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Utilizing social media to promote responsible tourism: Applying the technology acceptance model and source credibility theory

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES: The rapid growth of social media has significantly influenced tourist behavior, presenting an opportunity to promote responsible tourism. However, limited studies have explored the factors influencing tourists' intention to use social media for responsible tourism. This study integrates the Technology Acceptance Model and Source Credibility Theory to examine key determinants affecting tourists' behavioral intentions.

METHODS: A quantitative research approach was adopted, utilizing an online survey to collect data from 400 Thai tourists using social media. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling was employed to analyze the relationships between Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, Expertise, and Trustworthiness on the intention to use social media for responsible tourism.

FINDINGS: The results indicate that Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, Expertise, and Trustworthiness all have a significant and positive influence on tourists' intention to utilize social media for responsible tourism. The structural model demonstrated strong explanatory power with a coefficient of determination value of 0.701, supporting the relevance of the proposed framework. These findings highlight the crucial role of social media in promoting responsible tourism and provide valuable insights for developing targeted interventions and awareness campaigns to foster sustainable tourism practices.

CONCLUSION: This study provides empirical evidence supporting the integration of the Technology Acceptance Model and Source Credibility Theory in explaining social media adoption for responsible tourism. This study serves as a foundation for advancing conceptual models and frameworks to support responsible tourism.

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INTRODUCTION

Thailand's tourist industry is regarded as one of the country's primary economic drivers. Tourism is a major service-oriented trade sector closely connected with various production industries. Thailand was one of the top 10 most popular international visitor destinations according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (UNWTO, 2021). However, although tourism has created enormous economic benefits, it has been found that promoting the concept of socially and environmentally responsible tourism has not yet become widely popular among Thai tourists (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2024). According to 2024 data (Fig. 1), Thailand's tourism development index ranks 47th out of 119 countries, 107th in terms of travel and tourism sustainability, and 66th in terms of enabling environment for tourism (World Economic Forum, 2024). If not properly managed, it may lead to negative impacts on tourist attractions in the long term, such as the closure of Maya Bay, Krabi Province, which is caused by the impact of a huge number of tourists that destroy the marine ecosystem and cause the degradation of environmental resources. The decision to close Maya Bay is a proactive action by Thai authorities to restore natural resources (Koh & Fakfare, 2020). In the context that sustainable tourism has become a key issue. The use of technology and social media has played an important role in promoting tourism. Tourism operators utilize technological media to create tourism ideologies, aiming to reach target audiences and motivate people to travel (Leung et al., 2013). Presenting engaging and concise content encourages tourists to explore destinations and gain travel inspiration. Examples include recommendations for destinations and activities, eco-friendly travel practices, or travel reviews, which stimulate tourists' desire to travel and allow them to plan trips immediately (Chung & Koo, 2015). Social media has become an essential tool in supporting tourism, leading to studies on its applications in this sector (Singh & Srivastava, 2019; Wang et al., 2022). For instance, research has examined the use of social media for trip planning (Cheunkamon et al., 2020) and hotel reviews (Bae & Han, 2020). These studies often employ the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Davis (Davis, 1989), which was derived from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by Fishbein and Ajzen (Douglass, 1977). TAM evaluates

technology adoption based on users' Perceived Ease of Use (PEoU) and Perceived Usefulness (PU). These factors influence users' Behavioral Intentions (BI) and Actual technology Usage (AU). PU refers to users' perception that technology enhances efficiency or benefits daily life, while PEoU focuses on the ease with which users can utilize the technology (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). The integration of TAM and Source Credibility Theory (SCT) (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) provides a framework for understanding how people engage with sustainable tourism content on social media platforms. TAM offers insights into users' acceptance of technology, while SCT underscores the importance of credibility, expertise, and the appeal of information sources in influencing attitudes and behaviors. Hovland proposed the Source Credibility Theory, which explains the factors that make information from a source influential to its audience (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Credible sources can foster trust and increase the likelihood of behavioral changes based on their recommendations. Celebrity endorsers have become significant social representatives, with their credibility studied as a key factor influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors (Ohanian, 1990). The theory conceptualizes source credibility in terms of perceived expertise and trustworthiness. Applying this theory in the context of social media helps us understand why content from credible creators, such as travel experts or influencers, has a substantial impact on tourist behavior. Previous research has demonstrated that credible sources have a significant impact on tourist behavior. Their credibility significantly influences the intentions of their audience (Qiu et al., 2024), and this is a crucial factor in encouraging responsible behaviors (Qiu et al., 2023). Although there is research on the use of social media in tourism, only a few studies have presented the use of social media for sustainable tourism management (Hysa et al., 2022) or responsible tourism. The objective of this study is to fill this gap by investigating the factors—source credibility on social media and technology acceptance—that influence tourists' intentions to use social media to support responsible behaviors. The research survey was collected from Thai tourists in 2024. The findings of this research can be applied to the design of social media campaigns that encourage tourists to adopt environmentally friendly practices during their travels while also raising awareness of

