Factors Affecting Tourist Destination Choice: The Case of Destinations in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

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Abstract

This study identifies the determinants for tourists of Ho Chi Minh City (HCM City) as a travel destination. From a qualitative perspective, two groups (ten domestic and eight foreign tourists) were interviewed. Quantitatively, input data were obtained from 615 tourists who visited HCM City between October 2023 and February 2024. Factors affecting destination choice included tourism motivation, destination image, and information source. Destination image had the most significant influence followed by tourism motivation, while source of information had an important indirect impact. Based on the research findings policy implications are proposed to increase HCM City's attractiveness as a tourist destination.

Keywords: *Tourist's Destination Choice, Ho Chi Minh City (HCM City), Vietnam, Tourism Motivation, Information Source*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism makes an important contribution to economic restructuring, enhances state budget revenue, attracts investment capital, exports products to various countries, and embellishes historical and cultural values. It is unsurprising therefore that all countries are interested in developing their tourism industry and consider tourism a key economic sector. The topic of tourist destination selection has subsequently received much attention from researchers worldwide. Among them, the studies of Woodside and Lysonski (1989), Um and Crompton (1990), Keating and Kriz (2008), Wu (2009), Mutinda and Mayaka (2012) have notably focused on studying the process of how tourism destinations are chosen, and the factors influencing tourists' destination choice.

While a number of studies focusing on tourist destination choice have been carried out in Vietnam (Thuy, 2010; Van, 2012; Tam & Quyen, 2012), these studies have generally focused on analysing the competitiveness or destination image of a location, and have not meaningfully explored the destination choices of tourists.

In the view of a significant number of international experts, Vietnam possesses many advantages and holds great potential for the development of its tourism industry. Vietnam's tourism industry has subsequently been identified as one of the nation's key economic sectors for many years, with HCM City fulfilling the role of pioneer in this respect. However, in comparison to other countries in this region with similar potential as Vietnam, such as Thailand and Malaysia, the number of international visitors to Vietnam and HCM City in particular, remains very modest. This disparity sheds light on the practical necessity of a study that deeply explores the determinants of HCM City as a destination choice for tourists. This study provides a scientific basis for strategic planning of the development of the Vietnamese tourism industry, and practical solutions for attracting tourists to Vietnam in general, and HCM City in particular going forward.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

There have been a number of important research studies on tourists' destination choices so far.

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Woodside and Lysonski (1989) proposed a general model of the tourist's destination selection process, arguing that the destination choice decision is the consequence of a cognitive process that leads to love, creating a special interest among many destinations. This preference is affected by travellers' impressions of different destinations as well as their feelings about them, while the decision itself is also influenced by the values, motivations, and attitudes of tourists, the impact of promotional strategies and the initial impression obtained of the various locations that are deemed adequate to produce positive, negative, or neutral affective effects.

Um and Crompton (1990) investigated the role of perceptions and attitudes in tourists' destination choices and proposed that the destination selection process has two stages. The first stage is to form the thought of whether or not to take a trip; the second stage is to select a destination after having decided to take a trip. Um and Crompton (1990) built a model of tourists' destination choices based on an analysis of external and internal influencing factors. Internal inputs are derived from tourists' sociopsychological characteristics, including personal characteristics (sociodemographic, personality, lifestyle, and situational factors), values, motives, and attitudes. External inputs include marketing communications and social interactions that can be divided into social, symbolic, and significative stimuli (past travel experiences, advertising materials, and word-of-mouth tactics).

Um and Crompton (1990) held similar views to those of Woodside and Lysonski (1989) with regard to the central role of destination perception in the final destination selection process. Destination perception is itself influenced by external factors, such as promotional communication activities (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989); stimulant factors, including marketing communication activities, experiences, and references from friends and relatives; as well as tourists' own internal psychosocial factors.

