

## Impact of Motivation on Travel Destination Decision among Travellers – A Study

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**Abstract:** Tourism serves as an important means for individuals to relax and temporarily escape the monotony of routine life. One of the key questions that arise in this context is the choice of travel destination, a decision that has been widely examined through various theoretical models. This study adopts the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which posits that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control influence an individual's intention to travel, and that intention subsequently predicts actual behaviour. Recognizing the importance of intrinsic drivers, the present research extends the TPB framework by incorporating motivation as an additional construct, examining its impact on both intention and actual travel decisions. Data were collected from 322 domestic tourists in Madurai using a structured questionnaire, and the responses were analysed through Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The findings reveal that motivation plays a pivotal role in shaping travellers' intentions and significantly influences their final destination choices, more so than the traditional TPB variables. These results underscore the need for tourism marketers to design strategies that align with travellers' motivational drivers. The study not only enhances the explanatory power of TPB but also provides actionable insights for practitioners seeking to attract and retain tourists in an increasingly competitive market.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Motivation, Travel Destination Decision, Structural Equation Modelling

### Introduction and Review of Literature

Since the beginning of time, people have been fascinated by travel. Every person engages in significant social activities, such as travel and tourism. The movement of people on a day trip or excursion is referred to as tourism (Holloway, 2009). Travel is the driving force behind people's fascination with life. It is one of our society's most important economic pillars and one of the most rapidly expanding global economic sectors (Garg, 2013). The growth of tourism industry is the foundation for wealth formation, livelihood and income generation (Merli, 2019). Travel decision-making, is a highly complicated process. It is affected by the factors like attitude (psychological factor) (Garcia-Fernandez, 2018), subjective norms (social factors) (Bianchi C. M., 2017) and perceived behavioural control (Han H. a., 2010). To visit and revisit a tourism place the travellers are influenced by the image of the destination (Seetanah, 2020), quality of the services available in the location (Zhang, 2018) and the perceived value of the location (Wang T. T., 2017). Tourism is a highly competitive industry in the world and the intention of the travellers play a major role in determining the attractiveness of the destination (Chen, 2007). The researchers considered different models that

determining the intention of the travellers to visit a destination (Lee C. K., 2005). Theory of planned behaviour is one of the models that help us to understand about the intention of an individual to do the things. Theory of Planned Behaviour is a psychological theory that illuminates the psychological phenomena of behavioural intention of human being (Ajzen, 1991). This theory says that the behaviour of an individual is depending on his/her intention or repeat intention (Abbasi, 2020b). The attitude of the individual, subjective norms and motivation influence their satisfaction level in visiting the place and influence their intention to visit the place whereas perceived behavioural control is not influencing the satisfaction and intention to visit a place (Hasan, 2020). The attitude of the tourists comprises of cognitive, affective and behavioural components (Page, 2014). The positive attitude of an individual towards the tourism will influence his/her behavioural intention in a positive way (Wang, 2014). A study in Bangladesh tourism spot revealed that the attitude of the individual is not having much impact in their behavioural intention in visiting the tourism spot of Bangladesh but the subjective norms are having positive impact in the behavioural intention of the tourists to visit the places in Bangladesh (Hassan, 2014). The attitude of college students has positive influence in their behavioural intention in selecting the travel destination (S. Ramesh Babu, 2021). The tourists' attitude includes three components, namely: cognitive, affective and behaviour. In this the cognitive component evaluate the object and form the attitude whereas the affect makes the tourist to like or dislike the activities and based on that they will behave (Lee, 2009). The travel destination choice is influenced by the trait of an individual and that positively affect the behavioural intention of the individual (Karl M, 2020). Positive attitude of the visitors towards the destination influence their revisit intention positively that reduces the marketing expenses of the tour operators and administrators (Kim, 2013) (Hossain, 2015). Subjective norms are an individual's assimilation of the subjective culture and particular interpersonal agreements of their reference group, which directly influences their intention to act (Venkatesh, 2003). If the decision is supported by the reference group, their impact is a substantial and accurate predictor of the intent to participate in a novel event. Individuals' normative beliefs are reflected in their subjective norms (Chan, 2015) and it plays a key role in individual's decision making. The previous researches confirmed that there is a positive relationship between subjective norms and the behavioural intention of an individual (Ye, 2017) (Kumar, 2015). The subjective knowledge of the tourists towards the travel destination has positively influence their intention to visit the place (Tassiello, 2020). The idea of one's own level of knowledge is referred to as subjective knowledge (Brucks, 1985), (Sharifpour, 2014). Subjective knowledge is distinct from objective knowledge and directly affects how decisions are made as well as related psychological processes like the arousal of confidence and action readiness (Hadar, 2014). Muslim travellers select the non- Islamic destination by getting the opinion from the reference groups and international search engines (Ahmed M. Adel, 2020). Instead of experts and rankings, subjective norms are mostly obtained from friends, family, and online comments, and they affect both internal push and destination pull (Catherine Lejealle, 2021). The perception of an individual towards his or her own ability to perform the thinks in the given situation is considered as perceived behavioural control and it is determined by various factors (Ajzen, 1991).

