The Relationship Between Destination Experience and Tourists' Intention to Recommend and Revisit

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Abstract

Tourism destinations increasingly rely on delivering exceptional experiences to encourage tourist loyalty and stimulate positive behavioral intentions such as repeat visits and word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations. This review examines the relationship between destination experiences and tourists' intention to recommend and revisit, drawing from multidisciplinary literature and key theoretical models. It explores the impact of experiential components including service quality, emotional engagement, cultural authenticity, and environmental setting on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. The review emphasizes the role of memorable tourism experiences (MTEs), destination image, and emotional bonds in shaping revisit intentions and WOM behavior. It also analyzes the influence of digital communication, particularly electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), on shaping destination perceptions and decision-making. The paper integrates insights from foundational theories such as the Expectation-Confirmation Model (ECM), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) to explain how satisfaction, perceived value, and social influence contribute to loyalty development. In addition, it identifies key push and pull factors affecting destination choice and examines demographic influences on tourist behavior. The study concludes by highlighting strategic implications for destination marketing such as the importance of personalization, reputation management, and sustainability. It identifies future research opportunities in areas like post-pandemic recovery, AI-driven tourism engagement, and evolving tourist motivations. By synthesizing diverse findings, this review comprehensively explains how positive destination experiences drive long-term tourist loyalty and advocacy in a highly competitive global tourism landscape.

Keywords: *Destination experience, tourist loyalty, word-of-mouth (WOM), revisit intention, expectation-confirmation model (ECM).*

Introduction

Tourism is a vital sector that significantly contributes to global economic growth, job creation, cultural exchange, and regional development. It is one of the fastest-growing industries, supporting local economies by generating revenue, fostering entrepreneurship, and promoting international connectivity. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2023), tourism accounts for 10% of global GDP and one in ten jobs worldwide, underscoring its importance in driving socioeconomic progress. However, as the tourism industry continues to evolve, destinations face intense competition in attracting and retaining visitors. To remain competitive, destinations must offer unique, immersive, and memorable experiences that resonate with travelers, influencing their satisfaction, recommendation behavior, and likelihood of revisiting. The concept of destination experience has gained increasing attention as a key determinant of tourist behavior, particularly in shaping their willingness to recommend and revisit a destination. A destination experience encompasses both tangible and intangible elements, such as the quality of attractions, service standards, cultural authenticity, emotional engagement, and overall atmosphere. Research suggests that when tourists have positive and meaningful experiences, they are more likely to form emotional connections, leading to higher levels of satisfaction and destination loyalty (Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick, 2012). This, in turn, contributes to word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing, as satisfied visitors share their experiences with friends, family, and online communities, influencing the travel decisions of potential tourists. Memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) are particularly influential in shaping long-term visitor behavior. MTEs refer to experiences that leave a lasting psychological impact on tourists, triggering positive emotions such as joy, excitement, nostalgia, and personal fulfillment. These experiences often stem from

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factors such as cultural immersion, adventure activities, local hospitality, and sensory engagement (Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018). Tourists who associate positive emotions and personal meaning with a destination are more likely to develop strong attachments, revisit in the future, and actively recommend the destination to others. Studies show that destinations that effectively create MTEs experience higher visitor retention rates, as tourists seek to relive and recreate their cherished experiences (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Furthermore, with the rise of digital platforms and social media, tourists now play an active role in shaping destination image and influencing travel trends. Digital word-of-mouth (eWOM) has become a powerful tool in tourism marketing, as travelers share their experiences through online reviews, travel blogs, Instagram posts, TikTok videos, and vlogs. Destinations that provide high-quality, authentic, and engaging experiences are more likely to generate positive online discourse, further enhancing their appeal and attracting new visitors (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). This study seeks to explore the relationship between destination experience and tourists' behavioral intentions to recommend and revisit. By analyzing the factors that contribute to a memorable and satisfying destination experience, this research will provide valuable insights for destination managers, policymakers, and tourism marketers on how to enhance visitor experiences, foster long-term loyalty, and develop sustainable tourism strategies. Understanding the dynamics of destination experience and tourist behavior will help destinations create competitive advantages, improve service quality, and ensure economic sustainability in the global tourism market.

Understanding the factors that influence tourists' intentions

This study seeks to define and analyze the concept of destination experience by identifying key dimensions such as the physical environment, service quality, emotional engagement, and cultural authenticity. It also aims to examine the impact of destination experience on tourist satisfaction and how various elements contribute to perceived value. Additionally, the study investigates the role of positive experiences in motivating tourists to recommend destinations through word-of-mouth and digital engagement. Moreover, it explores how memorable tourism experiences, destination loyalty, and expectation-confirmation mechanisms influence repeat visitation. Furthermore, the study identifies moderating factors such as demographic variables, destination image, and motivational factors that affect tourists' behavioral intentions. Lastly, it aims to highlight research gaps and propose future directions to enhance tourism management strategies and destination competitiveness.

Understanding the factors that influence tourists' intentions to recommend, and revisit is vital for destination managers and policymakers, as these behaviors directly impact the long-term success and sustainability of tourism destinations. The decision to recommend a destination is often influenced by a tourist's overall experience, including aspects such as service quality, cultural engagement, environmental aesthetics, and emotional satisfaction. Similarly, the likelihood of repeat visits depends on the extent to which a destination meets or exceeds tourists' expectations, creating a lasting impression that encourages them to return. By focusing on enhancing various dimensions of the destination experience, destinations can cultivate tourist satisfaction and loyalty, which are crucial for fostering positive word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing and encouraging repeat visits. Elements such as seamless travel experiences, personalized services, and memorable tourism interactions contribute to higher satisfaction levels, making tourists more inclined to act as brand ambassadors for a destination. Moreover, ensuring a consistently high-quality experience across different touchpoints ranging from accommodation and transport to local attractions and cultural events strengthens a destination's appeal and competitive advantage. Sustainable tourism development is also closely linked to tourists' recommendation and revisit intentions. Destinations that integrate sustainable practices, such as environmental conservation, community involvement, and responsible tourism policies, not only enhance visitor experiences but also attract eco-conscious travelers who value ethical tourism. Investing in sustainable infrastructure, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting responsible tourism initiatives further solidify a destination's reputation and long-term attractiveness. This study provides insights into the mechanisms through which destination experiences translate into favorable tourist behaviors, offering a research-based framework that can guide tourism stakeholders in improving destination management strategies. By understanding the psychological and experiential factors that drive recommendations and repeat visits, tourism planners can develop targeted policies and marketing strategies to optimize visitor experiences. Furthermore, the findings highlight the

importance of leveraging digital engagement, personalized services, and strategic branding to enhance destination competitiveness in an increasingly globalized tourism industry (Prayag, Hosany, Muskat, & Del Chiappa, 2017).

