# SMART TOURISM TECHNOLOGY AND DESTINATION REVISIT INTENTION: THE ROLE OF TRAVEL MOTIVATIONS AND EXPERIENCE QUALITY

## CÔNG NGHỆ DU LỊCH THÔNG MINH VÀ Ý ĐỊNH TRỞ LẠI ĐIỂM ĐẾN: VAI TRÒ CỦA ĐỘNG CƠ DU LỊCH VÀ CHẤT LƯỢNG TRẢI NGHIỆM

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**Abstract -** The objective of this study is to explore the relationships among smart tourism technology, travel motivation, and experience quality toward tourists' revisit intention in the Eastern coastal region of the Mekong Delta. Data were collected from 600 domestic tourists through a quantitative survey. Analytical methods employed include reliability testing (Cronbach's Alpha), exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM). The findings indicate that smart tourism technology, travel motivation, and experience quality all have positive effects on tourists' revisit intention. The study proposes several managerial implications, including the development of smart tourism, improvement of product and service quality, and enhancement of promotional activities to attract and retain tourists. In addition, the study discusses several limitations and suggests directions for future research.

**Key words -** Experience quality; smart tourism technology; tourism; travel motivation; revisit intention.

**Tóm tắt -** Mục tiêu nghiên cứu khám phá mối quan hệ giữa công nghệ du lịch thông minh, động cơ du lịch và chất lượng trải nghiệm đến ý định trở lại điểm đến của du khách tại vùng duyên hải phía Đông đồng bằng sông Cửu Long. Dữ liệu được thu thập từ 600 khách du lịch nội địa thông qua khảo sát định lượng. Các phương pháp phân tích được sử dụng bao gồm kiểm định độ tin cậy thang đo (Cronbach's Alpha), phân tích nhân tố khám phá (EFA), phân tích nhân tố khẳng định (CFA) và mô hình cấu trúc tuyến tính (SEM). Kết quả cho thấy công nghệ du lịch thông minh, động cơ du lịch và chất lượng trải nghiệm đều tác động tích cực đến ý định trở lại điểm đến của du khách. Nghiên cứu đề xuất một số hàm ý quản trị nhằm phát triển du lịch thông minh, nâng cao chất lượng sản phẩm và dịch vụ, tăng cường hoạt động quảng bá nhằm thu hút và duy trì lượng khách du lịch. Ngoài ra nghiên cứu cũng thảo luận những hạn chế và đề xuất hướng nghiên cứu trong tương lai.

**Từ khóa -** Công nghệ du lịch thông minh; chất lượng trải nghiệm; du lịch; động cơ du lịch; ý định trở lại.

## 1. Introduction

The Mekong Delta (MD), also known as the Mekong River Delta, has an estimated total area of 40,577.6 km² and a population of 17,744,947 [1]. The MD possesses substantial tourism potential, with diverse and varied forms of tourism, and welcomes large numbers of domestic and international visitors each year. According to the master tourism development plan for the MD to 2020 with a vision to 2030, Tien Giang, Ben Tre, Vinh Long, and Tra Vinh belong to the eastern tourism spatial zone of the MD, also referred to as the Eastern coastal sub-region of the MD (now Vinh Long Province and part of Dong Thap Province). This sub-region features characteristic tourism products, including river-based tourism, orchard tourism, visits to craft villages, visits to historical and revolutionary sites, and homestay accommodation, products that are representative of the MD as a whole [2].

For tourism destinations, attracting repeat visitors plays a particularly important role, as this group typically has longer lengths of stay, higher spending levels, greater satisfaction, and a tendency to disseminate positive information about the destination. Moreover, marketing costs to maintain and leverage this visitor segment are generally lower than those required to attract first-time tourists [3], [4]. However, in recent years, tourism in this

area has not developed commensurately with its existing potential. Tourism products across localities remain overlapping and saturated, lack creativity, and have not delivered truly differentiated experiences, leading to visitor boredom. Consequently, tourists often stay for short periods, and the destination revisit rate remains low [5]. In this context, the present study is conducted to identify the factors influencing tourists' intention to revisit the destination, thereby proposing appropriate solutions to attract and retain tourists in this high-potential region.

Many prior studies have confirmed that destination revisit intention is a central topic in tourism research [6]. Numerous studies have identified various antecedents affecting revisit intention, aiming to understand why tourists make this decision. These antecedents vary considerably depending on the research context, including perceived value [7], [8]; travel motivation and satisfaction [9]; experience quality [10]; travel motivation and country image [11]; destination attributes such as accommodation, events, cuisine, and service quality [12]; other factors such as safety, transportation convenience, and cultural differences [13]; and destination impression and perceived risk [14]. Some studies have also indicated the roles of attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and positive experiences in tourists' revisit intention [15],

as well as the effect of augmented reality technology in attracting tourists to heritage tourism destinations [16]. In addition to facilitating antecedents, research has examined barriers that hinder revisits, such as convenience, time, motivation, and destination characteristics [17].

In the digital era - marked by the widespread diffusion of the Internet, mobile devices, and digital platforms tourists use smart tourism technology (ST) to search for destination information, restaurant locations, conduct online payments, or utilize travel maps, which plays an important role in shaping tourists' behavior and attitudes [18], [19]. Today, tourists use ST throughout the travel journey, from searching for information and planning personal vacations [20], helping shorten preparation time and reduce pre-trip anxiety [21], to booking services and making online payments, thereby enhancing satisfaction and experience quality at the destination [18], [22]. ST also contributes to more positive emotions and perceived happiness [23], promotes memorable experiences, satisfaction, and tourists' revisit intention [24]. Furthermore, core attributes of ST, such as accessibility, informativeness, interactivity, and personalization positively influence loyalty or tourists' destination revisit intention [25], [26]. Nevertheless, most of these studies primarily focus on the direct effects of ST on tourists' behavioral outcomes, while the underlying mechanism operating through internal psychological states such as travel motivation and experience quality remains insufficiently clarified.

