

## Conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance as determinants of domestic tourist destination choice in the Balkans: The moderating role of tourist ethnocentrism

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**Abstract:** The primary aim of this study is to examine the influence of conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance (a Hofstede cultural dimension) on the choice of domestic tourist destinations, while also exploring the moderating role of tourist ethnocentrism. Empirical research was conducted in early 2025 on a sample of 977 respondents from Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, using a survey method. Data analysis was performed with SmartPLS 4 software. The findings reveal that conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance exert a significant and positive direct impact on the choice of domestic tourist destinations. Furthermore, results indicate that tourist ethnocentrism significantly moderates all examined relationships, further strengthening the links between the independent variables and the preference for domestic destinations. These results highlight the central role of cultural and value dimensions in shaping tourist behavior within the Balkan context. The theoretical contribution of the study lies in the integration of cultural factors and ethnocentrism in analyzing consumer preferences in tourism, while the practical implications provide guidance for designing marketing strategies that foster domestic tourism promotion across the region.

**Keywords:** *conservatism, tradition, uncertainty avoidance, tourist ethnocentrism, domestic tourist destinations, Balkans*

**JEL Classification:** M31, Z1, Z3

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism represents one of the most dynamic sectors of the contemporary economy; however, the selection of tourist destinations is not determined solely by economic considerations such as price or service quality. Tourist decision-making is often rooted in deeper cultural and value-based orientations that shape individual attitudes, perceptions, and behavioral patterns (Balabanis et al., 2001; Cleveland et al., 2022; Hofstede, 2001; Janković et al., 2022; Riznić et al., 2014; Veljković et al., 2015). Within this context, conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance emerge as salient dimensions influencing how individuals evaluate and select domestic as opposed to foreign tourist destinations.

Conservatism, understood as a value system oriented toward the preservation of established social norms and resistance to change, may predispose individuals to favor domestic tourist destinations, particularly when such choices are associated with loyalty to national culture (Pop et al., 2024). In a similar vein, tradition, conceptualized as an attachment to cultural heritage and long-standing social practices, encourages tourists to seek destinations that reaffirm historical continuity and cultural familiarity (Apak & Gurbuz, 2023; Zdravković & Živković, 2025). Uncertainty avoidance, one of Hofstede's central cultural dimensions, reflects the degree to which individuals prefer predictability, security, and structured environments. Tourists characterized by higher levels of uncertainty avoidance tend to perceive domestic destinations as safer and more culturally familiar, which increases their attractiveness relative to foreign alternatives (Hofstede, 2001; Sabiote-Ortiz et al., 2024).

Beyond the direct effects of these value- and culture-based factors, this study places particular emphasis on tourist ethnocentrism, defined as the belief that the consumption of domestic tourism services is both preferable and morally justified compared to the selection of foreign destinations (Fernández-Ferrín et al., 2020; Zdravković & Gašević, 2022). Tourist ethnocentrism not only shapes attitudes toward domestic desti-

nations but may also amplify the influence of conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance by acting as a moderating mechanism. In this sense, ethnocentrism functions as a socio-cultural lens through which individual values are translated into concrete tourism choices.

The empirical research was conducted in the Balkan context, encompassing Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina—a region characterized by pronounced cultural diversity, a strong historical legacy, and deeply embedded value orientations. While previous studies (Cleveland et al., 2022; Cui et al., 2025; Shen et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2022) have predominantly examined the individual effects of conservatism, tradition, uncertainty avoidance, or ethnocentrism on the choice of domestic tourist destinations, this study adopts a holistic approach by simultaneously integrating these factors within a single analytical framework, thereby addressing an important research gap in the existing literature. The research is based on 977 valid survey responses, with data analyzed using the Smart-PLS 4 software package. Although the data were collected across three countries, the analysis treats them as a single cultural cluster, reflecting the shared socio-cultural and historical characteristics of the Balkan region and allowing for an aggregated examination of the determinants of domestic destination choice.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in several complementary theoretical perspectives that collectively offer a comprehensive explanation of domestic tourist destination choice. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) underscores the importance of group membership and cultural belonging in shaping individual preferences, which is directly relevant to conservatism and tradition as value orientations that strengthen attachment to the national in-group. In the tourism context, these value orientations may encourage individuals to favor destinations that reflect shared cultural symbols, norms, and identities. In addition, Social conflict theory (Sherif, 1966) provides further insight into how intergroup distinctions and perceived boundaries between “in-groups” and “out-groups” can foster protective attitudes toward domestic consumption. Applied to tourism, such dynamics may intensify ethnocentric tendencies, leading individuals to perceive domestic destinations as more legitimate, desirable, or morally appropriate compared to foreign alternatives.

