0.000
WOM \rightarrow SAT \rightarrow PVBI	0.275	6.562	0.000

Multicollinearity

Table 7 shows that all inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values are below 5 (the highest being DI \rightarrow SAT: VIF = 1.499), confirming the absence of multicollinearity in the model (Hair et al., 2019). This indicates that the independent variables (DQ, DI, PV, WOM) do not exhibit redundant information when predicting SAT and PVBI.

Table 7. Multicollinearity Assessment (Source: results processed by SmartPLS 4.0 by researchers)

Predictor Factor	VIF for SAT	VIF for PVBI
DQ	1.297	
DI	1.499	
PV	1.334	
WOM	1.433	
SAT		1.000

Table 8. Explanatory and Predictive Power of the Model (Source: results processed by SmartPLS 4.0 by researchers)

Dependent Factor	R ² Adjusted	f ² (Effect Size)	Q ² (Predictive Relevance)
SAT	0.667	DQ: 0.029 (small); DI: 0.206 (moderate); PV: 0.176 (moderate); WOM: 0.310 (moderate)	0.493 (moderate)
PVBI	0.518	SAT: 1.086 (strong)	0.378 (moderate)

Explanatory and Predictive Power

Table 8 indicates that the model explains 66.7% of the variance in SAT (R^2 adjusted = 0.667) and 51.8% of the variance in PVBI (R^2 adjusted = 0.518), demonstrating strong explanatory power (Hair et al., 2019).

The effect size (f^2) reveals that SAT has a strong impact on PVBI ($f^2 = 1.086$), while WOM ($f^2 = 0.310$), DI ($f^2 = 0.206$), and PV ($f^2 = 0.176$) have moderate effects on SAT, with DQ showing a small effect ($f^2 = 0.029$). Regarding predictive relevance, the Q^2 values for SAT (0.493) and PVBI (0.378) fall within the 0.25-0.5 range, indicating moderate predictive capability (Hair et al., 2019).

Thus, the results of the structural analysis and tests confirm that all hypotheses from H1 to H9 are supported. Based on these findings, the theoretical model has been adjusted as depicted in Figure 3.

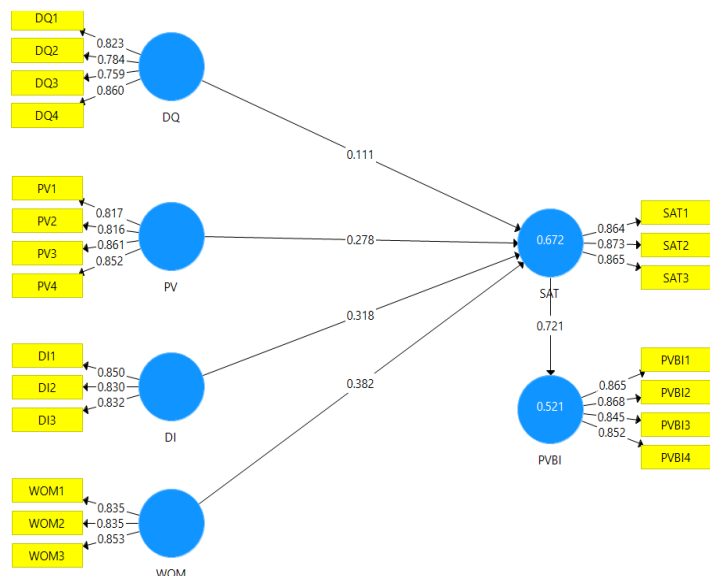


Figure 3. Research model on Factors influencing the choice of Community-based Tourism destinations in Hue City (Source: results processed by SmartPLS 4.0 by researchers)

