

# Do tourists' experiences have impacts on behavioural intentions? A case study in Hoi An ancient town, Vietnam

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## **Abstract:**

Tourist experiences are gaining increasing attention due to their essential role in shaping visitor satisfaction and contributing to the overall success of tourism destinations. This study aims to explore how multidimension of tourists' experiences influence their behavioural intentions, to develop and to test a framework in Hoi An ancient town, Vietnam which is located in the central coastal province of Quang Nam and recognised as a UNESCO world cultural heritage site. Based on data collected via an online survey, the findings from 361 tourists who visited Hoi An city in the past year reveal that different aspects of tourist experiences - such as emotional, sensory, behavioural, social, and cognitive factors - have a significant impact on behavioural intentions, particularly in terms of word-of-mouth (WOM) and revisit intentions. Additionally, revisit intention is found to be positively influenced by tourists' WOM intention. The study also offers insights into how enhancing tourists' experiences can foster positive behavioural outcomes, encouraging their intentions to revisit and promote Hoi An city as a travel destination.

**Keywords:** behavioural intentions, return intention, tourists' experiences, word-of-mouth intention.

**Classification numbers:** 2.2, 2.3

## **1. Introduction**

Customer experience has become a foundational element in modern marketing strategies, especially in service-oriented industries such as tourism. In recent years, experiential marketing has gained prominence by emphasising emotionally engaging and memorable encounters that influence customer satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioural outcomes [1, 2]. For destinations competing in the global tourism marketplace, offering exceptional customer experiences is essential - not only to differentiate themselves but also to stimulate positive WOM and revisit intentions [3, 4]. As a result, this concept has garnered significant interest from researchers [4].

Tourists' experiences at a destination shape their memories of the visit [5]. Moreover, when deciding whether to revisit a destination, individuals rely heavily on their memories of past travel experiences. However, not all experiences play an essential role in post-trip traveller behaviour. Research suggests that only unforgettable or memorable experiences significantly influence future decision-making [6]. These experiences provide lasting cognitive and emotional benefits that tourists value, acting as a connection between the traveller and the destination [7]. Positive emotions and moods from previous trips, such as feelings of joy, can strongly impact an individual's future decisions and behaviours, making them one of the strongest predictors of tourists' behavioural intentions.

Previous research often highlights the emotional and cognitive aspects of customer experience, using models like PAD (pleasure, arousal, dominance) to measure affective reactions [7]. However, the concept of customer experience, particularly tourist experience, is still relatively new, and there are currently few empirical studies directly related to it. Furthermore, tourism experiences are complex constructs that are challenging to define and measure, especially as they vary across individual tourists. Recent research has focused on developing scales to measure tourism experience components and examining their impact on tourist behavioural intentions in different service contexts [8]. However, most studies have centred on tourist destinations in Western or developed countries [9], posing a significant limitation for developing tourism strategies in Eastern countries or regions where the tourism industry is still emerging. Moreover, there is still a need for a deeper understanding of how customer experience influences tourists' behavioural outcomes. Specifically, how positive customer experiences translate into WOM intention and revisit intention remains underexplored. Many studies focus either on customer satisfaction or service quality, but fewer have examined the direct pathways linking experiential value to post-visit behaviours such as WOM and revisiting decisions. As L. Becker, et al. (2020) [10]'s research emphasised, the increasingly complex nature of consumer behaviour requires more holistic approaches to understanding experience-based outcomes in tourism settings.

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To address these research gaps, this study examines the relationships between customer experience, WOM intention, and revisit intention in the context of Hoi An ancient town, Vietnam - one of Southeast Asia's most iconic cultural destinations. Hoi An ancient town, located in Quang Nam province of Central Vietnam, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site celebrated for its unique blend of cultural heritage, historical architecture, and vibrant local traditions. Once a bustling international trading port from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Hoi An bears the imprints of diverse cultural influences, including Chinese, Japanese, and European, which are reflected in its preserved wooden shophouses, temples, and iconic Japanese Covered Bridge. Today, Hoi An stands as one of Vietnam's most popular tourist destinations, drawing both domestic and international visitors seeking authentic cultural experiences. The town offers a rich sensory environment through lantern-lit streets, traditional crafts, local cuisine, and riverfront scenes, making it an ideal setting for studying customer experience in tourism. Its heritage value, combined with a strong emphasis on sustainability and community-based tourism, also positions Hoi An as a model for experiential tourism development in Southeast Asia. As highlighted in hospitality and tourism literature, delivering a positive customer experience is vital given the experiential foundation of the industry. In the tourism sector, customer experience is considered a key determinant of visitor satisfaction and engagement. Therefore, this study seeks to explore customer experience within the context of Hoi An, aiming to further develop and broaden the understanding of this concept.

The main objectives are to: (1) Investigate the impact of customer experience on tourists' WOM and revisit intentions, and (2) Determine the role of WOM in this relationship. By doing so, the study contributes to the academic literature by expanding the concepts of customer experience, advancing the model related to customers' experience, WOM, and their revisit intention. Framed within the unique cultural and sensory environment of Hoi An ancient town, the research offers a localised lens that enriches theory and addresses the Western bias in prior studies. Practically, it provides destination managers with clear guidance on which aspects of the visitor experience to prioritise in order to foster stronger advocacy and repeat visitation. Ultimately, these insights support the development of sustainable, experience-driven tourism strategies in Vietnam and similar emerging markets.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Tourist experience and its dimension

Tourist experience has been widely studied in tourism research due to its crucial role in shaping customer satisfaction, destination loyalty, and WOM recommendations. Researchers have emphasised that the tourist experience is complex and multidimensional, influenced by both internal and external factors. According to V.W.S. Tung, et al. (2011) [11], tourist experience is an individual's subjective evaluation derived from emotional, cognitive, and behavioural responses during events

related to their tourism activities before, during, and after the trip. It encompasses a range of psychological processes, including anticipation, engagement, and reflection, which contribute to the overall perception of a journey.