### **Motivation**

In their daily lives, the people have several necessities. They engage in a variety of behaviours to satisfy these demands, and this psychological state is referred to as motivation. Motivation is a tendency or state of mind that results from a desire and propels a person to take various actions to satisfy that need (LA, 2012). An individual's biological and psychological requirements in a tourism setting awaken, guide, and integrate their actions and behaviour (Y-S, 2009). The psychological and biological needs of the individual trigger their action. So the individuals are motivated by the activities which fulfil the above needs. Those activities shape the intention of the individuals' destination selection (Nguyen, T. T. T., & Duong, T. D. H., 2025). Hence motivation acts as a main nerve system in travel destination decision making among the travellers (Luong, T. B., 2024). The advancement in the travelling options and the motivation of individuals will make them to travel. The needs of the tourists evolve continuously due to the advancement in technology and that drive them selecting the location

which fulfil their needs (A. Yousaf, 2018). Various researchers used various models to understand the travel motivation of travellers such as push and pull factors (GM, 1981), escape seeking approach (SE, 1991), and travel career approach (U-I, 2005). In selecting the travel destination, the youngsters are motivated by flexibility in activities and shopping facilities. They also want to learn different culture through tourism activities (Crompton, 1979). Tourists are motivated by the nature and interaction with inhabitants while selecting their travel destination (Buffa, 2015). College students are influenced by the fun activities while selecting the travel destination (S. Ramesh Babu, 2021). Cleanliness is an important aspect and that motivate the female tourists to select the tourism place (Han, 2017). The Chinese tourists were motivated by the activities that can be performed, cost and time required to reach place will influence their travel destination decision and no matter whether it is an individual decision making or group decision making (Hanqun Song, 2018). Travel motivations such as novelty seeking and knowledge seeking have a positive impact on an individual's intention to visit a location (Mohammad J Khan, 2018). Travel motives including exploring new locations, seeking knowledge, finding rest and relaxation, embarking on adventures, and finding amusement all have strong desires to go to the destination (LA, 2012), (Jang S, 2009). A study conducted in Srilanka, found that relaxation and shopping are the two major factors motivate the travellers to visit Srilanka (Perera, H. S. C. et al., 2022). Climatic condition of the destination is one of the major factor has positive impact in the travellers intention to visit the location (Maria Jushtena, 2019). A study by De Vos J, et al., (2025) argued that ease of travel act as greater motivational factor influences the intention of the travellers in deciding the destination. Motivational factors among individuals may vary based the type of tourism they want to enjoy. The people who to relax, enjoy and want to escape from the routine life prefer leisure tourism (Galati, A., et al., 2023). According to TPB, an individual's intention to choose a tourist destination is influenced by their attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In this study, the researcher also takes into account motivation as additional component. Hence the following hypothesis is framed

H<sub>1</sub>: Travel motivation positively influences the intention of the travellers in deciding the tourism destination.

