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Wanderlust of Buddhist Heritage Sites: An Empirical Exploration of Tourists' Behaviour on Religious Sites of Sikkim

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Abstract: The present study applies the Extended Theory of Planned Behaviour (ETPB) by including two more additional variables, namely, Past Experience (PEXP) and Destination Image (DI). It is to better explain tourists' Behavioural Intentions (BI) towards Buddhist heritage sites. It seeks to identify some of the key factors that influence tourists' behaviour in decisions making to visit Buddhist monastery in Sikkim. Addressing the gap in the existing literatures regarding heritage sites as a destination choice, the study offers practical insights for promoting sustainable tourism. A mixed-method approach was adopted, combining both qualitative and quantitative research design. Data were collected from 420 tourist individual chosen with the help of stratified random sampling method. Further analyses of data and interpretation was done by using descriptive statistics, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The SEM findings confirm that all five constructs significantly influence tourists' behavioural intentions. Among these, Attitude emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by Destination Image (DI) and Past Experience (PEXP). Therefore, it is concluded from the present study that ETPB are effective and can be used in the study related to decision-making process of tourists while considering final decision in destination choices.

Keywords: *Extended Theory of Planned Behaviour, Destination Image, Past Experience, Buddhist Heritage Sites.*

I. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing scholarly interest in exploring tourist behaviour (Pearce, 1996; Cohen et al., 2014; Budeanu, 2007; Guleria, 2016). A growing number of studies on behaviour have emphasized the increasing application and significance of the Behavioural Intention Theory (BIT) in understanding tourist behaviour (Hasan et al., 2020; Seow et al., 2017; Ramos & Hassan, 2021). Scholars argue that analysing tourist behaviour and understanding the intentions behind destination visits constitute an effective research strategy for promoting the growth of the tourism sector. The Behavioural Intention Theory (BIT) has proven valuable in identifying the various factors that influence traveller's decision-making when selecting a destination (Bosnjak et al., 2020). The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) explains how individual behaviour and subjective evaluations influence actions (Kraft et al., 2011). Originating from efforts to understand human behaviour, TPB aims to describe behaviours that individuals can regulate through self-control (Ajzen, 2011). Furthermore, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is extensively applied in a wide range of studies, including those focused on leisure tourism, consumer behaviour, social sciences, and several other academic fields (Wang & Ritchie, 2012). Within the framework of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), an individual's intention to perform a particular behaviour is influenced by the interaction of three key factors: attitude, social norms, and perceived behavioural control (Francesco & Ajzen, 2020; Leng et al., 2011; Sommer, 2011). The present study effectively applies this theory to anticipate and explain behavioural intentions. Moreover, the Extended Theory of Planned Behaviour (ETPB) enhances the original TPB framework by introducing two additional variables past experience and image thereby offering a new perspective in the existing literature (Singh et al., 2024). This adaptation, referred to as TPBL, strengthens the theory's ability to explain behaviour and provides a more holistic framework for understanding behavioural intentions (Norman & Smith, 1995). India, being the world's most populous developing nation (Mehrotra, 2010), has a thriving tourism industry that plays a vital role in driving its economic development (Mishra et al., 2011; Kaur & Sharma, 2012; Godara et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2012; Dash et al., 2018; Venkatesh & Raj, 2016). Among India's many destinations, Sikkim emerges as a captivating experience that leaves a deep and lasting impact on visitors (Mangar, 2023; Dutta & Mukhopadhyay, 2024). Celebrated for its distinctive natural setting and profound monastic heritage, Sikkim draws numerous tourists in search of spiritual enrichment (Mukherjee et al., 2023). The appeal of Sikkim's monastic sites goes beyond religious affiliations, attracting not only devoted

