

HUE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM



SUI NGHIỆP PHẬT

**AN INVESTIGATION OF PUSH AND PULL FACTORS
INFLUENCING THE DESTINATION ATTRACTIVENESS OF
BINH PHUOC: FROM TOURISTS' PERSPECTIVES**

**SUMMARY OF TOURISM DOCTORAL
DISSERTATION**

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Supervisor 1: **PhD. Nguyen Quoc Nghi**

Supervisor 2: **PhD. Tran Thi Ngoc Lien**

Reviewer 1:

Reviewer 2:

Reviewer 3:

The dissertation will be defended before the University-level
Dissertation Examination Committee at Hue University - 03 Le Loi
Street, Thuan Hoa Ward, Hue City.

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PART I. INTRODUCTION

1. The rationale of the study

In the context of increasing competition among destinations, identifying the factors that determine destination attractiveness from the perspective of tourists is of significant theoretical and practical importance. Destination attractiveness is understood as tourists' overall evaluation of how appealing and worth selecting a destination is, playing a central role in competitiveness and sustainable development (Tam, 2012; Yevloyeva, 2024). When a destination is perceived as attractive, tourists are more likely to revisit, engage in word-of-mouth communication, and recommend it to others (Nguthi et al., 2021). Therefore, examining destination attractiveness contributes to advancing the theoretical understanding of tourist behavior and provides a foundation for policy-making in tourism development.

From a theoretical perspective, although destination attractiveness has been widely studied, there remains fragmentation in conceptual approaches and structural interpretations (Dimitrov et al., 2017). Many studies treat attractiveness as a set of destination attributes or focus on behavioral outcomes, rather than conceptualizing it as an overall outcome variable within a causal structure explaining destination choice. Moreover, most existing models are developed in the context of mature destinations and do not adequately capture the characteristics of destinations that possess potential but lack a clearly established market position (Edward & George, 2008; Islam & Chaudhary, 2020). While the push-pull framework has been extensively used to explain destination choice, prior research has largely emphasized the direct effects of push or pull factors on behavioral intention, without sufficiently explaining the process through which perceived attributes are translated into overall attractiveness evaluations. In particular, the roles of intangible factors and value interpretation mechanisms remain underexplored, especially in Vietnam, where studies tend to separate internal motivations from destination attributes (Loan & Thanh, 2014; Giao & Sang, 2018; Thong, 2019; Nga, 2022). This gap highlights the need for an integrated model capable of explaining

destination attractiveness as a multi-layered cognitive structure from the tourist perspective.

From a practical perspective, Binh Phuoc, located in the Southeast region of Vietnam, possesses advantages in regional connectivity, natural resources, and cultural diversity. However, its tourism development performance remains modest compared to neighboring provinces. In 2024, the province recorded approximately 1.5 million tourist arrivals, significantly lower than other destinations in the region (Vietnam National Authority of Tourism, 2025). Recent studies and reports consistently indicate that, despite its considerable tourism potential, Binh Phuoc has not yet fully capitalized on its resources; tourism products remain limited and support services underdeveloped, resulting in a gap between potential and actual attractiveness. These characteristics suggest that Binh Phuoc is better understood as a destination with significant potential but without a clearly defined positioning, rather than being classified within conventional stages of the destination life cycle. This situation calls for a clearer identification of the factors and mechanisms shaping destination attractiveness during the process of market positioning and image development.

Building on this foundation, the dissertation adopts the push–pull theory (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979) as the primary analytical framework to identify internal motivations (push) and destination attributes (pull) influencing attractiveness. In this study, pull factors are conceptualized as destination attributes measured through tourists’ perceptions, consistent with a demand-side approach in tourism behavior research. In addition to tangible attributes, perceived word-of-mouth is incorporated as a pre-decisional information signal that shapes tourists’ initial perceptions. In the context of heritage tourism, cultural values do not automatically translate into attractiveness without being interpreted by tourists. Perceived authenticity has been shown to play a critical role in shaping experiential meaning and destination evaluation (Wang, 1999; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Accordingly, this study conceptualizes authenticity as a mediating mechanism in the relationship between cultural heritage and destination attractiveness. At the same time,

means–end theory (Gutman, 1982; Klenosky, 2002) is employed to explain how destination attributes are linked to personal values. The integration of these theoretical frameworks enables the study not only to identify predictors of attractiveness but also to clarify the value interpretation process underlying the formation of destination attractiveness.