Concept of Destination Experience

Destination experience refers to the sum of perceptions, emotions, and interactions that tourists develop during their visit to a destination. It encompasses both tangible elements, such as infrastructure, natural landscapes, attractions, and service quality, as well as intangible factors, including the emotional connection, cultural engagement, and overall atmosphere of the place (Hosany & Witham, 2010). These experiences play a crucial role in shaping tourists' perceptions and influence their behavioral intentions, such as satisfaction, recommendation, and revisitation. The uniqueness of a destination experience lies in its subjectivity, as it varies significantly from one individual to another. Factors such as personal preferences, travel motivations, cultural background, previous travel experiences, and expectations influence how tourists perceive a destination. For instance, an adventure-seeking traveler may focus on the thrill and excitement of outdoor activities, while a cultural enthusiast may prioritize heritage sites, local traditions, and authentic interactions with residents. Similarly, a first-time visitor may have a completely different experience compared to a repeat traveler who has deeper familiarity with the place. The emotional component of the destination experience is equally important, as emotions play a vital role in shaping travel memories. Research suggests that destinations that evoke positive emotions, such as joy, excitement, awe, and nostalgia, create stronger attachments with tourists and increase their likelihood of recommending and revisiting the location (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Conversely, negative experiences, such as poor service quality, safety concerns, or unmet expectations, can lead to dissatisfaction and deter future visits. Moreover, destination experience is dynamic and multi-dimensional, meaning that it evolves over time based on changing expectations, trends, and personal growth. Advances in digital technology and smart tourism have also transformed the way tourists experience destinations. Virtual reality (VR) previews, personalized travel recommendations, and real-time mobile applications enhance pre-travel expectations and improve on-site experiences, making destinations more accessible and appealing. Ultimately, the overall destination experience serves as the foundation for destination competitiveness, influencing how a place is perceived in the global tourism market. Destinations that successfully deliver memorable, high-quality, and immersive experiences are more likely to foster strong emotional connections with visitors, leading to higher satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth marketing, and increased tourist loyalty. This underscores the importance of destination managers adopting a holistic approach in designing and promoting experiences that align with diverse traveler expectations and preferences.

Literature Survey

Tourism is a competitive global industry where destinations must deliver high-quality experiences to attract and retain visitors. Research has extensively explored the relationships between destination experience, tourist satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, emphasizing the importance of service quality, cultural authenticity, and emotional engagement in shaping tourist perceptions (Çalışkan et al., 2022). Destination experience is a critical determinant of tourist behavior, encompassing a combination of tangible and intangible elements such as the physical environment, service quality, emotional experience, and cultural authenticity (Zhang et al., 2023). The physical environment includes natural landscapes, attractions, and infrastructure, all of which contribute to destination appeal (Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin 2017). Service quality is another key factor, with research showing that responsive and professional service providers enhance satisfaction and revisit intentions (Seetanah et al., 2020). The emotional experience is shaped by positive memories and personal engagement, leading to stronger tourist attachment (Mvondo et al., 2022). Finally, cultural authenticity, including interactions with local communities and traditions, fosters deeper tourist connections and increases destination loyalty (Souza et al., 2020).

Tourist satisfaction is widely regarded as a mediator between destination experience and behavioral intentions (Raza et al., 2012). According to the Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), satisfaction arises when a tourist's expectations are met or exceeded, reinforcing loyalty and positive word-of-mouth

recommendations (Mishra et al., 2022). Empirical evidence shows that high satisfaction levels significantly increase the likelihood of repeat visits and destination advocacy (Liu et al., 2017). Moreover, emotional satisfaction has been found to create lasting bonds between tourists and destinations, leading to long-term commitment (Li et al., 2020). The role of word-of-mouth (WOM) and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has transformed tourism marketing in recent years. Traditional WOM remains a strong influence, particularly among returning visitors (Reyes-Menendez et al., 2019). However, the rise of digital platforms has made eWOM a dominant force, with tourists relying on online reviews, social media, and travel blogs to make travel decisions (González-Rodríguez et al., 2022). Recent studies highlight that eWOM not only expands destination reach but also enhances perceived credibility when influencers and experienced travelers share recommendations (Chong et al., 2018).

The shift from traditional to digital WOM is summarized in Table 1, emphasizing the growing reliance on online engagement and the differences in their impact on consumer behavior. Traditional WOM typically relies on personal and direct communication, often among close social circles, whereas eWOM leverages the power of digital platforms to reach a broader audience. eWOM is characterized by higher accessibility, faster dissemination, and the ability to influence purchasing decisions on a larger scale. However, while eWOM provides extensive reach, concerns over credibility and the authenticity of online reviews and influencer marketing remain key issues in tourism research. Understanding how travelers evaluate and trust different sources of WOM is crucial for destination marketers to effectively strategize their promotional efforts.

