

Customers' Inclinations and Behavioral Intentions in Choosing Cultural Tourism in Shanghai, China: The Mediating Role of Negative Word-of-Mouth Coping Strategies

Lina Pan *, Mehrunishah Begum Binti VPS Bathusha Hamid

Graduate School of Business, SEGI University, Kota Damansara, Selangor, 47810, Malaysia

* Corresponding author: Lina Pan (Email: ahpln@petrochina.com.cn)

Abstract: This study explores the relationship between customers' inclinations (attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, desire) and their behavioral intentions in choosing cultural tourism in Shanghai, China, with a focus on the mediating role of negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) coping strategies. A quantitative research approach was adopted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via SmartPLS-SEM 4.0. Data were collected from 487 valid questionnaires completed by tourists who have either visited or plan to visit Shanghai for cultural tourism. The results indicate that attitudes and subjective norms significantly enhance tourists' behavioral intentions, while perceived behavioral control and desire do not. NWOM coping strategies play a crucial mediating role, effectively linking customers' inclinations with their intentions. The findings provide valuable insights for tourism marketers, emphasizing the importance of fostering positive attitudes and leveraging social influences. Developing effective NWOM coping mechanisms is also crucial for sustaining tourists' intentions in the face of negative feedback.

Keywords: Customers' Inclinations; Negative Word-of-Mouth Coping Strategies; Behavioral Intentions; Shanghai Cultural Tourism.

1. Introduction

Cultural tourism has become an increasingly vital component of the global tourism industry, reflecting the growing interest among travelers to engage with the cultural heritage and practices of diverse destinations (Smith & Richards, 2023). As urban centers globally strive to harness their cultural assets to attract tourists, Shanghai, as one of China's most vibrant and historically rich cities, has positioned itself as a key cultural tourism destination. The city's unique blend of traditional Chinese culture and modern global influences makes it an attractive choice for both domestic and international tourists (Wang & Li, 2023). The theoretical foundation for understanding tourist behavior, particularly in the context of cultural tourism, is well-established in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which highlights the importance of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in shaping individuals' intentions (Ajzen, 2020). More recently, the concept of desire has been integrated into this framework, recognizing its critical role in influencing tourists' decision-making processes (Bagozzi et al., 2022). These four dimensions of customers' inclinations—attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and desire—are pivotal in understanding how tourists choose cultural destinations, especially in a culturally rich environment like Shanghai.

Despite the growing emphasis on cultural tourism in Shanghai, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding how the inclinations of potential tourists—specifically their attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and desire—translate into actual behavioral intentions. Furthermore, the mediating role of negative word-of-mouth (WOM) coping strategies in this

context has not been thoroughly investigated. Negative WOM can significantly deter potential tourists, particularly when shared experiences highlight shortcomings in a destination (Chen & Huang, 2022). The existing literature has not sufficiently explored how these coping strategies might alter the impact of customers' inclinations on their decision to engage in cultural tourism in Shanghai.

This study offers valuable contributions to both academic research and practical applications within the field of cultural tourism. From an academic perspective, the research enriches the understanding of the TPB framework by incorporating desire as a key determinant of behavioral intentions, alongside the traditional factors of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Additionally, the investigation of negative WOM coping strategies as a mediating variable provides new insights into the complex mechanisms that influence tourist behavior (Zhang & Xiao, 2023). Practically, the findings will offer critical guidance for stakeholders in Shanghai's cultural tourism sector. By understanding how negative WOM can mediate the relationship between customer inclinations and behavioral intentions, destination marketers and tourism managers can develop more effective strategies to mitigate negative perceptions and enhance the overall appeal of Shanghai as a cultural tourism destination (Liu & Zhang, 2023). To address the identified gaps in the literature, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: 1) How do customers' attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and desire influence their behavioral intentions to choose cultural tourism in Shanghai? 2) What role do negative word-of-mouth coping strategies play in mediating the relationship between these inclinations and tourists' behavioral intentions? 3) How can tourism stakeholders in Shanghai effectively mitigate the impact of negative WOM to promote cultural tourism? These

research questions will direct the empirical analysis and contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors driving Shanghai's cultural tourism choices.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Current Development and Theoretical Underpinning

Cultural tourism has seen substantial growth in recent years, driven by an increasing demand for authentic cultural experiences that allow tourists to engage with different regions' history, traditions, and social practices (Richards, 2022). In Shanghai, this trend has been particularly pronounced as the city leverages its rich cultural heritage and modern urban landscape to attract tourists from around the world (Wang & Zhang, 2023). The intersection of traditional Chinese culture with contemporary global influences has positioned Shanghai as a focal point for cultural tourism in China. However, the development of cultural tourism in Shanghai is not without its challenges. While the city has made significant strides in promoting its cultural assets, issues such as over-commercialization, cultural commodification, and the spread of negative word-of-mouth (WOM) have threatened its sustainability (Chen & Liu, 2023). As a result, understanding the factors that influence tourists' behavioral intentions, particularly through the lens of their inclinations and how coping strategies like negative WOM mediate these, has become crucial for the ongoing development of Shanghai's cultural tourism sector.

The theoretical framework underpinning this study is primarily based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 2020). TPB suggests that an individual's intention to perform a behavior is determined by three factors: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. These constructs have been widely validated in the context of consumer behavior, particularly in tourism studies (Lam & Hsu, 2021). In addition to TPB, the concept of desire, as proposed by Bagozzi et al. (2022), plays a critical role in this study. Desire represents a motivational state that bridges the gap between attitudes and behavioral intentions. This model suggests that while attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control form the basis for intention, desire acts as an essential mediator that drives individuals toward action. Finally, this study integrates the concept of coping strategies, specifically negative WOM, as a mediating factor. Negative WOM has been shown to significantly affect consumer decision-making processes, particularly in high-involvement contexts like tourism (Zhang & Xiao, 2023). This theoretical integration allows for a more nuanced understanding of how negative experiences and the coping mechanisms associated with them influence the relationship between customers' inclinations and their behavioral intentions.

