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Experiential Tourism Intention: The Case Innovation of Salt Field into Experiential Tourism

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to investigate and understand the factors that influence individuals' intention to engage in experiential tourism at salt fields that have been innovatively repurposed for tourism, and what factors or results contribute to the success of such transformations. The study approached theory of planned behavioral framework extensively to build measurement structures. Data collection was conducted in areas where tourists visited salt fields, the actual sample size obtained 358 respondents. Data is processed by PLS-SEM method on SmartPLS v.4.0.9.2 software. The results identified factors that influence experiential tourism intention. The direct influence is less than the indirect influence of attitude and trust. In which, the influence of the attitude direction is higher than the direction of the trust. Visitor attitudes significantly determine the innovation from making salt fields to the experiential tourism business.

1. INTRODUCTION

Salt making is a long-standing traditional occupation in Vietnam, associated with the lives of coastal residents [1]. Vietnam has a coastline of more than 3200 km along the route from north to south, which demonstrates favorable natural conditions for marine economic development [2]. In all types of marine economy, salting from seawater has been exploited since the 19th century [3]. The process of making salt fields is extracted from natural seawater and all using manual labor without using machines. The activities here have become a unique culture of Vietnamese people; the same people who work manually to make salt have not applied any industrial machinery, so the scenery is peaceful, and the natural environment is still natural [4]. Figure 1 below illustrates the process of producing salt from natural seawater, while Figure 2 shows the final natural salt product.

In recent years, the global tourism industry has witnessed a significant shift away from traditional sightseeing towards more immersive and participatory experiences [5]. This shift, driven by tourists' growing desire for authenticity and engagement, has given rise to experiential tourism, which emphasizes active participation and connection with local cultures and environments [6]. This transformative trend in global tourism preferences challenges destinations to adapt and innovate, offering more personalized and meaningful experiences to meet modern tourists' expectations [7].

Figure 1. The process of making salt uses only natural and manual materials

Figure 2. A pile of salt in a field collected from sea water
Source: Author's recoded in the Sa Huynh, 2023

Although experiential tourism is gaining popularity worldwide, academic research particularly focusing on integrating traditional economic activities like salt making with tourism is sparse [8]. Internationally, extensive studies have explored various aspects of experiential tourism but have largely overlooked the potential of traditional practices such as salt making. This gap in the literature suggests a need for comprehensive studies that examine how these traditional industries can be innovatively transformed into tourism experiences that contribute to sustainable economic development [9, 10].

This study aims to fill the existing research gap by investigating the transformation of traditional salt fields into experiential tourism destinations. Such innovation not only helps preserve an important cultural heritage but also enhances the economic viability of regions dependent on salt making [5]. By analyzing how these traditional practices can be integrated into the tourism industry, this research contributes new insights into sustainable tourism development strategies that leverage cultural heritage for economic benefit [11].

It is estimated that Vietnam's salt production in 2022 will reach 1.6 million tons, down 10% compared to 2021. Meanwhile, the domestic demand for salt is about 2.4 million tons, the rest must be imported from abroad [12]. Basic statistics on Vietnam's salt making productivity in 2022 will reach 1000 tons / ha, lower than countries such as China 1500 tons / ha and India 1200 tons / ha. This makes Vietnam's salt making costs higher than other countries (China, India and Thailan), making it difficult for salt workers [13]. In such contexts, in order to preserve and develop to increase the value of salt field culture, not affect environmental resources, and ensure sustainable local economic development, convertingsalt fields into experiential tourism will help the government solve appropriate problems in the context of economic development, and cultural preservation [14].

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) has proven to be a valuable framework for understanding the factors that shape individuals' intentions and behavior. This theory posits that an individual's intention to engage in a specific behavior is influenced by three key factors: their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control [15]. In the tourism industry, the theory of planned behavior extends by adding a fourth factor, perceived risk, which defines a person's perception of the negative consequences of engaging in the behavior [16]. Furthermore, the association of attitudes and trust with intention is also recommended for analysis of individual behavior [17].

To enrich this framework, Conner and Armitage [18] explore how perceived behavioral control can include anticipated regret and past experiences, which are particularly relevant in tourism where decisions often carry significant personal and cultural implications. Additionally, the work of Sparks and Guthrie [19] integrates social identity theory with TPB, suggesting that the subjective norms influencing tourist behaviors reflect their social identities, which are shaped by the norms of their reference groups. This addition provides a deeper understanding of the social dynamics influencing tourist decisions, particularly in choosing unconventional destinations [20].

Moreover, Reisinger and Mavondo [21] examine the role of perceived risk in tourism, finding that it not only affects destination choice but also the types of activities tourists engage in upon arrival [22]. This insight is crucial for understanding tourist behavior concerning activities that might be perceived as risky [23], such as visiting repurposed salt fields for experiential tourism.

From these previous perspectives, the theoretical foundation of TPB in tourism becomes more robust, offering comprehensive insights into how various elements of attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and perceived risk interact to influence tourist behavior. This enriched framework aids in the development of precise marketing strategies and operational practices, particularly in promoting emerging tourism experiences like those involving experiential and adventure tourism [24]. Through this enhanced approach, the study not only adheres to but also extends the current theoretical discussions, providing a solid basis for practical applications in the evolving landscape of the tourism industry [25].

2.1 Perceived risk

Perceived risk within the realm of tourism has received extensive attention in research [21]. Related content about perceived risk in tourism encompasses a multitude of facets, spanning financial risk, performance risk, psychological risk, physical risk, time risk, and social risk [26]. Salt field excursions often entail physical exertion in natural surroundings, and studies, such as those have underscored safety concerns, including the potential for accidents during salt harvesting and the challenges of navigating the seawater environment [27]. Travelers might also harbor health-related concerns concerning salt exposure and its effects on their skin [28] and respiratory systems, as explored by researchers like representative, who underscore the significance of disseminating information and effective risk communication [29]. In the context of salt field experience tourism, the environmental and cultural dimensions of perceived risk can be investigated [30]. Tourists may worry about the ecological and cultural impact of their visits, who advocate for tourist education as a means to alleviate these concerns [31]. Moreover, there are other reports that tourists with prior experience in challenging outdoor activities are likely to perceive lower risk in salt field tourism [32]. These dimensions are critical for analyzing the perceived risk associated with salt field experience tourism.

