

# THE INFLUENCE OF ELECTRONIC-WOM ON TOURISTS' BEHAVIORAL INTENTION TO CHOOSE A DESTINATION: A CASE OF CHINESE TOURISTS VISITING THAILAND

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**Abstract:** Word of mouth (WOM) plays an important role in one's daily life, especially in the tourism industry. With the development of information communication technologies, WOM has developed into electronic word of mouth, also referred to as eWOM. This study examines the influence of eWOM on tourists' behavioral intentions to choose a particular tourism destination. The theory of planned behavior (TPB) is utilized to investigate how eWOM influences Chinese tourists' intention to visit Thailand. This study is based on non-probability convenience sampling where primary data were collected from 400 respondents who relied on tourists' online comments about their travel experiences to plan their trip to Thailand in the last six months.

Research objectives of this study are to study the relationship between eWOM and Chinese tourists' decision-making influence factors to visit Thailand, and to investigate how eWOM affects Chinese tourists' intention to travel in Thailand. The results show that eWOM significantly affects tourists' behavioral intention toward visiting Thailand by affecting their attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control of the theory of planned behavior (TPB). This thesis adopted the cross-sectional research methodology because of time limitations and no financial support from outside. In addition, this thesis focused on Chinese tourists only. Different countries have their own characteristics and cultures, and the results or conclusions of this study cannot be applied to other countries.

The findings of this study will help tourism organizations and marketers based in China and Thailand to realize that using eWOM is becoming a major trend for Chinese tourists when planning a so-called Do-It-Yourself (DIY) trip.

**Keywords:** Attitude, Behavioral Intention, eWOM, Perceived Behavioral Control, Subjective Norms, Tourism Destination, WOM, Chinese Tourist.

## 1. Introduction

With the amazing social and economic development of the People's Republic of China, people are getting much wealthier, and they are eager to go abroad to see the world, since China launched its opening policy just around 30 years ago. The Chinese government builds better-connected diplomatic relationships with

most of the countries in the world, which also stimulates the Chinese outbound tourism development, especially to Thailand. Among ASEAN countries, Thailand was the first one to negotiate with China about bilateral visa exemptions for tourists in 2013.

According to the Department of Tourism in Thailand, there are approximately 4,705,173 Chinese citizens who visited Thailand in the year 2013 and contributed 17.6% of all international tourists' arrivals in Thailand, which is the highest percentage compared to other countries. The total tourist arrivals from the PRC to Thailand has increased by 69% compared with the previous year's

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2,786,860. There is a significant increase in the official data from the department of tourism.

However, many Chinese tourists have been complaining about unsatisfactory experiences and tricky or illegal practices during group tours, like forced shopping. The tourists are getting increasingly unhappy with group tours. Instead of joining package/group tours, Chinese tourists are more likely to go on “Do It Yourself”(DIY) trips. When arranging DIY trip, the channel word of mouth (WOM) through the Internet is considered an innovative and effective platform to gain and obtain travel information, opinions and resources, collectively termed as electronic word of mouth (“eWOM”). eWOM is considered to be more effective than the traditional WOM for its higher accessibility (Chatterjee, 2001). As the products in tourism are intangible, the products cannot be measured, touched or sensed in other ways before the consumption experience. To avoid the potential purchase risk, tourists mostly depend on WOM. The main elements that favor the tourists purchase intentions are information from various sources, such as the Internet and the opinion from other people who have made trips to a particular destination before. Examples include consumer visit websites, such as Tripadvisor.com. As a result, tourist consumption behavior has undergone major change with the travel decision affected by the eWOM through various sources. Under those circumstances, understanding the reasons behind tourist decisions is fundamentally important. This study investigates how eWOM affects Chinese tourist behavioral intention to choose a particular tourism destination.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***-WOM and its Role in Tourism Industry***

eWOM comes from WOM. It has been proven to be one of the most effective ways of marketing, and more widely accepted than TV and radio, which is evident from previous tourism marketing studies. Day (1971) stated that WOM is nearly three

