

FACTORS INFLUENCING DOMESTIC TOURISTS' DESTINATION CHOICE INTENTION - A STUDY AT CAI RANG FLOATING MARKET, CAN THO, VIETNAM

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Abstract

In the context of experiential tourism associated with indigenous culture increasingly becoming a trend among domestic tourists, identifying the factors influencing destination choice intention plays a significant role in tourism management and local development. Cai Rang Floating Market, located in Can Tho, with its distinctive values in floating market culture, riverine landscapes, and trading-based experiences, represents a typical example of river-based cultural tourism in the Mekong Delta. This study applies the Theory of Planned Behavior, incorporating the following factors into the research model: Travel Motivation (TM), Destination Information (DI), Attitude (AT), Subjective Norm (SN), and Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC), which influence the dependent variable, namely "Intention to choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a tourism destination" (IC). Subjective Norm (SN) has the strongest impact on destination choice intention, with a coefficient of 0.396, followed by Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) is 0.288, and Attitude (AT) is about 0.229. Meanwhile, the factors of Travel Motivation (TM) and Destination Information (DI) are not statistically significant in explaining their influence on the dependent variable, the intention to choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a tourism destination (IC).

Keywords: Influencing Factors; Destination Choice Intention; Domestic Tourists; Cai Rang Floating Market, Can Tho, Vietnam.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of the global tourism industry undergoing restructuring after major disruptions, domestic tourism is increasingly regarded as a key pillar in strategies for recovery and sustainable development in many countries, including Vietnam. The growing competition among destinations is no longer limited to resource endowments but has shifted toward the ability to shape tourists' perceptions, destination image, and choice intentions.

According to UN Tourism, a tourism destination is not merely a geographical space but a composite of products, services, and experiences as perceived by visitors (UN Tourism, 2019). This perspective highlights the importance of examining destination choice intention from cognitive, psychological, and social dimensions, alongside purely physical factors.

In this context, Cai Rang Floating Market in Can Tho stands out as a representative symbol of river-based cultural tourism in the Mekong Delta. This destination not only embodies historical value and distinctive cultural identity but also plays a crucial role in destination image positioning. However, the expansion of road transportation and the transformation of trading practices have gradually diminished the authenticity of traditional floating market activities. At the same time, challenges related to tourism products, experiential quality, and destination communication persist, thereby constraining the competitiveness of Cai Rang Floating Market in an increasingly dynamic and digitalized tourism market. A notable trend is that modern tourists are not only consumers of information but also active co-creators of content through platforms such as social media, online reviews, and electronic word-of-mouth. Previous studies have shown that the quality and credibility of destination information can significantly shape tourists' perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Kurniati et al., 2022). In addition, travel motivation, which drives the desire for experience, is considered a fundamental determinant in forming destination choice behavior (Madden et al., 2017). However, these factors have often been examined in isolation or have not been fully integrated within a consistent behavioral theoretical framework.

From a theoretical perspective, the Theory of Planned Behavior developed by Icek Ajzen (1991) is one of the most widely applied models for explaining behavioral intention across various fields, including tourism. The TPB posits that behavioral intention is predicted by three core constructs: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. In tourism contexts, numerous studies have confirmed the central role of these components in explaining destination choice intention (Nguyễn Thị Oanh & Lê Trần Anh Thư, 2022; Hoàng Thị Xinh, 2023). Nevertheless, a notable limitation of TPB lies in its tendency to simplify decision-making contexts, whereas contemporary tourism behavior is influenced by additional factors such as information, technology, and experiential motivation. Consequently, recent studies have emphasized the need to extend TPB to enhance its explanatory power in specific contexts.

Despite the growing body of research on destination choice intention, several gaps remain:

- 1) Empirical studies in Vietnam have primarily focused on popular destinations such as urban tourism or coastal tourism, while river-based cultural destinations like Cai Rang Floating Market have received limited attention;
- 2) Previous studies have rarely integrated travel motivation (TM), destination information (DI), attitude (AT), subjective norm (SN), and perceived behavioral control (PBC) within a single model to assess their direct effects on destination choice intention (IC);
- 3) The independent roles of each factor in an extended TPB model, particularly TM and DI as direct exogenous variables, have not been systematically examined, limiting a comprehensive understanding of the mechanism underlying tourists' destination choice intention.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to explore and analyze the factors influencing domestic tourists' intention to choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a travel destination, grounded in the framework of the Theory of Planned Behavior. According to this model, destination choice intention is directly influenced by five factors: travel motivation, destination information, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. This study is expected to contribute in three main aspects:

- 1) **Theoretical contribution:** extending the TPB framework in the context of domestic tourism in Vietnam by incorporating relevant contextual factors;
- 2) **Methodological contribution:** proposing a structural model that enables simultaneous testing of relationships between independent variables and the dependent variable;
- 3) **Practical contribution:** providing a scientific basis for developing product strategies, communication, and destination management to enhance attractiveness and promote domestic tourists' intention to choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a tourism destination.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Key Concepts

(1) Tourism

According to the Tourism Law of Vietnam, “tourism refers to activities associated with trips made by individuals outside their usual place of residence for a period not exceeding one consecutive year, in order to satisfy needs such as sightseeing, leisure, recreation, learning, and exploring tourism resources, or for other lawful purposes” (National Assembly, 2017). This definition indicates that tourism is a temporary mobility process associated with the consumption of products and services to meet diverse human needs.