H1. Perceived risk has influential salt field experience tourism.

2.2 Subjective norms

Salt field experience tourism has gained prominence in recent years, offering a unique blend of cultural immersion and outdoor adventure. In the salt field experience tourism, subjective norm refers to the traveller's perception of how significant others, such as friends, family, or fellow travellers, view their decision to visit salt fields, participate in activities, and recommend such experiences to others [33, 34]. This dimension aligns closely with the theory of planned behavior [15], which emphasizes the impact of social influences on behavioral intentions.

Empirical research has explored the measurement of subjective norms within salt field experience tourism. Notably, the related research have highlighted the role of

social factors in shaping travel intentions [35]. They found that a favorable perception of subjective norms can positively influence tourists' intentions to engage in salt field experiences. Research indicates that the influence of subjective norms extends beyond immediate social circles. Destination image plays a vital role in shaping subjective norms [36]. When a destination is perceived positively by a broader group, it can bolster the subjective norm, reinforcing travellers' intentions.

H2. Subjective norms have an effect on salt field experience tourism.

2.3 Perceived behavioral control

Perceived behavioral control, as defined in the theory of planned behavior [15], plays a crucial role in shaping travelers' intentions and actions. It reflects their belief in their ability to overcome obstacles and successfully engage in salt field tourism. Several empirical studies have explored the measurement of perceived behavioral control within salt field experience tourism [37]. These studies revealed that when travelers perceive a high level of control over their ability to engage in salt field experiences [38], they are more likely to express intentions and follow through with their travel plans. During the experiential tour, there will be activities, physical needs that need attention and awareness about walking, wading and other [39]. Research suggests that improving the perceived behavioral control can positively influence travel intentions. Factors such as well-maintained infrastructure, clear instructions, and the presence of knowledgeable guides are instrumental in bolstering travelers' perceptions of control [40].

Additionally, digital tools and platforms have gained prominence in this context. Websites and apps can provide travelers with real-time information, maps, and resources, thereby enhancing their perceived behavioral control. The research have demonstrated the impact of technology on traveler control perceptions [41].

H3. Perceived behavioral control have an effect on salt field experience tourism.

2.4 Salt field experiential tourism intention

Experiential tourism focuses on offering travellers memorable, engaging, and participatory encounters [42]. This concept aligns with Pine and Gilmore's notion of the "experience economy," where experiences are seen as valuable commodities [43]. In experiential tourism, the intention to seek and engage in these unique, emotionally resonant encounters is emerging issues in the tourism market [44].

First, the role of travel motivation is pivotal [45]. There are many related studies on experiential travel, researches that mention personal motivation discussed that experiential tourists are often motivated by the desire for novelty, personal growth, and self-expression [46]. Such motivations strongly influence their intention to engage in experiential tourism [25, 47].

Second, the destination's capacity to offer these unique experiences is crucial [48]. Researchers like emphasize that the availability and diversity of experiential activities, often involving interaction with local culture and nature, significantly impact travellers' intention to visit a destination [49, 50].

Third, the role of technology and digital platforms is increasingly significant experiential tourism [7, 51]. The researches highlight how online information and social media influence travellers' intention to seek experiential activities, as they provide a platform for sharing, promoting, and engaging with these experiences [52, 53].

Fourth, personal characteristics, such as openness to new experiences and proclivity for adventurous activities, have been associated with a higher intention for experiential tourism [54]. Individuals who are more inclined toward risk-taking and novel experiences tend to seek out these types of encounters [55].

Experiential tourism intention is underpinned by a variety of factors, encompassing traveller motivations, destination offerings, technological influences, and personal traits [56]. As this form of tourism continues to evolve, innovative future research should delve deeper into the complex interplay of these determinants, particularly in the context of changing traveller preferences and technological advancements [57]. Understanding the direction and behavioral prediction of experiential tourism intention is pivotal for destination marketing and the creation innovation of truly immersive and memorable travel experiences.

H4. Perceived salt field experience tourism effect indirect on attitude of traveller.

H5. Perceived salt field experience tourism effect indirect on trust of traveller.

H6. Perceived salt field experience tourism effect directly on behavior intention.

2.5 Attitude

The theory of planned behavior is a valuable framework for understanding travelers' behavioral intentions. Specifically, it helps assess whether travelers plan to visit salt fields, participate in related activities, and recommend these experiences to others.

Numerous research studies have delved into measuring traveler attitudes and perceptions within the context of salt field tourism. Featuring researchers like underscored the pivotal role of attitudes in shaping travel intentions [58]. These attitudes encompass cognitive, affective, and destination image, providing a comprehensive view of tourists' inclinations [59].

Perceived aspects, as explored involve tourists' beliefs and knowledge integrate with local cultural activities about salt field experiences [60]. On the other hand, there are some research has reported that providing travellers with information about tour activities in the destination [61], such as participating in salt field activities, can significantly influence their attitudes and intentions towards the destination [62]. Affective components other, as investigated that delve into the emotional facets of travelers' attitudes relate support sustainable tourism initiatives [63]. Positive emotional responses to the distinctive sight’s sustainable tourism, the destination's image, and cultural interactions in salt field tourism can elevate the overall attitude towards the destination.

2.6 Trust

Within the context of salt field experience tourism, understanding travellers' trust is fundamental for effective destination management and marketing strategies. Trust has a pivotal role in influencing travellers' intentions and actions,

particularly when engaging in relatively unknown and unconventional experiences. In the realm of tourism, trust often pertains to the credibility and reliability of service providers, local communities, and the destination itself [64].

Empirical research within the field has explored the measurement of trust in salt field experience tourism. Studies like Su et al. [65] and Chen et al. [66] have underscored the importance of trust in travel intention. These works highlight that when travellers have a high level of trust in the destination and its stakeholders, they are more likely to express intentions and proceed with their travel plans.

Related research on trusts suggests that establishing and maintaining trust is a critical factor in attracting travelers to experiences tourism. Building trust is facilitated by transparent and ethical business practices, as emphasized by Liu et al. [67], as well as the involvement of local communities in the tourism value chain, contributing to a sense of authenticity and trustworthiness.