A tourist experience is an immediate or ongoing subjective reaction of an individual to an activity, context, or event outside their usual environment [12]. M. Godovykh (2024) [12] demonstrated that the tourist experience consists of four main components: emotions, cognition, sensory perception, and thinking, detailing the travel experience for the pre-visit, on-site, and post-visit stages. Emotions play a crucial role in shaping a tourist's overall satisfaction, as positive emotional responses enhance memories and influence future travel decisions. Meanwhile, cognition involves how tourists process and interpret their surroundings, affecting their perception of service quality, cultural encounters, and personal learning experiences.

Additionally, A. Walls, et al. (2011) [13] described the tourist experience as a multidimensional construct resulting from the interaction between tourists' internal factors (emotions and cognition) and external factors such as people (e.g., staff), physical surroundings, and cultural context. The presence of friendly and knowledgeable staff, the quality of service encounters, and the ambience of a destination can significantly influence a tourist's perception. In this study, based on previous research, the model suggests that customers' experience comprises emotional, sensory, cognitive, behavioural, and social experiences [10].

#### 2.1.1. Emotional experience

Emotional experience is defined as an emotional response [14]. Emotional responses range from minor mood changes to intense emotions in reaction to stimuli. Many theories agree that emotional responses often include happiness (joy), surprise, anger, sadness, and fear [15]. P.R. Shaver, et al. (1996) [15] categorised six primary emotions: joy, love, surprise, anger, sadness, and fear. For example, emotional responses may include feeling welcomed at a hotel or admiring a city's architecture.

#### 2.1.2. Sensory experience

Sensory response is a reaction related to the five senses: sight, touch, hearing, taste, and smell [16]. Sensory experience refers to tourists' experiences based on these specific senses such as touch, smell, taste, hearing, and sight [17]. Additionally, hedonism is an aspect of the tourist experience, relating to multisensory, imaginative, and emotional factors perceived by tourists. Specifically, hedonism is defined as "pleasurable sensations that excite oneself" [6].

#### 2.1.3. Cognitive experience

Cognitive experience involves thinking and reasoning processes, encouraging tourists to engage in cognitive activities often through surprise, attraction, provocation, curiosity, and problem-solving stimulation [16]. Cognitive experience is associated with terms such as thinking, intellect, reasoning, knowledge, skills, and memory [18]. Cognitive feedback

(complaints and compliments) helps businesses identify root causes and specific opportunities for improvement. K.N. Lemon, et al. (2016) [19] suggest that satisfaction can also be considered a cognitive aspect of the tourist experience.

#### 2.1.4. Behavioural experience

Behavioural experience refers to the process of directly or indirectly witnessing, performing, or participating in the actions and activities of others or oneself. It involves specific behaviours, participation, actions, and practices of tourists [20]. Behavioural experience encompasses physical actions, bodily experiences, and behaviours. This means that behaviours in travel experiences may include spending time at a destination and engaging in specific activities. Behavioural experience also involves reactions that encourage customers to adopt a certain lifestyle or behaviour [21].

#### 2.1.5. Social experience

Social experience relates to how stimuli affect tourists' social relationships or emotions in relation to others [21]. It involves the social aspects of tourists' experiences, implying social interactions in the presence of others during their journey. According to Social Learning Theory [22], social interaction allows tourists to observe and communicate with others. Furthermore, tourists frequently update their knowledge and adapt during the experience as part of a social learning process. This can enrich their understanding of different cultures and adjust their behavioural responses to the local culture.

### 2.2. Behavioural intention

Behavioural intention is formed from tourists' past service experiences [23]. It refers to the likelihood of tourists making key decisions [24], particularly the decision to return. If tourists have high satisfaction or good service experiences, their likelihood of returning increases, and vice versa. According to D.A. Baker, et al. (2000) [25], behavioural intention refers to tourists' intention to revisit a destination within a year and their willingness to visit regularly. Meanwhile, C.F. Chen, et al. (2010) [26] offer a multidimensional definition, stating that tourists' revisit intention is an essential part of behavioural intention, along with WOM intention. The level of behavioural intention is reflected in the intention to revisit a tourist destination and the willingness to recommend it to others. R.T. Ratnasari, et al. (2021) [27] also agree that behavioural intention includes the intention to visit in the future, speak positively about, give positive feedback and recommend a destination to others.

#### 2.2.1. Revisit intention

Revisit intention stems from behavioural intention. According to N. Stylos, et al. (2017) [28], revisit intention refers to the willingness to plan a future visit to a previously visited destination. The core of revisit intention lies in the efforts of individuals who have had actual service experiences at a destination [29]. Hence, it is said that revisit intention is directly related to travel experiences. Favourable past experiences at a destination can create positive impressions, leading to a desire to return.

#### 2.2.2. Word-of-mouth intention

Word-of-mouth intention stems from tourists' behavioural intentions toward a destination. WOM is an important and influential source of information in decision-making processes [30]. C.H.S. Liu, et al. (2016) [31] define WOM as the intention to share information and personal experiences about a service with others, significantly influencing consumers' purchasing decisions. Specifically, in the tourism context, WOM greatly affects tourists' decisions regarding a destination.

### 2.3. Research model and hypothesis

#### 2.3.1. The influence of emotional experiences on behavioural intentions

Emotional experience is defined as an emotional response [14, 32]. Emotions are important antecedents of tourism experiences that lead to satisfaction and future behavioural intentions. D. Padgett, et al. (2017) [14] argue that to understand tourists' decision-making processes, it is necessary to consider their emotional responses throughout their actual experiences. Several studies have indicated that tourists' emotional experiences have a positive relationship with future behavioural intentions [33]. Previous research has also consistently agreed that emotional experiences lead to positive emotions that stimulate visit intention, positive WOM, and revisit intention [34].

Additionally, in a tourism context, experiences that bring joy are likely to positively correlate with behavioural intentions such as positive WOM and revisit intention. G. Fullerton (2005) [35] demonstrated that emotional experiences positively influence WOM intentions and are among the strongest factors impacting tourists' sharing behaviour. Based on these studies, the author proposes the following hypotheses:

H1a: Tourists' emotional experiences have a positive impact on their word-of-mouth intention.

H1b: Tourists' emotional experiences have a positive impact on their revisit intention.

#### 2.3.2. The influence of cognitive experience on behavioural intention

Tourists' cognitive experiences are considered fundamental to destination competitiveness and sustainability, as they can significantly impact future destination choices. If destinations provide a memorable or satisfying experience, tourists are more likely to return [7, 32]. Revisit intention originates from tourists' perceptions of their travel experiences. Cognitive experiences significantly influence behavioural intentions and have a positive effect on revisit intention [6].