Building on this, contemporary studies have expanded the concept of tourism by emphasizing the role of experience. According to the World Tourism Organization, cultural tourism refers to a type of tourism in which the primary motivation of tourists is to explore, discover, and experience both tangible and intangible cultural values at a destination (UNWTO, 2005). This approach shifts the focus from mere “sightseeing” to “experiencing,” where tourists are not only observers but also active participants in local culture, daily life, and environments. This perspective is particularly relevant to culturally distinctive destinations such as Cai Rang Floating Market, where visitors can directly engage with river-based trading activities, local lifestyles, and community life.

(2) Tourist Destination

A tourist destination is a central concept in tourism behavior research. According to the World Tourism Organization, a destination is a geographical area where tourists stay for at least one night and which comprises tourism products, services, resources, and supporting factors capable of attracting visitors (UNWTO, 2005). This definition highlights

that a destination is not only formed by tourism resources but also by the system of services and experiences it offers.

From a marketing and management perspective, a destination can also be viewed as an integrated tourism product or a competitive brand in the marketplace (Buhalis, 2000). Accordingly, the attractiveness of a destination depends not only on its inherent resources but also on its ability to build a strong image, create meaningful experiences, and enhance perceived value in the minds of tourists.

In this study, Cai Rang Floating Market is considered a comprehensive tourism destination, distinguished by the river-based cultural identity of the Mekong Delta. Its attractiveness is derived from factors such as floating market activities, merchant lifestyles, boat-based trading, and local cuisine. Moreover, the experience at this destination is characterized by interaction, authenticity, and direct engagement with local culture.

According to the Vietnam National Authority of Tourism, the cultural practices of Cai Rang Floating Market were officially recognized as part of Vietnam's national intangible cultural heritage in 2016, underscoring its unique value not only in tourism but also in the preservation and promotion of local cultural heritage.

(3) Domestic Tourists

According to the World Tourism Organization, domestic tourists are individuals who travel within the territory of the country in which they reside, without crossing international borders (UNWTO, 2005). In Vietnam, the Tourism Law defines domestic tourists as Vietnamese citizens and foreign residents traveling within the national territory (National Assembly, 2017).

Compared to international tourists, domestic tourists generally possess a higher level of familiarity with the local cultural and social context. They tend to have easier access to information and often prioritize destinations that align with their time, budget, and travel convenience. In the current context, this group plays a crucial role in sustaining tourism demand and supporting industry recovery. Moreover, domestic tourists are increasingly interested in tourism products that emphasize authentic experiences, local cultural identity, and the genuineness of destinations.

2.2. Literature Review on Destination Choice Intention

(i) The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior, developed by Icek Ajzen (1991), is one of the most widely used and highly explanatory frameworks in consumer behavior research, particularly in tourism. The TPB posits that behavioral intention is the most immediate predictor of actual behavior and is formed by three core components: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. In the context of destination choice behavior, this model has been extensively applied to explain tourists' decision-making processes.

The key constructs in the TPB model (independent variables) include:

- **Attitude (AT):** refers to the degree to which an individual evaluates the act of choosing a tourism destination positively or negatively. Attitude is shaped by personal beliefs regarding the benefits, value, and experiences that the destination offers.
- **Subjective Norm (SN):** reflects an individual's perception of social pressure or expectations from significant others (such as family, friends, and the community) regarding destination choice. This factor captures the influence of the social environment on tourists' decisions.
- **Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC):** refers to an individual's perception of their ability to perform the behavior, including factors such as time, cost, accessibility, and personal resources.
- **Intention to Choose Destination (IC):** Destination choice intention is considered a form of behavioral intention, reflecting an individual's readiness to select a specific destination (Ajzen, 1991). It can be expressed through personal desire, preference ranking, and intention to recommend the destination to others (word-of-mouth). According to TPB, intention serves as the direct antecedent of actual behavior and is influenced by psychological factors such as attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control.

Although TPB provides a solid theoretical foundation, many studies argue that relying solely on its three original constructs is insufficient to fully explain tourism behavior in contemporary contexts. Therefore, recent research has increasingly extended the TPB framework by incorporating additional variables relevant to the tourism domain.

(ii) Extending the Research Model in the Tourism Context

In addition to the three core components of TPB, this study incorporates two additional variables—travel motivation (TM) and destination information (DI)—to enhance the explanatory power of the model.

- **Travel Motivation (TM):** Travel motivation is considered an internal driver that encourages individuals to engage in tourism activities. According to Crompton (1979), travel motivation consists of two main groups: push factors (e.g., relaxation, exploration, and seeking new experiences) and pull factors (e.g., destination attractiveness). In Vietnam, the study by Nguyen Quoc Khanh et al. (2021), which examined destination choice in Da Lat among tourists from Southeast Vietnam, found that both push factors (family and friends, entertainment, relaxation, learning, and novelty-seeking) and pull factors (destination characteristics, personal safety, and destination information) significantly influence destination choice.
- **Destination Information (DI):** Destination information refers to the availability, reliability, and consistency of information sources that tourists access before making decisions. Information enables tourists to anticipate their experiences and reduces perceived risk in the decision-making process. Previous studies in Vietnam (Nguyen Quoc Khanh et al., 2021; Nguyen Xuan Hiep, 2016) indicate that destination

information significantly influences tourists’ destination choice. In the digital environment, attributes such as information quality, credibility, usefulness, and accessibility continue to play a crucial role in shaping tourists’ perceptions and intentions.