## **Methodology**

### **Questionnaire development and Measurement**

The constructs and items of the study were identified through previous researches and modified by considering the objectives of this research. The items considered for this study was measured with the help of 5 point likert scale (5- strongly agree to 1- strongly disagree). The construct motivation consists of items like relaxation, seeing new faces, knowledge, experience new things, purchasing and entertainment (Cathy H. C. Hsu, 2010), (Mohammad Jamal Khan, 2019). The items of other constructs attitude (Han H. H.-T., 2010), subjective norms (Han H. a., 2010) and perceive behavioural control (Lam, 2006) were identified and modified through previous researches

### **Data collection procedure and Sampling**

The data were collected from the domestic travellers in the age category of above 20 years who visit Madurai are considered for this study. Madurai is considered as a temple town. It draws a large number of visitors who want to experience the rich culture, architecture, glorious sculptures, and historical monuments. It is a famous tourism spot in Tamilnadu. The famous places in Madurai include Meenakshiamman Temple, Thirumalai Nayak Palace, Azhagar Kovil, Gandhi Memorial Museum, and Samanar Hills. United Nations Organizations have included the Gandhi Memorial Museum in their list of Peace Museums Worldwide. So the place attracts both domestic and international tourists. Convenience sampling was used, and respondents were invited to participate in the survey voluntarily. In quantitative studies, convenience sampling is the most commonly used technique. However, by employing this technique, not all qualified individuals in the target population have an equal opportunity to participate (Suen LJ, 2014). The researcher distributed 550 questionnaires and 353 were returned with the response rate of 64.18%. The returned questionnaires were fully scrutinised and only 322 were suitable for analysis. Harman's single factor test was used to

ensure that there was no common method bias in the questionnaire survey. The results showed that the first factor accounted for 18.51% of the variance, which was less than the 50% threshold level (Podsakoff, 2012). It is observed that 100 samples were enough to perform structural Equation Modelling (Reinartz W, 2009). Hence the sample size for this study 322 is adequate to perform SEM.

## Results

**Table 1: Respondents Demographics**

Variables	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	142	44.1
	Female	180	55.9
Age	Less than 25	79	24.5
	25-34	80	24.8
	35-45	71	22.0
	More than 45	92	28.6
Marital Status	Married	101	31.4
	Unmarried	221	68.6
Education	UG	113	35.1
	PG	146	45.3
	Diploma	20	6.2
	Others	43	13.4
Occupation	Govt. job	42	13.0
	Private job	186	57.8
	Home maker	56	17.4
	Business	38	11.8
Family size	2 members	9	2.8
	3 members	64	19.9
	4 members	141	43.8
	More than 4 members	108	33.5
Family Monthly income	Less than 15000	7	2.2
	15000-30000	47	14.6
	30001-60000	103	32.0
	Above 60000	165	51.2

The demographic characteristics of the respondents reveal a balanced yet insightful representation of the sample. In terms of gender, females (55.9%) slightly outnumber males (44.1%), suggesting that women play a more prominent role in travel-related decision-making within the studied context. The age distribution indicates diversity, with respondents spread across all age groups: 24.5% are below 25 years, 24.8% fall between 25–34 years, 22.0% between 35–45 years, and 28.6% above 45 years. This reflects participation from both younger and older travellers, though a relatively higher proportion of respondents are above 45, highlighting the growing engagement of mature tourists in travel decisions.

With regard to marital status, a majority of respondents are unmarried (68.6%), indicating that single individuals may show greater interest in exploring travel opportunities, possibly due to fewer family-related constraints. Education levels further demonstrate a highly literate sample, with 45.3% holding postgraduate qualifications and 35.1% being undergraduates, suggesting that better-educated individuals may be more inclined toward travel and destination choices. Occupationally, private-sector employees dominate (57.8%), followed by homemakers (17.4%), government employees (13.0%), and business professionals (11.8%). This reflects the prevalence of middle-income, salaried individuals who likely prioritize leisure travel within their lifestyle.