Within the scope of the literature review, no prior study has been found to simultaneously examine push–pull factors, perceived word-of-mouth, and the mediating role of authenticity in the context of a destination with potential but without a clearly defined positioning, such as Binh Phuoc. Therefore, this research contributes both theoretically, by extending the explanatory framework of destination attractiveness from a cognitive perspective, and practically, by providing a scientific basis for tourism development strategies in Binh Phuoc toward differentiation and sustainability.

Based on these considerations, the dissertation is entitled: “An Investigation Of Push And Pull Factors Influencing The Destination Attractiveness Of Binh Phuoc: From Tourists’ Perspectives”.

2. Research objectives

2.1. General objective

This dissertation aims to examine the push and pull factors influencing the attractiveness of Binh Phuoc as a tourist destination, while clarifying the mediating role of authenticity in the relationship between destination attributes and perceived attractiveness from the tourist perspective. Building on this, the study develops and tests an integrated model to explain how destination attractiveness is formed as an overall evaluation, grounded in the combination of push–pull theory and means–end theory. Particular emphasis is placed on elucidating the mediating mechanism of authenticity in the relationship between cultural heritage and destination attractiveness. Based on the findings, the dissertation proposes managerial and policy implications to enhance the tourism competitiveness of Binh Phuoc Province.

2.2. Specific Research Objectives

- To systematize the theoretical and empirical foundations of destination attractiveness, the Push–Pull framework, Means–End

Theory, and Authenticity Theory in tourism research.

- To identify and operationalize push factors and destination attributes (pull factors) from the perspective of tourists' perceptions, in the context of a destination with potential but without a clearly established positioning, such as Binh Phuoc.

- To develop and test a structural causal model in which push and pull factors are hypothesized to have direct effects on destination attractiveness.

- To examine the specific mediating role of authenticity in the relationship between cultural heritage and destination attractiveness, thereby clarifying the mechanism of value interpretation within the heritage dimension.

- To propose policy and managerial implications aimed at enhancing destination attractiveness and tourism competitiveness in Binh Phuoc.

2.3. Research Questions

- Which theoretical framework is most appropriate for explaining destination attractiveness as an overall evaluative construct from the tourist perspective, particularly in the context of a destination with potential but without a clearly defined positioning?

- How do push factors and destination attributes (pull factors) influence the attractiveness of Binh Phuoc, and what is the magnitude of their effects?

- How does authenticity mediate the relationship between cultural heritage and destination attractiveness?

- Based on the empirical findings, what managerial and policy implications should be proposed to enhance destination attractiveness and tourism competitiveness in Binh Phuoc?

3. Research Subjects and Scope

3.1. Research Subject

The subject of this study is the relationship between push with pull factors, and destination attractiveness, examined from the perspective of tourists' perceptions. Based on this, the dissertation tests an integrated theoretical model combining the push-pull framework and means-end theory, in order to explain the mechanism through which destination attractiveness is formed as an overall

evaluation from the tourist perspective, particularly in the context of a destination with potential but without a clearly established positioning.

3.2. Survey Subjects

The survey respondents consist of both domestic and international tourists who have had direct travel experiences in Binh Phuoc Province. To ensure the reliability of the collected data, respondents were selected based on the criterion that they had stayed for at least one night and participated in tourism activities at the destination. This criterion ensures that respondents possess sufficient experiential exposure to provide informed evaluations of the destination. Details of the sampling method and data collection procedure are presented in Chapter 2 of the dissertation.

3.3. Research Scope

Scope of content: the study adopts a tourist-centered perspective, focusing on examining push factors and destination attributes (pull factors) influencing the attractiveness of Binh Phuoc, based on tourists' perceptions and evaluations following their actual experiences. The perspectives of government authorities and tourism businesses are beyond the scope of this study.

Scope of space: the research is conducted in Binh Phuoc Province, with data collected at selected representative tourist sites that reflect the main types of tourism in the area, including historical-cultural sites and emerging eco-cultural and community-based tourism destinations.

Scope of time and secondary data: The research covers both secondary and primary data collection and analysis phases.

