

Mind mapping the tourism destination choice framework: A theory-based perspective

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Abstract

This study employs a novel approach, integrating scoping review and mind mapping with a theory-based perspective approach to comprehensively explore the dynamics of tourism destination choice theories. Through a holistic examination of 177 papers, thematic connections within the literature were identified, shedding light on diverse research topics and emphasizing the role of theories in understanding human behaviour and social dynamics in destination choice. Key findings indicate the evolution and contribution of theoretical underpinnings in destination choice literature, offering valuable insights for scholars and practitioners. The constructed framework visually represents cognitive pathways and decision nodes in destination choice processes.

Keywords: Destination choice, destination marketing, theory-based perspective, mind mapping.

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1. Introduction

Tourism is crucial to global economic growth. According to the 2023 World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC) report, the travel & tourism sector created one in five new jobs globally from 2014 to 2019, with international visitor spending reaching US\$ 1.9 trillion in 2019. Despite the pandemic, the sector rebounded in 2022, contributing 7.6% to global GDP, a 22% increase from 2021 (UNWTO, 2023). However, recent studies emphasise changes in tourism trends and destination choices following COVID-19 (Li *et al.*, 2021). Safety, security and recommendations from trusted sources are crucial factors that influence travellers' decisions (Le & Bui, 2022). As Karl *et al.* (2020) highlight, perceptions of risks from past experiences shape the future of tourism destination choice. Given tourism's economic impact and the significance of post-COVID-19 perceptions in destination selection, the importance of understanding consumer behaviour in destination selection has become increasingly emphasised (Gürdoğan, 2022). This explains why the topic is once again receiving heightened attention.

The process of choosing and/or selecting a tourism destination has long been scientifically dubbed as “destination choice”, linked to a word with a radical in tourism destination (Gürdoğan, 2022; Hwang YeongHyeon *et al.*, 2006; Koppelman & Hauser, 1978; Quan *et al.*, 2023). Over the years, an enormous and diverse body of literature has been published on this subject (Pan *et al.*, 2021; Pestana *et al.*, 2020; Tham *et al.*, 2020), covering a wide range of theoretical perspectives (Batabyal & Yoo, 2020; Karl & Schmude, 2017), along with comprehensive reviews on topics like risk perceptions (Batabyal & Yoo, 2020; Karl & Schmude, 2017), factors influencing travellers' decisions (Campo-Martinez *et al.*, 2010; Dogra & Adil, 2023), behavioural models, and practical applications (Boley *et al.*, 2023; Omo-Obas & Anning-Dorson, 2023). For destinations, in particular marketers, policymakers, and stakeholders, studying the subject is essential because it allows us to understand the decision-making mechanisms behind tourism destination choice. This understanding is key to developing effective marketing strategies and promoting competitive tourism destinations (Mim *et al.*, 2022).

Recently, a few systematic and bibliometric reviews have examined the topic of destination choice (Çakar & Aykol, 2023; Pandey & Joshi, 2021; Ulker-Demirel & Ciftci, 2020). This type of analysis is valuable because it allows for the quantification of vast amounts of literature, revealing popular topics, as well as research patterns, leading authors, countries, and collaborative networks. For instance, Pandey and Joshi (2021) concentrated their study on destination choice by analysing leading journals, prolific authors, a country's production, and citation analysis, using purely bibliometric techniques. Ulker-Demirel and Ciftci (2020) conducted a systematic review focused solely on the theory of planned behaviour in tourism, leisure, and hospitality, without covering the broader literature on destination choice. Çakar and Aykol (2023) focused on choice behaviour, using quantitative bibliometrics to analyse author distribution, journals, and the framework of tourists' decision-making during crises. However, hybrid bibliometric analyses with a quantitative and qualitative component are seen as more productive for mapping a given topic (Cardoso *et al.*, 2021). To our knowledge, no hybrid bibliometric studies have been conducted on the topic of tourism destination choice, with the qualitative aspects being addressed only in literature reviews.

Sirakaya & Woodside (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of decision-making models in tourism, highlighting significant trends in the development of destination choice models; however, they did not cover the entire range of destination choice literature, making this one of the first significant studies in the field. Oppermann (1999) focused on the issue of loyalty, and this work contributes to the literature by linking destination loyalty with choice prediction and suggesting frameworks for future research. The literature review conducted by Qiu, Masiero and Li (2018) focused on the psychological process of travel destination choice and provides information on understanding the psychological mechanisms underlying travel destination choice, offering a basis for theoretical exploration and practical application in tourism marketing.

Within the qualitative research framework, several studies have contributed to understanding the theoretical models underlying tourism destination choice. For example, Qiu, Masiero and Li (2018) identify the specific elements involved in the destination choice mechanism, while Hwang *et al.* (2006) provide an overview of various destination choice models that describe the processes and strategies travellers use during trip planning. In addition, Pandey & Joshi (2021) highlight some destination choice models. However, despite these contributions, there is a notable research gap regarding the theoretical background that gave rise to destination choice models and theories covering the topic holistically, as no study has mapped the topic from this perspective. Given the above context, the following research question emerges: What are the theoretical foundations of the tourism destination choice topic, and how can these foundations be comprehensively mapped to deepen our understanding of this subject?

To fulfil the research question, this study employs a hybrid methodology by incorporating a quantitative component alongside qualitative analysis, like other studies that using bibliometric procedures to map scientific research (Cardoso *et al.*, 2022). In the qualitative approach, a scoping review combined with mind maps is used to illustrate the theories that gave rise to the theoretical models from a theory-based perspective. As argued by Soliman *et al.* (2021), mind mapping is useful in this kind of analysis as it visually organises complex relationships, simplifies large data sets, identifies patterns and research gaps, and improves the clarity and interpretation of key trends and links in the literature. The mapping of theoretical models in the light of the theory-based perspective is crucial as it clarifies the complex relationships between theories and concepts, enhancing understanding of the factors influencing tourism destination choice. It also provides a comprehensive framework that guides future research and informs strategic decision-making in marketing and policy development (Mjøset, 2001; Schutz, 2017; Van der Walddt, 2021). As far as the authors know, no research paper has employed a theory-based perspective in this domain before; this approach helps construct an understanding of the context in which theories give rise to the theoretical models, and in what contexts these theories have been mobilized (Möller, 2013).

This study aims to investigate two primary research inquiries about tourism destination choice.

- To discover thematic connections in scientific literature, highlighting the diversity of topics in the field.
- To analyse the scientific production of the topic using theory-based perspective.

To address this gap, the current study employs a scoping review to deal with the first research question and the theory-based perspective to deal with the second research question using mind mapping as a methodological lens to visualise and organise theories in tourism destination choice as an extensive network of concepts. Mind mapping is a method that visualises ideas and their interconnections in a non-linear way, as proposed by Biktimirov & Nilson (2006). A mind map essentially serves as a network where related thoughts and concepts interweave. By harnessing mind-mapping techniques, this research endeavour aims to construct a comprehensive structure that clearly illustrates the hierarchy and interconnectedness of theoretical principles.

This paper is set out in various sections, with the initial section delving into the literature review, the second section relating to the selected methods and their practical uses, supplemented with relevant justifications. The following section introduces the discoveries unearthed via the process of mind mapping, along with the theory-based perspective. The last section discusses perspectives derived from the theoretical foundations.

2. Literature review

Mapping theoretical models of tourism destination choice from a theory-based perspective is crucial for identifying the origins of theories. This approach traces the development and evolution of

frameworks, understanding their fundamental principles, and recognising their influence on subsequent research (Schutz, 2017). Looking at a theory from a historical perspective enables the researchers to see what motivated the theorists and what questions led to the formulation of the theory (Mjøset, 2001). Understanding the fundamental principles that underpin the theories is therefore necessary for applying current theories in today's research (Van der Walddt, 2021).

Examining how theoretical development has occurred over time gives an insight into adjustments that have been made to theories to accommodate discoveries, changes in society, and advances in technology, changes or even challenges in original theories that have affected subsequent research, current studies, and practices in tourism destination research (Rossetto *et al.*, 2018). Following key contributors is also important to locate the beginning of theories and to identify scholars who have made a considerable impact on the development of the field, which makes it easier to explain the line of reasoning and evolution of ideas (Cardoso, *et al.*, 2020b). Interdisciplinary analysis shows that all tourism theories incorporate concepts from psychology, sociology, and economics; it also assists in showing the interconnection and usage of theories from various fields (Tasci, 2020). Additionally, the theory-building approach offers a structural system to advance new frameworks based on existing theories and a denotative press to be creative by learning from the virtues and the vices of the current theories (Shepherd & Suddaby, 2017; Torraco, 1997).

