EXAMINING A NEW MODEL OF DESTINATION CHOICE BEHAVIOR: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY FROM VIETNAM

Trong Tien Bao BUI
HUTECH University, Faculty of Tourism & Hospitality Management
E-mail: btt.bao@hutech.edu.vn

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to propose a new model, the M-TPB-D model, which combines the theory of planned behavior (TPB), the travel motivation theory, and the overall image of the destination. This model aims to provide a new perspective for understanding and predicting tourists' visit intentions and leads to increasing destination choice behavior in the tourism destination context.

Methodology/Design/Approach – To gain a comprehensive understanding of destination choice behaviour, a mixed methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods was used. Data was collected through a random sample survey of 630 domestic tourists travelling to Ho Chi Minh City. The final sample consisted of 459 usable questionnaires.

Findings – The findings of the study confirm the causal relationship between the original TPB theory, pull-push motivation theory, overall image of the destination and destination choice behavior. This offers a novel insight into understanding destination choice behavior from the viewpoint of domestic tourists.

Originality of the research – The study makes a significant contribution through the integration of multiple theories, resulting in a comprehensive understanding of the various factors that influence destination choice behavior. Furthermore, the study has implications for both theoretical implications and practical implications for destination marketing and management.

Keywords Pull-Push motivation, Destination Image, Destination Choice, M-TPB-D model

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INTRODUCTION

Ho Chi Minh city is widely recognized as one of the most renowned tourist destinations and the busiest city in Vietnam with traditional sightseeing places, unique and impressive architectural works, French colonial constructions, local traditional festivals. These unique natural and cultural heritage sites attracted a great number of domestic tourists to visit Ho Chi Minh city. According to Ho Chi Minh City Department of Tourism (2022), during the first five months of 2022, the total tourism revenue of Ho Chi Minh City reached VND39.5 trillion (approximately USD 1.7 billion), reflecting a 9.8% increase compared to the previous year. In light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the local government recognizes that domestic tourism has become the driving force of the city. Understanding the factors influencing domestic tourists' choice of Ho Chi Minh City can provide valuable insights applicable to other destinations experiencing similar growth.

Tourist destination choice behavior is a crucial area of study for the tourism industry. While the theory of push and pull motivations has been widely accepted and proven useful in understanding destination choice behavior (Sastre & Phakdee-Auksorn, 2017), there remains a scarcity of academic literature specifically focusing on domestic tourists in the context of emerging destinations. Additionally, there has been little agreement on what tourist motivation is in tourism destinations, the significant and positive relationship between the behavior intention and determinants of behavior intention (Dean & Suhartanto, 2019). Furthermore, there has been relatively little discussion on destination choice behavior from the perspective of domestic tourists in the post-pandemic era. Therefore, further research is necessary to better understand why visitors are encouraged to choose a destination for holiday vacation that promote various tourism activities for future travel in the post-pandemic recovery period.

Additionally, researchers have shown an increased interest in visit intention which is the best predictor of future tourist behavior. Salsabila & Alversia (2020); Soliman, (2019); Su, (2018) pointed out that the destination image, travel motivation, and the TPB constructs has significantly correlated with destination choice behaviors in the existing studies. However, Salsabila & Alversia (2020) found that the causal relationship among pull-push motivation, destination image, and their combined ability to comprehensively predict domestic tourist destination choice behavior remains relatively weak.

To address the limitations of previous studies and fill the research gaps, the present study aims to evaluate and validate the significant interrelationship between the push - pull motivations and tourist destination choice behavior in Ho Chi Minh City. The present study aims to review existing research on two main aspects: (1) evaluating the determinants of visit intention behavior in the relationship between the combination of the original TPB model, pull-push motivation model, overall image of the destination, and (2) identifying the causal relationship between the new destination choice behavior model in the tourism

destination context. By developing a new conceptual model known as M-TPB-D (Motivation - Theory of Planned Behavior - Destination Image), the study seeks to investigate and explore the causal relationships among the overall image of the tourism destination, pull-push motivation, and the constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The objective is to provide a novel insight into predicting destination choice behavior in Ho Chi Minh City.

From a theoretical perspective, the study aims to explore the relationship between the pull-push motivation factors, and tourist attitude, visit intention. It also seeks to validate the relationship between the determinants of the Theory of Planned Behavior and provide a new understanding of predicting destination choice behavior among domestic tourists visiting Ho Chi Minh City. From a practical viewpoint, the major findings could support the local authorities develop the right marketing strategies to effectively enhance tourist's destination choices. Therefore, the new M-TPB-D model is increasingly important for explaining and predicting tourists' visiting intentions and their effects on destination choice behavior. The proposed theoretical model will be empirically tested using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. The theory of planned behavior

Ajzen (1991) has argued that the theory of reasoned action (TRA) may have limited predictive power thus the TPB model is formed by an extension and modification of the TRA. It has conclusively been shown that the added construct of perceived behavioral control (PBC) or self-efficacy belief could positively improve the power of prediction. Perceived behavioral control is considered a crucial factor in influencing both intention and actual choice behavior (Armitage & Conner, 2001). In the TPB model, the behavioral intention construct is determined by three conceptual antecedents consisting of tourists' behavior-related attitudes, perception of subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Phetvaroon, 2006). This view is supported by Su, (2018) who claimed this TPB theory better predicts and explains tourists' behavior in the tourism destination context.