3) Proposed Research Model

Based on the literature review, the authors propose a research model for the study titled: “Factors Influencing Domestic Tourists’ Destination Choice Intention: A Study at Cai Rang Floating Market, Can Tho”.

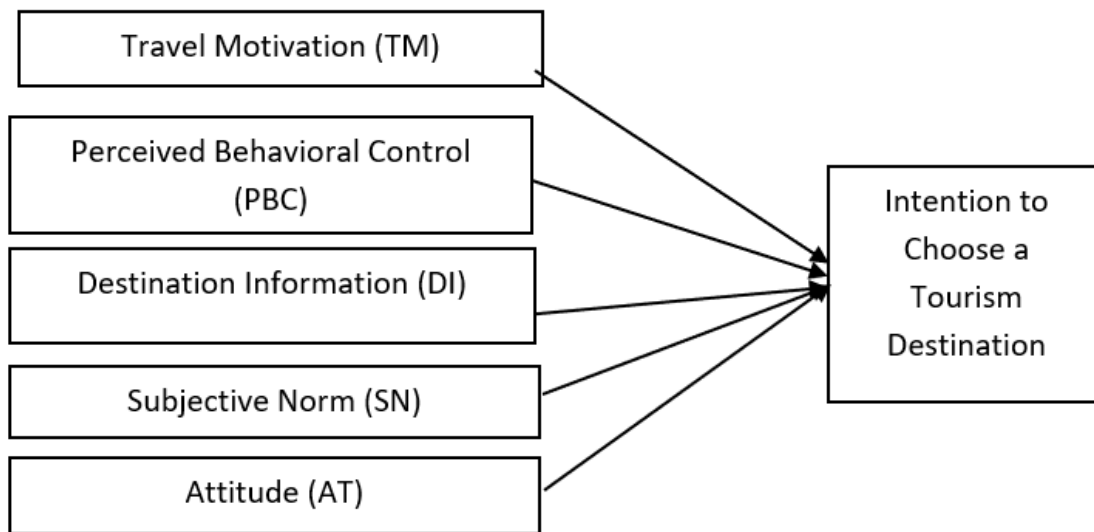


Figure 1: Proposed Research Model

Research Hypotheses and Measurement Scales:

H1: Attitude (AT) has positive impacts on Intention to Choose a Destination (IC): Domestic tourists’ perceptions and evaluations of the destination and their experiences at Cai Rang Floating Market.

Table 1: Proposed Measurement Scale for “Attitude (AT)” Factor

Coding	Scale	Source
AT1	I believe that Cai Rang Floating Market offers an attractive riverine landscape.	Ajzen (1991), Lam & Hsu (2004)
AT2	I believe that the cuisine and products sold on boats are unique.	
AT3	I find the floating market experience interesting.	
AT4	I think that the cultural values of Cai Rang Floating Market are distinctive.	

H2: Subjective Norm (SN) has positive impacts on Intention to Choose a Destination (IC): The influence of family members, friends, and the broader social environment on an individual’s intention.

Table 2: Proposed Measurement Scale for “Subjective Norm (SN)” Factor

Coding	Scale	Source
SN1	My family encourages me to visit Cai Rang Floating Market.	Ajzen (1991), Han (2015)
SN2	My friends or colleagues recommend that I visit Cai Rang Floating Market.	
SN3	I am influenced by social media and key opinion leaders (KOLs) when choosing Cai Rang Floating Market	

H3: Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) has positive impacts on Intention to Choose a Destination (IC): Tourists’ perceived ability and confidence in carrying out the trip positively influence their intention.

Table 3: Proposed Measurement Scale for “Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)” Factor

Coding	Scale	Source
PBC1	I find it easy to travel to Cai Rang Floating Market	Ajzen (1991), Sparks (2007), Lam & Hsu, 2006
PBC2	The cost of traveling to the floating market is affordable for me.	
PBC3	I feel safe when traveling by boat and visiting the floating market.	
PBC4	I am able to plan and organize a trip to Cai Rang Floating Market on my own.	

H4: Travel Motivation (TM) has a positive impact on Intention to Choose a Destination (IC): The underlying reasons and desires that drive tourists to select a destination positively influence their intention.

Table 4: Proposed Measurement Scale for “Travel Motivation (TM)” Factor

Coding	Scale	Source
TM1	I want to explore the river-based culture of the Mekong Delta.	Thuy., T.T., & Tuấn., L.A., (2018). Lam, T., & Hsu, C. H. (2004)
TM2	I want to experience the unique merchant lifestyle at the floating market.	
TM3	I want to relax and change my environment when traveling to Can Tho.	
TM4	I want to seek new and different experiences compared to my daily life.	

H5: Destination Information (DI) has positive impacts on Intention to Choose a Destination (IC): The availability and quality of destination-related information received by tourists positively influence their intention.