From a micro-level perspective, Consumer behavior theory, as developed in early integrative models of buyer decision-making (Engel et al., 1968; Howard & Sheth, 1969), explains how individual values, beliefs, and cultural orientations are translated into concrete consumption choices. These foundational frameworks emphasize the cognitive and evaluative processes underlying purchase decisions and provide the theoretical basis for understanding tourism-related preferences. Building upon this tradition, more recent studies (e.g. Pratama, 2025) further highlight the role of internalized value systems in guiding destination choices, particularly in contexts characterized by cultural salience and identity-driven consumption. Complementing these approaches, the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model, originally developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), provides a process-oriented framework explaining how external environmental stimuli influence internal psychological states, which subsequently shape behavioral responses. According to this foundational perspective, environmental cues (stimuli) affect individuals’ cognitive and affective conditions (organism), ultimately leading to approach or avoidance behaviors (response). Building upon this original framework, recent applications in tourism research (Li et al., 2025) extend the model to cultural and social contexts, suggesting that culturally embedded stimuli—such as uncertainty avoidance—shape internal states including risk perceptions and identity salience, which in turn influence behavioral outcomes. Within this theoretical logic, the preference for domestic tourist destinations can be interpreted as a behavioral response to culturally grounded stimuli processed through individual cognitive and affective mechanisms.

Building on these theoretical lenses, the present study conceptualizes conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance as key antecedents of domestic tourist destination choice, while positioning tourist ethnocentrism as a central moderating construct that conditions the strength and direction of these relationships within the context of domestic tourism.

### 2.1. Conservatism and domestic tourist destination choice

Conservatism is generally understood as a value orientation that emphasizes the preservation of traditional social structures, respect for authority, and resistance to change (Pop et al., 2024; Simpson et al., 2016). Individuals who lean toward conservative attitudes tend to exhibit a stronger sense of national identity and a

higher degree of loyalty toward domestic institutions, social norms, and established practices. Such value orientations influence a wide range of individual decisions, including consumption-related behaviors and preferences in the tourism domain (Shen et al., 2022). In the context of tourism, conservatism may manifest as a pronounced tendency to select domestic tourist destinations that reflect familiar cultural symbols, historical continuity, and socially shared values (Shen et al., 2022; Yousaf, 2025). Domestic destinations provide a culturally predictable environment that aligns with conservative worldviews and reduces exposure to unfamiliar social and cultural settings. By contrast, international travel may be perceived by conservative individuals as relatively riskier, less compatible with their value systems, and less conducive to supporting the domestic economy and local communities. These perceptions collectively contribute to a stronger inclination toward domestic tourism (Yıldız et al., 2023).

Accordingly, it is expected that individuals with stronger conservative orientations will be more likely to prefer domestic tourist destinations over foreign alternatives. On this basis, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H1: Conservatism has a positive effect on the choice of domestic tourist destinations.*

## **2.2. Tradition and domestic tourist destination choice**

Tradition refers to the preservation and transmission of inherited customs, practices, and beliefs that collectively shape a community's cultural identity and social continuity (Cui et al., 2025). Individuals who place a high value on tradition tend to emphasize stability, historical continuity, and the maintenance of established cultural norms, often perceiving these elements as central to both personal and collective identity. Such value orientations influence a wide range of social behaviors, including preferences related to leisure and tourism consumption (Lebrun & Bouchet, 2024). Within the tourism context, a strong orientation toward tradition is likely to translate into a heightened attachment to domestic tourist destinations that embody cultural rituals, folklore, historical landmarks, and locally rooted practices (Pezeshki et al., 2019). By choosing destinations that reflect national heritage and shared historical narratives, tourists are able not only to fulfill leisure-related needs but also to reaffirm their sense of cultural belonging and collective memory. In contrast, foreign destinations may be perceived

as less capable of providing this symbolic and identity-related reinforcement. As a result, tradition functions as a motivational driver that directs individuals toward domestic rather than international tourism choices (Cui et al., 2025; Lebrun & Bouchet, 2024).