The term "tourist attitude" has been used to refer to an individual's emotions towards a tourism destination or travel service, based on their perceptions of main attributes of tourism product (Lam & Hsu, 2006). Ajzen (1991, 188) defined subjective norm as "*the perception an individual has regarding the social pressures to do or not perform the specific behavior*". Thus, Ham et al., (2015) suggest that subjective norms can be referred to as social norms , as they are influenced by the behavior of reference groups and can impact an individual's decisions; and social norms as a tool for measuring social pressure impacting an personel's decision to perfore in a certain behavior. Ajzen (1991) also popularized the term "perceived behavioral control" to describe a certain behavior. Lam & Hsu (2004) used the term "behavioral intention" to refer to an individual's expectation or inclination towards undertaking a future holiday to a specific tourism destination , with the purpose of relaxation or leisure. It has conclusively been shown that tourist attitude, perceived social pressure, and perception of behavioral control positively increases tourist intention to visit (Rahman et al., 2021). Ajzen (1991) indicated that the tourist behavior intention can lead to performing actual behavior. Additionally, Ajzen & Driver (1992) claimed that the relationsip between the tourist behavior intention and actual behavior will better predict the activity choice; as well as published a paper in which they described the leisure behavior as a choice among alternative leisure activities by relating tourist intention to actual destination choice behaviors. Sirakaya & Woodside (2005) claimed that the theory of planned behavior has already been implemented in the context of making choices about tourism destinations. Lin et al., (2010) found that the combination between the pull-push motivation and the TPB model will emphasize the meanings of the ''tourist attitudes", ''perception of behavioral control" and ''perceived social norms" as well as provide a novel insight into explaining or predicting of behavioral intentions (Sahli et al., 2015). Sirakaya & Woodside (2005) confirmed that the fundamental of a tourism destination choice will depend on the positive relationship between these variables in the model. Rahman et al., (2021) claimed that the TPB theory can emerge with other constructs and various distinct theoretical model to novel insights into understanding of intention behavior. According to Ajzen (1991); Han & Kim (2010), the likelihood of visiting is primarily related to the core constructs of the original TPB model, including tourists' behavior-related attitudes, subjective norms, and perception of control over behavior performance. Moreover, Cheng & Chen (2022); Lam & Hsu (2004) claimed that a higher intention to visit can lead to a greater likelihood of destination choice behavior. This study aims to assess the significance of the new M-TPB-D model in explaining destination choice behavior. Therefore, five research hypotheses on the relationships among latent variables within a new model were proposed in this study:

H_1: Attitude will positively and significantly impact on visit intention
H_2: Subjective norm has positively and significantly impacted on visit intention
H_3: Perceived behaviour control has positively and significantly impacted on visit intention
H_4: Perceived behaviour control will exhibit a positive and significant relationship with destination choice behaviour
H_5: Visit intention has positively and significantly impacted on destination choice behaviour

1.2. Travel motivation

Throughout this paper the term "travel motivation" will refer to "*a satisfaction state of mind which appropriately disposes a tourist or a group of tourist to travel*" (Iso-Ahola, 1982). Dann (1977); Tang et al., (2022) has recently developed the pull–push motivation theory in the fields of leisure and hospitality tourism. In the destination choice context, Said & Maryono (2018) found that the tourists tend to identify their choices based on perception or the expression of a specific destination (pull factor), self-exploration, escaped, novelty seeking, and relaxation (push factor). Zhang & Lam (1999); Wang et al., (2020) claimed that the analysis of tourist motivation based on both pull (external) and push (internal) constructs has been accepted respectively.

The push factor has come to refer to those factors that motivate tourists to leave their homes, whereas the pull elements are generally understood to mean the aspects that attract tourists to a specific tourism destination (Ranee, 2019). On the other hand, "pull elements" are those which draw the tourist to a specific tourism destination, and whose value is concerned to stay in the main purpose of a travel (Dann, 1977). Typically, Phillips & Jang (2007) used the term "push factors" to refer to the desire of travelers consisting of the desire for visiting, novelty, rest, relaxation, self-exploration, healthy, escape seeking, social prestige and social interaction. Pull motivation draws a tourist to a specific tourism destination and is particularly tied to the attributes of a tourism destination.

In addition, pull aspects are emerged as the "attractiveness of a destination, escape seeking, relationship" to prominent understand the actual destination choice (Wang et al., 2020; Zhang & Lam, 1999); and push "cost, knowledge, novelty, natural and historical sight" are referred to as important pull motivations (Lin et al., 2010; Zhang & Lam, 1999) to meet the desired needs of tourist. Thus, the current study and previous papers were different based on push and pull motivation aspects' classifications which is in agreement with the study of Said & Maryono (2018); Zhang & Lam (1999) supported that the importance of push - pull motivation framework can be different for tourists from different cities, provinces, countries as well as different from the identification and approaches. In summary, the present study attempts to fill the research gaps between the current study in pull- push measurements and previous study of Salsabila & Alversia (2020), has an importance contribution to identify the differences in push and pull dimensions. Therefore, the current study aims to evaluate and validate push (that is cost, knowledge, novelty, natural and historical sight) factors and pull (that is an attractiveness, escape, relationship) factors, which were supported by Ramazannejad et al., (2021), influencing the destination choice behavior based on the pointview of domestic tourist travelling Ho Chi Minh city, Viet Nam. Therefore, four research hypotheses on the relationships among latent variables within a new model were proposed in this study:

H_6: Pull positively and significantly impacts on attitude.
H_7: Push positively and significantly impacts on attitude.
H_8: Pull positively and significantly impacts on visit intention.
H_9: Push is positively and significantly related to visiting intention.

1.3. Destination image

Hosany et al., (2006) were the first to use the term "destination image" as the set of particular characteristics of a tourist in relation to a tourism destination. Weaver & Lawton (2010) defined the destination image as the overall collection of beliefs, attitudes, ideas, feelings, emotions , and impressions that a tourist holds towards a destination or its attributes. Huang et al., (2018) identified two main constructs within the image of a tourism destination. Similarly, Sultan et al., (2021) found that the holistic image of a tourism destination encompasses both cognitive destination image and affective destination image. Cognitive dimensions which can be referred to as beliefs, feelings, and knowledge regarding the physical aspects of a tourism destination (Baloglu & McClearly, 1999); each tourism destination may have its distinctly different set of cognitive destination image targeting specific markets (Huang et al., 2018), and affective dimensions which can be interpreted as the emotional perception and evaluation of the destination's features, attributes, and overall atmosphere (Baloglu & McClearly, 1999). Previous researchers have measured the image of a tourism destination using various constructs, including cognitive destination image, affective destination image, and conative image dimensions (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). However, Králiková et al., (2020) claimed that the conative component is referred to be analogous to tourist behavior. Thus, the interaction between cognitive destination image and affective image constructs forms the overall image of a tourism destination, which can be considered as the third aspect in the literature (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). Additionally, Nunthiphatprueksa (2017) claimed that image of a tourism destination is closely tied to tourist attitudes toward the destination, while subjective norms, and perceptions of control over behavioral performance have no significant impact. Therefore, the present study focuses on examining the relationship between destination image and the likelihood of visitation, in turn leading to increase destination choice behavior.

