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Generative Artificial Intelligence in Tourism: The Roles of Perceived Usefulness, Trust in AI-Generated Content and Perceived AI Control among International Tourists

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Abstract

The rapid rise of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is fundamentally changing the way tourists search for information, plan their trips, experience their trips, and share information after their trips. While the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) considers perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as central factors, this study extends the theoretical framework by incorporating two additional constructs: trust in AI-generated content and perceived AI control. This study examines GenAI usage behavior using survey data from 541 international tourists in Ho Chi Minh City. The PLS-SEM results show that perceived usefulness is the strongest driver of GenAI usage behavior and the main antecedent of trust in AI-generated content. Trust has a significant but secondary effect, functioning as a credibility mechanism that strengthens tourists' confidence in useful AI-generated travel support. At the same time, perceived AI control has a direct and independent effect, highlighting the importance of tourists' ability to guide, adjust, and redirect AI-generated recommendations. Notably, perceived ease of use does not directly influence usage behavior or trust, although it has a weak positive effect on perceived usefulness. This study refines TAM by showing that perceived usefulness remains the dominant driver of GenAI usage behavior, while trust serves as a complementary credibility mechanism and perceived AI control acts as an independent usage driver. Practically, it suggests that tourism GenAI applications should prioritize concrete travel value, controllability, and locally credible information for international tourists.

Keywords: AI adoption, GenAI usage behavior, generative AI, trust in AI-generated content, perceived AI control, ˙perceived usefulness.

1. Introduction

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) refers to AI systems capable of producing new content, such as text, images, recommendations, and conversational responses, based on large-scale learning models (Christensen et al., 2025; Mogaji et al., 2024). Unlike earlier forms of AI that primarily analyzed or classified existing data, GenAI enables more

interactive, adaptive, and co-creative forms of human-technology engagement. In tourism, this shift is particularly important because tourists can now use GenAI not only to search for information but also to plan itineraries, receive real-time support, and personalize travel experiences (Duong et al., 2025; Kang et al., 2024; Mladenović et al., 2026; Wu et al., 2025). In tourism, GenAI is increasingly used not only as an information search tool but also as a travel companion that supports tourists in planning, decision-making, and experience personalization (Etlioglu, 2025). This tool can help tourists plan, make decisions and sometimes co-create experiences (Christensen et al., 2025; Fakfare et al., 2025; Mladenović et al., 2026). Today's tourists do not have one-way communication but can chat, ask questions, request personalization and receive instant feedback (Kang et al., 2024).

However, most current research on AI adoption focuses on education, business, or media (Kim et al., 2024; Li & Zhang, 2024; Ma & Li, 2024), while the international tourism sector has received little attention. Previous works mainly rely on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) with two central factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2012). Although important, these two factors are difficult to fully explain tourists' behavior when interacting with GenAI, which is a highly adaptive conversational technology. In this context, trust in AI-generated content and users' sense of control emerge as necessary variables to explain repeat behavior and sustained engagement (Hu et al., 2025; Hu & Min, 2025).

Building on this foundation, this study develops and tests an integrated PLS-SEM model to examine how perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, trust in AI-generated content, and perceived AI control shape international tourists' GenAI usage behavior in tourism. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions:

- RQ1: How do perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness influence international tourists' GenAI usage behavior in tourism?
- RQ2: How does perceived AI control influence international tourists' GenAI usage behavior and perceived usefulness of GenAI?
- RQ3: How does trust in AI-generated content influence international tourists' GenAI usage behavior, and how is this trust shaped by perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness?

The empirical context is Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, a dynamic and multicultural urban destination where international tourists increasingly rely on GenAI for travel information, planning, and on-trip support. This is a special environment: tourists often encounter language barriers, cultural differences and often have to make quick decisions. Therefore, the need to have a reliable source of information and a sense of initiative in interactions becomes more important than ever. Analyzing technology behavior in this context is not only of academic significance but also brings practical value to the strategy of developing smart tourism in emerging destinations in the region.

This study offers both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it refines the TAM by showing that perceived usefulness remains the dominant driver of GenAI usage behavior, while trust in AI-generated content serves as a complementary credibility mechanism rather than a substitute for usefulness. It also clarifies the independent role of perceived AI control in shaping usage behavior and identifies a boundary condition of TAM, as perceived ease of use does not directly predict usage behavior and explains little variance in perceived usefulness. Practically, the study suggests that tourism GenAI applications should prioritize concrete travel value, such as itinerary support, local recommendations, real-time assistance, and problem solving, while embedding trust and control mechanisms into these functions. For emerging destinations such as Vietnam, these findings highlight the need to connect GenAI systems with locally credible, multilingual, and up-to-date tourism information to support more confident and user-centered travel decisions.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature and develops the hypotheses. Section 3 presents the methodology. Section 4 reports the results, followed by the discussion and contributions. The final section concludes the study and outlines future research directions.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Tourist GenAI Usage Behavior

The emergence of GenAI is creating significant changes in the technological behavior of users and the way tourists travel. Tourists have recently changed their behavior in stages such as searching for information, preparing plans for the trip (Gursoy et al., 2023; Nicolau, 2025; Wong et al., 2023). In addition, they also use GenAI to co-create their experiences during the trip as well as share their experiences after the trip (Luo et al., 2025; Nicolau, 2025; Yang et al., 2026). Some recent studies show that tourists are starting to see GenAI as a potential alternative to traditional search channels. They especially appreciate the conversational ability, personalization, and the creation of "human-like" content of GenAI (Guttentag et al., 2024; Kang et al., 2024; Seyfi, Kim, Lee, et al., 2025; Seyfi, Kim, Nazifi, et al., 2025). But along with this excitement, there are also many concerns: is the information really authentic, how reliable is it, and whether users have enough control over this technology (Hu & Min, 2025; Kang et al., 2024).