Moreover, digital platforms and social media channels play a substantial role in shaping trust in the modern era [68]. Traveler reviews and recommendations on platforms such as websites, social media, TripAdvisor or through influencers can significantly influence trust perceptions [69]. Featured studies have examined how online content can both bolster and challenge trust within the context tourism intention and applied to the context of salt field tourism.

2.7 The mediating role of attitude and trust

In travel intent analysis, attitude and trust can be identified as intermediate variables. An individual's attitude towards a travel destination will influence their intention to go to that destination [65, 66]. An individual's trust in a place providing tourism will affect their intention to use and experience the services provided there. Specifically, attitude and trust can influence travel intentions through the directions; Positive attitude towards a travel destination that will make travelers feel excited and want to go to that destination [70]. A trust determined to be highly significant for a tourist attraction will make visitors feel secure and confident in the organization providing the service, thereby promoting the intention to use the service at the destination [71].

Studies have shown that attitude and trust can be important factors influencing travel intentions. a case study by Pop et al. [52] found that attitude and trust have a positive effect on travelers' intention to return. Another study found that attitude and trust a positive effect on travelers' intention to use travel services [72].

H7. The attitude has a positive influence on visitors' intentions about salt field experience tourism.

H8. The trust has a positive influence on visitors' intentions about salt field experience tourism (Figure 3).

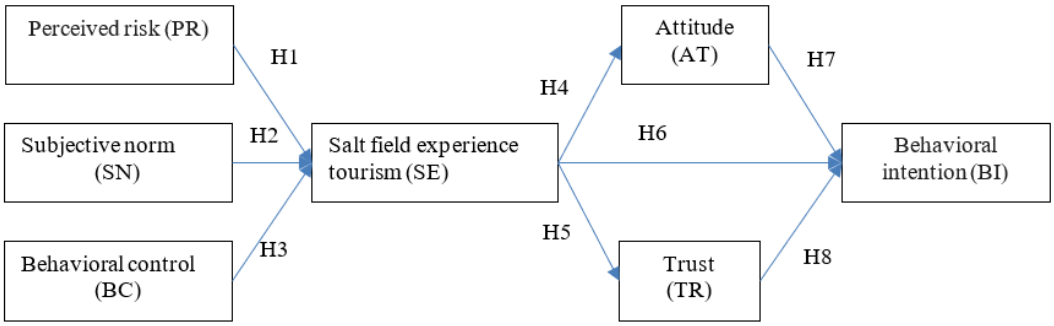

Figure 3. The conceptual model with measurement structureal salt field experience tourism
Source: Author's synthesized from literature review, 2023

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Measurements

In this study utilized a Likert five-point scale (1 is strongly disagree, 5 is strongly agree) to measure various constructs, drawing upon existing research. The questionnaire encompassed perceived risk, subjective norm, behavioral control, salt field experience tourism, attitude, trust, and behavioral intention, all of which were synthesized from the literature review. For each hypothetical measurement variable, the study employed 4 items that had been developed in previous studies. The content and structure of the questionnaire are detailed in Appendix A. The systematic literature review of questions from related studies.

To ensure the questionnaire's effectiveness, it underwent a pre-test involving group research and a small sample of tourists before the actual data collection [73]. This pre-test involved panels of experts, including academicians and field researchers in the tourism industry, who evaluated whether the questionnaire's indicators adequately represented the constructs and were comprehensible to respondents [74].

Additionally, research conducted a preliminary assessment to evaluate travelers' understanding of the measurement concepts by surveying a pilot group of 60 travelers. This initial survey aimed to gauge their comprehension of the concepts and content used in the measurement framework. The demographics of this group included 56.7% female and 43.3% male. The age distribution was as follows: 18-29 years (28.3%), 30-39 years (30.0%), 40-49 years (25.0%), and over 50 years (16.7%). The participants' employment status included managers (23.3%), employed individuals (58.3%), and unemployed individuals (18.3%). The results of this preliminary survey are detailed in Table 1 below.

The reliability tests and confirmatory factor analysis results indicate that most aspects of the research have achieved a satisfactory level of reliability [75]. The test values yield positive results and align well with the recommended conceptual measurements [76]. Key metrics assessed include Cronbach's Alpha (0.80 - 0.88), outer loadings (0.51 - 0.94), composite reliability (0.82 - 0.91), and average variance extracted (0.55 - 0.72).

Table 1. Test results 60 response on scale reliability and CFA testing

Items	Measurement Concepts	Cronbach's Alpha	Outer Loadings	CR	AVE
PR	Perceived risk	0.887	0.753 - 0.948	0.891	0.676
SN	Subjective norm	0.849	0.635 - 0.925	0.896	0.686
BC	Behavioral control	0.875	0.790 - 0.871	0.912	0.722
SE	Salt field experience tourism	0.836	0.712 - 0.887	0.890	0.671
AT	Attitude	0.824	0.514 - 0.930	0.824	0.551
TR	Trust	0.842	0.787 - 0.845	0.893	0.676
BI	Behavioral intention	0.801	0.731 - 0.881	0.866	0.619

Source: Author's analysis from data test, 2023

Note: CFA is confirmatory factor analysis, CR is Composite reliability, AVE is average variance extracted.

3.2 The collect data

In this study, the survey sample collection design was designated 4 destinations with the largest salt fields in Vietnam. The salt farms selected for this study are strategically located across Vietnam's three main regions, each representing unique geographical and cultural contexts. In the northern region, Diem Dien (Thai Binh province) covers 60 hectares; Sa Huynh (Quang Ngai province) represents the central region with 115 hectares; and Ca Na along with Phuong Cuu (Ninh Thuan province) spans 480 hectares in the southern region [77]. These areas are significant tourist attractions and are involved in tourism exploitation activities that draw visitors from across the country.