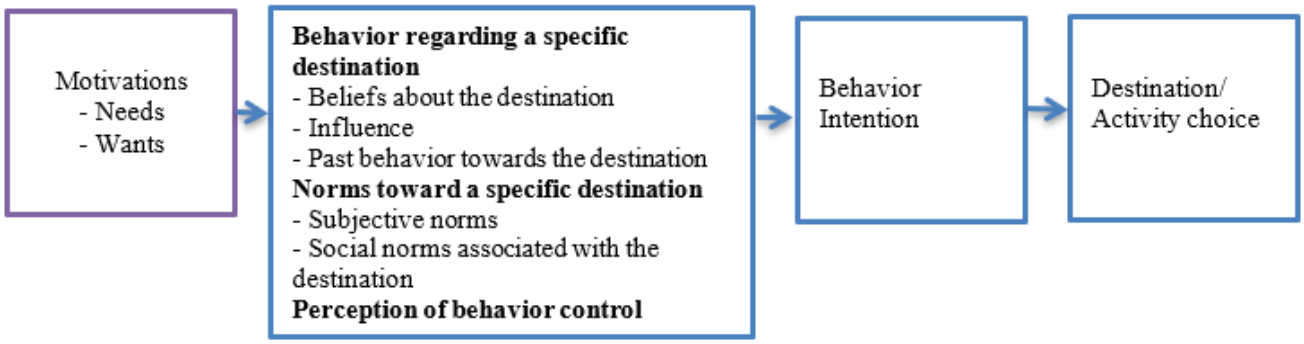
Phillips & Jang (2017) found that a positive image has a significant positive impact on the intention to visit, while a negative image has a negative effect on visit intention. Lee (2009) point out that tourists generally hold a positive perception of a tourism destination's image , which increases their intent to visit tourist attractions. Additionally, it is impossible to prove conclusively that image of a tourism destination and tourist motivation increase the visit intention (Phillips & Jang, 2017; Soliman, 2019). In general, the concept of destination image encompasses the overall perception of a tourist destination, incorporating both cognitive destination image and affective destination image dimensions; the formation of this image has been postulated to influence various tourist behavior variables (Ragab et al., 2020; Tasci, 2007). Therefore, a research hypotheses on the relationships among latent variables within a new model were proposed in this study:

H_{10}: Destination Image positively and significantly impacts on visit intention.

1.4. Proposed model and hypotheses

Research on travel motivation, tourist attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and emotions plays a crucial role in understanding tourist decision-making. This understanding empowers the hospitality and tourism industry to cater to tourist needs more effectively by offering suitable products and services. Previous research has explored the interrelationships between tourist motivations and destination choices, as demonstrated in the study of Bright (2008). However, this study proposes a new research model (presented in Figure 2) that builds upon this foundation. This new model integrates previously mentioned constructs (pull motivation, push motivation, and destination image) within the established Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework. By integrating these elements, the model is expected to offer deeper insights into tourist decision-making processes. This can lead to a more accurate prediction of destination choices for holiday trips to Ho Chi Minh City.

Figure 1: **Model of motivation–destination choice relationship**

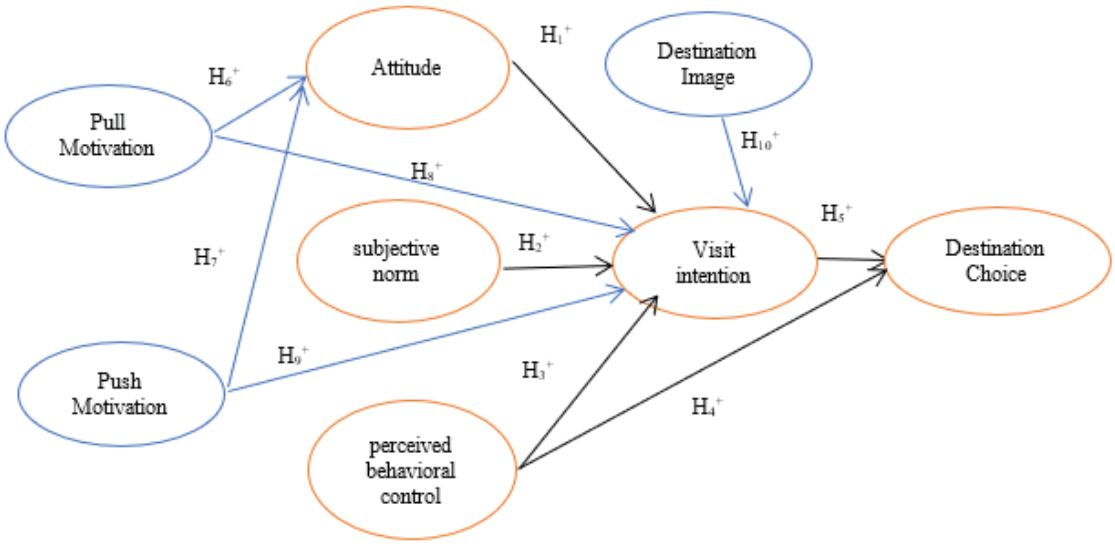


Source: Bright, 2008

Figure 1 illustrates a well-established model of the relationship between tourist motivations, including needs and wants, and situation-specific factors, such as feelings, attitudes towards behavior, and beliefs, has been widely investigated (Bright, 2008). Hanqin & Lam (1999) further emphasize that a tourist's overall attitude towards the key attributes of a tourism destination can serve as a measure of its ability to attract tourists. Chien et al., (2012) affirmed that both push and pull factors play a role in determining visit intention behavior. Hsu et al., (2009) postulated that tourists feeling and belief of pull- push motivational factors are used to refer to a determinant of affective dimension of the tourist attitude. Su (2018); Salsabila & Alversia (2020) concluded that both pull and push elements directly impact attitude toward visiting Ho Chi Minh City.

Building on this foundation, this study proposes a new model (Figure 2) that incorporates both push and pull motivations alongside a holistic destination image concept within the TPB framework. The study has two primary objectives. Firstly, the present study aims to investigate whether incorporating pull motivation, push motivation, and destination image constructs into the original Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework can offer new insights into predicting destination choice behavior for a holiday trip to Ho Chi Minh city. Secondly, the study seeks to develop a new research model (Figure 2) that integrates the pull motivation, push motivation, and destination image constructs, with the purpose of deepening our insights into tourists' decision-making processes.

