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Domestic Tourists' Behavioral Intentions: Insights from a Review Study

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Abstract

Domestic tourism has become increasingly important for sustaining the industry, yet limited research has explored the behavioral intentions of local travelers. To address this gap, the paper develops an integrative framework that links motivational factors, perceived benefits, satisfaction, and behavioral intention. Unlike studies earlier that mostly focused on international contexts or emphasized direct relationships, the proposed framework highlights the mediating influence of perceived benefits and satisfaction, offering a more comprehensive perspective on tourist behavior. The originality of this work lies in advancing theoretical insights through a synthesized framework, providing a deeper understanding of the factors influencing domestic tourism and supporting the development of sustainable tourism strategies.

Keywords: Domestic Tourism, Push & Pull Motivation, Perceived Benefit, Tourist Satisfaction, Behavioral Intention.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, notably following the Covid-19 pandemic, the economy has had positive changes with a clear recovery of the service industry, in which tourism plays a prominent role [1]. Domestic tourism in this context is regarded as a crucial factor to help the entire tourism industry recover quickly [1,2]. Understanding the factors that impact on tourists' behavioral intentions is an urgent requirement within the framework of fierce competition between destinations. In the field of tourism behavior research, the three concepts of tourism motivation, satisfaction and behavioral intention were introduced early by Dann in his research [3]. Later, these were considered important theoretical pillars to explain the decision-making process of tourists [4,5]. Tourism motivation reflects the needs, desires and expectations that motivate individuals to take part in tourism activities; perceived benefit and satisfaction represent the intensity of tourist satisfaction after experiencing services and destinations; meanwhile, behavioral intention is an indicator predicting future behaviors such as returning or recommending the destination to others [6]. Many international studies have also demonstrated that both push and pull motivations have a positive impact on satisfaction, which consequently impacts the intention to revisit and suggest a destination [7,8]. furthermore, satisfaction often serves as a conduit in the relationship between motivation and behavioral intention [5,9]. However, quantitative studies on motivation, the perceived benefit, the satisfaction levels and behavioral intentions of domestic tourists remain scarce. Therefore, this study was carried out with the aim of framing the association between domestic tourists' travel motivations, their satisfaction, and their behavioral intentions to further analyze the impact of motivation on domestic tourists satisfaction and their behavioral intention.

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2. Literature Review

2.1 Domestic Tourism

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2008) defines domestic tourism as the activities of visitors who reside permanently in the country under study, either as part of a domestic tourist trip or as an element of domestic tourism expenditure [10], emphasizing its distinction from international tourism. Scholars such as Cooper et al. emphasize that domestic tourism often accounts for the largest share of tourism activity in many countries in terms of both volume and expenditure but remains understudied [11]. Research by Dwyer and Kim suggests that domestic tourism can enhance the competitiveness of destinations by stabilizing demand and encouraging year-round visits [12]. In addition, Jansen-Verbeke and Lievois emphasized that domestic tourism serves a very pivotal role in promoting regional development and integrating local cultures, especially for countries with diverse ethnicities and landscapes [13]. Goeldner and Ritchie argued that domestic tourism is often driven by factors such as affordability, proximity, cultural familiarity, and convenience [14]. During the crisis, domestic tourism has demonstrated a strong recovery trend, much faster than international tourism [15]. Therefore, domestic tourism plays a very key role in fostering local economic growth.

2.2 Push & Pull Motivation

The concept of "push" and "pull" motivation was first developed by Dann in 1977 and later expanded by Crompton in 1979. Accordingly, the authors believe that motivation includes two factors: push motivation and pull motivation. Tourists are driven to travel by internal psychological needs - push factors and are attracted to destinations by their external characteristics - pull factors [4]. Push factors are factors that originate from within an individual. It reflects their desires and needs to escape from daily routines, seek relaxation, and explore themselves and are not related to any destination [3]. Push motivations act as triggers for tourists' travel intentions but are not the deciding factors in their destination choice [4]. As opposed to push motivations, pull motivations are factors relevant to the external environment, specifically the attractiveness of a destination [4]. These factors may encompass various elements such as the diversity of natural resources, cultural legacy, infrastructure, price, service quality or even the popularity of the destination [16]. Push factors will contribute to helping tourists make decisions about which destination to choose to travel to, meeting their own needs. Empirical studies have built on this framework to gain a deeper understanding of how motivations affect the formation of behavioral intentions and destination image. Baloglu and McCleary demonstrated that both "push" and "pull" motivations have a major impact on the cognitive and emotional components of destination image [16]. Similarly, Yoon and Uysal confirmed the forecasting power of travel motivation on tourists' satisfaction and loyalty. Their study found that motivation serves as key determinants of destination loyalty, strengthening the link between psychological motivation and post-visit behavior [18]. More recently, Bayih and Singh emphasized the interdependent role of push and pull factors in shaping travel behavior, especially in emerging markets. They found that the concurrent influence of push factors and pull factors had a meaningful and favorable impact on tourists' behavioral intentions [7]. In addition, cross-context comparative studies also confirm the universality but cultural differences of the push–pull model. Joseph & Gillariose in the United States show that the reflection–formation push–pull model better explains social motivation and self-actualization [19], while Ayoub & Mohamed in Egypt point to the prominent mediating role of country image [20]. In the Middle East, Jameel et al. emphasize that religious factors moderate the relationship between push–pull motivation and loyalty [21].