times more effective than zero-cost samples and nine times more effective than advertisement in influencing customer attitude or behavior when considering a newly launched convenient product. Zeithaml and Parasuraman (1996) also stated that the role of WOM is considered to be more significant when services are complex or have high-perceived risk. In recent years, Trusov, Bucklin and Pauwels (2009) found regarding web clients' procurement of information that the possibility of WOM is thirty times higher than the information obtained from traditional media channels. WOM plays a crucial role in tourism and hospitality industries. As products in tourism are intangible, visitors have no idea before it is experienced. Murray (1991) mentions that consumers are much more easily influenced by WOM when making the purchase decisions in the service industry. Shanka, Ali-Knight and Pope (2002) studied the ways of Western Australians' travel decision-making, and found out that a large number of travelers made destination decisions based on WOM sources. O'Neill, Palmer and Charters (2002) found that it increased the wine sales when the tourists returned home and shared their experiences with others. Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2002) investigated the tourism brand of Wales, and found that WOM is an efficient method for distributing the 'Visit Wales' information through the Welsh diaspora. Litvin, Bloise and Laird (2004) with a USA based study, emphasized that when consumers choose a restaurant, they are more likely influenced by WOM recommendations than by formal media. These researchers gave suggestions to the restaurant marketers to focus on the interpersonal marketing strategies rather than using traditional marketing strategies as before.

### ***-eWOM and its Role in the Tourism Industry***

There is a tremendous growth of online and social networking media with significant effects of WOM in our lives

(Brown, Broderick and Lee, 2007). The Internet gives a new meaning to WOM because of its fast way to share and deliver the message with a low cost through the Internet, known as eWOM (electronic word of mouth). As a result of significant growth of electronic/internet commerce, there is an increased attention on eWOM by researchers and practitioners (Xia and Bechwati, 2008). Researchers found that consumers are highly influenced by eWOM when they are shopping on the Internet (Bickart and Schindler, 2001), while other researchers have discovered that consumers obtained the necessary information frequently from using eWOM (Smith, Menon and Sivakumar, 2005). Consumers check websites, e.g., Chinese online communities check Sina.com and chat-sharing forums on Renren.com. And other online companies have also included eWOM as an additional item on their websites, e.g. the online retailer Taobao (淘宝), electronic music/movie download websites (QQ music/movie) and B2C websites TianMao (天猫) in China, and even NGOs and platforms (TED Talks). Online companies also use eWOM for advertisements because of its convenience and low cost. For example, Amazon.com never did any advertisement through any traditional marketing ways but instead uses eWOM. This study focused on how eWOM impacts tourists' intention for decision-making.

With the development of ICT, an increasing number of tourists obtain their travel information from the Internet and to handle transactions online. There is a good example: Tourists share their tourism destination experience and opinions on the website [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com). Some researches implied that eWOM information a main way how customers gain knowledge of the quality of products and services (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006). Chatterjee (2001) stated that this kind of information can effectively diminish or control uncertain risks when buying certain

products or services. Normally the customers' purchase intention can be further impacted. In terms of Islamic tourism destination, Fakharyan, Elyasi and Mohammadi (2012) posited that tourists' attitude towards Islamic destinations was influenced by eWOM.

There exist many views concerning the power of eWOM impact on tourists' views about their tourism decisions. For example, Vermeulen and Seegers (2009) stated that exposure of online views increases the awareness of hotels. At the same time the positive comments are more likely to improve the tourists' attitudes about that hotel. Ye, Law and Gu (2009) stated that the number of hotel bookings would increase if eWOM is positive. Furthermore, some studies are about the motives for expressing comments and giving information online (such as Lee, Cheung, Lim and Sia, 2006) and for chasing eWOM information (such as Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006), which provides useful information that helps marketers to "grasp" online customers by analyzing their behavioral intentions. A recent study by Albarq (2013) found that tourists' travel intentions and their attitudes were positively influenced by eWOM when they chose Jordan as a travel destination.

#### ***-The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and its Role in the Tourism Industry***

According to Ajzen (1991), TPB is known as improvement from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which covers TRA's limitations in terms of dealing with behaviors or performances where an individual has inadequate self-control of their own will. The TPB contains a supplementary element - Perceived Behavior Control (PBC), which is the individual's control over being able to achieve that behavior, and is influenced by control of beliefs (what one believes one can implement in the behavior). The individual thinks that they have control over a behavior and also can perform it, as they are confident they have enough resources to take the performance. In

conclusion, Attitude, Subjective Norm and PBC from the Theory of Planned Behavior all have a direct influence on behavioral intention. TPB hypothesizes that behavior is driven by behavioral intentions, while behavioral intentions are a function of a tourist's attitude towards the behavior. McIvor and Paton (2007) stated that an individual's feeling to show certain behavior is defined as attitude, no matter whether the feeling is positive or negative. Behavioral intention can be considered as a symbol of one's readiness or willingness to implement certain ways of conduct or behaviors. A tourist's intention determines his or her certain behavior.

