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Research article

The influence of nostalgic childhood holiday memories on adult travel habits

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between childhood vacation habits and adult travel preferences. The study investigates whether tourism experiences acquired during childhood influence accommodation preferences, vacation type preferences, destination perceptions, and behavioural intentions in adulthood. Data was collected from adult participants through a structured questionnaire. The research model was tested using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. The findings indicate that childhood accommodation preferences and vacation type preferences significantly influence travel preferences in adulthood. Destination personality and destination image perceived during childhood were found to have a significant effect on behavioural intention. In contrast, childhood travel motivations did not significantly influence adult travel preferences. Furthermore, childhood destination image showed a negative relationship with adult vacation type preferences. The results suggested that tourism experiences acquired during childhood may shape future travel decisions and destination choices. Therefore, destinations and tourism businesses should consider the long-term effects of experiences offered to child tourists. The study contributes to tourism literature by examining childhood vacation experiences as a determinant of adult travel preferences. It provides empirical evidence on the long-term influence of childhood travel memories and habits on tourism behaviour in adulthood.

KEYWORDS

Childhood tourism experiences; tourism preferences; travel motivation; destination image & personality; behavioural intention

Introduction

Going on a vacation and purchasing a travel product is an emotionally important decision. A vacation creates a financial burden and offers an opportunity to escape from work and daily routines. Consumer motivation in this decision is shaped by internal and external factors (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007). Motivation, defined as the activation of individuals through psychological and biological needs (Cohen et al., 2014), plays an important role in vacation choices. Push factors represent internal motivations to travel, whereas destination attributes act as pull factors and represent external motivations (Uğur, 2025). The Travel Career Ladder model suggests that travel motivations may change over time as individuals accumulate travel experiences (Pearce & Lee, 2005; Wong & Musa, 2014). Studies on vacation and accommodation preferences in tourism suggest that tourist decisions are shaped by multiple factors, including travel motivation, destination personality, destination image, and behavioural intentions. Recent research has also highlighted the influence of childhood travel experiences on tourism preferences in adulthood. MacInnes et al. (2022) argued that travel habits developed during childhood can have lasting effects on adult motivations and preferences. Similarly, Lally & Gardner (2013) noted that repeated behaviours may become habits over time and influence future behaviour. These findings suggest that childhood vacation experiences may shape later destination and accommodation preferences. Tourism studies have extensively examined the relationships among travel motivations, destination image, destination personality, and tourist behaviour. Destination personality has been found to shape tourist perceptions, destination choice intentions, and revisit intentions

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(Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011; Çelik et al., 2019). Behavioural intention is widely used to explain tourists' intentions to revisit and recommend destinations (Ajzen, 1991). However, the influence of childhood vacation experiences and past travel habits on tourism preferences in adulthood has received limited attention.

Previous studies show that travel experience is an important factor shaping tourist motivations and future travel behaviour. Filep & Greenacre (2007) argued that travel motivations should be explained not only by age but also by individuals' previous experiences. Similarly, Paris & Teye (2010) found that tourist motivations change as travel experience increases, although some motivations, such as cultural learning and relaxation, remain relatively stable. Song & Bae (2018) also reported that past travel experiences influence future travel behaviour. Studies on tourist behaviour indicate that past experiences influence future preferences. Gardner (2008) argued that repeated behaviours gradually become habits and may automatically shape future actions. Similarly, Chen et al. (2009) and Liu et al. (2008) suggested that previous travel behaviours and preferences influence future travel choices. Studies on family tourism decisions have also shown that childhood tourism experiences may have lasting effects. Li et al. (2021) found that children's tourism knowledge and involvement increase their influence on family tourism decisions. These findings suggest that childhood tourism experiences contribute to tourism-related attitudes and behaviours later in life. Cohen et al. (2014) emphasized that tourist behaviour is shaped not only by economic factors but also by experiences, emotions, habits, and memories. In this study, behavioural intention refers to an individual's intention to revisit a destination and recommend it to others based on memorable childhood travel experience. Childhood is an important developmental period during which behavioural patterns and habits begin to form. Habits emerge through repeated behaviours and may influence future actions (Wood et al., 2002; Gardner, 2009). In tourism, family travel experiences during childhood may contribute to destination perceptions, accommodation preferences, travel motivations, and vacation habits (MacInnes et al., 2022). Although previous studies have mainly focused on travel motivations, destination personality, service quality, and behavioural intentions, the influence of childhood vacation experiences on tourism preferences in adulthood remains underexplored. Therefore, this study examines the relationship between childhood vacation habits and tourism preferences in adulthood. This study examines the relationship between childhood holiday experiences and tourism preferences in adulthood. Participants were asked about their accommodation choices and preferred holiday types during childhood and adulthood. The study also explores whether childhood holiday memories influence revisit intentions and positive word-of-mouth intentions. It contributes to the literature by revealing the influence of childhood holiday habits on destination and accommodation preferences and highlighting the long-term effects of tourism experiences acquired during childhood.