Push and pull motivations not only directly influence travel decisions but also shape how tourists perceive the benefits of their trips. Yoon and Uysal demonstrate that strong intrinsic needs increase the perception of psychological, social, and personal benefits [17]. Similarly, Gan et al. in the United States found that motivations such as "escaping from everyday life" increase the perception of value and health benefits from travel. In contrast, in the United States, escape motivation is primarily linked to personal benefits [22]. In Egypt, social factors and country image play a more prominent role [20], while in the Middle East, religious beliefs are considered an important moderator of travel behavior [21]. Thus, although the push-pull model is highly generalizable, tourists' perceived benefits are shaped differently depending on the local cultural, social, and value context. Recognizing this diversity is an important foundation for explaining tourists' behavioral intentions in specific regions.

2.3 Perceived benefits

Perceived benefits are understood as the positive values or benefits that tourists perceive from the experience, including functional, emotional, social and personal development benefits. These benefits are formed when the tourism experience meets the tourists' initial needs and motivations [23]. The link between perceived benefits and satisfaction is strongly confirmed in many studies. When tourists perceive that their experience provides more benefits than expected, their satisfaction level [24]. Satisfaction plays a key role between perceived benefits and tourists' behavioral intentions, including promoting the destination to other tourists and revisiting intentions. Many studies confirm that perceived benefits play a key role in enhancing satisfaction and promoting behavioral intentions such as re-visiting or recommending a destination [24,25]. However, the mechanisms of action are not entirely consistent: some studies consider perceived benefits to directly influence satisfaction [5], while others point to an indirect effect through intermediate variables such as destination image or overall perceived [9]. Gan et al. in the US found that in health tourism, perceived benefits are an important bridge between

motivation and re-visit intention [22]. This result is also similar to Zhao et al., when perceived benefits were shown to be an important factor leading to destination choice behavior [26]. On the other hand, Zhang, Papp-Váry & Szabó in China demonstrated that digital engagement can enhance perceived benefits, thereby encouraging the intention to recommend a destination [27]; while Unguren in Europe pointed out that perceived benefits are shaped by the balance between intrinsic motivation and destination attributes [28]. Thus, the mediating role of perceived benefits is universal, but the manifestations are different. This difference suggests that in the context of domestic tourism with its own cultural, social and cost characteristics, more empirical research is needed to clarify the impact model of perceived benefits on travel behavior.

2.4 Tourist satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is often understood as the overall evaluation of a product or service after the experience, influenced by both internal psychological factors of each individual and external environmental conditions such as weather or social interactions [6,29]. The degree of fit between expectations and the ability of the destination to meet them plays a decisive role, because satisfaction will be reinforced when the destination attributes match the needs and expectations of tourists, creating a positive emotional state [5,30,31,32]. Many studies have also shown that satisfaction is not only a direct result of service experience but also a mediating variable connecting service quality, destination image and future behavioral intentions, such as revisiting, loyalty or recommending the destination to others [33,17,34,35].

However, empirical evidence shows that tourist satisfaction is not uniform but differs according to regional context. In Malaysia, Zang Xingjun emphasized infrastructure, safety and convenience as key factors [36]. In contrast, Mensah et al. in Africa pointed out emotions and social experiences as decisive factors [37]. This suggests that satisfaction is both a measure of experience outcomes and an important predictor of travel behavior, but the way it is formed varies according to the socio-cultural context.

2.5 Behavioral Intention

Tourists' behavioral intention is a very important category to be explored in tourism research. Beerli and Martín emphasized that understanding tourists' behavioral intention is very important for destination managers in order to promote tourist loyalty and improve overall satisfaction [38]. Behavioral intention, also known as future behavior or post-trip behavior, is a tourist perception of the probability of endorsing a destination among other tourists or of wanting to plan a subsequent visit to the same destination in the future [5]. Accordingly, the author identified destination image and perceived value as key factors influencing behavioral intention, showing that favorable perspectives of the destination increase the likelihood of tourists returning [5].