Keating and Kriz (2008) presented a theoretical framework of factors affecting Chinese tourists' destination choices (Figure 1). This framework represented a theoretical synthesis of the general model of the destination selection process created by Woodside and Lysonski (1989), the model of destination choice of Um and Crompton (1990), and the model of destination image formation by Beerli and Martin (2004).
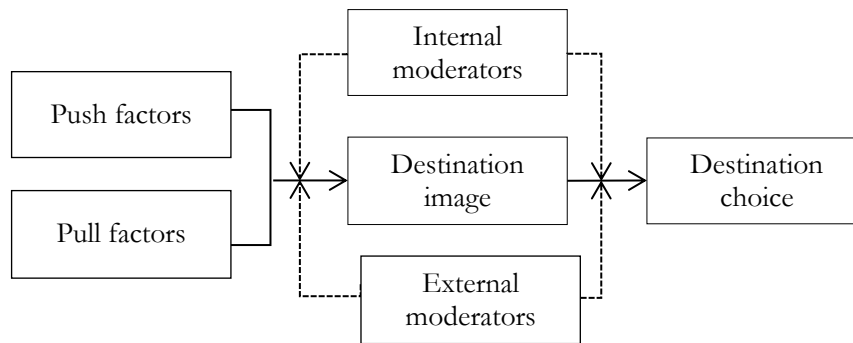

Figure 1: Theoretical framework of destination choice (Keating & Kriz, 2008)

Under Keating and Kriz's (2008) theoretical framework:

• Push factors are attributes that indicate generic motivations for tourism consumption. These are individual-specific, and include factors such as values, motivations, and personality.

• Pull factors are attributes that indicate the various types of generic destination products available in the tourism system. These are destination-specific and include factors such as natural resources, tourism infrastructure, art, history, and so on.

• Internal moderators are specific internal drivers that affect the perceptions of destination image and the decision to visit a particular destination. These are based upon the socioeconomic, cultural, and demographic characteristics of individual tourists.

- External moderators are specific external drivers that affect the perceptions of destination image and the decision to visit a particular destination. These include social networks, and the marketing information to which individual tourists are exposed.

- Destination images consist of both cognitive and affective components, showing tourists' attitudes towards and the relative attractiveness of a particular tourism destination.

Wu (2009) proposed a model of the factors influencing international tourists' destination choices in Taiwan based on three elements: tourism motivation, destination image, and sociodemographic characteristics. In which:

- Tourism motivation is considered the key factor that explains why people go on a trip.

- Destination image is a measure of tourists' impression before they visit the destination.

- Sociodemographic characteristics refer to personal information, such as gender, age, marital status, vocational education, income, nationality, and travel partner.

The results showed that tourism motivation and the sociodemographic characteristics of tourists, such as age, travel partner, and nationality, have a substantial impact on the decision to choose a destination, with destination image having less of an influence.

Mutinda and Mayaka (2012) studied the factors that determined destination choice among residents of Nairobi, Kenya under the hypothesis that there are two relevant groups of factors when switching destinations or choosing a final destination: environmental factors, and individual trait factors. Environmental factors include the source of the destination information, culture, family, lifestyle, and destination features. Individual trait factors, on the other hand, include personal features such as personal motivation, personality, past experiences, and income and also affect individuals' decisions.

The results indicated that individual trait factors are more significant than environmental factors in determining tourists' choice of holiday destination. The results further indicated that the factors affecting research participants' destination choices in order of rank included: knowledge and adventure, economic concerns, personal safety, destination information, travel arrangements, destination characteristics, family and friends, leisure and relaxation, religion, and cultural considerations. These factors were grouped into three main categories: tourism motivation, destination image, and destination information. Among these separate components, tourism motivation influences destination choice more significantly than environmental factors (destination image and information). Primary information sources (e.g. experiences) have more of an influence than destination image perception, and secondary information sources (e.g. personal interactions) are critical for forming an alternative destination image in the destination selection process.

Theoretical Framework

From the preceding theories and studies, adopting the models of Mutinda and Mayaka (2012) and Wu (2009), and combining analysis of the characteristics of tourist destinations in HCM City, the author group proposes a theoretical framework. This theoretical framework presents the three key factors affecting tourists' decision to choose HCM City as a tourist destination. They are destination image, tourism motivation, and destination information. In which:

Decision on Destination Choice (DECH)

This is the result of a cognitive process, which leads to a particular preference among different destinations (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). This is the final step of the entire destination selection process (Um & Crompton, 1990), the decision to choose a particular destination among various options. It is the result of an assessment of important destination information including the attractiveness of the destination image, and is affected by tourists' motivation to choose a destination that is most suitable for them (Keating & Kriz, 2008). Destination choice is a complex process that is influenced by many factors (Pan et al., 2021).