Other studies have focused on the communication aspect and perceived authenticity. For example, Yang et al. (2026) found that when chatbots used voice instead of text, tourists tended to perceive it as more "real," and thus they wanted to continue using it (Yang et al., 2026). Interestingly, this effect also depended on the type of destination: for hedonic trips, voice was more convincing; but for utility trips, the difference almost disappeared. Kang et al. (2024) also found that the richness of information through the combination of text,

images, and audio had a strong impact on trust and intention to book services through ChatGPT (Kang et al., 2024).

Conversely, other studies have shown that tourists still prefer human-generated information. Wong et al. (2025) found that travel plans written by humans were rated as more trustworthy than GenAI, although the addition of "travel personas" may increase AI trustworthiness. Some qualitative studies further explain that doubts about training data or concerns that GenAI does not fully capture local cultural nuances are the main reasons. In addition, research on GenAI-generated destination images also shows that this technology is changing the way tourists perceive and interact with tourism marketing. Yu and Meng (2025) argue that GenAI-generated images not only expand communication channels but also raise new questions about sustainability, hyper-personalization, and immersive experiences (Yu & Meng, 2025). Nicolau (2025) even sees GenAI as a "new cognitive layer" in smart tourism, as it moves from simply providing information to a role of co-creation and immersive storytelling, opening up many interdisciplinary research directions on society, ethics, and experience (Nicolau, 2025).

In addition to communication methods or authenticity, search intent and tourism motivation also influence GenAI adoption. Luo et al. (2025) demonstrate that GenAI is more commonly used for reference searches, while tourists are more cautious when making important decisions (Luo et al., 2025). In this case, the utility tourism motives and the ability to customize GenAI tasks may help increase adoption. Overall, empirical evidence suggests that tourists' GenAI usage behavior is a "complex mixture" of technological experience (medium, level of customization), cognitive psychology (authenticity, trust), and specific trip context (destination type, motivation, persona).

However, most current research is limited to experiments or marketing frameworks, while the actual usage context of international tourists in emerging destinations like Vietnam has not been deeply explored. This is a gap that needs to be filled to better understand how GenAI actually shapes technology behavior and cross-cultural tourism experiences.

2.2 Hypotheses Development

2.2.1 Perceived Ease of Use and Impact

In the TAM, perceived ease of use (PE) is a foundational belief that reduces users' cognitive and operational effort, thereby facilitating technology acceptance (Chin et al., 2024; Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2012). In GenAI-assisted tourism, PE remains relevant because tourists often use conversational tools under time pressure, information uncertainty, and unfamiliar destination conditions. When GenAI is perceived as easy to learn, operate, and redirect, tourists may be more willing to use it for travel-related tasks, evaluate its generated content with greater confidence, and perceive it as more useful for planning, decision-making, and on-trip support (Li & Zhang, 2024; Tuyen & Hanh, 2025; Yang et al., 2026). Therefore, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H1: Perceived ease of use positively impacts GenAI usage behavior.

- H2: Perceived ease of use positively impacts trust in AI-generated content.
- H3: Perceived ease of use positively impacts perceived usefulness.

2.2.2 Perceived Usefulness and Impact

According to TAM, perceived usefulness (PU) is considered an important factor in explaining technology usage behavior. This factor reflects the ability of technology to help users be more efficient in their work or make more accurate decisions (Venkatesh et al., 2012). However, in the context of using GenAI in tourism, to date, very few studies have examined this influence. The main reason is that GenAI recommendations are often novel and difficult to immediately verify whether they are effective (Kang et al., 2024). PU is theoretically important because tourists often evaluate technology through the results that support them during their tourism process (Tavitiyaman et al., 2024; Topsakal, 2025). For example, tourists will be interested in the ability of GenAI to help them choose the right destination and recommend itineraries according to their personal needs or calculate the cost of the trip (Kang et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2024; Kim, Blazquez, & Oh, 2024). Several recent empirical studies have shown that PU can directly promote behavior and increase tourists' trust in AI-generated content (Topsakal, 2025; Wong et al., 2025). Therefore, in this study, PU is hypothesized to have a direct influence on behavior and trust in AI-generated content.

- H4: Perceived usefulness positively impacts GenAI usage behavior.
- H5: Perceived usefulness positively impacts trust in AI-generated content.

2.2.3 Perceived AI Control and Impact

Perceived AI control (PC) describes users' feelings that they can guide or control the content so that GenAI delivers exactly what they need. This concept is associated with empowerment, satisfaction, and long-term engagement when using technology (Hu & Min, 2025; Kang et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2024). However, in tourism, especially with GenAI, there is still little research examining this factor in relation to usage behavior and related factors. In practice, tourists often face uncertainty and have difficulty controlling GenAI content (Hu & Min, 2025). In theory, PC increases intrinsic motivation and reduces dependence, thereby promoting usage behavior (Hu & Min, 2025; Zhou et al., 2022). Some related research results also show this trend. When users feel proactive, they will tend to use and have higher loyalty to using a technology (Guttentag et al., 2024; Hu & Min, 2025; Wong et al., 2023). Therefore, in this study, PC was expected to positively influence behavior and PU.

- H6: Perceived AI control positively impacts GenAI usage behavior.
- H7: Perceived AI control positively impacts perceived usefulness.

2.2.4 Trust in AI-generated Content and Behavior

Trust in AI-generated content is considered a key factor in explaining AI usage behavior (Hu & Min, 2025). The reason for this is that AI has the tendency to generate fake answers, and users cannot immediately verify its accuracy (Ali et al., 2024). In tourism, this is important because GenAI answers will determine tourists' decisions regarding cost, safety, and culture (Kang et al., 2024; Topsakal, 2025). Theoretically, trust in AI-generated content increases users' willingness to use it and increases satisfaction and engagement with the tool. Related research results also show that high trust increases the intention to continue using AI for booking services, planning, or co-creating experiences (Kang et al., 2024; Topsakal, 2025; Yang et al., 2026). In short, trust is expected to positively impact GenAI usage behavior.

- H8: Trust in AI-generated content positively impacts GenAI usage behavior.