Conceptual framework

Holiday preferences and accommodation

Travel refers to the movement of individuals between locations for specific purposes. Various factors explain travel habits, including duration, destination, accommodation type, and expenditure levels (Harman, 2014). Repeated behaviours can gradually develop into habits over time (Gardner, 2009). In this study, holiday habits represent the accommodation types, destinations, and travel patterns that individuals repeatedly experienced during childhood. Travel motivation is driven by internal and external forces shaped by psychological needs (Sellick, 2004). Tourist behaviour includes both hedonic and emotional elements (Cohen et al., 2014). Drawing on an adaptation of Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs, tourist motivations are shaped by requirements for relaxation, safety, and social relationships. Furthermore, the Travel Career Ladder (TCL) proposes that motivations evolve as travel experience increases (Pearce & Lee, 2005). Tourists may be motivated by a desire for knowledge, social bonding, or external family expectations. Additionally, nostalgic tourists travel to relive past memories and strengthen family bonds (Sellick, 2004).
Early travel experiences formed during childhood play a fundamental role in shaping adult travel behaviour (MacInnes et al., 2022). Individuals often travel to relive past memories (Sellick, 2004). Furthermore, self-concepts and personalities influence accommodation choices, as tourists often seek to preserve their identity (Cohen et al., 2014). These studies indicate that childhood experiences significantly influence tourism choices in adulthood. Based on this literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_1. The accommodation type preferred during childhood influences the accommodation type preferred in adulthood.

H_{1a}. The accommodation type preferred during childhood influences the holiday type preferred in adulthood.

H_{1b}. The accommodation type preferred during childhood influences behavioural intention in adulthood.

H_2. The holiday type preferred during childhood influences the accommodation type preferred in adulthood.
H_{2a}. The holiday type preferred during childhood influences the holiday type preferred in adulthood.
H_{2b}. The holiday type preferred during childhood influences behavioural intention in adulthood.

Destination personality

Adult travel decisions are influenced by both current motivations and past experiences. Childhood travel experiences specifically help shape tourism preferences later in life (MacInnes et al., 2022). Destination personality refers to the human characteristics attributed to tourism locations. This concept represents the emotional and symbolic dimensions of a destination and is adapted from the brand personality framework (Aaker, 1997). Ekinci & Hosany (2006) define destination personality through three dimensions: sincerity, excitement, and conviviality. According to Self-Congruity Theory, individuals tend to prefer destinations that align with their self-concepts (Sirgy, 1982). Positive personality traits perceived during childhood may influence tourism preferences in adulthood (Sellick, 2004). Furthermore, destination personality perceptions affect tourist satisfaction and future behavioural intentions (Artuğer & Çetinsöz, 2014). Based on this literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:H_3. The personality of the destination experienced during childhood influences the type of accommodation preferred in adulthood.

H_{3a}. The personality of the destination experienced during childhood influences the holiday type preferred in adulthood.
H_{3b}. The personality of the destination experienced during childhood influences behavioural intention in adulthood.

Destination image

Destination image refers to the overall impressions and beliefs that individuals hold about a location (Artuğer & Çetinsöz, 2014). The cognitive component involves knowledge of physical features and service quality (Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001). In contrast, the affective component represents the feelings that a destination evokes in an individual (Umur & Eren, 2016). Destination image serves as a fundamental cognitive filter and acts as a decisive factor in travel choices (Govers et al., 2007; Sirakaya et al., 2001). Perceptions formed during childhood can influence tourism preferences in later years. Thus, image is a long-term factor that shapes behavioural tendencies.

H_4: The destination image experienced in childhood influences the type of accommodation preferred in adulthood.
H_{4a}: The destination image experienced in childhood influences the type of holiday preferred in adulthood.
H_{4b}: The destination image experienced in childhood influences behavioural intention in adulthood.

Travel motivation

Travel motivation is a fundamental factor that determines participation in tourism activities. The Travel Career Ladder approach suggests that motivations evolve alongside travel experiences (Pearce, 2005). In contrast, habit theory suggests that repetition can make behaviours automatic, potentially replacing conscious decision-making (Lally & Gardner, 2013). Habits are learned patterns involving a specific cue, a routine, and a reward (Gardner et al., 2012). These automatic behaviours allow individuals to act without conscious effort when they encounter a stimulus. The Theory of Planned Behaviour views intention as the basis of behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). However, habits can also guide behaviour alongside intention (Gardner, 2009). As strong predictors of behaviour, habits are especially important in tourism due to high decision repetition (Wood et al., 2002). Research shows that childhood travel motivations can influence adult tourism preferences (MacInnes et al., 2022). Thus, early motivations are a significant factor in shaping long-term preferences.

H_5: Travel motivation in childhood influences the type of accommodation preferred in adulthood.
H_{5a}: Travel motivation in childhood influences the type of holiday preferred in adulthood.
H_{5b}: Travel motivation in childhood influences behavioural intention in adulthood.

Behavioural intention

Behavioural intention is a psychological indicator of the likelihood that an individual will perform a specific action (Ajzen, 1991). In tourism, this concept includes the tendency to revisit, recommend, and develop loyalty (Lin & Hsieh, 2007). Behavioural intention is closely related to variables such as destination image and service quality (Türkmen et al., 2018; Sarıışık, 2014) and feelings for destination (Agyeman-Duah et

al., 2024). Additionally, perceived value and switching costs significantly impact customer loyalty (Yang & Peterson, 2004; Akkılıç & Varol, 2016). In this study, behavioural intention focuses on the memory of childhood holiday destinations and the subsequent desire to revisit or recommend them.

H_6: Behavioural intention influences the type of accommodation preferred in adulthood.
*H_{6a}**:** *Behavioural intention influences the type of holiday preferred in adulthood.*

This study proposes an integrated model that examines the impact of accommodation preferences, destination image, destination personality, and travel motivations acquired during childhood on tourism preferences and behavioural intention in adulthood.