Family size distribution indicates that 43.8% of respondents belong to four-member families, while 33.5% belong to larger households of more than four members, suggesting that family-oriented travel is a common practice. In terms of monthly income, a significant proportion of respondents

(51.2%) earn above ₹60,000, while 32.0% fall in the ₹30,001–₹60,000 range, indicating that the majority of travellers belong to middle- to high-income categories with strong purchasing power. Collectively, these demographics suggest that travel decision-making in this study is largely driven by educated, financially stable individuals, with a significant share of unmarried and female respondents, thereby highlighting important consumer segments for tourism marketers and policymakers.

**Table 2: Preferred types of Tourism Spots**

<b>Tourism Spots</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>
Hill Station	194
Eco Friendly	48
Wildlife	223
Pilgrimage	99
Monuments	62
Beach	110
Adventure	118
Historical	76

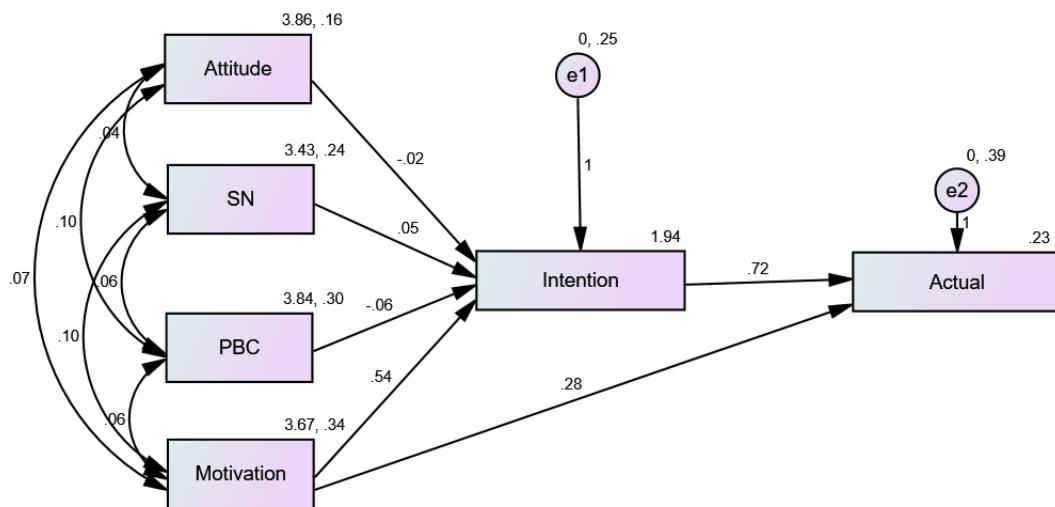
The preference distribution for tourism spots highlights clear patterns in travellers' choices. Wildlife tourism emerges as the most favoured category, with 223 respondents indicating interest, reflecting a growing awareness and appreciation of nature, biodiversity, and conservation-based travel experiences. Hill stations are the second most popular option (194 respondents), suggesting that cooler climates, scenic beauty, and relaxation remain central attractions for tourists, particularly as an escape from urban pressures. Adventure tourism (118 respondents) and beach destinations (110 respondents) also record strong interest, demonstrating that leisure-seeking travellers are equally drawn toward thrill-based activities and coastal experiences.

Pilgrimage tourism (99 respondents) reflects a considerable segment of travellers motivated by spirituality and religious sentiments, highlighting the cultural depth of tourism choices. Historical tourism (76 respondents) and visits to monuments (62 respondents) also maintain relevance, underscoring the continued appeal of heritage and cultural exploration. Eco-friendly tourism, while recording the least preference (48 respondents), indicates a niche but emerging trend as sustainability and responsible travel gradually gain recognition among modern travellers.