2.2. Behavioral Intentions (BI)

Behavioral intentions are defined as an individual's perceived likelihood or subjective probability of performing a specific action (Ajzen, 2020). In the context of tourism, particularly cultural tourism, behavioral intentions refer to the degree to which a potential tourist plans or intends to visit a particular cultural destination, such as Shanghai. This construct is crucial because it directly precedes actual behavior and is a strong predictor of whether the planned behavior will occur (Lam & Hsu, 2021). Behavioral

intentions are central to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that intentions are the immediate antecedents to behavior (Ajzen, 2020). The theory suggests that the stronger the intention to engage in a behavior, the more likely the behavior will be performed, provided that the individual has sufficient control over the behavior (Lam & Hsu, 2021). In tourism research, understanding behavioral intentions helps stakeholders predict future tourist flows and design interventions to enhance positive outcomes (Kim et al., 2022). Recent studies have examined behavioral intentions in various tourism contexts, focusing on factors such as destination image, perceived value, and satisfaction. For example, Kim and Lee (2022) found that positive destination image significantly enhances tourists' intentions to visit, while perceived risks can diminish these intentions. Similarly, a study by Liu et al. (2023) highlighted that tourists' satisfaction with previous experiences is a strong predictor of their intentions to revisit a destination. These studies underscore the importance of understanding the antecedents and mediators of behavioral intentions in the tourism domain.

2.3. Customers' Inclinations in Four Dimensions

2.3.1. Attitudes (AT)

Attitudes refer to an individual's positive or negative evaluations of engaging in a particular behavior, such as cultural tourism (Ajzen, 2020). In the context of Shanghai's cultural tourism, attitudes might encompass tourists' perceptions of the cultural richness, historical significance, and personal relevance of visiting cultural sites in Shanghai. Attitudes are often shaped by past experiences, word-of-mouth, and marketing efforts. Research by Zhang and Liu (2022) indicates that positive attitudes towards a destination significantly increase the likelihood of a tourist choosing that destination. Furthermore, attitudes have been shown to mediate the relationship between external stimuli, such as marketing messages, and behavioral intentions (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2022).

2.3.2. Subjective Norms (SN)

Subjective norms involve the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a particular behavior (Ajzen, 2020). These norms are influenced by the expectations and behaviors of people who are important to the individual, such as family, friends, and societal groups. In a collectivist culture like China, subjective norms can be particularly influential in shaping tourists' decisions (Wang & Zhang, 2023). Studies have shown that when important others express approval or disapproval of a certain behavior, such as visiting a cultural site, this can significantly influence an individual's intentions (Liu & Fang, 2022). Subjective norms are also closely linked to cultural values and social identity, which can amplify their effect on behavioral intentions.

2.3.3. Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)

Perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's perception of their ability to perform a particular behavior (Ajzen, 2020). This includes the perceived ease or difficulty of engaging in cultural tourism, such as access to resources, time availability, and personal competencies. Perceived behavioral control is a critical determinant of whether individuals believe they can translate their intentions into actual behavior (Lam & Hsu, 2021). For instance, research by Kim et al. (2022) found that tourists who feel confident in their ability to navigate a foreign culture and access cultural

sites are more likely to intend to visit such destinations.

2.3.4. Desire (DE)

Desire is conceptualized as a strong motivational state that compels an individual towards a particular behavior, bridging the gap between attitudes and intentions (Bagozzi et al., 2022). In tourism, desire is often driven by the anticipation of fulfilling personal needs, such as cultural enrichment, relaxation, or social status. Liu and Fang (2022) argue that desire is a critical mediator that enhances the predictive power of TPB by directly influencing behavioral intentions. Desire is also influenced by emotional responses to marketing stimuli and past experiences, making it a dynamic and complex component of decision-making in cultural tourism.

2.4. Negative-Word-of-Mouth Coping Strategies (NWOM)

Negative-word-of-mouth (NWOM) refers to the sharing of unfavorable opinions or experiences about a product, service, or destination by consumers, typically to warn others (Cheung & Lee, 2021). In the context of tourism, negative WOM can significantly influence potential tourists' perceptions of a destination, leading to changes in their behavioral intentions (Zhang & Xiao, 2023). Coping strategies related to negative WOM involve the methods that individuals use to manage or mitigate the impact of these negative communications, whether by disregarding them, seeking additional information, or altering their behavior (Chen & Huang, 2022). The impact of negative WOM on consumer behavior is well-documented in the literature. Negative WOM has been found to be more influential than positive WOM because consumers often perceive it as more credible and reliable (Cheung & Lee, 2021). In the TPB framework, negative WOM can act as a significant external factor that influences attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms, thus altering behavioral intentions. Coping strategies, in this context, are mechanisms through which consumers try to reduce the dissonance caused by negative WOM and make informed decisions (Zhang & Xiao, 2023). Recent studies have highlighted the critical role of negative WOM in the tourism industry. For example, Chen and Huang (2022) found that negative WOM significantly reduced tourists' intentions to visit certain destinations, especially when these communications were perceived as credible. Additionally, Zhang and Xiao (2023) demonstrated that effective coping strategies could mitigate the adverse effects of negative WOM, allowing tourists to maintain their intentions to visit a destination despite unfavorable reviews. This suggests that understanding how tourists cope with negative WOM is essential for developing strategies to manage its impact on tourism decisions.

2.5. Hypotheses Development

2.5.1. Customers' Inclinations and Behavioral Intentions

Attitudes towards a behavior reflect an individual's overall evaluation of the action, whether positive or negative (Ajzen, 2020). In the context of cultural tourism in Shanghai, positive attitudes towards the city's cultural attractions—such as its rich history, unique traditions, and vibrant arts scene—are likely to enhance tourists' intentions to visit. When tourists perceive cultural tourism in Shanghai as enjoyable, rewarding, and beneficial, they are more likely to form strong intentions to engage in this behavior. Empirical studies have consistently shown that attitudes are a significant predictor of behavioral intentions in various tourism settings (Lam & Hsu, 2021).

Hypothesis 1: Positive attitudes towards cultural tourism in Shanghai significantly increase tourists' behavioral intentions to visit the city.

Subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a behavior, shaped by the influence of important referent groups such as family, friends, and peers (Ajzen, 2020). In collectivist societies like China, where social conformity and group approval are highly valued, subjective norms can strongly influence individual decision-making. If tourists perceive that significant others expect them to visit Shanghai for cultural tourism, or if they believe that engaging in cultural tourism will enhance their social standing, they are more likely to develop strong intentions to visit. This relationship has been supported by numerous studies that highlight the role of social influence in shaping travel behavior (Wang & Zhang, 2023).

Hypothesis 2: Subjective norms significantly increase tourists' behavioral intentions to engage in cultural tourism in Shanghai.

Perceived behavioral control is the degree to which individuals feel capable of performing a particular behavior, influenced by their perceived ease or difficulty of doing so (Ajzen, 2020). In the context of cultural tourism, this includes factors such as accessibility, financial resources, time availability, and personal competence in navigating cultural experiences. When tourists feel confident in their ability to visit Shanghai's cultural sites—such as believing they can afford the trip, manage their time well, or navigate the city with ease—their behavioral intentions are likely to be stronger. Research indicates that perceived behavioral control is a robust predictor of intention across various behaviors, including tourism (Kim et al., 2022).