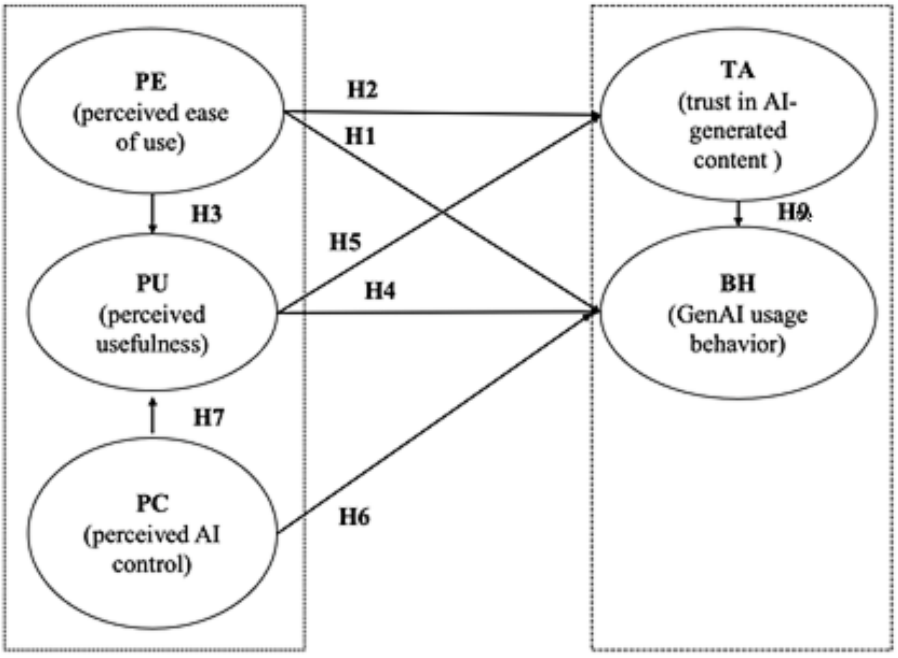

Figure 1: Proposed Research Model and Hypotheses

3. Methodology

3.1 Instrument Detail

The observed variables in the model are measured using multivariate scales, inherited and adjusted from previous studies to ensure suitability with the GenAI context in tourism. Specifically, the scales of perceived ease of use (PE) and perceived usefulness (PU) are developed from the TAM model (Davis, 1989; Tavitiyaman et al., 2024; Tuyen & Hanh,

2025); the perceived AI control (PC) scale is inherited from the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and adjusted for the tourism technology context (Hu & Min, 2025); the trust in AI-generated content (TA) scale is based on research on trust in technology (Hu & Min, 2025). The GenAI usage behavior (BH) variable was adapted from studies on technology use behavior in tourism (Lin & Jiang, 2025).

Each latent variable is measured by 4-6 statements, using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). To ensure reliability and content validity, the questionnaire was developed based on a literature review, then revised through the opinions of two independent experts in the fields of tourism and market research. Prior to the official survey, a small pilot test with 50 tourists was conducted to check its clarity, comprehensibility, and contextual appropriateness. The results showed that there were no language or content barriers, so the scale was accepted for the official survey.

3.2 Context

The study was conducted in Ho Chi Minh City, one of the largest international tourism centers in Vietnam, which welcomes a large number of international tourists every year. The survey subjects were international tourists who were or had just completed a trip to Vietnam and had used at least one GenAI tool during their information search, planning, or interactive support during their trip.

3.3 Pretesting

Before the official survey, a pilot study with 50 similar subjects was conducted to check the clarity and appropriateness of the questions. The results showed that the scales achieved preliminary reliability (Cronbach's alpha > 0.70) and did not require significant content adjustment (Hair et al., 2021).

3.4 Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling method was applied to ensure that participants fully met the research criteria, namely having used GenAI in a tourism context. This approach focuses on a real-world user population, which is consistent with the goal of testing theoretical relationships in a concrete application environment.

To guarantee the relevance of responses, the survey included an initial screening question asking whether the participant had used at least one GenAI tool for travel-related purposes (e.g., information search, itinerary planning, translation, or on-trip assistance). Respondents who answered No to this question were not invited to complete the remainder of the survey.

3.5 Data Collection

Data were collected from October 2024 to May 2025 through in-person and online surveys. Prior to participating in the survey, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and were committed to protecting their personal data. The questionnaires were

distributed in areas with high concentrations of international tourists, such as airports, hotels, shopping malls, and major tourist attractions.

3.6 Sample Size

A total of 541 valid surveys were collected and included in the analysis. This sample size is considered appropriate for the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis, especially when the model has many latent variables and complex relationships (Hair et al., 2021).

3.7 Common Method Bias

To minimize common method bias, the study applied some precautions during the questionnaire design stage, such as ensuring anonymity for respondents, arranging questions in random order, and using diverse question formats. After data collection, Harman's single-factor test was conducted, showing that no single factor explained the majority (>50%) of the variance, thereby minimizing the risk of common method bias (Kock, 2015).

In addition to Harman's single-factor test, the study also applied the full collinearity test procedure as suggested by Kock (2015). The results showed that all VIF values were less than 3.3, confirming that common method bias was not a serious problem in the data. In addition, questionnaire design measures such as ensuring anonymity, mixing question order, and varying response formats were also implemented to reduce the risk of systematic bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

3.8 Data Analysis Process

In this study, PLS-SEM was chosen instead of CB-SEM because the research model includes many latent variables, has complex mediating relationships, and is exploratory in the context of emerging technology (Hair et al., 2021). This method is especially suitable for predictive-oriented studies, complex models with many new concepts, and when the data is difficult to meet the normal distribution assumption. In the field of tourism and hospitality, PLS-SEM is increasingly widely applied, especially in studies on technology acceptance, AI-based services, and smart tourism (Hu et al., 2025; Seyfi, Kim, Nazifi, et al., 2025; Tavitiyaman et al., 2024). Therefore, this is a solid methodological basis for testing the research model and hypotheses.

The analysis was performed using SmartPLS software, which allows simultaneous testing of the measurement model and the structural model. The analysis process consists of two stages: (1) evaluating the measurement model through factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE); (2) evaluating the structural model to test the research hypothesis through path coefficients, t-values, and p-values. In addition, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was also analyzed to measure the explanatory power of the model.