For the purposes of data collection, the sample was proportionally allocated based on the size and tourist activity of each area: 30% from Diem Dien, 30% from Sa Huynh, and 40% from the combined areas of Ca Na and Phuong Cuu. This distribution ensures that each region is adequately represented in the study, reflecting the diverse tourism dynamics of northern, central, and southern Vietnam. The official data collection period spans from December 2022 to May 2023, and we've streamlined the data collection process by using digital surveys hosted on the application drive.google.com. In each salt field area where visitors are present, the author approaches each visitor and seeks their permission to provide a brief introduction to the study, including its measurement concepts. If visitors are willing to participate in the survey, the author will then share a link to access the survey content. This content is exclusively sent to those who willingly agree to participate.

3.3 Data analysis

In order to ensure the reliability of research's measurement instrument, the study conducted a thorough evaluation using Cronbach's Alpha, which provided valuable insights into the internal consistency of the measurement tools. Additionally, the study performed a confirmatory factor analysis to assess the data's relevance in the context of both discriminant validity and convergent validity, strengthening the robustness of the dataset.

For the analysis and testing of the relationship, the study utilized SmartPLS version 4.0.9.2, a software tool that has gained recent popularity in the field of tourism research [78]. This tool's attraction stems from its adaptability for latent constructs, especially in scenarios involving non-normality and small to medium sample sizes [79]. The method applied PLS algorithms to quantify loading levels, weights, and path coefficients. Following this, the study implemented bootstrapping with 5000 re-samples to assess the significance levels of the proposed hypotheses, adhering to the methodology outlined by Hair Jr et al. [79].

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Sample information

The statistical analysis of the sample, as presented in Table 2, reveals key characteristics of the 358 respondents. Notably, the sample is comprised of 62.6% females and 37.4% males. In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents, amounting to 60.3%, fall within the age group of 30 to 39 years. Regarding employment status, approximately 78.2% of the participants were actively employed, playing a significant role in this study. In contrast, the group of managers and those who were unemployed constituted a smaller proportion, indicating a relatively lower representation within the sample.

Table 2. Statistics descripting sample characteristics

Demographics	Content	Frequency	Percent
Gender			
	Female	224	62.6
	Male	134	37.4
Age			
	18-29	94	26.3
	30-39	216	60.3
	40-49	18	5.0
	Up 50	30	8.4
Job positive			
	Employment	280	78.2
	Manager	54	15.1
	Unemployment	24	6.7

Source: Author's analysis from dataset, 2024

4.2 Scale reliability analysis by Cronbach's Alpha

In this research, a comprehensive assessment was conducted to gauge the reliability of seven measurement constructs, with detailed outcomes presented in Table 3. To ensure the reliability of the measurement scale and validate the model structure, well-established methodologies were employed. These methodologies included Cronbach's Alpha, with a requirement of exceeding 0.7, and a confirmatory factor analysis. The research scrutiny of overall model fit encompassed multiple criteria, such as SRMR (0.046), d_ULS (0.877), d_G (0.398), Chi-square (878.722), and NFI (0.852). Significantly, all these values were found to fall below the recommended thresholds, aligning with the guidelines setup [80].

Furthermore, the research meticulously assessed indicator and construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity in accordance with the standards established [81]. To establish indicator reliability, the vvalues verified that the

outer loading of each item on its corresponding construct surpassed the 0.7 threshold, as recommended [82].

In addition, research addressed the potential issue of multicollinearity by scrutinizing the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) within the inner model [83]. The results of this analysis confirmed the absence of multicollinearity concerns, as all VIF values remained below 3, in accordance with the threshold defined by Hair et al. [84]. This comprehensive methodological approach served to fortify the robustness and validity in the research findings.

Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha and outer loadings

Items	Measurements	Cronbach's Alpha	Outer Loadings	Outer VIF
PR	**Perceived risk**	**0.849**		
PR1	Visitors' perceptions of specific safety hazards and the effectiveness of preventive measures at salt farms		0.844	2.012
PR2	Travelers may perceive health risks related to exposure to salt and the impact on their skin and respiratory systems		0.849	1.988
PR3	Tourists have concerns about environmental and cultural sensitivity		0.829	2.008
PR4	Worried travelers experience traveling outdoors differently than other travelers		0.793	1.853
SN	**Subjective norm**	**0.814**		
SN1	You believe that your friends and family would approve of your decision to visit salt fields		0.731	1.888
SN2	You know about salt field experience tourism from friends, family, or travel companions		0.776	2.009
SN3	You know about salt field experience tourism from your social network to plan your travel itinerary		0.846	2.027
SN4	The opinions and preferences of your friends or travel companions have on your decision to participate in salt field experiences		0.848	2.453
BC	**Perceived behavioral control**	**0.849**		
BC1	The salt field would be easy to access sites and related activities during the trip		0.849	1.886
BC2	The necessary resources and equipment required for salt field experience activities will be readily available		0.800	1.853
BC3	You perceive the physical demands of salt field activities to be, in terms of walking, lifting, or other physical exertions		0.831	2.035
BC4	You would easily find information, maps, or guidance about salt field experiences to help you plan and navigate during the trip		0.834	1.924
SE	**Perceived salt field experience tourism**	**0.864**		
SE1	The salt field tourism aligns with my personal travel motivations and interests		0.826	1.565
SE2	The destination seems to provide a diverse set of experiences that match my interests		0.835	1.674
SE3	Technological influences, digital platforms and social media in my interest and engagement with salt field tourism		0.840	2.185
SE4	The activities innovation in salt field tourism is in harmony with my adventurous nature and willingness to explore the unknown		0.870	2.272
AT	**Attitude**	**0.896**		
AT1	Visitors find the unique sights and destination image of salt fields enriching and memorable		0.877	2.525
AT2	Visitors feel culturally enriched by participating in local activities at salt fields		0.891	2.761
AT3	Visitors find participating in salt field activities highly enjoyable and engaging		0.893	2.938
AT4	Visitors believe that salt field tourism activities play a vital role in supporting sustainable tourism efforts		0.831	2.012
TR	**Trust**	**0.899**		
TR1	Visitors trust that local service providers and tour operators consistently deliver safe and authentic salt field experiences.		0.870	2.466
TR2	Visitors trust in the involvement and cooperation of local communities to preserve and promote salt field tourism		0.859	2.425
TR3	Visitors perceive the destination and its salt field experiences as highly reputable and credible		0.884	2.624
TR4	Visitors believe that positive online reviews and recommendations enhance their trust in salt farm experiences		0.892	2.764
BI	**Behavioral intention**	**0.902**		
BI1	You intend to revisit the salt field area in the future		0.881	2.589
BI2	Your intentions to recommend the salt field experience to friends and family		0.889	2.676
BI3	You are likely to engage in similar salt field activities in the future		0.874	2.527
BI4	You are willing to invest time and effort in participating in salt field experiences		0.871	2.544