Destination Image (*DEIM)*

According to Pan et al. (2021), "destination image, which is frequently described as impressions of a place or perceptions of an area, is usually believed as a result from tourists' previous experiences, marketing efforts or word of mouth, and often used as holistic concept, sometimes broken down by several dimensions or a list of attributes". Masiero and Qiu (2018) emphasise that visit experience also has a strong impact on destination choice.

Destination image is a synthesis of tourists' perceptions of a destination generated through the process of receiving information from various sources (Beerli & Martin, 2004). It is the overall impression and perception created by the destination, including the functional features related to the tangible aspects, and the psychological characteristics related to the intangible aspects of the destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). Karl et al.'s (2020) travel risks, such as risks from nature, health, politics, terrorism, and criminality, are also an important determinant of where tourists choose to visit.

In this study, destination image is a concept drawn from cognitive and affective image adopted from the models of Beerli and Martin (2004) and Pan et al. (2021). It includes six components: infrastructure and ease of access to the destination, historical and cultural components, leisure and recreation, political and economic environment, food and shopping, and natural environment, in which:

-      Infrastructure and ease of access to a destination includes the development of transport systems, airports, and ports; health services; telecommunications; commercial and building infrastructure; systems of restaurants and hotels; and tourist centres, among others.

-      Historical and cultural components include architectural and artistic works, historical buildings, concerts, festivals, customs, ways of life, and religion.

-      Leisure and recreation includes attractions, theme parks, entertainment, sports activities, bars, discotheques, and clubs.

-      Political and economic environments include political stability and political tendencies, transparency and clarity of rules and regulations, economic development, safety, and the ability to find business opportunities.

-      Food and shopping factors include culinary activities, restaurants, shopping, unique dishes, service styles, and prices.

-      The natural environment includes landscapes, uniqueness of flora and fauna, weather, environmental pollution, traffic congestion, level of safety for tourists, and language barriers.

In terms of the level of influence among factors, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) found that destination image has an important influence on destination choice. Prayag and Ryan (2011) have argued that image is generally accepted as an important pull factor for the success and development of a tourism destination. The research models of Keating and Kriz (2008), Wu (2009), and Mutinda and Mayaka (2012) all agree that the more attractive a destination, the more effective it is for attracting tourists. Park et al. (2017) found that destination image makes a significantly positive and direct contribution to tourists' destination choice or (re)visit intention.

H1: Destination image has a positive influence on tourists' destination choice.

Tourism Motivation (TOMO)

This factor, which explains why people travel (Wu, 2009); is an internal factor that contributes to the formation of tourists' attitudes (Jamrozy & Uysal, 1994). Summarising the findings of a number of previous studies, Hudson (1999) showed that motivation is the main factor in determining tourists' attitude and choice of destination. A conclusion also supported by Wu (2009), Mutinda and Mayaka (2012), and Battour et al. (2017).

Studies by Echtner and Ritche (1991), Baloglu and McCleary (1999), and Martin and Rodriguez (2008) all showed that tourism motivation has a strong and positive influence on destination image, even when visitors have not visited that place. In addition, Keating and Kriz (2008) confirmed that tourism motivation is an important push factor and is part of an internal consideration that positively affects the perception of the destination image.

H2: Tourism motivation has a positive influence on tourist destination choice.

H3: Tourism motivation has a positive influence on the destination image that tourists have chosen.

Destination Information (DEIN)

This element describes important information that tourists receive about tourist destinations (Mutinda & Mayaka, 2012) such as past experiences, advertising, promotional strategies, and includes information from friends, family, and society (Um & Crompton, 1990). Terzidou et al. (2018) examined the role of visual media in tourists' destination images and choices in Tinos, Greece, with the results of this study confirming the role of TV news and documentaries in shaping destination images.

Andrew et al. (2000) argued that tourists perceive destinations based on their knowledge of the destination, or past experiences. Laws (1995) and Mutinda and Mayaka (2012) showed that destination information positively affects destination image and destination choice decisions. Mayo and Jarvis (1981) confirmed that destination information affects perceptions, and thus influences tourism motivation. Pan et al. (2021) claim that information from social network members allows tourists to update their existing knowledge of destinations, which in turn influences their behaviour regarding destination choice.