In addition to testing reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, the study used bootstrapping techniques with 10,000 replicates to determine the statistical significance of the path coefficients. In addition, the predictive fit of the model was also tested through the Q^2 index to strengthen the robustness of the results.

3.9 Ethical Consideration

This study complied with international ethical standards for research involving human participants, including the Ethical Principles of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017) and the European Code of Research Ethics (ALLEA, 2017). Prior to conducting the survey, all tourists were fully informed about the objectives, content, and their ability to refuse. Therefore, their participation was completely voluntary. Verbal consent was confirmed before they answered the questions. Personal demographic information was collected anonymously, and no other information about individuals was collected during the study.

4. Results

4.1 Sample Profile

A total of 541 international tourists participated in the survey, with a fairly balanced gender distribution. Of which, 52.5% were male, 46.6% were female, and 0.9% chose not to disclose or identify as another gender. In terms of age, the group with the highest proportion was from 25 to 34 years old (40.5%), followed by the 35-44 year old group (22.9%) and the 45-54 year old group (16.5%). The younger group from 18-24 years old accounted for 13.9%, while the group from 55 years old and above accounted for only 6.3%, indicating that the sample mainly focused on young and middle-aged tourists - those who tend to easily access and use new technologies such as GenAI. The educational level of survey participants was mostly high. Up to 70.1% had a university degree, 11.5% had a postgraduate degree, while only 10.4% had a secondary education or lower. About 8.1% of participants were unspecified or had other educational levels. The high educational level indicates a fairly high level of willingness to access and use new technologies such as GenAI among the survey group.

In terms of region of origin, the majority of tourists came from Europe (35.3%) and Asia (excluding Vietnam) with 34.0%. The group of tourists from North America accounted for 14.0%, followed by Oceania (5.9%), and other regions such as South America, Africa or unspecified accounted for 10.7%. This distribution clearly reflects the growing role of tourists from developed countries and regions, which have a high level of access to technology, in applying GenAI tools to support tourism.

In terms of the time of GenAI use during the journey, the results show that 48.9% of tourists use technology during the trip (real time), 37.7% use it before the trip to get ready, and 13.4% use it after the trip to give feedback or comments. This distribution shows that more

and more people are using GenAI throughout the whole tourism experience, from the planning stage to the on-site and post-trip stages.

In terms of the main uses of GenAI, the majority of respondents said they use the tool to find itinerary suggestions (30.8%) and local destination recommendations such as food or attractions (27.0%). Other purposes include language translation assistance (18.1%), providing cultural knowledge or behavioral advice (11.8%), and booking assistance (12.3%). These figures show that GenAI is being applied in a variety of ways, not only to serve information but also to support communication, cultural understanding and deeper personalized experiences during the journey.

Overall, the characteristics of the survey sample clearly demonstrate the suitability of the group of participants to the research objectives, that is, international tourists who have practical experiences with GenAI in the context of tourism in Vietnam, representing highly educated population groups, coming from many different regions, and having the habit of using technology throughout the journey.

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was assessed through internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and collinearity diagnostics, following Hair et al. (2021). An initial assessment showed that perceived ease of use (PE) and perceived AI control (PC) had relatively high Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values, suggesting potential item redundancy. To improve model parsimony and reduce redundancy, three indicators, PE2, PE3, and PC5, were removed because they showed the highest inter-item overlap based on the outer VIF results. Because these constructs were modeled reflectively, item removal was not based solely on statistical criteria. The decision also considered conceptual redundancy and semantic overlap among the indicators. The measurement model was then re-estimated, and the refined results are reported below.

Regarding internal reliability, the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) indices both exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, with Cronbach's Alpha ranging from 0.802 (PU) to 0.915 (PC) and Composite Reliability (CR) ranging from 0.872 (PU) to 0.938 (PC). This result shows that the scales have a high level of reliability and the observed variables in the same structure have good consistency (see Table 1).

Table 1: Measurement Model Results

Construct	Code	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Aalpha	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
GenAI Usage Behavior	BH1	0.798	0.895	0.923	0.705
	BH2	0.886			
	BH3	0.875			
	BH4	0.815			
	BH5	0.821			
Perceived AI Control	PC1	0.879	0.915	0.938	0.791
	PC2	0.912			
	PC3	0.895			
	PC4	0.872			
Perceived Ease of Use	PE1	0.793	0.903	0.932	0.775
	PE4	0.900			
	PE5	0.921			
	PE6	0.902			
Perceived Usefulness	PU1	0.730	0.802	0.872	0.630
	PU2	0.749			
	PU3	0.847			
	PU4	0.842			
Trust in AI	TA1	0.814	0.906	0.931	0.728
	TA2	0.836			
	TA3	0.873			
	TA4	0.900			
	TA5	0.842			

Convergent validity is assessed through factor loadings and AVE indices. According to the standards of Hair et al. (2021), the factor loading must be greater than 0.70 and the AVE must exceed the threshold of 0.50 to ensure that each construct explains enough of the variance of the observed variables. The results show that all factor loadings are in the range of 0.730 (PU1) and 0.921 (PE5), and the AVE values of the variables are all above 0.630 (PU) (shown in Table 1). Thus, the model meets the requirements of convergent validity.

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

HTMT Matrix					
	BH	PC	PE	PU	TA
BH					
PC	0.141				
PE	0.103	0.778			
PU	0.702	0.073	0.133		
TA	0.524	0.089	0.121	0.632	
Fornell Lacker Matrix					
	BH	PC	PE	PU	TA
BH	0.840				
PC	0.136	0.890			
PE	0.090	0.678	0.880		
PU	0.598	0.062	0.111	0.794	
TA	0.476	0.087	0.113	0.537	0.853

To test the discriminant validity, the HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio) method is applied. The HTMT results show that all pairs of variables have values below 0.85 (see Table 2), demonstrating that the constructs in the model are clearly distinguishable and do not overlap concepts.