Table 1: Comparative Features of Traditional WOM and eWOM

| Aspect	Traditional WOM	Electronic WOM (eWOM)
Communication Mode	Face-to-face	Online reviews, social media
Reach	Limited to personal circles	Global audience
Trust Level	High (personal relationships)	Moderate (influencer credibility)
Speed	Slow	Instant
Impact on Tourism	Local influence	Can make destinations go viral

The literature highlights multiple factors that influence tourist satisfaction, revisit intentions, and recommendation behavior. Destination experience plays a crucial role, incorporating physical environment, service quality, emotional engagement, and cultural authenticity (Ardani et al., 2019). In addition, external determinants such as destination branding and digital marketing strategies significantly impact tourist decision-making (Kyriakaki et al., 2020). Several studies emphasize the role of push and pull travel factors, where push factors represent internal motivations such as adventure-seeking and relaxation, while pull factors relate to external attractions like natural landscapes and cultural sites (Yiamjanya & Wongleedee, 2014). Furthermore, demographic variables such as age and gender influence how tourists evaluate and respond to their experiences (So et al., 2016). These key determinants influencing tourist behavior are summarized in Table 2, providing a structured overview of the elements shaping tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

Table 2: Summary of Key Factors Influencing Tourist Behavior

Factor	Description	Impact on Tourists
Destination Experience	Physical environment, service quality, cultural experience, emotional engagement	Directly influences satisfaction & loyalty
Tourist Satisfaction	Overall assessment of experience at destination	Affects intention to recommend and revisit
Demographic Factors	Age, gender, travel motivation	Moderates' satisfaction-behavior relationship
Push & Pull Travel Factors	Internal motivations (adventure, relaxation) and external attractions (landscapes, culture)	Affects destination choice and revisits
Destination Image & Branding	How a place is perceived in marketing and social media	Influences expectations and satisfaction

Conceptual Framework

Building on the insights from the literature review, the conceptual framework for this study illustrates the relationship between destination experience, tourist satisfaction, and tourist behavioral intentions while accounting for the moderating effects of demographic characteristics, destination image, and travel motivations. At the core of this model, destination experience serves as the independent variable, encompassing four key dimensions: physical environment, service quality, emotional experience, and cultural authenticity. These elements collectively shape the overall satisfaction of tourists, which acts as a mediating variable. A positive and memorable destination experience enhances tourist satisfaction, increasing the likelihood of favorable post-visit behaviors. The dependent variable, tourist behavioral intentions, consists of two key aspects: recommendation intentions, which include both traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and revisit intentions, reflecting tourist loyalty to a destination. The framework also incorporates moderate variables, which influence the strength of these relationships. Demographic factors, such as age, gender, and travel motivation, affect how tourists perceive and respond to their experiences. Additionally, push and pull travel factors determine tourists' motivations for choosing a destination, while destination image and branding shape their expectations and perceptions, potentially reinforcing or altering the impact of satisfaction on future travel decisions. Overall, this framework suggests that a high-quality and engaging destination experience leads to greater tourist satisfaction, which, in turn, fosters stronger recommendation behavior and revisit intentions. However, this relationship is influenced by individual differences and external perceptions, highlighting the importance of tailored tourism strategies that enhance visitor experiences and promote long-term destination loyalty.
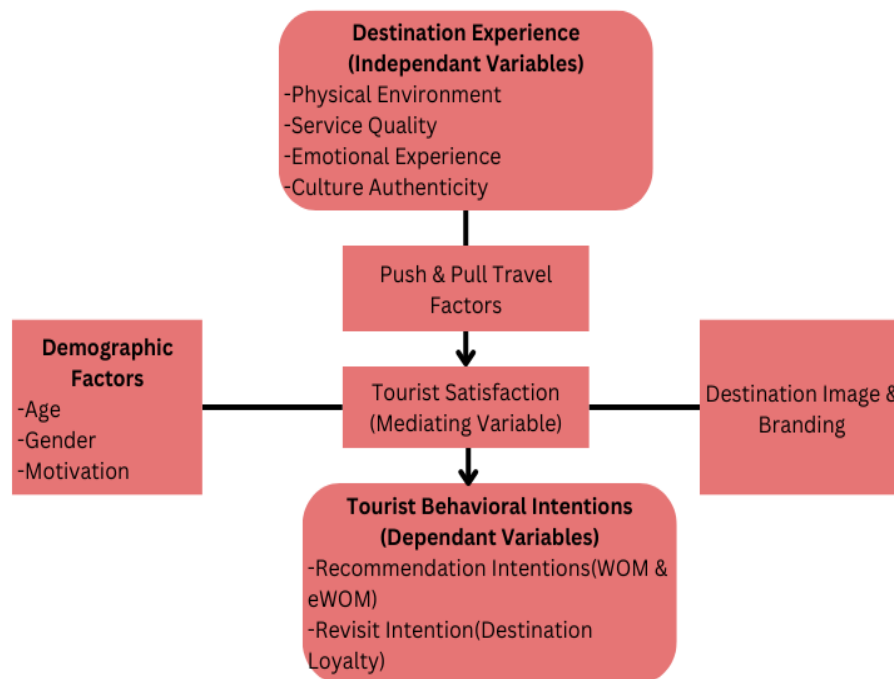
Conceptual Framework 1: Destination Experience and Tourist Behavior

Dimensions of Destination Experience

The physical environment includes natural landscapes, infrastructure, architectural designs, and attractions that contribute to tourists' overall experience. Scenic beauty, cleanliness, and well-maintained heritage sites significantly enhance satisfaction and encourage positive behavioral intentions (Kim & Lee 2020). High-quality service and hospitality enhance positive destination experiences. Responsiveness, professionalism, and warmth of service providers contribute to tourism satisfaction (Baker & Crompton, 2000). Research has shown that high levels of perceived service quality correlate positively with tourists' willingness to return and recommend (Ali, Hussain, & Ragavan, 2014). Tourists' emotional experiences play a significant role in their destination perception. Positive emotions such as joy, relaxation, and excitement lead to a stronger connection with the destination and greater satisfaction (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Emotional experiences influence tourists' memories, increasing their likelihood of recommending and revisiting the destination (Kim & Ritchie, 2014). Authentic cultural experiences create meaningful connections between tourists and destinations. Experiencing local traditions, cuisine, and interactions with residents enhances destination authenticity, increasing revisit and recommendation intentions (Mkono, 2013).

Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory

The Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), developed by Oliver (1980), explains how satisfaction is formed based on the comparison between pre-visit expectations and actual experiences at a destination. Tourists create expectations before visiting a destination, influenced by advertisements, online reviews, personal recommendations, and past travel experiences. Once they experience the destination firsthand, they evaluate whether it meets, exceeds, or falls below their expectations, leading to different levels of satisfaction and behavioral responses. If a destination exceeds tourists' expectations, it results in positive disconfirmation, leading to high satisfaction, increased destination loyalty, and stronger word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations. Tourists who are pleasantly surprised by a destination's offerings such as exceptional service, unique attractions, or cultural richness are more likely to develop an emotional connection to the place, increasing their chances of returning (Alegre & Garau, 2010). On the other hand, when a destination meets expectations, tourists experience confirmation, which leads to general satisfaction but may not necessarily create strong loyalty or motivation for a repeat visit. However, if the experience

falls below expectations, negative disconfirmation occurs, resulting in dissatisfaction, complaints, and negative WOM, which can damage a destination's reputation and discourage potential visitors (Oliver, 1999). In the tourism industry, managing expectations is just as important as delivering high-quality experiences. Tourists' pre-visit perceptions are shaped by marketing campaigns, influencer promotions, social media content, and online reviews, all of which create specific images of the destination. If the destination's reality fails to align with these pre-formed perceptions due to poor service quality, overcrowding, environmental degradation, or misleading advertisements tourists may feel disappointed and avoid revisiting. Studies show that destinations with realistic branding and consistent service delivery are more likely to achieve tourist satisfaction and long-term loyalty (Jani & Han, 2011). To enhance satisfaction and encourage repeat visitation, destination managers must focus on setting accurate expectations and continuously improving service quality. Marketing strategies should ensure that promotional materials authentically reflect the destination's actual offerings to prevent unrealistic expectations. Additionally, tourism providers should prioritize personalized experiences, effective complaint management, and consistent service enhancements to create positive disconfirmation and exceed tourist expectations. Engaging with tourist feedback, adapting to changing travel preferences, and maintaining high hospitality standards can significantly influence destination satisfaction and loyalty. The Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory highlights the importance of exceeding tourist expectations to foster destination loyalty, repeat visitation, and positive WOM recommendations. Destinations that consistently meet or surpass expectations will benefit from stronger brand reputations, increased visitor numbers, and sustain economic growth in the competitive tourism industry.

Perceived Value and its Influence on Tourist Behavior

Perceived value is a critical factor in shaping tourist satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioral intentions, as it reflects the overall assessment of a destination's worth concerning the benefits received. Tourists evaluate perceived value based on multiple dimensions, including monetary costs, service quality, emotional benefits, and experiential factors (Zeithaml, 1988). When travelers believe that the experience they receive at a destination is worth the time, effort, and money spent, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes, repeat visitation intentions, and engage in word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations. Perceived value is multi-dimensional, encompassing not only economic value but also functional, social, and emotional aspects. Functional value relates to tangible attributes such as affordable pricing, ease of accessibility, and well-developed infrastructure. Social value stems from tourists' perceptions of a destination's prestige, cultural significance, and exclusivity. Emotional value, however, is one of the strongest contributors to satisfaction, as it is linked to personal fulfillment, relaxation, nostalgia, and unique experiences. Studies have shown that destinations that provide high emotional value through authentic cultural experiences, engaging activities, and exceptional service quality foster greater satisfaction and loyalty (Chen & Chen, 2010). Higher perceived value leads to stronger tourist attachment and advocacy behavior, as satisfied tourists are more likely to share positive experiences through WOM recommendations and online reviews. In contrast, when tourists perceive a lack of value such as overpriced services, poor customer service, overcrowding, or unmet expectations they may feel dissatisfied and deter others from visiting. Negative perceived value can significantly harm a destination's reputation, reducing its competitiveness in the tourism market. To enhance perceived value, destination managers and tourism providers must balance cost, quality, and experience to ensure tourists feel they are receiving exceptional value for their money. Strategies to improve perceived value include offering competitive pricing, personalized services, exclusive experiences, and enhanced customer engagement. Additionally, destinations that emphasize sustainability, cultural authenticity, and high-quality infrastructure create stronger emotional connections with tourists, reinforcing repeat visitation and long-term loyalty. Perceived value plays a crucial role in shaping tourist behavior, satisfaction, and loyalty. Destinations that successfully deliver a balance of affordability, service excellence, and memorable experiences can significantly enhance tourist satisfaction, encourage repeat visits, and strengthen WOM recommendations, ensuring sustainable tourism growth and a competitive advantage in the global market.