Methodology

The study was conducted online using convenience sampling. This method involves collecting data from individuals who are easily accessible (Okumuş, 2010). Additionally, stratified sampling was used to represent the population by selecting individuals with specific characteristics (Karabey, 2019). The research primarily focused on participants aged 40 and older. Participants were asked to recall holiday destinations they visited before the age of twelve. They identified their current holiday habits as well as the accommodation types and destinations of their past holidays. Furthermore, participants evaluated items regarding their families' travel motivation, destination personality, and destination image during their childhood. Finally, they responded to items concerning their behavioural intentions toward the childhood destination that impacted them the most. The questionnaire was prepared via Google Forms and consisted of several sections. It included six questions on demographic data and ten options regarding current holiday habits. The survey also featured twelve options for destination preference, 68 items on holiday motivation, and twelve items on destination personality. Additionally, there were 17 items for destination image and three items for behavioural intention. Data analysis was performed using statistical methods in SPSS and PLS-SEM. Scale reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, while validity was tested via Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was used to ensure sample adequacy, and normality was assessed through skewness and kurtosis tests in SPSS. Hypothesis testing, scale reliability evaluation, and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted using SmartPLS. PLS-SEM is a path analysis-based modelling approach that offers high analytical flexibility, particularly for small sample groups (Hair et al., 2019). Consequently, it is an appropriate method for research in the field of tourism and hospitality services (Becker et al., 2023).

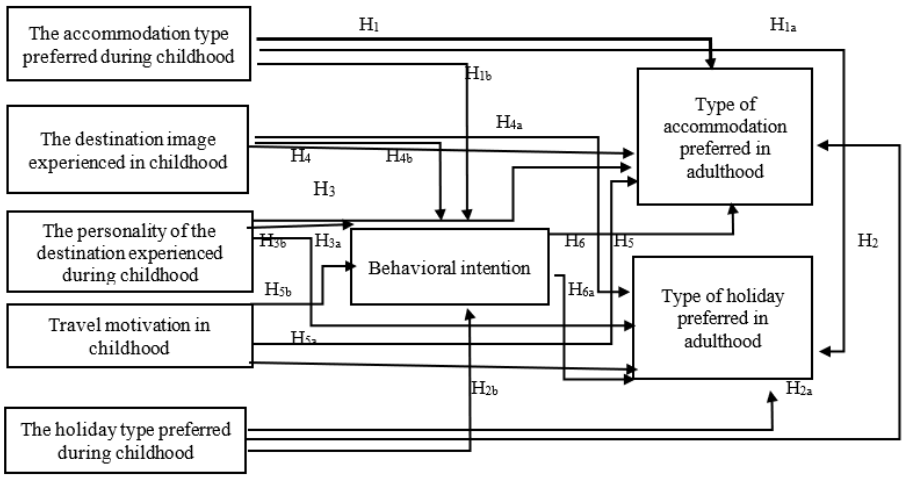

Figure 1. Research model

Scales used in the study

Items regarding travel motivation, destination image, destination personality, and behavioural intention were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale. Preferences for current and past holidays were presented as binary options.

Holiday motivation scale

This study examined travel habits using the travel career model (Pearce, 2005), following a similar approach to MacInnes et al. (2022). Items with high factor loadings were selected for the study, while the romance

factor was excluded. Participants evaluated motivations for both childhood (before age 12) and adulthood. Although specific childhood events are difficult to recall, general memories are considered reliable from age six (Henry et al., 1994). The travel motivation questionnaire developed by Pearce & Lee (2005) was utilized.

Destination personality scale
The destination personality scale developed by Ekinci & Hosany (2006) was utilized. It consists of 12 items across three dimensions: sincerity, excitement, and conviviality. This scale was adapted from the brand personality framework (Aaker, 1997). Participants evaluated the destinations they visited most frequently with family before the age of twelve.

Destination image scale
Destination image consists of cognitive and affective dimensions (Artuğer & Çetinsöz, 2014). The cognitive image involves knowledge and beliefs, while the affective image represents feelings toward a destination. This study adopted items from Bezirgan (2014), who adapted the original scale developed by Baloglu & Mangaloglu (2001). Bezirgan (2014) reported reliability values of 0.70 through confirmatory factor analysis. The scale includes 13 items for cognitive image and 4 items for affective image. Participants evaluated the image of destinations they visited with family before the age of twelve.

Behavioural intention scale
The behavioural intention scale was adapted from Yang & Peterson (2004). This scale was validated by Akkılıç & Varol (2015), who reported a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.986. Three items were used to measure behavioural intention in this study. Participants evaluated their recommendations for the childhood destination that remained most vivid in their memory.

Findings

The reliability and validity analyses of the scales used in the study were conducted using SPSS software.

Table 1.Reliability and validity analysis

Scale	Cronbach alpha	Mean	Skewness	Kurtosis	KMO	Bartlett
Travel motivation	0,984	176,98	- 0,539	-0,157	0,933	0,000
Destination personality	0,893	38,17	-0,610	0,531	0,845	0,001
Destination image	0,829	46,34	0,179	0,119	0,814	0,001
Behavioural intention	0,811	8,95	-0,669	0,391	0,689	0,001