environmental issues. Additionally, these initiatives support the more general objectives of encouraging a more responsible and sustainable tourism sector.

Literature review

Social media and tourism

Social media plays a crucial part in the tourist sector because it allows consumers to rapidly and efficiently search for, share, and compare information about various destinations. According to the 2024 Thai Tourist Data Survey, Thai tourists often share their experiences from various tourist attractions, including photo spots, scenic spots, restaurants, beverages, hotels, and accommodations. Local activities, including travel routes through social media such as Facebook, and use Facebook as a channel for positive word of mouth, more than 80 percent (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2024). Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) found that social media plays an important role in various elements of tourism, particularly in information search, decision-making behavior, tourism promotion, and consumer engagement. Leveraging social media is considered an excellent strategy for marketing tourism products. Social media has become a key source of information influencing tourists' decisions regarding destination selection and trip planning. Xiang and Gretzel (2010) discovered that social media is crucial in trip planning, especially via search engines, successfully engaging customer attention. Consumers engage with content on social media by sharing their own experiences in various forms, such as posting stories,

comments, photos, and videos. This interactive dynamic gives social media a direct influence on tourists' travel intentions. Social media is not merely a communication platform but also a space where travelers can exchange experiences and inspire others (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

TAM

Davis (1989) proposed the TAM, which integrates fundamental concepts from technology models with the TRA to explain the factors influencing users' acceptance and use of technology. The relationships and components of TAM are shown in Fig. 2. As illustrated in Fig. 2, the model begins by considering external variables that influence users' perceptions, namely Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use. If users perceive the technology as beneficial and easy to use, this will positively affect their attitude, leading to behavioral intention and, ultimately, actual technology adoption. In the context of online tourism, TAM has been used to explain tourists' intentions to use various applications and online platforms (Bano & Siddiqui, 2024; Chen & Tsai, 2019; Phaosathianphan & Leelasantitham, 2020). For example, applications for hotel booking or flight ticket purchases that offer convenience and reliable information, as well as the use of social media for tourism-related purposes, such as trip planning, accommodation reviews, and destination recommendations, are effectively captured within the TAM framework, as demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1 presents studies examining the use of

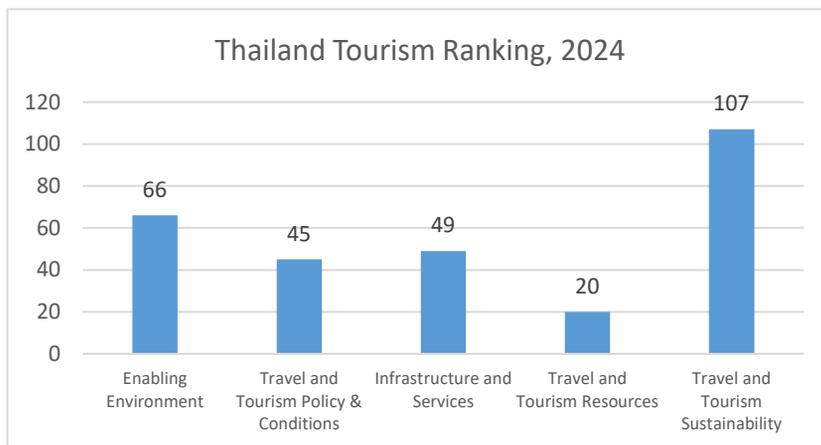


Fig. 1: Thailand's tourism rankings (World Economic Forum, 2024)