Table 5: Proposed Measurement Scale for “Destination Information (DI)” Factor

Coding	Scale	Source
DI1	I can easily find information about Cai Rang Floating Market.	Bigné et al. (2001), Gursoy & McCleary (2004); Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. R. (1991):
DI2	Information on social media and websites is reliable.	
DI3	Images and videos of the floating market help me clearly visualize the experience.	

Dependent Variable: Intention to Choose a Tourism Destination.

Table 6: Proposed Measurement Scale for ‘Intention to Choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a Tourism Destination

Coding	Scale	Source
IC1	I intend to visit Cai Rang Floating Market in the near future.	Ajzen, I., 1991 Lam & Hsu (2004)
IC2	I will prioritize choosing Cai Rang Floating Market as a travel destination in the near future.	
IC3	I will recommend Cai Rang Floating Market to others as a travel destination.	

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Data Collection

Based on the theoretical framework and literature review on factors influencing destination choice intention, this study proposes a model consisting of five independent variables: Travel Motivation (TM), Destination Information (DI), Attitude (AT), Subjective Norm (SN), and Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC), which influence the dependent variable—Intention to Choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a tourism destination (IC) among domestic tourists.

The questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale, including:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to collect data from domestic tourists in Vietnam who have visited or intend to visit Cai Rang Floating Market. Prior to the main survey, a pilot test was conducted with five domestic tourists to assess the clarity of the questionnaire and refine the measurement scales. The preliminary results indicated that the observed variables were appropriate and easily understood by respondents. Due to limitations in time and resources, a convenience sampling method was employed. The minimum sample size was determined based on the formula proposed by Barbara G. Tabachnick and Linda S. Fidell (1996): $n = 50 + 8m$ (where m is the number of independent variables). With five independent variables, the minimum required sample size is: $n = 50 + 8 \times 5 = 90$ observations. To ensure reliability and representativeness, the study collected a total of **272** responses. The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms (link: <https://forms.gle/a33nSLkmhByoCJmr9>). After data cleaning, **272** valid responses ($n = 272$) were retained for quantitative analysis.

3.2. Data Analysis Method

The collected data were processed using quantitative methods to test the research model and proposed hypotheses.

The general structural regression equation is formulated as follows:

$$IC = \beta_1 TM + \beta_2 DI + \beta_3 AT + \beta_4 SN + \beta_5 PBC$$

Where:

- IC: Intention to choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a tourism destination
- TM: Travel Motivation
- DI: Destination Information
- AT: Attitude
- SN: Subjective Norm
- PBC: Perceived Behavioral Control

The software SmartPLS was employed to analyze the data and test the model using the PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling) approach, which consists of two main stages:

Step 1: Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model was assessed using the following criteria:

- Cronbach's Alpha
- Composite Reliability (CR)
- Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
- Fornell–Larcker Criterion

Step 2: Structural Model Evaluation

After establishing the reliability and validity of the measurement model, the structural model was evaluated based on:

- Path Coefficients
- Coefficient of Determination (R^2)
- Effect Size (f^2)
- Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)

In addition, descriptive statistics were used to analyze sample characteristics and respondents' evaluations of the study variables. To interpret the Likert scale results, interval ranges were determined as follows:

- 1.00 – 1.80: Strongly disagree
- 1.81 – 2.60: Disagree
- 2.61 – 3.40: Neutral
- 3.41 – 4.20: Agree
- 4.21 – 5.00: Strongly agree

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1. Sample Description

A total of 272 responses were collected through the survey. The sample characteristics, including gender, occupation, and age, are presented below.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics of Survey Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Student	43	15,8 %
University student	141	51,9 %
Employed	79	29%
Retired	9	3,3%
Gender		
Male	105	38,7%
Female	163	60%
Prefer not to say	4	1,3%
Age		
Under 18	50	18,40%
19 - 29	151	55,6%
30 - 40	33	12,30%
41 - 60	29	10,50%
Above 60	8	3,20%

Source: Survey results

Regarding the occupation of respondents, the largest proportion belongs to university students, accounting for 51.9%, followed by employed individuals at 29%, school students at 15.8%, and retirees at 3.3%. This indicates that the majority of respondents are young individuals in the stage of education and employment, which is appropriate for studying destination choice behavior in tourism.

In terms of gender, females represent a higher proportion at 60% (equivalent to 163 respondents), while males account for 38.7% (105 respondents), and 1.3% prefer not to disclose. This suggests that the sample is somewhat skewed toward female participants, although both genders are adequately represented.

Regarding age, 58.8% of respondents fall within the 19–29 age group, 18.4% are under 18, 12.3% are aged 30–40, 10.5% are between 41 and 60, and 3.2% are above 60. Overall, the majority of respondents are aged 19–29, indicating that the sample primarily reflects the behavior of young tourists—a group that tends to show strong interest in experiential and exploratory travel.