Moreover, the efforts to map theoretical models of tourism destination choice based on a theory have never been as crucial as it is now, given the importance of the topic resulting from factors influencing both the travel industry and tourists. Consumer decision-making and behaviour are shaped by differences in their preference and expectations together with the factors like sustainability and overtourism, digital and social media, the personalization and sharing economy, post-COVID-19 travel behaviour emphasizing health concerns, remote destinations and avoiding crowded places, etc. (Gambhir, 2023; Rahmanov *et al.*, 2021; Toubes *et al.*, 2021). Thanks to AI and big data, it became possible to track tourism trends in detail, which gives an additional layer to the contemporary understanding of destination choice (Biswas & Patrab, 2023).

3. Methodology

The literature on destination choice was assessed using two criteria: Specifically, in conducting the current study the following objectives can be outlined: 1) To identify the thematic connections prevalent within the scientific literature on this subject, shedding light on the diverse array of topics interwoven within this domain; 2) To analyse the insights derived from the scientific literature through the lens of theory-based perspective.

A scoping review is more appropriate when used in areas of research that are vast or where no previous structured reviews have been done. They are frequently used for entering into the topic under study, exploring the field, and defining its key concepts, theories, and sources of evidence (Grant & Booth, 2009; Moher *et al.*, 2015). Tourism is one of the numerous fields where the use of the scoping review research methodology is rising (Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2023; Welling *et al.*, 2015).

The perspective approach falls under the theory-based approach, where the aim is to understand theories by analysing human behaviour and the social processes that accompany it, before devising a comprehensive analysis of the outcome (Stergiou & Airey, 2018). Adopted from (Van der Walddt, 2021), it should be grounded on the capacities of theoretical frameworks to explain phenomena, from the theoretical capacity to predict phenomena (Külpmann & Kuzmics, 2019), the integration of disciplines (Tasci, 2020), and the use of sociocultural knowledge (Huang & Huang, 2015).

This study synthesises findings from research literature using a scoping review to demonstrate how theories of tourism destination choice have been advanced in the field. In the present type of research, the term “scoping” applies to the process of integrating and searching for information from various forms of available literature, with a view to enhancing the conceptual understanding of a specific subject (Davis *et al.*, 2009). Scoping studies can serve various purposes, including evaluating the extent and the nature of specific areas of research, reviewing research evidence, and outlining research gaps (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). For scoping reviews, conceptual frameworks are helpful in underserved areas of research or where prior abstraction is limited (McKinstry *et al.*, 2014).

A considerable amount of research has been conducted on tourism destination choice through various research methodologies, including quantitative research (Wang *et al.*, 2021), ethnographic research (Terzidis, 2021), experimental research (Morley, 1994), systematic literature review (Karl & Schmude, 2017), network analysis (Karl & Reintinger, 2017), mixed methods (Choi *et al.*, 1999), qualitative research (Keshavarzian & Wu, 2017), and bibliometric analysis (Pandey & Joshi, 2021). However, this research is noteworthy as it is the first to employ a scoping review from a theory-based perspective in the realm of destination choice.

The current study examined journal papers on travel destination selection and choice published in Scopus-indexed journals up to November 2023. Publications from 2024 were not taken into account, as the year had just begun and had not yet been completed. The study opted for the Scopus database rather than Web of Science for extracting destination choice papers. Scopus is recognised as the largest repository of peer-reviewed literature, materials, books, articles, conference papers, and review papers (Salisbury, 2009).

The search phrase ("touris* destination choice" OR "touris* destination selection" OR "touris* destination preference*" OR "touris* destination loyalty*" OR "touris* place choice" OR "touris* place selection" OR "touris* place preference" OR "touris* attraction choice" OR "touris* attraction selection" OR "touris* attraction preference*" OR "travel* destination choice" OR "travel* destination selection" OR "travel* destination preference*" OR "holiday location choice" OR "holiday location selection" OR "holiday location preference*" OR "vacation location choice" OR "vacation location selection" OR "vacation location preference*") was used to search titles, abstracts, and keywords. Initially, 276 documents were found, which were reduced to 266 after removing duplicate articles. After applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, 226 papers were included, and then the abstracts were screened for relevance to tourist destination choice, resulting in 205 papers. A manual abstract review was performed on the 205 papers for selection, leading to the omission of 19 articles that did not cover any aspect of tourism destination choice and 9 papers whose primary topics could not be fully retrieved. In total, 177 manuscripts were analysed (as shown in Figure 1).

A mind map is a graphical diagram that is used in order to present concepts, ideas and information in a relevant structure (Choudhari *et al.*, 2021). On the level of academic works, the idea of mind mapping refers to a subject or an issue, concepts, findings and theories, and relevant articles, categorising them accordingly (Crowe & Sheppard, 2012).

Bibliometrics and scientometrics are techniques that explore the development of a field based on the changes in the variety of outputs published in the literature (Hood & Wilson, 2001). Bibliometrics focuses on trends in scientific and scholarly publishing to determine the rankings of authors, journals, and fields. These metrics can be expanded to other forms of scholarly output and collaboration using scientometrics (Ellegaard, 2018; Hou *et al.*, 2008). Accordingly, mind mapping is a way to map theories, models, and relations among them. It is an additional tool to bibliometrics and scientometrics; it allows

using graphs and constructing concept maps for brainstorming, planning, and knowledge integration (Canon *et al.*, 2022).

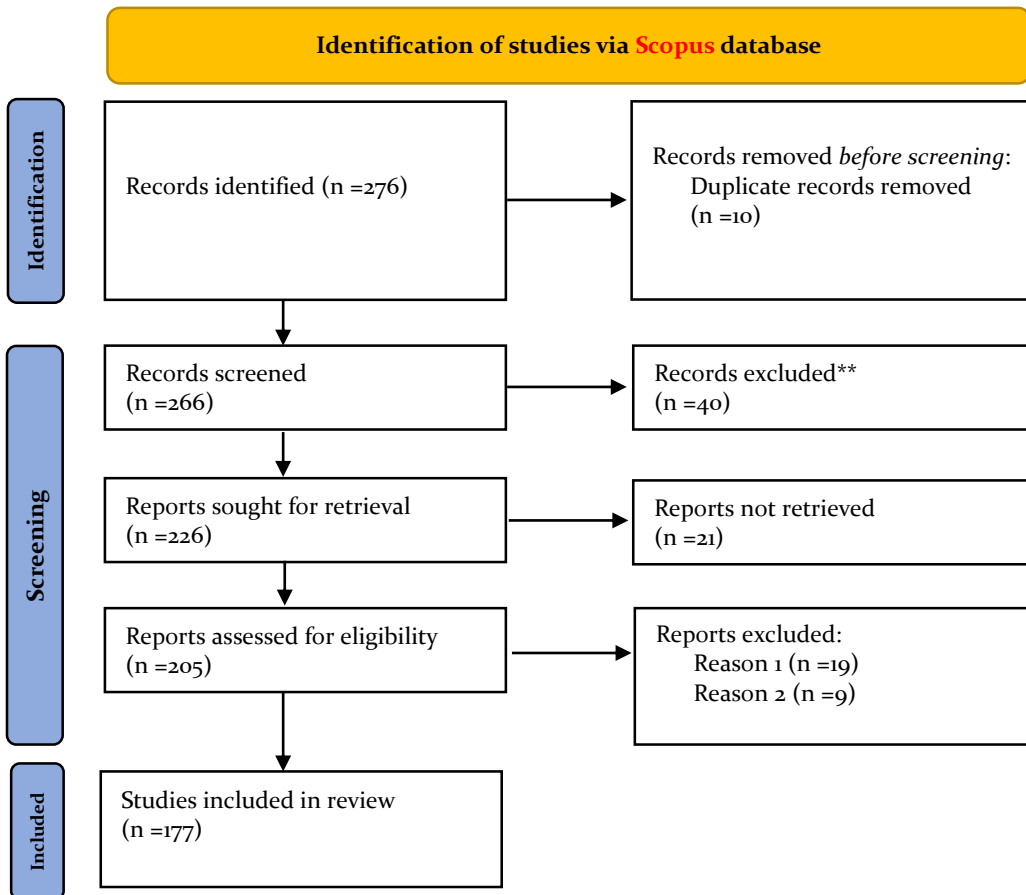


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram

If it is about mapping scientific literature with a theory-based perspective, then it involves adopting an exploratory approach, and expect the anchor theory to quest for new theories and interdisciplinary connections. Tasci (2020) and Yuzhanin and Fisher (2016) emphasise the importance of critical and integrative literature reviews as a recommendation for developing more comprehensive theories in future research (Tasci, 2020; Yuzhanin & Fisher, 2016). Applied to tourism, theory-based perspective, de Souza Bispo (2016) argues that we should emphasise the importance of understanding tourism theories as a set of tourism consumption and production practices (de Souza Bispo, 2016). Bricker and Donohoe (2015) defend that despite the diversity of perspectives, in the case of tourism research, one should look for the context in which the theories apply to tourism (Bricker & Donohoe, 2015). Huang and Huang (2015) and Tasci (2020) stress that analysing from a social, political, and geographical point of view gives the method a more holistic vision.