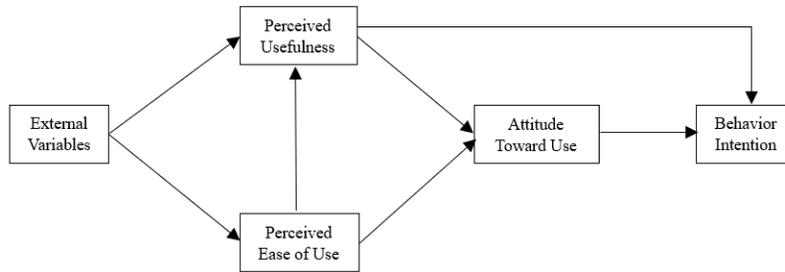


Fig. 2: A schematic of TAM (Davis et al., 1989)

Table 1: Related research about social media in tourism using TAM

Context	Theories	Purpose
Social media for outbound leisure travel (Singh & Srivastava, 2019)	TAM	The utilization of social media by Indian travelers who are traveling abroad.
Generation Y's tourism activity in social media (Kowalczyk-Anioł and Nowacki, 2020)	TAM	Study the factors influencing tourism-related social media activities of Generation Y.
Social media for travel planning (Cheunkamon et al., 2020)	TAM, TPB	The utilization of social media platforms for travel planning.
Online hotel reviews (Bae & Han, 2020)	TAM, Cultural Consonance	Study the factors influencing the acceptance of UGC websites for travel planning among Generation Y.
Short video apps (Wang et al., 2022)	TAM	Explore the factors influencing the intention to use short video apps for travel planning and decision-making.
Short tourism video (Liu et al., 2023)	TAM, SOR	Study the key factors of short videos that influence tourism intention to help develop strategies for tourism destinations.

social media in tourism, employing TAM as the foundational theory to investigate factors influencing tourists' intentions or behaviors when using social media. For instance, one study explored the use of social media by Indian tourists traveling abroad, particularly for leisure purposes, to develop a comprehensive framework encompassing various factors influencing social media usage in the travel process (Singh & Srivastava, 2019). The research utilized Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use as key factors, as these user perception factors significantly influence users' intentions or acceptance of technology.

SCT

SCT, proposed by Hovland, explores how the credibility of a source influences the decision-making and behavior of its audience (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Source credibility refers to the positive attributes of a message source that impact the audience's acceptance of information. Messages delivered by credible presenters tend to have a significant influence on the beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and behaviors

of recipients (Amos et al., 2008; Kang & Namkung, 2019). Source credibility comprises two main factors: trustworthiness, which refers to the audience's perception of the source as honest and reliable, and expertise, which denotes the audience's recognition of the source's knowledge and competence in the subject matter being presented (Ohanian, 1990). Research in the tourism context indicates that credible sources, such as tourism influencers who possess expertise and trustworthiness, can enhance tourists' intentions to travel (Dedeoglu, 2019; González-Rodríguez et al., 2022; Qiu et al., 2024). Social media amplifies the role of credible sources, such as influencers and tourism experts, by allowing them to influence tourists' behavior and improve confidence in destination choosing.

Hypothesis

This study is grounded in the integration of the TAM and SCT to investigate the factors influencing tourists' behaviors and Intentions to use social media to support responsible tourism (IU), as illustrated in Fig. 3.

PU

PU represents the level to which users believe that technology can improve their performance, as defined in TAM by Davis (Davis, 1989). For example, users who perceive that social media platforms make it easier and faster to access information or plan their trips are more likely to accept and use these platforms. Research by Doanh et al. (Doanh et al., 2022) highlights that perceived usefulness positively impacts users' intentions to adopt technology. Therefore, a hypothesis is proposed:

H1: PU positively influences the intention to use social media for responsible tourism.

PEoU

PEoU represents the level to which people believe that technology is simple and uncomplicated. It is a key factor in TAM and can be defined as the perception that social media platforms are straightforward to use and reduce the complexity of accessing information and making decisions (Davis, 1989). This construct has been widely used in numerous studies, which consistently demonstrate that ease of use significantly influences the intention to adopt technology (Doanh et al., 2022; Joo & Sang, 2013). Accordingly, a hypothesis is proposed:

H2: PEoU positively influences the intention to use social media for responsible tourism.