Against this backdrop, Tourism 4.0 is regarded as a stage of tourism development associated with the application of digital technologies and ST. Destinations are increasingly adopting ST platforms and solutions based on big data, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and mobile applications to collect, analyze, and provide real-time information to tourists. These technologies enable personalized itineraries, support decision-making, and enhance interactions between tourists and destinations, as well as among tourism service providers, throughout all phases of the trip, from planning and on-site experiences to the post-trip stage. Accordingly, ST goes beyond merely supporting information search or service booking. It also stimulates tourists' cognition and emotions, thereby influencing intrinsic motivation and the quality of the tourism experience [21], [23], [24]. Although many studies have documented the positive effects of ST on satisfaction, experience, and tourists' revisit intention [22], [26], [27], existing empirical research has not fully elucidated the mechanisms through which ST affects tourists' destination revisit intention. In particular, the mediating roles of travel motivation and experience quality in this relationship remain insufficiently clarified.

In addition, most existing studies have been conducted in developed countries or destinations with well-established tourism infrastructure, whereas empirical research in Vietnam, particularly in emerging destinations in the Eastern coastal sub-region of the MD, has received limited attention. This area has tourism potential grounded in distinctive natural resources and local culture, while the application of ST remains in the formative and developing stages. In this context, tourists' motivation and travel behavior may be influenced by their level of access to technology, information, and services throughout the journey. Therefore, clarifying the role of ST in shaping travel motivation, enhancing experience quality, and promoting tourists' intention to revisit destinations in the Eastern coastal sub-region of the MD is necessary to provide additional empirical evidence for this emerging destination context.

## 2. Theoretical background and research model

### 2.1. Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) theory

The Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) theory, proposed by Mehrabian and Russell [28] and Jacoby [29], provides a foundational theoretical framework for explaining human behavior in response to external factors. According to this theory, stimuli from the external environment influence individuals' internal psychological and cognitive states (organism), which in turn lead to corresponding behavioral responses (response). In other words, the SOR theory describes a process in which environmental factors affect internal perceptions and emotions, thereby shaping and regulating individual behavior [28]. Sampat and Raj [30] argued that the SOR model is a useful tool for interpreting users' cognitive processes and responses when receiving, processing, and reacting to external environmental stimuli. This framework has been widely applied across various fields, such as e-commerce [31], online shopping [32], and older adults' intention to use smartphones [33].

In tourism research, the SOR framework has been widely employed to explain how external factors influence tourists' behavioral intentions, particularly destination revisit intention. In the study by Chen et al. [34], the SOR model was applied to examine the relationships among destination attributes, tourism experiences, emotions, satisfaction, and destination revisit intention in the context of honeymoon tourism. Similarly, Kin et al. [35] used this framework to test the effects of information technology use on travel motivation and individuals' travel intention. Their results indicated that information-search behavior positively affects travel motivation and individuals' intention to travel. In the study by Xiong et al. [36], the effects of ST on tourism experiences and tourists' intention to revisit destinations were tested. A more recent study by Yaghmour [27] also adopted the SOR framework to examine the impact of ST on tourists' destination loyalty; the findings showed that ST promotes tourists' satisfaction, experiences, and destination loyalty. Building on prior studies, the present research continues to employ the SOR framework to explore the relationships among ST, travel motivation, experience quality, and destination revisit intention. Specifically, ST is conceptualized as the stimulus, representing the values and benefits that technology provides during tourists' interaction and decision-making processes. The organism component includes travel motivation, reflecting intrinsic needs that drive individuals to participate in tourism activities, and experience quality, manifested in tourists' emotions,

satisfaction, and positive perceptions during the experience. The response component is expressed as behavioral intention, reflecting tourists' desire and likelihood to revisit the destination in the future.

## 2.2. Smart tourism technology

According to Huang et al. [20], ST encompasses all forms of online travel applications and databases, such as online travel agencies, personal blogs, public websites, corporate websites, social media, smartphones, and smartphone applications, which tourists may use at any stage of the trip. Examples of ST include the Internet of Things (IoT), cloud computing, Wi-Fi connectivity, near-field communication (NFC), radio-frequency identification (RFID), sensors, smartphones, mobile-connected devices, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), mobile applications, online payment methods, smart cards, and social networking sites, among others [20], [37]. According to Jeong and Shin [18] and Lee et al. [23], the attributes of ST include accessibility, informativeness, interactivity, and personalization.

Accessibility refers to the extent to which tourists can easily access and use online travel information sources [19], [20]. This attribute provides practical benefits by enabling tourists to obtain and use information and tourism services quickly and conveniently. Accordingly, tourists can save time and costs and improve decision-making efficiency by comparing prices and service quality and consulting reviews from other users. Informativeness refers to the combination of the quality and reliability of information provided by ST at tourism destinations [24]. Given the intangible nature of tourism, information quality and reliability are important factors that can influence tourists' overall experiences throughout the journey. Interactivity enables tourists to take immediate actions through real-time feedback and active communication when using ST [21]. This attribute helps tourists proactively manage their itineraries, receive timely support, and obtain suggestions for services and activities that match individual needs, thereby enhancing personal experiences. The personalization attribute of ST delivers practical benefits by providing information, services, and recommendations tailored to tourists' specific needs, preferences, and behaviors. As a result, tourists can reduce decision-making time, optimize experiences, and feel personally attended to throughout the journey. Together, accessibility, informativeness, interactivity, and personalization enable ST to provide continuous and relevant information to tourists, thereby stimulating travel needs and enhancing overall travel experiences.

However, alongside the benefits of ST, studies indicate that ST presents both advantages and challenges, and does not always generate positive impacts on tourists. The effectiveness of ST use largely depends on users' technological knowledge and competence. Tourists with limited technological skills or little experience with digital platforms may encounter difficulties in accessing and utilizing ST functions, thereby reducing use effectiveness and the quality of their travel experience. Additionally, language barriers in digital travel platforms, particularly at international destinations, may limit tourists' ability to absorb information and interact effectively. Moreover, ST implementation entails potential risks related to personal information security, privacy, the reliability of online information, and information overload. These factors may induce feelings of insecurity, reduce trust, and negatively affect tourists' travel experience [37].

## 2.3. Destination revisit intention

According to Ajzen and Fishbein [38], intention is an individual's belief about what they intend to do in a given situation. Oliver [39] defined intention as an individual's likelihood of engaging in a particular behavior. In the tourism context, destination revisit intention may be regarded as a form of post-consumption behavior [40] and is defined as tourists repeating an activity or returning to a destination [41] and being willing to recommend the destination to others [42]. Repeat visitation plays an important role in the tourism industry because returning tourists tend to engage more in consumption activities, stay longer, and generate more positive word of mouth about the destination [3]. In addition, from an economic perspective, attracting tourists to revisit destinations is often more cost-effective than attracting new tourists [43]. In this study, tourists' intention is approached as comprising both destination revisit intention and the intention to positively recommend the destination to other potential tourists.