The reliability and validity of the scales were analysed using SPSS software. Internal consistency was measured using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, where higher values indicate increased reliability (Uğur, 2020). The results demonstrated high reliability for the travel motivation scale (0.984), destination personality scale (0.893), destination image scale (0.829), and behavioural intention scale (0.811). As all values exceeded the accepted thresholds, the scales are considered highly reliable. Data normality was assessed through skewness and kurtosis values. In normal or near-normal distributions, these values are expected to fall within the ±1 range (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018). The analysis confirmed that the skewness and kurtosis values for all scales were within these acceptable limits. Consequently, the dataset meets the assumption of normal distribution and is suitable for parametric analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used to determine scale suitability for factor analysis. According to Field (2009), a KMO value exceeding 0.50 suggests that the dataset is appropriate for analysis. In this study, KMO values reached 0.933 for travel motivation, 0.845 for destination personality, 0.814 for destination image, and 0.689 for behavioural intention. These scores verify that sampling adequacy is above the acceptable threshold. Additionally, significant results for Bartlett's Test ($p < 0.05$) demonstrate sufficient correlation among variables. Therefore, the research scales are concluded to be adequate in terms of reliability and construct validity (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018). Data for the study were collected between December 2022 and April 2026. The final research sample consisted of 164 individuals. Demographic analysis shows that 26.2% of participants were male and 73.8% were female. Regarding marital status, 47% of the respondents were married. Specifically, married participants with children accounted for 21.3%, whereas single participants with children represented 6.1%The distribution by generations was as follows: Baby Boomers (born in 1964 and earlier) represented 7.3%, Generation X (1965–1979) represented 46.3%, and Generation Y (1980–1999) represented 46.3%. In terms of education level, 37.8% of the participants held a postgraduate degree, 36.6% had an undergraduate degree, 12.8% held an associate degree, and 12.2% were high school graduates. Regarding the destinations where participants travelled with their families during childhood, 3% responded as international, while 21% indicated both domestic and international

travel. A majority of the participants, 75.6%, stated that they were engaged in domestic travel. Information concerning the participants' travel frequency is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Participants' travel frequency

Travel Frequency	Travel Frequency	Travel Frequency	Travel Frequency
Travel with family in childhood	80	75	10
Travel performed in adulthood	31	99	36

Participants reported their annual travel frequency for both childhood and adulthood. The number of individuals traveling once a year decreased from 80 in childhood to 31 in adulthood. In contrast, those traveling fewer than five times a year rose from 75 to 99. Furthermore, participants traveling more than five times a year increased from 10 to 36. These shifts in frequency across generations are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of travel frequency across generations

Generation	Period	Once a Year	Between 1-5 Times a Year	More than 5 Times a Year
Baby Boomers	Childhood	4	8	0
	Adulthood	1	9	2
Generation X	Childhood	35	39	2
	Adulthood	9	52	14
Generation Y	Childhood	41	27	7
	Adulthood	20	36	19

The distribution of travel frequency across generations indicates an increase in travel activity from childhood to adulthood. Baby Boomers reported relatively limited travel during childhood but showed higher travel frequency in adulthood. Generation X also demonstrated an increase in travel activity, particularly in the category of one to five trips per year. Generation Y emerged as the most mobile group in adulthood, recording the highest proportion of individuals traveling more than five times annually. Overall, travel frequency increased across all generations from childhood to adulthood. The increase was particularly evident in the highest travel frequency category. While Generation X maintained a relatively consistent pattern of regular travel, Generation Y emerged as the most mobile cohort, reporting the highest frequency of travel in adulthood. Participants were asked about their accommodation preferences during childhood family vacations and their current accommodation preferences in adulthood. Multiple responses were allowed.

Table 4. Accommodation preferences

Accommodation type. n:164	Adulthood preference	Childhood preference with family	Preference in both childhood and adulthood
Family/Friend's House	47	82	28
Summer House	63	63	26
Guesthouse	21	43	11
Campsite	23	29	7
Caravan	14	4	-
Mid-range Hotel	51	45	23
Resort	68	34	18
Luxury Hotel	82	23	15
AirBNB	48	3	1

Participants were allowed to select more than one accommodation type. Family/friend houses were the most common accommodation type during childhood (50.00%) but declined in adulthood (28.66%). Summer house preferences remained stable (38.41%). The use of pensions and camping sites decreased in adulthood, whereas preferences for caravans, mid-range hotels, holiday villages, luxury hotels, and Airbnb accommodations increased. The most notable increases were observed for luxury hotels (14.02% to 50.00%), holiday villages (20.73% to 41.46%), and Airbnb accommodations (1.83% to 29.27%). Overall, traditional accommodation forms were more common during childhood, while commercial and alternative accommodation options became more popular in adulthood. Participants who reported continuing to use the same accommodation type in both childhood and adulthood were also examined. The highest continuity was observed for family/friend houses (17.07%, n=28), followed by summer houses (15.85%, n=26), mid-range hotels (14.02%, n=23), holiday villages (10.98%, n=18), and luxury hotels (9.15%, n=15). Lower continuity rates were found for pensions (6.71%, n=11) and camping areas (4.27%, n=7). No participant reported using caravans in both periods, while only one participant (0.61%) reported preferring Airbnb-style accommodation in both childhood and adulthood. These findings suggest that some accommodation habits persist into adulthood, particularly traditional accommodation types such as family/friend houses, summer houses, and mid-range hotels. In contrast, continuity is considerably lower for alternative accommodation options such as caravans and Airbnb-style rentals. Participants' past and current destination preferences are presented in Table 5. Respondents were allowed to select multiple options and were asked to recall their holiday experiences before the age of 12.

Table 5. Destination preferences

Holiday Type (n= 164)	Adulthood period preference	Childhood period preference with family	Both childhood and adulthood preference
Sea-sun-sand	144	116	104
City centre	57	38	19
Highland	27	28	12
Hometown	37	65	19
Lakeside	38	23	9
Rural area	24	28	8
Natural open spaces	62	38	23
Ski resort	37	13	8
Entertainment centres	39	10	6
Art centres	39	7	6
Cultural tour	85	26	23
Archaeological sites	57	19	15
Other	17	11	4