Hypothesis 3: Higher perceived behavioral control significantly increases tourists' behavioral intentions to engage in cultural tourism in Shanghai.

Desire is defined as a strong motivational state that compels individuals towards a particular behavior, often acting as an intermediary between attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intentions (Bagozzi et al., 2022). In tourism, desire is fueled by the anticipation of satisfying personal needs, such as seeking cultural enrichment, relaxation, or social status. When tourists have a high desire to experience Shanghai's cultural offerings—driven by emotional connections, anticipated joy, or a deep interest in Chinese culture—they are more likely to form strong behavioral intentions to visit. Desire not only influences the intention directly but also amplifies the effects of other predictors like attitudes and perceived behavioral control (Liu & Fang, 2022).

Hypothesis 4: Stronger desire significantly increases tourists' behavioral intentions to engage in cultural tourism in Shanghai.

2.5.2. Customers' Inclinations and Negative-Word-of-Mouth Coping Strategies (NWOM)

This study examines the relationships between tourists' inclinations—specifically, attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and desire—and their ability to cope with negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) in the context of cultural tourism in Shanghai.

Attitudes represent an individual's evaluation of a behavior, such as engaging in cultural tourism (Ajzen, 2020). Tourists with positive attitudes towards Shanghai's cultural offerings are more likely to employ effective coping strategies when confronted with NWOM. These tourists might downplay

negative reviews or actively seek out additional positive information, thus maintaining their intention to visit despite encountering negative feedback. Positive attitudes, therefore, bolster the effectiveness of coping strategies, helping tourists to counterbalance the potential impact of NWOM (Zhang & Xiao, 2023).

Hypothesis 5: Positive Attitudes Towards Cultural Tourism in Shanghai Significantly Increase the Effectiveness of Negative Word-of-Mouth Coping Strategies.

Subjective norms, or the perceived social pressure to engage in a particular behavior, play a crucial role in shaping tourist behavior, especially in collectivist societies like China (Ajzen, 2020). When tourists perceive strong social support for visiting Shanghai, they are more likely to dismiss or reinterpret NWOM, reinforcing their decision to proceed with their travel plans. This social influence enhances their resilience to NWOM, leading to more effective coping strategies that sustain their behavioral intentions (Liu & Fang, 2022).

Hypothesis 6: Strong Subjective Norms Enhance Tourists' Resilience to Negative Word-of-Mouth Through Improved Coping Strategies.

Perceived behavioral control reflects an individual's belief in their ability to perform a specific behavior (Ajzen, 2020). Tourists who feel confident in their ability to manage the challenges associated with cultural tourism in Shanghai are more likely to develop effective strategies for coping with NWOM. For instance, they may actively seek out additional information, assess the credibility of negative reviews, or adjust their plans to mitigate potential risks. This proactive approach enhances their coping strategies, helping them maintain strong behavioral intentions despite negative feedback (Kim et al., 2022).

Hypothesis 7: Higher Perceived Behavioral Control Increases the Likelihood of Successfully Coping with Negative Word-of-Mouth in Cultural Tourism.

Desire, as a strong motivational state, drives individuals to pursue a specific behavior, such as visiting cultural sites in Shanghai (Bagozzi et al., 2022). Tourists with a strong desire to experience Shanghai's cultural tourism are more likely to engage in selective exposure, focusing on positive information and dismissing negative feedback. This intense desire serves as a buffer against the impact of NWOM, leading to more effective coping strategies that reinforce their intention to visit despite encountering negative reviews (Liu & Fang, 2022).

Hypothesis 8: Strong Desire to Experience Cultural Tourism in Shanghai Moderates the Impact of Negative Word-of-Mouth, Enhancing Coping Strategies.

2.5.3. Mediating Role of Negative Word-of-Mouth Coping Strategies

The environmental dimension pertains to minimizing the ecological footprint through practices such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and sustainable sourcing. SMEs that actively engage in environmental sustainability are likely to experience reduced operational costs and increased compliance with regulatory requirements, which can lead to improved organizational performance. Furthermore, businesses that are seen as environmentally responsible may attract environmentally conscious consumers, thus enhancing their market position (Liu et al., 2021).

Hypothesis 3: Environmental sustainability positively impacts the organizational performance of SMEs.

Negative-word-of-mouth (NWOM) refers to the

dissemination of unfavorable information about a destination or experience by previous visitors. This negative feedback can significantly influence the decision-making processes of potential tourists by shaping their perceptions and attitudes towards a destination (Chen & Huang, 2022). In the context of cultural tourism in Shanghai, where tourists may encounter mixed reviews or negative feedback, their coping strategies—how they manage or respond to this NWOM—become crucial in determining whether they will ultimately decide to visit. Coping strategies are psychological mechanisms that individuals employ to deal with stressors or negative information (Gao, 2024). In the case of negative WOM, tourists may engage in several coping strategies, such as seeking additional information, downplaying the negative aspects, or focusing on the positive attributes of the destination (Zhang & Xiao, 2023). When these coping strategies are strong and effective, they can mitigate the potential damage caused by negative WOM, helping tourists maintain or even enhance their behavioral intentions to engage in cultural tourism. For instance, a tourist who encounters negative reviews about a cultural site in Shanghai might cope by looking for more recent reviews, asking for opinions from trusted sources, or recalling positive aspects of other cultural experiences they've had. If these coping strategies successfully counterbalance the NWOM, the tourist may feel reassured and motivated to proceed with their travel plans. Thus, strong coping strategies can transform potentially discouraging information into a reaffirmation of the tourist's initial intent to visit Shanghai, thereby significantly increasing their behavioral intentions. Research has shown that coping strategies play a critical role in moderating the impact of NWOM on consumer behavior. For example, a study by Cheung and Lee (2021) found that individuals who actively engage in coping strategies, such as seeking additional information or reframing negative experiences, are more likely to maintain positive behavioral intentions despite exposure to NWOM. Similarly, Zhang and Xiao (2023) demonstrated that tourists who effectively cope with negative WOM are more resilient in their decision-making, leading to stronger intentions to visit a destination even in the face of negative feedback. This suggests that promoting effective coping strategies among potential tourists could be a valuable approach for destination marketers in managing negative WOM and sustaining interest in cultural tourism in Shanghai.

Hypothesis 9: Stronger Negative Word-of-Mouth Coping Strategies significantly increase tourists' behavioral intentions to engage in cultural tourism in Shanghai.