## 2.4. Tourism experience quality

According to Pine and Gilmore [44], tourism activities are experiential by nature. Tourism experience quality can be understood as tourists' emotional and cognitive evaluations of the psychosocial benefits they seek to attain during travel. Experience quality not only includes factors created by service providers, but is also substantially influenced by tourists' own level of participation and active contribution throughout the experience [45]. Lemke et al. [46] described experience quality as tourists' overall evaluation of a destination over a certain period of time, whereas Chen and Chen [47] emphasized that tourism experience quality can be viewed as tourists' composite psychological response to the extent to which expected psychosocial benefits prior to the trip are fulfilled, formed and adjusted throughout the tourism experience process. Overall, tourism experience quality encompasses not only positive responses such as enjoyment, satisfaction, and positive emotions, but also negative experiences such as disappointment, discomfort, or stress across the entire travel journey.

In contemporary tourism, travel experiences are not limited to activities occurring at the destination; they are also formed from the pre-trip stage, when tourists search for, receive, and interact with destination information through online channels and digital platforms [20]. This process helps shape expectations, initial emotions, and behavioral orientations, thereby directly or indirectly influencing how tourists perceive and evaluate the overall quality of their experiences during the trip. Therefore, tourism experience quality is considered a core factor that creates value for tourists and plays an important role in increasing satisfaction, promoting revisit intention, and encouraging positive word of mouth about the destination among tourists [48].

## 2.5. Travel motivation

Motivation is regarded as a factor that initiates and directs individual behavior [49]. According to Li and Cai [50], motivation is understood as a psychological tendency or state arising from needs, which drives individuals to take specific actions to satisfy those needs. In tourism, Crompton [51] classified motivation into two main groups: push factors and pull factors. Push factors reflect psychosocial motives that stem from individuals' intrinsic desires and create a propensity to travel. In contrast, pull factors relate to the attractive characteristics of destinations, including both tangible and intangible resources, which play a role in attracting tourists during destination choice. While push factors help explain why individuals desire to travel, pull factors clarify the basis for selecting a specific destination among alternative options. Within the scope of this study, travel motivation is approached from the push-factor perspective, reflecting intrinsic needs that drive individuals to travel. The components of push motivation are diverse, and this diversity depends on the research context (Table 1).

**Table 1.** *Components of travel motivation*

| Author | Components |
|---|---|
| Haquin and Lam [57] | Knowledge seeking, self-enhancement, relationship strengthening, relaxation, novelty seeking |
| Kozak [58] | Culture, pleasure seeking, relaxation, physical well-being |
| Yoon and Uysal [59] | Excitement, knowledge/education, relaxation, achievement, family, escape, safety/fun, being away from home, sightseeing |
| Mohamad and Som [60] | Prestige satisfaction, relationship enhancement, relaxation seeking, new connections, sightseeing, spiritual fulfillment, escape from daily routine, knowledge acquisition |
| Hsu et al. [49] | Knowledge, relaxation, novelty, shopping |
| Mutinda and Mayaka [61] | Knowledge and adventure, economic concern, destination information, entertainment and relaxation, travel achievement display |
| Bayih and Singh [62] | Knowledge, family |

*Source: Compiled by the authors.*

## 2.6. Relationships among constructs and research hypotheses

### 2.6.1. Relationship between smart tourism technology and travel motivation

In tourism activities, destination information has always played a fundamental role in forming and shaping individuals' travel motivation [52]. The development of ST has changed how tourists access and process information, enabling them to search for and compare data quickly, conveniently, and from multiple perspectives. Due to broad accessibility and widespread Internet connectivity, tourists can search for trip-related information anytime and anywhere, thereby reducing ambiguity and increasing confidence during the decision-making stage [20]. In addition, the interactivity of ST, as reflected in instant feedback, experience sharing, and participation in online communities, helps tourists not only receive information but

also proactively create, verify, and adjust their expectations for the trip [53]. This process enhances their cognitive perceptions and stimulates the need to explore and seek new experiences, which are important components of push motivation in tourism. When information is provided adequately, accurately, and persuasively, tourists' perceived risk decreases, creating a sense of security and strongly encouraging the desire to undertake the trip [54].

At the same time, personalization features of ST, such as itinerary suggestions, recommendations for activities aligned with personal preferences, or planning support, help tourists perceive greater control and need fulfillment, thereby increasing interest and intrinsic motivation to travel [53]. Moreover, smart travel utilities, including smart destination information systems, smart tourism management, smart payments, smart transportation systems, and smart tourism forecasting, among others [55], contribute to perceptions of convenience, safety, and reliability. These factors not only reduce hesitation but also generate positive emotions and create favorable impressions of the destination, which encourage tourists to participate in tourism activities [56]. Based on the above theoretical arguments, ST can be considered to play an important role in activating emotions, reducing perceived risk, and nurturing exploratory needs, which are core components of push motivation in tourism. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

*H1: Smart tourism technology positively affects travel motivation.*

### 2.6.2. Relationship between smart tourism technology and experience quality

Within the SOR theoretical framework, external environmental stimuli can influence individuals' internal cognitive and emotional states, thereby forming specific behavioral responses or evaluations. The emergence of ST has created marked changes in the tourism and travel industry, opening up new possibilities for enhancing tourists' experience quality [63]. In smart tourism contexts, ST is considered an important stimulus, encompassing attributes such as informativeness, interactivity, accessibility, and personalization [20]. These characteristics help tourists receive comprehensive information, interact flexibly with destination services, and adjust itineraries to fit personal needs, thereby generating positive cognitive and emotional states during the experience. In addition, ST is not only used directly by tourists but is also integrated into destination organization, management, and service delivery processes. Therefore, ST can influence tourists' experience quality through both direct and indirect channels, including in cases of package tours or travel in family or friend groups.