pilgrims but also secular travellers seeking social interaction, relaxation, and rejuvenation. Tourism in the state has seen a significant rise, with over 1.3 million visitors recorded in just the first half of 2024. Based on historical data and current tourism trends, the Civil Aviation and Tourism Development Department of Sikkim estimates that the state will welcome approximately 2.4 million tourists by the end of 2025. Tourist behaviour has become a central theme in tourism research (Ahmmadi et al. 2021), as gaining insight into the motivations behind travel choices is essential for strategic tourism development and marketing. Prominent attractions like Dubdi Monastery, Sangay Choling Monastery, and Tashiding Monastery are among the most compelling sites in Sikkim. Characterized by their mesmerizing traditional architecture, lively religious festivals, and rich historical significance, these destinations contribute to a favourable perception of the region (Chakrabarty & Sadhukhan (2020). However, experience and destination image represent only a few among the many factors that shape travellers' decisions (Mckercher & Tolkach, 2020; Kock et al. 2016). A thorough grasp of tourist behaviour requires examining the diverse factors that influence travel choices (Nejati & Mohamed, 2014); Dingil et al., 2021). In addition to visual and cultural attractions, elements like accessibility, cost-effectiveness, safety, and perceived value significantly influence the choice of a travel destination (Mutinda & Mayaka, 2012; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Moreover, personal preferences (Plan et al., 2022), travel motivations (Jang & Cai, 2002; Pestana et al., 2020; Gnanapala, 2012), and prior travel experiences (Mazursky, 1989) all play a crucial role in shaping the complex decision-making process of travellers. By examining the diverse dimensions of tourist behaviour, this study offers meaningful insights for various tourism stakeholders such as policymakers, destination marketers, and tour operators. These insights can guide strategic planning efforts focused on improving visitor experiences, safeguarding cultural heritage, and advancing sustainable tourism in destinations like Sikkim. Accordingly, this paper adopts the Extended Theory of Planned Behaviour (ETPB) framework to analyse the key factors that influence tourists' decisions to visit Buddhist monasteries. The main goal of this study is to evaluate the interconnections among the variable outlined in the Extended Theory of Planned Behaviour (ETPB) (Soliman, 2021). Past experiences and the image of a destination significantly influence tourists' behavioural intentions when choosing travel locations (Molina et al., 2013). Consequently, there exists an empirical link between destination image, personal experience, and various influencing and resulting factors within the behavioural intention framework (Wang & Hsu, 2010). Therefore, this research seeks to investigate the relationships among key ETPB components, including attitude, perceived behavioural control, social norms, experience, and destination image. Although Sikkim possesses considerable tourism potential (Mukherjee et al., 2023), there is a noticeable lack of empirical studies applying the Extended Theory of Planned Behaviour (ETPB) in this context. This research addresses that gap by empirically examining ETPB, with a particular focus on traveller experiences and destination image in the Sikkim region. The study's findings will offer valuable implications for local communities, heritage site authorities, destination managers, policymakers, and marketers by delivering insights that can help customize tourism products and services to better align with the expectations of target visitors. Although numerous studies have examined destination choice through different theoretical models, the use of the Extended Theory of Planned Behaviour (ETPB) has been relatively limited. Moreover, no existing research has specifically applied ETPB in the context of Buddhist heritage sites. Hence, this study provides fresh insights into tourists decision-making processes in this distinctive setting, delivering meaningful contributions to both academic literature and industry practitioners.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Attitudes:

In the realm of tourism, tourists' attitudes toward visiting a destination and their behavioural intentions toward the destination are widely recognized as key predictors. This relationship between tourism attitude and behaviour Hasan et al. (2023), Frey & George (2010), Carmichael (2000), Juvan & Dolnicar (2014), Hibbert et al. (2013), Martin et al. 2017) has formed the theoretical foundation of numerous studies, often supported by the Theory of Planned behaviour Erul et al. (2020), Han et al. (2017). Tourists' attitudes towards a tourism destination are considered pivotal in shaping their behavioural intentions. Past research, including studies by Joo et al. (2020) and Sommer (2011) has highlighted the impact of attitude on behavioural intention. Ajzen (2011) have affirmed that tourists' overall attitudes towards a tourism destination are indeed influenced by their behavioural intentions. Therefore, it can be inferred that attitude is intricately linked with behavioural intention Wang et al. (2020), Tajeddini et al. (2021), Qui et al. (2019). Building upon these insights, researcher proposed hypothesis as:

H1: There is a mixed association between attitudes and behavioural intention on visiting Buddhist heritage sites in Sikkim.