Overall, the results reveal a diverse set of tourist preferences, with nature-based tourism (wildlife and hill stations) commanding the strongest appeal, followed by adventure, beaches, and religious travel. Heritage and eco-friendly tourism occupy a smaller but meaningful space, suggesting that while traditional and sustainable tourism are valued, they may require greater promotion and awareness. These insights emphasize the need for tourism planners and marketers to balance offerings across mainstream nature-driven experiences and emerging sustainable segments, thereby catering to varied traveller motivations.

### **Travel Destination Decision**

To examine the travel destination decision model, the researcher employed Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using the constructs of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), namely attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Within the TPB framework, these variables are theorized to influence an individual's intention to visit a destination, which in turn drives actual travel behaviour. In addition to these established constructs, the present study incorporates motivation as an extended variable, recognizing its potential role not only in shaping intention but also in directly influencing actual behaviour. By integrating motivation into the TPB framework, the study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of tourists' decision-making processes.



**Figure 1: Travel Destination Decision Model**

**Sample Size: 322**

**Total Variables: 8**

Number of exogenous variables: 6

Number of endogenous variables: 2

**Table 3: Tourists Destination Decision Model**

Fit Indices	Value
Chi-square (CMIN)	3.727
Probability level (p)	0.293
Degrees of Freedom (DF)	3
CMIN/DF	1.242
Root Mean Square Error (RMSEA)	0.027
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.992
Relative Fit Index (RFI)	0.959
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.999
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.992
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.998

The results of the overall model fit (Table 2) demonstrate that the proposed framework achieves an excellent fit with the observed data. The chi-square/df ratio (1.242) falls well within the acceptable benchmark of less than 3, while the RMSEA value (0.027) further supports a close model–data correspondence. Moreover, the incremental fit indices (IFI = 0.999, CFI = 0.998, TLI = 0.992) substantially exceed the recommended threshold of 0.90, emphasizing the robustness and reliability of the structural model. Collectively, these results provide compelling evidence that the tourist destination decision model is well-suited to explain consumer behaviour in the context of travel choices.



**Table 4: Travel Destination Decision Model – Variable Causal Relationship**

	Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Intention	<--- Attitude	-0.020	0.082	0-.243	0.808
Intention	<--- SN	0.053	0.062	0.862	0.389
Intention	<--- PBC	-0.059	0.058	-1.013	0.311
Intention	<--- Motivation	0.543	0.052	10.381	0.000
Actual	<--- Intention	0.722	0.070	10.343	0.000
Actual	<--- Motivation	0.281	0.071	3.974	0.000

In examining the path coefficients, it is evident that motivation emerges as the most influential predictor of intention to visit a travel destination ( $\beta = 0.543$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This finding highlights that the travellers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations such as leisure, relaxation, cultural interest, or novelty seeking, play a central role in shaping their intentions. By contrast, attitude ( $\beta = -0.020$ ,  $p = 0.808$ ), subjective norms ( $\beta = 0.053$ ,  $p = 0.389$ ), and perceived behavioural control ( $\beta = -0.059$ ,  $p = 0.311$ ) were statistically insignificant. This indicates that social influence, individual control, and evaluative beliefs do not significantly impact tourists' intentions in this context, contrary to what is commonly suggested by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). This deviation may be explained by the unique socio-cultural characteristics of the respondents, where personal motivation outweighs external or normative pressures.