Figure 2: **the research framework**



Source: author, 2021

In summary, the addition of push-pull motivation and a holistic image of the tourism destination to the original theory of planned behavior framework enhances the predictability of destination choice behavior by providing a more comprehensive perspective.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Research Design

The utilization of the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method in the present study is motivated by its ability to promote high quality in research, explain an outcome of interest, and identify relationships among variables (Hair et al., 2017). Considering the study's objective to assess and validate destination choice behavior using the complex and novel M-TPB-D model, PLS-SEM is well-suited for this purpose. Furthermore, a combination of quantitative approach and qualitative method into tourism studies will provide a prominent understanding of the research phenomenon or behavior under investigation (Hossain, 2013; Ragab et al., 2020).

First, the qualitative method is conducted through focus group discussions involving domestic tourists visiting 5 tourist sites in Ho Chi Minh City. The purpose of these discussions was to gather in-depth insights and perspectives from domestic tourist regarding destination choice behavior. After fully explanation of the study's purpose and objectives, the research succefully recruited 10 volunteer respondents who contributed to refining the measurement scales, completing a survey questionnaire, and ensuring the robustness of all constructs.

According to the Burn & Bush (1995) formula, the recommended sample size for this study was determined to be 385 respondents, considering a confidence level of approximately 95% or a p-value of 0.05. Therefore, the study indicated that a minimum sample size of 385 respondents would be appropriate. A pilot survey was conducted with 38 domestic tourists who visited Ho Chi Minh City between April and June 2021. This pilot, using a sample size of approximately 10% of the target sample size as suggested by Wang et al., (2019), aimed to assess and validate the reliability and validity of the measurement constructs in the questionnaire. The survey employed a face-to-face interview technique, taking advantage of the ease of access to respondents in Ho Chi Minh City. Following the pilot test, minor adjustments were made to the completed survey based on the feedback received. The finalized survey questionnaire has been used in the present study consisting of items as shown in table 1.

Second, the data collection in this study employed purposive sampling due to the challenges associated with identifying a sampling frame (Leo et al., 2020). It is worth noting that the disadvantage of purposive samples is similar to convenience sampling (Andrade, 2021). Purposive sampling, as a non-probability sampling technique, empowers researchers to strategically achieve their objectives (Hair et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2019). Furthermore, Etikan et al., (2016) suggested that convenience sampling can be utilized in both qualitative and quantitative studies. Consequently, convenience sampling, a type of purposive sampling, was employed in this study. In conclusion, empirical data for this study was successfully collected using the convenience sampling method at the end of the trip to Ho Chi Minh city, with 630 domestic tourists voluntarily participating in the survey. The quantitative data was collected by the convenient sampling with the coordinated of the tour guides who distributed paper-and-pencil questionnaires to the domestic tourists at the end of their trip to Ho Chi Minh City. The tour guides explained the purpose of the survey to the participants, and the respondents voluntarily completed the questionnaires. A total of 630 surveys were collected, but 171 were identified as incomplete and excluded from the analysis. This resulted in a final sample size of 459 usable questionnaires, representing a response rate of 72.85%. Hair et al. (2010, 2017) suggest that this sample size is sufficient for analysis using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, this research design provides a comprehensive understanding of domestic tourist choice behavior in Ho Chi Minh City

2.2. Scales of the study

A survey questionnaire was conducted to collect personal responses from domestic travelers to Ho Chi Minh City. The questionnaires were divided into two parts: The first part of the survey questionnaire was about participant's demographic characteristics consisting of age groups, tourist's gender, educational level. The second part of the questionnaire included items that were adapted from previous research studies. Specifically, four items on tourist attitude were adapted from the research of Liu (2019); Salsabila & Alversia (2020). Five items on subjective norms were developed based on the studies of Abbasi et al., (2021); AL Ziadat (2015); Ngoc Diep Su (2018); Phetvaroon (2006). The observable items used to establish the perception of behavioral control were adopted from Abbasi et al., (2021); Su (2018); Phetvaroon (2006); Soliman (2019), and comprised four items. Four items on visit intention was adopted from the research of AL Ziadat (2015); Byon & Zhang (2010); Winarta et al., (2017). Destination choice behavior was measured using four items was adopted from the previous study of Ahmad (2108); Gallarza et al., (2013); Kim et al., (2016). Four items on the overall image of the destination were adapted from the previous research of Aunalal et al., (2017); Sultan et al., (2021); Tosun et al., (2015). The observable items to establish pull motivations was adopted from Al Jahwari (2015); Ramazannejad et al., (2021), Salsabila & Alversia (2020), and comprised four items. Four items on push motivation that was adapted form Liu (2019); Phillips & Jang (2007), Ramazannejad et al., (2021). All items

in the second part of the questionnaire were directly measured using a five-point Likert scale, where participants indicated their level of agreement, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (see table 1). This approach aimed to obtain higher reliability coefficients (Wang et al., 2022). Based on the high loadings observed in table 1, which ranged from 0.775 to 0.916, a strong causal relationship between the variables was indicated. Consequently, the study determined that these items chosen for each construct adequately measured the variables with accuracy.