Source: Author's analysis from dataset, 2024

Table 4. Discriminant validity of Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio

	CR	AVE	AT	BC	BI	PR	SE	SN	TR
AT	0.930	0.768	0.876						
BC	0.898	0.687	0.099	0.829					
BI	0.932	0.774	0.549	0.163	0.88				
PR	0.898	0.687	0.127	0.26	0.153	0.829			
SE	0.909	0.715	0.402	0.34	0.42	0.39	0.845		
SN	0.878	0.643	0.062	0.256	0.088	0.321	0.324	0.802	
TR	0.930	0.768	0.537	0.192	0.513	0.174	0.353	0.185	0.876

Source: Author's analysis from dataset, 2024

Note: Perceived risk (PR), Subjective norm (SN), Perceived behavioral control (BC), Perceived salt field experience tourism (SE), Attitude (AT), Trust (TR), Behavioral intention (BI)

4.3 Convergence and differentiation analysis by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

To ensure the reliability and validity of our measurement constructs, we followed established guidelines. First, construct reliability was assessed using two key measures: Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha. It is commonly recommended that these values exceed 0.7. Secondly, for convergent validity, we examined the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct, with a criterion of greater than 0.5, as proposed [85, 86].

The results, as depicted in Table 4, revealed that all indicator Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeded the 0.7 threshold. This outcome affirmed the internal consistency and reliability of our measurement models. Moreover, the AVEs for all reflective constructs were found to be higher than 0.5, further confirming their acceptable levels of convergent validity.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT), as recommended [85, 87]. According to the Fornell-Larcker criterion, for a construct to establish discriminant validity, its AVE should be greater than the squared correlations with all other constructs. In the case of HTMT, all values should significantly remain below one. The recommended threshold for HTMT values, around 0.85 or 0.9, is considered indicative of sufficient evidence of discriminant validity, as proposed. These rigorous assessments ensured the reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of our measurement constructs.

4.4 Results of the structural model analysis and hypothesis testing

In the evaluation of the structural model, our approach was guided by up-to-date recommendations specifically designed for the application of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in the context of confirmatory and explanatory research. These invaluable guidelines were put forth [88], and were subsequently expanded upon [89]. Following this well-established framework allowed us to conduct a rigorous and methodologically sound analysis of structural model.

From the results of the analysis in Table 5, the relationships in the 8 hypotheses were determined to have statistical significance. The structure of the analysis process follows the principle, starting from individual perception to perceived salt field experience in tourism and directly affecting behavioral intention. Simultaneously, it also exerts an indirect influence through the intermediary measurement variables of attitude and trust on behavioral intention (Figure 4).

Regarding individual perceptions, which include perceived risk, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, they are related to perceived salt field experience in tourism. Among these, perceived risk has the highest level of impact (beta = 0.308), followed by perceived behavioral control (0.209), and subjective norm (0.174).

In terms of the perceptions of perceived salt field experience in tourism, it is more strongly associated with attitude (beta = 0.348) compared to trust (0.322). Based on these results, the author's personal opinion is that this relationship is not different. Furthermore, perceived salt field experience in tourism has a direct relationship with behavioral intention (0.194), whereas the relationship between attitude and behavioral intention (beta = 0.348) is higher than trust with behavioral intention (0.275). Additionally, a more detailed presentation of these relationships in the measurement structure is provided in Table 6 below.

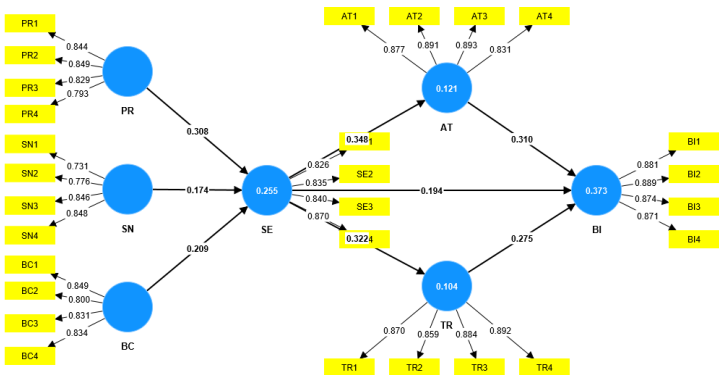

Figure 4. Path coefficients of structural model

Source: Author's analysis from dataset, 2024

Note: Perceived risk (PR), Subjective norm (SN), Perceived behavioral control (BC), Perceived salt field experience tourism (SE), Attitude (AT), Trust (TR), Behavioral intention (BI)

Table 5. Path coefficients of structureal model

Hypothesis	Paths	Standardized Coefficients	P-Value	Results
H1	PR -> SE	0.308	0.000	Accepted
H2	SN -> SE	0.174	0.003	Accepted
H3	BC -> SE	0.209	0.000	Accepted
H4	SE -> AT	0.348	0.000	Accepted
H5	SE -> BI	0.194	0.000	Accepted
H6	SE -> TR	0.322	0.000	Accepted
H7	AT -> BI	0.310	0.000	Accepted
H8	TR -> BI	0.275	0.000	Accepted

Source: Author's analysis from dataset, 2024

Note: Perceived risk (PR), Subjective norm (SN), Perceived behavioral control (BC), Perceived salt field experience tourism (SE), Attitude (AT), Trust (TR), Behavioral intention (BI)