2.2. Subjective Norms:

The concept of subjective norms pertains to how individuals perceive the social pressure influencing their engagement in particular behaviours, Manning, 2010; Kashif, Zarkada, & Ramayah, 2018. Subjective norm reflects an individual's interpretation of social behaviour or their perception of how others view their

participation in certain actions, Brechan (2016) and Rachbini (2018) define it as a person's judgment of whether a particular action or belief is socially acceptable or not. These norms play a crucial role in shaping tourists' behavioural intentions by affecting how they perceive social expectations, cultural standards, and recommendations from others (Ajzen, 1991). Prior research has consistently shown a positive correlation between subjective norms and behavioural intentions. Consequently, studies such as those by Yarimoglu and Gunay (2019) have proposed and validated this positive relationship, forming the bias for the following hypothesis:

H2: There is a significance positive relationship between subjective norms and behavioural intention on visiting Buddhist heritage sites in Sikkim.

2.3. Perceived Behaviour Control:

Perceived bahaviour control includes an individual's perception of their ability to control their behaviour, which can vary depending on circumstances and activities, Anggraini & Siswanto, 2016. Two key factors contributing to perceived behaviour control are controllability and self-efficacy Bamberg, Ajzen, & Schmidt, 2010; (Hasan, Ray, & Neela, 2021. It reflects an individual's impression of their own accountability in their actions Sutton, et al., 2003. Past studies have consistently identified a positive association between perceived behavioural control and behavioural intention Leung & Jiang, 2018. Hence, based on this empirical evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: There is a significance positive relationship between perceived behaviour control and behavioural intention on visiting Buddhist heritage sites.

2.4. Past Experience:

Prior experience plays a crucial role in enhancing and enriching the appeal of tourism destinations Mazursky, 1989. However, existing research suggests that the pros and cons of a tourism destination are often shaped by past visits Schroeder & Pennington-Gray, 2018. Both positive and negative past travel experiences significantly influence visitor perceptions and the services provided to them, thereby impacting the tourism sector. Furthermore, most of the previous studies indicate that past travel experiences generally exert a positive influence on tourists' destination choices Kidwell & Jewell, 2008; Aarts, Verplanken, & Knippenberg, 1998; Albarracin & Wyer, 2000. Consequently, the following hypothesis is formulated related to past experiences and tourists' intentions to visit Buddhist heritage sites in Sikkim.

H4: There is a significance positive relationship between previous experience and behavioural intention on visiting Buddhist heritage sites.

2.5. Destination Image:

Destination image, as conceptualised by Crompton, 1979; White, 2004; Cai, Wu, & Bai, 2003; refers to an individual's beliefs, perceptions, and impressions about a specific place. People widely recognise it as a crucial element in enhancing tourism destinations Jenkins, 1999. The attractiveness of a destination image plays a significant role in attracting travellers, who anticipate satisfaction from their visit Le, H., et al 2020. Consequently, destination image has emerged as a pivotal factor in the decision-making process for travellers Jenkins, 1999. Destination image closely influences the success or failure of tourism management. As such, it has become an integral aspect of tourism destinations, reflecting the overall sentiments and expectations associated with a particular experience. Notably, destination image exerts a tangible impact on tourism destinations, shaping visitors' perceptions and behaviours Chi & Qu, 2008. Research indicates that destination image influences behavioural intention, which is a forerunner to actual behaviour Laing & Crouch, 2009; Woomi & Soocheong, 2007. This underlines the critical role of destination image in shaping visitors' intentions and subsequent actions. Based on the above argument following hypothesis is formulated.

H5: There is a significance mixed association between destination image and behavioural intention on visiting Buddhist heritage sites.

III. Research Methodology

3.1. Population and Sample Size:

This research employed a mixed-method approach to ensure a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The primary data are meticulously gathered from tourists' head or leader who leads the group during their visits in the select monasteries of Sikkim during the study period. A stratified random sampling approach was adopted to select 420 participants from the varied population of tourists visiting Buddhist monasteries in Sikkim. To capture perceptions and attitudes effectively, a 5-point Likert scale was designed and utilized for data collection. Prior to its application, the questionnaire underwent a thorough assessment to confirm its reliability and validity, ensuring consistent and trustworthy data for the current investigation. Descriptive statistical methods were applied to analyse the demographic characteristics of the sample. To explore the interrelationships among variables and confirm theoretical constructs, advanced analytical tools such as Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) were implemented. This

integrated methodology offers valuable insights into tourist behaviour and establishes a robust basis for future research in the domain of heritage tourism within the region.