EX

EX refers to the level of knowledge and proficiency of a source, which is perceived as credible and capable of providing accurate and valuable information (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). In the scope of social media, users tend to trust information from expert sources, such as travel experts or influencers, as this information enhances their confidence in choosing destinations (Ohanian, 1990). Expertise has been extensively studied and is shown to influence the attitudes, inspiration, intentions, and behaviors of users (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2025; Yilmazdoğan et al., 2021). Based on this, a hypothesis is proposed:

H3: EX of the source positively influences the intention to use social media for responsible tourism.

TR

TR refers to the perception that a source is sincere, honest, and reliable in presenting information (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). The credibility of a source significantly impacts customer behavior, especially within the field of social media. When users perceive a source as trustworthy, their intention to follow recommendations, especially when planning travel, can increase (Amos et al., 2008). Numerous studies have utilized trustworthiness as a factor and have found that it significantly impacts users' attitudes,

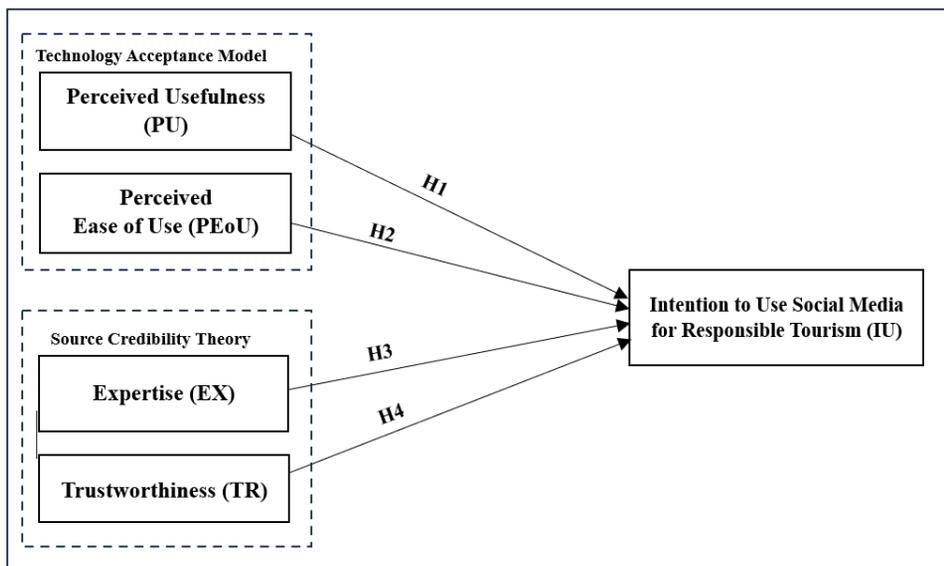


Fig. 3: Proposed research model

intentions, and behaviors (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2025; Yilmazdoğan et al., 2021). Based on this, a hypothesis is proposed:

H4: TR of the source positively influences the intention to use social media for responsible tourism.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sampling and data collection

The data collecting method uses an online questionnaire via Google Forms, distributed through social media to collect information from a sample of 400 Thai visitors who are active social media users. The questionnaire was developed based on TAM and SCT and consisted of three sections, with a total of 15 selected questions, as shown in Table 2.

The first section focused on general information related to demographic characteristics. The second section included questions about key factors: Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, expertise, trustworthiness, and the intention to use social media. The third section comprised

open-ended questions, allowing respondents to provide additional opinions and recommendations. Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 representing “strongly disapprove” and 5 representing “strongly agree.” Additionally, before conducting the main testing, the quality of the research instrument was assessed through a pilot test. The evaluation employed the internal consistency method using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, which should not be lower than 0.7. The questionnaire utilized in this study received approval from the Center for Ethics in Human Research at Mahidol University, with the reference number COE No. MU CIRB 2025/001.0301 Before the questionnaire could be used to collect data, this approval was required.