Numerous previous studies have empirically demonstrated that cognitive experience positively influences WOM intention. S. Marschall (2012) [36] emphasises that memory affects the perception of tourism experiences, and positive memories of a destination increase the likelihood of revisits and positive WOM [34]. S.C. Martínez, et al. (2010) [37] found that when tourists' expectations are met, their revisit intention and willingness to share positive experiences with family and friends increase.

Based on these findings, the author proposes the following hypotheses:

H2a: Tourists' cognitive experiences have a positive impact on their WOM intention.

H2b: Tourists' cognitive experiences have a positive impact on their revisit intention.

2.3.3. *The influence of sensory experience on behavioural intentions*

Sensory experience encompasses the five senses: hearing, sight, smell, touch, and taste, all of which influence behavioural intentions [38]. C.Y. Wang, et al. (2010) [5] found that vibrant destination imagery positively affects tourist satisfaction and future destination choices, specifically their revisit intention. Similarly, when tourists experience a beautiful and romantic atmosphere, their revisit intention increases [39].

Moreover, research by I.K.W. Lai, et al. (2021) [39] indicates that a tourist satisfied with a destination's cuisine may be willing to share their positive experience on social media during and after their trip. More broadly, for tourism destinations, visual appeal plays a crucial role in predicting tourist behaviour, including WOM intention and revisit intention. Based on these studies, the author proposes the following hypotheses:

H3a: Tourists' sensory experiences have a positive impact on their WOM intention.

H3b: Tourists' sensory experiences have a positive impact on their revisit intention.

2.3.4. *The influence of behavioural experience on behavioural intention*

In the tourism context, behavioural experience refers to tourists' physical experiences, including adjustments to their actions, habits, and lifestyles [21, 32]. Tourists' behavioural experiences are a key factor in determining their revisit decisions. According to I.K.W. Lai, et al. (2021) [39], tourists who participate in multiple engaging programmes or activities at destinations are more likely to revisit. When tourists engage in local activities, immerse themselves in an appealing environment, or enjoy performances, they gain meaningful experiences. As a result, they are more likely to engage in positive WOM by posting or sharing content via online platforms such as Facebook, Zalo, and Instagram. R.M. Ahmad (2019) [40] also found that tourists' behavioural experiences positively influence their behavioural intentions (revisit intention and WOM intention). Based on these findings, the author proposes the following hypotheses:

H4a: Tourists' behavioural experiences have a positive impact on their WOM intention.

H4b: Tourists' behavioural experiences have a positive impact on their revisit intention.

2.3.5. *The influence of social experience on behavioural intention*

Social experience plays a crucial role in understanding and interpreting tourists' experiences [41]. It includes human

interactions, social contexts, and relationship dynamics. H. Choo, et al. (2014) [42] conducted research in the tourism field and argued that social interaction influences behavioural intentions through satisfaction.

Previous studies have consistently agreed that the social experience aspect is a significant factor affecting motivation, satisfaction, and revisit intention [43]. Additionally, the social aspect of the experience is a strong motivator that encourages participants to return and recommend the experience to others. Tourists value social relationships as they positively influence revisit intention and WOM intention [43]. Based on these studies, the author proposes the following hypotheses:

H5a: Tourists' social experiences have a positive impact on their WOM intention.

H5b: Tourists' social experiences have a positive impact on their revisit intention.

2.3.6. *Word-of-mouth intention and revisit intention*

Word-of-mouth is of great importance in providing customers and tourists with essential information about products or services, thereby significantly influencing their purchasing decisions or business choices. In the tourism and travel sector, WOM can substantially affect tourists' travel decisions and their likelihood of revisiting a destination [44]. M. Damayanti, et al. (2017) [45] conducted research on how WOM can increase tourists' interest in visiting and revisiting a tourism destination, finding that it serves as a crucial resource for travel planning. Notably, WOM positively influences future behaviours, such as the intention to revisit. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: WOM intention has a positive impact on tourist revisit intention. The proposed research model is presented in Fig. 1.

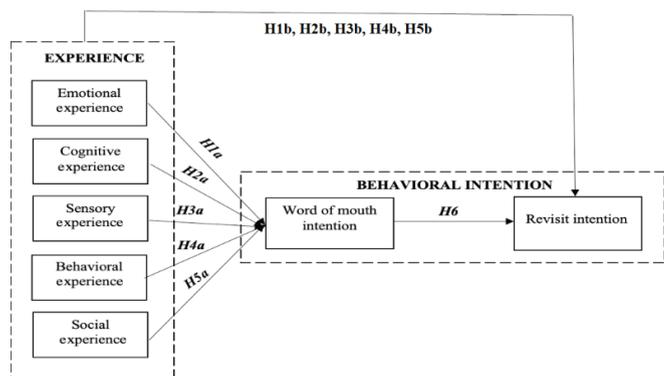


Fig. 1. A proposed research model.

3. Research methodology

Figure 2 illustrates the research procedure followed in this study, which encompasses identifying research gaps and objectives, reviewing relevant literature, developing research instruments, conducting a pilot study, collecting data, analysing data using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social

Sciences), and presenting research findings, discussions, and conclusions. While the previous sections outline the research gaps, objectives, and the development of the research model and hypotheses, the subsequent sections provide detailed descriptions of the remaining steps.

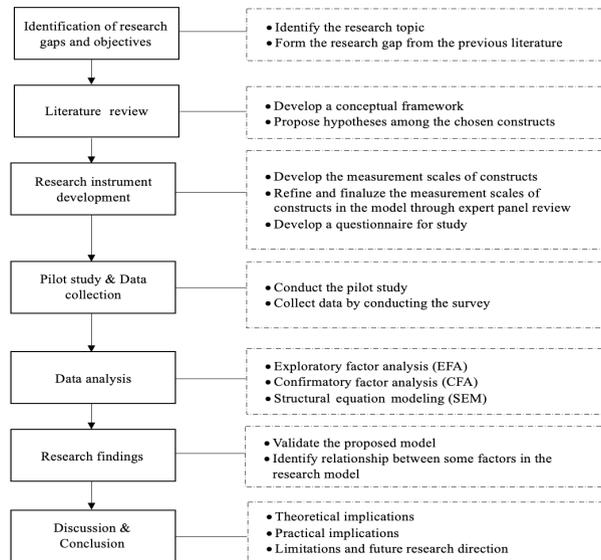


Fig. 2. The research procedure.