Participants were allowed to select multiple holiday destination types. Sea–sun–sand holidays increased from 70.73% in childhood to 87.80% in adulthood. Preferences also increased for city-centre destinations (23.17% to 34.76%), lake-side holidays (14.02% to 23.17%), natural outdoor areas (23.17% to 37.80%), ski resorts (7.93% to 22.56%), entertainment-oriented destinations (6.10% to 23.78%), art-related destinations (4.27% to 23.78%), cultural tourism (15.85% to 51.83%), and archaeological sites (11.59% to 34.76%). In contrast, preferences for hometown visits declined from 39.63% to 22.56%, while preferences for highland destinations (17.07% to 16.46%) and rural destinations (17.07% to 14.63%) remained relatively stable. Other holiday types increased slightly from 6.71% to 10.37%. The highest continuity between childhood and adulthood was observed for sea–sun–sand holidays (63.41%, n=104). Continuity was also found for natural outdoor areas and cultural tourism (14.02%, n=23), city-centre destinations and hometown visits (11.59%, n=19), archaeological sites (9.15%, n=15), highland destinations (7.32%, n=12), lake-side holidays (5.49%, n=9), and rural destinations and ski resorts (4.88%, n=8). Lower continuity rates were observed for entertainment-oriented and art-related destinations (3.66%, n=6) and other holiday types (2.44%, n=4). Overall, the findings indicate that some childhood holiday preferences persist into adulthood. The strongest continuity was observed for sea–sun–sand holidays, while cultural tourism, natural outdoor destinations, and archaeological sites also showed moderate continuity. In contrast, specialized tourism activities such as entertainment-oriented destinations, art-related destinations, and ski resorts displayed lower continuity. A Pearson's chi-square test was used to examine the relationship between accommodation preferences during childhood and adulthood. This test is appropriate for nominal categorical variables and is based on the comparison of observed and expected frequencies (Field, 2009).

Table 6. Summary of chi-square test and association measure for accommodation preferences

Test / Statistic	Value	df	Significance
Pearson Chi-Square ()	94.524	64	.008
Cramer's V	.268	-	.008
Number of Valid Cases (N)	164	-	-

Note: 87.7% of the cells have an expected count of less than 5

A Pearson's chi-square test was conducted to examine the association between accommodation preferences during childhood and those in adulthood. The results revealed a statistically significant association between the two variables. The strength of this relationship was small to moderate (Cramer's V = .268). However, the assumption regarding expected cell frequencies was violated, as 87.7% of the cells had expected counts below 5. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Overall, the results suggest that accommodation experiences during childhood are associated with accommodation preferences in adulthood, although the effect size indicates that other factors also contribute to adult accommodation choices. A Pearson's chi-square test was also conducted to examine the association between holiday types preferred during childhood and those preferred in adulthood.

Table 7. Summary of chi-square test and association measure for holiday preferences

Test / Statistic	Value	df	Significance ()
Pearson Chi-Square ()	349.386	132	.000
Likelihood Ratio	180.888	132	.003
Uncertainty Coefficient (Symmetric)	.271	-	.003
Number of Valid Cases (N)	164	-	-

Note: 149 cells (95.5%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01.

The results revealed a significant association between childhood and adulthood holiday preferences (Uncertainty Coefficient = .271, p = .003), indicating that childhood holiday experiences are associated with adult holiday choices. However, because 95.5% of the cells had expected counts below 5, the findings should be interpreted with caution.

Path analysis

Factor analysis was conducted using SmartPLS software (Ringle et al., 2022). The explanatory power of the structural model was evaluated using R^2 values, which are recommended as a key assessment criterion in PLS-SEM studies (Ali et al., 2016). Since PLS-SEM does not provide a global goodness-of-fit index, R^2 values were used to assess model performance. Items with factor loadings below 0.40 were removed from the model (Field, 2009). Accordingly, destination image items 2, 3, and 4, travel motivation novelty item 1, and self-enhancement item 2 were excluded from further analysis. Convergent validity was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with values above 0.50 indicating acceptable validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Yasım, 2020). In addition, Rho_A values above 0.70 were considered evidence of construct reliability (Cifci et al., 2023). Multicollinearity was evaluated using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, where values above 5 indicate a potential problem (Hair et al., 2019; Uğur, 2024). Several travel motivation items exceeding this threshold were removed. Following re-evaluation of the model, additional items with low factor loadings were excluded to achieve acceptable validity levels.

Table 8. Factor loadings

Scale	Item	Outer loadings	α	rho_a	rho_c	AVE	r^2	VIF
Behavioural Intention	Beh.Int1	0,901	0,817	0,857	0,890	0,731	0,168	2,119
	Beh.Int2	0,896						2,228
	Beh.Int3	0,760						1,527
Destination Personality	Conviviality1	0,729	0,895	0,901	0,914	0,516	0,411	2,562
	Conviviality3	0,821						2,679
	Excitement 1	0,704						2,094
	Excitement 2	0,675						2,058
	Excitement 3	0,752						2,225
	Excitement 4	0,782						2,830
	Sincerity 2	0,628						1,545
	Sincerity 3	0,672						1,916
	Sincerity 4	0,758						2,524
	Sincerity 5	0,639						1,647
Destination Image	Cognitive 12	0,736	0,860	0,862	0,891	0,506	0,380	2,235
	Cognitive 3	0,691						1,727
	Cognitive 4	0,722						1,902
	Cognitive 5	0,770						1,884
	Cognitive 6	0,657						1,565
	Cognitive 7	0,760						1,913
	Cognitive 8	0,681						1,840
	Cognitive 9	0,667						1,637
Travel Motivation	MOThost_inv1	0,710	0,891	0,904	0,910	0,506		2,187
	MOTNovelty2	0,739						2,311
	MOTNovelty3	0,784						2,066
	MOTNovelty4	0,813						2,390
	MOTrelax1	0,633						1,866
	MOTrelax2	0,701						2,819
	MOTrelax3	0,690						2,406
	MOTrelax5	0,720						2,286
	MOTStrengthen1	0,596						1,670
	MOTStrengthen3	0,702						1,854