Data analysis

Statistics are utilized in research to investigate causal correlations. SmartPLS was utilized to conduct the study with the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method. The analysis

Table 2: The measuring items in the questionnaire

Construct	Items	Question	Source
Perceived Usefulness	PU1	You have received useful information about responsible tourism via social media.	(Davis et al., 1989; Qiu et al., 2023)
	PU2	Using social media enhances followers’ understanding of responsible tourism.	
	PU3	Social media helps support decision-making in selecting responsible tourism activities more effectively.	
Perceived Ease of Use	PEoU1	You feel that accessing information about responsible tourism through social media is easy.	(Davis et al., 1989; Qiu et al., 2023)
	PEoU2	You feel that using social media to share content about responsible tourism is simple.	
	PEoU2	Learning how to use social media to view and share content about responsible tourism is easy for you.	
Expertise	EX1	You believe that travel influencers on social media are knowledgeable about tourist destinations.	(Ayeh, 2015; Qiu et al., 2023)
	EX2	You believe that travel influencers on social media often research and learn from sources about responsible tourism.	
	EX3	You believe that travel influencers on social media often provide useful information about destinations.	
Trustworthiness	TR1	You believe that travel influencers on social media would not present themselves as experts if they lack sufficient knowledge.	(Ayeh, 2015; Qiu et al., 2023)
	TR2	You believe that travel influencers on social media express their opinions about tourism honestly.	
	TR3	You believe that travel influencers on social media present tourism information with sincerity.	
Intention to Use social media for responsible tourism	IU1	I expect to use social media to share content about responsible tourism in the future.	(Chung et al., 2015; Venkatesh et al., 2003)
	IU2	I plan to share posts or information about reducing environmental impacts through social media in the future.	
	IU3	I expect to use social media to access reviews and information about responsible tourism in the future.	

includes two main types: measurement model evaluation and structural model analysis (Hair Jr et al., 2023)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics

Data was gathered from a sample of 400 Thai tourists utilizing social media, as indicated by the survey. Table 3 summarizes the results, including the demographic characteristics of the respondents, categorized into four groups: gender, age, education, and monthly income.

The data in Table 3 shows that the respondents included 98 males and 302 females, representing 24.5% and 75.5% of the respondents, respectively. The largest number of respondents were aged 25 to 34 years, representing 39.8% of the sample. Notably, respondents aged 18 to 24 years and those over 55 years comprised similar proportions, representing 6.8% and 7.8%, respectively. Regarding education, the majority of respondents had either completed

or were pursuing a bachelor’s degree, representing 78.5% of the sample. In terms of income, the largest group reported a monthly income of 30,001–50,000 baht, representing 53.3%, followed by those earning 15,000–30,000 baht, representing 31.8% of the respondents.

Measurement model

The assessment of the variables’ quality was performed according to the criteria outlined in the measurement model, considering Composite Reliability, Cronbach’s α , and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), as shown in Table 4. The analysis results revealed that the Composite Reliability values for each latent variable ranged from 0.793 to 0.935, meeting the required threshold of no less than 0.7. Similarly, Cronbach’s α values ranged from 0.718 to 0.875, also conforming to the specified criteria. Moreover, the AVE values ranged from 0.617 to 0.940, exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.5. The survey items used to assess quality showed outer

Table 3: Summary of participants’ demographic characteristics

Variables	Categories	N	% of Responded
Gender	Male	97	24.2%
	Female	303	75.8%
	Total	400	100
Age	18-24	27	6.8%
	25-34	159	39.8%
	35-44	111	27.8%
	45-54	72	18%
	Over 55	31	7.8%
	Total	400	100
	Education	Undergraduate	3
Bachelor		314	78.5%
Master		79	19.8%
Doctorate		4	1%
Total		400	100
Income	<15,000	20	5%
	15,000 - 30,000	127	31.8%
	30,001 – 50,000	213	53.3%
	50,001 – 70,000	35	8.8%
	>70,001	5	1.3%
	Total	400	100

loading values between 0.711 and 0.959, meeting the minimum threshold of 0.7, indicating strong correlations between the indicators and the latent variables. The reliability of the survey items for measurement in this study was confirmed to meet

the specified criteria.