DISCUSSION

The PLS-SEM analysis highlights the central role of Satisfaction (SAT) in translating perceptual factors, namely Destination Quality (DQ), Destination Image (DI), Perceived Value (PV), and Word-of-Mouth (WOM), into Post-visit Behavioral Intention (PVBI) within the context of community-based tourism (CBT) in Hue. Word-of-Mouth (WOM) and Destination Image (DI) stand out as the most significant influencers of SAT, with path coefficients of $\beta = 0.382$ and $\beta = 0.318$,

respectively ($p < 0.001$). This finding is critical as it suggests that the soft factors (social influence and cultural appeal) have a significantly stronger influence on satisfaction than physical factors. These findings resonate with Nguyen et al. (2024), who found that trust and cultural interactions in CBT significantly boost satisfaction, particularly in Vietnam's Mekong Delta, a region with similarities to Hue's coastal lagoons. Likewise, Pham et al. (2025) demonstrate that electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) enhances satisfaction through social media engagement, underscoring Hue's potential for digital marketing strategies. Perceived Value (PV) also plays a substantial role in driving SAT ($\beta = 0.278$, $p < 0.001$), capturing the emotional and cultural rewards derived from CBT experiences. This aligns with Huang et al. (2025), whose research on desert tourism emphasized that cultural engagement and tangible benefits elevate both satisfaction and loyalty. The strength of PV is further reinforced by Duong & Pham (2024), who identified tourist expectations for experience and destination quality as strong predictors of CBT choice in Vietnam. However, the relatively weaker influence of Destination Quality (DQ) ($\beta = 0.111$, $p = 0.022$) likely stems from infrastructure shortcomings at Hue's CBT sites, such as lagoons and mountainous areas, echoing Cuong et al. (2024), who noted that resource limitations in Vietnam's coastal regions impact perceived quality. Critically, this suggests that the high perceived value and image factors effectively compensate for minor infrastructure deficiencies, a common trait in successful authentic CBT models. Compared to Na et al. (2024), this model advances understanding by emphasizing memorable experiences mediated through SAT, accounting for 51.8% of the variance in PVBI.

The model exhibits moderate predictive power ($Q^2 = 0.378-0.493$), indicating the potential benefit of including additional factors, such as customer-to-customer interactions, as suggested by Liébana-Cabanillas et al. (2025), who highlighted that social interactions enhance experiences and revisit intentions in experiential tourism. These findings reinforce theories of sustainable tourism behavior while also revealing local gaps in Hue, where challenges like climate change, resource depletion, and unforeseen pandemics may further shape perceptions.

Based on these insights, stakeholders in Hue should prioritize strategies to strengthen Destination Image (DI) and Word-of-Mouth (WOM) to boost Satisfaction (SAT) and Post-visit Behavioral Intention (PVBI), thereby advancing sustainable community-based tourism. Local authorities could launch social media campaigns showcasing the cultural and natural allure of sites like the Tam Giang - Cau Hai lagoon, aligning with Pham et al. (2025), who advocate leveraging eWOM to enhance experiences and satisfaction. Local communities should emphasize Perceived Value (PV) by offering authentic, interactive experiences, such as homestays or traditional craft workshops, to elevate SAT (Dai et al., 2025). Travel agencies should promote WOM through incentive programs for sharing reviews while partnering on community training initiatives to enhance Destination Quality (DQ), including improvements to infrastructure and services.

CONCLUSION

This research confirms that Destination Quality (DQ), Destination Image (DI), Perceived Value (PV), and Word-of-Mouth (WOM) significantly shape tourist satisfaction (SAT), which subsequently mediates Post-visit Behavioral Intention (PVBI) at community-based tourism (CBT) destinations in Hue City, Vietnam. Employing PLS-SEM analysis on data from 238 tourists, the findings identify WOM and DI as the most powerful predictors of SAT, accounting for a substantial portion of variance in both SAT (66.7%) and PVBI (51.8%). These results build upon existing tourism behavior theories, particularly in the emerging context of CBT, by underscoring SAT's mediating role and the critical influence of cultural and social factors in destination choice (Nguyen et al., 2024; Pham et al., 2025). Theoretically, this study makes a crucial contribution to the emerging CBT literature by integrating established frameworks (Customer Satisfaction, Theory of Planned Behavior, Perceived Value, and Destination Image theories) into a single, robust PLS-SEM model tailored for Vietnam's CBT context. Specifically, it empirically validates the pivotal mediating role of Satisfaction (SAT), showing how perceptual factors drive loyalty and advocacy, thus filling a significant gap in destination choice research in Hue. The finding that Word-of-Mouth (WOM), particularly digital WOM, is the strongest predictor of SAT offers a theoretical refinement by underscoring the dominance of social influence in experiential, post-COVID-19 tourism.