Within the scope of the study, measurement model and structural model analyses were conducted using SmartPLS software (Ringle et al., 2022). Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were performed for the variables included in the research model, and the reliability and validity levels of the scales were examined. Additionally, R^2 values were considered the primary criterion for evaluating the explanatory power of the structural model As a result of the analyses, the behavioural intention scale demonstrated Cronbach's alpha value of 0.817, a rho_A value of 0.857, a composite reliability (rho_c) value of 0.890, and an AVE value of 0.731. For the destination personality scale, the Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, composite reliability, and AVE values were calculated as 0.895, 0.901, 0.914, and 0.516, respectively. The destination image scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.860, a rho_A value of 0.862, a composite reliability value of 0.891, and an AVE value of 0.506. For the travel motivation scale, the Cronbach's alpha value was 0.891, the rho_A value was 0.904, the composite reliability value was 0.910, and the AVE value was 0.506. These findings indicate that all scales exceeded the commonly accepted threshold values for reliability and met the required validity criteria. An examination of the outer loading values showed that all items ranged between 0.596 and 0.901. In addition, the VIF values varied between 1.527 and 2.830, indicating that there were no multicollinearity issues in the model. According to the structural model results, the explained variance (R^2) was 16.8% for behavioural intention ($R^2 = 0.168$), 41.1% for destination personality ($R^2 = 0.411$), and 38.0% for destination image ($R^2 = 0.380$). These findings suggest that the model has a moderate level of explanatory power. In the second stage, the Fornell-Larcker criterion was examined to assess discriminant validity. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct must be higher than its correlation coefficients with all other constructs in the model. This condition indicates that a given construct is empirically distinct from others, thereby establishing that discriminant validity has been satisfied (Dülgeroğlu & Başol, 2017; Uğur, 2024).

Table 9. Fornell-Larcker discriminant validity

Fornell-Larcker Discriminant validity	Beh.Int	Dest_Image	Dest_Personality	Tavel_Mot
Beh.Int	0,855			
Dest_Image	0,545	0,712		
Dest_Personality	0,595	0,598	0,719	
Tavel_Mot	0,410	0,486	0,462	0,711

The analysis of the results demonstrates that the square root of the AVE values are 0.855 for behavioural intention, 0.712 for destination image, 0.719 for destination personality, and 0.711 for travel motivation. Each of these values was found to be higher than the correlation coefficients between the respective construct and all other constructs in the model. Based on these findings, it is concluded that the variables within the research model are empirically distinct from one another, thereby confirming that discriminant validity has been established To assess the overall fit of the research model, goodness-of-fit indices were examined using SmartPLS software. The evaluation included the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), d_ULS, d_G, Chi-square, and the Normed Fit Index (NFI). According to Henseler et al. (2014), an SRMR value below 0.10 is considered indicative of an acceptable level of model fit. The analysis results revealed an SRMR value of 0.087 for the saturated model and 0.096 for the estimated model. These findings demonstrate that the research model possesses an acceptable level of goodness-of-fit

Hypothesis testing

Structural model analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses defined within the research model. To evaluate the statistical significance of the path coefficients, the bootstrapping method was employed using SmartPLS software, and the analysis was performed with 5,000 subsamples. Bootstrapping is a widely utilized and robust technique for assessing the statistical significance of relationships between variables within a model (Field, 2009). In SmartPLS analyses, a path coefficient is considered statistically significant when the t-value exceeds 1.96 (t > 1.96). If the t-value is below 1.96, the corresponding path is regarded as statistically insignificant. Accordingly, the hypotheses proposed in the research model were evaluated based on the path coefficients, t-values, and significance levels (p) obtained from the analysis.

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Beh.Int -> Adlt..Tra.Prefer	0,001	0,000	0,086	0,010	0,992
Beh.Int -> Adlt.Accom	0,084	0,082	0,097	0,857	0,391
Chl.Accom -> Adlt..Tra.Prefer	0,178	0,186	0,081	2,200*	0,028
Chl.Accom -> Adlt.Accom	0,326	0,329	0,110	2,960*	0,003
Chl.Accom -> Beh.Int	0,054	0,048	0,072	0,754	0,451
Chl.Tra.Prefer -> Adlt..Tra.Prefer	0,524	0,542	0,082	6,392*	0,000
Chl.Tra.Prefer -> Adlt.Accom	0,176	0,206	0,128	1,371	0,170
Chl.Tra.Prefer -> Beh.Int	-0,081	-0,074	0,066	1,224	0,221
Dest.Img -> Adlt..Tra.Prefer	-0,205	-0,202	0,080	2,571*	0,010
Dest.Img -> Adlt.Accom	-0,193	-0,171	0,099	1,953	0,051
Dest.Img -> Beh.Int	0,269	0,272	0,082	3,271*	0,001
Dest.Pers -> Adlt..Tra.Prefer	-0,133	-0,128	0,075	1,783	0,075
Dest.Pers -> Adlt.Accom	-0,019	-0,021	0,104	0,181	0,856
Dest.Pers -> Beh.Int	0,398	0,392	0,075	5,325*	0,000
Tra.Mot -> Adlt..Tra.Prefer	0,118	0,115	0,071	1,648	0,099
Tra.Mot -> Adlt.Accom	-0,014	-0,016	0,114	0,119	0,905
Tra.Mot -> Beh.Int	0,123	0,129	0,079	1,567	0,117

