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STUDY OF TRAVEL MOTIVATION AND VISIT INTENTION: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PERCEIVED RISKS AND TRAVEL CONSTRAINTS

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ABSTRACT

The motivation to travel has been extensively studied, as it plays a crucial role in influencing people's travel decisions. Various theories have been proposed to explain travel behavior, including allocentric, psychocentric, push-pull factors, travel career ladder model (TLC) and travel career patterns model (TCP). This study delves into the impacts of perceived risks and travel constraints on Japanese travelers' motivation to travel to Mongolia, employing the push-pull theory as a framework. In the questionnaire survey, 142 Japanese citizens were selected by simple a random sampling method, and the survey was conducted in Japanese and English between April and May 2023. The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS 26 and SmartPLS 4 software. Out of the seven proposed hypotheses, four were confirmed and three were rejected. Two variables of push motivation, relax and recreation and relationship, did not significantly influence travel intention. However, three variables of pull motivation (comfort and dependability, nature and culture/history, and facility and event) were found to have a significant effect on travel intention. When examining risk/constraints as mediating variables, the results revealed that push motivation did not significantly influence travel intention, while pull factors demonstrated a statistically significant relationship. Two segments of travelers were also identified: those seeking nature-based experiences and those interested in historical and cultural attractions. These findings may guide tourism business operators seeking to attract Japanese travelers to Mongolia.

Keywords: travel intention; push-pull travel motivation factor; perceived risks; constraints

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INTRODUCTION

Following the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry stands out prominently among the sectors that have experienced substantial recuperation, contributing 7.6% to the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2022 and displaying a notable 22% upsurge in revenue from the previous year (WTTC, 2023). Given these promising developments, it becomes imperative for developing countries such as Mongolia to bolster and amplify the export earnings of their tourism sector through strategic initiatives, thereby fostering economic growth. Mongolia, as a landlocked central Asian country with geographical limitations to international tourism, is looking for ways to increase its participation in the integration of tourism in Northeast Asia by implementing the third-neighbor policy (Munkhuu et al., 2020). In the top 10 inbound flows of Mongolian tourism, travelers from South Asia, Euro-Asia, and Northeast Asia accounted for 83.5 percent in 2023 (National Statistics Office of Mongolia, 2023c), so experts in a) border tourism (Northern China and Russia's Siberia) and b) regional tourism (South Korea and Japan) have been receiving a lot of attention.

Over the past 25 years, Japanese tourists have been a significant source of revenue for Mongolia's tourism industry, consistently ranking among the top 10 foreign visitors. Recent data, however, indicates a concerning trend of declining Japanese tourist arrivals. In 1999-2000, Japanese tourists accounted for an average of 7.5% of foreign visitors, but this figure dropped to 4.2% in 2019 and further plummeted to 1.1% in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (National Statistics Office of Mongolia, 2023c). To boost regional tourism, government agencies have been working with South Korean airlines to improve logistics and implement influencer marketing strategies, while tour operators have upgraded their product mix, resulting in an increase of 47.7 percent in the flow of Korean travelers (National Statistics Office of Mongolia, 2023a, 2023b). It is unclear how this successful strategy will affect the flow of Japanese travelers, and now only tour operators are attempting to accelerate the flow in the absence of government organizations' initiatives and support.

Pereira et al. (2022) emphasized the need to make efforts to enhance the travel motivation of tourists to build a positive destination image. Therefore, understanding the travel motivations and travel intentions of Japanese travelers is essential for addressing the decline in their visits. According to Nam (2023) Japanese tourists have an extended model of goal-directed behavior when they travel to South Korea, while they may be motivated by goal-directed behavior or heritage culture and nature when they travel to Mongolia. Additionally, Watkins (2006) noted that Japanese visitors prefer to "escape from daily work life, relax, and spend time with family."

Little research has been conducted on the motivations of Japanese travelers to visit Mongolia, and a 2012 study found that Mongolian nomadic culture, animal husbandry, beautiful nature, and people's hospitality excite many Japanese travelers (Ministry of Nature, 2012). Also, stakeholders in Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) have relied on the Japanese, who have been motivated by the nomadic culture, nature, and hospitality of Mongolians to travel to Mongolia. Due to the impact of the new normal lifestyle after COVID-19 on tourism and the differences in travel behavior between generations, however, there is a need to investigate Japanese travelers' pull-push motivations and intentions to travel to Mongolia, thus developing innovations in the tour operator's business model.