H4: Destination information has a positive influence on destination image.

H5: Destination information has a positive influence on tourism motivation.

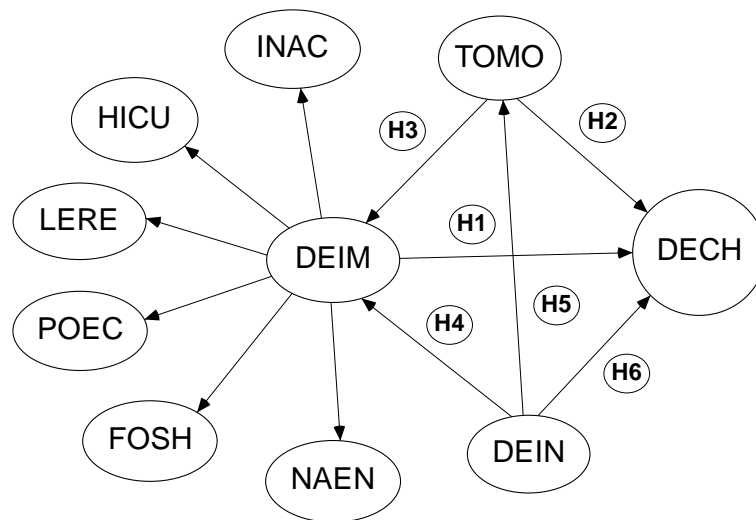*H6: Destination information has a positive influence on tourist destination choice.*

Figure 2. The proposed theoretical framework

METHODOLOGY

The research process for this study consisted of two stages: preliminary research and formal research.

The preliminary research stage was carried out through a qualitative study using a group discussion technique with two tourists groups (a group of 10 domestic tourists and a group of eight foreign tourists). This process was based on the discussion outline prepared by the author group to evaluate the theoretical framework of factors affecting tourists' destination choice in HCM City, with the scale of these research concepts based on the scale of previous studies.

The formal research stage was implemented through a multi-stage quantitative study.

- Research data was collected through face-to-face interviews with tourists who were on tour in HCM City, including local and international tourists, using the convenience sampling method with a sample size of 615 (see Table 1).

The reliability and value of the scales were evaluated using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using SPSS 16.

- The fit of the model with the market data was assessed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

The suitability of the theoretical framework relevant to the research hypothesis was assessed by analysing the linear structural model through structural equation modelling (SEM).

The estimates were tested within the theoretical framework (estimated using the optimal estimation method, ML) by bootstrap analysis.

- Testing was carried out to assess whether there was a difference in the theoretical framework according to the demographic characteristics of tourists using multigroup structure analysis.

Table 1. Research samples according to demographic characteristics

Demographic characteristics		Number	Rate (%)
Nationality	Viet Nam	290	47.2
	Other	325	52.8
Gender	Female	287	46.7
	Male	328	53.3
Age	20 – 35	245	39.8
	36 – 50	317	51.6
	>50	53	8.6
Education	Under college	214	34.8
	College, university	219	35.6
	Above university	182	29.6
Marital status	Not in marriage	252	41.0
	In marriage	363	59.0
Times of visiting HCM	First time	425	73.5
	>= 2 times	163	26.5
Total		615	100.0

*Source: S*urvey results of the author group

RESEARCH RESULTS

The results affirm that the three proposed factors are the main factors affecting the decision on tourist destination choice in HCM City. This study also develops the scales of these concepts with 47 observed variables in Likert scales consisting of 7 levels from 1 to 7, with 1 being completely disagree, and 7 being completely agree (see Table 2).