Table 3: Multicollinearity Assessment (VIF Values)

	Variance Inflation Factor
PC -> BH	1.851
PC -> PU	1.849
PE -> BH	1.867
PE -> PU	1.849
PE -> TA	1.013
PU -> BH	1.411
PU -> TA	1.013
TA -> BH	1.412

In addition, the phenomenon of multicollinearity between independent variables in the structural model is also considered. According to the recommendation, the VIF value should be less than 3. The results show that all paths have VIF in the range of 1.013-1.867, indicating that there is no concern about multicollinearity (see Table 3).

Overall, the measurement model in this study fully met the evaluation criteria according to the guidelines of Hair et al. (2021). Therefore, the study can continue to analyze the structural model and test the hypothesis in the next stage.

4.3 Structural Model Assessment and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was assessed using PLS-SEM with a bootstrapping procedure of 10,000 resamples. Detailed coefficients and confidence intervals are provided in Tables 4, 5 and 6:

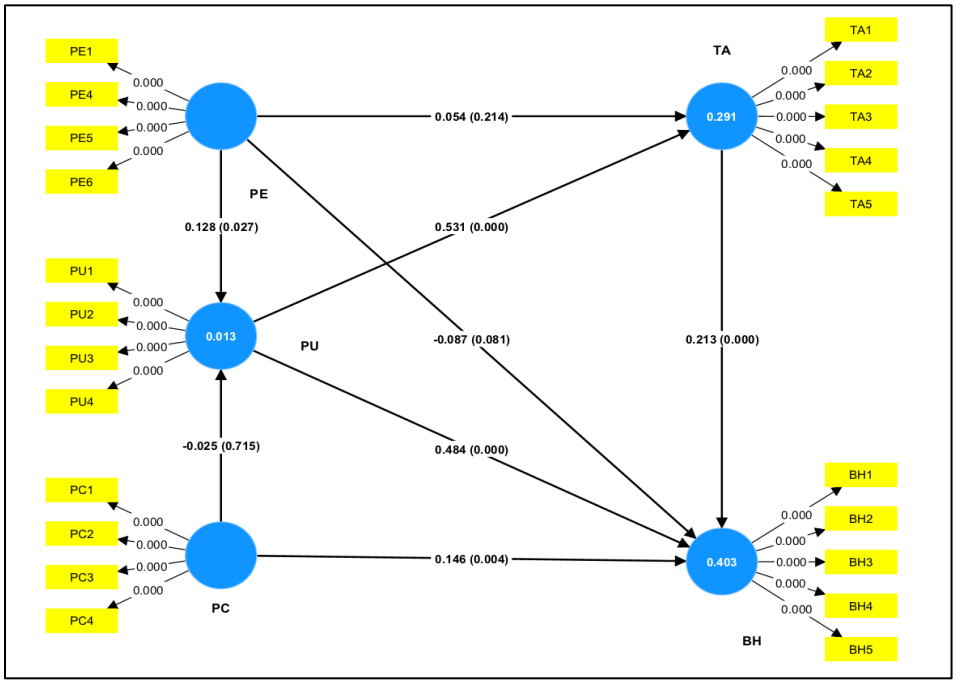

Figure 2: Structural Model with Standardized Path Coefficients

Table 4: Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Hypoth	Relationship	Path	STD	t statistic	2.5%	97.5%	P-values	Reference
H1	PE -> BH	-0.087	0.050	1.746	-0.190	0.008	0.081	Rejected
H2	PE -> TA	0.054	0.044	1.244	-0.042	0.133	0.214	Rejected
H3	PE -> PU	0.128	0.058	2.206	0.005	0.234	0.027	Supported
H4	PU -> BH	0.484	0.057	8.427	0.369	0.592	0.000	Supported
H5	PU -> TA	0.531	0.043	12.410	0.443	0.610	0.000	Supported
H6	PC -> BH	0.146	0.050	2.919	0.046	0.245	0.004	Supported
H7	PC -> PU	-0.025	0.068	0.366	-0.185	0.093	0.715	Rejected
H8	TA -> BH	0.213	0.042	5.074	0.131	0.295	0.000	Supported

The direct-effect results show that perceived ease of use (PE) did not significantly influence GenAI usage behavior (BH) ($\beta = -0.087$, $p = 0.081$); therefore, H1 was rejected. Similarly, PE did not significantly affect trust in AI-generated content (TA) ($\beta = 0.054$, $p = 0.214$), leading to the rejection of H2. However, PE had a positive and significant effect on perceived usefulness (PU) ($\beta = 0.128$, $p = 0.027$), supporting H3. These findings suggest that ease of use contributes to tourists' usefulness perceptions, but it does not directly translate into usage behavior or trust.

Perceived usefulness emerged as the strongest predictor in the model. PU had a significant positive effect on BH ($\beta = 0.484$, $p < 0.001$) and TA ($\beta = 0.531$, $p < 0.001$); thus, H4 and H5 were supported. These results indicate that international tourists are more likely to use GenAI when they perceive it as practically useful, and that usefulness also strengthens their trust in AI-generated travel content. Perceived AI control (PC) also had a significant positive effect on BH ($\beta = 0.146$, $p = 0.004$), supporting H6. However, PC did not significantly influence PU ($\beta = -0.025$, $p = 0.715$), so H7 was rejected. Finally, TA significantly predicted BH ($\beta = 0.213$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H8. Overall, five hypotheses were supported (H3, H4, H5, H6, and H8), while three hypotheses were rejected (H1, H2, and H7).