Table 6. Specific indirect effect

Paths Indirect Effect	Estimate	P-Value	Results
BC -> SE -> BI	0.041	0.002	Accepted
PR -> SE -> AT	0.107	0.000	Accepted
SN -> SE -> BI	0.034	0.022	Accepted
SE -> AT -> BI	0.108	0.000	Accepted
SN -> SE -> AT -> BI	0.019	0.022	Accepted
SN -> SE -> AT	0.061	0.010	Accepted
PR -> SE -> TR -> BI	0.027	0.004	Accepted
BC -> SE -> TR -> BI	0.019	0.004	Accepted
BC -> SE -> AT -> BI	0.023	0.003	Accepted
BC -> SE -> TR	0.067	0.000	Accepted
PR -> SE -> TR	0.099	0.000	Accepted
SN -> SE -> TR -> BI	0.015	0.031	Accepted
SE -> TR -> BI	0.089	0.001	Accepted
PR -> SE -> AT -> BI	0.033	0.002	Accepted
SN -> SE -> TR	0.056	0.011	Accepted
BC -> SE -> AT	0.073	0.000	Accepted
PR -> SE -> BI	0.060	0.002	Accepted

Source: Author's analysis from dataset, 2024

Note: Perceived risk (PR), Subjective norm (SN), Perceived behavioral control (BC), Perceived salt field experience tourism (SE), Attitude (AT), Trust (TR), Behavioral intention (BI)

From the analysis results in Table 5 and the analysis of indirect relationships in the measurement structure in Table 6, several expected outcomes can be summarized: (1) Individual perceptual factors influence perceived salt field experience in tourism, with perceived risk being of the highest concern to travelers. (2) The analysis indicates that the direct relationship between perceived salt field experience in tourism and behavioral intention is weaker than the indirect relationship through attitude and trust. (3) In the context of this study, travelers have shown significant interest in the indirect relationship from perceived salt field experience in tourism, through the intermediary variable attitude, to behavioral intention.

From the results of the analysis and inspection necessary to obtain the expected results for application in the enterprise, the following diagram is proposed for the overall analysis of salt field innovation into salt field experience tourism.

5. DISCUSSION

Salt fields are not mere historical relics but enduring symbols of coastal communities' survival. In the face of societal evolution, preserving traditional cultures and harnessing their economic potential is vital. This study diligently explores these cultural gems, offering a foundation for innovation in their preservation and economic growth [90].

To better grasp these findings, engaging in insightful dialogues with related tourism studies is essential. These results should be carefully analyzed and contextualized through discussions with research addressing various aspects of experiential travel. It's crucial to note that within experiential travel, a common theme emerges travelers often grapple with concerns regarding perceived risk. Indeed, there are extant case studies that offer comprehensive explorations of risk perceptions within the broader tourism context, including notable research focused on tourists in Malaysia [23]. These parallel investigations can provide complementary insights and enrich the discourse on the relationship between cultural preservation, economic development, and travelers' perceptions and concerns [14]. In doing so, a more comprehensive and informed approach to salt field preservation and development can be cultivated, ultimately ensuring their continued cultural significance while promoting sustainable economic growth.

Research within the realm of experiential travel has unearthed significant insights regarding the interconnectedness of travellers' perceptions, attitudes, trust, and subsequent behavioral intentions. This intricate relationship has been explored in various studies, with notable case studies shedding light on tourism gentrification, a phenomenon where residential areas undergo a transformation into tourist destinations, as evidenced in South Korea [91]. A separate investigation conducted in Romania examined the mediating function of travellers' trust towards visiting in the connection between the assessment of destination factors and their intentions regarding tourist behavior [52].

However, it's worth noting that there exist distinctions in the research findings related to the two intermediary variables examined in this study. Notably, within the interplay of perceptions and intentions, attitude retains a more prominent and influential role compared to trust [92]. This distinction underscores the enduring significance of cultivating a favourable attitude among travellers when promoting experiential travel. While trust is undoubtedly important, the overall perception and emotional connection to a destination or experience play a pivotal role in shaping travellers' behavioral intentions [93]. This finding resonates with the broader discussions in the field of tourism, highlighting the critical importance of crafting compelling narratives, marketing strategies, and experiences that not only establish trust but also evoke positive attitudes and emotions among potential tourists [94].

The study examined the demographic characteristics of the sample to gain insights into the potential tourists' profiles. The findings shed light on the gender distribution within the sample, revealing that 62.6% of the participants were female, while 37.4% were male. This gender disparity provides valuable information for tailoring experiential tourism offerings to suit the preferences of both male and female travelers [55]. Moreover, the study delved into the age distribution of the respondents, showing that a significant portion, amounting to 60.3%, fell within the age group of 30 to 39 years. This age group's prominence suggests the need for experiential tourism initiatives that resonate with this particular demographic, possibly focusing on activities and experiences that align with the interests and expectations of individuals in this age range [95]. Additionally, the research examined employment status, revealing that approximately 78.2% of the participants were actively employed. This insight is crucial for crafting experiential tourism packages that accommodate the time constraints and preferences of a predominantly working population.

The first key finding of the study emphasizes the impact of individual perceptual factors on perceived salt field experiences in tourism, with a particular emphasis on the prominence of perceived risk [96]. It reveals that travellers have a heightened level of concern when it comes to risk perceptions associated with salt field tourism. Travelers may have concerns about the unfamiliarity of salt field experiences, potential health and safety risks, and the environmental impact of such visits [97]. These apprehensions are typically more salient and influential in shaping perceptions as they align with travellers' innate instinct for self preservation and well being. The perception of risk among tourists at salt fields is influenced not only by the physical aspects of the activities but also by their personal experiences and backgrounds [98]. For instance, tourists who are not accustomed to physical labor or outdoor activities might perceive these activities as more hazardous compared to those who regularly engage in such activities [99]. Additionally, the novelty and unfamiliarity of salt field environments can elevate perceived risks, affecting the overall willingness to participate in this form of experiential tourism [97]. In essence, perceived risk taps into primal instincts that play a pivotal role in decision-making.

Moreover, salt field tourism might be a relatively novel concept for many travellers, making them more susceptible to uncertainties and concerns. Unlike more established and widely recognized forms of tourism, the innovative nature of salt field experiences may inherently evoke questions and reservations [100].