Table 2. Scales of the research concepts

The research concepts	Observed variables	Statement	Source
Infrastructure and the ease of access to a destination	INAC1 INAC2 INAC3 INAC4 INAC5 INAC6 INAC7 INAC8	HCM City has development of transportation system Development of health services Development of information and telecommunication services Many modern buildings' development Good hotel and restaurant system Various shopping centres Development of the system of travel centres and tourism companies Professional tour guide team	Chi and Qu (2008); Bozbay and Ozen (2008); Mutinda and Mayaka (2012).
Historical and cultural components	HSCU1 HSCU2 HSCU3 HSCU4	HCM City has unique architectural works Unique historical sites, cultural heritages Diverse and attractive cultural festivals Friendliness and hospitality of local people	Mutinda and Mayaka (2012), Pan et al. (2021)
Leisure and recreation	LERE1 LERE 2	HCM City has many places to visit, bringing strange feelings Many spas to relax and cure diseases Many special art shows	Chi and Qu (2008);

	LERE 3	Diverse nightlife	Mutinda and
	LERE 4	Various outdoor activities and sports	Mayaka (2012),
	LERE 5		Pan et al. (2021)
Political and economic environment	POEC1	HCM City has a stable political situation	Chi and Qu (2008), Karl et al. (2020)
	POEC2	Clear rules and regulations	
	POEC3	Few robberies and social evils	
	POEC4	Dynamic and developed economic centre	
Food and Shopping	FOSH1	HCM City has a diverse cuisine	Chi and Qu (2008); Mutinda and Mayaka (2012)
	FOSH2	Many distinct dishes	
	FOSH3	Various shopping options	
	FOSH4	Professional service manner	
	FOSH5	Reasonable prices for food and shopping	
	FOSH6	Unique and abundant souvenirs	
Natural environment	NAEN1	HCM City has pleasant weather and climate all year round	Bozbay and Ozen (2008); Mutinda and Mayaka (2012), Pan et al. (2021)
		Numerous landscapes to visit and explore	
	NAEN2	Less dust and noise pollution in living environment	
	NAEN3	No language barrier for visitors	
		High level of security and safety for tourists	
	NAEN4		
	NAEN5		
Tourism motivation	TOMO1	Coming to HCM City is for fun	Wu (2009); Mutinda and Mayaka (2012)
	TOMO2	To observe the city's characteristics	
	TOMO3	To visit, explore the city	
	TOMO4	To exchange information, gain new skills, find business possibilities	
		To combine travelling and visit relatives	
	TOMO5	To get an easy access to other tourist attractions	
	TOMO6		
Destination information	DEIN1	Coming to HCM City based on experience	Um and Crompton (1990);
	DEIN2	Through friends/colleagues/relatives	
	DEIN3	Through the media, the Internet	
	DEIN4	Through travel agency/travel marketing	
Decision on destination choice	DECH1	You have carefully considered before choosing a destination in HCM City.	Keating and Kriz (2008); Mutinda and Mayaka (2012).
	DECH2	Do you believe that your decision to visit HCM City is absolutely the right one?	
	DECH3	You keep your decision to choose the destination even if there is a possibility to change it.	
	DECH4	Would you recommend destinations in HCM City to others?	
		Are you satisfied with your choice of HCM City as a vacation destination?	
	DECH5		

Source: The result of the qualitative study

After removing the two observed variables of food shopping and tourism motivation, due to their total variable correlation being much lower than that of the remaining variables, Cronbach's alpha showed that the scale of research concepts all reached the level of reliability (see Table 3**).**

Table 3. Preliminary evaluation results of the scales with Cronbach's alpha

| No.	Scale of concepts	Code	Number of observed variables	Cronbach's alpha	Coefficient of correlation of total variables - Smallest
1	Infrastructure and the ease of access to a destination	INAC	8	0.923	0.695 (INAC5)
2	Historical and cultural components	HICU	4	0.925	0.797 (HICU4)
3	Leisure and recreation	LERE	5	0.911	0.744 (LERE2)
4	Political and Economic environment	POEC	4	0.878	0.687 (POEC3)
5	Food and shopping	FOSH	5	0.883	0.657 (FOSH5)
6	Natural environment	NAEN	5	0.901	0.609 (NAEN4)
7	Tourism motivation	TOMO	5	0.945	0.810 (TOMO5)
8	Destination information	DEIN	4	0.893	0.743 (DEIN2)
9	Decision on destination choice	DECH	5	0.901	0.719 (DECH3)

Source: The analysis results from the research data

The results of the EFA (after removing 10 variables with unsatisfactory factor loading weight < 0.4; or with unsatisfactory factor loading weight difference ≥ 0.3), showed 35 observed variables were extracted in 9 original

factors at Eigenvalue = 1.012 and the extracted variance reached 71.015%. The factor loading weights of the variables extracted into the factors were also acceptable.