To test the hypotheses proposed in the research model, path analysis was conducted using SmartPLS. The significance of the path coefficients was assessed through the bootstrap procedure, and the analyses were performed using 5,000 resamples. In SmartPLS, a path is considered statistically significant when the t-value exceeds 1.96 (t > 1.96). A t-value below 1.96 indicates that the relationship is not statistically significant (Dülgeroğlu & Başol, 2017). In addition, a significance level of $p < 0.05$ was used as the criterion for accepting or rejecting the hypotheses. According to the analysis results, the type of accommodation preferred during childhood was found to have a positive and significant effect on the type of accommodation preferred in adulthood (β=0.326; t=2.960; p=0.003). Similarly, it was determined that childhood accommodation preferences exert a significant influence on the type of holiday preferred in adulthood (β=0.178; t=2.200; p=0.028). Conversely, the effect of childhood accommodation preferences on behavioural intention was found to be statistically insignificant (β=0.054; t=0.754; p=0.451). Consequently, while hypotheses H_1 and H_{1a} were supported, hypothesis H_{1b} was not supported. According to the analysis results, the type of holiday preferred during childhood was found to have a strong and significant effect on the type of holiday preferred in adulthood (β=0.524; t=6.392; p=0.000). However, the effects of childhood holiday preferences on the type of accommodation preferred in adulthood (β=0.176; t=1.371; p=0.170) and behavioural intention (β=-0.081; t=1.224; p=0.221) were found to be statistically insignificant. Consequently, while hypothesis H_{2a} was supported, hypotheses H_2 and H_{2b} were not supported.

According to the analysis results, the destination personality experienced during childhood was found to have a positive and significant effect on behavioural intention (β=0.398; t=5.325; p=0.000). In contrast, the effects of destination personality on the type of holiday preferred in adulthood (β=−0.133; t=1.783; p=0.075) and the type of accommodation preferred in adulthood (β=−0.019; t=0.181; p=0.856) were found to be statistically insignificant. Consequently, while hypothesis H_{3b} was supported, hypotheses H_3 and H_{3a} were not supported. The analysis results indicate that the destination image experienced during childhood has a negative and significant effect on the type of holiday preferred in adulthood (β=−0.205; t=2.571; p=0.010). Furthermore, destination image was found to exert a positive and significant influence on behavioural intention (β=0.269; t=3.271; p=0.001). In contrast, the effect of childhood destination image on the type of accommodation preferred in adulthood was found to be statistically insignificant, as the values did not meet the required threshold (β=−0.193; t=1.953; p=0.051). Consequently, while hypotheses H_{4a} and H_{4b} were supported, hypothesis H_4 was not supported. The results of the structural model analysis indicated that travel motivation experienced during childhood does not exert a statistically significant influence on the type of holiday preferred in adulthood (β=0.118; t=1.648; p=0.099), the type of accommodation preferred in adulthood (β=−0.014; t=0.119; p=0.905), or behavioural intention (β=0.123; t=1.567; p=0.117). In each of these causal relationships, the t-values failed to reach the required critical threshold of 1.96, and the p-values remained above the 0.05 significance level. Consequently, hypotheses H_5, H_{5a}, and H_{5b} were not supported.

The results of the analysis indicated that behavioural intention does not exert a statistically significant influence on the type of accommodation preferred in adulthood (β=0.084; t=0.857; p=0.391) or the type of holiday preferred in adulthood (β=0.001; t=0.010; p=0.992). In both cases, the t-values failed to reach the required critical threshold of 1.96, and the p-values remained significantly higher than the 0.05 level (Yasım, 2020). Consequently, hypotheses H_6 and H_{6a} were not supported. The results of the structural model analysis demonstrated that the type of accommodation preferred during childhood exerts a positive and significant influence on both the type of accommodation preferred in adulthood (β=0.326; t=2.960; p=0.003) and the type of holiday preferred in adulthood (β=0.178; t=2.200; p=0.028). Additionally, it was determined that the type of holiday preferred during childhood has a strong and significant effect on holiday preferences in adulthood (β=0.524; t=6.392; p<.001), suggesting a high level of behavioural continuity in holiday patterns. Furthermore, the destination personality experienced during childhood was found to have a positive and significant impact on behavioural intention (β=0.398; t=5.325; p<.001). These findings indicate that childhood travel experiences play a critical role in shaping both concrete consumer choices and long-term behavioural intentions in adulthood. Destination image, on the other hand, exerts a negative influence on the type of holiday preferred in adulthood. This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that even if individuals had experiences with destinations possessing a positive image during childhood, they tend to seek different experiences and destinations in their adult years. Specifically, the novelty seeking approach prevalent in tourism literature suggests that individuals are inclined toward new and distinct tourist experiences rather than returning to destinations they have already visited (Jang & Feng, 2007). Furthermore, it is posited that since destination preferences in childhood are predominantly shaped by family decisions, this may lead to a differentiation in individual preferences once they reach adulthood and gain autonomy over their choices.

Discussion

This study examined the effects of childhood accommodation preferences, holiday types, destination image, destination personality, and travel motivations on adult tourism preferences and behavioural intentions. The findings indicate that tourism experiences acquired during childhood continue to influence certain preferences in adulthood. The results revealed that the type of accommodation preferred during childhood had a positive and significant effect on both accommodation and holiday type preferences in adulthood. These findings suggest that tourism habits developed through family vacations during childhood may persist later in life. This result supports the findings of MacInnes et al. (2022), who argued that childhood travel experiences can shape tourism behaviour in adulthood. The findings also highlight the role of family-based holiday experiences in the development of long-term tourism consumption patterns. The type of holiday preferred during childhood has a strong and significant effect on holiday preferences in adulthood. This suggests that individuals tend to maintain holiday patterns established during childhood. The high continuity observed in sea-sun-sand holidays further supports this finding (MacInnes et al., 2022). However, childhood holiday preferences did not significantly influence behavioural intentions or accommodation choices, indicating that adult tourism decisions are shaped by factors beyond past experiences alone. Consistent with this result, Chen et al. (2009) argued that economic conditions, lifestyle, personal interests, and social environment also influence tourism preferences in adulthood.