Table 5 presents the results of the Fornell-Larcker criterion-based discriminant validity assessment. The square roots of the AVE for each construct are shown by the bold diagonal values, whereas the off-diagonal

Table 4: Internal consistency, reliability, and convergent validity

Constructs	Items	Outer Loading	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability	AVE
Perceived Usefulness	PU1	0.778	0.718	0.793	0.617
	PU2	0.711			
	PU3	0.876			
Perceived Ease of Use	PEoU1	0.923	0.856	0.874	0.873
	PEoU2	0.946			
	PEoU2	0.912			
Expertise	EX1	0.859	0.816	0.820	0.730
	EX2	0.871			
	EX3	0.832			
Trustworthiness	TR1	0.923	0.875	0.935	0.940
	TR2	0.959			
	TR3	0.901			
Intention to Use social media for responsible tourism	IU1	0.914	0.819	0.822	0.847
	IU2	0.926			
	IU3	0.891			

Table 5: Fornell-Larcker criterion

Construct	IU	PEoU	PU	EP	TR
IU	0.920				
PEoU	0.678	0.934			
PU	0.706	0.595	0.786		
EP	0.709	0.639	0.470	0.854	
TR	0.706	0.571	0.667	0.710	0.941

Table 6: Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Tourist (N=400)					Supported
		Coefficient (β) (>0.1)	p-value (<0.05)	t- value (>1.96)	VIF (<5.00)	Q ²	
H1	PU -> IU	0.357	0.000	9.716	2.120	0.629	Supported
H2	PEoU -> IU	0.178	0.000	3.726	2.086		Supported
H3	EX -> IU	0.337	0.000	7.704	2.490		Supported
H4	TR -> IU	0.128	0.000	3.639	2.838		Supported

values represent the correlations between the constructs. The findings indicate that the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeds its correlations with other constructs, thereby verifying discriminant validity.

Structural model

The structural model was assessed by the Bootstrap approach. Multicollinearity was assessed by the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), revealing that the causative variables remained below the threshold of 5 (Hair, 2014). The significance of the path coefficients was assessed by analyzing p-values and t-values according to predefined criteria: a t-value greater than 1.96 (at a 5% significance level), 2.58 (at a 1% significance level), and 3.29 (at a 0.1% significance level) (Hair, 2014). The findings revealed that H1: PU positively influences the intention to use social media for responsible tourism at a significance level of 0.05 ($\beta = 0.357, t = 9.716$); H2: PEoU positively influences the intention to use social media for responsible tourism at a significance level of 0.05 ($\beta = 0.178, t = 3.726$); H3: EX positively influences the intention to use social media for responsible tourism at a significance level of 0.05 ($\beta = 0.337, t = 7.704$); and H4: TR positively influences the intention to use

social media for responsible tourism at a significance level of 0.05 ($\beta = 0.128, t = 3.639$). Table 6 and Fig. 4 illustrate the findings of this investigation. The analysis indicates that all hypotheses in the model are supported and reliable for further analysis.

The R-squared (R^2) value serves as a measure of model fit, with specific thresholds to evaluate its acceptability. An R^2 value below 0.19 indicates that the model is deemed unacceptable. Values ranging from 0.19 to 0.33 suggest a low level of acceptability, while values between 0.33 and 0.67 reflect moderate acceptability. An R^2 value exceeding 0.67 signifies that the model exhibits a good level of acceptability. In this study, the R^2 value for the dependent variables was 0.701, surpassing the established minimum threshold. This finding implies that the model effectively captures the patterns in the collected data. Consequently, the analysis confirms that the model achieves a high degree of fit, as shown in Table 7.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the factors influencing tourists' intention to use social media to support responsible tourism. A conceptual model was developed by integrating TAM, which focuses on Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use, with

Table 7: Coefficient of determination (R^2)

Constructs	Items	Outer Loading	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability	AVE
Perceived Usefulness	PU1	0.778	0.718	0.793	0.617
	PU2	0.711			
	PU3	0.876			
Perceived Ease of Use	PEoU1	0.923	0.856	0.874	0.873
	PEoU2	0.946			
	PEoU2	0.912			
Expertise	EX1	0.859	0.816	0.820	0.730
	EX2	0.871			
	EX3	0.832			
Trustworthiness	TR1	0.923	0.875	0.935	0.940
	TR2	0.959			
	TR3	0.901			
Intention to Use social media for responsible tourism	IU1	0.914	0.819	0.822	0.847
	IU2	0.926			
	IU3	0.891			

