ASEAN International Sandbox Conference 2026
http://aseansandbox.org

AISC Proceedings, Volume 9, 2026

Consumer Acceptance and Behavioral Responses to Location-Based Marketing: Evidence in Vietnam

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Abstract
As location-based marketing (LBM) is increasingly implemented through Wi-Fi infrastructures in retail environments, understanding consumer acceptance and behavioral responses has become particularly important, especially in emerging markets such as Vietnam. This study examines consumer acceptance of Wi-Fi-based location advertising and its influence on behavioral intentions. Drawing on large-scale survey data collected by Nielsen, the research analyzes how perceived value, message personalization, Wi-Fi usage habits, willingness to share personal information, and privacy concerns shape consumers' acceptance of LBM. The findings indicate that perceived value and message personalization are associated with higher acceptance of Wi-Fi-based marketing. In contrast, privacy and data security concerns negatively influence consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions. However, these negative effects are attenuated among consumers with frequent Wi-Fi usage and a higher willingness to disclose personal information when clear benefits are perceived. Furthermore, acceptance of LBM plays a mediating role in driving behavioral responses, including advertising acceptance, brand interaction, purchase intention, and store revisit intention. This study provides empirical evidence on consumer responses to Wi-Fi-based LBM in Vietnam and contributes to the literature by highlighting the conditions under which location-based advertising can effectively balance personalization benefits and privacy concerns in emerging markets.

Keywords: *Consumer Acceptance, Behavioral Response, Location-Based Marketing, Perceived Usefulness, Wifi Marketing*

1. Introduction

Location-Based Marketing (LBM) has expanded rapidly in the digital transformation era, where location data has become a strategic resource in contemporary marketing practice. Advances in global positioning systems (GPS), smartphone adoption, and connected infrastructures enable firms to integrate spatial context into communication strategies and deliver messages aligned with consumers' real-time environments (Hazimeh, 2020). Industry reports estimate that the global location-based advertising market reached approximately USD 111 billion in 2023 and is expected to continue strong growth, reflecting the rising importance of real-time contextual targeting in digital marketing ecosystems (Grand View Research, 2025). This development signals a transition from experimental applications toward large-scale commercialization of location-driven marketing. Within this evolving landscape, LBM increasingly embeds marketing communication directly into physical consumption settings rather than relying solely on traditional digital touchpoints. The diffusion of smartphones and location-aware infrastructures allows firms to engage consumers at moments of immediate relevance, strengthening interaction opportunities at the point of consumption (Bernritter et al., 2021). Existing literature has primarily examined LBM through psychological and behavioral perspectives, emphasizing the roles of contextual relevance, autonomy perceptions, and spatial–temporal proximity in shaping consumer responses (Liberman & Trope, 2008; Bertini & Aydinli, 2020). These studies provide important theoretical insights into how consumers evaluate location-based communication.

Despite growing academic attention, empirical research has largely focused on developed markets and app-based or outdoor location signals, leaving indoor and infrastructure-based implementations relatively underexplored. This limitation is particularly relevant in emerging markets, where public Wi-Fi is deeply embedded in everyday consumption activities and functions as a key gateway to digital interaction. In such contexts, Wi-Fi–based LBM represents a distinctive form of location marketing that integrates connectivity access with advertising exposure.

However, limited evidence exists regarding how consumers perceive and respond to this form of marketing communication.

By focusing on Wi-Fi–based LBM in Vietnam, this study addresses this research gap and extends the LBM literature to an underexamined technological and market setting. Specifically, the study investigates consumer acceptance and behavioral responses to infrastructure-based location marketing, providing empirical insights into how contextual relevance shapes marketing effectiveness within emerging digital economies.

2. Objectives

This study aims to explore consumer acceptance and behavioral responses to Wi-Fi–based location-based marketing (LBM) in Vietnam. Using descriptive evidence, the research examines how consumers perceive and interact with infrastructure-based advertising delivered through public Wi-Fi networks. The study focuses on factors such as contextual relevance, perceived value, and privacy considerations in shaping consumer attitudes toward Wi-Fi–enabled advertising. By providing descriptive insights from an emerging market context, the research highlights patterns in consumer engagement and interaction with location-based advertising. The findings also offer practical insights for businesses seeking to implement contextual and value-driven marketing strategies through public Wi-Fi environments.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Conceptual foundations and technological evolution of location-based marketing