### 3.1. Research instrument

Quantitative analysis is employed using the questionnaire method. Based on the synthesis of the literature review, the indicators for tourist experience and behavioural intention were selected. The WOM intention scale, denoted as WI (including six variables), is adapted from N. Quynh, et al. (2021) [46] and B. Lin, et al. (2023) [47]. The revisit intention scale, denoted as RI (including six variables), is derived from B. Lin, et al. (2023) [47] and R.A. Rather (2020) [32].

The emotional experience scale, denoted as EF (including six variables), and the cognitive experience scale, denoted as CO (including four variables), are adapted from the research of R.A. Rather (2020) [32]. The social experience and sensory experience scales, denoted as SO and SE, respectively (each including five variables), are derived from the research of B. Lin, et al. (2023) [47]. The behavioural experience scale, denoted as BE (including three variables), is adapted from R.A. Rather (2020) [32].

These scales were translated into Vietnamese, resulting in a questionnaire that includes both English and Vietnamese versions for each item. The scales were then analysed and refined through in-depth interviews with five tourism academic experts before being finalised. This process ensured that the scales were clear and suitable for the tourism context of Hoi An, as illustrated in Table 1. The final adjusted scales were used in the study's survey. Hence, the questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part collects demographic information about the respondents; the second part includes screening

questions such as “Have you visited Hoi An?” and “When was your last visit?” and asks respondents to rate their opinions about their experience and behavioural intention. A seven-point Likert scale, ranging from “completely disagree” to “completely agree,” was employed for measurement. A pilot study with a sample of 50 tourists visiting Hoi An city was then conducted to check the reliability of the chosen measurement scales. The results indicated that the content validity and reliability of the research instrument were adequate.

Table 1. List of variables.

Factors	Encoding	Variables
Emotional experience	EF1	I had interesting experiences at the tourist attractions I visited in Hoi An city.
	EF2	The tourist attractions I visited in Hoi An city made me feel happy.
	EF3	The tourist attractions I visited in Hoi An city made me feel proud.
	EF4	I felt comfortable and delighted when experiencing the tourist attractions I visited in Hoi An city.
	EF5	I truly felt welcomed by the staff, tour guides, and local people when visiting the tourist attractions in Hoi An city.
Cognitive experience	CO1	The tourist attractions in Hoi An city prompted me to reflect deeply on them.
	CO2	The tourist attractions I visited in Hoi An city stimulated my curiosity to learn more about them.
	CO3	I was able to experience new things at the tourist attractions I visited in Hoi An city.
	CO4	I am willing to provide feedback on the tourist attractions I visited in Hoi An city.
Social experience	SO1	I talked with my travel companions while visiting tourist attractions in Hoi An city.
	SO2	I strengthened relationships and built strong friendships with my travel companions through experiences and activities at the tourist attractions in Hoi An city.
	SO3	I received recommendations about tourist attractions, food, and entertainment venues in Hoi An city from others (e.g., tourism staff, and travel companions).
	SO4	I enjoyed interacting with others while experiencing tourist attractions in Hoi An city.
	SO5	When travelling in Hoi An city, I wanted to build new relationships.
Sensory experience	SE1	The food at the tourist attractions in Hoi An city was extremely delicious and beautifully presented.
	SE2	The tourist attractions I visited in Hoi An city were visually impressive and stimulating.
	SE3	The colours of the designs and architecture at the tourist attractions I visited in Hoi An city were ancient and unique.
	SE4	The music performed at festivals/events (e.g., folk music performances, and traditional music performances) at the tourist attractions I visited in Hoi An city was pleasant to listen to.
	SE5	The atmosphere at the tourist attractions I visited in Hoi An city was fresh and pleasant.
Behavioural experience	BE1	I often participated in activities (e.g., taking photos, trying local specialties, relaxing experiences, playing games, etc.) when visiting tourist attractions in Hoi An city.
	BE2	Whenever I travel, I usually choose tourist attractions in Hoi An city.
	BE3	I spent more time experiencing tourist attractions in Hoi An city compared to other destinations.
Revisit intention	RI1	If given the opportunity, I will revisit the tourist attractions I visited in Hoi An city in the future.
	RI2	The tourist attractions I visited in Hoi An city are my top choice compared to other destinations.
	RI3	I want to revisit the tourist attractions in Hoi An city I visited to explore the diverse local cuisine in the future.
	RI4	I will plan to revisit Hoi An city's tourist attractions in the near future.
	RI5	I will visit the tourist attractions in Hoi An city I have been to again during my next vacation.
	RI6	I am willing to spend time and money to revisit the tourist attractions in Hoi An city I have visited.
WOM intention	WI1	When asked on social media, I will share positive things about the tourist attractions I visited in Hoi An city.
	WI2	I want to spread good words about the tourist attractions I visited in Hoi An city on social media platforms.
	WI3	I want to post pictures of the tourist attractions I visited in Hoi An city on social media platforms.
	WI4	I will speak positively about the tourist attractions I visited in Hoi An city and its signature dishes to others.
	WI5	I want to recommend the tourist attractions I visited in Hoi An city and its signature dishes to others.
	WI6	I intend to encourage my family and friends to visit the tourist attractions I have been to in Hoi An city.

3.2. Data collection

The target sample comprised tourists who had visited Hoi An city within the past year. An online self-administered survey was conducted using a non-probability convenience sampling method to gather data from extensive social media networks related to Hoi An city. Survey questionnaires, created on Google Forms, were distributed via Facebook and Zalo. The questionnaire was posted on domestic tourism fan pages, travel association groups, and Zalo communities. The criteria for selecting groups of Hoi An tourists for the survey were: (1) The number of members was at least 1,000; (2) The groups' descriptions focused on exchanging experiences related to Hoi An city; and (3) The language used for discussions in the groups was either English or Vietnamese. After identifying suitable groups, the link to the questionnaire was attached to an invitation posted in these groups. Weekly reminder invitations were also posted to encourage participation. To further expand participation, the survey was sent directly via Facebook Messenger to group members. A total of 370 responses were collected from August to November 2024; however, only 361 valid responses were used for data analysis.