3.2. The Research Framework:

In this study, researcher explored the underlying factors of the Extended Theory of Planned Behaviour (ETPB) by bringing in two additional constructs: Past Experience (PEXP) and Destination Image (DI). Along with the traditional components like Attitude (ATT), Subjective Norms (SN), and Perceived Behaviour Control (PBC), these new variables helped to build a stronger model to explain tourists Behavioural Intention (BI). Research focus was specifically on tourists visiting Buddhist heritage sites, an area where both theoretical and practical discussions are still evolving. What makes this model stand out is its novelty, no empirical research has tested this exact combination before. Through this approach, this study aimed to offer something fresh to the field of heritage tourism by broadening the established framework and giving a clearer picture of what drives tourists' intentions. By looking closely at how all these factors work together within the ETPB structure, this research brings both academic and real-world value. Adding past experience and destination image, in particular, gives a sharper view of what influences tourists choices in heritage contexts.

IV. Results

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents Visiting Sikkim Monasteries

		Number = 420	%
Gender	Male	245	58.3%
	Female	175	41.7%
	Transgender	0	0%
Age	Below 25	71	16.9%
	26 – 35	154	36.7%
	36 – 45	128	30.5%
	46 – 55	66	15.7%
	56 & above	1	0.2%
Qualification	PG & above	192	45.7%
	UG	160	38.1%
	12^{th}	45	10.7%
	10^{th} & below	23	5.5%
Income	below 5,00,000	14	3.3%
	5,00,001 – 10,00,000	77	18.3%
	10,00,001 – 15,00,000	172	40.9%
	15,00,001 – 20,00,000	100	23.9%
	20,00,000 & above	57	13.6%

Source: *Compilation of the scheduled questionnaire*

The demographic profile of 420 respondents visiting monasteries in Sikkim reveals a diverse tourist base, with notable trends in gender, age, education, and income. In terms of gender, males constitute the majority (58.3%), while females account for 41.7%. No responses were recorded from transgender individuals, indicating a possible gap in inclusivity or limited representation in this tourist segment. The age distribution shows that the majority of visitors are young to middle-aged adults. Tourists aged 26-35 form the largest group (36.7%). Followed by those aged 36-45 (30.5%). A smaller proportion falls in the 46-55 age bracket (15.7%), while only 0.2% are above 56 years, suggesting that younger and middle-aged individuals are more inclined to visit religious heritage sites like monasteries. Notably, tourists under 25 years old make up 16.9% of the sample, reflecting a growing interest in cultural and spiritual tourism among the youth. In terms of educational qualifications, a significant portion of respondents are highly educated. Visitors with postgraduate qualifications or higher comprises 45.7%, followed by undergraduates (38.1%). This suggests that the monastery tourism segment attract a well-educated demographic, potentially interested in the cultural, historical, and spiritual aspects of the destination. Regarding income, a large share of respondents (40.9%) earns between Rs. 10,00,001 - Rs. 15,00,000 annually, followed by 23.9% in the Rs. 15,00,001 – Rs. 20,00,000 range. Only 3.3% of tourists have an annual income below Rs. 5,00,000. These figures imply that monastery tourism in Sikkim is favoured by middle to upper-income groups, likely due to associated travel costs and an appreciation for spiritual or heritage experiences. The data also suggested that tourists visiting monasteries in Sikkim are predominantly educated, financially well-off, and fall within the productive age group, making them an important target for sustainable religious tourism strategies.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics, Reliability and Validity of Construct Variables

Variables	Mean	S.D.	KMO	CR	AVE	MSV
BI	3.4118	0.829	0.898	0.933	0.737	0.483
ATT	3.3359	0.824	0.816	0.919	0.533	0.184
PBC	3.3647	0.762	0.869	0.873	0.700	0.468
SN	3.4871	0.887	0.778	0.880	0.650	0.309
PEXP	3.4031	0.785	0.849	0.862	0.621	0.463
DI	3.4022	0.775	0.855	0.844	0.663	0.344