Secondary data: Collected from 2018 to 2025, including official reports and statistics on Binh Phuoc's tourism development from the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism; the provincial e-government portal; the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism; as well as related domestic and international studies. This time frame allows the dissertation to capture tourism development before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic, providing a comprehensive and updated overview.

Primary data: Collected directly from tourists at selected

survey sites between March 2024 and October 2024, serving the quantitative analysis and validation of the proposed research model.

4. Research Methodology

This dissertation adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative research to ensure both theoretical depth and empirical validation.

The qualitative phase was conducted through consultations with 15 experts and a focus group discussion involving 6 experts to refine the measurement scales. This process ensured clarity, contextual relevance, and content validity of the observed variables.

A pilot quantitative study was subsequently carried out with 300 tourists using convenience sampling. The data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0 to assess the reliability and validity of the measurement scales, including Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity. The results served as the basis for refining the survey instrument.

The main quantitative study involved 600 survey responses. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed due to its suitability for exploratory models and its ability to handle data without requiring normal distribution. The analysis focused on evaluating the measurement model, the structural model, and the mediating role of authenticity.

This research design ensures methodological rigor and contextual appropriateness for Binh Phuoc as a tourism destination, providing an empirical foundation for policy implications aimed at enhancing destination attractiveness and competitiveness.

5. Structure of the Dissertation

In addition to the Introduction and Conclusion, the dissertation is organized into four main chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: Scientific foundations of destination attractiveness

Chapter 2: Study area characteristics and research methodology

Chapter 3: Research findings

Chapter 4: Discussion of findings and policy implications

PART II. RESEARCH CONTENT
CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF
DESTINATION ATTRACTIVENESS

1.1. Key Concepts

1.1.1. Concept of a Tourism Destination

This study conceptualizes a tourism destination not merely as a physical space but as an integrated branded product in which natural, cultural, and service-related values interact with visitors' perceptions to co-create its attractiveness. Accordingly, research on destinations should move beyond descriptive accounts of resources to focus on the structure of the destination product and tourists' experiential perceptions, which together form the basis for measuring destination attractiveness in today's competitive environment (Formica & Uysal, 2006; Kozak, 2002).

1.1.2. Concept of Destination Attractiveness

Destination attractiveness is a critical factor influencing tourists' destination choice, on-site experiences, and intentions to revisit (Yevloyeva, 2024; Pompurová et al., 2023). The concept is multidimensional, relative, and shaped by tourists' subjective perceptions (Roman & Bury, 2022), reflecting the destination's capacity to attract visitors (Gunn, 1987; Boivin & Tanguay, 2019). Existing studies approach destination attractiveness from two perspectives: the supply side (resources, infrastructure, services) and the demand side (perceptions, emotions, experiences), with the latter increasingly considered more appropriate in the experience economy (Formica & Uysal, 2006; Zhang et al., 2014).

Destination choice is closely linked to the extent to which tourist needs are satisfied and is often explained through the push-pull framework, where push factors represent internal motivations and pull factors relate to the external attributes that make a destination appealing (Vengesayi, 2003; Tasci et al., 2007). Attractiveness is shaped both during the pre-visit stage through information and mediated imagery and during the actual on-site

experience (Tam & Quyen, 2012). It also varies across destination types and tourist segments (Albayrak & Caber, 2013).

Identifying and measuring destination attractiveness is thus essential for understanding tourist decision-making and for destination managers seeking to enhance competitiveness (Vengesai, 2003). This underscores the importance of integrating push and pull factors in contemporary analyses of tourist behavior.

1.1.3. Concept of Authenticity

Authenticity has become a central concept in heritage tourism research and is approached from cognitive, affective, and behavioral perspectives (Cohen, 1988; Kolar & Žabkar, 2010). Sharpley (1994) associates authenticity with cultural–historical originality, whereas more recent studies emphasize that authenticity is a constructed and subjective experience shaped by tourists themselves (Park et al., 2019). From a theoretical development standpoint, authenticity is multidimensional, typically comprising object-based authenticity and existential authenticity (Wang, 1999; Kolar & Žabkar, 2010).

A substantial body of research has demonstrated that authenticity exerts positive effects on tourist satisfaction, destination image, emotions, and revisit intention (Park et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2024). The experiencescape of heritage sites including natural, social, sensory, and functional elements has also been identified as a key determinant shaping tourists' perceptions of authenticity (Chen et al., 2024). Within the experience economy, tourists increasingly seek distinctiveness and cultural connection, making authenticity a core factor that enhances destination attractiveness and strengthens competitive advantage (Domínguez-Quintero et al., 2019).