the SCT, including expertise and trustworthiness, to analyze their effects on the intention to use social media. The findings revealed that all variables significantly impacted tourists' intention to use social media to support responsible tourism. For factors derived from TAM, Hypothesis H1 indicated that PU positively affects tourists' intention to use social media. This aligns with Davis (Davis, 1989), who stated that the perceived benefits of technology stimulate its acceptance and use. Additionally, Chung and Koo (2015) confirmed that social media enhances users' ability to efficiently find tourism-related information. In the area of tourism, this study suggests that when tourists perceive the usefulness of social media for responsible tourism—such as accessing reviews about eco-friendly destinations, activities, or content that enhances understanding and facilitates

sustainable travel planning—it effectively increases their intention to use the platforms. Hypothesis H2 demonstrated that PEoU positively influences tourists' intention to use social media. In the area of tourism, travelers find it convenient to search for and share information about responsible tourism through social media, which contributes to greater intention to use these platforms and encourages the sharing of responsible tourism information. These findings align with those of Doanh et al., (2022) and Lin et al., (2020), who emphasized that simplicity and user-friendliness are critical factors in encouraging technology adoption, reducing barriers to information access, and increasing user motivation. For factors derived from the SCT, Hypothesis H3 indicated that EX positively impacts tourists' intention to use social media. This result aligns with studies conducted by

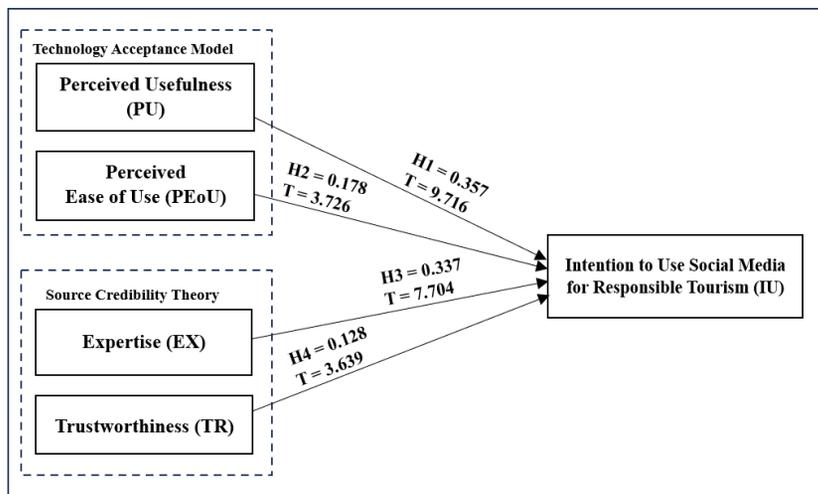


Fig. 4: Model testing results



Fig. 5: Practical recommendations for responsible tourism via social media

Ohanian (1990) and Hovland and Weiss (1951), which highlighted that the expertise of a source enhances its credibility and influences consumer behavior. Similarly, Nguyen *et al.*, (2025) supported the notion that expertise in social media platforms affects tourists' intentions. In this context, travel influencers with expertise can inspire other tourists to create or share environmentally responsible travel experiences on social media, fostering adherence to responsible tourism practices. Hypothesis H4 demonstrated that TR positively affects tourists' intention to use social media. This finding aligns with studies by Ayeh (2015) and Ismagilova *et al.*, (2020), which suggested that the trustworthiness of a source enhances trust and promotes behavioral changes among consumers. In this context, trustworthy influencers help build confidence among tourists, increasing their likelihood of using social media to access or share information about responsible tourism. The results emphasize the important role of social media in encouraging responsible tourism and identifying the factors that affect tourists' intentions.

Recommendations

From the research results, various practical recommendations for digital tourism management can be proposed, which can be applied to communication, digital marketing, and promoting sustainable tourism behaviors via social media effectively and systematically, as shown in Fig. 5. This figure shows four main approaches recommended for promoting responsible tourism behaviors via social media:

(1) using credible sources of information, such as influential experts or certified organizations;

(2) designing useful and motivating content, such as providing knowledge, providing tangible examples, and creative communication;

(3) supporting learning via social media, such as organizing online workshops, short-term activities, or lessons that stimulate environmental awareness;

(4) promoting participation through engaging activities, such as quizzes, campaigns, or online challenges that emphasize real-world actions.

All of these elements work together to create a systematic, positive impact on the behavior of new-generation tourists.