In light of these considerations, it is reasonable to expect that individuals with stronger traditional value orientations will exhibit a greater preference for domestic tourist destinations. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H2: Tradition has a positive effect on the choice of domestic tourist destinations.*

## **2.3. Uncertainty avoidance and domestic tourist destination choice**

Hofstede's (2001) cultural framework comprises several dimensions, including individualism versus collectivism, power distance, masculinity versus femininity, long-term versus short-term orientation, indulgence versus restraint, and uncertainty avoidance. While each of these dimensions offers valuable insights into how cultural values shape consumer behavior, the present study focuses specifically on uncertainty avoidance due to its pronounced relevance for tourism-related decision-making. This dimension is particularly important in tourism contexts, as destination choice inherently involves perceptions of risk, safety, and predictability. Uncertainty avoidance refers to the extent to which individuals seek to minimize ambiguity, unpredictability, and uncertainty in their social and physical environment (Hofstede, 2001). Individuals characterized by high levels of uncertainty avoidance tend to prefer clear rules, structured situations, and familiar contexts that reduce perceived risks and enhance a sense of control. When applied to tourism behavior, this cultural orientation plays a significant role in shaping destination preferences (Zakaria et al., 2021). Domestic tourist destinations typically offer a higher degree of familiarity, including shared language, known social norms, and culturally embedded practices, which collectively contribute to a stronger perception of safety and predictability (Duong et al., 2025; Sun et al., 2022). In contrast, international travel often entails exposure to unfamiliar cultural settings, different languages, and potentially uncertain logistical or safety conditions, which may be perceived as stressful or undesirable by tourists with high uncertainty avoidance. Consequently, such individuals are more likely to favor domestic destinations, where perceived risks are lower and the overall

travel experience is more controllable and predictable (Hong et al., 2023; Prince et al., 2019). This tendency is particularly relevant in the Balkan context, as Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina are generally characterized by relatively high levels of uncertainty avoidance, further underscoring the importance of this cultural dimension for the present analysis (Hofstede Insights, 2025).

Based on these theoretical considerations, uncertainty avoidance is expected to positively influence tourists' preferences for domestic destinations. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H3: Uncertainty avoidance has a positive effect on the choice of domestic tourist destinations.*

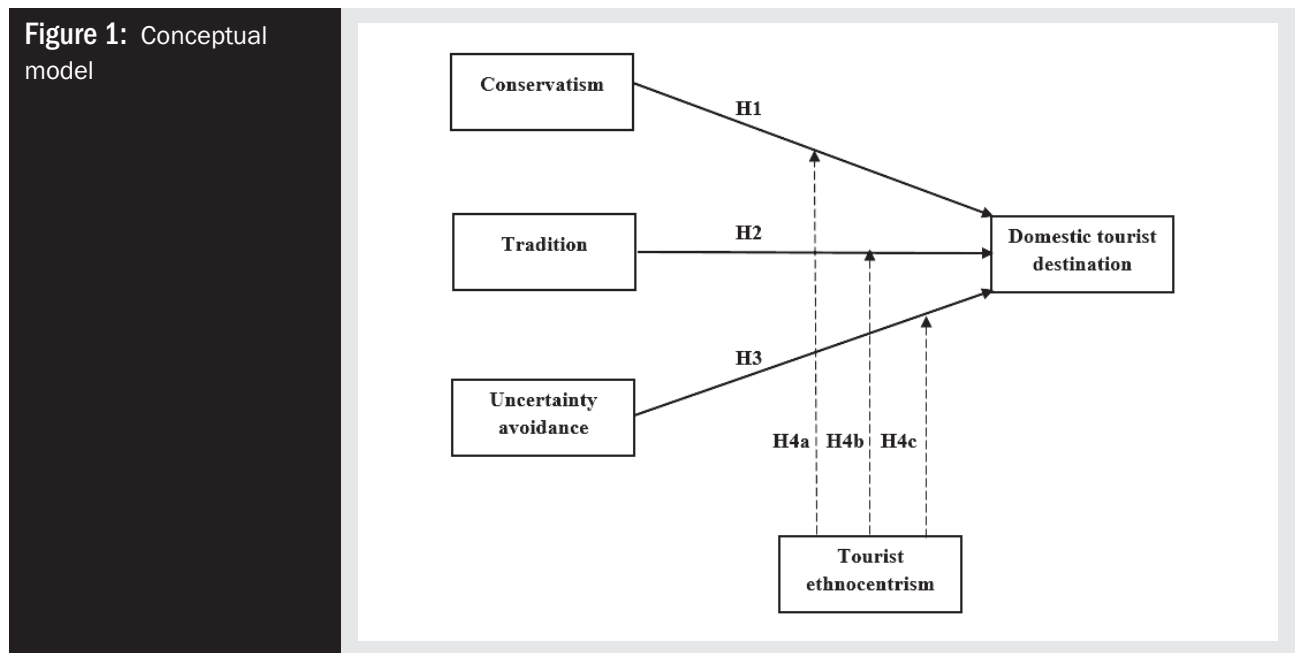
### 2.4. Tourist ethnocentrism as a moderator