**Table 5: Effects on Intention to Visit and Destination Decision**

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	R <sup>2</sup>
Intention	Motivation to Visit Travel Destination	0.543	0	0.543	0.291
	Perceived Behavioural Control	-0.059	0	-0.059	
	Subjective Norms	0.053	0	0.053	
	Attitude towards the Travel Destination	-0.020	0	-0.020	
Actual Decision	Motivation to Visit Travel Destination	0.281	0.079	0.673	0.421
	Perceived Behavioural Control	0.000	-0.042	-0.042	
	Subjective Norms	0.000	0.038	0.038	
	Attitude towards the Travel Destination	0.000	-0.014	-0.014	
	Intention to Visit Travel Destination	0.722	0.000	0.722	

When moving from intention to actual decision-making, intention strongly predicts actual travel behaviour ( $\beta = 0.722$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), signifying that once individuals form an intention, it substantially drives their final decision. Motivation also exerts a significant direct effect on actual decision ( $\beta = 0.281$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with a combined total effect of 0.673 through both direct and indirect paths. This highlights that motivation not only shapes intention but also directly influences actual destination choice, reinforcing its dominant role. Other constructs, including attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, showed minimal or negative indirect effects, further supporting the view that tourists in this study rely heavily on their own motivational factors rather than external influences.

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) values also provides useful insights. Intention is explained at 29.1% by the independent constructs, while actual decision is explained at 42.1%. This suggests that while motivation alone explains a substantial portion of variance, other unobserved factors may also contribute to destination decision-making, such as past experiences, situational constraints, or availability of resources. Nonetheless, the model provides strong explanatory power within the tested variables.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The results contribute to theory by extending the predictive power of the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Traditionally, TPB emphasizes attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control as central drivers of intention. However, this study demonstrates that motivation surpasses these constructs in predicting both intention and actual behaviour. Incorporating motivation into the TPB framework enhances its explanatory strength and provides a more context-specific understanding of tourist behaviour. These findings suggest that future models of consumer choice in tourism should prioritize motivational dimensions over purely attitudinal or normative factors.

### **Managerial Implications**

From a managerial perspective, the SEM result highlights the importance of designing tourism marketing strategies that directly appeal to travellers' motivations. Destination marketers should focus on emotional and experiential appeals such as cultural enrichment, novelty seeking, relaxation, and adventure, as these resonate most strongly with travellers' decision-making processes. Since social influence and perceived control factors play only a marginal role, campaigns should focus less on peer or societal validation and more on triggering individual desires. Additionally, enhancing destination experiences that align with motivational triggers will strengthen both tourists' intentions and their eventual travel decisions, thereby improving destination competitiveness.

The findings of demographic profile of the respondents have direct implications for destination marketers and policymakers. The higher representation of female respondents suggests the need for campaigns emphasizing safety, cultural enrichment, wellness, and convenience. The significant share of younger and unmarried respondents calls for packages that emphasize adventure, experiential travel, and cost-effectiveness, while the older age group highlights opportunities for senior-friendly, comfortable, and heritage-focused tourism. The high educational profile indicates a preference for quality-driven, informative, and experience-rich travel, suggesting that marketing should appeal to rational as well as emotional dimensions of decision-making.

Additionally, the prevalence of family-oriented respondents points to the importance of offering family-friendly facilities, group discounts, and inclusive travel packages. Finally, the income distribution confirms the potential for premium tourism offerings, such as luxury accommodations, exclusive travel experiences, and personalized services, which cater to affluent travellers. Collectively, these demographic insights suggest that tourism strategies should be segmented and customized, with marketers tailoring their offerings to the distinct needs, motivations, and lifestyles of diverse consumer groups. Such targeted approaches not only enhance destination competitiveness but also strengthen tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

### **Conclusion**

The present study confirms that motivation is the most critical determinant of tourist destination choice, exerting strong direct and indirect effects on both intention and actual behaviour. While intention plays a pivotal role in translating motivation into actual decisions, other TPB-based constructs such as attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control have limited influence in this context. The findings validate the robustness of the proposed decision model and suggest that focusing on motivational factors offers deeper explanatory power than relying solely on attitudinal or normative variables. For destination marketers, the implication is clear: strategies that resonate with tourists' motivational drivers will be more effective in shaping travel decisions. Future research could extend this model by incorporating situational and psychological moderators, thereby providing an even more comprehensive understanding of consumer choice in tourism.

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research paper.

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