The study undertook the initiatives to further analyze applications of TPB in determining how eWOM affects Chinese tourist behavioral intention towards tourism destination decision, especially when travelling to Thailand. According to Ajzen (1988), the important elements of the TPB are attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, intention and behavior. TPB has been adopted in many different studies, for examples, in the discussion of online purchasing intention and behavior (Celik, 2008). Nevertheless, there is still a limited number of TPB empirical studies in Asian countries' tourism areas, especially in China.

#### **- Related Empirical Studies**

Albarq (2013). *Measuring the Impacts of Online WOM on Tourists' Attitude and Intentions to Visit Jordan: An Empirical Study*: The purpose of this study was to inspect how eWOM impacts tourists' attitude in terms of choosing a destination for travelling, and to find the connections between tourists' attitudes on certain tourism destinations and actual behavioral intentions to visit a destination based on eWOM. The questionnaire has four parts, including socio-demographic character identification, eWOM, tourist attitudes towards Jordan, and travel intentions. 302 questionnaires were distributed in Amman (the most popular destination in Jordan), out of which 294 were valid questionnaires

and were analyzed using statistical analysis. The study posited that marketers can use various advantages of eWOM to attract tourists to participate in online activities in order to foster tourists' trust in visiting Jordan, and even to revisit in the future.

Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan (2008). "Electronic WOM in hospitality and tourism management": The study described eWOM as a potentially economical way for marketers in the hospitality and tourism area. This article first discussed relevant studies on interpersonal impacts and WOM, and then generated a model containing mediating variables, sources, and incentives for giving and obtaining WOM. Moreover, the authors also suggested appropriate marketing strategies to cope with and develop interpersonal impact online. Finally, the authors mentioned ethical issues when using the current technologies for marketing purposes and suggested directions for future research.

Jalilvand and Samiei (2012). *The impact of eWOM on a tourism destination choice: Testing the theory of planned behavior (TPB)*: The aim of this study was to explore the impact of electronic word of mouth regarding choosing a tourism place or destination, and adopting the theory of planned behavior (TPB) to analyze. To reach the goal, a relevant market survey was carried out in Iran (one of the most popular destinations is Isfahan, used as target population for this study). There were 400 questionnaires distributed to guests in Iran in international hotels, and 296 questionnaires, yielding 74% percent response, were considered valid. TPB offers a theoretically tempting clarification in the tourism destination procedure. Based on the results, eWOM among tourists is positive and significantly influences attitudes towards visiting Isfahan. It also plays a strong impact in terms of the intention to travel.

Di Pietro, Di Virgilio and Pantano (2012). Social network for the choice of tourist destination: attitude and behavioural intention: The aim of this study was to explore how social networks can become the primary tool to obtain useful information when making a tourism destination choice, and also to discuss how to use the social media to attract potential visitors in competitive marketing and how to promote the tourism destination in a global perspective. A total of 1509 questionnaires were distributed at universities in southern Italy, 1397 of them valid and analyzed for the statistical analysis. The findings of this study show that eWOM plays a key role both in the opinion of usefulness and the influences on attitude towards choice of tourism destination. Moreover, the study mentioned that social network provides enjoyment for the users, and represented a

deeper predictor for tourist behavior intention and consumer attitude.

Fakharyan, Elyasi and Mohammadi (2012). The influence of online WOM communications on tourists' attitudes towards Islamic destinations and travel intention: Evidence from Iran: The purpose of the study was to investigate the connections among eWOM, tourists' attitudes and travel intentions towards Islamic destinations based on empirical and theoretical evidence. The study targeted international visitors as survey population. Participants were selected at different tourism attractions of Isfahan. 205 questionnaires were distributed during the month of January 2012. 189 of them were valid questionnaires and were analyzed. The outcomes indicate that eWOM positively impacts tourists' attitudes with regard to Islamic destinations and travel intention. Below table is the summary of empirical studies.

Researcher s (Year)	Research Title	Objective of the Research	Research Methodology	Research Findings
Albarq. (2013).	Measuring the Impacts of Online Word-of- Mouth on Tourists' Attitude and Intentions to Visit Jordan: An Empirical Study	To investigate the influence that eWOM has on the attitudes of tourists towards destinations and intentions to travel, also to find out the relationships between tourists' attitudes regarding specific destinations and actual intention to travel regarding the causal eWOM.	The methodology of the study focuses on developing a structural equation model (SEM) to examine eWOM on Tourists' Attitude and Intentions to Visit Jordan	The findings of this study show that eWOM positively impacts tourists' travel intentions and their attitudes towards Jordan as a destination, more ever, the study mentioned the marketers can use various aspects of eWOM to foster tourists' trust on visiting Jordan, and even revisit in the future.