Destination personality was found to have a positive and significant effect on behavioural intention, indicating that destinations perceived positively are more likely to be revisited, recommended, and evaluated favourably by tourists. This result is consistent with the studies of Akkılıç & Varol (2015), Çelik et al. (2019), and Usakli & Baloglu (2011), which emphasize the influence of destination personality on tourist behaviour. The results also support Ekinci & Hosany's (2006) argument that destination personality plays an important role in shaping tourists' perceptions and future behavioural intentions. One of the most notable results of this study is the negative effect of childhood destination image on holiday preferences in adulthood. This finding may be explained by the novelty-seeking tendency frequently discussed in tourism literature. Although individuals may have experienced destinations with a positive image during childhood, they may seek different destinations and experiences in adulthood (Jang & Feng, 2007). In addition, because destination choices in childhood are largely determined by family decisions (Çiftçi, 2021), personal preferences may change as individuals gain autonomy in adulthood. In contrast, destination image was found to have a positive and significant effect on behavioural intention, indicating that a positive image increases tourists' intentions to revisit, recommend, and evaluate a destination favorably. This result is consistent with previous studies (Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001; Artuğer & Çetinsöz, 2014; Akkılıç & Varol, 2015) and supports the argument of Govers et al. (2007) that destination image plays a critical role in shaping tourist behaviour.

Travel motivation was not found to have a significant effect on accommodation preferences, holiday type, or behavioural intentions in adulthood. This suggests that childhood travel motivations are not directly transferred to adult tourism behaviour. Travel motivations are dynamic and may change over time due to factors such as age, income, experience, and social environment. The Travel Career Pattern (TCP) approach suggests that motivations evolve throughout the life course (Pearce & Lee, 2005). Similarly, Sellick (2004) reported that different motivations become more important at different stages of life. Therefore, the absence of a significant relationship between childhood travel motivations and adult tourism preferences is consistent with the existing literature. Behavioural intention was not found to have a significant effect on holiday type or accommodation preferences in adulthood. This suggests that behavioural intention alone may not fully explain actual tourism choices. According to Ajzen (1991), positive intentions do not always translate into behaviour, as factors such as economic conditions, time constraints, transportation accessibility, and life circumstances may influence travel decisions (Cohen et al., 2014). Overall, the results indicate that childhood tourism experiences are not fully deterministic of adult preferences. However, they contribute to continuity, particularly in accommodation and holiday type choices. In contrast, perceptual factors such as destination personality and destination image appear to exert a stronger influence on behavioural intention.

Conclusion and implications

The study examined the effects of childhood tourism experiences on adult tourism preferences and behavioural intentions. The results indicate that holiday experiences with the family during childhood influence adult tourism behaviour to a certain extent. In particular, accommodation types and holiday destinations preferred during childhood were found to have significant effects on similar preferences in adulthood. These findings suggest that childhood experiences contribute to the formation of future tourism consumption patterns. Destination personality and destination image were found to have significant effects on behavioural intention. Tourists showed stronger intentions to revisit and recommend destinations with a positive image and distinctive personality characteristics (Türkmen et al., 2018). In contrast, childhood travel motivations did not directly influence adult preferences. Moreover, the negative effect of childhood destination image on adult holiday type preferences suggests that individuals may seek new experiences in adulthood rather than repeating previous holiday patterns. The study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that childhood tourism experiences influence tourism preferences in adulthood. The effects of childhood accommodation and holiday preferences on similar choices later in life suggest that tourism habits may persist over time. This finding supports the argument of MacInnes et al. (2022) regarding the formative role of childhood travel experiences in shaping adult travel behaviour. The significant effects of destination personality and destination image on behavioural intention also support existing destination branding literature. The results are consistent with the destination personality framework of Ekinci & Hosany (2006), the self-congruity perspective of Usakli & Baloglu (2011), and previous studies highlighting the positive role of destination image in shaping tourist behaviour (Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001; Govers et al., 2007). Another noteworthy result is the negative effect of destination image on adult holiday type preferences. This finding can be explained by the novelty-seeking perspective, suggesting that tourists may prefer new experiences rather than repeating destinations associated with positive childhood memories.

Based on the study's findings, tourism providers should focus on the following practical applications. First, they should create memorable activities for children during family holidays. Since

positive childhood experiences lead to long-term loyalty, these activities are essential for ensuring future revisit intentions. Second, providers should incorporate the emotional and symbolic dimensions of destinations into their services. This approach helps strengthen the destination personality perceived by young travellers. From a managerial perspective, destination management organizations and businesses should prioritize family-oriented marketing strategies. Managers should recognize that childhood experiences with families form the fundamental basis for long-term consumption patterns. Therefore, strategic efforts should be directed toward strengthening destination personality to influence individuals' tourism choices in their later years. However, this study has several limitations. First, the findings are based on a specific sample group, which may limit their generalization to all tourist profiles. Second, the data relies on the subjective evaluations of participants. Recalling childhood experiences retrospectively can lead to recall bias (Rylander et al., 1995). Specifically, the reliance on memory to assess childhood accommodation, image, and motivation is a significant limitation. Future research should include comparative analyses across different cultures, age groups, and income levels. Additionally, studying different destination types would be beneficial. Future models could also include variables such as family structure, parental habits, and individual lifestyles. Adding these factors would help in understanding how childhood experiences shape adult tourism behaviour more comprehensively

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