Table 1: **Measurement scales and literature sources**

Code	Measurement scales	Original Sources	Outer loading
Pull Motivation (Pull)			
PULL1	Reasonably priced goods and services in Ho Chi Minh City	Al Jahwari (2015); Ramazannejad et al., (2021); Salsabila & Alversia (2020)	0.841
PULL2	I traveled because the local people are friendly	Ramazannejad et al., (2021); Salsabila & Alversia (2020)	0.889
PULL3	I traveled because this city has natural scenery and a beautiful landscape	Ramazannejad et al., (2021); Salsabila & Alversia (2020)	0.832
PULL4	I traveled because this city offers a variety of local culture	Ramazannejad, et al., (2021); Salsabila & Alversia (2020)	0.890
Push Motivation (Push)			
PUSH1	I traveled to experience new and different lifestyles in the city	Phillips & Jang (2007), Ramazannejad et al., (2021),	0.859
PUSH2	I traveled to escape from my daily routine when visiting the city	Phillips & Jang (2007), Ramazannejad et al., (2021),	0.868
PUSH3	I am ready to share my trip to Ho Chi Minh City with my friends or family after returning home	Liu (2019)	0.842
PUSH4	Visiting Ho Chi Minh City would create a memorable trip for my friends or family	Liu (2019)	0.786
Attitude			
ATT1	I believe that visiting Ho Chi Minh City at this time is the best option	Liu (2019)	0.874
ATT2	I think that visiting Ho Chi Minh City at this time is pleasant	Liu (2019)	0.889
ATT3	I consider visiting Ho Chi Minh City at this time to be valuable	Liu (2019)	0.867
ATT4	Traveling to Ho Chi Minh City fills me with excitement	Salsabila & Alversia (2020)	0.852
Subjective Norm (subnorm)			
SN1	My family and friends support my decision to travel to Ho Chi Minh City	Phetvaroon (2006)	0.794
SN2	The decision to visit Ho Chi Minh City would be influenced by the opinions and perspectives of those who hold great importance in my life	Abbasi et al., (2021)	0.885
SN3	The positive reviews from significant people in my life influence my desire to visit Ho Chi Minh City	Su (2018)	0.874
SN4	People who influence my behavior have expressed their intention to visit Ho Chi Minh City at least once in the future.	AL Ziadat (2015)	0.796
Perceived Behaviors Control (PBC)			
PBC1	I have sufficient time and financial resources to travel to this city	Abbasi et al., (2021)	0.809
PBC2	I could easily travel to this city from now on	Phetvaroon (2006)	0.856
PBC3	I have opportunities to travel to this city	Soliman (2019)	0.836
PBC4	There is nothing preventing me from making the decision to take a holiday trip to Ho Chi Minh City	Su (2018)	0.811

Code	Measurement scales	Original Sources	Outer loading
Visit Intention (Intent)			
VI1	I am most likely to travel to Ho Chi Minh City soon.	Byon & Zhang (2010);	0.855
VI2	I am highly likely to recommend Ho Chi Minh City to my friends who want to visit	Byon & Zhang (2010);	0.845
VI3	I am willing to visit Ho Chi Minh City more frequently	AL Ziadat (2015)	0.853
VI4	I have plans to visit Ho Chi Minh City again.	Winarta et al., (2017)	0.867
Destination Image (DIMAGE)			
DI1	Ho Chi Minh City is known for its favorable environmental conditions	Sultan et al., (2021)	0.832
DI2	The local communities in Ho Chi Minh City are welcoming and hospitable to tourists.	Aunalal et al., (2017)	0.864
DI3	The local residents in Ho Chi Minh City are open-minded and welcoming to tourist	Tosun et al., (2015); Aunalal et al., (2017)	0.868
DI4	Ho Chi Minh City will be a suitable choice for a vacation.	Sultan et al., (2021)	0.844
Destination Choice (Dchoice)			
DC1	My decision choice to take the trip to Ho Chi Minh city was the right one.	Ahmad (2108)	0.775
DC2	I am really pleased with my decision to travel to Ho Chi Minh city, including optional excursions	Ahmad (2108)	0.916
DC3	I am confident that I made the correct choice by selecting	Gallarza et al., (2013)	0.890
DC4	I am determined to make a significant effort to travel to Ho Chi Minh City soon	Kim et al., (2016)	0.897

Source: author, 2021

3. DATA ANALYSES AND RESULTS

3.1. Descriptive analysis

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of domestic tourists to Ho Chi Minh City as obtained from a survey, encompassing information on age groups, gender, and educational background.

Table 2: **Respondents' characteristics**

	Characteristics	Frequency	Percent	Skewness	Kurtosis
Gender	Male	218	47.5	-0.101	-1.999
	Female	241	52.5		
Age	18 - 22	57	12.4	0.492	0.226
	22-35	153	33.3		
	36-49	189	41.2		
	49-62	29	6.3		
	> 62	31	6.8		
Education Level	Secondary Education	29	6.3	-0.587	-0.310
	Vocational/Technical Education	73	15.9		
	Undergraduate Education	129	28.1		
	Bachelor	201	43.8		
	Other	27	5.9		

Source: author, 2021

The study sample comprised slightly more females (52.5%) than males (47.5%). The respondents ranged in age from 36 to 49 years old. Notably, a significant proportion (approximately 43.8%) of the respondents, who were primarily middle-aged domestic tourists visiting Ho Chi Minh City, held a bachelor's degree, indicating a high level of education within this group.

These demographic characteristics hold critical implications for developing targeted tourism marketing strategies. Regarding the assessment of data normality, Byrne (2010) and Hair et al., (2010) suggest evaluating skewness within the range of -2 to +2 and kurtosis within the range of -7 to +7 to determine normality. According to table 2, the data in this study exhibited normality, as the skewness values ranged from -0.101 to 0.492, and the kurtosis values ranged from -1.991 to +0.226. This suggests that the data distribution is relatively symmetrical and does not deviate significantly from a normal distribution.

3.2. Analysis of results

The scale reliability can be evaluated by Cronbach's Alpha (α), composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). The results of the PLS-SEM analysis of overall measurement model indicated that composite reliability values (CR), Cronbach's Alpha coefficient should exceed 0.70; and AVE should exceed the minimum threshold of 0.50 respectively. These findings confirm the reliability and convergent validity of the measurement model (Hair et al., 2019). The results demonstrate that all factor loadings are acceptable, exceeding 0.700 (Henseler et al., 2016). Cronbach's Alpha is found to be greater than 0.847, indicating good internal consistency, and the composite reliability values for all constructs exceed 0.897. Additionally, the minimum average variance extracted values were level of 0.686, which is greater than the accepted minimum value of 0.50 but lower than the values of CR and each variable (Hair et al., 2010; Henseler et al., 2015). In other words, the results shown in table 3 stands for the reliability was supported respectively. Therefore, the current study concluded that the indicators for all eight constructs were adequate in terms of the proposed model, and the convergent validity of each measurement scale is supported and accepted.