Negative-word-of-mouth (NWOM) can significantly impact tourists' attitudes towards a destination, potentially reducing their positive evaluations. However, the way tourists cope with negative NWOM can mediate this effect (Yu et al., 2024). Some tourists may dismiss negative reviews if they have strong positive attitudes or seek additional information to counterbalance the negativity. Others might adjust their expectations or even reconsider their decision. Therefore, coping strategies can either weaken or strengthen the relationship between attitudes and behavioral intentions depending on how tourists process and respond to negative NWOM (Chen & Huang, 2022).

Hypothesis 10: Negative word-of-mouth coping strategies mediate the relationship between attitudes and behavioral intentions.

Subjective norms can be influenced by negative NWOM,

particularly if the negative experiences come from significant others or are widely accepted within a social group. How tourists cope with this information can affect their intentions. For instance, a tourist might downplay the negative NWOM if the social pressure to visit Shanghai remains strong, or they might seek reassurance from other sources. The coping strategies employed thus mediate the relationship between subjective norms and behavioral intentions, influencing how social pressures translate into actual intentions to visit (Zhang & Xiao, 2023).

Hypothesis 11: Negative word-of-mouth coping strategies mediate the relationship between subjective norms and behavioral intentions.

Perceived behavioral control can be diminished by NWOM, especially if the negative experiences relate to accessibility, safety, or comfort. Tourists who hear negative feedback might feel less capable of successfully visiting Shanghai's cultural sites. However, coping strategies can mitigate these effects. Tourists might plan more thoroughly, seek additional resources, or adjust their plans to manage perceived risks. These coping mechanisms can thus mediate the relationship between perceived behavioral control and behavioral intentions, either reinforcing or weakening the tourists' sense of control over their ability to engage in cultural tourism (Kim et al., 2022).

Hypothesis 12: Negative word-of-mouth coping strategies mediate the relationship between perceived behavioral control and behavioral intentions.

Desire is a powerful motivator, but it can be undermined by NWOM, particularly if it casts doubt on the anticipated satisfaction or fulfillment of visiting Shanghai. Coping strategies play a crucial role in managing the impact of NWOM on desire. Tourists with strong coping mechanisms may disregard negative feedback (Gao et al., 2024), reinforce their desire by focusing on the positive aspects, or seek additional positive information to outweigh the negative. These coping strategies thus mediate the relationship between desire and behavioral intentions, determining whether desire remains strong enough to lead to actual travel plans (Liu & Fang, 2022).

Hypothesis 13: Negative word-of-mouth coping strategies mediate the relationship between desire and behavioral intentions.

The research framework is shown in Figure 1.

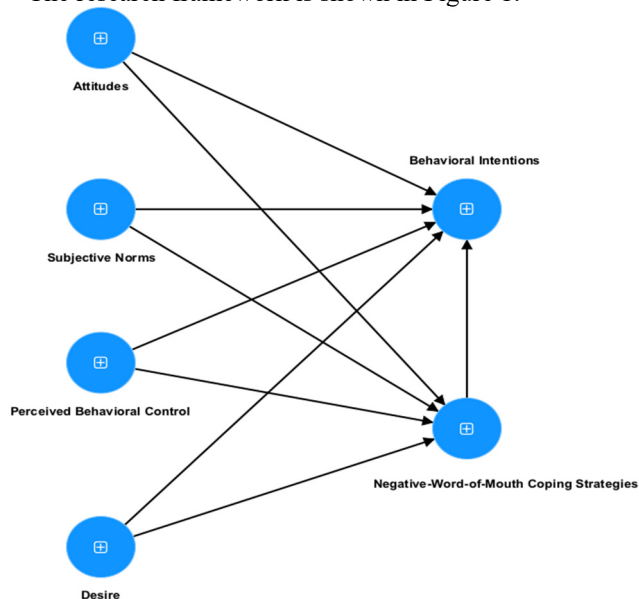


Fig 1. Research Framework

2.6. Research Gap

Despite the extensive research on behavioral intentions in tourism, several critical gaps persist, particularly regarding the roles of attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and desire, along with how tourists cope with negative word-of-mouth (NWOM). Existing studies have largely focused on the direct relationships between these factors and behavioral intentions, often overlooking the complex interactions and mediating effects that might influence tourists' decision-making processes, especially in the context of cultural tourism in a dynamic city like Shanghai.

First, while the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has been widely applied to understand how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 2020), there is limited research that examines how these variables interact with desire—a critical motivational factor—in shaping tourists' intentions to engage in cultural tourism. Desire is increasingly recognized as a powerful driver that can enhance or diminish the effects of other TPB components, but its interaction with NWOM coping strategies remains underexplored (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2022).

Second, although the impact of NWOM on consumer behavior is well-documented, there is a significant gap in understanding how tourists' coping strategies can mediate the relationship between NWOM and their behavioral intentions. Previous research has primarily focused on the direct negative impacts of NWOM (Gao et al., 2023), with insufficient attention paid to the psychological mechanisms that enable tourists to effectively manage and mitigate these impacts. Understanding how tourists' attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and desire influence their NWOM coping strategies is crucial for comprehensively predicting their behavioral intentions (Cheung & Lee, 2021; Zhang & Xiao, 2023).

Third, there is a lack of research exploring the mediating role of NWOM coping strategies in the relationships between the key determinants of behavioral intentions. Specifically, the ways in which NWOM coping strategies mediate the effects of attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and desire on behavioral intentions have not been thoroughly examined. This gap is particularly pertinent in the context of cultural tourism, where negative feedback can significantly alter tourists' perceptions and decisions (Kim et al., 2022).

Finally, while some studies have investigated the moderating effects of perceived behavioral control and desire on the relationship between attitudes and behavioral intentions, the combined effects of NWOM coping strategies as both mediators and moderators within this framework have not been systematically explored. The complexity of these interactions, particularly in the culturally rich and diverse setting of Shanghai, necessitates a more nuanced understanding of how tourists process negative information and how this processing influences their intentions to visit (Liu & Fang, 2022).

In summary, this study aims to address these research gaps by developing and empirically testing a comprehensive model that incorporates NWOM coping strategies as mediators and examines the interaction effects between attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and desire on tourists' behavioral intentions in cultural tourism. By doing so, the study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors that drive tourist behavior in the face of negative feedback,

offering valuable insights for both theoretical development and practical applications in tourism management.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Population and Sampling

The population for this study comprises domestic and international tourists who have either visited Shanghai for cultural tourism or are planning to do so. Shanghai, being one of the most popular cultural tourism destinations in China, attracts a diverse group of tourists with varying inclinations towards cultural experiences. The unit of analysis in this study is the individual tourist, as the research aims to understand personal inclinations and behavioral intentions towards cultural tourism in Shanghai. This focus on individual-level data allows for a more precise analysis of the psychological and social factors that influence decision-making in cultural tourism (Wang & Zhang, 2023).