Ethnocentrism originates as a sociological concept, initially defined as the tendency to interpret and evaluate other cultures through the standards and norms of one's own culture, often accompanied by a perceived superiority of the in-group over out-groups. Building on this foundational understanding, subsequent research has introduced several derivative constructs that capture the manifestation of ethnocentrism within specific social and economic domains. One of the most influential among these is consumer ethnocentrism, which emphasizes the economic dimension of ethnocentric orientations and refers to consumers' preference for domestic over foreign products, driven

by loyalty to the national economy and concerns for domestic welfare (Shimp & Sharma, 1987).

Extending this logic to the tourism domain, the concept of tourist ethnocentrism has emerged to describe individuals' moral, cultural, and normative preferences for domestic tourist services and destinations. Tourist ethnocentrism reflects the belief that choosing domestic tourism options is more appropriate and socially responsible than selecting foreign alternatives, particularly in contexts where tourism consumption is perceived as contributing to national economic development. Given its direct relevance to destination choice and travel-related decision-making, the present study adopts tourist ethnocentrism as a central analytical construct (Cleveland et al., 2022; Fernández-Ferrín et al., 2020).

Tourist ethnocentrism is commonly characterized by the perception that supporting domestic tourism services constitutes not only a personal preference but also a moral obligation, whereas opting for foreign destinations may be viewed as less legitimate or even harmful to the domestic economy (Aguilar-Rodríguez et al., 2025; Ragab et al., 2023). Individuals with higher levels of tourist ethnocentrism tend to evaluate tourism decisions through a strong lens of national loyalty, interpreting domestic travel as an expression of economic and cultural support for their country (Zdravković & Gašević, 2022). Beyond its direct influence on destination preferences, tourist ethnocentrism may also function as a moderating mechanism



Source: Authors

that conditions the strength of relationships between individual value orientations and domestic destination choice. Specifically, ethnocentrism is expected to amplify the effects of conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance by reinforcing value-consistent interpretations of tourism behavior. For instance, tourists who simultaneously exhibit strong conservative orientations and high levels of ethnocentrism are likely to demonstrate a particularly pronounced preference for domestic destinations. Similarly, individuals who value tradition or seek to minimize uncertainty may experience an intensified inclination toward domestic travel when these orientations are coupled with ethnocentric beliefs (Cui et al., 2025; Zakaria et al., 2021).