First, the study results indicate that "source credibility" has a significant influence on

environmentally responsible tourist behavior, which is consistent with the source credibility theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) that explains that highly credible sources can effectively influence recipients' attitudes and behaviors. Credibility consists of two main components: trustworthiness and expertise. When a communicator is perceived as highly credible, they can effectively persuade recipients and bring about changes in opinions (Qiu *et al.*, 2024). In addition, those with specialized expertise, such as experienced tourists or environmental experts, are more persuasive and accepted by recipients than individuals without relevant expertise (Ohanian, 1990). Therefore, tourism agencies, governments, and private sectors should focus on selecting content publishers who are both trustworthy and expert, especially those who can convey sustainable tourism experiences and knowledge in an influential and credible manner, such as tourism influencers with hands-on experience, environmental experts, or organizations certified for sustainability. These publishers can positively influence tourists' decisions and behaviors in choosing tourist attractions, activities, and using resources responsibly. In terms of technology acceptance, it was discovered that the intention to use technology is significantly influenced by both PU and PEOU (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). In the case of tourists, using social media to promote tourism is an effective communication channel. According to the 2024 Thai Tourist Behavior Survey (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2024), the most influential source of information on travel decisions and the most influential stimulus for travel decisions is social media, especially Facebook and TikTok. Therefore, those who play a role in producing online content should design and present content that is consistent with the format that users can easily access, communicate clearly, and present the benefits that viewers will receive from participating in sustainable behaviors, such as having a deeper travel experience, helping to conserve natural resources, and participating in local communities. At a strategic level, government agencies and tourism organizations should develop public communication approaches using social media channels, creating campaigns or campaign activities that use influencer content, short videos, or content that uses narrative storytelling techniques to inspire and raise awareness about the impact of irresponsible tourism behavior

and present practical alternatives such as reducing waste, choosing environmentally friendly activities, and supporting local businesses.

Future work

This research focuses on developing a conceptual model to study tourists' intentions to use social media for responsible tourism, serving as an important starting point for establishing a novel guideline framework, as proposed in [Leelasantitham \(2024\)](#). Based on the approach in this study, the new framework comprises three key components: the development of a conceptual model, the creation of a conceptual framework, and the implementation of these concepts through technology handling. These components can be applied in future research to extend the findings into practical applications and create societal and economic impacts. This is particularly relevant for raising awareness, leveraging technology to support environmentally responsible behaviors in tourist destinations, and establishing new learning frameworks for sustainable tourism.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the factors influencing tourists' intention to use social media for responsible tourism by integrating the conceptual frameworks of the TAM and SCT. The purpose of this study is to understand tourists' social media behavior in the digital era. The study combines factors from TAM, including Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use, with factors from SCT, such as expertise and trustworthiness of the information source, which play a crucial role in shaping users' intentions and behaviors. The findings reveal that all variables positively influence tourists' intention to use social media. This research's model demonstrates strong validity and offers a robust explanation of tourists' intention to use social media. Furthermore, the results provide useful implications for stakeholders in the tourism business. For instance, they can guide the development of campaigns that emphasize simple access to information and building trust through credible influencers. Social media can also be leveraged to foster engagement and support sustainable tourism. Finally, this research contributes to the foundational knowledge for developing future tourism strategies aimed at promoting environmentally responsible tourism and effectively addressing the needs of digital-age travelers.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

R. Puengjandum performed the conceptualization, literature review, and wrote the original draft. N. Lewis provided guidance on the research design, data collection, and data analysis. A. Leelasantitham supervised the research and assisted in conceptualizing, data collection, data analysis, and reviewed as well as edited the manuscript.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest regarding the publication of this work. In addition, the authors have witnessed the ethical issues, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancy.

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ABBREVIATIONS (NOMENCLATURE)

R^2_{adj}	Adjusted coefficient of determination
R^2	Coefficient of determination
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
COE	Certificate of Exemption
EX	Expertise
IU	Intention to Use social media for responsible tourism
N	Sample size
PEoU	Perceived Ease of Use
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling
PU	Perceived Usefulness
p-value	Probability value
Q ²	Predictive relevance
RMSE	Root Mean Square Error
SCT	Source Credibility Theory
SOR	Stimulus-organism-response theory
t-value	Test statistic value
TAM	Technology Acceptance Model
TPB	Theory of Planned Behavior
TR	Trustworthiness
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
β	Coefficient

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