Given the broad and diverse population of potential tourists to Shanghai, this study employs a stratified random sampling technique to ensure that the sample accurately reflects the various subgroups within the population, including different age groups, genders, nationalities, and previous tourism experience. Stratification helps in capturing the variability in tourist inclinations and intentions, providing a more representative sample for analysis (Smith, 2022). A sample size of approximately 400-500 respondents is targeted, which is deemed sufficient for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis based on recommendations from previous studies (Hair et al., 2020). The sample size is calculated to provide adequate power for detecting significant relationships between variables and ensuring the generalizability of the findings. Questionnaires for this study were collected through online travel forums, social media platforms, and tourism websites to ensure broad coverage of diverse groups of tourists.

3.2. Measurement and Instrumentation

The constructs in this study—attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, desire, negative word-of-mouth coping strategies, and behavioral intentions—will be measured using validated scales adapted from previous research. Each construct will be measured using a multi-item scale with responses captured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This approach allows for the capture of nuanced responses and ensures consistency across the constructs (Ajzen, 2020; Bagozzi et al., 2022). Attitudes: Measured using items adapted from Platania et al. (2021), assessing tourists' overall evaluation of engaging in cultural tourism in Shanghai. Subjective Norms: Measured using items that capture the perceived social pressure to engage in cultural tourism, adapted from previous studies (Platania et al., 2021). Perceived Behavioral Control: Measured through items that assess the perceived ease or difficulty of engaging in cultural tourism in Shanghai, adapted from Platania et al. (2021). Desire: Measured using items that reflect the strength of tourists' motivation to experience cultural tourism in Shanghai, based on the scale developed by Platania et al. (2021). Negative Word-of-Mouth Coping Strategies: Measured by items that capture the strategies tourists use to manage or mitigate the impact of negative word-of-mouth, adapted from Nyer & Gopinath (2005). Behavioral Intentions: Measured through items that assess the likelihood of tourists

engaging in cultural tourism in Shanghai, based on previous studies (Platania et al., 2021).

3.3. Data Collection Procedures

Data will be collected through an online survey distributed via social media platforms, travel forums, and tourism-related websites. The survey will be available in multiple languages, including English and Mandarin, to accommodate both domestic and international respondents. Before the survey is administered, a pilot test will be conducted with a small sample of respondents to ensure that the questions are clear and the survey design is effective (Bryman, 2021). Participants will be informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. The survey is designed to take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete, ensuring that it is comprehensive yet manageable for respondents. A total of 487 valid questionnaires were collected for research analysis.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis will be conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the software SmartPLS, which is well-suited for complex models and smaller sample sizes (Hair et al., 2020). PLS-SEM is chosen for its ability to simultaneously assess the measurement model (relationships between observed variables and their underlying latent constructs) and the structural model (relationships between the latent constructs), making it ideal for exploratory and predictive research in tourism.

Measurement Model Assessment: The first step in the analysis will involve testing the reliability and validity of the measurement model. This will be done by evaluating indicator loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). Items with low loadings (<0.70) may be considered for removal to improve the model's fit. Structural Model Assessment: Once the measurement model is validated, the structural model will be assessed to examine the relationships between the constructs. The significance of path coefficients will be evaluated using the bootstrapping technique with 5,000 resamples to generate confidence intervals for assessing the significance of direct, indirect, and total effects (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Model Fit Assessment: Although PLS-SEM does not rely on traditional fit indices like those used in CB-SEM (e.g., CFI, RMSEA), model quality will be assessed using measures such as the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). Additionally, the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) will be reported as an approximate fit index, with values below 0.08 indicating a good fit (Hair et al., 2020).

3.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are paramount in this study, particularly concerning the privacy and confidentiality of participant data. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants before they complete the survey, ensuring that they are fully aware of the study's purpose and their rights as participants (Bryman, 2021). Confidentiality: All responses will be anonymized, and no identifying information will be collected. Data will be stored securely, with access limited to the research team. Voluntary Participation: Participation in the study is entirely voluntary, and participants can withdraw from the study at any time without any consequence.

Approval: This study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the institution and will obtain approval from the relevant ethics committee before data collection begins.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Analysis Results

Table 1 shows the results of our descriptive and correlation

analyses. The descriptive statistics indicated above-average mean scores for AT, SN, PBC, DE, NWOM, and BI, which were 4.271, 4.527, 4.437, 4.822, 4.192, and 4.434, respectively. Consistent with prior studies, the skewness and kurtosis parameters were below 3.0 and 10.0, respectively (Kline, 2011). Additionally, the highest correlation among the underlying factors was 0.781, confirming the absence of high correlation and supporting the suitability of the model for subsequent statistical exploration.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. AT	4.271	0.693	0.714	-0.598	1					
2. SN	4.527	0.714	0.529	-0.443	0.651	1				
3. PBC	4.437	0.762	0.972	-1.124	0.693	0.581	1			
4. DE	4.822	0.810	0.764	-1.279	0.652	0.732	0.629	1		
5. NWOM	4.192	0.873	-0.131	-1.593	0.583	0.653	0.632	0.651	1	
6. BI	4.434	0.821	0.520	-0.519	0.543	0.597	0.643	0.781	0.701	1

¹ Source: Authors' calculation.

4.2. Common Method Bias

To mitigate potential common method bias (CMB) during the data collection process, we implemented procedural adjustments following the recommendations of Podsakoff et al. (2003). First, the survey provided clear instructions on how to answer the questions and urged respondents to provide their most accurate responses while ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. We also emphasized that there were no right or wrong answers. Additionally, we carefully reviewed each item to ensure clarity and conciseness, avoiding any unusual or ambiguous language. We also altered

the sequence of statements to minimize the likelihood of respondents making educated guesses (Malhotra et al., 2006). In this manner, we ensured that our measurement items were clear and comprehensible. In terms of statistical remedies for CMB, we conducted a post-hoc assessment using Harman's (1976) single-factor test. The analysis indicated that the highest variance explained by a component was only 38.82%, which is less than 50%. This finding confirms the absence of CMB in our data.

4.3. Measurement Model Results

Table 2. Construct validity and reliability.