1.2. Overview of Studies on Destination Attractiveness from Push–Pull Factors

Existing studies on destination attractiveness within the push–pull framework reveal regional differences, with European research emphasizing tangible attributes such as infrastructure and accessibility (Klufová, 2016; Krabokoukis & Polyzos, 2020;

Chaudhary & Islam, 2022), while studies in Asia and Southeast Asia increasingly focus on intangible factors, including socio-cultural elements, personal perceptions, and individual values (Woyo et al., 2019; Trimurti & Utama, 2019; Ding et al., 2021; Rahman, 2021; Ah Dulhamid et al., 2022). Despite this shift toward experience-oriented perspectives, much of the literature remains descriptive and lacks a clear explanation of how destination attributes (means) are transformed into tourists' desired values (ends), as proposed by means–end theory (Gutman, 1982; Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). Although personal values influence travel motivation (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992; Li et al., 2011), authenticity enhances emotional and behavioral outcomes (Wang, 1999; Kolar & Žabkar, 2010), and perceived word-of-mouth shapes destination image and choice (Westbrook, 1987; Litvin et al., 2008), these constructs are typically examined as post-visit outcomes rather than as pull factors shaping destination attractiveness. In Vietnam, research has largely focused on established destinations, leaving emerging destinations such as Binh Phuoc underexplored within integrated theoretical models (Ha & Quyen, 2021; Tuu & Cam, 2012). Therefore, this study integrates the push–pull framework with means–end theory to clarify the mechanism through which destination resources are cognitively and experientially transformed into perceived value, addressing a critical theoretical gap in destination attractiveness research.

1.3. Research Gaps and Study Orientation

A review of the literature on destination attractiveness reveals several unresolved gaps within the push–pull framework. Existing studies have predominantly focused on pull factors, such as natural and cultural attributes, while push factors related to tourists' intrinsic motivations and personal values remain insufficiently examined. Although integrating push–pull theory with means–end theory has been suggested to clarify how internal motivations shape destination

perceptions (Klenosky, 2002; Richmond & Cornelius, 2021), empirical applications of this approach are still limited.

Moreover, intangible elements including personal values, perceived word-of-mouth, and authenticity have not been systematically incorporated into push–pull models, particularly in the Vietnamese context. Authenticity, in particular, has rarely been examined as a mediating mechanism explaining how destination attributes are translated into perceived destination attractiveness.

Finally, emerging destinations such as Binh Phuoc remain underrepresented in behavioral tourism research. Despite possessing substantial ecological and cultural potential, the province attracts fewer visitors than neighboring destinations, and empirical assessments of tourist perceptions are scarce, limiting evidence-based destination planning.

Addressing these gaps, this dissertation develops and tests an integrated model combining push–pull theory and means–end theory, in which personal values are conceptualized as intrinsic push motivations, perceived word-of-mouth as an extended pull factor, and authenticity as a mediating variable. The empirical focus on Binh Phuoc advances destination attractiveness theory and provides practical insights for the sustainable development of emerging destinations.

1.4. Hypothesis Development and Proposed Research Model

In this study, destination attractiveness is approached through an integrated framework based on three theoretical foundations.

First, the push–pull model (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979) serves as the cornerstone for explaining the sources of motivation, with push factors reflecting intrinsic needs and pull factors representing the destination’s appealing attributes. Second, Means–End Theory (Gutman, 1982; Klenosky, 2002) is employed to elucidate the mechanism through which destination attributes (means) are transformed into the personal values desired by tourists

(ends). Third, the cognitive approach (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003) adds the perspective that attractiveness does not solely derive from objective characteristics but is strongly influenced by how tourists interpret and attach value to the destination. This integration provides the theoretical foundation for proposing the research model and developing hypotheses.

Based on this integrated framework, the research model is structured into four component groups:

- Push factors, including novelty seeking, self-development, relaxation, social interaction, and personal values (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987) as newly incorporated intrinsic motivators.

- Pull factors, encompassing positive perceived word-of-mouth, accessibility, landscape environment, cultural heritage, supplementary services, human resources, and cost attributes shaping tourists' perceptions and destination choice.