To ensure comprehensiveness, the study prioritised circumventing selection bias and incorporating all pertinent research in the analysis. This study helps to clarify the hierarchical structure and relativity among different theories that comprise the tourism destination choice process. The resulting

constructed framework, facilitated through the application of mind mapping techniques, can be used as a visual representation of destination choice cognitive pathways and decision nodes.

Another justification for the choice of this method is that it can make a great impact in terms of the contribution that it can make to the literature regarding the choice of tourism destinations. Unlike classic literature reviews, which often deal with certain aspects or defined periods, our approach is intended to provide a general overview of the current state of the art in this field. By highlighting prominent theoretical underpinnings, important authors, and recent research topics, this study will provide a useful guide to tourism researchers, scholars, and practitioners. In addition, this approach enables us to detect literature issues and determine new research directions that might inspire and guide further research into promising areas in the destination selection process. Furthermore, this paper shows the practicality of mind mapping in terms of a methodological means for conceptualising complex phenomena within tourism research by integrating theory-based perspectives.

4. Results

4.1. Thematic connections between prominent topics in destination choice

The output of the network structure represented in Figure 2 reveals that the topic of “destination choice” is connected to three principal clusters: “destination image”, “motivation” and “consumer behaviour”. The cluster with the most significant prevalence and the highest betweenness centrality (274.9) is “destination choice,” directly linked to “tourist behaviour,” “travel motivation,” “destination preference,” and “set theory.” Additionally, this cluster establishes robust connections with four other clusters: “destination image,” “motivation,” “travel motivation,” and “decision making.”

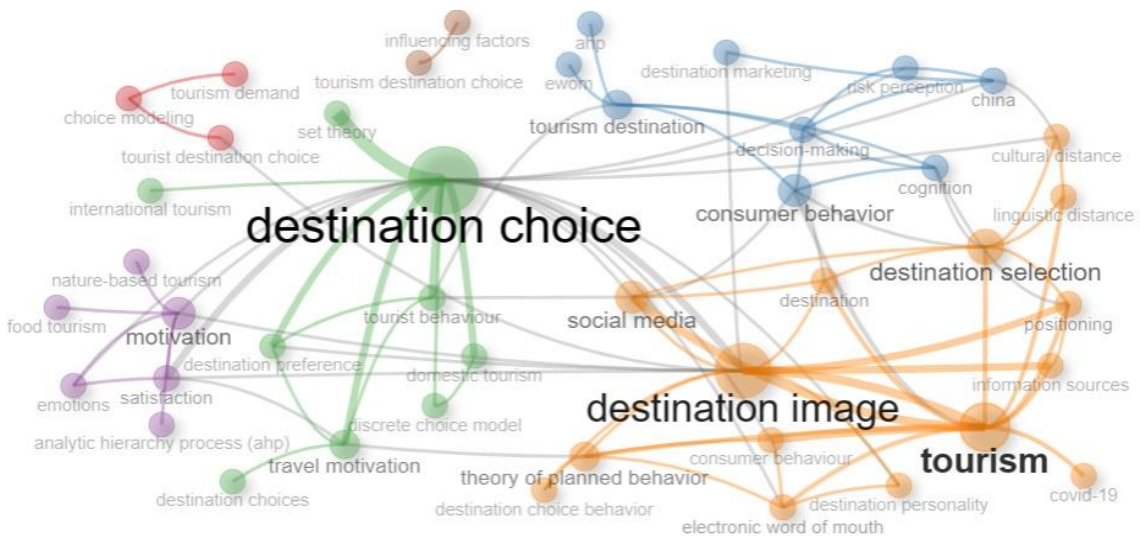


Figure 2. Author keywords – co-word analysis

"Destination image," boasting a substantial centrality index of 235.7, is intricately connected with various areas such as "tourism," "theory of planned behaviour," "destination," "electronic word of mouth," "consumer behaviour," "social media," "destination personality," "information sources," and "positioning." Notably, Hoan and Do Thi Thu (2022) assert the correlation between the theory of planned behaviour and destination image. They posit that this theory encompasses three distinct determinants influencing intention: attitude towards the behaviour, social factors as subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. The "tourism" cluster is associated with the "theory of planned

behaviour," "electronic word of mouth," "information sources," and further correlates with "destination selection."

The "motivation" cluster, with a centrality of 131.8, interlinks with "satisfaction," "emotions," "food tourism," "nature-based tourism," and the "Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP)." AHP is a structured decision-making analysis that uses pairwise comparisons and mathematical calculations to prioritise and evaluate complex alternatives based on multiple criteria. It plays a key role in the decision-making process when selecting destinations, involving a hierarchy of choices among various destination attributes (Chen *et al.*, 2013).

Finally, the "consumer behaviour" cluster, with a centrality of 60.6, exhibits direct connections with key topics such as "decision making," "risk perception," "destination marketing," and "tourism destination". Based on the above, four key clusters emerge in destination choice studies: "destination choice", "destination image", "motivation", and "consumer behaviour". The convergence with the co-word analysis results of Pandey and Joshi (2021) and Saito and Strehlau (2017) provides additional support for the methodological approach adopted in this study.

4.2. Theoretical underpinnings applied to destination choice research

Over the years, numerous academic contributions have advanced the scientific understanding of tourism destination choice. Since 1989, this body of research has identified and classified the theoretical and empirical models summarised in Table 1. These models, which are applied to tourism destination choice, fall into three main categories – destination-choice sets models, destination-choice models, and isolated models of destination choice – categories that are corroborated by the clustering of author keywords in Figure 1. These models have been utilised across four primary domains: (1) destination choice, (2) destination image and perceptions, (3) behaviour, and (4) motivations.

Table 1. Theoretical and empirical models applied to destination choice research

Theoretical models	DC	DI & P	B	M
Destination-choice sets models: Pleasure travel destination choice model (Um and Crompton, 1990); Decrop's Destination choice set (DCs) model (Decrop, 2010); The destination brand choice set model (DBC model) and Destination Brand Choice Integrative (DBCI) model (Dias & Cardoso, 2017); The destination choice sets for families with wheelchair-bound children (Nyman <i>et al.</i> , 2018).	✓		✓	
Destination choice models: Consumer decision-making process model (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989); Conceptual Model of Tourist Destination Choice Mansfeld's model (Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002); Tourism destination choice model (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005); Tourists' Behaviour and Destination Choice model (Wu <i>et al.</i> , 2012).	✓		✓	
Isolated models of destination choice:				
Chen & Gursoy's (2001) model	✓			✓
Morais & Lin's (2010) model		✓	✓	
Reza Jalilvand & Samiei's (2012) model			✓	
Cardoso's <i>et al.</i> (2020a) model	✓	✓		
Cao's <i>et al.</i> (2020) distance desire model			✓	
Bayarsaikhan's <i>et al.</i> (2020) model	✓			
Hoan and Do Thi Thu's (2022) model	✓		✓	
Liu's (2022) model	✓			

Caption: (DC) Destination choice; (DI & P) Destination image & Perceptions; (B) Behaviour; (M)- Motivations

In destination-choice sets models, Crompton introduced a taxonomy for destination choice structures (Crompton, 1992). Decrop (2010) with “The formation of destination CSs model” (p.108), presented a typology with seven choice sets, including the awareness, dream, and evoked sets, highlighting their evolving nature (Decrop, 2010). Dias and Cardoso (2017) introduce the Destination Brand Choice (DBC) Model, differentiating it from Keller's (2009) theory and Decrop's (2010) model.