4.2. Model and Hypothesis Testing

4.2.1. Results of Measurement Model Evaluation (Indicator Reliability)

The research team estimated the model, and the quality of the observed variables was assessed using outer loadings. The reliability of the indicators influencing the intention to choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a tourism destination is presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Outer Loadings of Factors Influencing Destination Choice Intention at Cai Rang Floating Market

	AT	DI	IC	PBC	SN	TM
AT1	0.846					
AT2	0.806					
AT3	0.826					
AT4	0.826					
DI2		0.907				
DI3		0.861				
IC1			0.887			
IC2			0.854			
IC3			0.894			
PBC1				0.804		
PBC2				0.818		
PBC3				0.820		
PBC4				0.830		
SN1					0.868	
SN2					0.876	
SN3					0.862	
TM1						0.857
TM2						0.828
TM3						0.809
TM4						0.808
DI1		0.882				

Source: Author's testing results

The results from Table 8 indicate that the outer loadings of all observed variables measuring the factors influencing the intention to choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a tourism destination are greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2016), confirming that the indicators are statistically significant and meet the requirement for indicator reliability.

Reliability Testing of Measurement Scales

The reliability of the measurement scales for factors influencing destination choice intention at Cai Rang Floating Market was assessed using the PLS-SEM approach through two main indicators: Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR).

Table 9: Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) of Factors Influencing the Intention to Choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a Tourism Destination

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
AT	0,845	0,845	0,896	0,683
DI	0,860	0,864	0,914	0,781
IC	0,852	0,852	0,910	0,772
PBC	0,835	0,836	0,890	0,669
SN	0,838	0,838	0,902	0,755
TM	0,844	0,845	0,895	0,682

Source: Author's testing results

According to Table 9, the results of reliability testing using Cronbach’s Alpha show that all constructs achieve satisfactory levels: Attitude (AT) = 0.845; Destination Information (DI) = 0.860; Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) = 0.835; Subjective Norm (SN) = 0.838; Travel Motivation (TM) = 0.844; and Intention to Choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a tourism destination (IC) = 0.852. All values exceed the threshold of 0.7 (DeVellis, 2012), indicating good internal consistency. Therefore, none of the measurement items were removed, and all scales are considered reliable. The Composite Reliability (CR) values of all constructs also exceed 0.7 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988) (see Table 9), confirming that the measurement scales are reliable and suitable for further analysis.

Convergent Validity

Based on the results presented in Table 9, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are as follows: Attitude (AT) = 0.683; Destination Information (DI) = 0.781; Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) = 0.669; Subjective Norm (SN) = 0.755; Travel Motivation (TM) = 0.682; and Intention to Choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a tourism destination (IC) = 0.772. All AVE values exceed the threshold of 0.5 (Hock & Ringle, 2010), indicating that the model satisfies the requirements for convergent validity.

Discriminant Validity

The results in Table 10, based on the Fornell–Larcker criterion, demonstrate that all constructs—Attitude (AT), Destination Information (DI), Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC), Subjective Norm (SN), Travel Motivation (TM), and Intention to Choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a tourism destination (IC)—achieve discriminant validity. Specifically, the square root of AVE for each construct (on the diagonal) is greater than the corresponding inter-construct correlations (off-diagonal values). Thus, both criteria—cross-loadings and the Fornell–Larcker criterion—confirm that the model satisfies the requirements for discriminant validity.

Table 10: Fornell–Larcker Criterion for the Research Model of Factors Influencing the Intention to Choose Cai Rang Floating Market as an Experiential Cultural Tourism Destination

	AT	DI	IC	PBC	SN	TM
AT	0,826					
DI	0,655	0,884				
IC	0,669	0,509	0,879			
PBC	0,700	0,525	0,732	0,818		
SN	0,627	0,575	0,742	0,733	0,869	
TM	0,727	0,678	0,608	0,670	0,648	0,826

Source: Author’s testing results

Effect Size (f²)

The effect size (f²) indicates the extent to which an exogenous construct contributes to the explanatory power of the model when it is included or removed. In other words, it reflects the impact of each factor on the dependent variable—Intention to Choose Cai

Rang Floating Market as a tourism destination. According to Cohen (1988), f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively. If the effect size is less than 0.02, it is considered to have no significant effect.

Table 11: Summary of effect size (f^2) values

	AT	DI	IC	PBC	SN	TM
AT			0,053			
DI			0,001			
IC						
PBC			0,084			
SN			0,180			
TM			0,000			

Source: Author's testing result

According to Table 11, the results show that Subjective Norm (SN) has a medium effect on destination choice intention (IC) with an f^2 value of 0.180. Attitude (AT) ($f^2 = 0.053$) and Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) ($f^2 = 0.084$) have small effects on IC. Meanwhile, Travel Motivation (TM) ($f^2 = 0.000$) and Destination Information (DI) ($f^2 = 0.001$) have effect sizes below 0.02, indicating no significant impact on the intention to choose Cai Rang Floating Market as an experiential cultural tourism destination.

4.2.2. Results of Structural Model Evaluation

Assessment of Relationships and Impact Levels

The relationships and the magnitude of influence of the factors affecting the intention to choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a tourism destination were analyzed using SmartPLS and are illustrated in Figure 2.