Role of Positive Experiences in Word-of-Mouth (WOM) Recommendations

Positive experiences are among the strongest motivators for word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations, as satisfied tourists are naturally inclined to share their travel experiences with others. WOM can be categorized into traditional WOM, which includes face-to-face conversations and personal recommendations, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), which involves online reviews, social media posts, travel blogs, and vlogs. Both forms play a crucial role in influencing travel decisions by providing user-generated information that shapes perceptions and expectations of destinations (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). Several psychological factors drive WOM behavior, including emotional satisfaction, social recognition, altruism, and reciprocity. Tourists who experience joy, excitement, or fulfillment at a destination are more likely to share their experiences, reinforcing the importance of emotionally engaging tourism offerings (Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick, 2012). Additionally, the desire for social recognition motivates travelers to share experiences to enhance their credibility among peers, while some engage in WOM out of altruistic motives, seeking to help others make informed travel decisions (Bronner & de Hoog, 2011). Reciprocity also influences WOM engagement, as travelers who benefit from online reviews often feel compelled to contribute their own insights. The impact of WOM extends beyond individual recommendations, significantly shaping destination image and tourism growth. Studies indicate that destinations receiving high volumes of positive WOM experience increased tourist arrivals, as peer recommendations are often more trusted than traditional advertising (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Conversely, negative WOM, such as poor service reviews or safety concerns, can harm a destination's reputation and deter potential visitors. The growing influence of eWOM, fueled by digital platforms and social media, has transformed destination marketing. Tourists frequently share their experiences on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, TripAdvisor, and YouTube, leveraging visually engaging content and detailed travel reviews to influence future travelers (Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018). Given the significant role of WOM in tourism, destination managers can adopt strategies to enhance positive WOM by ensuring high-quality experiences, encouraging user-generated content, managing online reviews effectively, and leveraging digital storytelling. Loyalty programs and incentives can also drive repeat visits and increase recommendations. As eWOM continues to shape the tourism industry, delivering exceptional and memorable experiences is essential for destinations to maintain strong reputations, attract new visitors, and sustain long-term tourism growth (Miguéns, Baggio, & Costa, 2008). Figure 2 illustrates the Role of Positive Experiences in WOM, summarizing the key drivers, types of WOM, and their overall influence on tourist behavior and destination loyalty.

Figure 2: Role Of Positive Experiences In WOM

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Recommendation Intentions

Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (1991) provides a widely accepted framework for understanding how individuals form intentions to perform specific behaviors, including tourists' intention to recommend a destination. According to TPB, behavioral intentions are shaped by three core factors: Attitude toward the behavior, a tourist's personal evaluation of whether recommending a destination is beneficial or worthwhile. A positive experience at a destination enhances attitudes, increasing the likelihood of recommendation (Han & Kim, 2010). Subjective norms, the social pressures or influences that encourage or discourage a tourist from recommending a destination. If friends, family, or social media trends promote the idea of sharing travel experiences, individuals are more likely to engage in recommendation behavior. Perceived behavioral control, the perceived ease or difficulty of recommending a destination. If tourists feel that their opinions are valued, that their reviews will be useful, or that they have convenient ways to share their experiences (e.g., social media, online reviews), they are more inclined to recommend.

Application of TPB to Tourist Recommendations

The TPB framework helps explain why some tourists actively promote destinations while others do not. Several factors influence these behaviors: Positive Destination Experience and Attitude Formation: A strong positive attitude toward a destination is developed when tourists have satisfying, memorable, and high-quality experiences (Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018). This includes factors such as excellent service, unique cultural attractions, and emotional engagement. When attitudes are favorable, tourists are more inclined to share recommendations. Social Influence and Subjective Norms in WOM Recommendations: Tourists are often influenced by their social circles and cultural norms. If their peers frequently share travel recommendations on social media platforms, blogs, or word-of-mouth interactions, they are more likely to follow the trend (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). Influencer endorsements, travel communities, and user-generated content play significant roles in shaping these subjective norms. Ease of Recommending (Perceived Behavioral Control): Digital advancements have made it easier than ever for tourists to recommend destinations. The availability of online travel platforms (TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, Booking.com), social media (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok), and video-sharing sites (YouTube, travel vlogs) increases perceived behavioral control. If tourists find it convenient and accessible to leave reviews or post about their experiences, they are more likely to engage in recommendation behavior (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

Empirical Evidence Supporting TPB in Tourist Recommendation Behavior

Several studies have validated TPB's role in influencing tourist recommendations: Han & Kim (2010) found that attitude and subjective norms significantly impacted tourists' intentions to recommend eco-friendly hotels, emphasizing the role of social and environmental values in decision-making. Jalilvand & Samiei (2012) showed that subjective norms and WOM influence potential tourists' decision-making, reinforcing the importance of social influence in tourism marketing. Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis (2018) highlighted that perceived behavioral control, enhanced by digital platforms, encourages more frequent and widespread travel recommendations.

Tourism Marketing Implications of TPB

Understanding TPB's influence on recommendation behavior allows destination marketers and tourism managers to develop strategies that increase tourist engagement and WOM promotion: Enhancing Attitudes: Ensure that tourists have exceptional experiences through personalized services, unique attractions, and emotional engagement. Strengthening Social Influence: Leverage social media marketing, influencer collaborations, and user-generated content to shape positive subjective norms. Increasing Accessibility: Simplify the process of leaving reviews and sharing experiences through incentives, interactive websites, and seamless digital integrations. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a valuable framework for understanding how attitudes, social norms, and perceived ease of recommendation influence tourist behavior. By fostering positive attitudes, leveraging social influence, and making recommendation

tools more accessible, destinations can encourage tourists to actively promote and recommend their experiences, ultimately enhancing tourism growth and destination competitiveness.

Impact of Digital and Social Media on Tourist Recommendations

The rise of digital and social media has revolutionized the way tourists share their experiences and influence others' travel decisions. Unlike traditional word-of-mouth (WOM), which relies on personal interactions, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) allows travelers to instantly broadcast their opinions to a global audience, significantly amplifying the effect of recommendations (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Tourists frequently share their experiences on platforms such as TripAdvisor, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube, shaping destination perceptions and influencing potential visitors.