Table 5: Structural Model Results - Indirect Effects

Relationship	Path	STD	t-statistic	2.5%	97.5%	P-values
PC -> PU -> TA -> BH	-0.003	0.008	0.342	-0.024	0.010	0.732
PE -> PU -> TA	0.068	0.032	2.110	0.003	0.130	0.035
PC -> PU -> BH	-0.012	0.032	0.375	-0.085	0.045	0.708
PC -> PU -> TA	-0.013	0.036	0.365	-0.097	0.050	0.715
PE -> PU -> TA -> BH	0.015	0.008	1.898	0.002	0.031	0.058
PE -> PU -> BH	0.062	0.030	2.047	0.005	0.124	0.041
PE -> TA -> BH	0.012	0.010	1.140	-0.008	0.032	0.254
PU -> TA -> BH	0.113	0.025	4.580	0.069	0.165	0.000

The indirect-effect results provide further evidence for the mediating mechanisms in the model (see Table 5). The indirect effect of PE on BH through PU was significant ($\beta = 0.062$, $p = 0.041$), while the direct effect of PE on BH was not significant. This suggests that PU fully mediates the relationship between PE and GenAI usage behavior, although this finding should be interpreted cautiously given the low R^2 of PU. PE also had a significant indirect effect on TA through PU ($\beta = 0.068$, $p = 0.035$), indicating that PU fully mediates the PE-TA relationship. By contrast, the indirect pathway PE → TA → BH was not significant ($\beta = 0.012$, $p = 0.254$), and the sequential pathway PE → PU → TA → BH was only marginally significant ($\beta = 0.015$, $p = 0.058$). For PU, the indirect effect on BH through TA was significant ($\beta = 0.113$, $p < 0.001$); because the direct effect of PU on BH also remained significant, TA partially mediates the PU-BH relationship. Finally, none of the indirect effects from PC through PU or TA were significant, suggesting that PC influences GenAI usage behavior directly rather than through usefulness or trust.

Table 6: Structural Model Results -Total Effects

Relationship	Path	STD	t-statistic	2.5%	97.5%	P-values
PC -> BH	0.131	0.061	2.163	-0.001	0.242	0.031
PC -> PU	-0.025	0.068	0.366	-0.185	0.093	0.715
PC -> TA	-0.013	0.036	0.365	-0.097	0.050	0.715
PE -> BH	0.001	0.056	0.018	-0.128	0.098	0.986
PE -> PU	0.128	0.058	2.206	0.005	0.234	0.027
PE -> TA	0.122	0.052	2.334	0.006	0.216	0.020
PU -> BH	0.597	0.047	12.620	0.496	0.682	0.000
PU -> TA	0.531	0.043	12.410	0.443	0.610	0.000
TA -> BH	0.213	0.042	5.074	0.131	0.295	0.000

The total-effect results further confirm the central role of perceived usefulness in the model (see Table 6). PU had the strongest total effect on GenAI usage behavior (BH) ($\beta = 0.597$, $p < 0.001$), followed by trust in AI-generated content (TA) ($\beta = 0.213$, $p < 0.001$). PU also exerted a strong total effect on TA ($\beta = 0.531$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that tourists' trust in GenAI content is largely shaped by the perceived practical value of the tool. Perceived AI control (PC) showed a weak positive total effect on BH ($\beta = 0.131$, $p = 0.031$), although the confidence interval was close to zero, suggesting that this effect should be interpreted cautiously. By contrast, PC had no significant total effects on PU or TA. PE showed significant total effects on PU ($\beta = 0.128$, $p = 0.027$) and TA ($\beta = 0.122$, $p = 0.020$), but its total effect on BH was not significant ($\beta = 0.001$, $p = 0.986$). Overall, these findings indicate that PU is the dominant mechanism driving GenAI usage, TA plays a meaningful but secondary role, and PE affects usage only indirectly through usefulness- and trust-related pathways rather than through a direct behavioral effect.

4.4 Explanatory Power, Effect Size, and Predictive Relevance

In addition to path coefficients, the explanatory power and predictive relevance of the model were evaluated using the adjusted R^2, effect size (f^2), and Stone-Geisser's Q^2 statistics.

The adjusted R^2 values indicate that the model explains a substantial proportion of variance in GenAI usage behavior (BH) ($R^2adj = 0.399$, $p < 0.001$) and a moderate proportion in trust in AI-generated content (TA) ($R^2adj = 0.288$, $p < 0.001$). By contrast, the variance explained in perceived usefulness (PU) was minimal ($R^2adj = 0.009$, n.s.), suggesting that neither perceived ease of use nor perceived AI control contributes meaningfully to PU in this context (see Appendix H). This low R^2 value indicates a boundary condition of the model. Specifically, PU should not be interpreted as a well-explained endogenous construct, because PE and perceived AI control do not meaningfully account for how tourists form usefulness perceptions. However, this does not weaken the role of PU as a key predictor; rather, it shows that PU operates mainly as a value-based driver of trust and GenAI usage behavior in this model. A plausible explanation is that, in GenAI-assisted tourism, tourists judge usefulness less by ease of use or control and more by travel-specific performance, such as accuracy, personalization, contextual relevance, real-time support, and problem-solving ability. Future research should therefore examine these more proximal antecedents to better explain the formation of PU.

Table 7: Effect Size Assessment (f^2)

	Original Sample	Sample Mean	STD	t-statistic	P-values
PC -> BH	0.019	0.022	0.014	1.420	0.156
PC -> PU	0.000	0.003	0.005	0.068	0.946
PE -> BH	0.007	0.009	0.008	0.817	0.414
PE -> PU	0.009	0.011	0.009	1.055	0.292
PE -> TA	0.004	0.007	0.008	0.540	0.589
PU -> BH	0.278	0.282	0.085	3.272	0.001
PU -> TA	0.392	0.403	0.090	4.361	0.000
TA -> BH	0.054	0.057	0.021	2.557	0.011

The f^2 indices help clarify the relative importance of the predictor variables in the model (see Table 7). The results show that perceived usefulness (PU) has the largest impact on GenAI usage behavior ($f^2 = 0.278$, $p = 0.001$), and also contributes strongly to the formation of trust in AI-generated content (TA) ($f^2 = 0.392$, $p < 0.001$). Trust (TA) itself also has a smaller but still significant impact on GenAI usage behavior ($f^2 = 0.054$, $p = 0.011$). In contrast, ease of use (PE) and perceived AI control (PC) barely yield significant f^2 values for any of the dependent variables ($p > 0.30$), thereby reinforcing the conclusion that the influence of these two variables in the model is quite limited.