In destination choice models, Woodside and Lyonskl's (1989) model is based on the theory of consumer behaviour, focusing on how individuals navigate through a structured process of searching for information, evaluating alternatives, and making a final decision when selecting a destination. Seddighi and Theocharous (2002) applied the Lancasterian model to tourism, proposing a framework that integrates product characteristics and consumer transportation models to assess the impact of tourism product features on foreign travel. Sirakaya and Woodside's (2005) Tourism Destination Choice Model is grounded in decision-making and behavioural theories, particularly the theory of reasoned action. Later, Wu *et al.* (2012) expanded this perspective by introducing the tourist's multi-destination choice model with future dependency, which demonstrates that travellers often make current destination choices while already considering future trips. This model highlights the temporal interdependence between present and future travel decisions, adding a dynamic layer to the traditional understanding of destination choice.

The models that do not fit into the two previous categories are referred to in this research as isolated destination choice models, as they incorporate constructs related to destination choice but are not fully integrated into established destination choice models. The first model, about destination preferences and intentions, is that of Chen and Gursoy (2001), who link experience, destination preferences, and destination loyalty. Their model shows that previous experience influences these dimensions, contributing to destination loyalty. The Morais and Lin (2010) model is based on attachment theory and behavioural intention models, exploring how emotional connections to a destination (destination attachment) influence perception (destination image), intentions to revisit, and recommendation. It is anchored in the theories of loyalty, behaviour and destination image, and resistance to change, particularly among repeat visitors. Reza Jalilvand and Samiei (2012), in an attempt to test the theory of planned behaviour, revealed that travel intentions are influenced not only by Ajzen's model dimensions but also by electronic word of mouth among tourists.

In perceptions and destination image topics applied to food tourism, Cardoso *et al.* (2019) propose a model to examine image processing in memory when recalling destinations. Cao *et al.* (2020) model for distance desire, incorporating attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control to influence the desire for distance and travel intentions. Bayarsaikhan *et al.* (2020) introduce a model integrating Plog's personality typologies, destination types (primitive, rural, urban), and factors like socio-demographics and travel characteristics, finding that allocentric tourists prefer primitive areas while psychocentric tourists prefer urban attractions.

In the context of behavior unlinked to visiting the tourism destination, Hoan and Do Thi Thu's (2022) model, shows that visit intentions are shaped by service, natural environment, and quality of life, with spatial and temporal elements influencing attitude and visit intentions. Finally, Liu (2022) argues, via the tourist perception experience model, that tourists achieve a more accurate perception by evaluating landscape, service, and environmental quality [...]. However, despite the abundance of theoretical and empirical models, their existence only makes sense when we understand the underlying theories and concepts that gave rise to them.

4.3. *Theory-based perspectives on tourism destination choice*

Given that the focus of this study is the choice of tourist destinations, this section emphasises

the importance of a theory-based perspective by mapping out only those scientific works that are directly and integrally connected to the topic, as a theory-based approach provides a robust framework for understanding the complex factors influencing destination choice and enhances the validity of research findings. Based on the above, eight blocks of theoretical theories were mapped, with the three large blocks shown in Figures 3, 4, and 5.

4.3.1. *The emergence of the Social Exchange Theory (SET) in destination choice*

As illustrated in Figure 3, the SET theory emerged in the 1990s, anchored in psychological theories from the 1970s and 1980s. Um and Crompton (1990), building on Assael's 1984 theoretical background of the sociopsychological set of a potential traveller concept and others, conceptualised destination choice as a cognitive process involving stimulus perception, association with needs, alternative evaluation, and assessing meeting expectations. Um and Crompton's 1990 SET theory stems from the interconnection of two psychological theories: the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), as well as the sociopsychological set of a potential traveller concept.

Developed by social psychologists Fishbein and Ajzen in 1975 and 1980, the TRA was introduced first and later extended to form the TPB (Cao *et al.*, 2020). The TRA presupposes that individuals are rational decision-makers who weigh the implications of their actions before deciding to engage in a behaviour. It also assumes that individuals have control over their behaviour, and that their intentions serve as the primary predictors of their actual behaviour. The theory of reasoned action (TRA) initially includes key components such as attitude, subjective norm, behavioural intention, and behaviour. It was later expanded by Ajzen in 1991 and Driver in 1992, who added perceived behavioural control – the individual's sense of how easy or difficult a behaviour is to carry out (Cao *et al.*, 2020; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). This expansion led to the development of the theory of planned behaviour (TPB). Around the same time, Crompton (1992), drawing on risk theories, proposed a taxonomy of destination choice sets, including initial, late, action, and interaction sets (Cao *et al.*, 2020; Crompton, 1992).

After a 15-year pause, Sirakaya and Woodside (2005) revisited the field of destination choice by conducting a comprehensive literature review, building upon the foundational model by Woodside and Lyonski (1989). Their work marked an important step in the evolution of tourism decision-making models, particularly through the integration of Moutinho's (1987) consumer behaviour framework and key theories such as Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour (1991), its further development by Ajzen and Driver (1992), and Crompton's (1992) risk-based model. They proposed that travellers move through a sequence of increasingly refined choice sets, in a funnel-like process, leading to a final decision — a perspective that reflects a more nuanced understanding of how destination decisions unfold over time. After a 15-year break, Sirakaya and Woodside (2005) conducted an extensive literature review on destination choice theories, building upon Woodside and Lyonski's (1989) earlier framework. They focused on Moutinho's (1987) consumer behaviour concept, which examined the factors influencing decision-making processes in tourism, as well as integrating theories such as Ajzen's 1991 theory of planned behaviour (TPB), Ajzen and Driver's 1992 expansion of TPB, and Crompton's 1992 theory. They suggested that potential travellers go through a series of choice sets that gradually narrow in a funnel-like manner, ultimately culminating in a final decision. This encapsulates Sirakaya and Woodside's (2005) conceptualisation of choice sets as a funnel-like process, reflecting a more specialised understanding of destination choice within the broader evolution of tourism decision-making models. Certainly, as illustrated in Figure 3, the 2000s witnessed the emergence of a new wave of research in the realm of tourism destination choice sets. Decrop (2010) expands the perspective on tourism destination choices by framing destinations as brands, integrating brand theories into Um and Crompton's (1990) and Crompton's (1992) theories. By introducing the destination brand-consideration stage and the brand-evaluation stage, Decrop (2010) contributes to the evolution of the destination choice set (CSs) theory. Building on psychological behaviouristic approaches from Um and Crompton (1990) theory and