Numerous empirical studies have documented a positive association between ST and tourism experiences. Azis et al. [25] found that the development of ST infrastructure significantly affects tourists' experiences, as technology facilitates access to information, interaction with the destination, and deeper participation in tourism activities. Yang and Zhang [64] showed that ST enhances museum visitors' satisfaction and promotes revisit intention as well as positive word of mouth about the destination. Sustacha et

al. [65] identified a positive relationship between ST and tourists' experiences, with informativeness and interactivity exerting the strongest influences. Similarly, Zheng and Wu [66] found that informativeness significantly affects the satisfaction of coastal tourists in China. In addition, Torabi et al. [24] reported that three ST attributes, namely informativeness, accessibility, and interactivity, positively affect tourists' memorable experiences at smart rural tourism destinations in Iran. On this basis, ST can be affirmed as not only a support tool for travel but also a key factor in delivering positive tourist experiences. Accordingly, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

*H2: Smart tourism technology positively affects experience quality.*

### 2.6.3. Relationship between smart tourism technology and destination revisit intention

Smart technologies have fundamentally changed not only how tourists search for information but also how they use services throughout the travel process at destinations via digital platforms and applications. In this study, ST is conceptualized not merely as an information-provision tool but also as a set of digital technologies and applications that directly support the use of tourism services across tourists' journeys, ranging from planning, transportation, and accommodation to sightseeing and service consumption at the destination [18], [23], [67].

From the perspective of transaction cost economics (TCE), Wu et al. [68] argued that reducing information search and processing costs can increase customers' repurchase intention. In digital marketing contexts, many studies have demonstrated that platform attributes, such as ease of access to products [69], convenient interactivity or platform convenience [70], rapid responsiveness in online interactions [71], and content personalization or customization aligned with users' needs [72], affect customers' repurchase intention. Applied to smart tourism, these ST attributes not only assist tourists in searching for and processing information but also directly shape service-use experiences at destinations by reducing time, effort, and decision-related risk. Specifically, ST accessibility and informativeness help tourists quickly locate and utilize data related to destinations and tourism services. At the same time, interactivity and real-time feedback enable tourists to flexibly adjust service choices to personal needs, while data-driven personalization mechanisms ensure recommendations for products and services aligned with each tourist's preferences and behaviors [19], [26], [67]. As a result, ST use contributes to a convenient, seamless, and emotionally consistent travel journey, thereby enhancing tourists' overall satisfaction and strengthening attachment to the destination, which in turn increases revisit intention.

Prior empirical studies provide evidence for this mechanism. Zhang et al. [22], in a study conducted at the Liangzhu Museum in China, showed that ST features such as accessibility and interactivity enhance tourists' experiences and satisfaction, thereby increasing revisit intention, positive word of mouth intention, and willingness to pay more. Ng et al. [73] in Macau found that ST informativeness has a strong effect on tourists' satisfaction and destination loyalty.

Similarly, Mitala et al. [74] reported that the convenience of information, interactivity, and personalization of ST affect satisfaction, revisit intention, and intention to recommend the destination. A recent study by Balakrishnan et al. [26] further confirmed that ST directly affects tourists' revisit intention at heritage tourism destinations in Macau. Based on these theoretical arguments and empirical evidence, ST can be considered to not only reduce transaction costs but also to play an important role in enhancing experiences and shaping tourists' behavior, thereby promoting destination revisit intention. Hence, the study proposes:

*H3: Smart tourism technology positively affects destination revisit intention.*

### 2.6.4. Relationship between travel motivation and destination revisit intention

Travel motivation is regarded as an initiating factor that drives tourism behavior, reflecting intrinsic needs and desires to be satisfied through experiences at the destination. When an individual's travel motivation is fulfilled, tourists tend to develop positive emotions and increased satisfaction with the destination, thereby reinforcing their intention to revisit in the future. The relationship between travel motivation and destination revisit intention has been supported by numerous studies. Huang and Hsu [75] found that travel motivation positively affects tourists' attitudes and destination revisit intention. Lam and Hsu [76], drawing on the theory of planned behavior, approached travel motivation through behavioral beliefs and subjective norms, thereby confirming the foundational role of motivational factors in shaping destination-related behavioral intentions. In addition, Jang et al. [77] showed that novelty-seeking motivation is an important factor driving older tourists in Taiwan to travel to Hong Kong. Similarly, Yoon and Uysal [59] found that travel motivation positively influences revisit intention as well as positive word of mouth about the destination. Based on the above arguments, the study proposes:

*H4: Travel motivation positively affects destination revisit intention.*

### 2.6.5. Relationship between experience quality and destination revisit intention

Experience quality in tourism is conceptualized as tourists' overall evaluation of tangible and intangible factors perceived throughout the journey at the destination, including infrastructure, services, social interactions, cultural values, and emotions arising from the experiential process [44]. From a consumer behavior perspective, when tourists perceive their experiences as high quality, they tend to develop positive emotions, thereby increasing satisfaction and attachment to the destination. These emotions serve as an important mediating mechanism that promotes revisit intention in the future. Many empirical studies have shown that tourists' experience quality has a positive relationship with post-trip behavioral responses, including destination revisit intention and positive word of mouth [40], [47], [78]. Based on these arguments and empirical findings, the study proposes:

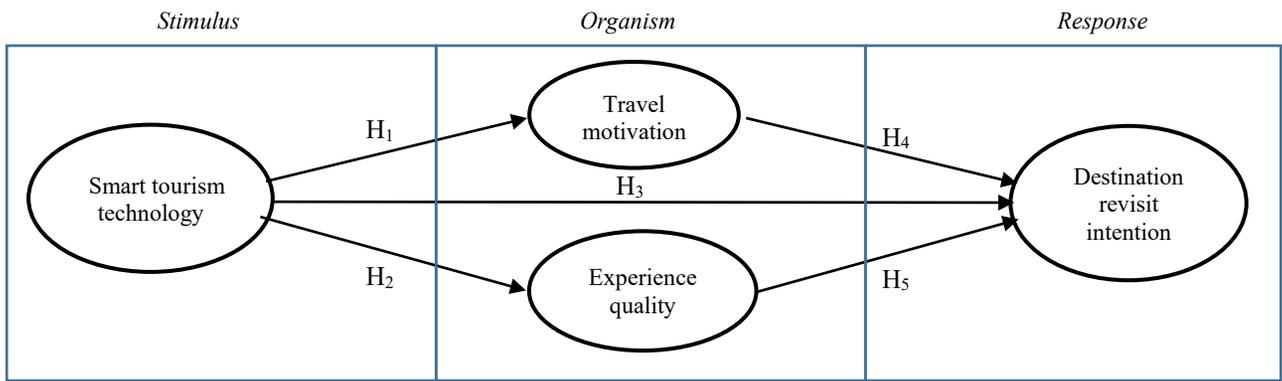*H5: Experience quality positively affects destination revisit intention.*

**Figure 1.** *Proposed research model*

## 3. Research methodology

*Preliminary qualitative and quantitative study:*

The preliminary qualitative and quantitative phases was conducted to ensure the appropriateness and practical relevance of the measurement scales used in this study. Specifically, the authors carried out in-depth interviews with three tourism scholars and seven managers from travel agencies, restaurants, and hotels in the Eastern coastal area of the Mekong Delta (MD). Group discussions were also organized at Con Phung Tourist Area (Ben Tre) and Con Thoi Son (Tien Giang). Each group consisted of five domestic tourists who were unfamiliar with each other, aiming to collect diverse perspectives.