Source: *Author's calculation*

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, reliability and validity measures of construct variables used in the study. The mean scores indicate the average responses for each variable and it is found that the average mean scores ranging from 3.33 to 3.49, SN (Subjective Norms) underscore the highest with 3.4871, followed by BI (Behaviour Intention) with 3.4118. PEXP (Past Experience) shows the third highest mean score with 3.4031 which is also followed by DI (Destination Image) with 3.4022. Among the construct variables PBC (Perceived Behaviour Control) and ATT (Attitudes) recorded the lowest mean score with 3.3647 and 3.3359 respectively. Likewise, standard deviations (S.D.) provide a measure of the low variability within each variable, ranging from 0.762 to 0.887. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy assesses the suitability of data for factor analysis, with values above 0.5 considered acceptable; all dimensions surpass this threshold, ranging from 0.778 to 0.898, indicating adequate sampling adequacy. Additionally, Construct Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) assess internal consistency and convergence validity, respectively. CR values recorded greater than 0.7 and AVE values greater than 0.5 indicate satisfactory reliability and convergent validity; all dimensions meet these criteria, with CR ranging from 0.844 to 0.933 and AVE ranging from 0.533 to 0.737. Also, the Maximum Shared Squared Variance (MSV) test checks for discriminant validity. Values less than the average value (AVE) show good discriminant validity, and all dimensions have MSV values lower than their corresponding AVE values, confirming good discriminant validity. This statistical output justified the reliability and validity for all the attributes, supporting its suitability or feasibility for further analysis in the present study.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity of Construct Variables

Variables	BI	ATT	PBC	SN	PEXP	DI
BI	**0.846**					
ATT	0.463	**0.848**				
PBC	0.493	0.686	**0.828**			
SN	0.618	0.422	0.453	**0.785**		
PEXP	0.546	0.524	0.511	0.686	**0.836**	
DI	0.147	0.200	0.204	0.090	0.114	**0.750**

Source: *Author's calculation*

Table 3 displays the discriminant validity assessment of the construct variables used in this study. The results confirm that discriminant validity is established, as the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct exceeds the corresponding inter-construct correlation values. This indicates that each construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs in the model. As a result, the constructs are empirically distinct, supporting the reliability of the measurement model and ensuring that the variables used capture separate and unique dimensions relevant to tourists' behavioural intentions in the context of heritage tourism.

Table 4: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.911
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	6954.140
	Df	136
	Sig.	0.000

Source: *Author's calculation*

Table 4 presents the outcomes of the KMO and Bartlett's tests, both essential for evaluating whether the data is appropriate for factor analysis. The KMO value of 0.911 is considered excellent, reflecting a high level of sampling adequacy and indicating that the variables share enough common variance to justify factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yields a chi-square statistic of 6954.140 with 136 degrees of freedom and a significance level below 0.001. this confirms that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix and that