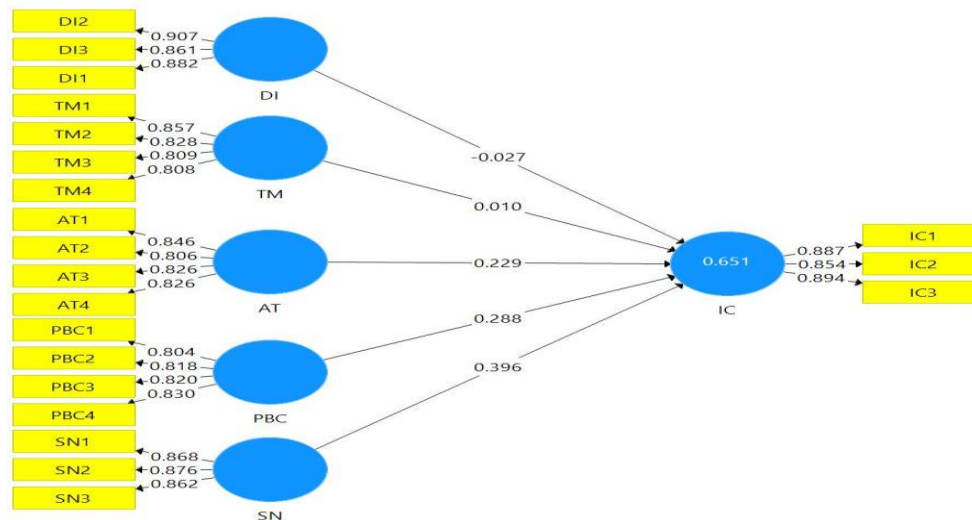


Figure 2: Factors Influencing the Intention to Choose Cai Rang Floating Market as an Experiential Cultural Tourism Destination

Source: Authors' testing results using SmartPLS.

The results of the Bootstrap analysis used to assess the relationships among variables are presented in Table 12. Accordingly, the variables Attitude (AT), Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC), and Subjective Norm (SN) have statistically significant effects on the “Intention to Choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a tourism destination (IC),” with p-values < 0.05. This indicates that these factors have significant positive relationships with destination choice intention, and therefore hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 are supported.

In contrast, Travel Motivation (TM) and Destination Information (DI) have p-values > 0.1, suggesting that these factors are not statistically significant in explaining the dependent variable, “Intention to Choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a tourism destination (IC).” Hence, hypotheses H4 and H5 are not supported.

Table 12: Structural Model Path Coefficients

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
AT => IC	0,229	0,225	0,076	3,012	0,003
DI => IC	-0,027	-0,026	0,052	0,520	0,604
PBC => IC	0,288	0,287	0,072	4,010	0,000
SN => IC	0,396	0,398	0,067	5,891	0,000
TM => IC	0,010	0,014	0,076	0,133	0,894

Source: Authors’ testing results using SmartPLS.

The results in Table 12 indicate that, at a 95% confidence level, Subjective Norm (SN) has the strongest influence on the intention to choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a tourism destination, with a path coefficient of 0.396. This is followed by Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) with an effect of 0.288, and Attitude (AT) with an effect of 0.229. Meanwhile, Travel Motivation (TM) and Destination Information (DI) are not statistically significant, and thus no conclusions can be drawn regarding their effects on the dependent variable, Intention to Choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a tourism destination (IC).

Accordingly, the regression equation is formulated as follows:

$$IC = 0.396*SN + 0.288*PBC + 0.229*AT$$

Evaluation of the Coefficient of Determination (R²)

The results from the PLS Algorithm provide the R² value, which reflects the explanatory power of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The R² index (R-square value) measures the overall goodness-of-fit of the model, indicating how well the model explains the observed data. According to Hair et al. (2010), R² values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 can be interpreted as substantial, moderate, and weak levels of explanatory power, respectively.

Table 13: Coefficient of Determination (R²) of the Model

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
IC	0,651	0,644

Source: Authors’ testing results using SmartPLS.

The results from Table 13 show that the R² value is 0.651 and the adjusted R² is 0.644, which are appropriate for this study. This indicates that the independent variables in the model explain 65.1% of the variance in the intention to choose Cai Rang Floating Market as an experiential cultural tourism destination.

Evaluation of Model Fit (SRMR)

The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) is used to assess the goodness-of-fit of the research model. According to Hu and Bentler (1999), a model is considered to have a good fit when the SRMR value is less than 0.08.

Table 14: Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) Index

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0,055	0,055

Source: Author's testing result

The results from Table 14 show that the SRMR value of the research model is below 0.08. Therefore, the model demonstrates a good fit and is appropriate for data analysis

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Discussion

The descriptive statistics of the observed variables corresponding to three aspects—intention to visit (IC1), priority of choice (IC2), and word-of-mouth intention (IC3)—within the construct of destination choice intention (IC) are presented as follows:

Table 15: Mean Values of Observed Variables for “Intention to Choose Cai Rang Floating Market as a Tourism Destination (IC)”

Code	Mean	Interpretation
IC1	3,640	Respondents intend to visit Cai Rang Floating Market in the near future.
IC2	3,632	Respondents tend to prioritize choosing Cai Rang Floating Market as a travel destination in the near future.
IC3	3,680	Respondents are willing to recommend Cai Rang Floating Market to others as a tourist destination.

Source: Author's testing result

Among the three observed variables, IC3 (“I will recommend Cai Rang Floating Market to others as a tourism destination”) has the highest mean value (3.680). This result indicates a relatively strong positive word-of-mouth effect. It suggests that tourists not only hold favorable perceptions of the destination but also form sufficiently positive evaluations to share within their social networks.