Tourist ethnocentrism is conceptualized in this study as a moderating variable that strengthens the relationships between conservatism, tradition, uncertainty avoidance, and the choice of domestic tourist destinations. Based on this theoretical reasoning, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H4a: Tourist ethnocentrism positively moderates the relationship between conservatism and domestic tourist destination choice.*

*H4b: Tourist ethnocentrism positively moderates the relationship between tradition and domestic tourist destination choice.*

*H4c: Tourist ethnocentrism positively moderates the relationship between uncertainty avoidance and domestic tourist destination choice.*

The conceptual model presented in Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized relationships among conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance as independent variables, domestic tourist destination choice as the dependent variable, and tourist ethnocentrism as a moderating factor.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study employed a quantitative research design to systematically examine the influence of conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance on the choice of domestic tourist destinations, while explicitly incorporating tourist ethnocentrism as a moderating variable. A quantitative approach was deemed particularly appropriate given the study's objective to test theoretically grounded hypotheses and to estimate

the strength and direction of relationships among multiple latent constructs within a structured analytical framework. The empirical research was conducted at the beginning of 2025 in the Balkan region, encompassing Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Considering the cross-national scope of the study and the need to ensure adequate representation of respondents from each country, a stratified sampling strategy was applied. Stratified sampling is especially suitable in cross-cultural research, as it allows researchers to control for structural heterogeneity across predefined subpopulations and to enhance the comparability of empirical findings. In this study, the strata were defined by country of residence (Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina), reflecting both administrative boundaries and meaningful socio-cultural groupings within the Balkan context. This approach ensured that each national group was proportionally and systematically included in the sample, thereby reducing potential sampling bias associated with over- or under-representation of specific countries.

Within each national stratum, quota sampling was employed as an additional sampling technique to further improve sample balance and comparability across groups. Quota sampling is particularly useful in large-scale survey research when probability sampling is constrained by practical considerations such as time, access, or population registers. By establishing predefined quotas for each country, the study ensured a relatively even distribution of respondents across the three national groups, which is critical for cross-national and comparative analyses. This methodological choice enhances the internal validity of the study by minimizing distortions that could arise from unequal group sizes and by enabling more reliable aggregation of data across countries when analyzing the Balkan region as a coherent cultural cluster. As a result of this combined stratified–quota sampling approach, data were collected from a total of 977 respondents, including 330 participants from Serbia, 340 from Croatia, and 307 from Bosnia and Herzegovina. This sample size exceeds commonly recommended thresholds for PLS-SEM analysis and provides sufficient statistical power for estimating complex models involving multiple latent constructs and interaction effects. Moreover, the balanced structure of the sample supports the study's conceptual assumption that, despite national differences, Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina share comparable historical, cultural, and value-based characteristics that justify their joint examination within a single regional framework (Balkan).

**Table 1:** Measurement items, Cronbach’s alpha, and composite reliability for variables

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Cronbach’s alpha</b>	<b>Composite reliability</b>
<b>Conservatism</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I prefer maintaining traditional values in my daily life.</li> <li>2. I tend to follow established norms rather than adopt new trends.</li> <li>3. Rapid social changes make me feel uncomfortable.</li> <li>4. I respect conventional practices and customs.</li> </ol>	0.929	0.905
<b>Tradition</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Family customs and rituals are important to me.</li> <li>2. Preserving cultural heritage is a priority in my life.</li> <li>3. I value historical continuity in my community.</li> <li>4. Maintaining national traditions is important in everyday activities.</li> </ol>	0.917	0.911
<b>Uncertainty avoidance</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I feel uncomfortable in ambiguous or unpredictable situations.</li> <li>2. I prefer structured situations with clear rules.</li> <li>3. I avoid taking risks whenever possible.</li> <li>4. I rely on guidelines or instructions to handle new situations.</li> </ol>	0.924	0.892
<b>Tourist ethnocentrism</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I prefer visiting domestic tourist destinations over foreign ones.</li> <li>2. I feel an obligation to support local tourism.</li> <li>3. I am skeptical about the quality of foreign tourist offerings.</li> <li>4. I feel proud when choosing national tourism products.</li> </ol>	0.936	0.889
<b>Domestic tourist destination</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I prefer spending my holidays at domestic tourist destinations.</li> <li>2. Domestic destinations offer experiences that meet my travel expectations.</li> <li>3. I feel more comfortable visiting tourist spots within my own country.</li> <li>4. I would recommend domestic destinations to friends and family.</li> </ol>	0.907	0.865

Source: Authors

All constructs were measured using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). The use of a seven-point scale was selected to enhance measurement sensitivity and to capture subtle variations in respondents’ attitudes, perceptions, and value orientations. Each latent variable was operationalized through four reflective indicators adapted from well-established and widely validated measurement scales in the literature (Cleveland et al., 2022; Fernández-Ferrín et al., 2020; Hofstede, 2001; Sabiote-Ortiz et al., 2024; Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Zdravković & Gašević, 2022). This ensured both content validity and theoretical consistency with prior empirical research.

Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4 software, enabling the application of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM was selected due to its suitability for predictive research, its robustness in handling complex models with moderating effects, and its ability to simultaneously assess the measurement and structural components of the model. This approach is particularly appropriate in tourism and consumer behavior research, where constructs are often abstract and measured indirectly through multiple indicators.

Table 1 presents the full set of measurement items used in the study, along with Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability values for all constructs. These indicators confirm satisfactory internal consistency and reliability of the measurement model, thereby providing a solid foundation for subsequent structural analysis and hypothesis testing.

As presented in Table 1, all constructs demonstrate a high level of internal consistency reliability. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients range from 0.907 to 0.936, while composite reliability (CR) values range between 0.865 and 0.911, all of which exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2006; Nunnally, 1978). These findings indicate that the measurement items used to operationalize conservatism, tradition, uncertainty avoidance, tourist ethnocentrism, and domestic tourist destination choice are highly reliable and internally consistent. The strong reliability indicators suggest that the items within each construct consistently reflect the underlying latent variables and that respondents interpreted the measurement statements in a stable and coherent manner. This reduces the potential impact of random measurement error and enhances confidence in the quality of the measurement model. Consequently, the established

level of reliability provides a solid foundation for the application of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) and ensures that the subsequent analysis of structural relationships is based on well-measured constructs, thereby strengthening the overall validity of the study's empirical results.

#### 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

Table 2 reports the average variance extracted (AVE) values for all research variables, indicating the convergent validity of the measurement constructs.

**Table 2:** Average variance extracted (AVE) for research variables

Research variables	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Conservatism	0.722
Tradition	0.715
Uncertainty avoidance	0.709
Tourist ethnocentrism	0.756
Domestic tourist destination	0.723

Source: Auhtors

As shown in Table 2, all average variance extracted (AVE) values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.50, ranging from 0.709 to 0.756. These results indicate that each construct explains a substantial proportion of the variance in its associated indicators, thereby providing strong support for convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The findings suggest that the measurement items are well aligned with their respective latent constructs and share a high degree of common variance. Consequently, the indicators effectively capture the underlying theoretical concepts, ensuring that the measurement model is robust and suitable for subsequent PLS-SEM structural analysis.

Table 3 presents the model fit indicators for the domestic tourist destination research model, assessing the overall goodness-of-fit of the PLS-SEM model.

As reported in Table 3, all model fit indices meet or exceed the recommended thresholds, providing strong evidence of an adequate overall model fit. The  $\chi^2/df$  ratio of 1.962 falls well below the commonly accepted upper limit of 3, indicating a satisfactory level of model parsimony and fit between the proposed model and the observed data (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Furthermore, the goodness-of-fit indices—including GFI, IFI, TLI, and CFI—range from 0.911 to 0.953, all surpassing the recommended cutoff value of 0.90, which further confirms the robustness and structural adequacy of the model (Byrne, 1998). In addition, the RMSEA value of 0.017 is substantially lower than the threshold of 0.08, indicating a very low level of approximation error and suggesting an excellent fit of the model to the data (Hair et al., 2006). Taken together, these results demonstrate that the proposed PLS-SEM model exhibits strong empirical support and provides a reliable and valid framework for testing the hypothesized relationships among the constructs.

Table 4 reports the results of the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis, examining the direct effects of the independent variables—conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance—on tourists' preference for domestic destinations. The Table 4 presents the estimated path coefficients, statistical significance levels, and explanatory power of the model, providing a comprehensive evaluation of the hypothesized relationships. These results offer empirical evidence on the extent to which value-based orientations and cultural predispositions shape domestic destination choice, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of tourist behavior within the examined context.