To enhance the influx of Japanese travelers that Mongolia benefits from, it is imperative to comprehensively assess not only their motivations for travel but also the constraints and perceived risks they may face during or before travel. Moreover, examining the effects of these factors on their travel intentions is essential. Khan et al. (2019) studied the moderating effect of travel motivation on the relationship between perceived risks, travel constraints, and travel intention. Furthermore, Liang et al. (2023) examined travel motivation, perceived risks, and travel constraints and how they impact the destination images that contribute to the formation of a pre-travel image and travel intention. Studies conducted on perceived risks and travel constraints usually show that they are influencing variables on travel intention (Putra et al., 2023; Ramadhani, 2023; Ratna Sari et al., 2023) or travel destination (Khan et al., 2020; Nazir et al., 2021; Sun et al., 2022), or acting as moderating variables (Aziz &

Long, 2022; Khan et al., 2020; Liang et al., 2023), among other things.

This study, based on the push-pull theory of travel motivation, aims to investigate how Japanese traveler's travel motivation influences their intention to travel to Mongolia. Therefore, we examined four key aspects: checking how travel motivation factors influence travel intentions; assessing the impact of perceived risk/constraints variables on travel intentions; investigating how travel motivation factors influence perceived risks/constraints; and choosing perceived risks/constraints as the mediating variables to explore whether travel motivation influences travel intentions through the mediation of perceived risks/constraints.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Travel Motivation

It is natural for the motivation behind the selection of a travel destination to depend on both real and subjective reasons. Jang et al. (2009) stated that motivation is a human's inner state that directs and effects their behavior. Utama et al. (2014) noted that the travel motivation of foreign travelers is determined by push- and pull-factors that motivate their decision-making process when choosing a travel destination. Božić et al. (2017) contended that a comprehensive understanding of travel motivation necessitates considering both push and pull factors, offering a holistic view of the various factors that determine the decision to visit a destination. And likewise, Tu (2020) stated that the push and pull factors of travel motivation are important to consider when considering a traveler's behavior. Said and Maryono (2018) defined push motives as directly influencing the traveler's behavior, shaping their desires, goals, and responsibilities, while pull factors arise from the perception of a particular destination and existing positivity. Moreover, Ayoub and Mohamed (2024) explained that push motives actuate individuals to go away from home, while pull motives actuate individuals to visit a travel destination. It is crucial to identify the major attractions or motives of Japanese travelers visiting Mongolia. Therefore, the push-pull theory serves as the foundation of the theoretical model in this research.

The relationship between travel motivation and travel intention

Travel is a fundamental human activity that meets their needs, whether they are for experience, enlightenment, physical and psychological refreshment, or self-actualization (Trimurti & Utama, 2021). Therefore, in order to satisfy this need, tour operators and researchers should study why people travel and how their motivation to travel affects their travel intentions. According to Bai et al. (2009), the intention to travel is an emotional process that marks a shift from decision-making and behavior to actions, or it may lead to inaction, ultimately resulting in the decision not to travel. Notably, Satrya et al. (2023) explained that the possibility or willingness to visit a particular destination later is known as the intention to travel. Many researchers (Chi, 2022; He & Luo, 2020; Simpson et al., 2020) examined how travel motivation affects their desire to revisit travel intention. To expand the stable inbound flow of Japanese travelers to Mongolia after COVID-19, we have decided to examine their primary travel intentions.

Foedjiawati et al. (2023) emphasized the significance of travel motivation within the dynamic framework of tourist behavior, establishing it as a central theme in tourism studies since the 1960s. Consequently, extensive research has been dedicated to exploring the connection between travel motivations and intentions to visit or travel. Khan et al. (2019) discovered a positive correlation between travel motivation and intentions to visit or travel. Similarly, Chi and Pham (2022) extensively regarded travel motivation as a pivotal element in the current literature, particularly influencing intentions related to ecotourism. Moreover, Salsabila and Alversia (2020) argued that push-pull motivations influenced travel intention, and the relationship between these two was weak. Sari et al. (2023) found that the motivational push-pull factor played a weighty role in forming travel intentions.

Nowadays, there is a strong desire among the Japanese Z-generation to travel abroad. Japanese men travel an average of 1.7 times a year, while 50-year-olds travel twice a year, and women travel 1.5 times a year regardless of age (JBT Tourism Research & Consulting Co, 2019). This trend presents a significant opportunity for Mongolia to attract more Japanese travelers. It is

essential to explore whether Japanese travelers' motivation to travel has a positive effect on their travel intention, which leads to the following hypotheses:

H1: The push motivation of Japanese traveler has a positive impact on travel intention to Mongolia.

H2: The pull motivation of Japanese traveler has a positive impact on travel intention to Mongolia.