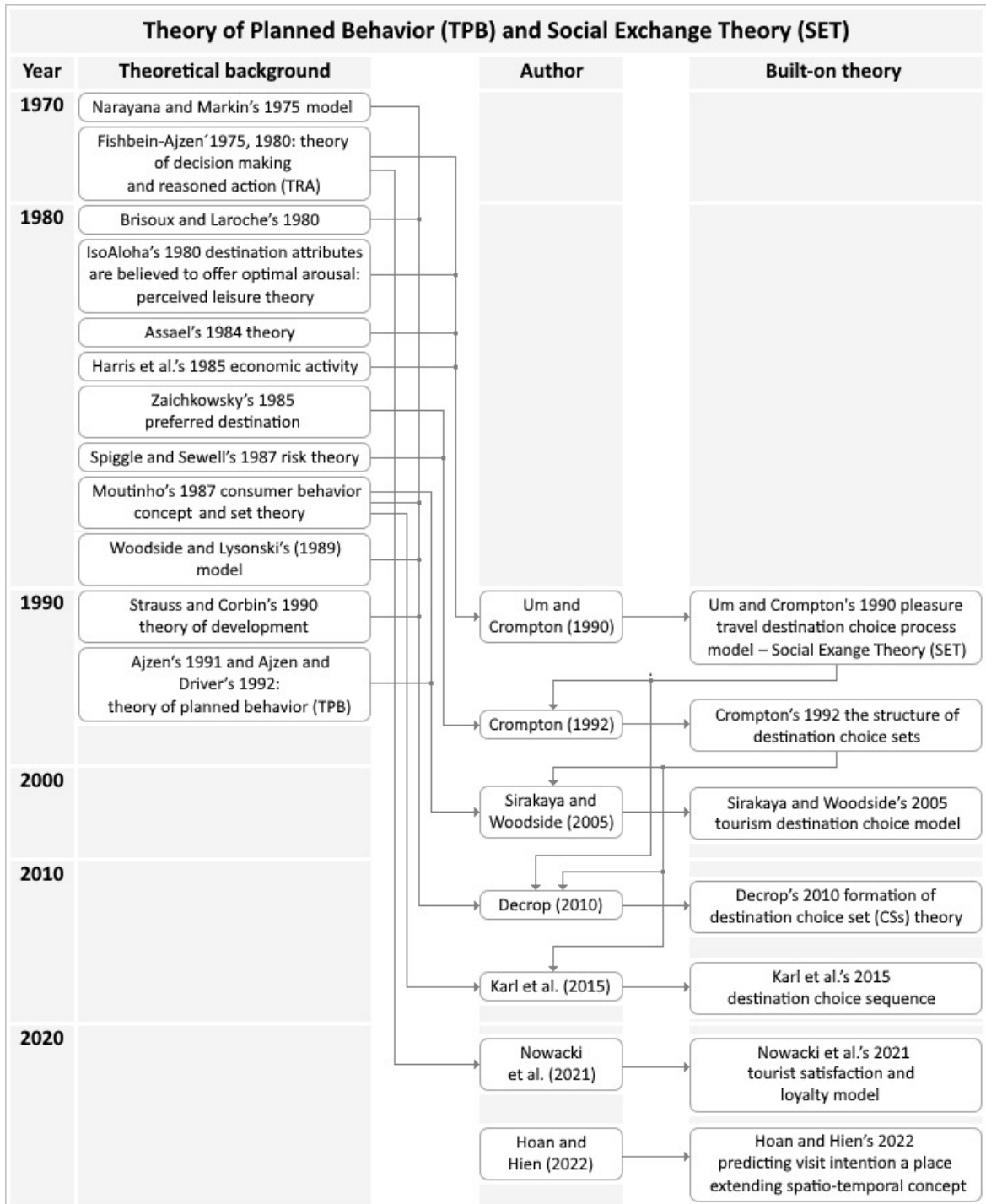


Figure 3. Research on tourism destination choice based on TPB and SET theories

Moutinho's 1987 concepts, Karl et al. (2015) formulate the destination choice sequence. This sequence has come to be known by Qiu, Masiero and Li (2018) as the logical process of choosing destinations. Dias and Cardoso (2017) argue that while the mentioned sequence is suitable for describing a single destination choice, it is crucial to account for the impact of previous visits on subsequent choices. To

address this limitation, they introduce the destination brand choice model (DBC model), which distinguishes itself from Decrop's model 2010 (Decrop, 2010).

In the 2020s a new wave of theories emerged. Nowacki *et al.* (2021) go back nearly 50 years, return to the theories of Fishbein-Ajzen' 1975, 1980 – theory of decision making and reasoned action (TRA) – and develop the Nowacki *et al.*'s behaviour eco-friendly tourist destinations conceptual framework and the tourist satisfaction and loyalty model that explores behaviours and factors influencing tourists' preferences for eco-friendly destinations. Furthermore, Hoan and Do Thi Thu (2022) enrich the TPB theory, clarifying that this theory involves three distinct determining factors for intention: the attitude towards the behaviour, social factors perceived as the subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control. Additionally, they introduce the spatial-temporal concept.

4.3.2. *The distance theories and concepts in tourism destination choice*

The perceptual aspect of the distance theory elucidates how tourists subjectively perceive distances, encompassing both physical and psychological dimensions. Figure 4 illustrates the progression of distance theories and concepts in the context of tourism destination choice. Cognitive distance is categorised into three types: temporal distance, related to temporally distant phenomena; spatial distance, associated with the place-based separation of phenomena; and social distance, indicating the perceived separation from others during an event.

The foundational basis based on a theory-based perspective in the realm of distance theories and concepts related to destination choice can be traced back to Cao *et al.*'s (2020) work developing the distance desire concept. In this study, the authors engaged with Bullough's 1912 theory of psychological distance, asserting that the separation of subject and object is the key to achieving aesthetic experiences. The application of psychological distance theory in destination choice involves understanding how individuals emotionally and psychologically perceive the distance to a specific destination.

Elements such as cultural familiarity, personal experiences, and emotional connections play a role in shaping the psychological distance people associate with different places. This perspective elucidates why individuals may interpret the same physical distance differently based on their emotional and psychological states. In an extension of this groundwork, Cao *et al.* (2020) incorporated de Um and Crompton's (1990) pleasure travel destination choice process – SET theory and Henderson's *et al.* (2015) construal level theory and spatial distance (CLT) into the distance desire concept.

However, as far back as 2003, Van Middelkoop *et al.* (2003) argued that cultural and psychological distance was important when choosing destinations. On the other hand, Nicolau and Mas (2006) integrated Moutinho's (1987) consumer behaviour concept from travel motivations, asserting that motivations serve as internal drivers (needs) influencing destination choices, acting as push factors guiding tourist travel decisions. They found that these motivations moderate the impact of factors like distance and prices on destination choice. Lin and Morais (2008) built upon Hart and Moore's 1973 cognitive dissonance concept, which explains the psychological discomfort that occurs when individuals hold conflicting beliefs or when their behaviours contradict their attitudes, impacting their decision-making and information processing in consumer contexts. They also drew on Mark and Ankomah's 1993 model, which integrates various elements such as individual preferences, destination attributes, and socio-economic factors to elucidate how these variables interact to influence tourists' choices. Additionally, they considered Crompton's (1992) theories, which developed the concepts of spatial cognition and cognitive distance.

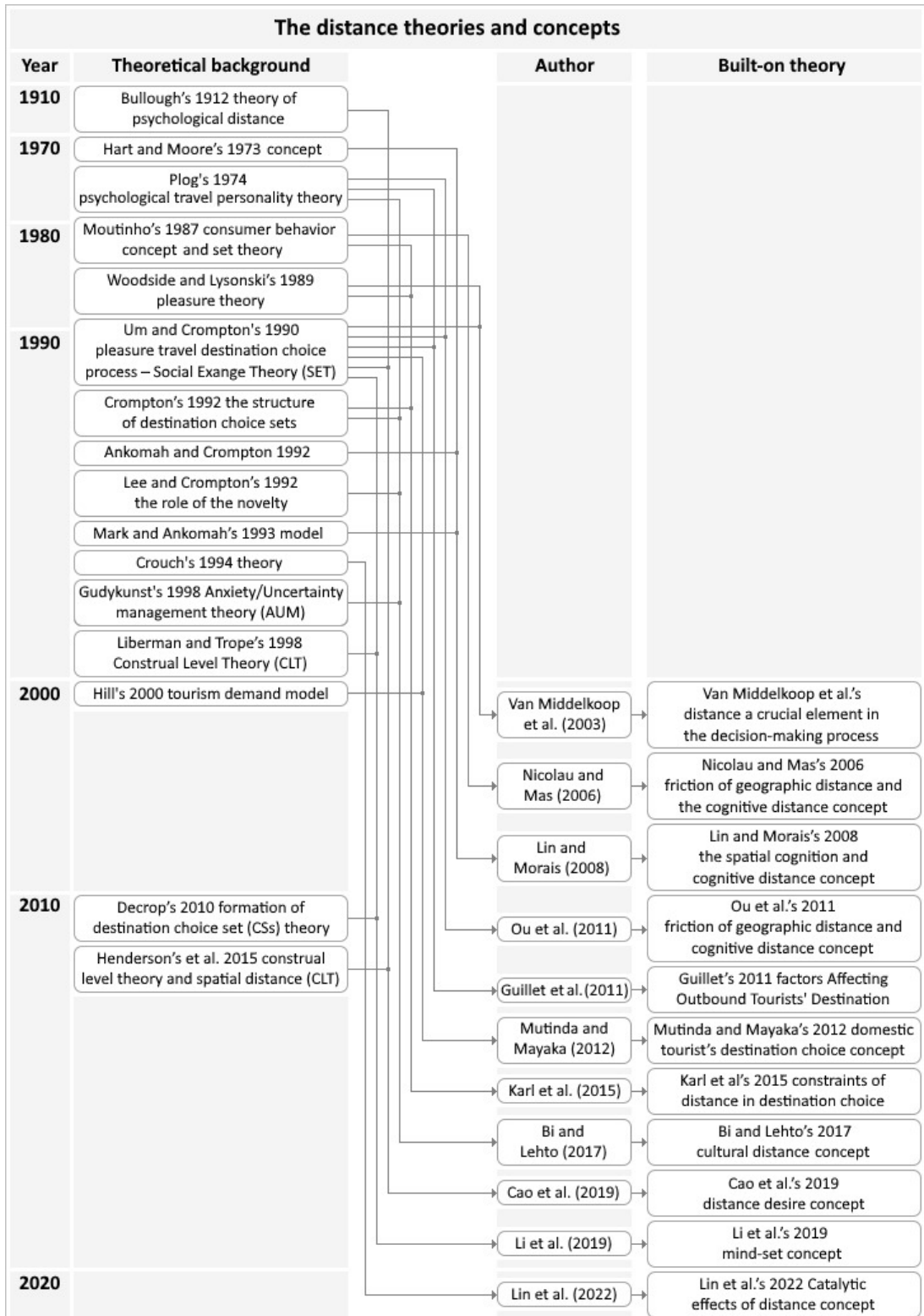


Figure 4. Research on tourism destination choice based on distance theories and concepts in tourism destination choice