The Role of Social Media in Tourist Recommendations

Social media plays a transformative role in shaping tourist recommendations by enhancing engagement, trust, and decision-making. Through real-time sharing of reviews, photos, and videos, travelers provide authentic and unfiltered insights about destinations, while live streaming, interactive polls, hashtags, and geotagging increase visibility and make destinations trend online. User-generated content is considered more trustworthy than traditional advertisements, with platforms like TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, and Booking.com enabling tourists to share credible evaluations of hotels, attractions, and services. Influencers and bloggers further strengthen this trust by generating positive recommendations that create a strong social proof effect, enhancing destination appeal. Visual storytelling on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube has become especially impactful, with short-form video content offering quick and immersive glimpses into travel experiences. This shift toward digital expression, often referred to as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), allows for the rapid dissemination of reviews and significantly influences tourist decisions a positive eWOM enhances credibility, while negative content can deter potential visitors. Empirical research supports this impact; for example, Xiang and Gretzel (2010) found that more than 75% of travelers rely on search engines and social media for trip planning, and studies by Fotis, Buhalis, and Rossides (2012), and Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) affirm that online engagement and digital storytelling heavily influence destination choice and brand image. Despite its benefits, social media also presents challenges, such as content oversaturation, fake reviews, and the risk of negative viral exposure that can damage a destination's reputation. To harness its potential, destinations must adopt strategic marketing approaches that include encouraging user-generated content, engaging directly with tourists online, partnering with credible influencers, utilizing AI-driven personalization tools, and actively managing their online reputation. Overall, social media has redefined how tourists interact with and recommend destinations, making it a critical component of modern tourism marketing and competitive positioning.

Relationship Between Satisfaction and Repeat Visitation

The relationship between tourist satisfaction and repeat visitation is a fundamental aspect of destination loyalty and long-term tourism success. Tourist satisfaction is derived from the overall experience at a destination, including factors such as service quality, hospitality, attractions, safety, and emotional engagement. When visitors have positive experiences that meet or exceed their expectations, they develop a strong emotional attachment to the destination, increasing the likelihood of returning (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Satisfied tourists not only engage in repeat visits but also act as brand advocates, sharing their experiences through word-of-mouth recommendations and social media, which further enhances the destination's reputation and attractiveness. Repeat visitation is beneficial for both tourists and destinations. For tourists, returning to a familiar place reduces uncertainty and enhances the overall experience, as they are already aware of the best attractions, activities, and services available. For destinations, repeat visitors provide a stable source of revenue, reduce marketing costs, and strengthen the tourism economy. Studies show that loyal tourists tend to spend more on subsequent visits, as they shift their focus from basic sightseeing to deeper cultural and leisure experiences (Jang & Feng, 2007). Additionally, repeat visitors contribute to the sustainability of tourism by promoting steady demand throughout the year, helping destinations reduce the negative effects of seasonality.

However, satisfaction alone does not always guarantee repeat visits. External factors such as price fluctuations, competing destinations, personal circumstances, and travel restrictions can influence a tourist's decision to return. This is why destination managers must continuously innovate and enhance the visitor experience, ensuring that each visit offers something new and exciting. Personalized services, loyalty programs, and unique attractions can reinforce emotional connections with visitors, increasing the probability of return trips. Tourist satisfaction is a major driver of repeat visitation, creating long-term economic benefits and a competitive advantage for destinations. By consistently delivering high-quality experiences, maintaining positive destination images, and fostering strong emotional ties with tourists, destinations can secure a loyal customer base and ensure sustainable tourism growth.

Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTEs) and Loyalty

Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTEs) play a crucial role in shaping tourist perceptions and fostering long-term loyalty toward a destination. MTEs are not just about sightseeing or visiting attractions; they involve deep emotional connections, personal engagement, and unique experiences that leave a lasting impression on visitors (Kim, Ritchie, & Tung, 2010). Destinations that provide enriching, immersive, and meaningful experiences enhance tourists' overall satisfaction, increasing the likelihood of repeat visits and positive recommendations. MTEs are often driven by factors such as cultural immersion, adventure, novelty, and personal interactions. Engaging in local traditions, culinary experiences, and historical explorations allows tourists to form authentic connections with a destination, making their experiences more meaningful and unforgettable. Similarly, adventure-based tourism such as hiking, diving, or safaris triggers excitement and adrenaline, further strengthening emotional attachment to a place. Studies have shown that tourists who engage in interactive and emotional experiences are more likely to develop destination loyalty, as these experiences evoke strong positive memories and personal satisfaction (Tung & Ritchie, 2011).

Furthermore, social interactions with locals and other travelers contribute significantly to MTEs. Personalized services, warm hospitality, and engaging with friendly, welcoming communities enhance tourists' sense of belonging and create positive emotional associations with a destination. Tourists who feel emotionally connected to a place are not only more likely to return but also to recommend the destination to others through word-of-mouth and social media (Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018). The link between MTEs and tourist loyalty is particularly relevant in the era of digital tourism, where travelers seek authentic and shareable experiences. Social media platforms allow tourists to relive and share their most memorable moments, reinforcing their connection with the destination and influencing potential visitors. Destinations that prioritize experience-driven tourism by offering personalized tours, immersive storytelling, and exclusive cultural engagements create stronger emotional bonds with tourists, fostering long-term loyalty. MTEs are a key determinant of destination loyalty. Destinations that offer unique, meaningful, and emotionally engaging experiences significantly increase their chances of attracting repeat visitors and positive recommendations. By focusing on cultural authenticity, adventure tourism, personalized services, and emotional engagement, tourism stakeholders can enhance visitor experiences, strengthen brand loyalty, and ensure sustainable tourism growth.

Expectation-Confirmation Model (ECM) and Destination Loyalty

The Expectation-Confirmation Model (ECM), introduced by Oliver (1999), serves as a foundational framework for understanding consumer satisfaction and loyalty in tourism. It suggests that tourists develop loyalty to a destination when their pre-visit expectations are met or exceeded, leading to greater satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth (WOM), and repeat visitation. The model is driven by a continuous evaluation process that begins before travel, evolves during the visit, and is reassessed post-trip. Expectations are shaped by advertisements, online reviews, social media content, personal recommendations, and prior experiences. While high expectations can enhance satisfaction if met, they also risk disappointment when unmet. During the visit, tourists compare their experiences—such as service quality, attractions, hospitality, safety, and cultural authenticity—against their initial expectations. A positive alignment between expectation and reality (confirmation) enhances satisfaction, while a mismatch (disconfirmation) leads to dissatisfaction and reduces the likelihood of returning (Oliver, 1999). When expectations are confirmed or