Items	Factor Loadings	Alpha	CR rho-c	AVE
AT1	0.830	0.854	0.901	0.696
AT2	0.819			
AT3	0.844			
AT4	0.844			
SN1	0.882	0.880	0.917	0.735
SN2	0.845			
SN3	0.823			
SN4	0.879			
PBC1	0.902	0.893	0.926	0.758
PBC2	0.879			
PBC3	0.827			
PBC4	0.873			
DE1	0.900	0.915	0.936	0.747
DE2	0.864			
DE3	0.853			
DE4	0.845			
DE5	0.857			
NWOM1	0.889	0.909	0.932	0.734
NWOM2	0.840			
NWOM3	0.837			
NWOM4	0.864			
NWOM5	0.853			
BI1	0.778	0.891	0.917	0.648
BI2	0.749			
BI3	0.850			
BI4	0.816			
BI5	0.831			
BI6	0.801			

¹ Note (s): Alpha = Cronbach's Alpha, CR = Composite reliability, AVE = Average variance extracted. ² Source: Authors' calculation.

The first stage in PLS-SEM is the assessment of the measurement model, wherein four tests are designed to verify item-level reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. First, the

minimum and maximum factor loadings demonstrated in Table 2 and Figure 2 are 0.749 and 0.902, respectively, surpassing the threshold of 0.50 recommended by Hair et al. (2016) and Hair Jr et al. (2021). This result indicates that this

research had adequate item-level reliability. Next, according to Rahman et al. (2020), the internal consistency reliability of each variable should be ascertained using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR), both of which should exceed

the minimum threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The Cronbach's alpha and CR values shown in Table 2, Figure 2, and Figure 3 surpass this criterion, signifying that all the constructs were consistent, internally cohesive, and reliable

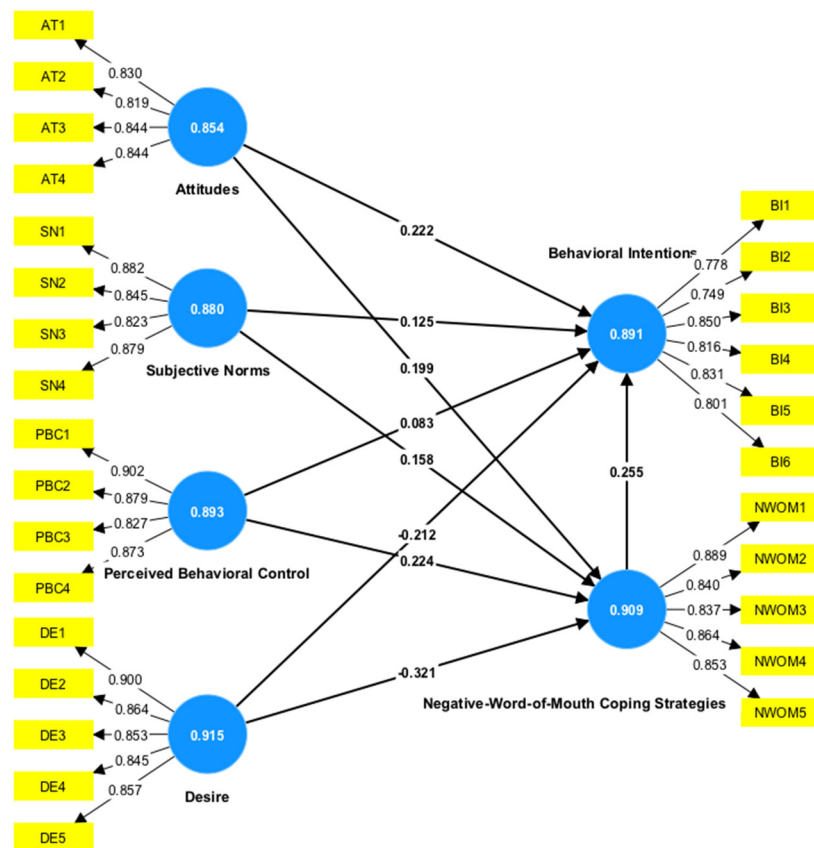


Fig 2. Factor Loadings and Cronbach's alpha.