In terms of predictive fit, the Q^2 indices obtained from the blindfolding procedure provide additional important information (see Appendix J). GenAI usage behavior (BH) ($Q^2 = 0.278$) and trust (TA) ($Q^2 = 0.209$) both achieved moderate predictive fit, confirming that the model has a fairly good predictive ability for these two variables. In contrast, PU has a Q^2 close to zero ($Q^2 = 0.006$), reflecting poor predictive ability in a context dominated by existing exogenous variables.

Taken together, these results show that the structural model has acceptable performance in predicting GenAI usage behavior and trust, and shed light on the role of PU as a central variable, acting as a "value conduit" rather than an outcome explained by PE or PC. This result also reinforces previous hypotheses tests, where PU emerges as the key mechanism linking trust to behavior, while PC contributes directly to behavior but does not shape perceptions of usefulness.

5. Discussion and Contributions

5.1 Discussion

This study provides a more nuanced understanding of GenAI usage behavior in tourism by showing that international tourists do not adopt GenAI simply because it is easy to use.

Instead, their usage behavior is mainly shaped by a value-credibility-control logic. Perceived usefulness emerged as the strongest driver of GenAI usage behavior and the strongest antecedent of trust in AI-generated content. Trust also had a significant effect on usage behavior, but its role was more complementary than dominant. Perceived AI control contributed directly to usage, whereas perceived ease of use influenced behavior only indirectly through perceived usefulness.

These findings partly confirm the continuing relevance of TAM, but they also refine its explanatory logic in the GenAI tourism context. Consistent with prior studies on AI and tourism, usefulness remains central because tourists are more likely to use GenAI when it provides concrete travel value, such as itinerary support, local recommendations, translation, and real-time problem solving (Hu et al., 2025; Kang et al., 2024). However, this study adds a sharper point: usefulness does not only lead to usage behavior; it also builds trust in AI-generated content. In other words, tourists appear to trust GenAI not because it is intelligent in an abstract sense, but because it is useful in practical travel situations. This helps explain why perceived usefulness produced both the strongest direct effect on usage behavior and a strong indirect effect through trust.

The role of trust is another important finding. Previous studies have emphasized that tourists may hesitate to rely on GenAI because AI-generated information can be difficult to verify, especially in travel planning and destination decision-making (Kang et al., 2024; Topsakal, 2025). The present study supports this view, but it also clarifies that trust should not be treated as a replacement for usefulness. Rather, trust works as a credibility mechanism that strengthens tourists' confidence in useful AI-generated travel support. This is particularly relevant for international tourists in Vietnam, who may face language barriers, unfamiliar local contexts, and uncertainty when evaluating travel information. In such situations, trust helps reduce perceived risk, but practical usefulness remains the primary reason for continued GenAI use.

The finding on perceived AI control further extends technology adoption research. Perceived AI control had a significant direct effect on GenAI usage behavior, but it did not significantly predict perceived usefulness. This suggests that feeling able to guide, adjust, or redirect AI-generated recommendations encourages tourists to keep using GenAI, even if this sense of control does not necessarily make the tool seem more useful. This result is theoretically important because it separates "being in control" from "perceiving usefulness." In GenAI-assisted tourism, control may function less as a cognitive evaluation of system performance and more as a sense of agency during interaction. This is consistent with emerging work on control and trust in human-AI or service robot contexts (Hu & Min, 2025; Zhou et al., 2022), but it extends this discussion to international tourism behavior.

By contrast, perceived ease of use showed a limited role. It did not directly predict GenAI usage behavior or trust, although it had a weak positive effect on perceived usefulness and an indirect effect on usage through usefulness. This finding does not mean that ease of use is irrelevant. Rather, it suggests that in the context of conversational GenAI, especially

among international tourists already familiar with digital tools, ease of use may have become a basic expectation rather than a decisive adoption factor. Therefore, the role of perceived ease of use in TAM should be interpreted more carefully in GenAI settings. It may matter most at the entry stage of interaction, but once tourists become familiar with prompt-based tools, their continued use depends more on whether GenAI provides accurate, relevant, controllable, and trustworthy travel support.

Overall, the study refines TAM by showing that GenAI adoption in tourism is not driven by a simple ease-usefulness-behavior sequence. Instead, the findings reveal a more differentiated structure: usefulness is the dominant value driver, trust is a credibility mechanism, perceived AI control is an independent agency-based driver, and ease of use plays only an indirect and reduced role. This interpretation is especially meaningful in the context of international tourists in an emerging destination, where technology adoption is shaped not only by system features but also by travel uncertainty, cultural unfamiliarity, and the need for reliable local information.

5.2. Theoretical Contributions

First, this study refines TAM by clarifying the unequal but complementary roles of perceived usefulness and trust in AI-generated content. The findings show that PU remains the dominant driver of GenAI usage behavior, while TA has a smaller but significant supporting effect. Thus, trust should not be viewed as replacing usefulness, but as a credibility-based mechanism that strengthens the value-based logic of TAM in the GenAI tourism context.

Second, the study clarifies the role of perceived usefulness as a variable that both directly and indirectly influences behavior. PU not only directly impacts BH but also increases trust in GenAI, thereby promoting stronger behavior. This extends the theoretical framework by viewing PU not only as a mere output of cognition but also as an important mediating mechanism leading to the formation of trust.

Third, the study establishes perceived AI control (PC) as an independent variable that directly influences usage behavior. Unlike traditional models that often ignore this factor, the results show that tourists are willing to maintain their behavior when they feel they have control and adjust the content generated by AI. This is a new contribution in linking the theory of technological behavior with the concept of user empowerment.

Fourth, this study advances GenAI tourism research by distinguishing between trust formation and usage behavior as two related but different outcomes. The findings show that trust in AI-generated content significantly predicts GenAI usage behavior, but its effect is smaller than that of perceived usefulness. This suggests that trust functions as a credibility mechanism rather than the primary adoption driver. Tourists may continue using GenAI mainly because it is useful, while trust helps reduce uncertainty and strengthen confidence in AI-generated travel information.