- Two mediating variables of authenticity, including object-based authenticity (Wang, 1999; Hà & Quyên, 2021) and existential authenticity (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006), incorporated to explain the mechanism of value interpolation in the destination evaluation process.

- Dependent variable, destination attractiveness, representing the overall level of appeal perceived by tourists (Hu & Ritchie, 1993).

On this basis, the dissertation develops a series of hypotheses to test the direct effects of push and pull factors, as well as the mediating roles of the two types of authenticity, thereby clarifying the mechanism through which destination attractiveness is formed in Binh Phuoc as an emerging destination. Hypotheses H1–H14 are proposed to empirically examine these relationships.

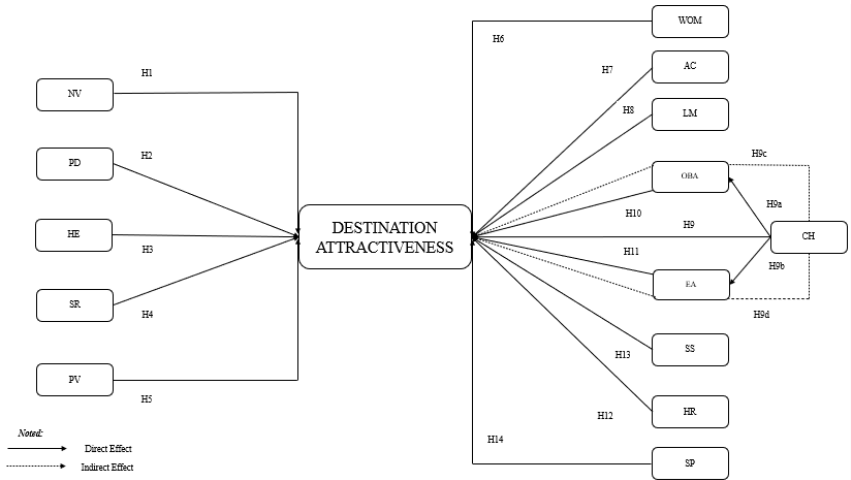


Figure 1.1. Conceptual model integrating Push–Pull, Means–End, and Authenticity frameworks in explaining Destination Attractiveness

Source: *Author (2025)*

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH AREA CHARACTERISTICS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Characteristics of the Study Area

Binh Phuoc is a mountainous and midland province located in the Southeast region of Vietnam, covering an area of 6,874 km². It lies in a transitional zone between the lowlands and the Central Highlands and represents the terminal point of the Truong Son mountain range as well as the Ho Chi Minh Trail (Viet & Giang, 2024). The province shares a border of approximately 240 km with Cambodia and maintains relatively convenient connections with Ho Chi Minh City, creating favorable conditions for trade and regional tourism development. The topography gradually declines from north to south, combining characteristics of mountainous, midland, and lowland terrains, which contributes to the formation of diverse ecosystems (Phuoc & Khoa, 2015). The climate is tropical monsoon with sub-equatorial features, characterized by two distinct seasons, high temperatures, and localized microclimatic variations.

In terms of natural resources, Binh Phuoc possesses several elements with strong potential for tourism development, including Ba Ra Mountain (733 m), the Dong Nai – Sai Gon – Be river systems, and both natural and artificial lakes such as Thac Mo, Soc Mieng, and Can Son. These features create a rich and varied landscape, suitable for developing ecotourism, leisure tourism, and nature-based experiences (Binh Phuoc Provincial Gazetteer, 2015).

Regarding the social environment, the province consists of seven districts and three towns, with a diverse population structure that includes the Kinh majority and more than 40 ethnic minority groups. Among them, the S'tieng represent the largest indigenous community, while groups such as the Ma, Mnong, and Cho Ro have long-standing settlement histories (Lan, 2017). Cultural diversity is reflected in traditional festivals, handicrafts, and indigenous knowledge systems, forming an important foundation for the development of cultural and community-based tourism products.

These characteristics also contribute to the formation of authentic tourist experiences, consistent with the perspectives of Wang (1999) and Kolar and Zabkar (2010).