Practically, the results provide specific, data-driven managerial guidelines. Local authorities must prioritize digital marketing campaigns to boost Destination Image (DI) and actively manage electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), aligning with the model's strongest paths. Communities should focus on enhancing Perceived Value (PV) by curating more authentic and immersive cultural experiences (e.g., interactive craft workshops, homestays) rather than relying solely on improving physical infrastructure, which had a weaker effect (DQ). Travel agencies should implement structured incentive programs for positive online reviews and social media sharing to leverage WOM. These actions are critical for fostering visitor loyalty and ensuring the economic and cultural sustainability of CBT in Hue City. Despite limitations such as reliance on convenience sampling and potential for limited generalizability to international tourists, future research could extend to international tourists or employ mixed methods for greater applicability. Overall, this study highlights CBT's potential to drive economic growth, preserve cultural heritage, and support resilient tourism in post-COVID-19 Hue City.

Ethical considerations and Data collection process

These studies were conducted in adherence to established research ethics, which encompass fundamental principles of ethical research, including obtaining informed consent and safeguarding participant confidentiality. Before collecting data, ethical principles were strictly adhered to, and consent was obtained from all participants for their involvement in the research. Clear instructions were provided to all participants before conducting interviews.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, C.L.C.H.; methodology, C.L.C.H.; D.N.T. and H.H.D.; software, C.L.C.H.; validation, C.L.C.H. and D.N.T.; formal analysis, C.L.C.H.; investigation, C.L.C.H.; D.N.T.; H.H.D and T.T.T.Q.; data curation, C.L.C.H. and T.T.T.Q.; writing - original draft preparation, C.L.C.H.; writing - review and editing, D.N.T.; H.H.D

and C.N.V.; visualization, H.H.D. and T.T.T.Q.; supervision, C.N.V.; project administration, C.L.C.H.; D.N.T. and H.H.D. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: Not applicable.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study may be obtained on request from the corresponding author.