After data collection, responses were processed using SPSS and SmartPLS software. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modelling (SEM) methods were utilised in analysing the collected data using SPSS.

4. Research results

4.1. Characteristics of respondents

The demographic analysis (Table 2) of the sample in the table below reveals that the majority of respondents are female, accounting for 51.2% (185 individuals), while males account for 48.8% (176 individuals). The largest age group (47.6%) is under 25, indicating a young demographic, followed by those aged 25-35 (20.8%), 36-50 (14.4%), and over 50 (17.2%). Regarding income levels, those earning below 6 million VND and those

Table 2. Socio-demographic profile (n=361).

		n	%
Gender	Male	176	48.8
	Female	185	51.2
Age	Under 25 years old	172	47.6
	From 25-35 years old	75	20.8
	From 36-50 years old	52	14.4
	Over 50 years old	62	17.2
Income	Under 6 million VND	122	33.8
	From 6-10 million VND	122	33.8
	Over 10 million VND	117	32.4
Marital status	Married	126	34.9
	Single	235	65.1
Travel frequency	1 time/year	203	56.2
	2-3 times/year	102	28.3
	More than 3 times/year	56	15.5

earning between 6-10 million VND each make up 33.8% of the total. Meanwhile, individuals with an income exceeding 10 million VND constitute 32.4%.

In terms of marital status, over 65% of the respondents are single, while 34.9% of the sample are married. Regarding travel frequency, most people travel once a year (56.2%), while 28.3% travel 2-3 times annually, and 15.5% travel more than three times.

4.2. Assessment of measurement model

4.2.1. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

The analysis results show that all scales have Cronbach's alpha coefficients greater than 0.7, indicating that the measurement scales are usable. The total item correlations are all greater than 0.3; thus, no variable is eliminated from the scale. All scales are retained to ensure internal consistency (Table 3).

Table 3. Results of exploratory factor analysis.

Rotated component matrix	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
WI2	.804						
WI1	.674						
WI3	.621						
WI5	.592						
WI4	.572						
WI6	.552						
EF5		.784					
EF4		.661					
EF2		.620					
EF1		.591					
EF3		.577					
SE2			.819				
SE1			.774				
SE3			.672				
SE4			.590				
SO3				.764			
SO1				.703			
SO2				.671			
BE3					.755		
BE2					.724		
BE1					.709		
CO2						.767	
CO1						.717	
CO3						.604	
RI1							.678
RI3							.640
RI2							.502

Extraction method: Principal component analysis.  
 Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization.  
 a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Source: Results extracted from SPSS.

Regarding the EFA analysis, the results of the KMO coefficient and Bartlett's test indicate that the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) value is 0.906, satisfying the condition  $0.5 < KMO < 1$ . This demonstrates that the actual data is suitable for EFA. Using Bartlett's Test to assess the correlation between observed variables shows that Bartlett's Test has a significant value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the observed variables are correlated with each other within each factor group.

Moreover, the results indicate that after running EFA, seven main factors were identified. The Total Variance Explained table shows that the factor analysis extracted seven factors from the observed variables, with the extracted variance of 66.034%, which exceeds 50%, thus meeting the requirements.

The analysis results show that the factor loading coefficients of the observed variables in the Rotated Factor Matrix have reached values greater than 0.5, meeting the requirements, and no variables were eliminated. Therefore, the scales are deemed suitable for the next analysis process.

4.2.2. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

To test the reliability and validity of the model, 361 valid responses were analysed using CFA with AMOS 24. Some goodness-of-fit indices include  $CMIN/df=3.177 (\leq 5)$ ,  $CFI=0.857 (\geq 0.8)$ ,  $GFI=0.835 (\geq 0.8)$ , and  $RMSEA=0.078 (\leq 0.08)$ . Fig. 3 demonstrates that the model fits the data well and satisfies the criterion for unidimensionality [48].

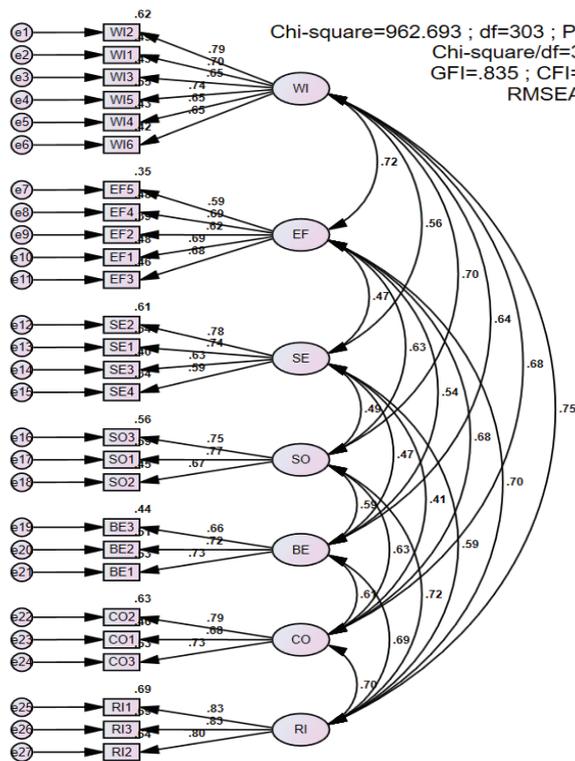


Fig. 3. Confirmatory factor analysis results of the scale (standardised). Source: Results extracted from SPSS.

Before proceeding to structural model analysis, multicollinearity and the validity of the constructs were assessed to ensure the robustness of the measurement model.

4.2.3. Multicollinearity

When testing the relationship between all dependent variables - BE, SE, EF, SO, CO - and the independent variable WI, the adjusted  $R^2$  is 0.542, meaning that 54.2% of the variation in WI is explained by the five independent variables: BE, SE, EF, SO, and CO. The Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.953, which falls within the acceptable range of 1 to 3, indicating that there is no autocorrelation in the regression model. The results of the analysis of variance show that the F-value has a significance level of  $Sig=0.000 (<0.05)$ , indicating that the regression model fits the collected data well and that all included variables are statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

The results in the Table 4 indicate that the VIF values of all independent variables are less than 3, suggesting that the model does not suffer from multicollinearity.