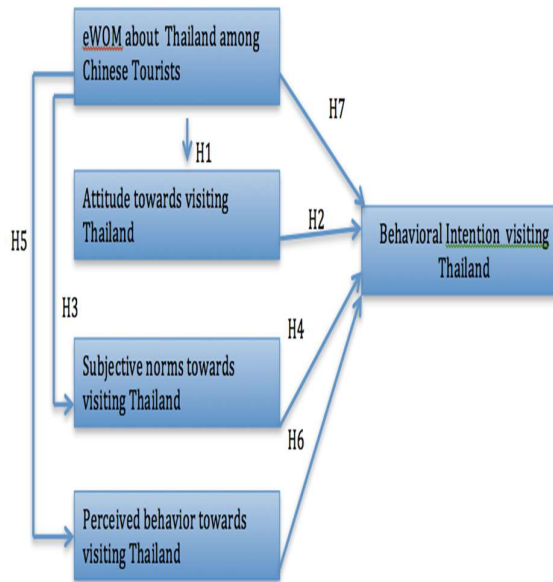
<b>Researcher s (Year)</b>	<b>Research Title</b>	<b>Objective of the Research</b>	<b>Research Methodology</b>	<b>Research Findings</b>
<b>Litvin et al. (2008)</b>	Electronic Word-of-Mouth in Hospitality and Tourism Management.	To explore the importance and usefulness of eWOM in the hospitality and tourism industry.	The article used secondary data from other studies to support the rationale.	This article generated a conceptual model including sources, mediating variables, and motivations for contributing to and seeking WOM. The authors suggest the appropriate marketing strategies. Finally, the authors mention ethical issues when using the current technologies for marketing purposes, and accompanying with the suggestions directions for future research.
<b>Jalilvand et al. (2012)</b>	The impact of electronic word of mouth on a tourism destination choice: Testing the theory of planned behavior (TPB)	To explore the influence of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) in choosing a tourism destination, adopting the TPB for analysis. Moreover, an attempt was made to analyze the effect of past travel experiences by using eWOM and TPB constructs.	The methodology of this research is based on the SEM, attempting to describe eWOM effects on the process of a tourism destination choice.	The findings of survey indicate that eWOM among tourists positively and significantly influences an attitude towards visiting Isfahan. Additionally, attitude towards visiting a destination, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are all found to be important factors of the intention to visit a specific tourism destination.

Researcher s (Year)	Research Title	Objective of the Research	Research Methodology	Research Findings
<b>Di Pietro et al. (2012)</b>	Social network for the choice of tourist destination: attitude and behavioral intention	To explore how the social networks can become the primary tool for obtaining useful information when making a tourism destination choice. It also discussed how to use the social media to attract potential visitors in competitive global marketing.	The methodology of the study is concentrated on a Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) which includes enjoyment of electronic communication systems.	The findings of this study show that eWOM plays the key role both in the perception of usefulness and in the influences on attitude towards tourism destination choosing. Moreover, the study mentioned that social network represented a deeper predictor for tourist behavior intention and consumer attitude.
<b>Fakharyan et al. (2012).</b>	The influence of online word of mouth communications on tourists' attitudes towards Islamic destinations and travel intention: Evidence from Iran	To investigate the relationships among eWOM, tourists' attitudes and travel intention towards Islamic destinations based on the theoretical and empirical evidence.	The methodology of the study is based on a structural equation model (SEM) test.	The findings of this research indicate that eWOM positively influences tourists' attitudes towards Islamic destinations and travel intention.

### 3. Research Framework and Methodology

In the study by Albarq (2013), the link and relationship between the attitude of tourists and actual intention to travel to a certain destination in relation to the influence of eWOM was investigated. The results are helpful for the present study. Di Pietro et al. (2012) used the hypothesis “eWOM communication has an impact on the tourist’s attitude in using the social digital media for the choosing tourism destination” to analyze the relationship between eWOM and tourist attitude, which inspired the researcher to investigate in more detail eWOM’s influence on Chinese tourists’ attitudes, and furthermore to investigate the relationship with behavioral intention in this study. Jalilvand et al. (2012) studied the relationship between eWOM and the intention to travel to Isfahan by analyzing its relationship with TPB as a mediator. This has given the foundation for this research. Based on the studies mentioned above, the key findings and arguments, the researcher created a conceptual framework as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework



Source: Developed by the researcher

This study has seven hypotheses to fulfill the research objective.