Travelers' perceived risks and travel constraints

Another influential factor in travelers' decision-making is the perceived risks or unexpected circumstances they may face during the trip. Trimurti and Utama (2019) stated that tourism is a highly sensitive and vulnerable activity, and travelers might encounter any perceived threats to safety, health, property, or finance. The perceived risks encompass elements such as travel costs, natural disasters, or social instability (Rahman et al., 2021). Perceived risk affects the choice of destinations and travel decisions (Lee & Jan, 2023) and affects them differently depending on individual values, past travel experiences, gender, or cultural factors (Conor, 2022). Caber and collaborators (2020) conducted a study suggesting that expected or perceived risks exert a negative influence on the interaction between destination perception and travel intention. However, a study by Bremser et al. (2022) found that, despite foreseeing the risks of the pandemic, visitors were willing to travel more, provided there were adequate mitigation measures to protect themselves. Additionally, Lee and Jan (2023) concluded that reducing travelers' risk perceptions through effective attention and real-time information can positively affect their travel intentions.

Liang et al. (2023) argued that the constraints of trave and perceived risk imply the perception of potential adversity or threats with reaching or enjoying a destination. Khan et al. (2019) studied intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints, and used travel constraints as a variable. Also, time, money, opportunity, knowledge, ability, overcrowding, lack of companions, lack of transportation, safety, interest, and poor quality are travel constraints that prevent people's leisure and tourism activities. Andreani and Njo (2021) stated that travelers have different constraints that may affect their travel intentions. According to them, travel constraints are the conditions under which travelers may not participate in leisure activities, and they include lack of time and information, financial conditions, transportation, and others. Moreover, Sari et al. (2023) argued that travel constraints have an impact on the intention to travel. The next three hypotheses were developed based on prior studies on the direct relationship between perceived risk/constraints and travel intention.

H3: Perceived risk/constraints of Japanese travelers have a positive impact on travel intention to Mongolia.

H4: Perceived risk/constraints have a positive impact on Japanese traveler's travel push motivation (push motivation).

H5: Perceived risk/constraints have a positive impact on pull motivation for Japanese travelers.

Travelers acquire information about perceived risks and constraints in a destination from various sources, including websites, social networks, word of mouth, and other social media channels, as noted by Neuburger and Egger (2021). Furthermore, for Japanese travelers, opinions and past travel experiences carry more weight than official information and warnings about a specific destination (Yang & Nair, 2015). Dulamragchaa (2023) also examined Mongolia-related news, photos, videos, and comments posted on popular Japanese online platforms. The study discovered that the steppes, cold winters, heritage, and nomadic livestock are the main reasons why Japanese people want to visit Mongolia. Furthermore, many comments from visitors encouraged others to visit Mongolia, making no mention of the difficulties or dangers encountered during the journey.

As already indicated, surveys on perceived risks and travel constraints usually show that they are either influencing travel intention or acting as moderating variables, leading to hypotheses 6 and 7.

H6: Perceived risk/constraints is a mediation variable that influences Japanese travelers' motivation (travel intention) to travel to Mongolia.

H7: Perceived risk/constraints is a mediating variable that influences Japanese travelers' motivation to travel in Mongolia.