Table 4. Multicollinearity test between BE, SE, EF, SO, CO and WI.

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>								
Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients		t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
	B	Std. error	Beta				Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.361	.185			1.947	.052		
EF	.264	.047	.255		5.577	.000	.615	1.626
CO	.164	.041	.187		4.001	.000	.589	1.697
SO	.210	.041	.232		5.085	.000	.619	1.615
SE	.147	.039	.154		3.735	.000	.754	1.327
BE	.135	.039	.151		3.450	.001	.672	1.487

a. Dependent Variable: WI

Source: Results extracted from SPSS.

When testing the relationship between all dependent variables - BE, SE, EF, SO, CO - and the independent variable RI, the adjusted  $R^2$  is 0.583, meaning that 58.3% of the variation in RI is explained by the six independent variables: BE, SE, EF, SO, CO, and WI. The Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.996, which falls within the acceptable range of 1 to 3, indicating that there is no autocorrelation in the regression model. The results of the analysis of variance show that the F-value has a significance level of  $Sig=0.000 (<0.05)$ , indicating that the regression model fits the collected data well and that all included variables are statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

The results in the Table 5 show that the VIF values of all independent variables are less than 3, indicating that the model does not suffer from multicollinearity.

Table 5. Multicollinearity test between BE, SE, EF, SO, CO and RI.

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>							
Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
	B	Std. error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	-.244	.199		-1.228	.220		
EF	.189	.053	.164	3.587	.000	.566	1.768
CO	.142	.045	.146	3.187	.002	.564	1.773
1 SO	.161	.046	.160	3.539	.000	.577	1.733
SE	.152	.043	.143	3.555	.000	.725	1.379
BE	.185	.042	.185	4.350	.000	.651	1.537
WI	.237	.057	.213	4.195	.000	.458	2.185

a. Dependent Variable: RI

Source: Results extracted from SPSS.

4.2.4. Convergent and discriminant validity

The construct validity was tested through convergent validity and discriminant validity using standardised factor loading and average variance extracted (AVE). The composite reliability (CR) of the constructs ranges from 0.744 to 0.850, meeting the required threshold of ≥0.70, which indicates that the measurement scales are reliable.

Regarding convergent validity, an AVE score greater than 0.5 is considered an acceptable level. However, according to C. Fornell, et al. (1981) [49], if the AVE is less than 0.5 but the composite reliability exceeds 0.6, the construct can still be considered to have adequate convergent validity. Therefore, the model meets the criteria for convergent validity.

The AVE ranges from 70.3% to 77.2% (≥50%) (Table 6). Additionally, the square roots of the AVE are the highest values in their respective rows and columns. Moreover, the AVE of each construct is greater than its maximum shared variance (MSV). Hence, the model also satisfies the criteria for discriminant validity [49].

Table 6. Convergent and discriminant validity.

CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1	0.850	0.487	0.566	0.857	<b>0.698</b>						
2	0.791	0.432	0.518	0.795	0.720***	<b>0.658</b>					
3	0.781	0.474	0.343	0.798	0.560***	0.466***	<b>0.689</b>				
4	0.771	0.530	0.512	0.777	0.696***	0.630***	0.495***	<b>0.728</b>			
5	0.744	0.493	0.483	0.747	0.637***	0.544***	0.472***	0.592***	<b>0.702</b>		
6	0.780	0.542	0.490	0.788	0.681***	0.685***	0.406***	0.634***	0.613***	<b>0.736</b>	
7	0.862	0.676	0.566	0.863	0.752***	0.703***	0.586***	0.716***	0.695***	0.700***	<b>0.822</b>

Source: Results extracted from SPSS.

4.3. Structural equation modelling (SEM)

The study employs SEM to assess the relevance of the research model and to test the relationships within the model. The results of the SEM analysis, with degrees of freedom (df)=303, Chi-square=962.693, and Chi-square/df=3.177 (<5),

indicate that the model fits the observed data well, with an RMSEA of 0.078 (<0.08) (Fig. 4).

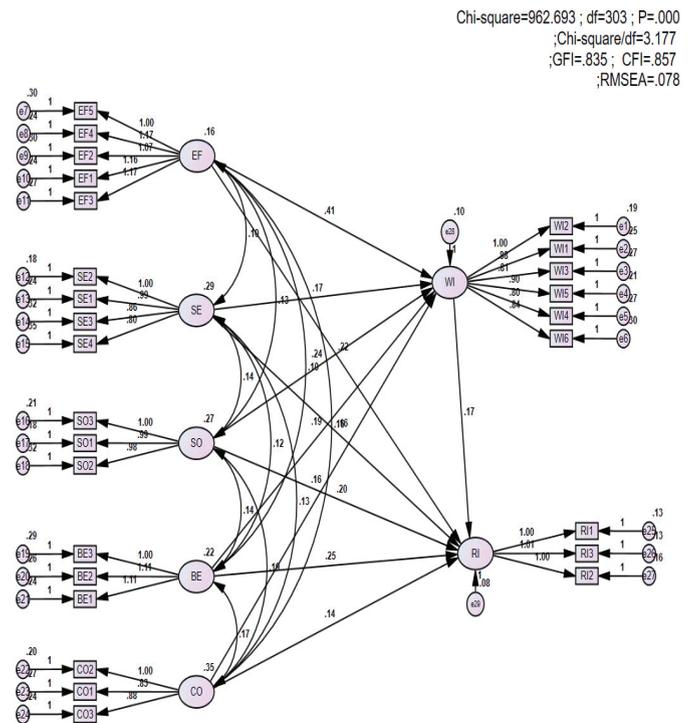


Fig. 4. Results of structural equation modelling (SEM). Source: Results extracted from SPSS.

With 95% confidence, all model hypotheses were accepted (p-value<0.05). Specifically, affective experience, cognitive experience, sensory experience, behavioural experience, and social experience all have positive effects on WOM intention and revisit intention. Moreover, WOM also has positive impacts on the intention to revisit a tourism destination. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. The relationship between concepts in the research model.