The Theory of Planned Behavior posits that individuals' behavioral intentions are partly driven by their normative beliefs, attitude and perceived behavioral control [39]. The author also argues that attitudes toward behaviors, self-efficacy behavioral control, and subjective norms can be the basis for predicting tourists' intentions to perform various types of behaviors [39]. Meanwhile, when talking about tourism behavioral intention, Hsieh, Baker and Crompton argued that these are post-trip or future tourist behaviors that are reflected in various forms such as return visits, affirmative word-of-mouth, or advocating the destination to others [40,6]. According to Crompton, the quality of tourism services has an impact on tourist satisfaction, thereby helping to improve destination referrals and tourists' intention to return [6]. To supplement this view, Hsieh conducted a review of the intrinsic attributes of a destination that can influence tourists' behavioral intentions, including physical environment, cultural heritage, and amenities. The research results emphasize the influence of unique characteristics at the destination that are consistent with tourists' motivations and experience expectations [40]. From the above theoretical foundations, it can be affirmed that tourists' behavioral intentions are a key component in tourism behavior research, which is impacted by many intrinsic and extrinsic factors of the destination, and assumes a decisive role in forming loyalty and promoting sustainability-oriented growth of the tourism sector.

3. Conceptual Framework of Domestic Tourists' Motivation, Satisfaction, and Behavioral Intention

Based on the literature review, this paper proposes a conceptual framework to explain the relationship between four main factors: travel motivation, perceived benefits, satisfaction and behavioral intention. In which, motivation (including both internal motivators and external attractions) initiates the need to travel and guides tourists' expectations. Perceived benefits reflect the value that tourists gain from the experience, which serves as bridge between motivation and satisfaction. Satisfaction represents the level of satisfaction when comparing actual results with expectations and also plays a mediating role in transforming motivation into behavioral intention. Finally, behavioral intention includes future attachment behaviors such as returning to the destination or recommending to others [39,5].

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework developed from this synthesis. Motivations are proposed to affect perceived benefits, which subsequently enhance satisfaction. Both perceived benefits and satisfaction serve as mediators linking motivations to behavioral intention. This structure emphasizes that tourist behavior is not solely the result of initial motivations but also of the perceived value and level of satisfaction derived from the travel experience.