Table 3: **Composite Reliability**

	Cronbach's Alpha	**Composite Reliability**	**AVE**	**ASV**	**MSV**
Attitude	0.893	0.926	0.758	0.670	0.281
DChoice	0.893	0.926	0.759	0.528	0.605
DIMAGE	0.874	0.914	0.726	0.684	0.197
Intent	0.877	0.916	0.731	0.658	0.360
PBC	0.847	0.897	0.686	0.628	0.605
PULL	0.886	0.921	0.746	0.693	0.151
PUSH	0.860	0.905	0.705	0.670	0.281
SUBNORM	0.859	0.904	0.703	0.675	0.249

Note: Dchoice: Destination Choice; DIMAGE: destination image; SUBNORM: Subjective norms, Intent: Intention, PBC: Perceived Behaviors Control
Source: author, 2021

Composite reliability (CR) values that exceed the minimum requirement of 0.70 indicate good reliability. The assessment of discriminant validity using the PLS-SEM approach is presented in table 4. Both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotriat ratio of the correlations are widely used measures of discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). The first discriminant validity criterion, based on Fornell-Lacker criterion, is achieved when the square root of AVE values for each dimension (bold numbers in the diagonal) is greater than their corresponding correlation coefficients of the other construct loadings (off-diagonal elements) in the same column and row (Fornell & Larker, 1981). This indicates that the measurement scales have good reliability and discriminant validity. In the present study, table 4 confirms that the square root values of the AVE are higher than the off-diagonal elements. Additionally, table 3 reveals that discriminant validity is further supported by comparing the AVE values of each latent construct to the maximum shared variance (MSV) and average shared variance (ASV) values (Hair et al., 2017). Overall, the establishment of discriminant validity is supported in the current study.

Table 4: **Discriminant Validity**

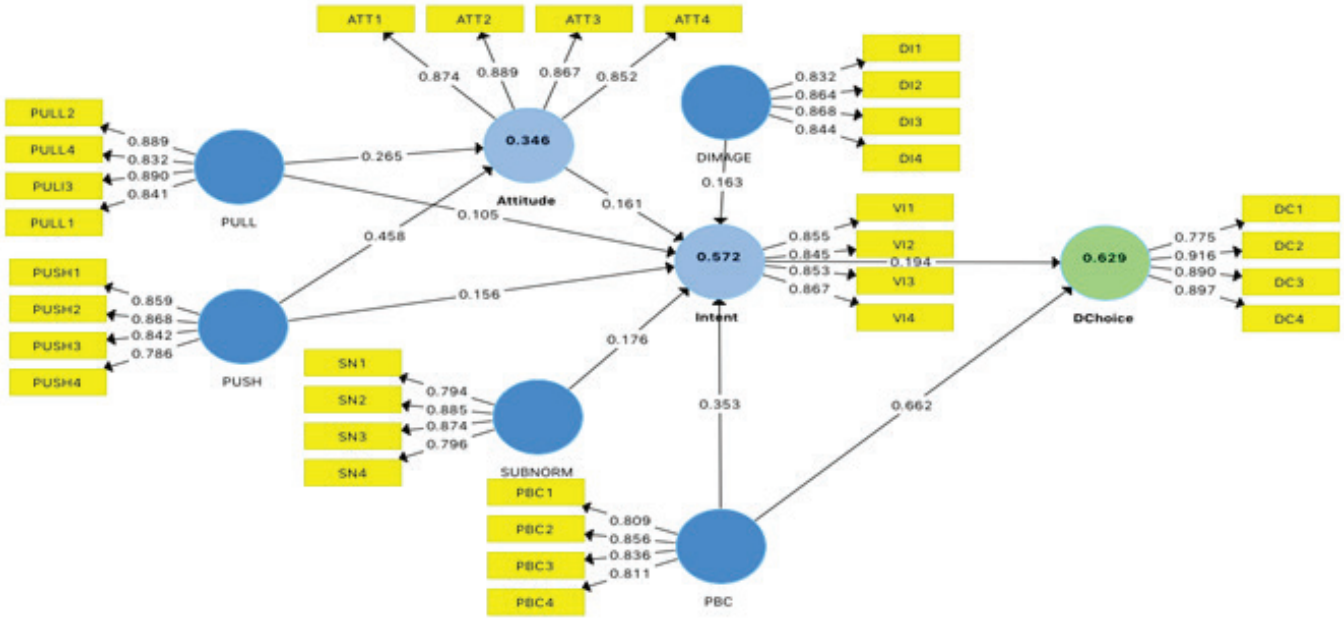
	Attitude	**DChoice**	**DIMAGE**	**Intent**	**PBC**	**PULL**	**PUSH**	**SUBNORM**
Attitude	**0.870**							
DChoice	0.216	**0.871**						
DIMAGE	0.296	0.235	**0.852**					
Intent	0.502	0.591	0.444	**0.855**				
PBC	0.323	0.778	0.264	0.600	**0.828**			
PULL	0.389	0.372	0.209	0.392	0.329	**0.864**		
PUSH	0.530	0.206	0.333	0.500	0.314	0.270	**0.839**	
SUBNORM	0.313	0.362	0.377	0.499	0.384	0.179	0.368	**0.839**

Note: Dchoice: Destination Choice; DIMAGE: destination image; SUBNORM: Subjective norms, Intent: Intention, PBC: Perceived Behaviors Control
Source: author, 2021

Due to the unreliability of the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loading criterion in reliably detecting a lack of discriminant validity in common research scenarios, the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations criterion was applied to evaluate and validate discriminant validity (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019; Henseler et al., 2015). The second validity criterion can be achieved when the HTMT is below 0.900, validity of discriminant has been demonstrated the relationship between two reflective constructs (Henseler et al., 2015), meaning that validity of discriminant could be an issue when the values of HTMT are higher than 0.900 (Muskat et al., 2019). Table 4 displays that all values are below the cutoff value of 0.900, which is considered acceptable. This indicates that all variables and constructs in this study exhibit both validity and reliability (Henseler et al., 2015). Consequently, the validation of the new conceptual model confirms its validity. This allows for the evaluation of both the model's predictive power and the interrelationships among the variables (constructs), as depicted in Figure 3

Furthermore, the R^2 values of each endogenous latent variable, namely 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25, are commonly interpreted as indicating substantial positive, moderate positive, and weak effects, respectively respectively (Hair, et al., 2017). In this study, the coefficient of determination (R^2) value for the variables of tourist attitude, visit intention, and destination choice behavior are found to be 62.9%, 57.2%, and 34.6% respectively. Consequently, the value of R^2 in this study fall within the range of substantial positive to moderate positive effects. The results of R^2 in Figure 3 show that 62.9% of destination choice behavior is significantly influenced by push and pull motivation, and the overall image of the tourism destination. Moreover, 57.2% of visit intention is significantly influenced by push and pull motivation, destination image, tourist attitude toward behavior, subjective norm and self-efficacy belief. Finally, 34.6% of behavior attitude can be explained by pull motivation and push motivation. The adjusted R^2 demonstrates that 62.7% of the variation in destination choice behavior can be explained by the new M-TPB-D model. This finding further confirms the satisfactory coefficient of determination in the current study, providing strong support for the proposed research model.