Location-based marketing (LBM), also referred to as proximity marketing or geo-marketing (Al-Haddad et al., 2024), encompasses programs and communication initiatives that utilize consumers' physical location to deliver contextually tailored marketing messages and services (Bansal, 2023). At its core, LBM relies on the integration of spatial data with consumer information such as preferences, behavioral patterns, and demographic characteristics to enhance targeting precision and communication relevance (Hazimeh, 2020). Within this broader domain, location-based advertising (LBA) represents a specific application focused on promotional communication conducted through mobile and location-aware environments (Unni & Harmon, 2007; Dao et al., 2022). The central objective of LBM is to reach consumers at moments of heightened receptivity, when situational context increases the likelihood of engagement and purchase decisions (Hendricks, 2018; Stolle, 2014).

The evolution of LBM reflects a broader transformation in marketing from aggregate geographic segmentation toward highly individualized and context-sensitive targeting. Early applications relied primarily on coarse geographic indicators such as postal codes, whereas contemporary systems enable real-time microtargeting at the individual level (Agan, 2007; Barbu-Kleitsch, 2014). Advances in technologies including GPS, Wi-Fi positioning, Bluetooth beacons, QR codes, and Near Field Communication (NFC) have substantially expanded firms' ability to identify consumer presence within specific environments (Almahdi et al., 2018; Bilolo et al., 2015). These technological developments have shifted marketing logic from predicting consumer behavior based on historical data toward responding dynamically to situational context.

Two dominant targeting strategies illustrate this transition. Geo-fencing establishes virtual geographic boundaries that trigger marketing messages when consumers enter predefined locations, while geo-conquesting targets individuals in proximity to competitors' venues in order to influence switching behavior (Shirdastian et al., 2025). Collectively, these approaches demonstrate how spatial immediacy increasingly functions as a strategic mechanism for influencing consumer decision-making, emphasizing contextual relevance over traditional demographic segmentation.

Empirical research suggests that the effectiveness of LBM depends not only on technological capability but also on psychological mechanisms shaping consumer evaluation. Prior studies indicate that spatial and temporal proximity reduces psychological distance and encourages more concrete, action-oriented responses to marketing stimuli (Bernritter et al., 2021). In-store mobile advertising, for example, tends to generate stronger sales effects than out-of-store exposure, particularly among consumers with low product category involvement, where reduced cognitive resistance limits psychological reactance. Conversely, highly involved consumers may respond more positively to

informational rather than price-based promotions, highlighting the importance of perceived autonomy in shaping acceptance. These findings suggest that LBM effectiveness emerges from the interaction between contextual immediacy and consumers' perceptions of control.

Communication orientation further influences consumer responses. Similar to traditional promotion strategies, LBM messages may follow push or pull delivery logics. Pull-based interactions occur when users actively request information and are typically associated with higher perceived value and lower privacy concern. Push-based communication, initiated without explicit consumer request, may stimulate impulse behavior but can also generate irritation if perceived as intrusive or irrelevant (Unni & Harmon, 2007). This distinction underscores the importance of balancing personalization with perceived autonomy, reinforcing the view that technological precision alone does not guarantee positive consumer responses.

Within this technological landscape, Wi-Fi marketing has emerged as a specialized form of proximity marketing that operates through wireless local area networks to deliver digital content within defined physical spaces (Krum, 2010). Unlike GPS-based systems, Wi-Fi infrastructures enable indoor positioning where satellite signals are less effective, allowing marketing communication to be embedded directly within consumption environments. Common implementations include passive SSID messaging, where promotional information appears within network names, and sponsored captive portals requiring user interaction prior to internet access (Krum, 2010). These mechanisms transform connectivity itself into a marketing touchpoint, integrating advertising exposure into routine digital behavior.

3.2. Consumer acceptance and the development of location-based marketing in emerging markets

The development of LBM and Wi-Fi marketing in Vietnam illustrates how infrastructure conditions shape marketing adoption. Supported by a rapidly digitizing, mobile-first economy and an internet penetration rate approaching 79%, Vietnam provides favorable conditions for location-driven communication strategies (Bui, 2025). Public Wi-Fi networks play a particularly important role by creating what has been described as a "digital aura" for indoor positioning. Platforms such as AWING have operationalized a sharing-economy model in which free connectivity is exchanged for advertising exposure, reaching a substantial proportion of internet users nationwide. High rates of Wi-Fi usage across work, leisure, and transactional contexts create repeated moments of consumer attention, enabling location-based communication to occur during naturally occurring engagement situations.