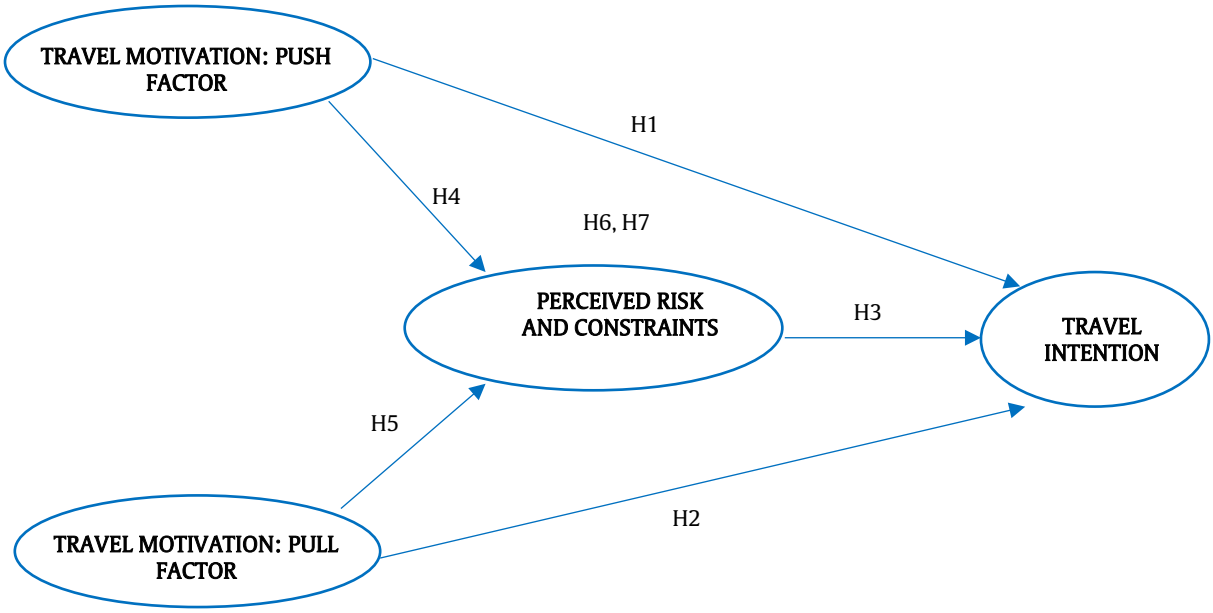


Figure 1: Proposed Research Model.
Source: Own elaboration.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling and Data collection

In this research, the population has been estimated to be 2,639 tourists, representing the average number of Japanese tourists who visited Mongolia in the last three years (National Statistics Office of Mongolia, 2022, 2023c). The overall complexity of a structural model has little influence on the minimum sample size requirements for PLS-SEM (Gefen et al., 2000; Hair et al., 2021). The "10-times rule" technique is suitable for a study of this nature, especially because it does not depend on the normality of the distribution (Hair et al., 2019; Priyanath et al., 2020). A total of 142 responses were received from those who received questionnaires, which was determined would be the optimal sample size. The questionnaire was developed in both Japanese and English, and data were collected on the social platform Facebook Messenger from April to May, 2023.

Questionnaire and Measurement tools

The questionnaire comprised four main parts. The first part included demographical questions (age, gender, marital status, annual income), and participants were asked about their source of information about Mongolia, with a focus on previous travel experiences. The second part addressed pull and push factors of travel motivation, and risks and constraints factors, eliciting responses regarding intentions to travel; this section specifically targeted individuals who had previously visited Mongolia. The travel motivations questions were based on prior studies (Io, 2021; Katsikari et al., 2020; Luvsandavaajav & Narantuya, 2021; Osiako et al., 2022; Sato et al., 2018; Wen & Songshan, 2019; Yousefi & Marzuki, 2015) and measured by twenty-four questions. Also, the perceived risks and constraints questions were based on previous studies (Blešić et al., 2022; Bremser et al., 2022; Caber et al., 2020; Chew & Jahari, 2014; Khan, Chelliah, Khan, et al., 2019; Meng et al., 2021; Şengel et al., 2022; Zaman et al., 2022) and encompassed ten questions on risks and seven on constraints. The third part of the questionnaire was designed for Japanese who had never been to Mongolia, and this section included eight questions on push factors, six on perceived risks, and six on travel constraints. The last part addressed travel intentions and was measured by five questions.

All measurements were conducted using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). The collected data were processed using IBM SPSS 26 software, employing statistical methods such as frequency

calculation, descriptive analysis, crosstab, exploratory factor analysis, and reliability analysis. Testing of research hypotheses was done using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method through SmartPLS 4 software.

Study background

This study surveyed 142 Japanese to gain insights into their motivations for traveling to Mongolia, their perceived risks and constraints, and their travel intentions. The demographic profile of respondents revealed that the majority were women (52%), aged over 45 years (65%), married (67%), and had an annual income of 1-4 million yen (33%). 33% of the participants had visited Mongolia before. There were somewhat different age distributions, with 14 (10%) for 18-24 years, 17 (12%) for 25-34 years, 19 (13%) for 35-44 years old; 37 (26%) for 45-54; and 55 (39%) for 55 years above.

The primary source of information about Mongolia for Japanese traveler was friends and relatives (44%), followed by other sources (15%), and the press and media (13%).

Our study revealed that Japanese travelers expressed a desire to experience a different way of life (m = 4.32), admire the beauty of nature (m = 4.19), learn about history and culture (m = 4.14), and escape from everyday life (m = 4.01). From the Mongolian perspective, factors attracting Japanese visitors included national cuisine and drinks (m = 4.15), nature, history (m = 4.05), and heritage events (m = 3.98). For those who had previously travelled to Mongolia, in addition to the mentioned factors, they noted the friendliness and hospitality of Mongolians as pull factors.