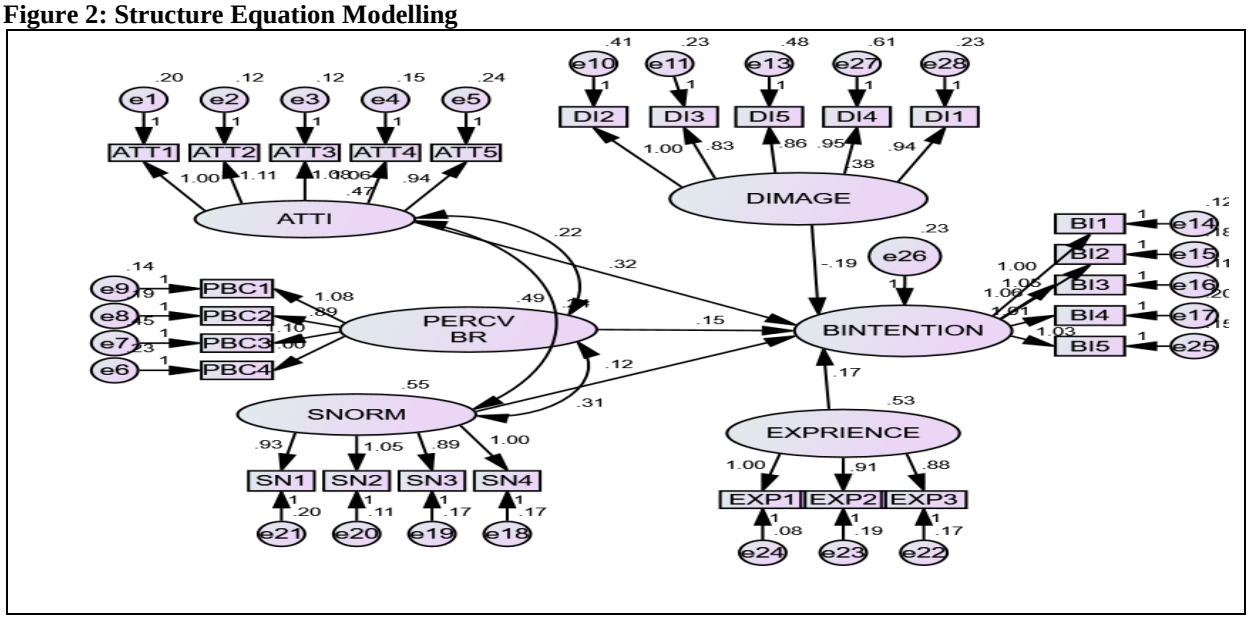
significant relationships exist among variables. Together, these findings affirm the dataset's suitability for conducting factor analysis and support the validity of extracting meaningful latent constructs. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used to extract the components, and varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization was applied to enhance interpretability. The matrix reveals the strength of associations among variables within each factor. For the attitude construct, all variables showed high factor loadings between 0.772 and 0.793, indicating that they strongly reflect the underlying attitude dimension. Similarly, variables related to PBC exhibited strong factor loadings ranging from 0.784 to 0.855, suggesting they are closely tied to the concept of perceived behavioural control. For subjective norms, the construct variables had factor loadings between 0.830 and 0.887, highlighting a significant relationship within this construct. The destination image factor also reflected solid relationships, with loadings from 0.719 to 0.851 across the construct variables. Meanwhile, past experience (PEXP) constructs show factor loadings ranging from 0.749 to 0.907, showing strong alignment with the intended construct.

FACTORS	Chi-square	GFI	AGFI	CFI	TLI	RMR	RMSEA
ATT	2.026	0.976	0.927	0.986	0.922	0.16	0.041
PEXP	2.168	0.990	0.949	0.956	0.879	0.13	0.034
DI	3.12	0.840	0.823	0.884	0.896	0.37	0.033
PBC	2.820	0.987	0.951	0.923	0.944	0.14	0.026
SN	1.913	0.995	0.997	0.983	0.997	0.21	0.030

Table 5: Reliability and Validity of Confirmatory Factory Analysis
Source: *Author's calculation*

Table 5 presents the model fit indices for each of the five constructs used to predict behavioural intention to visit Buddhist heritage sites, as part of an extended Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) framework. The results indicate that all five constructs; Attitude (ATT), Past Experience (PEXP), Destination Image (DI), Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC), and Subjective Norms (SN) demonstrate acceptable to excellent model fit values. Attitude, with a chi-square value of 2.026 and a high comparative Fit Index (CFI) of 0.986, alongside a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of 0.041, confirms its strong structural reliability. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) of 0.976 further supports the model's adequacy, indicating that attitude plays a vital role in shaping tourist behaviour. This aligns with the finding that attitude significantly influences behavioural intention ($\beta = 0.255$, $p < 0.05$). Similarly, Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) shows excellent fit indices (GFI = 0.987; RMSEA = 0.026) and exhibits a strong effect on behavioural intention ($\beta = 0.326$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that tourist's perception of control over their ability to visit heritage sites is an important predictor of intention. The model also highlights Subjective Norms (SN) as a significant contributor ($\beta = 0.422$, $p < 0.05$), with an outstanding GFI of 0.995 and RMSEA of 0.030, confirming the influence of social expectations and peer influence on tourism choices. Past Experience (PEXP) stands out as the most influential factor ($\beta = 0.456$, $p < 0.05$), reaffirming that previous visits shape current travel intentions. This is supported by a good model fit (CFI = 0.956, RMSEA = 0.034). Destination Image (DI), although slightly lower in GFI (0.840), still presents an acceptable fit (RMSEA = 0.033) and contributes significantly to intention ($\beta = 0.311$, $p < 0.002$), suggesting that tourists' perception of a site plays a decisive role in their decision-making. It can be concluded from the above analysis that the structural model validates the extended TPB framework, with all five constructs contributing meaningfully to behavioural intention of tourists visiting monasteries of Sikkim.