As shown in Table 4, all three independent variables have a significant positive impact on domestic tourist destination choice. Conservatism exhibits a path coefficient of 0.356 ( $t = 5.369, p < 0.01$ ), tradition has a coefficient of 0.378 ( $t = 5.893, p < 0.01$ ), and uncertainty avoidance shows the strongest effect with a coefficient of 0.412 ( $t = 6.781, p < 0.01$ ). These results

**Table 3:** Model fit indicators for the domestic tourist destinations research model

Goodness-of-fit indicators	Domestic tourist destination model	Recommended threshold
$\chi^2/df$	1.962	<3
GFI	0.933	>0.9
IFI	0.941	>0.9
TLI	0.911	>0.9
CFI	0.953	>0.9
RMSEA	0.017	<0.08

Source: Authors

**Table 4:** PLS-SEM results – impact of independent variables on the domestic tourist destinations

Independent variables	Path coefficient	Standard deviation	t statistics	p values
Conservatism	0.356	0.073	5.369	0.000**
Tradition	0.378	0.095	5.893	0.000**
Uncertainty avoidance	0.412	0.064	6.781	0.000**

**Notes:** Level of statistical significance: \*\*0.01

**Source:** Authors

**Table 5:** Moderation effects of tourist ethnocentrism in the PLS-SEM model (dependent variable: domestic tourist destinations)

Relations	Path coefficient	Standard deviation	t statistics	p values
Conservatism X Tourist ethnocentrism	0.239	0.082	4.541	0.003**
Tradition X Tourist ethnocentrism	0.289	0.085	5.187	0.001**
Uncertainty avoidance X Tourist ethnocentrism	0.331	0.091	5.659	0.000**

**Notes:** Level of statistical significance: \*\*0.01

**Source:** Authors

indicate that respondents who score higher on conservatism, value tradition, or prefer structured and predictable environments are more likely to choose domestic tourist destinations. Therefore, the findings fully support hypotheses H1, H2, and H3, confirming the expected positive relationships between the examined cultural and value dimensions and the preference for domestic tourism.

Table 5 presents the results of the moderation analysis, examining the moderating role of tourist ethnocentrism in the relationships between the independent variables—conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance—and tourists’ preference for domestic destinations. The Table 5 reports the interaction effects estimated within the PLS-SEM framework, providing insight into how ethnocentric orientations condition the strength and direction of value- and culture-based influences on domestic destination choice. These findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of tourist behavior by demonstrating the contingent nature of the examined relationships under varying levels of tourist ethnocentrism.

The results indicate that tourist ethnocentrism significantly moderates all examined relationships. Specifically, the interaction between conservatism and tourist ethnocentrism has a path coefficient of 0.239 ( $t = 4.541, p < 0.01$ ), tradition and tourist ethnocentrism 0.289 ( $t = 5.187, p < 0.01$ ), and uncertainty avoidance and tourist ethnocentrism 0.331 ( $t = 5.659, p < 0.01$ ). These findings suggest that individuals with higher levels of tourist ethnocentrism exhibit a stronger positive effect of conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance on the preference for domestic tourist des-

tinations. Therefore, hypotheses H4a, H4b, and H4c are fully supported, confirming the expected moderating role of tourist ethnocentrism in reinforcing the impact of cultural and value-related dimensions on domestic tourism preferences.

## 5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings of this study not only corroborate prior empirical research (all research hypotheses confirmed) but also provide a theoretically grounded and integrative explanation of domestic tourist destination choice rooted in cultural values and social identity mechanisms (Aguilar-Rodríguez et al., 2025; Cui et al., 2025; Pop et al., 2024; Shen et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2022). The significant effects of conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance confirm that tourists’ destination preferences are deeply embedded in stable value orientations and culturally shaped cognitive frameworks, rather than being driven solely by utilitarian or economic considerations. These results strongly support the relevance of Hofstede’s cultural framework (2001) in explaining tourism behavior, particularly in contexts characterized by strong collective identities and historically grounded value systems.