- H1o. There is no significant relationship between eWOM and Chinese tourists’ attitudes towards visiting Thailand.*
- H2o. There is no significant relationship between attitudes and behavioral intention to visit Thailand.*
- H3o. There is no significant relationship between eWOM and Chinese tourists’ subjective norms towards visiting Thailand.*
- H4o. There is no significant relationship between subjective norms and Chinese tourists’ behavioral intention to visit Thailand.*
- H5o. There is no significant relationship between eWOM and perceived behavioral control towards visiting Thailand.*
- H6o. There is no significant relationship between perceived behavioral control and behavioral intention towards visiting Thailand.*
- H7o. There is no significant relationship between eWOM and behavioral intention towards visiting Thailand.*

#### - Research Methodology

This study applies a descriptive research method which aims to find out whether there are correlations between eWOM and behavioral intention to visit a destination, taking Chinese tourists to Thailand as a case study by analyzing each phases of the TPB impacted by eWOM. The researcher developed a five-point Likert scale questionnaire which was distributed among the respondents who in turn marked the answers in each part. The information collected includes the demographics as well as the opinions used to evaluate the presented hypotheses and how eWOM influences Chinese tourists’ behavioral intentions to select Thailand as their destination for traveling. The total sample size of the research is 400. Since the researcher selected two ways, both online



survey and offline survey. For the online survey, a link was presented in Chinese travel websites until 100 respondents finished the survey, such as in “Weixin”, “Sina Weibo”, and “Manfeng WO” during 1<sup>st</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>, Sep 2014. Furthermore, for offline surveys, 150 questionnaires were separately distributed in Bangkok at two airports during 30<sup>th</sup> Aug to 28<sup>th</sup>, Sep 2014 (Suvarnabhumi Airport and Don Muang Airport).

The researcher self-administered questionnaires to collect data from participants. The questionnaires consist of three parts with a total of 28 items and start with two screening questions, and the data was collected during the period of 29<sup>th</sup>, August to 30<sup>th</sup>, Sep 2014, and all collected data of this study were analyzed by the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science). The researcher gathered the data from 400 respondents and coded into SPSS, and using both descriptive and inferential analysis.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The research data were transformed into the applicable form for analysis and interpretation by using SPSS. The data based on 400 questionnaires were obtained from both online and offline, and the detail results are as below:

#### *-Descriptive analysis*

Six variables of demographic characteristics were analyzed, including gender, age, education attainment, current occupation, purpose of visiting, and length of trip. According to result, 54.3% of the respondents are male (217 respondents), 45.8% (183 percent) of them are female. The majority of respondents are 20-29 years old, representing 47.8% of the whole sample (191 respondents). For the education range among 400 respondents, most respondents hold a Master's degree with 54% (216 respondents); 40.5% of the respondents have a Bachelor's degree (162 respondents); There are 197 respondents (49.3%) are private sector employees, whereas 46 respondents (11.5%) are

government employees; most respondents' purpose is stated as “vacation/leisure,” taking the highest percentage with 37.5% (150 respondents); the highest percentage in terms of the length of trip is “six days to ten days” with 34.8% (139 respondents); the length of trip for “eleven days to half of month” is taking a significant percentage with 29.5% (118 respondents). Therefore, it is concluded that the majority of the respondents stayed in Thailand around six to ten days or eleven days to half a month.

#### *-Inferential Analysis*

Pearson correlation analysis was used to test the relationships between dependent and independent variables through seven hypotheses. The results of Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis are discussed and explained below:

#### Hypothesis One (H1)

H1o. There is no significant relationship between eWOM and Chinese tourists' attitudes towards visiting Thailand.

H1a. There is a significant relationship between eWOM and Chinese tourists' attitudes towards visiting Thailand.

According to the results, the Sig. value equals .000, which is less than .01 (.000<.01). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, it confirms that there is a significant relationship between eWOM and attitude towards visiting Thailand at 0.01 level of significance. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient is .649, which means that there is a medium positive relationship between eWOM and attitude towards visiting Thailand. This implies that these two variables move in the same direction.

#### Hypothesis Two (H2)

H2o. There is no significant relationship between attitudes and behavioral intention to visit Thailand.

H2a. There is a significant relationship between attitudes and behavioral intention to visit Thailand.

According to the results, the Sig. value is .000, which is less than .01 (.000<.01). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, which means that there is a significant relationship between attitude and behavioral intention to visit Thailand at the 0.01 level of significance. Moreover, the Pearson Coefficient of Correlation shows .519, which means there is a medium positive relationship between two variables. This implies that these two variables move in the same direction.

#### Hypothesis Three (H3)

H3o. There is no significant relationship between eWOM and Chinese tourists' subjective norms towards visiting Thailand.

H3a. There is a significant relationship between eWOM and Chinese tourists' subjective norms towards visiting Thailand.