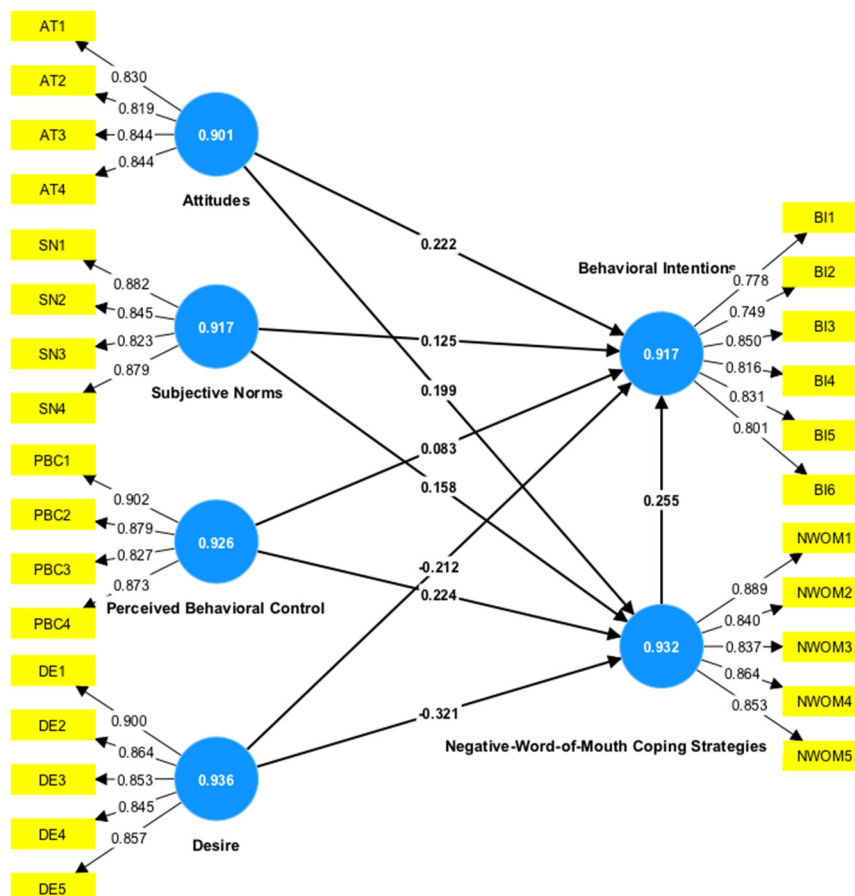


Fig 3. Factor Loadings and Composite Reliability

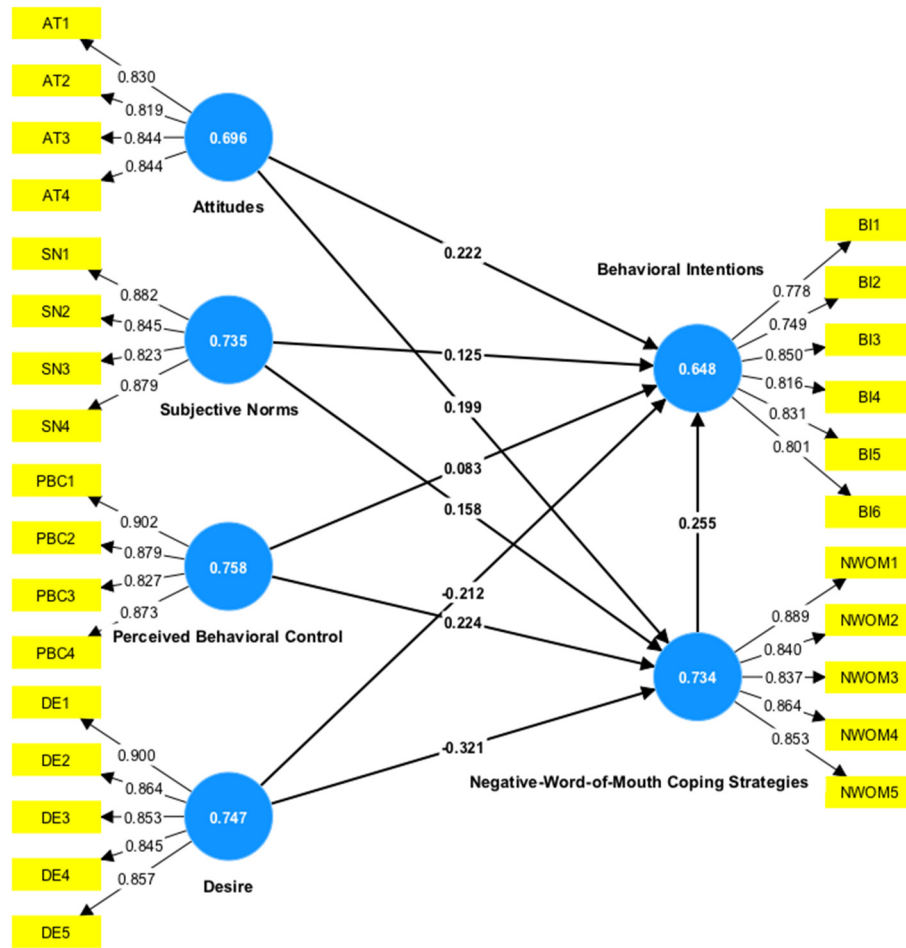


Fig 4. Factor Loadings and AVE

Third, convergent validity assesses the extent to which different items are expected to be associated with an identical construct. Table 2 and Figure 4 shows that the average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.648 to 0.758, meeting the minimum criterion of 0.50 set by Hair et al. (2021). Therefore, convergent validity was established in this study. Lastly, discriminant validity ensures that two indicators do not share a statistical identity (Hair et al., 2021). Henseler et al. (2016) recommended the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) of correlations as an innovative method to assess discriminant validity, asserting that the traditional metric is

not suitable. They recommended setting the HTMT critical point to 0.90 for the same concepts in the theory and 0.85 for conceptually different variables. In this paper, both the HTMT criterion. Table 3 indicates that the HTMT values for all constructs were below 0.85. Both these results confirm the establishment of discriminant validity as per their respective criterion. In addition, Hair et al. (2021) suggested that the value of the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to evaluate multicollinearity should not exceed 5.0. The test results indicated that the VIF values were all below 5, meeting the requirement for discriminant validity (see Table 4).

Table 3. HTMT criterion and VIF

	AT	SN	PBC	DE	NWOM	BI	VIF
AT							1.548
SN	0.559						1.474
PBC	0.383	0.379					1.609
DE	0.514	0.560	0.444				1.416
NWOM	0.562	0.524	0.535	0.471			1.865
BI	0.609	0.532	0.465	0.596	0.646		1.409

4.4. Structural Model Results

After establishing the measurement model, we proceeded to analyze the structural model using the bootstrapping technique in Smart PLS 4.0 with 10,000 subsamples. The inner model, used to assess the proposed hypotheses, calculates both the p-value and t-value. A hypothesis is considered supported if the p-value is below 0.05 or the t-value exceeds 1.96. The results of the analysis and corresponding hypotheses are presented in Table 5 and Figure 4.

The predictive validity of the constructs is presented in Table 5, demonstrating the ability of the independent constructs in our model to make predictions of the dependent ones. Two metrics, R² and Q², were employed to assess predictive accuracy. According to Cohen (1992), a substantial R² should exceed 0.26. The model accounted for 47.4% of the variance in BI, and 46.4% in NWOM, verifying substantial R². Furthermore, Q² indicates the predictive relationship among internal variables, where a value above zero suggests predictive relevance. The results confirmed the predictive relevance of the variables examined in this study,

with all Q2 exceeding zero (BI = 0.474, NWOM = 0.464). The model fit was considered acceptable, with the PLS-SEM

SRMR coefficient at 0.040, which is below the threshold of 0.10.

Table 4. Direct and indirect hypotheses testing results.

Hypotheses	Structural Path	Coefficient	T-statistics	Test result
H1	AT → BI	0.222***	4.498	Supported
H2	SN → BI	0.125*	2.347	Supported
H3	PBC → BI	0.083ns	1.791	Not supported
H4	DE → BI	-0.212***	3.940	Not supported
H5	AT → NWOM	0.199**	4.763	Supported
H6	SN → NWOM	0.158**	3.152	Supported
H7	PBC → NWOM	0.224**	4.904	Supported
H8	DE → NWOM	-0.321***	6.534	Not Supported
H9	NMOM → BI	0.255***	4.282	supported
H10	AT → NWOM → BI	0.051**	3.223	Supported
H11	SN → NWOM → BI	0.040*	2.547	Supported
H12	PBC → NWOM → BI	0.057**	3.265	Supported
H13	DE → NWOM → BI	-0.082**	3.368	Supported

¹ Notes: ns =not significant. *p <0.05, **p <0.01, ***p <0.001 (two-tailed test). ² Source: Authors' calculation