The results of the CFA of the destination image and the critical model CFA (after removing the observed variables with the Modification Index [MI]: the correlation between the errors of the observed variables was very high) showed that models of concepts' scales accurately fit market data. The regression weights all met the standard > 0.5 and were statistically significant (p < 0.05), proving that the concepts' scales in the theoretical framework had a convergent value. The correlation coefficients between the concepts were all < 1 and statistically significant (p < 0.05), indicating that the concepts had discriminant values. The scales had general reliability and satisfactory Cronbach's alpha coefficients, indicating that the scales in the critical model met the requirements for value and reliability.

The SEM results of the theoretical framework (standardised) showed that the theoretical framework fits the market data (see Figure 3). The results of the estimation of the causal relationship between the concepts in the theoretical framework (see Table 4) showed that the relationship between the destination information and the decision on the destination choice (DEIN → DECH) was not statistically significant (p = 0.660 > 0.05). Thus, there is no basis to confirm that destination information directly affects decisions on the tourist destination choice. In other words, hypothesis H6 was rejected.
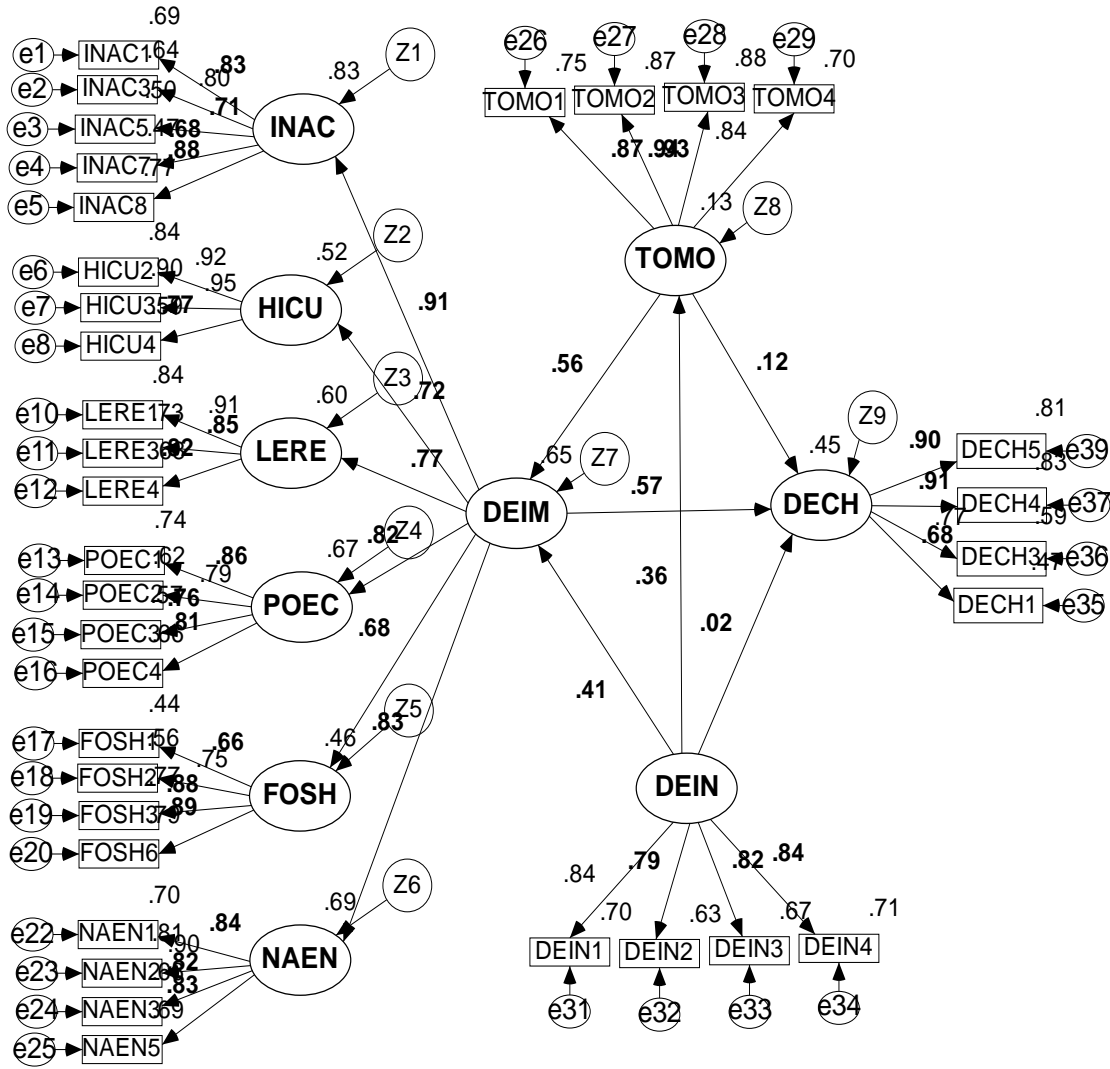
Chisquare= 1738.438; df= 548; P= .000;
Chisquare/df= 3.172;
GFI= .857; TLI= .926; CFI= .932;
RMSEA= .059