Relationship	Regression weights					Standardised regression weights
	Estimate	SE	CR	P	Result	Estimate
WI <= EF	0.410	0.112	3.674	0.000	Accept	0.298
WI <= SE	0.171	0.060	2.876	0.004	Accept	0.165
WI <= SO	0.243	0.083	2.913	0.004	Accept	0.225
WI <= BE	0.189	0.085	2.211	0.027	Accept	0.160
WI <= CO	0.160	0.078	2.049	0.04	Accept	0.168
RI <= EF	0.220	0.106	2.087	0.037	Accept	0.164
RI <= SE	0.156	0.056	2.775	0.006	Accept	0.154
RI <= SO	0.200	0.079	2.538	0.011	Accept	0.190
RI <= BE	0.247	0.081	3.059	0.002	Accept	0.215
RI <= CO	0.144	0.072	1.997	0.046	Accept	0.155
RI <= WI	0.169	0.083	2.028	0.043	Accept	0.173

Source: Results extracted from SPSS.

## 5. Discussion and implications

This study develops a conceptual framework and measurement scales to examine the experiential factors that shape tourists' behavioural intentions in Hoi An city. Through data collection and analysis, five primary experiential dimensions - emotional, social, behavioural, sensory, and cognitive experiences - were identified as key influencers of tourists' revisit intentions and their willingness to engage in WOM recommendations. Moreover, the study confirms that WOM intention plays a significant role in influencing revisit intention, reinforcing the interconnected nature of these experiential factors. These insights contribute to the theoretical understanding of how tourists' experiences translate into behavioural outcomes.

The study highlights that strong sensory experiences significantly enhance both revisit intention and positive WOM, aligning with prior research by C.Y. Wang, et al. (2010) [5], D. Agapito, et al. (2013) [50], and I.K.W. Lai, et al. (2021) [39]. This also demonstrates that multi-sensory stimuli indirectly boost post-visit behaviours. However, in Hoi An's heritage-town context, our findings reveal a novel, direct pathway from sensory experience to WOM intention, independent of satisfaction. Hoi An provides visitors with a rich multi-sensory journey - its vibrant yellow-walled houses, colourful lanterns glowing at night, the fragrant aroma of fresh herbs and spices, and the distinctive flavours of local delicacies. The city's atmosphere is further enriched by live folk music performances and traditional market sounds. These coordinated sensory stimulations not only elevate overall satisfaction but also directly motivate tourists to share their experiences, creating lasting memories that increase their likelihood of revisiting and recommending Hoi An as a must-visit destination.

Emotional experiences strongly impact revisit intention and WOM, consistent with previous studies by H. Han, et al. (2013) [33], G. Fullerton (2005) [35], and J. Nawijn, et al. (2015) [51]. Prior research by S. Hosany, et al. (2009) [52] and G. Prayag, et al. (2013) [53] also emphasised the role of high-arousal emotions such as excitement and joy in driving emotional attachment in mass-tourism settings. In contrast, our findings reveal that the lower-arousal emotions of tranquillity and nostalgia - uniquely evoked by Hoi An's lantern-lit ancient streets and serene riverside ambience - deepen emotional bonds even more powerfully. Tourists visiting Hoi An often experience a spectrum of feelings: strolling through historic lanes can evoke nostalgia, joy, and peace, while interactions with friendly locals further enhance emotional depth. Hoi An's romantic ambience, combined with its historical charm and hospitable environment, leaves travellers with a profound sense of fulfilment and attachment that not only encourages them to return but also motivates them to share their experiences with others.

Positive cognitive experiences also play a crucial role in shaping tourists' revisit decisions and WOM intentions by fostering curiosity, learning, and deeper engagement with the

destination, as shown in the research of J.H. Kim, et al. (2010) [6], H. Zhang, et al. (2018) [7], and P.R. Shaver, et al. (1996) [15]. Previous research, including T. Kolar, et al. [54] and H. Ramkissoon, et al. (2012) [55], demonstrated that guided educational activities - such as museum tours and interpretive briefings - enhance satisfaction and loyalty through knowledge acquisition. However, our findings extend these insights by revealing that Hoi An's hands-on cultural workshops - including lantern-making, traditional cooking classes, and pottery sessions - not only enrich visitors' understanding of the region's culture and history but also exert a disproportionately strong effect on WOM intentions, surpassing their impact on revisit intentions. In addition, exploring bustling local markets allows tourists to discover the city's culinary diversity - new tastes, aromas, and direct interactions with vendors and artisans - which further deepens cognitive engagement and creates highly shareable experiences that drive positive WOM.

The study confirms that active participation in various activities significantly boosts both revisit intention and WOM behaviour, including the research of R.M. Ahmad (2019) [40], B. Schmitt (1999) [21], and R.A. Rather (2020) [32]. This research demonstrated that tourists who engage in immersive cultural experiences, such as watching traditional performances, savouring authentic street food, or having custom-made garments tailored by Hoi An's skilled artisans, are more likely to form strong personal connections with the destination. Furthermore, the widespread use of social media allows travellers to document and share their experiences instantly, amplifying positive WOM. These shared experiences, whether through personal conversations or digital platforms, encourage future visitors to explore Hoi An, reinforcing the town's appeal as a dynamic and culturally rich travel destination.

Social interactions, whether with locals or fellow tourists, deepen visitors' emotional ties to Hoi An and enhance their revisit intention, bearing resemblance to the research of I. Alnawas, et al. (2016) [43]. Engaging in activities such as participating in traditional festivals, dining at communal-style restaurants, or joining guided heritage tours fosters meaningful cultural exchanges. These interactions provide a deeper appreciation of the city's traditions, strengthening the overall travel experience. Moreover, positive social encounters not only create lasting impressions but also play a crucial role in WOM promotion, as travellers tend to recommend destinations where they have formed valuable connections. This interpersonal dimension further contributes to tourists' willingness to return.

Structural equation modelling results indicate that WOM significantly influences tourists' intention to revisit a destination, aligning with previous research in travel and leisure tourism, such as the studies by R. Filieri, et al. (2014) [44] and M. Damayanti, et al. (2017) [45]. As tourists frequently rely on personal recommendations, online reviews, and social media content when planning their trips, positive WOM serves as a powerful marketing tool for Hoi An. Visitors who have had remarkable

experiences are more inclined to share their stories via platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and travel blogs. This organic promotion generates heightened interest in the destination, attracting first-time visitors while reinforcing the desire of past visitors to return.