According to the results, the Sig. value is .000, which is less than .01 (.000<.01). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, which means that there is a significant relationship between eWOM and subjective norms towards visiting Thailand at the 0.01 level of significance. Moreover, the Pearson Coefficient of Correlation displays .710, which means there is a high positive relationship between two variables. This implies that these two variables move in the same direction.

#### Hypothesis Four (H4)

H4o. There is no significant relationship between subjective norms and Chinese tourists' behavioral intention to visit Thailand.

H4a. There is a significant relationship between subjective norms and Chinese tourists' behavioral intention to visit Thailand.

According to the results, the Sig. value equals .000, which is less than .01 (.000<.01). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, which means that there is a significant relationship between subjective norms and behavioral intention to visit

Thailand at the 0.01 level of significance. Moreover, the Pearson Coefficient of Correlation displays .710, which means there is a high positive relationship between two variables. This implies that these two variables move in the same direction.

#### Hypothesis Five (H5)

H5o. There is no significant relationship between eWOM and perceived behavioral control towards visiting Thailand.

H5a. There is a significant relationship between eWOM and perceived behavioral control towards visiting Thailand.

According to Table 5.18, the Sig. value equals .000, which is less than .01 (.000<.01). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected which means that there is a significant relationship between eWOM and perceived behavior control towards visiting Thailand. Moreover, the Pearson Coefficient of Correlation is .822, which means there is a strong positive relationship between the two variables. This implies that these two variables move in the same direction.

#### Hypothesis Six (H6)

H6o. There is no significant relationship between perceived behavioral control and behavioral intention towards visiting Thailand.

H6a. There is a significant relationship between perceived behavioral control and behavioral intention towards visiting Thailand.

According to the results, the Sig. value equals .000, which is less than .01 (.000<.01). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, which means that there is a significant relationship between perceived behavior control and behavioral intention to visit Thailand. Moreover, the Pearson Coefficient of Correlation is .817, which means there is a strong positive relationship between the two variables. This implies that these two variables move in the same direction.

#### Hypothesis Seven (H7)

H7o. There is no significant relationship between eWOM and behavioral intention towards visiting Thailand.

H7a. There is a significant relationship between eWOM and behavioral intention towards visiting Thailand.

According to the results, the Sig. value equals .000, which is less than .01 (.000<.01) Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, which means that there is a

significant relationship between eWOM and behavioral intention towards visiting Thailand. Moreover, the Pearson Coefficient of Correlation is .725, which means there is a high positive relationship between the two variables. This implies that these two variables move in the same direction.

In this study, inferential analysis was applied for testing the relationship between the variables, and a total of seven null hypotheses were rejected in this study.

Hypotheses statement	Statistical analysis	Level of significance	Correlation Coefficient	Result
H1o. There is no significant relationship between eWOM and Chinese tourists' attitudes towards visiting Thailand.	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.00	0.649 ( Medium positive correlation)	Reject Ho
H2o. There is no significant relationship between attitudes and behavioral intention to visit Thailand.	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.00	0.519 ( Medium positive correlation)	Reject Ho
H3o. There is no significant relationship between eWOM and Chinese tourists' subjective norms towards visiting Thailand.	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.00	0.71 (High positive correlation)	Reject Ho
H4o. There is no significant relationship between subjective norms and Chinese tourists' behavioral intention to visit Thailand.	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.00	0.71 (High positive correlation)	Reject Ho
H5o. There is no significant relationship between eWOM and perceived behavioral control towards visiting Thailand.	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.00	0.822 (Strong positive correlation)	Reject Ho
H6o. There is no significant relationship between perceived behavioral control and behavioral intention towards visiting Thailand.	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.00 23	0.817 (Strong positive correlation)	Reject Ho

*Here comes the summary of Hypotheses testing result as below table:*

As the hypotheses significant values at 0.000 were less than 0.05, they indicate that all variables are significantly related to each other. The summary of the results are as below:

Hypothesis One (H1): There is a medium positive relationship between eWOM and Chinese tourists' attitudes towards visiting Thailand

Hypothesis Two (H2): There is a medium positive relationship between attitudes and behavioral intention to visit Thailand.

Hypothesis Three (H3): There is a high positive relationship between eWOM and Chinese tourists' subjective norms towards visiting Thailand.

Hypothesis Four (H4): There is a high positive relationship between subjective norms and Chinese tourists' behavioral intention to visit Thailand.

Hypothesis Five (H5): There is a strong positive relationship between eWOM and perceived behavioral control towards visiting Thailand.

Hypothesis Six (H6): There is a strong positive relationship between perceived behavioral control and behavioral intention towards visiting Thailand.