From 2010, Qu *et al.* (2011) developed a conceptual framework that focuses on tourism destination image and its impact on tourists' behavioural intentions. They integrated destination branding theories into destination choice and destination image studies, applying Plog's 1974 theory and Um and Crompton's (1992) theories to destination brand associations. Additionally, they introduced the concepts of the friction of geographical distance and cognitive distance. Geographical distance is seen as a constraint, reducing interactions with increasing distance, while cognitive proximity promotes effective communication and interactions. Guillet *et al.* (2011) underscore the significance of travel motivation, also drawing on Plog's 1974 theory and Um and Crompton's (1990) theories. They highlight that travel motivation serves as a pivotal factor influencing the destination preferences of outbound tourists and propose a conceptual model.

Additionally, factors such as trip expenditure, duration of stay, size of the travel party, and monthly household income contribute to the complex dynamics of destination choice. Similarly, Mutinda and Mayaka (2012), employed a framework based on Hill's 2000 tourism demand model, which examines the factors influencing tourism demand and traveller behaviour, along with Um and Crompton's (1990) theories, to demonstrate the significant impact of motivations on the destination preferences of domestic tourists. Similarly, Mutinda and Mayaka (2012), utilising a framework derived from Hill's 2000 tourism demand model, which focuses on the factors influencing tourism demand and the behaviour of travellers and Um and Crompton's (1990) theories, illustrate the significant impact of motivations on the destination preferences of domestic tourists.

In the context of destination choice, Karl *et al.* (2015) based on Um and Crompton (1990) and in Moutinho's (1987) work, propose that cognitive distance involves individuals' perceptions of distances between locations within vast spaces – places distant enough and concealed from each other to remain hidden.

Two years later, Bi and Lehto (2018) developed the cultural distance concept, and they discussed the impact of cultural distance/travel distance on destination choice, examining its dual role as either inhibiting or facilitating choice based on three theories. Firstly, following Um & Crompton's (1992) theories, they assert that cultural distance can act as either a facilitator or inhibitor. Facilitators align with destination attributes that fulfil a tourist's motivations, such as novelty, relaxation, and learning. Cultural distance can facilitate destination choice when it aligns with a tourist's needs, like the pursuit of novelty. Conversely, it may act as an inhibitor, correlating with travellers' risk perception in international destination selection. Secondly, they present the inverted U-Curve cultural distance and international destination choice model, rooted in Plog's 1974 allocentric/psychocentric theory. This concept suggests tourists fall on a spectrum from allocentric (novelty-seeking) to psychocentric (familiarity-seeking). The inverted U-Curve model builds on this, considering cultural distance's role in destination choices. In the domain of destination choice, they also explore Gudykunst's (1998) anxiety/uncertainty management theory regarding cultural distance as an inhibitor. This theory highlights how tourists navigate and adapt to intercultural contexts by managing uncertainties and anxieties tied to cultural differences, emphasising dynamic communication strategies in cross-cultural situations.

Li *et al.* (2019) apply Liberman and Trope's (1998) psychological construal level theory (PCLT), emphasising the influence of temporal distance on mental representations of future events. By integrating Decrop's (2010) SET theory and Um and Crompton's (1990) pleasure travel destination choice process, Li *et al.* (2019) propose the concept of 'mind-set,' defined as an individual's overarching approach to thinking when making decisions or reacting to various situations. More recently, Lin *et al.* (2022), building on Crouch's 1994 theory of travel distance and analysing the period before and after the emergence of COVID-19, identify six components of distance: physical distance, economic distance,

differences in tourism prices, tourism development distance, cultural distance, and climate distance, and propose the concept of catalytic effects of distance.

The travel risk theory has been applied across various domains, encompassing destination selection, perceptions, destination image, behaviour, and motivation. In destination image context, building on Maslow's 1943 hierarchy of needs and Pearce's 1988, 1996 models, Mura (2010) discusses a fear-risk paradox in destination choice, contending that more experienced tourists, having already addressed lower-order needs like safety, exhibit reduced concern for fear and risk. They developed the Mura's 2010 fear-risk paradox in destination choice as illustrated in Figure 5.

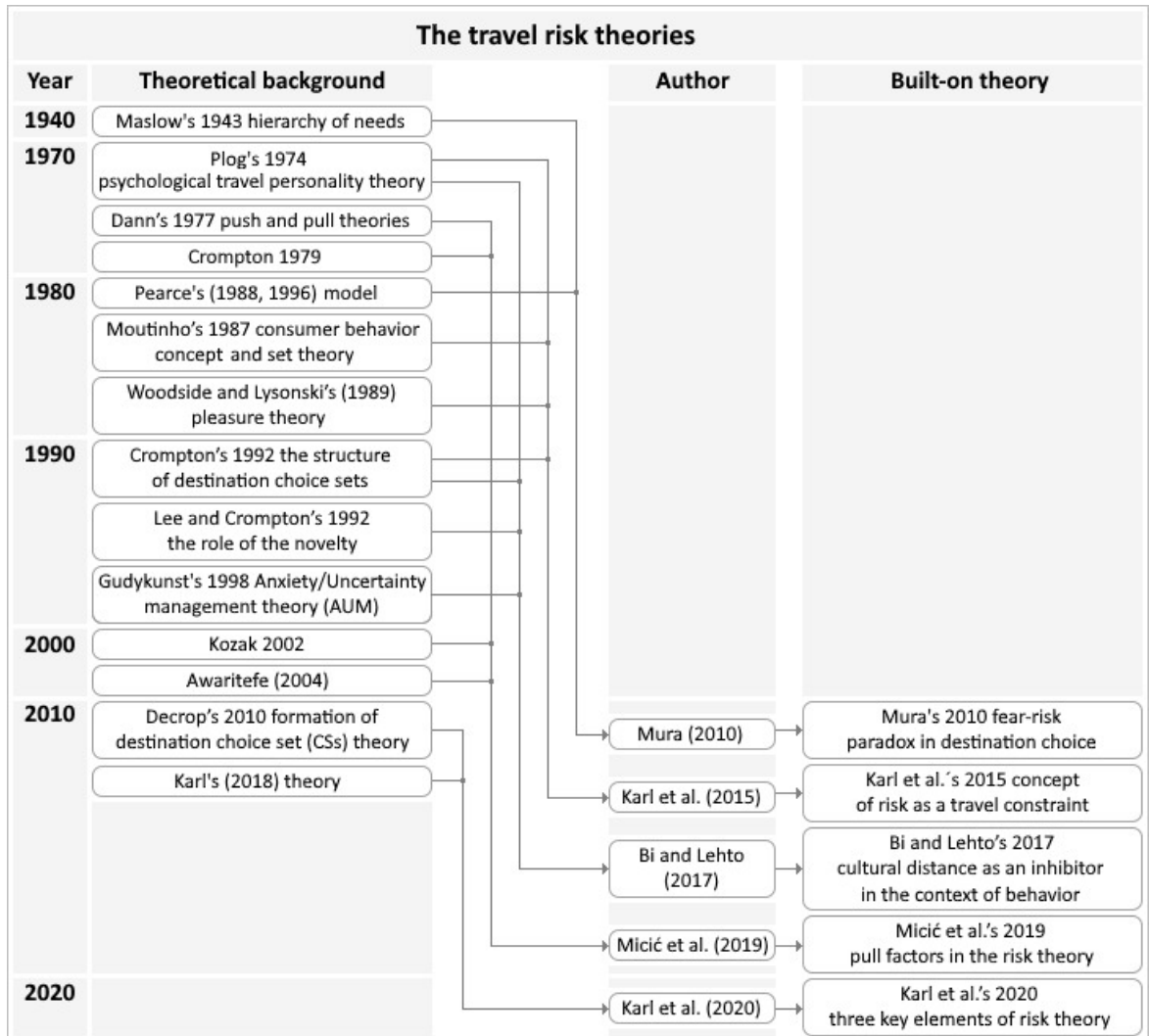


Figure 5. Research on tourism destination choice based on risk theories in tourism destination choice

Five years later, Karl & Schmude (2017), influenced principally by Plog's 1974 theory. They proposed that travel behaviour and destination choice (DC) are shaped by personality traits, specifically the level of risk aversion (Karl & Schmude, 2017). They emphasised the role of risk perceptions, particularly in the realm of safety and security images, operating between destination and tourist attributes. The authors introduced the concept of risk as a travel constraint.