Beyond its role in attracting new tourists, WOM also strengthens revisit intention by reinforcing positive memories associated with the destination. When travellers receive enthusiastic recommendations about Hoi An's renowned culinary scene, bespoke tailoring services, or vibrant cultural events, they often develop a longing to relive those experiences. Research suggests that destinations offering unique and emotionally engaging encounters benefit from strong revisit behaviour fuelled by WOM. In the context of Hoi An, the ability to deliver memorable, authentic, and shareable experiences makes WOM a powerful factor in sustaining tourism growth. As a result, Hoi An remains an attractive destination for global travellers, ensuring its continued appeal and competitive edge in the tourism industry.

### **5.1. Theoretical implications**

The findings of this study have important theoretical implications, particularly in the context of customer experience as a multidimensional construct. While existing research has explored various facets of customer experience, few studies have measured and examined its multidimensional nature, especially in the context of developing countries. This gap in the literature is significant, as it limits our understanding of how different dimensions of tourist experience (emotional, sensory, behavioural, social, and cognitive) interact to shape behavioural intentions. By addressing this gap, the study contributes to a more comprehensive framework for understanding the complexities of tourist behaviour.

Additionally, the study extends the application of L. Becker, et al. (2020) [10]'s theoretical experience model in the tourism domain, demonstrating that the different aspects of travel experiences have a tangible impact on tourists' behavioural intentions, such as WOM and revisit intentions. This enhances the theoretical understanding of how experiential factors influence decisions in the tourism context, particularly in regions where tourism research is still evolving. The findings suggest that incorporating a multidimensional view of customer experience can offer more nuanced insights into the factors driving tourist behaviour and can inform future theoretical developments in tourism studies.

The research also provides a comprehensive understanding of how tourists' experiences play a critical role in fostering positive WOM and increasing customers' intention to revisit. This research also demonstrates the relationship between WOM and customers' revisit intention, particularly in developing countries such as Vietnam. Finally, this study created and validated a new model that includes customers' experiences (sensory, behavioural, emotional, social, and cognitive experiences) along

with WOM and customers' intention to revisit the destination. This has made a significant contribution to the current research on tourism customer behaviour and can serve as a reference point for further investigations in this field.

### **5.2. Practical implications**

Based on the results, tourists are more likely to revisit and engage in positive WOM when they have meaningful emotional, social, behavioural, sensory, and cognitive experiences. The results provide practical recommendations for Hoi An city tourism management:

*Firstly*, destination managers should continue to maintain and enhance the strengths of Hoi An's natural landscape and environment. Encouraging investment in tourism development projects, protecting, conserving, and developing tourism resources, and implementing advanced waste treatment technologies are crucial. Moreover, supporting environmentally friendly tourism models, such as eco-tourism, can enhance tourists' emotional experiences, thereby increasing their intention to return and share positive information about Hoi An city.

*Secondly*, Hoi An is a destination rich in traditional culture and historical values. Therefore, raising awareness of local culture and history among residents and improving the organisation of tourism services should be prioritised. Investments in cultural programmes, events, and festivals should be encouraged to promote and convey Hoi An's cultural heritage to visitors, enhancing their cognitive experiences.

*Furthermore*, tourism managers should focus on preserving, regularly restoring, and maintaining ancient architecture and historical sites to provide tourists with a comprehensive cultural experience. Collaborations with cultural organisations to host traditional music performances and artistic events can create a vibrant and colourful atmosphere. Developing unique and innovative business ideas to enhance tourists' behavioural experiences is also essential. For instance, organising recreational activities such as "basket boat spinning" or "pottery-making with artisans" can provide engaging experiences. Creating opportunities for tourists to interact and connect with one another and with locals should also be encouraged. Additionally, investing in cultural and artistic festivals, as well as friendship exchange events, can help strengthen social bonds, allowing visitors to gain deeper insights into local culture and Vietnamese culture as a whole. These initiatives contribute to enhancing tourists' sensory, behavioural, and social experiences.

*Finally*, destination managers should recognise the importance of feedback and WOM, especially electronic WOM, in attracting new and returning customers. Practitioners should utilise WOM in developing strategies to maximise revenue as well. The fact that good experiences can induce positive WOM, which in turn facilitates customers returning to a tourism destination to experience it again, should be emphasised.

## 6. Limitations and future research directions

Although this study provides insights into how different aspects of experience influence behavioural intentions, some limitations remain.

*Firstly*, the data were collected after the tourists' visits, relying on memories from different time periods. To minimise inconsistencies between recalled experiences and on-site experiences, future research should collect data immediately after tourists complete their visits to the destination.

*Secondly*, the study employed a convenience sampling method, which limits the generalisability of the results. Moreover, this research was conducted in the context of Hoi An city and may not represent other tourist destinations in Vietnam. Differences in geographical locations, environmental conditions, and regional cultures may influence the findings. Future studies should expand the research scope to include multiple tourist destinations across Vietnam.

## 7. Conclusions

This study highlights the critical role of tourists' experiences - such as emotional, sensory, cognitive, behavioural, and social experiences - in shaping tourists' revisit intentions and WOM behaviours in Hoi An city. The findings confirm that positive experiences significantly influence tourists' likelihood of returning and recommending the destination. WOM also emerges as a key mediator, reinforcing the impact of memorable experiences on future travel behaviour. Theoretically, this research contributes a validated multidimensional framework to better understand tourist behaviour, particularly in developing country contexts. Practically, it offers valuable insights for tourism managers to enhance visitor experiences through cultural engagement, environmental preservation, and interactive activities. By prioritising meaningful and shareable experiences, Hoi An city can strengthen its appeal and sustain tourism growth. Future research should expand this model across different destinations to improve generalisability and explore real-time data collection for deeper insights.

## CRedit author statement

Thi Bich Thuy Nguyen: Conceptualisation, Data collection and analysis, Writing, Reviewing and Editing; Tran Bao Tran Nguyen: Methodology, Writing, Reviewing, Editing; Ngoc Thao Vy Nguyen and Thi Hang Do: Conceptualisation, Writing, Reviewing.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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