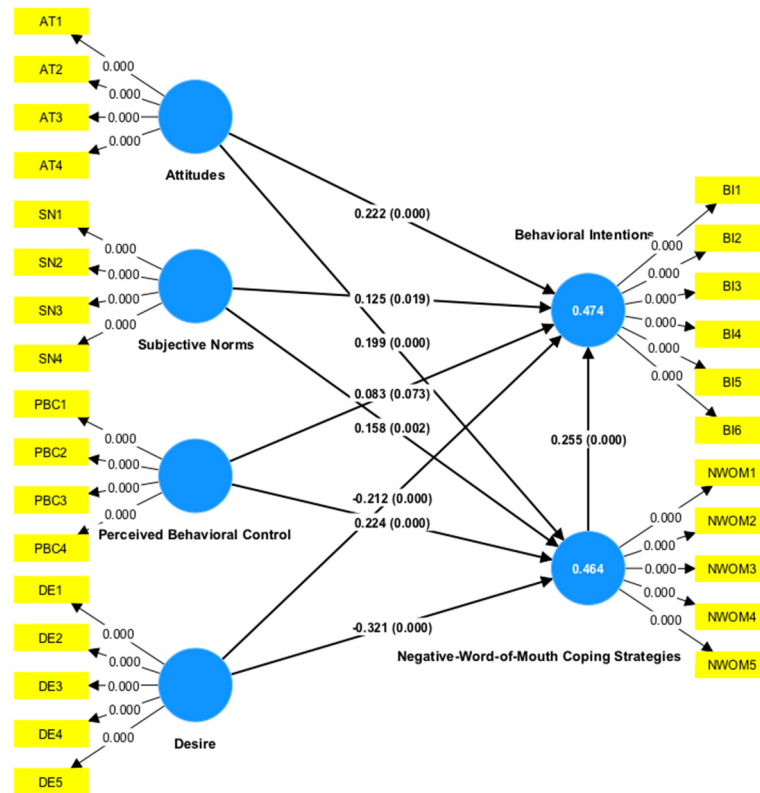


Fig 5. Structural model estimation results

Table 5. Predictive relevance of the model.

	R Square	Q2 (= 1-SSE/SSO)
BI	0.474	0.424
NWOM	0.464	0.452

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. Findings

This study aimed to investigate the impact of sustainable development on organizational performance among SMEs in Guangdong Province, China, using a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach via SmartPLS-SEM 4.0. The findings provide valuable insights into the relationships between sustainable development initiatives and organizational outcomes.

The results indicate that positive attitudes towards cultural tourism in Shanghai significantly increase tourists' behavioral intentions, emphasizing the importance of favorable perceptions in driving tourism behavior (H1: Supported).

Similarly, subjective norms were found to significantly influence behavioral intentions, highlighting the role of social pressure and influence in shaping tourism decisions (H2: Supported). However, contrary to expectations, perceived behavioral control did not significantly impact behavioral intentions (H3: Not supported), suggesting that other factors might be more critical in determining tourist actions in this context (Gao et al., 2023). Moreover, desire was not a significant predictor of behavioral intentions (H4: Not supported), indicating that simply wanting to engage in cultural tourism might not translate into actual intentions without other supportive factors (Gao et al., 2023).

The findings also reveal the significant role of negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) coping strategies. Positive attitudes and strong subjective norms enhance the effectiveness of

these coping strategies (H5: Supported, H6: Supported), enabling tourists to better manage negative feedback and maintain their behavioral intentions. Additionally, perceived behavioral control was found to increase the likelihood of successfully coping with NWOM (H7: Supported). Interestingly, while desire was expected to moderate the impact of NWOM on coping strategies, this was not supported by the data (H8: Not supported). However, stronger NWOM coping strategies were directly associated with increased behavioral intentions (H9: Supported), and these strategies mediated the relationships between attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and desire with behavioral intentions (H10, H11, H12, H13: Supported).

5.2. Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to the literature on sustainable development and organizational performance by integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) with the concept of NWOM coping strategies. The findings extend our understanding of how psychological factors (attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and desire) interact with coping mechanisms to influence behavioral intentions in the context of cultural tourism. The study challenges previous assumptions by demonstrating that perceived behavioral control and desire may not always be strong predictors of intentions, particularly in environments influenced by social and attitudinal factors.

Moreover, this research introduces a novel perspective by emphasizing the mediating role of NWOM coping strategies, which has been underexplored in previous studies. By showing that these strategies can effectively mediate the relationships between various psychological constructs and behavioral intentions, the study provides a deeper understanding of how tourists manage negative feedback and maintain their commitment to cultural tourism destinations like Shanghai.

5.3. Practical Implications

The findings offer several practical implications for tourism marketers and policymakers in Shanghai and similar cultural tourism destinations. First, the significant impact of attitudes and subjective norms on behavioral intentions suggests that marketing strategies should focus on enhancing the overall image of Shanghai as a cultural destination and leveraging social influence. Creating positive experiences that encourage tourists to share favorable reviews within their social circles can help reinforce subjective norms and drive behavioral intentions.

Furthermore, the importance of NWOM coping strategies highlights the need for effective management of negative feedback. Tourism stakeholders should develop mechanisms that allow tourists to access balanced and credible information, as well as platforms for sharing positive testimonials to counteract negative reviews. By supporting tourists in managing NWOM, destination marketers can help sustain their interest and intention to visit.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

This study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing tourists' behavioral intentions towards cultural tourism in Shanghai; however, it is essential to acknowledge several limitations related to the sample location, research perspective, and the use of cross-sectional data.

Sample Location. The data were collected exclusively from

tourists associated with Shanghai's cultural tourism sector. While this focus allows for a detailed analysis within a specific context, it limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions or types of tourism. Future research could expand the geographical scope by including multiple cultural destinations or comparing results across different cities to assess whether the observed relationships hold in different cultural and economic environments.

Research Perspective. This study adopts a psychological and social perspective, focusing primarily on customers' inclinations and NWOM coping strategies. While these factors are crucial, the study does not account for other potential influences such as economic, technological, or policy-related factors that could also significantly impact tourists' behavioral intentions. Future studies should consider a more interdisciplinary approach, integrating perspectives from economics, technology adoption, and public policy to develop a more comprehensive understanding of tourist behavior.

Cross-Sectional Data. The study is based on cross-sectional data, which captures respondents' attitudes, norms, perceptions, and intentions at a single point in time. This design limits the ability to establish causal relationships or observe changes in behavior over time. Longitudinal studies that track changes in tourists' intentions and behaviors over time would provide deeper insights into how attitudes and coping strategies evolve, especially in response to external factors such as new marketing campaigns, policy changes, or economic shifts.

5.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of attitudes, subjective norms, and NWOM coping strategies in shaping tourists' behavioral intentions towards cultural tourism in Shanghai. The findings provide both theoretical insights and practical guidance for enhancing the effectiveness of tourism marketing strategies, particularly in managing negative feedback. As the tourism industry continues to evolve, understanding the complex interplay between psychological, social, and informational factors will be crucial for sustaining tourist interest and engagement in cultural destinations like Shanghai.

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