In the realm of behaviour, Bi and Lehto (2017), drawing fundamentally on Gudykunst's (1998) anxiety/uncertainty management Theory (AUM), explored cultural distance as an inhibitor in the context of behaviour. According to AUM theory, individuals encounter anxiety and uncertainty when confronted with unfamiliar or ambiguous cultural situations. Such situations may result from variations in communication styles, social norms, values, and other cultural factors. The authors argued that elevated cultural distance may lead to increased cultural risk, acting as a potential inhibitor for potential tourists. This phenomenon could contribute to the observed negative effects of cultural distance on tourists' destination choices.

Discussing the motivation in tourism, Micić *et al.* (2019) adopted the push and pull theories from Dann 1977, Crompton 1979, Kozak 2002 and Awaritefe (2004), asking respondents the question "Which factors are the most important when you choose a destination?" (p.45), based in pull factors they developed the risk theory anchored in the motivation to travel (Micić *et al.*, 2019). Emami and Ranjbarian (2019), in their exploration of various types of perceived risks among tourists, identified seven categories within consumer behaviour literature: social, physical, satisfaction, time, psychological, functional or performance, and financial risks.

Karl *et al.* (2020) have extended Karl's (2018) theory and, based in Decrop's 2010 (CSs) theory, posited that the attributes of a destination catering to tourists' needs should be approached in an integrated manner. This suggests that risk perceptions towards specific attributes can vary from one destination to another. Moreover, certain risks may hold greater significance for particular tourists in their destination choices, emphasising the importance of considering how differences in risk perception types of manifest across key stages of the destination choice process. From a consumer behaviour perspective, travel risk perception involves anticipating the negative impact of a given risk and the likelihood of these negative consequences occurring.

The evaluation of both elements is susceptible to errors and biases, leading to instances where tourists might overestimate the probability of severe occurrences (e.g., terrorism) compared to more commonplace events. Despite potential biases, tourists base their decisions on these perceptions of risk, which may not accurately reflect the actual situation in a destination. Karl *et al.* (2020) propose three key elements for consideration: 1) The sociodemographic profile of each tourist influences how travel risk perceptions shape decision-making; 2) Increased travel experience impacts tourists' risk perception; and 3) Personality and psychographic factors play a role in shaping risk perceptions and travel decision-making (Karl *et al.*, 2020). According to Barazi *et al.* (2021), the perception of risk plays a vital role in the decision-making process of tourists, influencing conscious decisions related to destination choice.

4.3.3. Oppermann's concept in destination choice: Travel horizon, past travel experience and prospect theories

According to Cardoso *et al.* (2019), Oppermann's 1998 travel horizon concept, specifically the travel horizon ladder concept, suggests that individuals typically commence their travel journey by visiting nearby places and progressively extend their destinations, rather than immediately venturing to distant locations. In line with this notion, the authors argue that most people's favourite destinations are nearby, as not everyone ascends to the higher levels of the travel horizon ladder. Consequently, it is also plausible that individuals dream of visiting faraway places, aspiring to reach the higher rungs of the ladder while ascending through the lower ones. In a study on destination image, Pan *et al.* (2021) found that, in terms of respondents' past visits to cities in the choice set, most tourists prefer revisiting a city they have been to within the last 5 years and are less inclined to visit a city they have never experienced before.

Van Middelkoop *et al.* (2003) based in Um and Crompton's (1992) theories and Woodside and Lyonski's (1989) theories, discussed Oppermann's 1998 concept in the cultural context, asserting that geographical proximity is highlighted for reducing travel costs and effort, while cultural proximity is emphasised for diminishing the risk of unpleasant experiences such as language barriers, food differences, and social manners.

4.3.4. *Keller's concept of destination attributes*

In line with Bilynets *et al.* (2023), Keller's 1993 concept of destination attributes, centered on descriptive characteristics, posits that access to destination attributes is facilitated by qualities such as safety, friendliness, cleanliness, environmental sustainability, and cost. The authors also highlight Crompton's 1990 theory of destination formation, which contends that tourists shape their destination choices based on perceptions, specifically positive perceptions regarding specific attributes that matter to them.

4.3.5. *Aesthetic experience, aesthetic and embodiment components of tourism destination image theory*

In the realm of distance desire, Cao *et al.* (2020) contend that it mirrors the aesthetic and emotional requisites of tourists, forming the foundation for their emotional experiences. Building on Ramachandran and Hirstein's 1999 neurological theory of aesthetic experience, Malvica *et al.* (2022) posit the aesthetic and embodiment theory, within destination choice, the aesthetic and embodiment components of destination image, encompassing dimensions related to the aesthetic quality (such as taste or beauty) of the tourist destination image, wield significant influence on choices before the actual visit. The embodied simulation account of aesthetics suggests that the aesthetic experience is rooted in simulating actions, emotions, and bodily sensations induced by art, contributing to its aesthetic appreciation. In the context of tourism literature, particularly emphasising the tourist experience and centred on embodiment, this stage is grounded in actively engaging with and embodying experiences in social space. Aligning with this theory, the authors introduce the concept of the embodied tourist, wherein the multisensory body of the tourist actively participates in the destination choice process, commencing even before the tourist physically visits and experiences the destination.

4.3.6. *Value decision theory in travel motivation*

In an initial effort to categorise destination choice theories, Mansfield (1992) employed the value stretch theory and introduced the concept of class-differentiated destination choice attributes for tourists. consumption values theory suggests that tourists' decisions are shaped by a combination of values. The authors extensively explore the theoretical aspects of this phenomenon, incorporating decision theory and later random utility theory to comprehend tourists' decision-making processes. His application of decision theory to travel motivation provides insights into the cognitive processes, risk evaluations, and preference structures influencing individuals when making travel-related decisions. This approach aids researchers and practitioners in understanding the complexities of travel choices and can inform strategies to enhance the decision-making experience for travellers (Lin *et al.*, 2022).

According to Phau *et al.* (2014), the theory of consumption values suggests that consumers assign different values to various products, which ultimately influences their purchase motivation. Drawing from Baloglu and McCleary's 1999 and Tapachai and Waryszak's 2000 consumption values scale (functional, social, epistemic, emotional, and conditional values), the authors revealed in their study that consumption values play a significant role in shaping perceptions of destination image. This connection, in turn, impacts tourists' intentions in choosing a destination. They further correlate the consumption values theory with the destination choices of young tourists, proposing that consumers attribute distinct values to different products, influencing their motivation to make a purchase.

Concerning the perceived value of a destination's brand, travel motivation is a subjective element that influences both destination choice and tourist behaviour. In particular, the correlation between travel motivation and destination choice revolves around the sought-after benefits and activities pursued

within a destination. The association with status and prestige is closely linked to the levels of social image enhancement desired by tourists. Chen *et al.* (2021) argue that the prestige-worthy tourism framework in the 21st century, specifically in the era of Web 3.0 and social media dominance, acts as a travel motivation. Their study involving Chinese tourists reveals that these tourists opt for high-end or prestigious destinations, purchase luxury products, capture moments at famous landmarks, and share these experiences on social media. This behaviour is driven by the belief that such actions will enhance their face, or Mien-Tzu, conveying dignity and prestige within their social circles.