The unique characteristics of salt fields, with their distinctive geographic settings along coastal areas, expose tourists to unique environmental factors [101]. These settings often involve direct exposure to elements such as intense sunlight and high winds, contributing to a heightened perception of physical risks. The nature of the activities at salt fields, which can include manual labor like harvesting salt, navigating uneven terrain, and prolonged periods outdoors, also plays a significant role in shaping these perceptions [27]. Understanding these unique characteristics allows tourism developers to tailor safety messages and enhance protective measures, which are critical in mitigating perceived risks.

This result also underscores the importance of addressing perceived risk in the development and promotion of salt field tourism as an experiential venture. To alleviate these concerns, it is crucial to design and market experiences that prioritize safety, environmental sustainability, and clear communication about the unique features of salt field visits [9, 10]. Crafting risk mitigation strategies and offering reassurances can help boost travellers' confidence in exploring these novel experiences [102]. This finding offers a unique perspective on how individuals form their intentions when considering salt field experiences within the context of experiential tourism.

The relationship between tourists' experiences at salt fields and visitor’s behavioral intentions is weaker than expected, indicating that the unique appeal of these experiences alone may not sufficiently drive robust intentions to visit. Therefore, it is clear that additional perceptual elements are required to effectively translate interest into concrete behavioral intentions.

Consequently, attitude and trust stand out as crucial mediators in this process. The indirect relationship illustrates that travelers’ intentions are heavily influenced by their overall attitude towards the experiences and the level of trust they place in the service providers [103]. Furthermore, the geographic environment and the physically demanding nature of activities like salt harvesting not only enhance perceived risk but also increase curiosity and engagement among those seeking unique experiences [48]. This complexity underscores the importance of understanding these perceptions, as visitors lay the groundwork for forming attitudes towards the destination.

Similarly, a positive attitude towards salt field tourism often stems from the emotional and experiential outcomes tourists anticipate [63]. If tourists believe they will gain meaningful experiences, learn about sustainable practices, or contribute to the local economy, their attitude towards participating in salt field tourism becomes positive [104]. This positive attitude is crucial as it can mitigate perceived risks by framing the experience as worthwhile [94]. Additionally, trust plays a vital role, especially in contexts where tourists perceive higher risks. Trust may relate to the safety measures implemented, the authenticity of cultural experiences offered, or the sustainability of tourism practices, ensuring tourists feel that their well-being is considered and that their participation is ethically responsible [69].

In general, this analysis confirms that while initial perception sparks interest in new tourism experiences [9], it is the attitude shaped by these perceptions and trust in service providers that ultimately drive tourists' decisions to engage [52, 72]. Thus, this insight should be integrated into models of tourist behavior, particularly for marketing and strategic planning in emerging tourism sectors like salt field tourism.

6. CONCLUSION

This study aims to investigate and understand the determinants that shape individuals' inclinations to participate in experiential tourism at salt fields. It also delves into the implicit attitudes and trust held by tourists regarding experiential tourism within the context of salt fields. The results obtained have increased the understanding and characteristics of research in the field of tourism.

This research contributes to the understanding of experiential tourism by exploring the unique context of salt fields, a relatively underexplored setting in tourism studies. By applying the theory of planned behavior, this study innovates in methodologically integrating perceptions of risk, attitudes, and trust into the model of tourist behavior in a novel tourism environment.

Moreover, the findings highlight the critical role of perceived risk and demonstrate how it can be managed to enhance tourist experiences. For practitioners, these insights suggest that improving safety measures, coupled with effective communication about these measures, can mitigate perceived risks. Additionally, developing marketing strategies that focus on the unique aspects of salt field tourism, such as its cultural and educational opportunities, can attract more visitors. The study suggests that tailoring tourism products to align with the demographic characteristics of potential tourists such as age, gender, and employment status can increase relevance and appeal.

However, this study's limitations may impact the generalizability and interpretation of its findings. Focused on salt field tourism in a specific region, the results may not readily apply to other types of tourism or locations. This specialization restricts broader applicability and advises caution in extending these findings. Moreover, the sample size of 358, while sufficient for basic PLS-SEM analysis, is moderately small for complex models or detailed subgroup analyses, potentially missing subtle variations in tourist behavior or perceptions. Additionally, reliance on self-reported survey data risks biases such as social desirability, where responses may not accurately reflect true feelings or behaviors. These limitations underscore the need for further research in more diverse contexts with larger sample sizes and possibly mixed-methods approaches to enhance validity and applicability of the findings.

7. IMPLICATIONS (PRACTICAL, SOCIAL, RESEARCH)

This research, focusing on experiential tourism intention: the case innovation of salt field into experiential tourism, has yielded pivotal insights with practical implications. Firstly, the study underscores that travellers' perceived risk is a paramount concern when considering salt field experiences. This highlights the need for travel providers to address and mitigate these concerns through clear communication and safety measures. Secondly, the indirect relationship between perceived salt field experiences and behavioral intentions, mediated by attitude and trust, reveals the importance of crafting favourable narratives and experiences to drive intentions [94]. Marketing strategies should focus on cultivating positive attitudes and trust in the authenticity and quality of salt field experiences. Lastly, the significant interest in the indirect relationship between perception, attitude, and bbehavioral intention suggests that emphasizing travellers' perceptions and emotional connections to salt field experiences can strongly influence their intentions [4]. In practice, this implies that experiential tourism initiatives should focus on evoking enthusiasm and positivity in potential tourists to boost participation in salt field tourism [105].

The study illuminates salt field experiencing tourism dynamics, which might boost the region's economy and society. First and foremost, local economic growth depends on acknowledging that individual perceptual elements, particularly perceived danger, shape travelers' salt field experiences. These issues must be addressed to attract tourists and boost the salt field tourism business. Effective communication, prioritizing safety, and minimizing risks can help to attract and keep tourists. The finding that attitude and trust had a stronger impact than the direct link between reported salt field experiences and behavioral intentions highlights the significance of positive impressions. This encourages original, unique, and appealing salt field encounters, which benefits social development. This might boost local employment, craft industries, and economic growth. Involving local communities in the tourism development process ensures that they benefit economically and socially. This participation not only fosters a sense of pride and cultural identity among residents but also strengthens the social fabric of the area, as described by Wondirad et al. [106]. Empowering local communities to manage tourism activities helps sustain the cultural and historical authenticity of the salt fields. Furthermore, sustainable practices are essential in maintaining the ecological balance of salt field areas, which are often located in delicate coastal ecosystems [101]. Implementing environmentally friendly methods in salt extraction and tourism operations can minimize the ecological footprint and ensure the long-term viability of these habitats. Similarly, salt fields hold historical significance and are integral to the cultural heritage of the regions in which they are located [104]. Preserving these traditions not only enhances the tourism experience but also ensures that cultural practices are passed down to future generations, enriching their cultural landscape.