Hypothesis Seven (H7): There is a high positive relationship eWOM and behavioral intention towards visiting Thailand.

#### **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

##### ***-Conclusions***

This study investigated how eWOM affects tourists' behavioral intention to choose a tourism destination, in particular in the case of Chinese tourists' decision making to visit Thailand. The theory of planned behavior (TPB) was utilized to investigate how eWOM influences tourists' intention to choose a tourism destination. With respect

to the research objectives of this study, the relationship between eWOM and the attitude towards visiting Thailand was tested to yield a medium positive relationship between eWOM and the attitude towards visiting Thailand. Likewise, the researcher investigated any significant relationship between attitudes and the behavioral intention towards visiting Thailand and found a medium positive relationship between attitudes and the behavioral intention towards visiting Thailand. The results came out similarly in Albarq (2013), where eWOM positively affects tourists' attitudes and their travel intentions to choose Jordan as a tourism destination.

When investigating the relationship between eWOM and subjective norms towards visiting Thailand, the research findings indicate a high positive relationship between eWOM and subjective norms towards visiting Thailand. Furthermore, a significantly high positive relationship is observed by examining a relationship between subjective norms and the behavioral intention towards visiting Thailand. Chinese tourists belong to a collectivist culture, so the travel behavioral intention is strongly affected by subjective norms. The results came out the same in Triandis (1994b), who stated that a person in a collectivist culture is more likely to act following the opinion by others who are important to them when compared to those individuals who hold strong individualistic values.

According to the research objectives of this study, a strong positive relationship is achieved by exploring the relationship between eWOM and perceived behavioral control towards visiting Thailand. Furthermore, there is a strong positive relationship between perceived behavioral control and behavioral intention towards visiting Thailand. Agreeing with these findings, two previous studies have confirmed the significant role of perceived behavioral control. Martin et al. stated that perceived behavioral control is considered a

crucial element of their intention for buying foods (Alam et al. 2011).

Additionally, a high positive significant relationship is achieved between eWOM and the behavioral intention towards visiting Thailand. Previous researches have established that eWOM information is vital, whereby consumers can gain information about services and the quality of goods (Chevalier et al., 2006). This sort of information can be taken as efficient to reduce the potential danger and risk for consumers when they purchase services or goods, so that their buying intention may be further impacted (Chatterjee, 2001). This means that Chinese tourists' behavioral intention towards visiting Thailand is highly affected by eWOM.

#### **- Recommendations**

This study investigated eWOM influences on Chinese tourists' behavioral intention to choose Thailand as a tourism destination. In this study, the TPB provides a conceptually appealing interpretation of the process of decision-making for a tourism destination. Based on the results, eWOM among Chinese tourists directly influences their intention to visit Thailand, especially through attitudes, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. It is recommended to tourism industry practitioners and travel organizations in Thailand to develop an appropriate communication link to help tourists to be knowledgeable about a unique travel experience in Thailand. They should develop rich content and contexts capable of being consistently updated through that link, which would influence tourists' attitude, and consequently increase the behavioral intention to visit Thailand. Regarding to develop a positive attention for increasing the behavioral intention, the researcher would like to recommend that the marketers should be aware of the risks of negative eWOM, as the consequences of the risks could lead to significantly diminishing tourists' attitude and intention towards visiting Thailand. In order to use eWOM to affect tourists' decision from the

subjective norms perspective, it is suggested that website operators should expand by creating trust mechanisms to attract the tourists to social media to share their travel experiences. The website should be easy to use, and with a clear web design for tourists to upload or download the pictures in order to maximize their engagement on social networks. The website design should thus encourage their sharing of videos and photos of their recent trips to Thailand. While with purpose to increase the behavioral intention from subjective norms perspective, it is suggested that destination organizations can build online tourist communities. Such communities are the main virtual place where tourists can exchange opinions and obtain online information, they can speak out and freely share their traveling experience. It would be more attractive to potential Chinese tourists if online communities could engage in chat and have discussions in forums, hence, tourists could get the immediate response if they have any questions concerning a visit to Thailand. Based on the results regarding perceived behavioral control, it is suggested to marketing managers and website operators based in China and Thailand to provide online services to answer frequently asked questions and to provide potential Chinese tourists with comprehensive, clear, detailed, and specific information about Thailand around the clock. Based on the results regarding perceived behavioral control, it is suggested the website information would be more trustworthy if it is updated frequently, e.g. during the periods of political instability in Thailand in 2013 and 2014, when safety was considered a priority, international tourists, particularly Chinese tourists, wanted to know the location of protesters, and then to arrange their route to avoid the protest areas. According to the results that there is a high positive relationship between eWOM and behavioral intention towards visiting Thailand, which means that eWOM has considerable effects on behavioral intention.