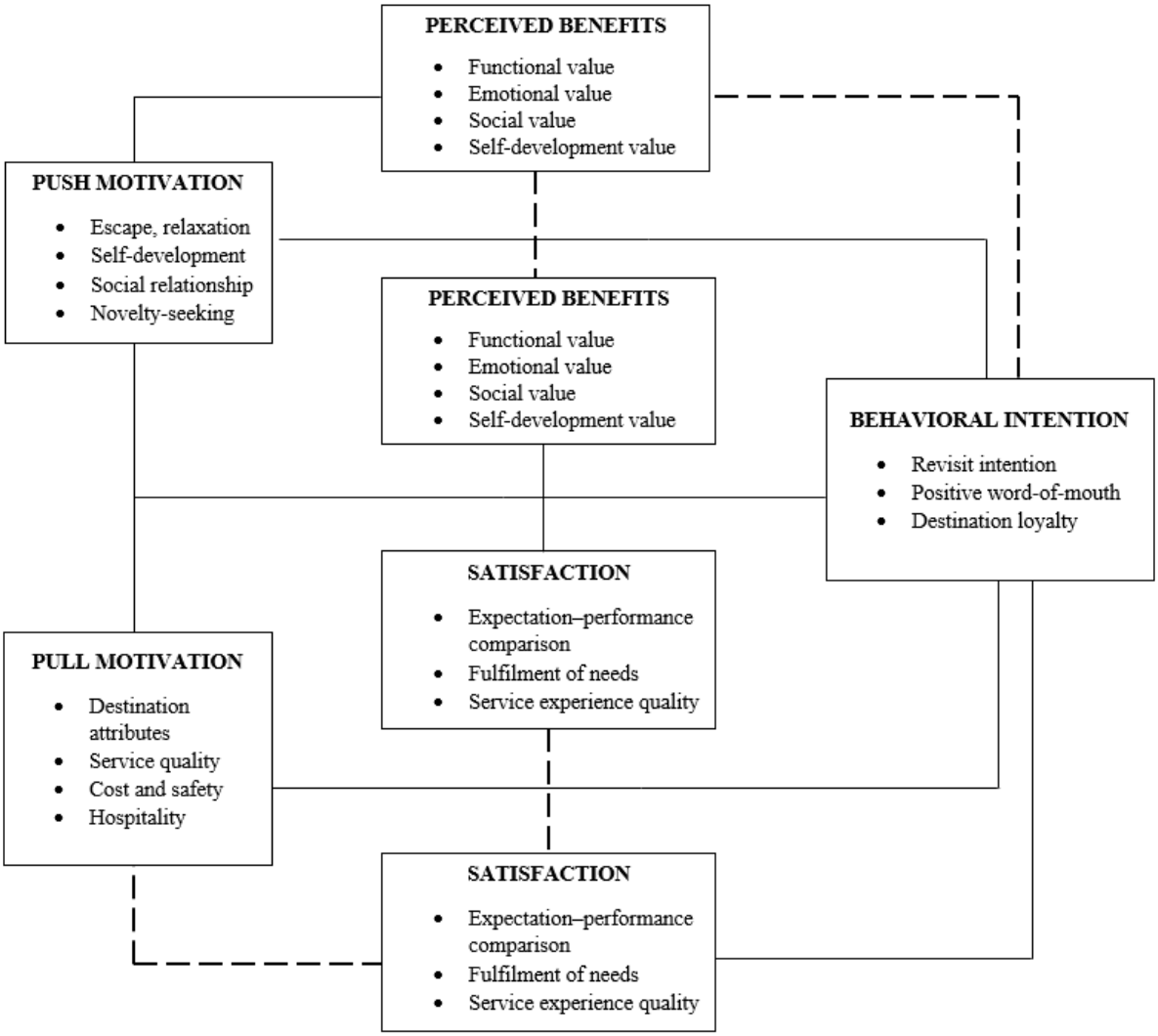

Figure 1. Framing domestic tourism

——— : Direct relationships

— — : Mediating relationship

4. Discussion

The proposed theoretical framework integrates four key factors including motivation, perceived benefits, satisfaction and behavioral intention into a unified construct. This approach shows that behavioral intention is not only shaped by initial motivation but is also strongly influenced by the value received by tourists and the level of satisfaction with the experience. This is an extension of many previous studies that have mainly focused on direct impacts. The literature review also points out significant gaps. Most of the existing evidence is based on international tourists, while domestic tourism has not received due attention. Empirical comparisons from various continents such as the United States, Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East show that the push-pull framework and the variables perceived benefits and satisfaction are all confirmed but differ in their mediating and moderating roles. This reinforces the generality of the theoretical framework while emphasizing the need for empirical testing in domestic contexts to clarify the extent of similarities and differences. In addition, previous studies have often considered individual variables, with little

attention to the sequential relationship between perceived benefits and satisfaction, or have not incorporated new elements such as destination image, emotions, or memorable experiences. This raises the need for empirical research to validate and extend the theoretical framework. From a practical perspective, the model suggests that to enhance positive revisit and recommendation intentions, destinations need to simultaneously satisfy motivations, increase perceived benefits, and create overall satisfaction for visitors. Governments, businesses, and communities can use this framework to shape policies, develop products, and design more sustainable tourism experiences.

5. Conclusion

In addition to synthesizing the relationship between travel motivation, perceived benefits, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, this study also suggests several directions for research and practical applications. First, it is necessary to concretize the theoretical framework into clear scales that can be tested with empirical data. For example, Gan et al. recommended measuring the level of "escapism" in health tourism to predict revisit intention [22], while Zhang, Papp-Váry & Szabó emphasized the assessment of digital engagement to better understand satisfaction and destination recommendation intention [27]. In addition, Unguren showed that satisfaction is formed by the balance between intrinsic motivation and destination factors – an important suggestion for building appropriate scales [28].

Some potential research questions could include:

1. Which factors in push and pull motivations play a key role in shaping perceived benefits in different types of tourism (e.g., leisure, cultural, health)?

2. How do perceived benefits mediate between travel motivation and behavioral intention?

3. How do cultural, social, or religious factors moderate this relationship in different regions?

4. How does digital engagement influence perceived benefits and satisfaction in the modern tourism context?

In terms of application, these findings provide implications for policy makers and destination managers in tourism product development and marketing strategies. Where escapism motives are dominant [22], the design of leisure and leisure tourism products would be more appropriate. In contexts where national image and social factors are central [20], communication activities can emphasize identity and community values. In destinations where religious beliefs are strongly influenced [21], services need to be designed in accordance with cultural and religious norms to increase tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

In short, the theoretical framework is only truly valuable when it is concretized by scales, empirically tested and linked to specific contexts. This not only helps to expand the academic base but also provides useful tools for stakeholders in policy design, product development and enhancing global tourism experiences.

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