Figure 2: Structure Equation Modelling



Source: *Author's own model*

Table 6: Hypothesis Testing

Dimensions	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P-VALUE
ATT	0.624	0.049	12.725	***
PBC	0.285	0.062	4.612	***
SN	0.289	0.061	4.766	***
DI	0.368	0.043	8.633	***
PEXP	0.291	0.043	6.764	***

Source: *Author's own calculation*

V. Discussion

The structural model analysis shows that all five dimensions significantly contribute to behavioural intention. Attitude (ATT) has the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.624$, $p < 0.001$), followed by Destination Image (DI) ($\beta = 0.368$, $p < 0.001$), Past Experience (PEXP) ($\beta = 0.291$, $p < 0.001$), Subjective Norms (SN) ($\beta = 0.289$, $p < 0.001$), and Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) ($\beta = 0285$, $p < 0.001$). Each path is statistically significant, as indicated by the critical ratios (C.R.) exceeding the threshold of 1.96 and p-values greater than 0.001. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) has proven effective in explaining and predicting individual actions by focusing on attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In the context of tourism, especially regarding destination selection, TPB has shown substantial explanatory power. This study extends the TPB framework by incorporating two additional constructs: Destination Image and Past Experience, aiming to explore the determinants of tourists' intentions to visit Buddhist heritage sites in Sikkim. The findings affirm that all five factors attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, past experience, and destination image, positively and significantly influence tourists' behavioural intentions. Attitude emerges as the most influential predictor ($\beta = 0.356$, $p = 0.001$), indicating a strong predisposition among tourists toward choosing Buddhist heritage sites. Subjective norms also exert a notable effect ($\beta = 1.83$, $p < 0.001$), reflecting the impact of social influences. Perceived behavioural control shows a meaningful association ($\beta = 0.144$, $p = 0.005$), highlighting the importance of tourists' self-efficacy in travel decisions. Moreover, destination image ($\beta = 0.311$, $p = 0.002$) significantly shapes behavioural intentions, confirming its relevance in tourism studies. Overall, the extended TPB model of the present study demonstrates that these five constructs collectively shape tourists' intention to visit religious destination, offering deeper insights into the psychological and experiential dimensions of travel behaviour.

VI. Conclusion

The findings of this study hold considerable value for both academic research and practical applications, particularly within the tourism sector. By focusing on the monasteries of Sikkim, the research offers distinct insights into the dynamics of tourism and the factors influencing destination choice. These

insights are not only academically enriching but also beneficial for practitioners involved at various levels of the tourism industry; regionally, nationally, and internationally. Stakeholders such as religious site managers, travel operators, and local service providers can utilize these findings to develop more targeted marketing strategies and improve service offerings that align with tourist preferences and expectations. Understanding the key determinants of tourists' behavioural intentions allows these stakeholders to effectively respond to visitor motivations, thereby enhancing tourist experiences and promoting sustainable tourism development. Nonetheless, the study has certain limitations, primarily its restricted focus on Buddhist monastic sites in Sikkim. This narrow geographical and thematic scope limits the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the application of the theory of planned Behaviour (TPB) within the context of Buddhist heritage tourism remains relatively underexplored.

To build on this foundation, future research could undertake comparative studies across different regions or countries to identify variations in tourist behaviour and decision-making. Further investigations might also examine the role of cultural values, visitor expectations, and informational needs in shaping travel intentions. Expanding the research scope in these directions would contribute significantly to a more comprehensive understanding of tourist motivations and improve strategic planning in religious and heritage tourism management.

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