Evidence from Vietnam further indicates that consumers respond positively to hyper-contextual communication. LBM applications have been associated with increased brand loyalty in eco-tourism settings (Quang et al., 2022; Nhung & Phuong, 2025), stronger revisit intentions in food and beverage environments (Cam et al., 2025), and repeat purchasing behavior shaped by geographic proximity in online food delivery services (Ge et al., 2025). Consumers also respond to situational cues such as crowding information or environmental conditions, demonstrating the growing importance of contextual signals in shaping behavioral outcomes (Huang et al., 2024). These findings collectively suggest that location-based communication operates not merely as a targeting tool but as a mechanism that embeds marketing within consumers lived environments. Consumer acceptance of LBM in Vietnam appears to follow a privacy calculus in which individuals evaluate trade-offs between perceived benefits and data disclosure risks (Le & Nguyen, 2021). Despite privacy concerns, many consumers demonstrate willingness to share personal information when clear value or incentives are provided, particularly among higher-spending segments seeking convenience and service quality. However, acceptance remains conditional. Highly personalized communication may trigger psychological reactance when perceived as intrusive, whereas contextually relevant messaging aligned with situational needs tends to reduce resistance (Bernritter et al., 2021). These dynamics indicate that acceptance depends less on personalization intensity and more on perceived fairness and transparency of value exchange. At the same time, the expansion of LBM in Vietnam occurs within evolving regulatory and structural constraints. Challenges include shortages of digital marketing expertise, uneven distribution of marketing activity across regions, and increasingly stringent data protection regulations such as the Personal Data Protection Decree. Regulatory scrutiny of digital marketing practices further emphasizes the need for transparent consent mechanisms and responsible data governance (Backholer et al., 2024). These institutional factors reinforce the importance of understanding consumer

acceptance not only as a psychological outcome but also as a context-dependent phenomenon shaped by technological infrastructure and governance environments.

Taken together, existing research demonstrates that LBM effectiveness is shaped by contextual relevance, perceived autonomy, and privacy-value trade-offs. However, empirical studies have predominantly examined app-based or outdoor implementations in developed markets, leaving infrastructure-based forms of LBM, particularly Wi-Fi-enabled systems in emerging economies, insufficiently explored. As public Wi-Fi increasingly functions as a routine gateway to digital interaction, understanding how consumers evaluate and respond to infrastructure-based location marketing becomes essential. Addressing this gap provides an opportunity to extend current LBM theory by examining how contextual proximity embedded within connectivity infrastructures influences consumer acceptance and behavioral responses.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

Data for this study were derived from a large-scale quantitative survey conducted by NielsenIQ in collaboration with AWING, a Wi-Fi–based location marketing platform operating across major urban areas in Vietnam. AWING provides free public Wi-Fi services integrated with advertising and data analytics solutions, enabling brands to deliver location-based marketing (LBM) messages at physical consumption venues. By embedding advertising exposure into the Wi-Fi access process, the platform creates real-time interaction points between consumers and marketing communication within offline environments.

The survey was administered when users connected to AWING Wi-Fi at public locations such as coffee chains, restaurants, shopping centers, fitness facilities, and entertainment venues. The questionnaire appeared during the Wi-Fi login process and required approximately two to three minutes to complete, allowing responses to be captured within an actual usage context and minimizing recall bias.

The final dataset included 4,344 valid responses (n = 4,344) collected from wifi users living in major Vietnamese cities within 12 days in 2025. The sample largely represents economically active urban users, with about 80% belonging to the working population and an average age of approximately 31 years. Data collected covered demographic characteristics, lifestyle and spending behavior, Wi-Fi usage habits, exposure and interaction with advertisements, attitudes toward Wi-Fi advertising, and willingness to share personal information. Because responses were obtained at the moment of Wi-Fi access, the dataset reflects consumers' real-time perceptions and behavioral tendencies in authentic consumption settings, providing strong ecological validity for examining acceptance and behavioral responses to infrastructure-based LBM in an emerging market context.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Research findings

A descriptive analysis was conducted to provide an overview of respondent characteristics and general behavioral patterns related to Wi-Fi–based location-based marketing (LBM). The analysis aims to contextualize the empirical sample and ensure its suitability for examining consumer acceptance and behavioral responses within real consumption environments.