Figure 3. SEM results of the conceptual model (Standardized)

Source: The analysis results from the collected data

Table 4. Results of testing the causal relationship between concepts

Relationship			Estimate	SE	CR	P
TOMO	<---	DEIN	0.362	0.065	8.364	***
DEIM	<---	TOMO	0.562	0.031	14.046	***
DEIM	<---	DEIN	0.410	0.044	11.024	***
LERE	<---	DEIM	0.772	0.059	17.641	***
POEC	<---	DEIM	0.821	0.053	16.567	***
INAC	<---	DEIM	0.910	0.062	19.073	***
NAEN	<---	DEIM	0.831	0.053	18.855	***
FOSH	<---	DEIM	0.681	0.039	13.847	***
HICU	<---	DEIM	0.724	0.056	17.078	***
DECH	<---	DEIM	0.571	0.074	7.835	***

| DECH | <--- | TOMO | 0.118 | 0.042 | 2.199 | 0.028 |
| DECH | <--- | DEIN | 0.021 | 0.057 | 0.441 | 0.660 |

Note: Estimate = average estimated value; SE = standard deviation; CR = critical value; P = significance level; *** p < 0.001.

Source: The analysis results from the research data

The results of the estimation (standardised) of the causal relationship between the concepts in the theoretical framework and the results of the parameter estimation obtained through the ML method show that the relationships were all positive and statistically significant (p < 0.05), except for the relationship between the destination information and the destination choice (DEIN → DECH). Thus, Hypothesis H6 *(Destination information has a positive influence on the tourists' destination choice)* is rejected, and the remaining hypotheses are accepted.

The results of the bootstrap estimation performed by repeated sampling with size N = 1500 showed that there is a Bias and SE-Bias between the bootstrap estimate and the optimal estimate ML used in the test, but the standard deviation of the bias was not statistically significant (< 0.05), proving that the above estimation results are reliable.

The results of the multigroup structural analysis showed that no differences were found in the factors affecting tourists' destination choice in HCM City according to nationality, gender, age, education level, and marital status. However, there were differences among the different tourist groups based on the number of visits to the city. For tourists visiting HCM City for the second or subsequent time, tourism motivation had no direct influence on destination choice, while destination image had a strong influence on the destination choice for tourists visiting HCM City for the first time.

The results summary of factors affecting tourists' destination choice in HCM City showed that destination information had an influence on tourism motivation (β = 0.362). Tourism motivation in turn had a strong influence on destination image (β = 0.562), with destination image also having a strong influence on destination choice (β = 0.571). However, destination information was not found to directly influence destination choice. This result can be explained as follows:

First, according to Kotler (2001), a need becomes a motive when it increases to a sufficiently strong level. A motive is a need that is sufficiently powerful to drive people's behaviour. Satisfying needs reduces the stress of having to act. Therefore, for tourists visiting HCM City for the second time or more, their needs have already been partially satisfied, and their motivation is no longer as strong as it is for tourists visiting for the first time. However, because they are people with experience and first-hand knowledge of the location, destination image becomes a powerful motivation to return if that destination is genuinely appealing to them.