surpassed, emotional bonds strengthen, leading tourists to revisit and advocate for the destination through WOM and social media (Um, Chon, & Ro, 2006). Conversely, negative experiences may result in avoidance and damaging reviews. Empirical studies affirm ECM's predictive power in destination loyalty. Alegre and Garau (2010) found that satisfaction from expectation confirmation strongly influences repeat visits, while Baker and Crompton (2000) emphasized that exceeding service expectations fosters long-term loyalty. Chen and Phou (2013) highlighted the role of emotional satisfaction alongside cognitive evaluations in reinforcing attachment to a destination. Furthermore, ECM recognizes that loyalty is dynamic—continuously reinforced by positive experiences or weakened by declining quality over time. This dynamic nature has critical implications for tourism management. To apply ECM effectively, tourism managers must set realistic, authentic expectations through transparent marketing, and deliver consistently high-quality services via excellent hospitality, well-maintained attractions, and positive interactions (Malik & Rao, 2019). Personalization plays an essential role, as tailored services and exclusive experiences can exceed expectations and deepen satisfaction. Active engagement with tourists through online reviews, post-visit surveys, and feedback channels helps maintain service quality and address concerns. Moreover, destinations must stay adaptive by integrating innovative attractions, enhancing digital accessibility, and promoting sustainability to align with evolving tourist demands. Strengthening destination loyalty also requires recognizing the influence of demographic factors such as age, gender, and travel motivation. Tourists of different age groups have distinct preferences. Millennials and Gen Z prioritize adventure, digital interaction, and affordability, whereas older generations favor relaxation, cultural depth, and premium services (Jang & Feng, 2007). Gender differences further affect travel behavior, with women tending to emphasize safety, wellness, and cultural experiences, while men often pursue adventure and risk-based activities (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000). Women are also more engaged in planning and sharing experiences online, thereby shaping digital tourism trends. Travel motivation influences repeat behavior as well: leisure travelers seek stress-free, scenic, and enjoyable destinations; business travelers often revisit due to professional obligations and familiarity; and special-interest tourists may return when destinations align with their passions (Chen & Petrick, 2013). By understanding and responding to these demographic and motivational factors, destination managers can tailor marketing, personalize offerings, and deliver meaningful experiences that build long-term tourist loyalty in an increasingly competitive global market.

Role of Destination Image in Tourist Behavior

Destination image plays a vital role in shaping tourists' perceptions, expectations, and behaviors, significantly influencing both their decision-making processes and post-visit intentions. It encompasses the overall impression a tourist holds about a place, formed through elements such as natural beauty, cultural richness, hospitality, infrastructure, safety, and promotional activities. A well-developed and positive destination image enhances satisfaction, strengthens emotional bonds, and increases the likelihood of repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Tourists frequently form mental images of destinations before visiting, based on online reviews, advertisements, social media content, and personal recommendations. A clearly communicated and favorable brand identity attracts more visitors and fosters positive behavioral intentions (Tasci & Gartner, 2007), whereas a negative or ambiguous image due to poor infrastructure, safety concerns, or environmental degradation can deter potential travelers. Destination image includes both cognitive and affective components: the cognitive dimension reflects objective aspects such as accommodation, transport, and attractions, while the affective component relates to emotional perceptions like how exciting, peaceful, or welcoming a place feels (Stylidis, Shani, & Belhassen, 2017). Destinations that successfully integrate both components foster stronger emotional connections and higher revisit rates. Moreover, destination image plays a crucial role in crisis recovery, where branding and reassurance efforts can help restore trust after events like natural disasters or political instability (Avraham & Ketter, 2017). To strengthen destination image and positively influence tourist behavior, destination managers should focus on authentic storytelling, community engagement, digital marketing, and sustainability efforts that resonate with visitor expectations.

In this context, the push and pull framework (illustrated in the figure above) offers valuable insight into how destination image aligns with tourist motivations. Push factors represent internal motivations that drive individuals to seek travel, such as relaxation, adventure, social bonding, cultural exploration, and personal

achievement (Dann, 1981). These are psychological in nature and not tied to specific locations. On the other hand, pull factors refer to the external attributes of a destination such as natural attractions, cultural heritage, entertainment options, infrastructure, affordability, and safety that influence where people choose to travel (Klenosky, 2002; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2009). The figure highlights this dual influence by categorizing the key push and pull factors affecting destination choice. The interaction between these elements determines not only the initial travel decision but also satisfaction and loyalty. For instance, a tourist motivated by relaxation (push) may be drawn to a tranquil beach resort (pull), while someone seeking cultural enrichment may choose a destination known for heritage and tradition. When destinations consistently meet or exceed these internal and external expectations, they reinforce loyalty and increase the chances of repeat visitation. By understanding and integrating push and pull dynamics into destination marketing strategies, tourism planners can tailor experiences to specific traveler segments, personalize offerings, and build lasting emotional connections. This comprehensive approach enhances tourist satisfaction, encourages long-term loyalty, and strengthens the destination's competitive positioning in the global tourism market.
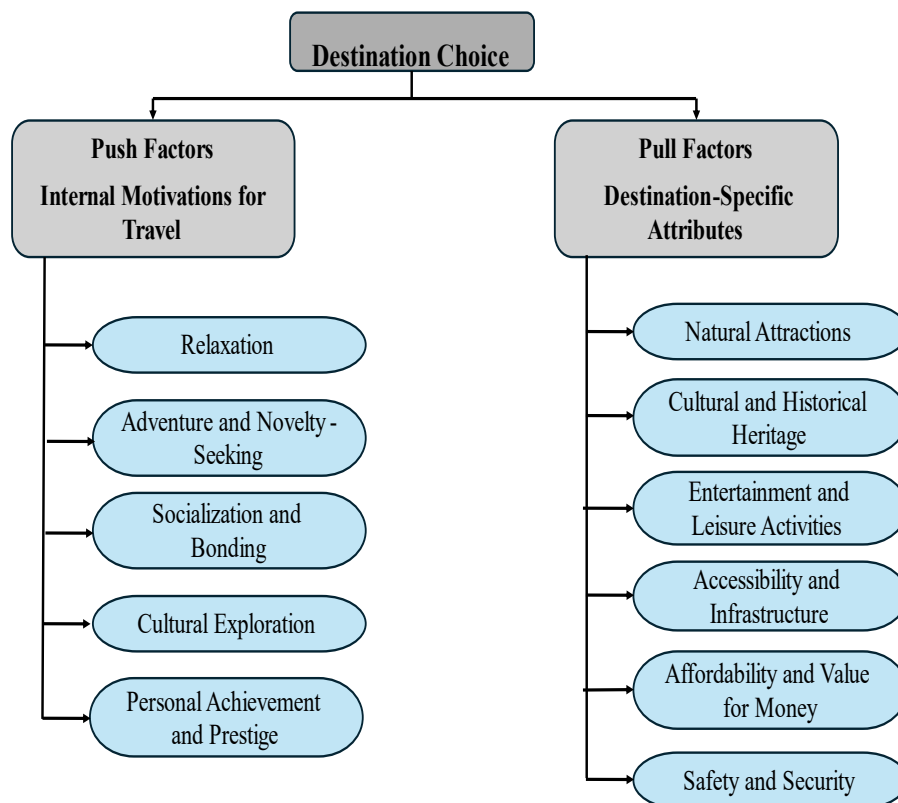