However, despite its rich natural and cultural resources, tourism development in Binh Phuoc remains relatively limited. These resources have not yet been effectively transformed into competitive tourism products and experiences, and the destination image has not been clearly established in tourists' perceptions. In this context, Binh Phuoc can be understood as a destination with considerable potential but without a clearly defined positioning. This condition provides a suitable context for examining the mechanism through which destination attractiveness is formed from the perspective of tourist behavior, particularly in analyzing the roles of push–pull factors and value interpretation mechanisms.

2.2. Research Methodology

The research process of this dissertation was conducted in four stages to ensure systematic rigor and a solid scientific basis for identifying the push–pull factors influencing destination attractiveness in Binh Phuoc. First, a comprehensive literature review was carried out on both domestic and international studies related to destination attractiveness. Based on this review, the measurement scales were developed and refined, drawing upon two primary theoretical frameworks: the push–pull theory and the means–end theory.

The scale development process followed Churchill's (1979) guidelines, which include concept identification, design and refinement of observed variables, and expert consultations to ensure content validity and contextual relevance.

Next, a preliminary quantitative survey was conducted with 286 visitors who had experienced Binh Phuoc (data collected from March to July 2024) to test the reliability and validity of the measurement scales. The analysis using SmartPLS 4.0 provided the basis for adjusting the scales for the main survey. The official

quantitative phase took place from August to September 2024, yielding 586 valid questionnaires collected at representative tourist sites in the province. The sample size was determined according to the recommendations of Boomsma (1982), Bentler and Chou (1987), and Hair et al. (2021), meeting the requirements for a PLS-SEM model with multiple latent constructs.

Data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0, following steps for evaluating both the measurement model (Outer Loading, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, AVE, HTMT, VIF) and the structural model (R^2 , f^2 , Q^2). This procedure enabled the assessment of model fit, explanatory power, and predictive capability of the research model.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1. Sample Characteristics

The survey sample comprised 586 tourists, including 55.0% males and 45.0% females. The largest age group was over 50 years old (43.5%), followed by those aged 41–50 (18.6%), 21–30 (16.2%), and 31–40 (15.2%). Most respondents had relatively high educational attainment, with 63.0% holding college or university degrees and 10.2% possessing postgraduate qualifications.

Vietnamese tourists accounted for 68.3% of the sample, while international visitors and overseas Vietnamese represented 31.7%, primarily from Asia and Europe. Monthly income was concentrated in the 10–15 million VND range (50.5%).

In terms of travel behavior, 69.9% were first-time visitors. Most traveled independently (67.3%) and with family or friends (78.5% combined). The main travel purpose was sightseeing and leisure (62.8%), followed by study, conferences, and business-related trips.

Overall, the sample reflects the current structure of tourists visiting Binh Phuoc and provides a reliable basis for subsequent analysis.

3.2. Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model, comprising 15 constructs grounded in the push–pull and means–end frameworks, was assessed for reliability and validity prior to structural analysis. Four indicators (MM4, PB2, SK4, DA4) with outer loadings below 0.700 were removed (Hair et al., 2017); all remaining items loaded above the threshold.

Internal consistency was confirmed, with Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values exceeding 0.700, while convergent validity was established as all AVE values surpassed 0.500 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity, assessed using the HTMT criterion, was also satisfactory, with all values below 0.900 (Henseler et al., 2015). Overall, the measurement model met accepted

standards, providing a robust basis for subsequent structural model testing.

3.3. Structural Model Assessment

3.3.1. Collinearity Assessment

Multicollinearity was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). All VIF values ranged from 1.08 to 1.576, well below the recommended threshold of 10 (Hair et al., 2017), indicating no multicollinearity concerns. Low VIF values for newly introduced constructs (personal values, authenticity, and precived word-of-mouth) further confirm construct independence and support the robustness of the extended push–pull framework.

3.3.2. Hypothesis Testing in the Research Model

Hypotheses were tested using a 5,000-sample bootstrap procedure in SmartPLS 4.0. The model demonstrated good fit, with an SRMR of 0.048, below the recommended threshold of 0.08 (Henseler et al., 2015). Both direct and indirect effects were examined.

3.3.2.1. Testing Direct Relationships

The results reveal that all direct paths have p-values < 0.05; thus, all 14 hypotheses are supported at a 95% confidence level. The coefficients are all positive, indicating that both push and pull factors positively influence destination attractiveness (DA).