Furthermore, Japanese respondents believed that traveling to Mongolia carried low risk, and they identified two major travel constraints. According to the study, the highest risk was "food safety problems (m = 3.42)", the second was "crime (m = 3.62)", and other risks were very low (m < 1.87). Also, the highest travel constraints were "a trip to Mongolia would be more expensive than other international trips (m = 3.09)", "no time to travel for now (m = 2.83), and others were very low (m < 2.00). Notably, 67 percent of participants expressed intentions to visit Mongolia, and 83 percent of past tourists indicated they will revisit Mongolia. This indicates intentions among those familiar with Mongolia to return for future experiences.

Reliability and Validity of Research

The reliability and validity of the research model were analyzed by exploratory factor analysis (EFA), including the Kaiser-Meir-Olkin test (KMO) and Bartlett's test. The KMO of sampling adequacy was greater than 0.6 (Mohd Sohaili et al., 2022) - 0.826 for the push factors - meaning that the sample size was adequate. Also, Bartlett's test is acceptable when the significance value is less than 0.05 (Shkeer & Awang, 2019). The result of the significance value of Bartlett's test (sig <.001) was statistically significant and the actual performance was 66.549%. The variables with high loading values were set to be greater than 0.5, and 5 questionnaires with values less than 0.5 were excluded from the estimates.

The variables were classified into 2 categories, named Relax and Recreation, and Relationship, as indicated by other researchers. Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which expresses the reliability of the variables, was more than 0.6 (0.669–0.850), demonstrating the credibility of the research questionnaire. Overall, the processing of 7 questionnaires within 2 groups is considered to have good reliability and validity, as shown in Table 1.

The result of the KMO criterion for pull factors was 0.804, and the actual performance was 66.886%, indicating that the sample size was sufficient. The significance value of Bartlett's test (sig <.001) was statistically significant, confirming the credibility of the factor analysis results. Variables with high loading values were set to be greater than 0.5, and 2 questionnaires with values less than 0.5 were excluded from the calculations. Therefore, the estimates were applicable to the remaining 3 questionnaires, which were divided into 3 variables named as Comfort and Dependable, Nature and Culture/History, and Facility and Event, similar to previous research.

Since the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, expressing the reliability of the questions, was above 0.6 (0.670–0.952), processing with 3 groups of 10 questions is considered to have good reliability and validity.

Table 1: Results of EFA and Reliability Analysis: Travel Motivation

Items	See Figure 2.	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	% of variance	Cronbach's alpha
Travel motivation: PUSH FACTORS					
Factor 1. Relax and recreation					
Experience different lifestyle	Push1	0.822	3.46	49.425	0.85
Get close to and appreciate nature	Push9	0.792			
To see culture and history	Push12	0.785			
Escape everyday demands and relax mind	Push5	0.764			
Increase knowledge	Push2	0.732			
Factor 2. Relationship					
Spend time with family or friends	Push3	0.856	1.199	17.124	0.669
Establish friendships and develop a relationship	Push4	0.849			
Travel motivation: PULL FACTORS					
Factor 1. Comfort and dependable					
Safety/Peace place to travel and comfort	Pull8	0.969	4.184	41.838	0.952
Sanitation/Hygiene is dependable	Pull7	0.965			
Transportation is convenient and trustworthy	Pull3	0.941			
Mongolian people are friendly and kind to travelers	Pull11	0.902			
Factor 2. Nature and Culture/History					
To see natural heritage sites	Pull6	0.857	2.584	25.845	0.823
To see historical and cultural places/sites	Pull5	0.816			
To enjoy festivals/events (Naadam festival, Yak festival etc.)	Pull10	0.812			
Want to have traditional art (handy crafts, national goods etc.)	Pull9	0.662			
Factor 3. Facility and Event					
Good accommodation and facilities for vacation	Pull4	0.884	1.121	11.27	0.670
Availability of travel-related information	Pull12	0.775			

Source: Own elaboration.

The result of the KMO criterion for perceived risk factors was 0.758, and the actual performance was 76.421%, indicating that the sample size was sufficient. The significance value of Bartlett's test (sig < .001) was statistically significant, confirming the effectiveness of the factor analysis method. In the research, the variables were divided into 2 groups named Performance Risk and Physical Risk, similar to other researchers. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient, above 0.6 (0.823–0.949), suggests that processing 8 questionnaires within 2 groups is considered reliable and valid.

Regarding the limiting factors, the result of the KMO criterion was 0.633, and the actual performance was 66.607%, indicating a sufficient sample size. The Bartlett's test significance value (sig <.001) was statistically significant, affirming the effectiveness of the factor analysis method. Variables with high loading values were set to be greater than 0.5, and 2 questionnaires with values less than 0.5 were excluded. Although 2 variables were divided and named Intrapersonal Constraints and Interpersonal Constraints, like previous researchers, the Intrapersonal Constraint's Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.767. The Interpersonal Constraints variable was excluded due to its low Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.308.