Acknowledgements: This work was partially supported by Hue University under the Core Research Program, Grant No. NCTB.DHH.2025.03.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- Afshardoost, M., & Eshaghi, M. S. (2020). Destination Image and Tourist Behavioural Intentions: A Meta-Analysis. *Tourism Management*, *81*, 104154. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2020.104154>
- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *50*(2), 179–211. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978\(91\)90020-T](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T)
- Cuong, L. C. H., Ha, H. D., Hung, H. G., Chung, N. V., Ty, P. H., & Tien, T. T. Q. (2024). Factors influencing residents' decisions to participate in community tourism in the central coastal lagoon region of Vietnam. *GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites*, *55*(3), 1297–1309. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.55325-1297>
- Crompton, J. L. (1979). An Assessment of the Image of Mexico as a Vacation Destination and the Influence of Geographical Location Upon That Image. *Journal of Travel Research*, *17*(4), 18–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004728757901700404>
- Dai, Q., Chen, J., & Zheng, Y. (2025). Assessing the impact of community-based homestay experiences on tourist loyalty in sustainable rural tourism development. *Scientific Reports*, *15*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-84075-y>
- Duong, N. L., & Pham Hong, L. (2024). Exploring the influence of expectations on community-based tourism choice in Vietnam's Central Highlands. *Journal of International Economics and Management*, *24*(3), 176–196. <https://doi.org/10.38203/jiem.024.3.0100>
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *18*(1), 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3151312>
- Goodwin, H. (1998). *Sustainable tourism: A global perspective*. Routledge.
- 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. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-11-2018-0203>
- 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*(1), 115–135. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-014-0403-8>
- Huang, S., Shi, L., Sheng, D., He, T., Guo, X., & Xiao, J. (2025). Perceived value, awe, and place attachment: Influencing tourists' environmentally responsible behavior in desert tourism. *Research in Cold and Arid Regions*, *17*(4), 261–268. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rcar.2025.02.005>
- Liébana-Cabanillas, F., Ali Abbasi, G., Higuera-Castillo, E., & Molinillo, S. (2025). From perception to decision: key factors influencing destination choice explored-insights from ANN and SEM comparative analysis. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, *42*(5), 645–664. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2025.2456077>
- Loedphacharakamon, N., & Choibamroong, T. (2025). Attitudinal Segmentation and the Perceived Value of Sustainable Practices in Luxury Hotels: Evidence from Chinese Tourists. *Sustainability*, *17*(12), 5525. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17125525>
- Na, S. A., Foroughi, B., & Choong, Y. O. (2024). Tourists' Satisfaction, Experience, and Revisit Intention for Wellness Tourism: E Word-of-Mouth as the Mediator. *SAGE Open*, *14*(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241274049>
- Nguyen, N. H. Q., Nguyen, N. T. H., & Nguyen, V. L. (2021). The role of emotional experience and destination image on ecotourism satisfaction. *Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC*, *25*(2), 312–332. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SJME-04-2020-0055>
- Nguyen, Q. N., Mai, V. N., & Hoang, T. H. L. (2024). Explaining tourist satisfaction with community-based tourism in the Mekong Delta region, Vietnam. *GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites*, *56*(4), 1336–1344. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.56422-1336>
- Pahrudin, P., Chen, C. T., & Liu, L. W. (2021). A modified theory of planned behavioral: A case of tourist intention to visit a destination post pandemic Covid-19 in Indonesia. *Heliyon*, *7*(10), e08230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e08230>
- Palacios-Florencio, B., Santos-Roldán, L., Berbel-Pineda, J. M., & Roldán, J. L. (2021). Sustainable Tourism as a Driving force of the Tourism Industry in a Post-Covid-19 Scenario. *Social Indicators Research*, *158*(2), 991–1011. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-021-02735-2>
- Pham, T. V., Duc Le, T., Dang Thi, K. T., Nguyen, T. L., & Tran, T. N. T. (2025). Unveiling the impacts of eWOM on tourist revisit intention from a cognitive perspective: the moderating role of trade-offs. *Cogent Business & Management*, *12*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2025.2452239>
- Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., & Hair, J. F. (2021). Partial least squares structural equation modeling. In *Handbook of Market Research* 587–632. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57413-4_15
- Teng, W., Chen, Y., & Zhang, S. (2025). A Study on Travel Decisions of Potential Adventure Tourists Under Risk Contexts: Based on the Extended Theory of Planned Behavior. *SAGE Open*, *15*(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251335806>
- Tosun, C. (2006). Expected nature of community participation in tourism development. *Tourism Management*, *27*(3), 493–504. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2004.12.004>
- Wang, T. L., Tran, P. T. K., & Tran, V. (2017). Destination perceived quality, tourist satisfaction and word-of-mouth. *Tourism Review*, *72*(3). <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-06-2017-0103>
- Zeithaml, V. A. (1988). Consumer Perceptions of Price, Quality, and Value: A Means-End Model and Synthesis of Evidence. *Journal of Marketing*, *52*(3), 2–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224298805200302>
- Zheng, Q., & Rahman, S. (2025). Examining the Mediating Effect of Destination Image Between Sensory Impression and Behavioral Intention: Empirical Evidence From China World Natural Heritage Sites. *SAGE Open*, *15*(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251341404>
- Zuo, W., Udomwong, P., Fu, J., & Onpium, P. (2023). Destination image: A review from 2012 to 2023. *Cogent Social Sciences*, *9*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2240569>