Figure 3: **Results of the proposed model**



Note: Dchoice: Destination Choice; DIMAGE: destination image; SUBNORM: Subjective norms, Intent: Intention, PBC: Perceived Behaviors Control
Source: author, 2021

Table 5 summarizes the results of hypothesis testing. Firstly, the suggested hypothesis were tested by running a bootstrapping method with 5000 resamples was applied (Hair et al., 2017). Second, Path analysis was used to evaluate and validate the complex proposed hypotheses. As depicted in Figure 3, the path diagram of the structural model, and in table 5, all hypotheses were supported at a statistical significance level of 0.05. The path coefficients (β) values are provided in table 5 below.

Table 5 demonstrates that the causal relationship between behavior attitude and the likelihood to visit is supported by H_1^+ (β=0.161, t=3.037, p=0.000). H_2^+ proposes that subjective norms has a contribution to the visit intention, which is supported (β= 0.176, t= 3.680, p=0.000). H_3^+ suggestes that perceived behavior control has a significantly influence on the willingness to visit, which is supported (β=0.353, t=7.522, p=0.000). H_4^+ postulates that perceived behavior control has a positive contribution to the destination choice behavior, which is supported (β=0.730, t=8.833, p=0.000). H_5^+ hypothesizes that visit inention has a significantly and positively influence on destination choice, which is supported (β=0.194, t= 3.587, p= 0.000). H_6^+ hypothesizes that pull motivation has a significantly effect on behavior attitude, which is supported (β=0.265, t=5.755, p= 0.000). H_7^+ posits that push motivation has a positively and significantly contribution to tourist attitude toward behavior, which is supported (β= 0.458, t= 9.531, p=0.000). H_8^+ posits that pull motivation has a positively and significantly effect on visit intention, which is accepted (β= 0.148, t= 3.760, p=0.000). H_9^+ suggests that push motivation has a positive and significant effect on the likelihood to visit, which is supported (β=0.230, t=5.461, p=0.000). H_{10}^+ ndicates a significantly positive correlation between destination image and visit intention, which is confirmed (β=0.163, t=3.961, p=0.000). In summary, the path coefficients and p-values

of each hypothesis from H_1 to H_{10} a were obtained from the data analysis, signifying that all ten hypotheses are significantly validated. Consequently, the new M-TPB-D model, which influences destination choice, is strongly confirmed.

Table 5: **Hypothesis Testing**

Hypothesis		β	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
H_1	**Attitude-> Intent**	0.161	0.053	3.037	0.003	Support
H_{10}	**DIMAGE-> Intent**	0.163	0.041	3.961	0.000	Support
H_5	**Intent-> DChoice**	0.194	0.054	3.587	0.000	Support
H_4	**PBC-> DChoice**	0.730	0.039	18.833	0.000	Support
H_3	**PBC-> Intent**	0.353	0.047	7.522	0.000	Support
H_6	**PULL-> Attitude**	0.265	0.046	5.755	0.000	Support
H_8	**PULL-> Intent**	0.148	0.039	3.760	0.000	Support
H_7	**PUSH-> Attitude**	0.458	0.048	9.531	0.000	Support
H_9	**PUSH-> Intent**	0.230	0.042	5.461	0.000	Support
H_2	**SUBNORM-> Intent**	0.176	0.048	3.680	0.000	Support

Source: author, 2021

The presence of multicollinearity among the independent variables in the structural model was evaluated by considering the inner VIF values for each construct. Multicollinearity is examined through variance inflation factors (VIF) and the tolerance. Multicollinearity is considered to exist when the VIF exceeds the threshold of 4.0 or when the tolerance values fall below 0.2 (Hair et al., 2010). The Collinearity Statistics (inner VIF values) of all constructs in the structural model had the values less than the threshold of value 4.0 shows that multicollinearity does not necessarily exist among the independent variables. Table 6 presents the results, showing that the inner VIF values for variables such as tourist attitude toward behavior, subjective norm, perception of behavior control, overall image of the tourism destination, push motivation, pull motivation, and intention to visit ranged from 1.079 to 1.56, which further confirms the absence of multicollinearity in the current structural model (Hair et al., 2017). The findings of this study suggest that the M-TPB-D model serves as a new conceptual framework, providing novel insights into predicting destination choice behavior.

Table 6: **The Collinearity Statistics**

	Attitude	DChoice	**Intent**
Attitude			1.578
DIMAGE			1.258
Intent		1.561	
PBC		1.561	1.323
PULL	1.079		1.255
PUSH	1.079		1.534
SUBNORM			1.369

Source: author, 2021

4. DISCUSSION

The study's major findings revealed that all the constructs used in the current study, including pull-push motivation and the overall image of the tourism destination, made positive and significant contributions to destination choice behavior. The study also identified research gaps in the existing literature and provided support for all proposed hypotheses. The following significant points are discussed based on the above analysis results.

First, the study found a positive and significant relationship between perception of behavior control and destination choice behavior, which was the strongest hypothesis in the model with a path coefficient of 0.730 at a significance level of 0.05. Additionally, the relationship between perceived behavior control or self-efficacy belief and willingness to visit was also positively and significantly supported in the model with a path coefficient of 0.353 at a significance level of 0.05. Furthermore, the study indicated that visit intention positively influenced destination choice behavior of domestic tourists with a path coefficient of 0.194 at a significance level of 0.05. This finding contradicts the study by Dolnicar et al., (2017) , which claimed that the causal relationship between the likelihood to visit and actual behavior is not clear and not a significant predictor of behavior. However, the present study's results are consistent with the findings of AL Ziadat (2015), Tarawneh et al., (2020), Wang et al., (2019), who claimed the causal relationship between perception of behavior control, visit intention, and acutal destination choice behavior.