The final dataset consisted of 4,344 valid respondents collected through the AWING public Wi-Fi network across major urban locations in Vietnam. The sample primarily represents digitally connected urban consumers who frequently engage with public service environments such as cafés, restaurants, shopping centers, and fitness facilities. The demographic structure indicates a predominantly economically active population with strong exposure to digital services and mobile connectivity. Survey results show that public Wi-Fi usage is deeply embedded in daily routines. A large proportion of respondents regularly connect to free Wi-Fi services for both work-related communication and leisure activities, suggesting repeated exposure opportunities for infrastructure-based marketing communication.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Respondents (N = 4,344)

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	~49
	Female	~51
Average age	Mean age	31 years
Employment status	Working population	~80
	Students/others	~20
Public Wi-Fi usage purpose	Work-related activities	59
	Leisure/entertainment	29
	Other purposes	12

Source: AWING

The descriptive findings derived from the Nielsen survey dataset (n = 4,344) indicate that Wi-Fi–based location-based marketing (LBM) is embedded within routine consumption practices rather than functioning as an occasional digital exposure. A large proportion of respondents reported frequent connections to free public Wi-Fi across cafés, restaurants, retail stores, and service environments, suggesting that Wi-Fi login has become a habitual digital gateway integrated into everyday offline activities. This repeated behavioral pattern creates predictable moments of consumer attention, positioning Wi-Fi infrastructure as a stable and recurring touchpoint for location-based advertising exposure.

In terms of usage context, respondents primarily connected to public Wi-Fi during activities characterized by active engagement. Approximately 59% reported using Wi-Fi for work-related communication and messaging, while 29% connected for entertainment and leisure purposes. A smaller share used Wi-Fi for browsing or transactional activities conducted during consumption occasions. These findings indicate that advertising exposure occurs when users are cognitively engaged rather than passively scrolling, thereby increasing the likelihood that marketing messages are noticed and processed. Consumer attitudes toward Wi-Fi advertising were generally favorable, reflecting a normalization of advertising within the free connectivity experience. The survey results show that 76% of respondents maintained positive attitudes toward advertisements delivered through Wi-Fi networks, while 84% expressed willingness to interact with advertising content provided by service operators. Rather than perceiving advertising as intrusive, many users appeared to interpret it as an acceptable exchange for free internet access, suggesting the presence of a perceived value trade-off between connectivity benefits and advertising exposure.

Behavioral responses further demonstrate meaningful engagement beyond simple exposure. More than 70% of respondents reported searching for additional information after encountering Wi-Fi advertisements, and over one-third indicated that they experienced tangible benefits such as promotional offers or useful product information. These outcomes suggest that Wi-Fi–based LBM can stimulate post-exposure engagement behaviors when advertising content aligns with consumers' situational needs and perceived relevance. The data also reveal conditional openness toward personal data disclosure. Approximately 71% of respondents indicated willingness to share personal information, including phone numbers or email addresses, when clear incentives or benefits were provided. This pattern suggests that consumer acceptance of Wi-Fi marketing follows a pragmatic evaluation process in which perceived utility moderates' privacy concerns. Data sharing therefore appears to be driven less by unconditional trust and more by perceived fairness and immediacy of value exchange

Descriptive comparisons additionally indicate a positive alignment between advertising acceptance and behavioral tendencies. Respondents reporting favorable perceptions toward Wi-Fi advertising also demonstrated higher interaction rates, stronger brand engagement, and greater consideration of future purchase or revisit intentions. Although causal relationships cannot be inferred from descriptive analysis, the co-occurrence of these indicators

highlights acceptance as a potential gateway linking infrastructure-based advertising exposure to downstream consumer responses.

Overall, the results portray Wi-Fi–based LBM in Vietnam as a contextually embedded marketing practice characterized by habitual exposure, positive consumer sentiment, and value-driven participation. The findings suggest that advertising effectiveness in infrastructure-based environments is closely associated with perceived usefulness, situational relevance, and the integration of marketing communication into naturally occurring digital behaviors rather than forced promotional interruption.

Table 2 Summary of Key Descriptive Indicators (N = 4,344)

Indicator	Result
Positive attitude toward Wi-Fi ads	76%
Willingness to interact with ads	84%
Willingness to share personal data (with incentives)	71%
Information search after exposure	>70%

Source: AWING

4.2. Discussions

The findings of this study invite a more nuanced interpretation of consumer responses to location-based marketing in emerging markets, particularly when delivered through infrastructure-based channels such as public Wi-Fi. Contrary to narratives that frame LBM as inherently intrusive or privacy-threatening, the results suggest that consumer resistance is neither uniform nor inevitable. Instead, acceptance appears to be contextually negotiated and contingent upon perceived usefulness, situational relevance, and clarity of value exchange.