The same has been reflected in numerous studies prior to this study, such as in Chevalier et al. (2006). Therefore, managers or tourist organizations could initiate point-of-sale activities to encourage online WOM participation by enabling consumers to share their personal impressions online. For example, gifts would be provided to the first 10 tourists who publish a review. In addition, the accessibility and transparency of the Internet allow tourism marketers and organizations to monitor online WOM communications. Marketers could develop appropriate communication tools about the Thai travel products and services to make Chinese tourists aware of specific travel experiences and unique services.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that positive online WOM plays a significant role in increasing tourists' travel intention, so the marketers and organizations should try to change some of the negative thoughts that Chinese tourists have about some products or services in Thailand through online WOM. Thus, a system of receiving complaints online from Chinese tourists and solving the problems for Chinese tourists must be implemented. Ignoring complaints can lead Chinese tourists to engage in negative eWOM about Thailand.

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**Appendix 1.** The Analysis of Demographic Factors by Using Frequency and Percentage

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
-Male	217	54.3
-Female	183	45.8
<b>Age</b>		
-Under 20	23	5.8
-Between 20-29	191	47.8
-Between 30-39	140	35
-Between 40-49	42	10.5
-Above 50	4	1
<b>Education Level</b>		
-High school or Less	14	3.5
-Bachelor degree	162	40.5
-Master Degree	216	54
-Doctor Degree or more	8	2
<b>Occupation</b>		
-student	50	12.5
-private sector employee	197	49.3
-government employee	46	11.5
-self-employed	71	17.8
-other	36	9
<b>Purpose of visiting</b>		
-Vacation/leisure	150	37.5
-Business	70	17.5
-Education	80	20
-Visiting friends and relatives (VFR)	76	19
-Other	24	6
<b>Length of trip</b>		
-One to five days	6	1.5
-Six days to ten days	139	34.8
-Eleven days to half a month	118	29.5
-Half a month to one month	31	7.8
-One month to three months	3	0.8
-Three months to six months	3	0.8
-More than six months	100	25



Appendix 2. Descriptive Analysis for Variables  
eWOM

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
To know a tourism destination better, such as history, local culture and attractions, etc. I often view other tourists' online comments.	400	2	5	3.62	.792
To make sure that tourism destination is worth visit, I often view other tourists' online comments.	400	2	5	3.67	.958
To choose a really attractive tourism destination, I often consult with other tourists online, who have previous travel experience there.	400	2	5	3.81	.751
To make the final best choice about the tourism destination, I will keep researching the updated information online.	400	3	5	3.57	.545
The more I read the comments online, the more confident I feel travel tourism destination.	400	2	5	3.72	.891
Valid N (listwise)	400				

Attitude

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
My travel plan is positively affected by other tourists' favorable online comments about travel in Thailand.	400	2	5	4.02	.774
I would like to choose Thailand as destination if online favorable comments exceed unfavorable comments.	400	2	5	3.65	.837
My attitude to travel Thailand would change due to unfavorable comments I read online.	400	2	5	3.88	.813
Valid N (listwise)	400				

SN

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
My e-friends whose opinion I value recommend for me to visit Thailand for travel.	400	2	5	3.69	.616
My e-friends had a nice experience traveling Thailand.	400	2	5	3.76	.929
My e-friends encourage me to travel Thailand.	400	2	5	3.63	.774
My e-friends who are important to me say Thailand is worth the trip and I ought to visit Thailand.	400	2	5	3.72	.889
My e-friends whose opinions I value would prefer for me to visit Thailand.	400	2	5	3.63	.846
Valid N (listwise)	400				

PBC

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am capable to travel Thailand after viewing eWOM about trip in Thailand (In spite of language barriers and travel budget).	400	2	5	3.65	.684
I would enjoy the same excellent travel experience as my e-friend shared online.	400	2	5	3.75	.759
I am confident I can arrange a trip to Thailand by myself as my e-friend did it too (personal safety).	400	2	5	3.66	.762
It is very easy for me to manage the trip to Thailand after viewing eWOM about trip in Thailand.	400	2	5	3.75	.799
Valid N (listwise)	400				

# Intention

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I visited Thailand more than any other tourism destination after the viewing online WOM information about Thailand.	400	2	5	3.63	.692
I visited Thailand as my first priority tourism destination choice after viewing online WOM information about Thailand.	400	2	5	3.44	.743
I implemented my trip to Thailand after viewing online WOM information about Thailand.	400	2	5	3.58	.843
Valid N (listwise)	400				