Similarly, Boto-García *et al.* (2021) demonstrate that tourists driven by intrinsic motivation, such as seeking adventure sports, predominantly choose destinations with warmer climates (pull factor). The research also indicates that while island destinations are preferred for nature-based trips, coastal destinations are more popular among those intending to engage in water sports. In urban destinations like Ljubljana, culture and nightlife emerge as the main pull factors for visitors (Bozic *et al.*, 2017). For food tourists, particularly gastronomic event tourists, Kim and Kang (2018) identify three push factors (knowledge and learning, fun and new experiences, and relaxation with family) and three pull factors (area quality and value, quality of event, and food variety). Travel motivation serves as a subjective factor impacting both destination choices and tourist behaviour.

Certainly, while tourists are guided by their internal motivations and destinations can vary in attractiveness based on how well their attributes align with these motivations and the implied benefits they promise, there are also constraining factors, notably distance and price. In this context, Nicolau and Mas (2006) make a significant contribution by demonstrating that the discouraging effects of distance and prices are influenced by travel motivation. Motivations can either directly amplify the discouraging effect or inversely alleviate it, serving as a moderating factor on the impacts of distance and price. In the case of the senior market, Pestana *et al.* (2020) reveal that satisfaction acts as a mediator in the relationships between motivations, emotions, and behavioural intentions. It also reinforces the positive correlation between push and pull factors. Vujičić *et al.* (2020) illustrate that, for city breaks, internal factors are the most critical in influencing destination choice, followed by external factors and demotivation.

Furthermore, travel motivation significantly influences destination choice, and it's essential to note that these motivations can vary notably between domestic and international tourists. For instance, Awaritefe's (2004) findings highlight a substantial difference in motivations between these two groups, especially in the context of Nigeria. Guillet *et al.* (2011) emphasise that travel motivation stands as a key variable impacting the destination choice of outbound tourists. Factors like trip expenditure, length of stay, travel party size, and monthly household income also play a role in this decision-making process. Similarly, Mutinda and Mayaka (2012) demonstrate that motivations play a crucial role in shaping the destination choices of domestic tourists.

5. Discussion

The evolution of destination choice research reflects a progressive diversification of theoretical underpinnings, moving from foundational consumer behaviour and decision-making theories to more nuanced frameworks integrating cognitive, psychological, sociocultural, and motivational dimensions. The typology of models – ranging from destination-choice sets to isolated and hybrid frameworks – reveals a sophisticated layering of constructs such as image perception, loyalty, prior experience, and behavioural intentions. Models like those of Um and Crompton (1990), Decrop (2010), and Dias & Cardoso (2017) illustrate how destination choice is no longer seen as a linear decision but as a dynamic and recursive process shaped by experience, memory, and branding. Additionally, the incorporation of frameworks such as the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and social exchange theory (SET) demonstrates how researchers have anchored destination choice in broader psychosocial contexts,

emphasising rationality, perceived control, and the interplay between individual intentions and external stimuli.

Emerging theories in the 2020s further expand this landscape by addressing complex variables such as psychological and cultural distance, aesthetic embodiment, and perceived risks. The distance desire model (Cao *et al.*, 2020) and the work of Bi and Lehto (2018) exemplify how emotional and cognitive interpretations of distance modulate travel decisions beyond physical proximity. Simultaneously, the integration of risk theories and motivation-based value-decision frameworks highlights that travel behaviour is driven not only by attraction but also by constraints and perceived vulnerabilities. Aesthetic and embodied experiences, as proposed by Malvica *et al.* (2022), point to the multisensory and anticipatory nature of destination imagery in pre-travel phases. Overall, the field has transitioned from descriptive to deeply interpretive models, offering a multidimensional understanding of how tourists choose destinations, shaped by internal drives, external signals, and a continuously evolving interplay of affective and cognitive evaluations.

The origin of the destination choice model and theories can be traced back to the 1990s, specifically with Um and Crompton's leisure travel destination choice process – social exchange theory (SET). This theory, developed from two psychological theories – namely the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), marked a significant development in understanding destination selection during that period. The authors revisit the theories of psychology from the 1980s including perceived leisure theory, optimal arousal, set theory, and economic activity, and build SET theory. However, SET theory had already been introduced in the 1980s by Moutinho (1987). The background that gave rise to the TPB and SET theories from 1990 to 2022 saw the creation of various models, but Hoan and Hien (2022) presented the concept of temporal space, which has not yet been included in any theoretical or empirical model. This reveals a need for future research.

Distance theories emerged in 2003 through Van Middelkoop *et al.*'s 2003 concepts, emphasising distance as a crucial element in the decision-making process. This concept revisited Bullough's 1912 theory of psychological distance and drew inspiration from the pleasure and novelty theories of the 1980s and 1990s. Notably, the early 1910s witnessed the end of the First World War (1914–1918), marked by technological advancements such as developments in aviation. In the realm of tourism, this era saw the peak of Grand Tours undertaken by the elites. The beginning of the 2000s was marked by the emergence and widespread use of the Internet, which revolutionised the way people saw distance – online travel agencies emerged, and booking platforms and travel review websites became popular. In both periods, distance is seen in the same way, and the pattern of theory development is repeated. From 2003 to 2022, numerous authors have contributed to the evolution of distance concepts. However, no definitive theory has been proposed, nor has a comprehensive theoretical model been developed, indicating significant potential for future research directions.

Regarding the inception of fear-risk theories, Mura's 2010 fear-risk paradox in destination choice stands out, re-examining Maslow's 1943 hierarchy of needs. The 1940s were characterised by the Second World War (1939 – 1945) and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 1945, while the 2010s were marked by the global refugee migration crisis and apprehensions about overtourism. In both epochs, the perception of fear and travel risk is analogous, and a recurring pattern of theory development is evident. In 2020, the theoretical background of risk theories was resumed, which could be explained by the COVID-19 pandemic, and future lines of research could explain the origin of this phenomenon. Between 2010 and 2020, risk theories related to destination choice models have not produced any theoretical or empirical models, presenting a valuable opportunity for future research.

Oppermann's concept in destination choice was revisited with limited impact, with only three studies, posing a risk in conducting a thorough analysis using a theory-based approach such as the concept of destination attributes, the aesthetic experience and the value of the decision. Future lines of research are therefore interesting. Oppermann's concept of destination choice has been revisited with limited impact, as evidenced by only three studies, which makes it difficult to carry out a comprehensive analysis using approaches based on theories such as destination attributes, aesthetic experience and decision value. This opens up opportunities for future research.

6. Conclusion

This study addressed a critical gap in the tourism literature by integrating a theory-driven approach with mind mapping techniques to analyse and synthesise destination choice research. By identifying core themes, interpreting findings through established theoretical lenses, and constructing a comprehensive conceptual framework, this research enhances our understanding of how tourists choose destinations. The resulting synthesis captures the evolution of destination choice models, providing a structured and multidimensional view of the cognitive, behavioural, psychological, and socio-cultural foundations underpinning travel decision-making.

The findings underscore the importance of considering psychological, socio-cultural, economic, and environmental factors in understanding tourists' preferences. By anchoring the framework in theories such as the theory of planned behaviour, push-pull theory, and involvement theories, this study reveals the mechanisms shaping tourists' attitudes, motivations, and behavioural intentions. Moreover, the classification of models into destination-choice sets, core destination-choice frameworks, and isolated models offers a clearer structure for advancing theoretical discourse. This enriched perspective also paves the way for future research exploring longitudinal decision-making patterns, the role of memory and prior experience, and the influence of embodied and affective responses in destination image processing.

From a managerial perspective, the developed framework provides destination marketers, planners, and policymakers with a strategic lens to design more effective and emotionally resonant branding and communication strategies. Understanding how tourists perceive distance – whether geographical, psychological, or cultural – enables more targeted segmentation and destination positioning. The practical relevance extends to post-crisis recovery, where applying models like social exchange theory (SET) and risk perception frameworks can help restore confidence, reshape expectations, and promote sustainable visitation patterns. Additionally, the integration of aesthetic and embodied dimensions into destination image development encourages immersive, multisensory, and emotionally engaging storytelling, particularly relevant for digital and social media platforms.

Furthermore, this research contributes methodologically by demonstrating the value of mind mapping as a visual and analytical tool in organising complex theoretical constructs. It opens new avenues for research on multi-destination choice behaviour, real-time decision processes using neurophysiological methods (e.g., eye-tracking, facial expression analysis), and comparative studies between domestic and international tourists. Future investigations could also explore the dynamic interplay between virtual tourism experiences and actual destination choices, especially in light of growing digitalisation and experiential marketing trends.

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