From a theoretical perspective, the observed patterns are consistent with Construal Level Theory, which posits that spatial and temporal proximity reduce psychological distance and foster more concrete, action-oriented evaluations (Liberman & Trope, 2008; Luo et al., 2011). In the present context, Wi-Fi–based LBM operates at a moment of immediate relevance when consumers are physically present in a venue and actively seeking connectivity, thereby narrowing the gap between message exposure and potential action. Importantly, this proximity effect does not require extensive personalization or deep data profiling, suggesting that infrastructural context may partially substitute for more intrusive personalization strategies. At the same time, the results complicate dominant assumptions derived from psychological reactance theory. While prior research highlights that excessive personalization can trigger resistance by threatening perceived autonomy (Bertini & Aydinli, 2020), the present findings indicate that reactance is moderated by framing and context. When advertising is embedded within a transparent exchange for free Wi-Fi access, resistance appears attenuated rather than amplified. This insight challenges the tendency to generalize findings from purely digital or app-based environments to infrastructure-based LBM settings.

The conditional nature of privacy concerns further underscores the need to move beyond binary interpretations of consumer attitudes toward data collection. Rather than viewing privacy sensitivity as a fixed trait, the descriptive evidence supports a privacy–value trade-off perspective, in which consumers dynamically balance perceived risks against expected benefits (Wohllebe, 2020; Xu & Hu, 2022). Market-level reports corroborate this interpretation, showing that Vietnamese consumers routinely engage with data-enabled services, cashless payments, and omnichannel platforms when convenience and value are salient (Vietnam E-commerce Association, 2025). However, this does not imply unlimited tolerance: acceptance remains conditional and may erode if value exchange becomes opaque or disproportionate.

From a managerial standpoint, the findings caution against equating effectiveness with increasing personalization intensity. The results suggest that relevance at the point of access which grounded in physical context and immediate utility that may be more critical for acceptance than granular targeting based on extensive personal data. This perspective aligns with recent industry analyses emphasizing the growing importance of contextual and

infrastructure-based advertising as privacy regulations tighten and third-party data becomes less accessible (Hazimeh, 2020).

Finally, the descriptive nature of the data warrants careful interpretation. Although acceptance is associated with favorable behavioral intentions, causality cannot be inferred, and selection effects may be present. For instance, frequent public Wi-Fi users may already be more digitally receptive than the general population. Nonetheless, by situating the findings within both academic literature and broader market evidence, this study contributes a grounded and context-sensitive understanding of how Wi-Fi–based LBM is evaluated by consumers in an emerging market. Future research may build on these insights by employing longitudinal or causal designs to further disentangle acceptance dynamics and long-term behavioral outcomes.

5. Conclusions

This study provides descriptive empirical insights into consumer acceptance and behavioral responses to Wi-Fi–based location-based marketing (LBM) in Vietnam, based on large-scale survey data collected by Nielsen and implemented through the AWING public Wi-Fi infrastructure. The findings indicate that Wi-Fi–based LBM is not inherently perceived as intrusive; rather, acceptance is primarily shaped by perceived usefulness, contextual relevance at the point of access, and a transparent value exchange embedded within the free connectivity experience. Advertising integrated into routine Wi-Fi access is therefore interpreted less as interruption and more as a functional component of service provision. The results further show that privacy concerns operate as a conditional rather than absolute constraint. Consumers demonstrate willingness to interact with advertising and share limited personal information when benefits are immediate, clear, and aligned with situational needs. These patterns suggest that infrastructural proximity and contextual relevance may play a more decisive role in fostering acceptance than intensive personalization based on extensive data collection. By examining an indoor, infrastructure-based LBM environment within an emerging market context, this study extends existing LBM literature beyond predominantly app-based and outdoor settings. The findings highlight the strategic potential of Wi-Fi–enabled marketing as a context-sensitive communication channel capable of embedding digital engagement into everyday consumption practices.

Although the descriptive design limits causal interpretation, the study offers a grounded understanding of how consumers evaluate infrastructure-based LBM and provides a foundation for future research employing longitudinal or experimental approaches to examine acceptance dynamics and long-term behavioral outcomes. As digital ecosystems evolve and privacy regulations reshape marketing practices, context-driven approaches such as Wi-Fi–based LBM may offer a sustainable balance between marketing effectiveness and consumer trust.

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