Qualitative data obtained from interviews and focus group discussions were synthesized and thematically analyzed to evaluate the appropriateness, clarity, and contextual fit of the observed variables in the adapted scales. Based on feedback from experts, managers, and tourists, several observed variables were reworded to better match the tourism context of the Eastern coastal MD; additionally, items that did not adequately capture the conceptual domain were either added or removed. The qualitative findings served as the foundation for finalizing the preliminary measurement instrument before carrying out the formal quantitative study.

Results from the qualitative and preliminary quantitative stage indicated that travel motivation comprises five components (novelty, prestige, knowledge, social and family bonding, and relaxation) with 16 observed variables (PM1–PM16), adapted and refined from Haquin and Lam [57], Yoon and Uysal [59], and Mohamad and Som [60]. The ST construct includes eight observed variables (ST1–ST8), that were adapted and refined from Um and Chung [67]. Experience quality comprises four observed variables (EQ1–EQ4), adapted and refined from Otto and Ritchie [48]. Destination revisit intention comprises five observed variables (RI1–RI5), adapted and refined from Zeiltham et al. [79]. Accordingly, the final measurement scale was completed with 33 observed variables measured on a five-point Likert scale, ensuring theoretical and contextual appropriateness, and was used for subsequent analyses (see Appendix 1).

*Formal Quantitative Study*

The formal quantitative study was conducted through face-to-face interviews with domestic tourists in the Eastern coastal area of the MD. Because no comprehensive list of tourists in the study area was available, convenience sampling was employed to ensure feasibility in data collection. The survey questionnaire comprised 33 observed variables, and the minimum required sample size was 165 observations [80]. Data collection was conducted from October 2024 to May 2025, coinciding with the region's peak tourist season, when dry and cool weather conditions are favorable for sightseeing and leisure activities. To improve sample representativeness, surveys were administered at several typical tourist destinations in the region.

A total of 795 questionnaires were distributed, of which 195 were invalid due to missing information or patterned responses. Specifically, in Tien Giang Province, 200 questionnaires were distributed and 154 valid questionnaires were returned (77%); in Ben Tre, 200 were distributed and 157 valid questionnaires were returned (78%); in Vinh Long, 245 were distributed and 185 valid questionnaires were returned (76%); and in Tra Vinh, 150 were distributed and 104 valid questionnaires were returned (69%). In total, 600 valid questionnaires were obtained, meeting and exceeding the target and were included in the analysis.

After data collection, the data were processed using SPSS 24 and AMOS 24, following these steps: (1) testing scale reliability with Cronbach's alpha, (2) conducting exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to identify the measurement structure, (3) performing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs, and (4) testing the research hypotheses using structural equation modeling (SEM).

## 4. Results and discussion

### 4.1. General information of the respondents

The survey of 600 domestic tourists in the Eastern coastal area of the Mekong Delta (MD) indicates that the sample is diverse and relatively well reflects the visitor structure in the region. Females accounted for 52.5%, higher than males (47.5%), while the 18 to under 40 age group represented 54.5%, reflecting characteristics of a young, dynamic segment with a strong tendency toward experiential travel. Most respondents were married (60.3%) and had an educational level of intermediate vocational/college or higher (84.5%), of whom 37.8% held a university degree. Regarding occupation, the business/trading group accounted for 26%, office workers 23%, unskilled labor 18.3%, and other occupations 32.7%. Although there are certain differences in digital technology adoption across occupational groups, the results indicate

relatively even technology access overall, reflecting the diffusion of ST in everyday life.

In terms of trip arrangement, 52.8% of tourists chose to organize their trips independently, while 47.2% joined package tours, indicating a growing trend toward independent travel. Many tourists reported that self-organization has become more convenient due to improved transport infrastructure and easier access to destination information via online platforms. Regarding visit frequency, 54.7% were first-time visitors, whereas 45.3% had revisited at least once. In addition, most tourists traveled with family, friends, or colleagues (85.8%), and only 14.2% traveled alone. Overall, the sample structure highlights a prominent profile of young tourists with relatively high educational attainment and a tendency toward autonomy in trip planning, suggesting potential for developing community-based tourism and independent experiential tourism in this area.

### 4.2. Results of scale reliability assessment

The ST scale in this study is unidimensional, with reliability testing showing a Cronbach's alpha of 0.889. The travel motivation scale is a second-order construct, measured by 16 observed variables across five components, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.755 to 0.831, all above the recommended threshold of 0.6. The experience quality scale and the destination revisit intention scale are unidimensional. The reliability testing produced Cronbach's alpha values of 0.842 and 0.871, respectively, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. In addition, all observed variables exhibited corrected item–total correlations greater than 0.3 [81], confirming acceptable reliability and supporting their suitability for subsequent analyses.

### 4.3. Exploratory factor analysis results

After conducting reliability testing, all scales in the model met the necessary conditions for conducting exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Bartlett's test confirmed significant correlations among the variables [82]. The analysis was performed using Principal Axis Factoring (PAF), with Promax rotation and Kaiser normalization, and observed variables with factor loadings below 0.5 were removed. The results indicated that Bartlett's test was statistically significant (p-value < 0.001), and the KMO values were all greater than 0.5, confirming sampling adequacy for factor analysis.

Among the 33 observed variables included, based on the Eigenvalue > 1 criterion (the Guttman–Kaiser rule), eight factors were extracted with a cumulative explained variance of 66.62% (> 50%). All factor loadings exceeded 0.5, indicating that the observed variables fit the scale structure

well [83]. The EFA results support the reliability of the scales and the appropriateness of the research model (see Appendix 2).