Second, according to Um and Crompton's (1990) destination selection process theory, destination information plays a crucial role in forming tourists' full perception of the destination, as well as developing their destination awareness, thereby creating a destination image and stimulating tourism motivation. However, the manner in which consumers act is also influenced by their perceptions of the situation at the current time (Kotler, 2001). Therefore, destination information does not always directly impact tourist destination choice.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study represents a summarisation of existing theories and previous studies on the subject of tourist destination choice, combined with an analysis of the characteristics of tourism destinations in HCM City. The theoretical framework "Factors affecting tourist destination choice: A case of destination in HCM City, Vietnam" was adopted from previous studies carried out Mutinda & Mayaka (2012) and Wu (2009). The study's results show that three factors—in the proposed theoretical framework; destination image, travel motivation, and destination information affect tourist's destination choice in relation to HCM City. Of these factors:

- Destination image is the factor that has the most significant influence on tourists' selecting HCM City as their destination choice (β = 0.571). Destination image is a 2-level concept measured by six components: destination

infrastructure and ease of access, historical and cultural components, leisure and recreation, political and economic environment, food and shopping, and natural environment.

- Tourism motivation has a strong impact on the destination choice of HCM City. However, the level of direct influence (β = 0.118) is much lower than the indirect influence that manifests through destination image (β = 0.321).

- Although destination information has not been found to have a direct influence on destination choice regarding HCM City, it has an important indirect impact on destination choice through the factors of tourism motivation and destination image (β = 0.393).

Based on these research findings and practical considerations, policy implications to increase HCM City's ability to convince tourists to choose it as a travel destination are proposed as follows:

First**,** prioritising investment in the promotion of tourism promotion activities. Although the influence of the destination information source on destination choice was less than that of destination image and tourism motivation, it still had a strong influence on tourism motivation and destination image. This means that investment in tourism promotion activities can simultaneously solve all three objectives: the source of destination information, tourism motivation, and destination image. Moreover, this investment in tourism promotion will be very small compared to the investment needed to improve the destination image.

Second, upgrading the image of the tourist destination in HCM City can be achieved through the following means:

- Improving the quality of specific tourism products using the available resources and potential of HCM City and its surrounding localities to create unique tourism products that accentuate Vietnamese national identity, the tourism brand of Vietnam in general, and the city itself in particular.

- Improving overall infrastructure and tourism infrastructure specifically in a green, clean, and beautiful manner by attracting suitable capital and technology that can facilitate synchronous infrastructure development and riverside tourism attractions. This will also necessitate developing and proposing a number of preferential policies on land, electricity prices, and loan interest rates in relation to ecotourism development projects.

Strengthening state management activities to better regulate the business activities of tourism service enterprises. This will help to resolve the situation whereby tourism service enterprises unilaterally raise the prices of goods and services, often asking tourists to buy things with unpleasant insistence, and even going so far as to rob tourists on occasion.

Third, coordinating with universities and colleges to increase the training quality of professional tour guides, with a specific focus on providing services in English, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and so on, as many of HCM City's potential tourists will be from the East Asia region.

Fourth, increasing ties and collaboration between the Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of HCM City and other provinces and cities to promote HCM City's tourism brand and build inter-provincial and trans-Vietnam tourism travel routes, with HCM City as a start or end point.

Limitations

Just like other studies in this field, this study possesses some limitations. The research sample was collected using a convenience sampling method, and the level of explanation of the concepts covered in the theoretical framework was not as high as it could possibly have been. This shows that there are other factors and other observed variables that may help to further explain the concepts included in this model and the concept of tourists' destination choice. Therefore, further studies are necessary to increase the research sample size if the convenience sampling method is used or alternatively, other sampling methods can be used to ensure better representation.

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Ethical Approval and Informed Consent Statements

Ethical approval

Approval was obtained from the ethics committees of Posts and Telecommunications Institute of Technology. The study procedures were conducted in accordance with the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Informed Consent

When the interviews began, the research aims were communicated to the respondents, who were also informed that their participation was completely voluntary, and that they could terminate the interview at any time. All respondents provided verbal, informed consent. To ensure the confidentiality of the respondents, the transcripts were pseudonymized.

Competing Interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available in Mendeley Data at http://doi.org/ 10.17632/b9sgz8nm4w.1, reference numbers b9sgz8nm4w.1.

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