Table 2: Results of EFA and Reliability Analysis: Perceived Risk and Constraints

Items	See Figure 2	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	% of variance	Cronbach's alpha
PERCEIVED RISKS					
Factor 1. Performance Risk					
Purchasing a tourist product would cause me psychological discomfort	PercRisk7	0.958	3.610	36.102	0.949
There are unexpected extra expenses during the trip	PercRisk10	0.955			
Sites and hotels in Mongolia would be unsatisfactory	PercRisk6	0.951			
I would not receive personal satisfaction from traveling to Mongolia	PercRisk9	0.877			
Factor 2. Physical Risk					
Political Unrest and Violence in Mongolia	PercRisk3	0.887	2.768	27.678	0.823
Crime (theft, robbery, pickpockets) in Mongolia	PercRisk2	0.857			
Food safety problems in Mongolia	PercRisk1	0.723			
Hydro-meteorological hazards would destroy and damage my property (car, personal belongings etc.)	PercRisk4	0.720			
CONSTRAINTS					
Intrapersonal Constraints					
I saw online reviews; social media recommendations on the internet and decided not to go there	Constraints6	0.893	2.144	42.872	0.767
Someone recommended me not to go there	Constraints5	0.846			
Traveling involves too much risk	Constraints7	0.736			

Source: Own elaboration.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing analysis was performed using SmartPLS 4 software using structural model analysis (SEM). CR coefficient, AVE, and Cronbach's alpha were calculated to check the consistency of the research model, and the coefficient was calculated based on Gefen et al.'s study (Gefen et al., 2000). The AVE coefficient was used to test the validity of the latent variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The research model was tested by calculating the SRMR-Standardized root mean square residual, and the SRMR value greater than 0.10 is considered inadequate, and less than 0.08 is considered to be appropriate (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

The research findings indicate an SRMR of 0.096 with a significance level of 95% confidence interval or a 5% significance level, suggesting compatibility with the research model. The CR coefficient was above 0.8 (0.850-0.904). Cronbach's alpha of the variables was more than 0.6 (0.762-0.850), so is considered optimal (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2014). In addition, the AVE coefficient was more than 0.5 (0.656-0.770). We also checked variance inflation factors (VIF) to assess the collinearity issue in the model; it has a VIF value of 1.000–3.325. VIF values of 5 or above indicate collinearity problems (Hair et al., 2021). Hence, it was confirmed that the present study model is free from collinearity issues.

Table 3: Reliability, convergent, and discriminant validity

Factors	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE	Push Factor	Pull Factor	Perceived Risk/ Constraints	Travel Intention
Push Factor	0.762	0.850	0.656	0.640			
Pull Factor	0.821	0.904	0.770	-0.169	0.696		
Perceived Risk/ Constraints	0.850	0.904	0.737	0.893	0.078	0.572	
Travel Intention	1.000	1.000	1.000	-0.090	0.167	-0.157	1.000

Source: Own elaboration.

The SEM results indicate that push motivation does not significantly influence travel intention (β = 0.189; t-value = 1.344; p > 0.05), leading to the rejection of H1. Similarly, push motivation does not have a significant impact on risk-taking/constraint (β = 0.074; t-value = 1.004; p > 0.05), resulting in the rejection of H4.

In contrast, pull factors were found to have a significant effect on travel intention (β = 0.342; t-value = 2.086; p < 0.05) and also on the risk/constraints of expectations (β = 0.906; t-value = 14.273; p < 0.05), confirming H2 and H5, respectively. Additionally, H3 is confirmed (Table 5) as perceived risk/constraints significantly affect travel intention (β = -0.448; t-value = 2.401; p < 0.05).

Table 4: Results of the direct relationships between variables

Hypothesis	The Path	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics	P values	Remark
H1	Travel Intention ← Push Factor	0.189	0.172	0.141	1.344	0.089	Rejected
H2	Travel Intention ← Pull Factor	0.342	0.297	0.164	2.086	0.019**	Supported
H3	Travel Intention ← Risk/Constraints	0.448	-0.410	0.187	2.401	0.008**	Supported
H4	Risk/Constrains ← Push Factor	0.074	0.043	0.074	1.004	0.158	Rejected
H5	Risk/Constrains ← Pull Factor	0.906	0.893	0.063	14.273	0.000***	Supported

Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

Source: Own elaboration.

The test results for risk/constraint factors as a mediating variable between motivation to push and intention to travel were non-significant (β = 0.033; t-value = 1.054; p > 0.05). Consequently, H6 is rejected. However, H7 is considered partially mediated as it was found to be significant (β = 0.406; t-value = 2.414; p < 0.05) as a mediating variable between travel motivation and intention.