### 4.4. Confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling

*Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)*: CFA was conducted for all scales in the research model. The fit indices were as follows: Chi-square = 1038.731, p-value = 0.000, Chi-square/df = 2.224 < 3, RMSEA = 0.045 < 0.08, TLI = 0.929, CFI = 0.937, and GFI = 0.904 (all > 0.9). These results indices confirm that the measurement model demonstrates a good and acceptable fit to the observed data [80].

CFA was also used to assess measurement properties, including composite reliability, unidimensionality, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. In terms of reliability, commonly considered criteria include: (1) composite reliability (CR), (2) average variance extracted (AVE), and (3) Cronbach's alpha [80]. The results reported in Table 2 show that the CR values of all constructs exceed 0.7, while AVE values surpass the 0.5 threshold at the 5% significance level. This indicates that the scales achieve convergent validity; that is, the observed variables are strongly correlated within the same factor. In other words, the latent constructs are adequately explained by their observed variables [81].

*Structural equation modeling (SEM) and model fit assessment:* Model fit was evaluated using structural equation modeling (SEM). The SEM results indicate that the research model fits the collected data well. Specifically, Chi-square = 1226.156 with degrees of freedom df = 485, p = 0.000; the Chi-square/df ratio = 2.528 < 3; RMSEA = 0.051 < 0.08; along with TLI = 0.912 (> 0.9) and CFI = 0.888 [80]. These indices suggest that the research model achieves a high level of fit (Figure 2). Furthermore, hypothesis-testing results (Table 3) confirm that the relationships among ST, travel motivation, experience quality, and destination revisit intention are all statistically significant at the 5% level and positive in direction. Thus, all proposed relationships in the model are supported, consistent with the theoretical foundation and initial expectations.

The study also examined the mediating roles of travel motivation and experience quality in the relationship between ST and destination revisit intention. The test results, reported in Table 4, indicate that both travel motivation and experience quality serve as significant mediators in the research model, thereby clarifying the indirect mechanism through which ST influences tourists' destination revisit intention via travel motivation and experience quality.

*Table 2. Reliability analysis of the constructs in the model*

| Construct | CR | AVE | MSV | MaxR(H) | ST | RI | KE | RE | QE | SF | PS | NS |
|-----------|------|------|------|---------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| ST | 0.889 | 0.501 | 0.353 | 0.890 | **0.708** | | | | | | | |
| RI | 0.872 | 0.579 | 0.464 | 0.885 | 0.555*** | **0.761** | | | | | | |
| KE | 0.801 | 0.503 | 0.271 | 0.805 | 0.372*** | 0.421*** | **0.709** | | | | | |
| RE | 0.835 | 0.628 | 0.294 | 0.839 | 0.356*** | 0.333*** | 0.368*** | **0.792** | | | | |
| QE | 0.846 | 0.581 | 0.464 | 0.863 | 0.594*** | 0.681*** | 0.486*** | 0.441*** | **0.762** | | | |
| SF | 0.810 | 0.587 | 0.271 | 0.816 | 0.280*** | 0.411*** | 0.521*** | 0.294*** | 0.429*** | **0.766** | | |
| PS | 0.757 | 0.511 | 0.252 | 0.770 | 0.353*** | 0.407*** | 0.340*** | 0.502*** | 0.353*** | 0.452*** | **0.715** | |
| NS | 0.759 | 0.514 | 0.333 | 0.773 | 0.422*** | 0.497*** | 0.503*** | 0.543*** | 0.577*** | 0.315*** | 0.430*** | **0.717** |

*Source: Authors' data analysis results.*

***Table 3.*** *Results of the hypothesis testing among the constructs in the model (Standardized)*

| Correlation | | | Unstandardized Regression Coefficient | Standardized Regression Coefficient | Standard Error (S.E) | Critical Ratio (C.R) | Significance Level (P-value) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TM | <--- | ST | 0.456 | 0.586 | 0.049 | 9.339 | *** |
| QE | <--- | ST | 0.768 | 0.622 | 0.061 | 12.576 | *** |
| RI | <--- | ST | 0.185 | 0.139 | 0.081 | 2.288 | *** |
| RI | <--- | TM | 0.477 | 0.281 | 0.097 | 4.916 | *** |
| RI | <--- | QE | 0.481 | 0.449 | 0.056 | 8.543 | *** |

*Source: Authors' data analysis results.*

***Table 4.*** *Results of the mediation testing among the constructs in the model*

| Path Relationship | Unstandardized Estimate | Lower | Upper | P-Value | Standardized Estimate |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ST --> TM --> RI | 0.218 | 0.115 | 0.349 | 0.001 | 0.164*** |
| ST --> QE --> RI | 0.370 | 0.264 | 0.499 | 0.001 | 0.279*** |
| Ghi chú: **p** < 0.05*, **p** < 0.01**, **p** < 0.001***. | | | | | |

*Source: Authors' data analysis results.*



Chi-square=1226.156; df=485; P=.000
Chi-square/df =2.528
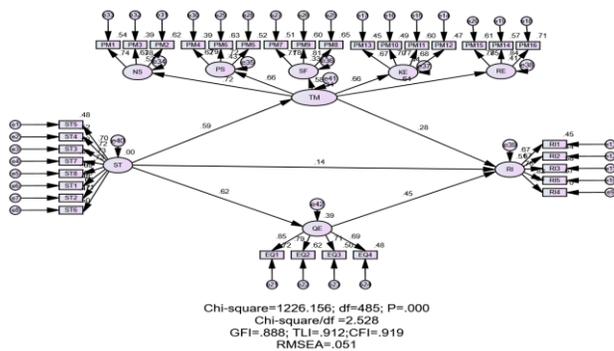GFI=.888; TLI=.912;CFI=.919
RMSEA=.051

***Figure 2.*** *Standardized SEM structural model*

## 5. Discussion of research findings

The study confirms the relationships among ST, travel motivation, experience quality, and destination revisit intention. This finding is consistent with the proposed model and highlights the increasingly evident role of technology in shaping tourists' behavior.