Fifth, this study identifies an important boundary condition of TAM in the GenAI tourism context. Perceived ease of use did not significantly predict GenAI usage behavior, and the model explained very little variance in perceived usefulness. This finding suggests that usefulness perceptions may not be formed mainly through ease of use or perceived AI control in conversational AI settings. Future studies should therefore examine more proximal antecedents of perceived usefulness, such as information accuracy, personalization quality, contextual relevance, real-time responsiveness, and problem-solving ability.

5.3 Practical Implications

First, the findings suggest that tourism GenAI applications should prioritize practical usefulness before general trust-building features. Since perceived usefulness is the strongest driver of GenAI usage behavior, developers and tourism service providers should focus on functions that deliver concrete travel value, such as accurate itinerary suggestions, relevant local recommendations, real-time support, translation assistance, and problem-solving during unexpected travel situations. Trust should then be embedded as a credibility layer within these useful functions, for example by linking recommendations to recognizable local tourism sources or allowing tourists to verify important travel information.

Second, the results show that perceived AI control has a direct effect on GenAI usage behavior. This suggests that GenAI applications should allow tourists to actively guide, adjust, and redirect AI-generated recommendations. Practical functions may include editable travel preferences, adjustable budgets, flexible itinerary options, source selection, and the ability to refine or reject suggestions. These control mechanisms are important because they make tourists feel less dependent on AI outputs and more empowered in their travel decision-making.

Third, tourism firms should design GenAI tools around the full tourist journey rather than only the pre-trip planning stage. The GenAI usage behavior scale in this study covers pre-trip planning, itinerary building, in-trip recommendations, unexpected problem solving, and post-trip sharing. Therefore, GenAI services should support tourists before, during, and after travel. For example, hotels, destination management organizations, and travel platforms can integrate GenAI features for trip preparation, real-time local guidance, cultural advice, emergency support, and post-trip review assistance.

Fourth, marketing communication should emphasize performance, reliability, and decision support rather than only ease of use. The insignificant role of perceived ease of use suggests that international tourists may already regard GenAI tools as relatively easy to operate. Therefore, promotional messages should focus on what GenAI can help tourists achieve: saving time, improving itinerary quality, accessing context-relevant recommendations, reducing uncertainty, and supporting more confident travel decisions. This is likely to be more persuasive than simply claiming that the tool is user-friendly.

Finally, for Vietnam's smart tourism development, the findings imply that GenAI should be connected with locally credible tourism information systems. Rather than treating trust as a broad ethical principle, destination managers can strengthen tourists' confidence by integrating GenAI tools with official destination data, verified business information, multilingual visitor guidance, and up-to-date local recommendations. This approach can help international tourists use GenAI more confidently while supporting Vietnam's positioning as a more intelligent, responsive, and tourist-centered destination.

6. Conclusion

This study developed and tested an integrated PLS-SEM model to explain international tourists' GenAI usage behavior in tourism. Drawing on data from 541 international tourists in Ho Chi Minh City, the findings show that perceived usefulness is the strongest driver of GenAI usage behavior and also the main antecedent of trust in AI-generated content. Trust has a significant but secondary effect on usage behavior, suggesting that it works as a credibility-based mechanism that supports, rather than replaces, the practical value of GenAI. Perceived AI control also directly influences usage behavior, indicating that tourists are more likely to use GenAI when they feel able to guide, adjust, and redirect AI-generated travel support.

By contrast, perceived ease of use does not directly affect GenAI usage behavior or trust, although it has a weak positive effect on perceived usefulness. In addition, the low explained variance of perceived usefulness suggests that tourists' usefulness perceptions may depend more on travel-specific performance factors, such as accuracy, personalization, contextual relevance, real-time responsiveness, and problem-solving capacity, than on ease of use or perceived control.

Overall, the study refines TAM in the GenAI tourism context by showing that usefulness remains the core adoption logic, while trust and perceived AI control provide additional but distinct explanatory mechanisms. Practically, the findings suggest that tourism GenAI systems should prioritize concrete travel value, credible information, and user control. For emerging destinations such as Vietnam, integrating GenAI tools with verified local tourism information and multilingual support can help international tourists make more confident and effective travel decisions.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that open more specific directions for future research. First, the model explained GenAI usage behavior and trust reasonably well, but it explained very little variance in perceived usefulness. This indicates that PE and perceived AI control are insufficient antecedents of PU in GenAI-assisted tourism. Future studies should examine more proximal usefulness drivers, such as information accuracy, personalization quality, contextual relevance, response timeliness, hallucination awareness, and perceived problem-solving ability. Second, this study measured GenAI usage behavior across broad travel stages, but it did not distinguish

between different task types. Tourists may evaluate GenAI differently when using it for low-risk tasks, such as itinerary inspiration, compared with high-risk tasks, such as safety decisions, booking choices, or cultural advice. Future research should test whether task criticality, decision risk, or information verifiability moderates the effects of PU, TA, and PC on usage behavior.

Third, although the study focused on international tourists in Ho Chi Minh City, it did not directly measure cross-cultural travel frictions, such as language barriers, cultural distance, destination familiarity, or prior experience with Vietnam. Future studies should include these variables to clarify when trust and control become more important in GenAI-supported travel decision-making. Fourth, the study relied on self-reported GenAI usage. Future research could combine survey data with behavioral indicators, such as prompt logs, app interaction records, recommendation acceptance rates, or real-time travel decision data. Such designs would provide stronger evidence of how tourists actually use GenAI before, during, and after trips. Finally, this study did not compare different GenAI systems or interface modes. Future research could examine whether text-based, voice-based, multimodal, or destination-integrated GenAI tools produce different levels of usefulness, trust, control, and usage behavior. This would help refine technology acceptance theory for more specific forms of GenAI in tourism.

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Declaration of AI Use

The author confirms that to improve the professional quality and clarity of the English language, QuillBot AI was used only as a language editing and proofreading tool, mainly for grammar checking, sentence refinement, and academic readability. The intellectual content, theoretical framing, empirical analysis, discussion, and conclusions were fully developed by the author.

Data Availability

The datasets are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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