Table 3.1. Results of Hypothesis Testing – Direct Effects

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	p-value	Conclusion
H1	NS → DA	0.184	0.000	Accepted
H2	PD → DA	0.101	0.000	Accepted
H3	HE → DA	0.145	0.000	Accepted
H4	SR → DA	0.090	0.001	Accepted
H5	PV → DA	0.153	0.000	Accepted
H6	WOM → DA	0.136	0.000	Accepted
H7	AC → DA	0.184	0.000	Accepted
H8	LE → DA	0.140	0.000	Accepted

H9	CH → DA	0.216	0.000	Accepted
H9a	CH → OBA	0.303	0.000	Accepted
H9b	CH → EA	0.412	0.000	Accepted
H10	OBA → DA	0.173	0.000	Accepted
H11	EA → DA	0.107	0.001	Accepted
H12	SS → DA	0.181	0.000	Accepted
H13	HR → DA	0.158	0.000	Accepted
H14	SP → DA	0.086	0.004	Accepted

Source: *Data processed by the author (2025)*

3.3.2.2. Testing Indirect Relationships

Mediating effects were tested using a 5,000-sample bootstrap with a 95% BCa confidence interval. Cultural heritage (VH) exerts a significant indirect effect on destination attractiveness (DA) through object-based authenticity (OBA) and existential authenticity (EA). The total effect of VH on DA is 0.216 ($p < 0.001$), while the direct effect decreases to 0.120 after including the mediators, indicating partial mediation. The indirect effects via OBA (0.052; VAF = 24.2%) and EA (0.044; VAF = 20.4%) yield a combined indirect effect of 0.096 (VAF = 44.6%). Medium to strong f^2 values for VH → EA (0.204) and VH → OBA (0.101) further confirm authenticity as a key mechanism translating cultural heritage into perceived attractiveness. Overall, the findings highlight authenticity and perceived word-of-mouth as pivotal pathways through which push-pull factors shape destination attractiveness in Binh Phuoc.

The PLS-SEM model was evaluated using R^2 , Q^2 , and f^2 indices to assess explanatory power and predictive relevance. Destination Attractiveness (DA) exhibits strong explanatory ($R^2 = 0.648$) and predictive power ($Q^2 = 0.369$), indicating a theoretically robust and practically applicable model. Experiential Authenticity (EA) and Object-Based Authenticity (OBA) show low to moderate explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.170$ and 0.092) but retain predictive relevance ($Q^2 > 0$), which is appropriate given their mediating roles.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1. Discussion of Research Results

The findings confirm that both push and pull factors significantly influence destination attractiveness in Binh Phuoc ($p < 0.05$), supporting the push–pull model and the applicability of means–end theory. Among push factors, personal values exert the strongest effect, followed by relaxation and health, self-development, social relationships, and novelty seeking, indicating that destination attractiveness in an emerging context is primarily driven by meaning-oriented and self-affirming motivations rather than functional needs.

All pull factors are significant, with cultural heritage emerging as the most influential, followed by accessibility, supplementary services, human resources, and perceived word-of-mouth. Notably, word-of-mouth functions as a direct pull factor, shaping initial trust in a relatively less-known destination.

The mediating role of authenticity is clearly established. Cultural heritage significantly influences both object-based and experiential authenticity, which in turn enhance destination attractiveness. These indirect effects demonstrate that authenticity operates as a cognitive mechanism through which heritage values are translated into perceived value, reinforcing the explanatory power of the integrated push–pull and means–end framework in the context of emerging destinations such as Binh Phuoc.

4.2. Policy Implications

Based on the quantitative results, this study proposes policy implications to enhance the destination attractiveness of Binh Phuoc, structured within an integrated push–pull and means–end framework and emphasizing the mediating role of authenticity. Policy priorities are determined by the relative magnitude of standardized path coefficients, ensuring efficient allocation of tourism development resources.

The findings indicate that destination attractiveness is shaped by the interaction of push, pull, and mediating factors. Among push factors, personal values exert the strongest influence ($\beta = 0.153$), followed by relaxation and health ($\beta = 0.145$), self-development ($\beta = 0.101$), social relationship enhancement ($\beta = 0.090$), and novelty seeking ($\beta = 0.078$), suggesting that tourists are primarily motivated by intrinsic and value-oriented needs rather than functional considerations.