*First,* the results show that ST positively affects travel motivation (β = 0.59; p = 0.000), providing additional empirical evidence for the mechanism through which technology influences tourists' internal psychological factors. ST also positively affects experience quality (β = 0.62; p = 0.000), consistent with studies by Jeong and Shin [18], Sustacha et al. [65], Zheng and Wu [66], and Torabi et al. [24]. This finding confirms the role of ST as a stimulus in the SOR model, indicating that technology is not only a supporting tool but can also inspire, enhance motivation, and shape tourism experiences. Additionally, the stronger effect of ST on experience quality reflects a contemporary tendency for tourists to prioritize technology-enabled convenience, interactivity, and personalization over traditional intrinsic push drivers.

*Second,* the results indicate that ST has a positive and statistically significant effect on tourists' destination revisit intention (β = 0.14; p = 0.000), which is consistent with the theoretical rationale and the findings of Balakrishnan et al. [26]. Although the effect size is relatively modest, this result underscores the important supportive role of technology in maintaining relationships between tourists and destinations. The moderate effect size may be explained by the behavioral characteristics of domestic tourists, many of whom view technology primarily as a convenient tool for information search, service booking, and itinerary navigation, rather than as a factor generating emotional attachment or destination loyalty. Currently, provinces in the region have implemented tourism information portals (Ben Tre tourism, Tra Vinh Portal, the website mytiengiang.vn), along with smart tourism applications at destinations (e-payments, online booking, virtual tours such as VR tour 360, etc.), which help strengthen the role of ST in improving information accessibility and experience quality for tourists.

*Third,* the study finds that travel motivation positively and significantly affects destination revisit intention, indicating that when tourists' needs and expectations are satisfied during the trip, they tend to revisit or continue seeking similar experiences (β = 0.28; p = 0.000). This result is consistent with Jang et al. [77] and Yoon and Uysal [59], reaffirming the central role of motivation as a driver of tourism behavior. Moreover, the present study extends empirical evidence in the smart tourism context by showing that travel motivation is not only psychosocial but is also substantially influenced by technological factors - especially information accessibility, interactivity, personalization, and technology-enabled utilities throughout the experience. In addition, these findings suggest that tourism products in the study area are relatively appropriate and meet tourists' needs reasonably well. Accordingly, destination managers should design and develop tourism programs tailored to specific visitor segments based on their distinct motivations and expectations, thereby enhancing satisfaction and revisit intention in the smart tourism context.

*Fourth,* the results indicate that experience quality positively and significantly affects destination revisit intention (β = 0.45; p = 0.000), confirming that when tourists have positive experiences, they develop satisfaction and a desire to revisit in the future. This finding is consistent with prior studies by Cole and Scott [40] and Chen and Chen [47], which indicate that when tourists have positive experiences, they not only form revisit intentions but also tend to generate positive word of mouth to other potential tourists. In the smart tourism context, experience quality is shaped by both tangible factors (infrastructure and services) and intangible, technology-enabled factors such as convenience, interactivity, and personalization. This indicates that ST contributes to enhancing overall

experience quality, increasing satisfaction, and strengthening tourists' attachment. Therefore, investing in improving experience quality, particularly through smart technology applications, should be considered a strategic priority for developing and sustaining destination competitiveness.

*Fifth,* the results indicate that both travel motivation and experience quality are statistically significant mediators in the relationship between ST and destination revisit intention, with standardized coefficients of β = 0.164 and β = 0.279 (p = 0.001). The 95% confidence intervals do not include 0, confirming the presence of mediation effects. This result is consistent with prior studies in confirming the role of technology in enhancing experiences and loyalty or destination revisit intention [18], [24], [25], and it reinforces the argument that technological factors influence behavior not only directly but also indirectly through psychological responses and emotional experiences. However, the present study contributes a novel insight by simultaneously establishing the mediating roles of both travel motivation and experience quality, thereby demonstrating a dual-path mechanism through which ST influences destination revisit intention. This finding extends scholarly understanding of tourist behavior in smart tourism contexts, where technology is not merely a supportive tool but also a factor that activates emotions, motivation, and tourists' connections with destinations in today's increasingly digitalized environment.

# 6. Conclusions and managerial implications

The findings indicate that ST positively influences travel motivation, experience quality, and tourists' destination revisit intention. Based on these results, the study proposes several theoretical and managerial implications to attract tourists and encourage repeat visitation to the Eastern coastal area of the Mekong Delta (MD).

*Theoretical implications:* Building on the SOR framework [28], this study contributes to the smart tourism literature by clarifying the mechanism through which ST affects tourists' destination revisit intention. The results not only confirm the role of ST as a behavioral stimulus, consistent with prior studies [27], [36], but also elucidate ST's indirect effects through travel motivation and experience quality. While many previous studies mainly examined the effects of ST on experience, satisfaction, and loyalty or revisit intention [18], [22], [24], [84], the present findings suggest that technological stimuli are translated into tourists' internal psychological states, namely travel motivation and experience quality, which subsequently strengthen revisit intention. This supports the appropriateness and extendability of the SOR model in smart tourism contexts and adds academic evidence regarding the mediating roles of psychological factors in the relationship between technology and tourism behavioral intentions.

In addition, the results help specify the content of ST within smart tourism by indicating that attributes such as accessibility, informativeness, interactivity, and personalization are critical components that stimulate travel motivation and enhance tourists' experience quality.

*Managerial implications:*

*First,* the results show that travel motivation positively affects tourists' destination revisit intention, confirming that the Eastern coastal MD possesses attractive tourism products. Therefore, in the coming period, the region should further leverage its strengths, including river-based tourism (orchard homestays and agricultural experiences), cultural–spiritual tourism (Tra Vinh Khmer culture, pagoda systems, and Mekong Delta belief practices), and culinary tourism (e.g., Ben Tre coconut candy, Tra Vinh *bún nước lèo*, My Tho *hủ tiếu*), linked with traditional craft villages and fruit orchards. At the same time, environmental protection and the preservation of local cultural heritage should be prioritized and regarded as sustainable tourism resources.

Moreover, the findings suggest that destination managers should prioritize technology-based destination strategies through channels such as websites, blogs, smart tourism applications, VR/AR technologies, and online payment systems. In parallel, digital transformation should be implemented in a coordinated manner by improving digital competencies among local tourism and travel businesses, including skills in managing digital platforms, leveraging tourist data, and operating online services. This approach not only supports the digitization of tourism products and services and ensures a seamless tourist experience, but also helps optimize business operations and strengthen destination competitiveness.