Figure 3: Push and Pull Factors Influencing Destination Choice.

Conclusion and Research Gaps

Summary of Key Findings

This study explored the relationship between destination experience, tourist satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, highlighting key dimensions such as physical environment, service quality, emotional engagement, and cultural authenticity. The findings suggest that a well-designed and immersive destination experience enhances tourist satisfaction, leading to higher revisit intentions and stronger word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations (Yu et al., 2023). The role of memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) was emphasized, as emotionally engaging experiences significantly influence tourists' attachment to destinations

and their likelihood of returning (Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018). Furthermore, the study highlighted the increasing impact of digital platforms and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), where social media and online reviews play a crucial role in shaping tourist perceptions and influencing travel decisions (Bronner & De Hoog 2011). The research also examined the Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to understand tourist behavior in terms of satisfaction, loyalty, and recommendation intentions (Oliver, 1999; Han & Kim, 2010). The interplay of push and pull travel factors, destination branding, and demographic variables (age, gender, and motivation) was explored as moderating elements affecting how tourists perceive and respond to their experiences (Zhang & Buhalis 2018; Zhang et al., 2023). Overall, the study confirms that a high-quality and engaging destination experience fosters greater tourist satisfaction, stronger recommendation behavior, and increased revisit intentions. However, these relationships are influenced by external factors such as evolving traveler expectations, digital influence, and destination image perceptions.

Limitations of Existing Literature

Despite extensive research on destination experience and tourist behavior, several gaps and limitations remain. First, most studies focus on quantitative survey-based approaches, which often fail to capture the depth of emotional and psychological experiences associated with destinations (Kim et al., 2012). More qualitative or mixed-method approaches could provide deeper insights into how tourists develop long-term emotional bonds with destinations (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Second, while eWOM and digital engagement have been extensively studied, there is limited research on the credibility and long-term influence of online reviews and influencer marketing in tourism decision-making (Jalilvand & Samiei 2012). The impact of fake reviews, algorithm-driven content visibility, and social media manipulation remains an underexplored area that could significantly affect destination choices. Third, research on destination loyalty has primarily focused on short-term revisits, neglecting the factors influencing long-term loyalty and generational shifts in travel preferences (Viraiyan Teeroovengadum & Padachi 2017). Understanding how repeat visitation patterns change over time and how destinations can maintain competitiveness amidst changing traveler demographics is crucial for sustainable tourism management. Additionally, most studies focus on popular tourist destinations, leaving lesser-known or emerging destinations underexplored (Dahal et al., 2024). Investigating how small, remote, or culturally unique destinations can enhance their experiential offerings to attract tourists and compete with established hotspots is a key research gap.

Future Research Directions

To address these gaps, future research should explore new methodologies, evolving tourist behaviors, and destination management strategies. First, longitudinal studies could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how tourist satisfaction and loyalty evolve over multiple visits (Chi et al., 2008). Examining how travelers reinterpret experiences over time could reveal insights into destination attachment and repeat visitation drivers. Second, the role of artificial intelligence (AI) and personalization in destination marketing is an emerging area that warrants further study. AI-driven personalized recommendations, chatbots, and augmented reality (AR) experiences are transforming how tourists interact with destinations before, during, and after their visits (Mishra et al., 2024). Exploring how AI-driven marketing strategies influence tourist satisfaction, expectations, and decision-making could be highly beneficial for destination managers. Third, sustainable tourism research should focus on the intersection of experience design and environmental conservation. While many studies examine sustainable practices, there is limited research on how sustainability itself enhances or detracts from destination experience and loyalty (Wang et al., 2023). Investigating how eco-conscious travelers prioritize sustainability over traditional comfort and luxury elements could provide valuable insights for green tourism strategies. Finally, cross-cultural and generational studies are needed to understand how different demographic groups form and maintain travel habits. The expectations and preferences of Millennials and Gen Z travelers differ significantly from those of Baby Boomers and Gen X, particularly in terms of digital influence, social media engagement, and sustainability considerations (Zouni et al., 2024). Future studies should examine how destination branding and marketing strategies should evolve to cater to these emerging trends. In conclusion, while substantial research has been conducted on destination experience, satisfaction, and tourist behavior, evolving digital trends, sustainability concerns, and changing traveler expectations demand further investigation. By

adopting new methodologies, expanding the scope of research to underrepresented destinations, and integrating technological advancements, future studies can contribute valuable insights into enhancing destination competitiveness, fostering sustainable tourism, and improving visitor experiences in the global tourism industry.

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