IC1 (“I intend to visit Cai Rang Floating Market in the near future”) has a mean value of 3.640, reflecting that the destination possesses a certain level of attractiveness among domestic tourists. However, this score also implies that the transition from intention to actual behavior may still be influenced by various constraints such as time, cost, accessibility, or competition from alternative destinations.

IC2 (“I will prioritize choosing Cai Rang Floating Market as a tourism destination in the near future”) has a mean value of 3.632, indicating that while tourists generally have a favorable attitude and intention, the level of priority assigned to this destination is not yet strong. In other words, Cai Rang Floating Market is included in tourists’ consideration set but is not necessarily the top choice. Factors such as itinerary, distance, cuisine, cost, and the diversity of tourism products should be further considered to enhance this aspect of intention.

Overall, the three observed variables of the IC construct suggest that the intention to choose Cai Rang Floating Market is positive. However, to convert this intention into actual priority choice, it is necessary to further examine the influencing factors. The analysis reveals that the two additional variables—Destination Information (DI) and Travel Motivation (TM)—do not have statistically significant direct effects on intention. This implies that, in the context of domestic tourists and a relatively well-known destination like Cai Rang Floating Market, access to information alone is insufficient to drive intention unless it is accompanied by positive evaluations, perceived feasibility, or social reinforcement.

In other words, destination information may serve as a foundational condition that supports awareness formation but does not act as a direct driver of intention in this model. This finding also suggests that, in an increasingly saturated and digitalized tourism communication environment, competitive advantage no longer lies in simply providing information, but in making tourists feel that the destination is worth visiting (through Attitude – AT), easy to visit (through Perceived Behavioral Control – PBC), and socially endorsed (through Subjective Norm – SN).

Similarly, the lack of statistical significance of Travel Motivation (TM) indicates that general motivations such as relaxation, exploration, or cultural experience—although present—are not distinctive enough to drive tourists to specifically choose Cai Rang Floating Market over similar destinations. Instead, tourists’ intentions are more strongly influenced by proximal, behavior-related factors within the TPB framework, particularly attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. This also suggests that TM and DI may exert indirect effects, possibly through shaping attitudes or reinforcing perceived feasibility.

From the regression equation:

IC = 0.396*SN + 0.288*PBC + 0.229*AT, we have:

(1) Subjective Norm (SN)

Subjective Norm (SN) has a positive and statistically significant effect on the intention to choose Cai Rang Floating Market (IC), with a path coefficient of 0.396 ($p < 0.05$). This is the strongest influencing factor in the model, highlighting the critical role of social influence in shaping tourists’ destination choice intentions. This finding is consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1991), where subjective norm reflects social pressure and the influence of important others on individual behavior.

Table 16: Mean Values of Observed Variables for the Subjective Norm (SN) Factor

Code	Mean	Interpretation
SN1	3,754	Family tends to encourage respondents to visit Cai Rang Floating Market.
SN2	3,640	Friends/colleagues tend to recommend visiting the floating market.
SN3	3,654	Respondents are influenced by social media/KOLs when choosing a destination.

Source: Author's testing result

The results related to the Subjective Norm (SN) construct show that the level of influence is relatively similar across different reference groups: family (SN1) has the highest mean (3.754), followed by social media and KOLs (SN3) with 3.654, and friends/colleagues (SN2) with 3.640. The differences among these groups are minimal.

This indicates that, in addition to traditional reference groups such as family and friends/colleagues, who play a key role in shaping the intention to visit Cai Rang Floating Market, the influence of social media reflects the increasingly important role of digital communication channels in guiding destination choices. In other words, tourists' behavioral intentions are not only shaped by direct interpersonal relationships but also by digital platforms and online communities. For experiential destinations like Cai Rang Floating Market, user-generated content such as images, videos, and reviews enhances attractiveness and stimulates intention. This explains why Subjective Norm (SN) has the strongest impact (0.396) in the research model.

(2) Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)

The PLS-SEM results indicate that Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) has a positive and statistically significant effect on the intention to choose Cai Rang Floating Market (IC), with a path coefficient of 0.288 ($p < 0.05$). This confirms that hypothesis H3 is supported and aligns with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which posits that when individuals perceive they have sufficient resources and ability to perform a behavior, their intention to do so increases. This finding is also consistent with previous tourism studies (Lam & Hsu, 2006), where PBC is identified as a key determinant of destination choice intention. The mean values of the observed variables within the PBC construct range from 3.551 to 3.706, corresponding to the "agree" level on a five-point Likert scale. This suggests that respondents generally have positive perceptions regarding their ability to undertake a trip to Cai Rang Floating Market.

Table 17: Mean Values of Observed Variables for the Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) Factor

Code	Mean	Interpretation
PBC1	3,654	Respondents perceive traveling to Cai Rang Floating Market as relatively easy.
PBC2	3,618	The cost of the trip is considered affordable for respondents.
PBC3	3,706	Respondents feel safe when visiting the floating market by boat.
PBC4	3,551	Respondents are able to plan and organize the trip on their own.

Source: Author's testing result

The observed variables related to safety (PBC3), accessibility (PBC1), and affordability (PBC2) all receive relatively high evaluations, indicating that tourists generally hold positive perceptions regarding the feasibility of undertaking the trip. Among these, safety when traveling by boat (PBC3) records the highest mean (3.706), reflecting tourists' confidence in this distinctive experience at Cai Rang Floating Market.