Regarding pull factors, cultural heritage is the most influential determinant ($\beta = 0.216$), followed by accessibility ($\beta = 0.184$), supplementary services ($\beta = 0.181$), human resources ($\beta = 0.158$), landscape and environment ($\beta = 0.140$), and perceived word-of-mouth ($\beta = 0.136$), while service price shows a weaker but significant effect ($\beta = 0.086$). These results highlight the importance of improving heritage-based experiences, transport connectivity, service quality, and experience-driven communication, particularly for an emerging destination.

Authenticity plays a critical mediating role, with both object-based authenticity ($\beta = 0.173$) and experiential authenticity ($\beta = 0.107$) significantly enhancing destination attractiveness. This confirms that cultural heritage contributes to destination appeal primarily through authentic objects and lived experiences, thereby validating the integration of push-pull and means-end theories in the context of Binh Phuoc.

PART III. CONCLUSION

1. Conclusion

This dissertation confirms the suitability of an integrated model combining push–pull theory and means–ends theory for analyzing destination attractiveness in Binh Phuoc. The SEM results demonstrate strong explanatory power and reveal three key contributions.

First, personal values are identified as a significant push factor, reflecting tourists’ needs for self-awareness and meaningful experiences in the context of contemporary tourism. Second, both object-based authenticity and existential authenticity serve as mediators between cultural heritage and destination attractiveness, clarifying how heritage experiences translate into perceived value and positive emotions. Third, perceived word-of-mouth emerges as a new pull resource, strongly influencing tourists’ perceptions and destination choice decisions.

These findings not only extend push–pull theory but also broaden the application of means–ends theory, highlighting that destination attractiveness is constructed from both tangible values and the internalization of tourists’ experiences.

From a practical perspective, the dissertation offers guidance for developing tourism in Binh Phuoc by emphasizing quality experiences, enhancing authenticity, improving infrastructure and services, and fostering perceived word-of-mouth. Such strategies contribute to building a destination brand grounded in cultural value and tourist engagement.

2. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This dissertation acknowledges several limitations: (1) measurement errors arising from scale adjustments and self-reported data; (2) sample bias due to the predominance of domestic tourists and surveys conducted at major heritage sites; (3) limited consideration of regional cultural factors and post-pandemic contexts; (4) constraints of PLS-SEM in evaluating overall model fit.

Future research should validate measurement scales using CFA/ESEM, expand cross-regional and cross-cultural surveys, apply multi-group or CB-SEM analyses, and combine mixed methods to clarify the mechanisms of mediating and moderating variables. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to track changes in tourist behavior and experiences as Binh Phuoc evolves from a potential destination into a key tourism hub.

LIST OF THE AUTHOR'S PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION

1. Phat, S.N. and Lien, T.T.N. (2024). Authenticity in the heritage tourism – Approach based on tourists experience: A review. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Economics (ICE 2024)* (pp. 229–241). Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House of Economics.

2. Phat, S.N., Nguyen, Q.N., & Lien, T.T.N. (2025). The impact of cultural heritage on the destination attractiveness: The mediating role of authenticity. *Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites*, 60(2spl), 1362–1371. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.602spl31-1507>

3. Phat, S. N., Nghi, N. Q., & Lien, T. T. N. (2025). Destination attractiveness: a review of research approaches and proposed directions. *Hue University Journal of Science: Economics and Development*, 134(5B), 05-24.

4. Phat, S.N. and Nguyen, Q.N. (2025). Research model of Binh Phuoc's destination attractiveness: The mediating role of authenticity within the Push-Pull and Means-End theoretical frameworks. *Vietnam Economic & Financial Review (VEFR)*. Issue 2, November 2025(5), 200–203.

5. Nghiep, P. S., Phuong, L. V., & Quoc, N. N. (2025). Unpacking authenticity in heritage tourism: the mediating role of destination attractiveness and the moderating effect of prior knowledge. *Intellectual Economics*, 19(2), 239-266. DOI:10.13165/IE-25-19-2-10

6. Phat, S. N., Nguyen, Q. N., & Lien, T. T. N. (2026). A comprehensive review of approaches to measuring destination attractiveness: Towards an integrated theoretical framework. *International Research Journal of Multidisciplinary Scope (IRJMS)*, 7(2), 288–301. <https://doi.org/10.47857/irjms.2026.v07i02.07619>