Table 5: Results of the indirect relationships between variables

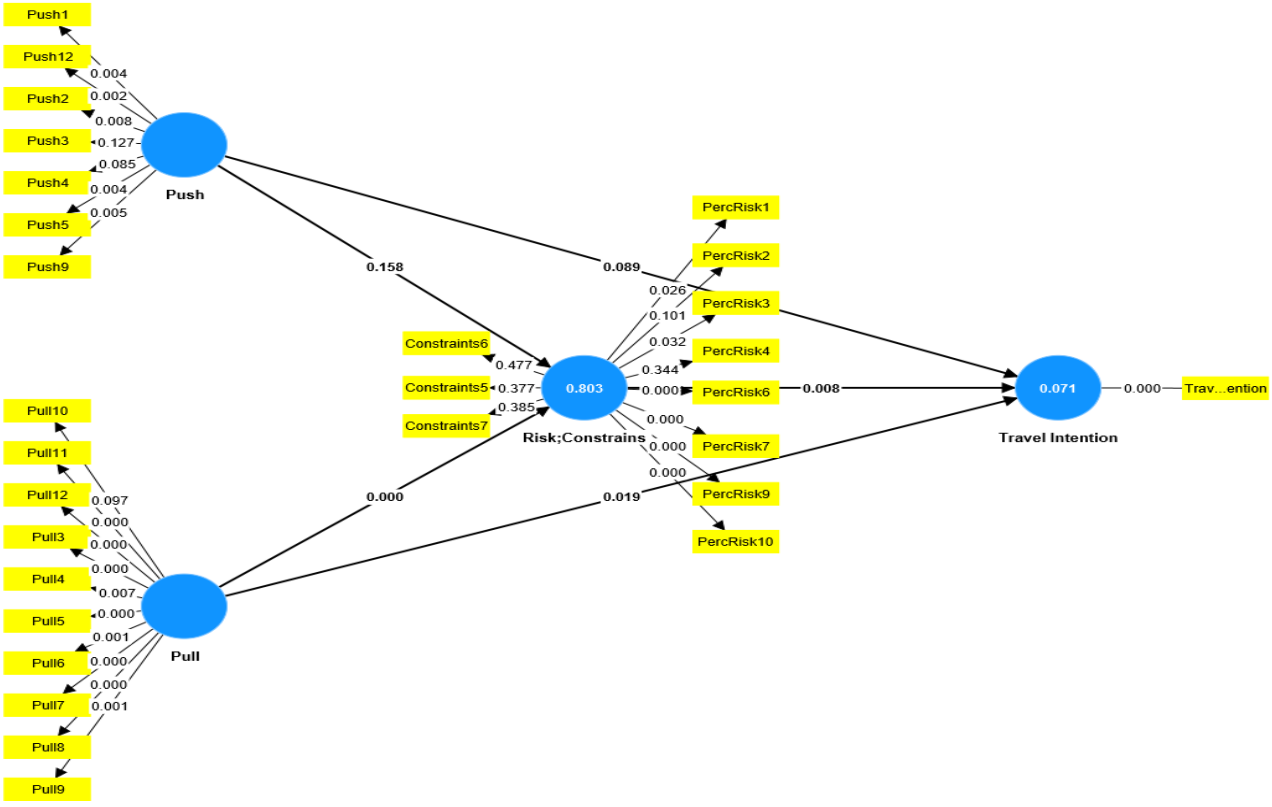
Hypothesis	The Path	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics	P values	Remark
H6	Travel Intention ← Risk/Constrains ← Push Factor	0.033	-0.017	0.032	1.054	0.146	Rejected
H7	Travel Intention ← Risk/Constrains ← Pull Factor	0.406	-0.365	0.168	2.414	0.008**	Partially mediated

Note: ***p<0.001, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

Source: Own elaboration.

Hence, among the seven hypotheses, four were confirmed while three were rejected. Consequently, it is deemed that the results of the researcher's proposed model are partially confirmed. Figure 2.'s coded description is now included in Tables 1 and 2.

Figure 2: Research Model Output



Source: Own elaboration.

DISCUSSION

This study, based on the Push-Pull theory of travel motivation, aimed to investigate how Japanese traveler's travel motivation influences their intention to travel to Mongolia. The results of the study rejected the hypotheses H1, H4, and H6. To clarify, research findings indicate that the push factors influencing Japanese travelers' travel motivation do not impact their intention

to travel to Mongolia, and similarly, push factors do not have a significant effect on perceived risk/constraint. There is a common belief that push factors are the primary motivators for travel, but the research results indicate that traveling to Mongolia is probably not the first choice for Japanese travelers. It may depend on factors such as the poor development of transport logistics and infrastructure and the high prices of flight tickets. Conceivably, to impact the push motives of Japanese travelers, tour operators should innovate their travel product packages, while government agencies should develop more optimal transportation and logistics solutions in the short run, which will result in convenient travel to interested destinations.