*Second*, the results also indicate that ST positively affects experience quality and tourists' destination revisit intention, implying that smart tourism in the Eastern coastal MD has begun to take shape and generate positive outcomes. Going forward, tourism enterprises should collaborate with local governments to invest in upgrading information technology infrastructure, ensuring system stability, access speed, and interactive capacity of digital services. In addition, applying ST solutions such as real-time information provision, integrated digital maps, automated support chatbots, and VR/AR technologies can further enhance experiential value.

In particular, the application of artificial intelligence (AI) to analyze tourists' behavioral data enables itinerary personalization, ranging from destination and sightseeing recommendations to dining services and experiential activities aligned with individual preferences. Beyond technical aspects, ST should be integrated into destination marketing strategies to create seamless connections with tourists across all three stages of the travel journey, namely the pre-trip, during the trip, and post-trip phases, thereby increasing satisfaction and enhancing revisit intention.

Although the study's results are consistent with the proposed hypotheses and research model, certain limitations remain, particularly regarding the scope of respondents. Specifically, the data were primarily collected from domestic tourists and therefore do not fully reflect the perspectives and behaviors of international tourists. This may limit the generalizability of the conclusions, as tourists from different countries often differ substantially in their needs, expectations, and approaches to tourism products.

Accordingly, future research should expand the survey scope to include both domestic and international tourists. Comparative analyses between these two groups would not only clarify differences in tourism consumption behavior

but also improve the robustness and practical applicability of the proposed research model.

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*Appendix 1. Description of Research Measurement Scales*

| Variable name | Item content | | Scale | Reference |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Smart Tourism Technology (ST)** | | | | |
| ST1 | Travel websites and applications provide useful information about destinations and trips | | | |
| ST2 | Travel websites and applications provide accurate information that helps me complete my trip | | | |
| ST3 | I can use travel websites and applications anytime and anywhere | | | |
| ST4 | Travel websites and applications are easy to access and operate reliably on my device | Likert 1-5 | Um & Chung [56] | |
| ST5 | I can easily share content (e.g., travel information) on travel websites and applications | | | |
| ST6 | I can find many questions and answers from other users on travel websites and applications | | | |
| ST7 | I can interact with travel websites and applications to receive personalized information | | | |
| ST8 | The personalized information provided by travel websites and applications meets my needs | | | |
| **Travel motivation (TM)** | | | | |
| *Novelty Seeking (NS)* | | | | |
| PM1 | Traveling to seek novel experiences | | | |
| PM2 | Traveling to feel excitement and thrill | Likert 1-5 | Haquin & Lam [42] | |
| PM3 | Traveling to experience something different from daily life | | | |
| *Prestige Seeking (PS)* | | | | |
| PM4 | Traveling to places I have always dreamed of visiting | | | |
| PM5 | Traveling to destinations that are highly rated | Likert 1-5 | Haquin & Lam [42] | |
| PM6 | Traveling to impress friends and relatives | | | |
| *Social and Family Relationship (SF)* | | | | |
| PM7 | Traveling to strengthen family bonds | | | |
| PM8 | Traveling to meet people with similar interests | Likert 1-5 | Haquin & Lam [42] | |
| PM9 | Traveling to share experiences with others | | | |

| Variable | Item content | Scale | Reference |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Knowledge Enhancement (KE)* | | | |
| PM10 | Traveling to experience the local cultural life of residents | | Yoon & Uysal [44] Mohamad & Som [45] |
| PM11 | Traveling to learn about regional culinary specialties | Likert 1-5 | |
| PM12 | Traveling to visit historical and cultural sites | | |
| PM13 | Traveling to explore the unique identity of each region | | |
| *Relaxation (RE)* | | | |
| PM14 | Traveling to escape from daily routines | | |
| PM15 | Traveling to release work pressure | Likert 1-5 | Haquin & Lam [42] |
| PM16 | Traveling to rest and relax mentally and physically | | |
| **Experience Quality (QE)** | | | |
| EQ1 | I had a positive experience during this trip | | |
| EQ2 | The experiences from this trip were truly memorable | Likert 1-5 | Otto & Ritchie [38] |
| EQ3 | I found this trip very enjoyable | | |
| EQ4 | I am satisfied with the overall experience of this trip | | |
| **Revisit intention (RI)** | | | |
| RI1 | I will share positive things about this destination with others | | |
| RI2 | I will recommend this destination to others | Likert 1-5 | Zeiltham et al. [67] |
| RI3 | I will encourage others to visit this destination | | |
| RI4 | I will prioritize this destination for my next trip | | |
| RI5 | I will revisit this destination in the future | | |

*Appendix 2. Pattern Matrix[a]*

| | Factor | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| ST5 | 0.762 | | | | | | | |
| ST4 | 0.756 | | | | | | | |
| ST3 | 0.725 | | | | | | | |
| ST7 | 0.712 | | | | | | | |
| ST8 | 0.708 | | | | | | | |
| ST1 | 0.661 | | | | | | | |
| ST2 | 0.660 | | | | | | | |
| ST6 | 0.660 | | | | | | | |
| RI4 | | 0.839 | | | | | | |
| RI5 | | 0.821 | | | | | | |
| RI3 | | 0.766 | | | | | | |
| RI2 | | 0.700 | | | | | | |
| RI1 | | 0.524 | | | | | | |
| PM12 | | | 0.754 | | | | | |
| PM11 | | | 0.741 | | | | | |
| PM10 | | | 0.663 | | | | | |
| PM13 | | | 0.643 | | | | | |
| PM16 | | | | 0.817 | | | | |
| PM14 | | | | 0.794 | | | | |
| PM15 | | | | 0.703 | | | | |
| EQ1 | | | | | 0.838 | | | |
| EQ2 | | | | | 0.832 | | | |
| EQ3 | | | | | 0.642 | | | |
| EQ4 | | | | | 0.546 | | | |
| PM8 | | | | | | 0.782 | | |
| PM9 | | | | | | 0.765 | | |
| PM7 | | | | | | 0.719 | | |
| PM5 | | | | | | | 0.748 | |
| PM6 | | | | | | | 0.683 | |
| PM4 | | | | | | | 0.638 | |
| PM2 | | | | | | | | 0.797 |
| PM3 | | | | | | | | 0.674 |
| PM1 | | | | | | | | 0.599 |

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.
Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.