In contrast, the ability to independently organize the trip (PBC4) has the lowest mean (3.551), suggesting that a segment of tourists still faces difficulties in planning their trips, possibly due to limitations in information or independent travel experience.

Cai Rang Floating Market in Can Tho is a relatively accessible destination with reasonable costs and distinctive experiential value. However, visiting this attraction still depends heavily on specific conditions such as timing (early morning visits) and transportation (boats). Therefore, when tourists perceive travel as convenient, safe, and affordable, their intention to choose this destination increases. This explains why PBC demonstrates a relatively strong effect (0.288) in the research model.

(3) Attitude (AT)

The Attitude (AT) construct has a positive and statistically significant effect on the intention to choose Cai Rang Floating Market, with a path coefficient of 0.229 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that more favorable evaluations of the destination lead to a higher likelihood of selection. This finding is consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), where attitude is a core determinant of behavioral intention, and aligns with prior tourism studies (e.g., Lam & Hsu, 2006), which emphasize the importance of positive destination perceptions in decision-making.

Table 18: Mean Values of Observed Variables for the Attitude (AT) Factor

Mã	Mean	Interpretation
AT1	3,827	Respondents highly appreciate the riverine landscape of Cai Rang Floating Market.
AT2	3,588	The food and products sold on the boats are considered relatively unique.
AT3	3,875	Respondents find the floating market experience enjoyable and interesting.
AT4	3,857	The cultural aspects of the floating market are perceived as distinctive and valuable.

Source: Author's testing result

The survey results indicate that experiential factors play a dominant role in shaping tourists' positive attitudes, with AT3 (experience) achieving the highest mean value (3.875). This is followed by perceived cultural value (AT4) and riverine landscape (AT1), highlighting the distinctive appeal of water-based tourism.

In contrast, cuisine and products on boats (AT2) receive a relatively lower evaluation, suggesting room for improvement in service experience. These findings align with the practical development context of Cai Rang Floating Market, where experiential and cultural values are central to attracting tourists. In the current shift toward experiential tourism, perceptual factors such as enjoyment, authenticity, and cultural value significantly influence tourists' attitudes.

5.2. Implications

Based on the findings, Subjective Norm (SN), Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC), and Attitude (AT) positively influence destination choice intention, with SN having the strongest effect. The following managerial implications are proposed:

(1) Enhancing Social Influence and Communication Spillover

Given the dominant role of subjective norms, communication strategies should leverage social influence:

- Promote Cai Rang Floating Market on social media platforms (TikTok, Facebook, YouTube) through authentic experience-based content and short-form videos.
- Collaborate with KOLs, travel bloggers, and influencers to create engaging content, especially highlighting river culture and the merchant lifestyle.
- Encourage user-generated content through hashtags, campaigns, or incentives.
- Strengthen promotion through family and peer groups, which remain influential reference sources.

(2) Improving Accessibility and Travel Conditions

Since PBC significantly affects intention, particularly regarding safety, cost, and feasibility:

- Improve travel guidance systems, including schedules and early-morning visiting information.
- Enhance safety standards for boats and water transport (life jackets, clear instructions).
- Develop flexible tour packages for different customer segments and strengthen regional linkages (e.g., Can Tho – An Giang – Đồng Tháp).
- Offer seasonal promotions and bundled tourism packages.
- Provide digital planning tools such as AI-based support, QR codes, and 3D maps to enhance convenience.

(3) Enhancing Experience Quality and Perceived Value

As attitude is strongly influenced by actual experience:

- Design interactive tourism products (e.g., trading on boats, cooking activities, experiencing merchant life).
- Diversify local cuisine and products.
- Improve service quality, environmental hygiene, and professionalism.
- Organize events and festivals associated with the floating market to create temporal attraction.

6. CONCLUSION

Experiential tourism associated with local culture is increasingly becoming a preferred choice among domestic tourists in Vietnam. Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this study examined the intention to choose Cai Rang Floating Market through five factors: Travel Motivation (TM), Destination Information (DI), Attitude (AT), Subjective Norm (SN), and Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC).

The findings reveal that SN, PBC, and AT have significant positive effects on intention, with Subjective Norm being the most influential factor, emphasizing the critical role of social influence (family, friends, and social media). PBC and AT also play important roles, indicating that when tourists perceive travel as convenient, safe, affordable, and enjoyable, their likelihood of choosing the destination increases.

In contrast, Travel Motivation (TM) and Destination Information (DI) are not statistically significant, suggesting that these factors do not directly influence intention in this context.

The study proposes practical implications focusing on:

- Strengthening social influence through communication strategies.
- Improving accessibility and travel feasibility.
- Enhancing experiential tourism products and cultural value.

These solutions are expected to not only increase intention but also convert it into actual travel behavior toward Cai Rang Floating Market.

However, this study does not examine differences across demographic characteristics such as gender, age, occupation, or residential area. Additionally, the sample is limited to domestic tourists within a specific timeframe, which may not fully represent the diversity of the tourism market.

Future research should expand the sample scope and apply more advanced analytical methods (e.g., group comparison analysis) to better understand demographic influences. Moreover, the model can be extended to other experiential or river-based tourism destinations in Vietnam and internationally to test its generalizability.

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