As a result of the research, pull factors were found to have a significant effect on travel intention and also on the perceived risk/constraints confirming H2 and H5, respectively. This suggests that Mongolian wildlife, history, and culture serve as motivating factors for Japanese travelers to visit Mongolia. Also these findings align with the results of other studies conducted by Io (2021), Tan & Fan (2023), Neuburger and Egger (2021) and Bremser et al. (Bremser et al., 2022). Additionally, H7 is considered partially mediated, as it was found risk/constraints factors to be significant as a mediating variable between travel motivation and intention. By reducing the perceived risk/constraints, the pull motivation of the destination will have a positive effect on the intention to travel, so it is necessary to motivate special ideas of the pull factor while promoting it as 'a low-risk destination'. Mongolia's destination image is a full motivation factor for nature-based tourism. Thus, there is a potential to expand the number of Japanese travelers through eco-tourism.

The results of testing support the third hypothesis (H3), indicating that perceived risks/constraints of Japanese travelers significantly affect travel intentions to Mongolia. This finding aligns with previous studies, including those by Khan, Chelliah, and Ahmed (2019), Neuburger and Egger (2021) and Bremser et al. (2022). There are no perceived risk/constriants, such as political unrest, war, or natural disasters, an earthquake, sea storms, etc., which is an advantage of the travel destination. To gain a lasting competitive edge, Mongolian tour agents, tour operators, and managers must create technology innovation services (Anggraeni et al., 2023) and offer innovative products and service packages that influence push motivation in their tours. Although the competitiveness of a developing country's tourism sector is determined by a variety of social and economic development indicators (Stryzhak et al., 2024), it is critical to address the following issues because stakeholders play a crucial role (Arabov et al., 2024) in the value chain of tour operators that provide services to Japanese travelers. Within this, the quality of services provided to tourists, the better the image of the destination (Dewi et al., 2024) the more the service strategy provided must be in accordance with Japanese culture (Prasetyo Ery & Hendraningrum, 2023). Also, tour guide competence is a determinant of the effect of tour quality evaluation (Almasooudi & Rahman, 2023; Hwang et al., 2023; Kul et al., 2024) and high hygiene standards (Asthu & Putra, 2021); combined with staycation (Kurniati & Suryanto, 2023), this must be considered in the package tour creation or design.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study used a quantitative analysis method and proposed seven hypotheses; four were confirmed and three were rejected. As a result of the research, push factors influencing Japanese travelers' travel motivation do not impact their intention to travel to Mongolia and do not have a significant effect on perceived risk or constraint. On the other hand, pull factors were found to have a significant effect on travel intention and also on the perceived risk/constraints of Japanese travelers, which significantly affect travel intentions to Mongolia. Also, risk/constraint factors are significant as a mediating variable between travel motivation and intention.

Based on the research findings, the target market for Japanese travelers coming to Mongolia has been categorized into two groups: those seeking the natural beauty of the destination and those desiring experiences related to its history and culture. Given the widespread use of YouTube among the Japanese population, leveraging it as the primary platform for direct marketing and personal selling is deemed effective. Simultaneously, incorporating other online tools ensures that consumers can access information from various sources. In this context, the

exploration of blogs authored by previous travelers and the sharing of their experiences through YouTube channels have been observed to elevate the motivation of Japanese to travel. Therefore, strategies that emphasize user-generated content, particularly on platforms like YouTube, can play a pivotal role in influencing and inspiring Japanese travelers.

Due to the specific focus on Japanese travelers in this study, it is essential to acknowledge that travel motives can vary among individuals from different countries. To enhance the reliability of future research, expanding the original sample population is recommended. Conducting similar studies and administering questionnaires to travelers from diverse countries will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of intention factors, allowing for tailored recommendations specific to each market.

Additionally, considering the dynamic nature of travel motivations over time, it is crucial to recognize that results from past research and future investigations may differ. The present study was conducted in the post-pandemic period, which could potentially lead to an underestimation of risk or constraints by survey participants. Therefore, conducting research at regular intervals and in a timely manner becomes more critical to capture evolving trends more accurately. This approach ensures that the research remains relevant and accounts for shifting factors influencing travel intentions. In many cases, researchers have discovered that perceived risks and travel constraints usually show that they are either influencing travel intention or acting as moderating variables, and in future research they will be mediating factors.

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