Second, the study found a positive and significant relationship between push motivation and tourist attitude toward behavior, which was a strong hypothesis in the model with a path coefficient of 0.458 at a significance level of 0.05. This finding is consistent with the studies of Su (2018), Salsabila & Alversia (2020), which also supported the positive relationship between push motivation and the likelihood to visit. However, the study found a contrasting result with the study by Salsabila & Alversia (2020) regarding the relationship between pull motivation and tourist attitude toward behavior, which showed a significant path coefficient of 0.265 at a significance level of 0.05. Thus, the study concluded that both pull and push factors play a significant role in driving and influencing destination choice behavior.

Third, the study's results supported the hypothesis of H_1^+; H_2^+; H_3^+, H_5^+ and H_{10}^+ are consistent with the study by Wang et al., (2019) who claimed that likelihood to visit is positively influenced by tourist attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, and self-efficacy belief, leading to increased destination choice behavior. The findings also align with the study by Phillips & Jang (2017), which highlighted the positive impact of the destination's image on visit intention. However, Lam & Hsu (2006) indicated that tourist attitude does not influence the likelihood to visit, and subjective norms do not influence visit intention. These findings contrast with the study by Salsabila & Alversia (2020). Nonetheless, the present study supported the significance of overall image of the tourism destination, tourist attitude behavior, and subjective norm were significantly predictors of visit intention, which is in consistent with the research of Lee (2009). In summary, the current study claimed that the reference from friends, relatives enhances the likelihood to visit, and a positive perception of travel activities increases the likelihood to visit and leads to increased destination choice behavior.

5. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The study's major findings address research gaps and have theoretical and practical implications for the local government and tourism industry in Ho Chi Minh City. The study introduces a new M-TPB-D model for local authorities, providing a better understanding of domestic tourists' behavior and contributing to the development of effective marketing strategies. The empirical findings of the study contribute novel insights into domestic tourists' destination choice behavior. The study's new findings suggest that local authorities must create an exciting destination image and foster positive motivation among tourists to enhance the likelihood of visiting a specific destination. The image of the destination is considered as a fundamental marketing strategy, and the local goverment could adopted various attributes of the culture and natural resource characteristics to enahance the motivations and to attract more domestic tourists in the marketing strategy. The study's results make a valuable contribution to the tourism marketing literature by integrating the destination image, pull-push motivation, and TPB model into one empirical framework, which has not been fully examined in previous research. Additionally, the study expands the implementation of pull-push motivation and the destination image for branding and positioning strategies in the tourism industry of Ho Chi Minh City. Furthermore, the new M-TPB-D model provides comprehension of tourists' decision-making process when selecting destinations. Consequently, the findings indicate that tourism marketing managers and local governments could focus on effective marketing strategies to build the image of Ho Chi Minh city as the first choice for holiday vacations.

6. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The findings of the current research demonstrate the potential of the new M-TPB-D model to influence destination choice behavior. However, it is important to note certain limitations of the study. Firstly, the evaluation of destination choice behavior was solely based on the perspectives of domestic tourists, and the primary data collection was conducted from April to June 2021 in Ho Chi Minh City. Therefore, the study results may not be generalized to all cities in Vietnam, and they may not capture variations in destination choice behavior during different seasons. Further research should investigate in different period with the vary seasons, and expand the research to other cities to establish a more robust M-TPB-D model. Additionally, other data selection method to enhance the validity of this study as well to improve the sampling reliability of the study.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the present study employed non-probability sampling using the purposive sampling technique to select domestic tourists in Ho Chi Minh City. While this sampling method was convenient, it may introduce biases and restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research could consider using other survey techniques to gain a more comprehensive understanding of domestic tourists' destination choice behavior.

Moreover, the data collection method in this study relied on gathering primary data through tour guides, which may have introduced limitations. Further research could explore other survey methods to better explain and comprehend domestic tourists' destination choice behavior. Additionally, it would be beneficial to compare and contrast destination choice behavior between domestic tourists and inbound tourists to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that there may be other factors that can affect destination choice behavior. Further research would also consider incorporating other latent variables constructs to gain further insights into the complexities of tourist destination choice behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study successfully developed and validated the M-TPB-D model for an insight into predicting destination choice of domestic tourist which is consistent with the study of Bright (2018). The new M-TPB-D model integrates the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), pull-push motivation theory, and the overall image of the destination variables. The findings of this study support the relationships proposed in the model and contribute to both theoretical and practical implications in the context of tourism destinations.

Importantly, when comparing these results with existing literature on destination choice behavior in the Asia-Pacific area, both consistencies and differences were found. While Lam & Hsu (2006) did not find an influence of tourist attitude on travel intention in a Taiwanese sample, and Salsabila & Alversia (2020) found no significant impact of subjective norms on travel intention in an Indonesian sample. On the other hand, Zhou et al. (2023) found that attitudes and subjective norms did not have a significant impact on behavioral intentions in a Chinese sample, but in a South Korean sample, all three TPB dimensions had a positive impact on behavioral intention. These findings highlight the importance of considering cultural and regional variations in tourist decision-making. The study's findings suggest that the M-TPB-D model provides a more comprehensive understanding of domestic tourist decision-making by capturing a broader range of influencing factors. The broader range of factors captured by the M-TPB-D model, such as pull-push motivation and the overall image of the destination, influences destination choice behavior. The study confirmed positive interrelationships among the variables in the model. The study also found that the M-TPB-D model effectively explains destination choice behavior from the perspective of domestic tourists in the context of tourism destinations. Another important finding was that pull-push motivation, tourist attitude toward a destination, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and overall image of the destination significantly and positively influenced the likelihood to visit and ultimately led to increased destination choice behavior. These findings provide valuable insights into visit intention and destination choice behavior in Ho Chi Minh City. Moreover, the research methodology and the major findings of this study are considered acceptable and valuable for researchers studying destination choice behavior in the tourism field. However, it is important to note that factors influencing destination choice behavior may vary across different research and destination contexts, as evidenced by the differences found when comparing the study's results with previous literature. Overall, this study contributes to the understanding of destination choice behavior and offers practical implications for tourism destinations. Further research can build upon this work by incorporating additional variables and investigating destination choice behavior in different contexts, thereby expanding the sample and enhancing the understanding of the complex decision-making processes of tourists.

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