The result of research offers a valuable platform for future research endeavors. The identification of perceived risk as a central concern for travellers implies the need for further exploration of risk mitigation strategies and the impact of perceived risk on travel decisions [102]. Additionally, the emphasis on the indirect relationship between perceived salt field experiences, Attitude, Trust, and behavioral intentions suggests the potential for in-depth investigations into the mechanisms behind these mediating variables. Further research could delve into the nuances of crafting narratives and marketing strategies that enhance travellers' attitudes and trust, thus influencing their intentions [107]. These findings pave the way for a rich landscape of future research that can enrich our understanding of experiential tourism in various contexts.

In general, the exploration of salt farm tourism as a unique case within experiential tourism showcases considerable innovation. This study enriches the academic field by highlighting how traditional economic activities can be integrated into the tourism sector, enhancing both economic viability and cultural preservation [11]. To further expand the theoretical and practical implications of this research, comparisons with other types of experiential tourism could provide deeper insights. Such comparative analysis would not only contextualize the uniqueness of salt farm tourism but also

offer broader implications for sustainable development practices across different tourism models [9]. This approach could ultimately help in crafting more robust development strategies that are both culturally sensitive and environmentally sustainable, fostering a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of experiential tourism's potential impacts.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Questionnaire content and structure

Dear Visitors,

The research team at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, is conducting a study titled "Experiential Tourism Intention: The Case Innovation of Salt Field into Experiential Tourism." We extend our warmest greetings and invite you to participate in our study by completing the following questionnaire.

Our research model consists of seven factors related to tourism experiences. We aim to understand and recommend improvements in the quality of tourism services, innovating while preserving the salt-making culture. Your feedback will help us examine the relationship between cognitive motivations, attitudes, and beliefs regarding the intention to choose salt-making experience tourism. We hope to provide practical recommendations to enhance your experience.

The questionnaire is available in Vietnamese and will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Please be assured that we do not collect any personal data. All data collected will be used solely for research purposes, based on the level of consent provided by participants.

If you have any questions or need further clarification, please contact:

1. Nguyen Nu Nguyet Anh, email: nguyen.nunguyetanh@hcmussh.edu.vn

2. Nguyen Van Ninh, email: nguyenvanninh@iuh.edu.vn

To confirm your voluntary participation, please acknowledge as follows:

"I have received the survey information and confirm my voluntary participation."

Thank you for helping us achieve our research objectives.

Best regards,

Research Team

Data collection period: December 2022 to May 2023.

Part 1. General Information

Please select your gender (Choose one option)

Female

Male

Please select your age group from the options below (Choose one option).

18-29

30-39

40-49

Up 50

Please specify your current job position (Choose one option).

Employment

Manager

Unemployment

Part 2. Key content for data collection

Please indicate your response to each statement using the following scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 represents 'Strongly Agree': 1. Strongly Disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly Agree (Appendix Table 1).

Appendix Table 1. Questionnaire

PR	Perceived Risk	References	1	2	3	4	5
PR1	Visitors' perceptions of specific safety hazards and the effectiveness of preventive measures at salt farms	[27]					
PR2	Travelers may perceive health risks related to exposure to salt and the impact on their skin and respiratory systems	[29]					
PR3	Tourists have concerns about environmental and cultural sensitivity	[30]					
PR4	Worried travelers experience traveling outdoors differently than other travelers	[32]					
SN	**Subjective norm**						
SN1	You believe that your friends and family would approve of your decision to visit salt fields	[33]					
SN2	You know about salt field experience tourism from friends, family, or travel companions	[34]					
SN3	You know about salt field experience tourism from your social network to plan your travel itinerary	[35, 36]					
SN4	The opinions and preferences of your friends or travel companions have on your decision to participate in salt field experiences	[34]					
BC	**Perceived behavioral control**						
BC1	The salt field would be easy to access sites and related activities during the trip	[37]					

BC2	The necessary resources and equipment required for salt field experience activities will be readily available	[38]
BC3	You perceive the physical demands of salt field activities to be, in terms of walking, lifting, or other physical exertions	[39]
BC4	You would easily find information, maps, or guidance about salt field experiences to help you plan and navigate during the trip	[41]
SE	**Perceived salt field experience tourism**	
SE1	The salt field tourism aligns with my personal travel motivations and interests	[46, 47]
SE2	The destination seems to provide a diverse set of experiences that match my interests	[48-50]
SE3	Technological influences, digital platforms and social media in my interest and engagement with salt field tourism	[52, 53]
SE4	The activities innovation in salt field tourism is in harmony with my adventurous nature and willingness to explore the unknown	[54, 55]
AT	**Attitude**	
AT1	Traveller would enjoy to the unique sights, destination image	[58, 59]
AT2	Traveller would integrate with local cultural activities	[60]
AT3	Traveller would enjoy participating into salt filed activities	[62]
AT4	Salt field tourism activities is important to support sustainable tourism initiatives	[63]
TR	**Trust**	
TR1	You trust the local service providers and tour operators associated with salt field experiences to deliver a safe and authentic experience	[64]
TR2	You have the involvement and cooperation activities of the local communities in preserving and promoting salt field tourism	[65, 66]
TR3	You would rate the overall reputation and credibility of the destination and its salt field experiences	[67]
TR4	Visitors believe that positive online reviews and recommendations enhance their trust in salt farm experiences	[68, 69]
BI	**Behavioral intention**	
BI1	You intend to revisit the salt field area in the future	[49, 50]
BI2	Your intentions to recommend the salt field experience to friends and family	[33, 34]
BI3	You are likely to engage in similar salt field activities in the future	[47]
BI4	You are willing to invest time and effort in participating in salt field experiences	[55, 62]