From a Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) perspective, the positive influence of conservatism and tradition suggests that domestic tourism serves as a symbolic arena in which individuals express and reinforce their membership in the national in-group. Tourists who prioritize social continuity, cultural heritage, and established norms are more

likely to perceive domestic destinations as extensions of their collective identity, thereby favoring them over foreign alternatives. This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing the role of identity affirmation and cultural embeddedness in tourism decision-making (Cui et al., 2025; Shen et al., 2022). Domestic tourism, in this sense, transcends its functional role and becomes a value-laden form of consumption through which cultural loyalty and national belonging are enacted (Lebrun & Bouchet, 2024).

Similarly, the significant impact of uncertainty avoidance underscores the importance of perceived risk and predictability in shaping tourist preferences. Consistent with Hofstede's conceptualization, individuals characterized by high uncertainty avoidance seek environments that minimize ambiguity and enhance feelings of safety and control. Domestic destinations, which offer linguistic familiarity, shared social norms, and culturally predictable settings, are therefore perceived as more attractive than foreign destinations, especially in regions such as the Balkans where uncertainty avoidance tends to be pronounced (Hofstede Insights, 2025). This finding reinforces the notion that cultural dimensions operate as cognitive filters through which tourists evaluate the desirability of alternative destinations.

Crucially, the moderating role of tourist ethnocentrism provides deeper insight into how these value-based orientations are translated into concrete destination choices. In line with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and prior empirical evidence (Fernández-Ferrín et al., 2020; Prince et al., 2019), the results demonstrate that ethnocentrism amplifies the effects of conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance on domestic destination preference. This suggests that ethnocentric beliefs intensify in-group favoritism by framing domestic tourism not only as a safer or more familiar option, but also as a morally appropriate and socially responsible choice. Tourist ethnocentrism thus functions as a reinforcing mechanism that strengthens the alignment between individual values and tourism behavior.

What distinguishes the present study from previous research is its holistic integration of cultural value orientations and ethnocentric attitudes within a single PLS-SEM framework. While earlier studies have predominantly examined these constructs independently or through limited relational models, this research captures their combined and interactive effects, thereby addressing an important gap in the tourism literature. By modeling tourist ethnocentrism as a moderator rather than merely a direct predictor, the study

advances theoretical understanding of how cultural values and identity-based orientations jointly shape domestic tourism preferences. Taken together, these findings highlight the necessity of adopting integrative, theory-driven approaches in tourism research. The results demonstrate that domestic destination choice emerges from a complex interplay between cultural dimensions, value orientations, and social identity processes, particularly within regions such as the Balkans where historical experiences and national identities remain highly salient. By bridging Hofstede's cultural framework with Social Identity Theory, the study offers a more comprehensive and context-sensitive explanation of tourist behavior and contributes to the advancement of culturally informed tourism theory.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study explicitly situates the analysis of domestic tourist destination choice within the Balkan region, emphasizing the role of culturally embedded value orientations and tourist ethnocentrism in shaping travel preferences in this distinctive socio-cultural context. By simultaneously examining Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the research offers region-specific insights while treating the Balkans as a coherent cultural cluster characterized by shared historical experiences, strong national identities, and pronounced value systems. In doing so, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance jointly influence tourism behavior across the region, thereby providing a context-sensitive explanation of domestic tourism preferences.

The originality of this research lies in its holistic and integrative analytical framework, which simultaneously incorporates conservatism, tradition, uncertainty avoidance, and tourist ethnocentrism within a single PLS-SEM model. Unlike prior studies that have predominantly examined these constructs in isolation or through fragmented analytical approaches, this study captures their combined and interactive effects. By conceptualizing tourist ethnocentrism as a moderating mechanism rather than merely a direct predictor, the research advances existing tourism literature and fills an important theoretical gap related to the conditional nature of domestic destination choice.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings reinforce the central role of cultural values in shaping tourism behavior and extend prior frameworks by

demonstrating how ethnocentric orientations intensify the influence of conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance. The study contributes to tourism theory by bridging Hofstede's cultural dimensions with Social Identity Theory, illustrating that domestic tourism preferences emerge from the interaction of value-based orientations and identity-driven processes. This multi-dimensional perspective underscores the importance of moving beyond single-factor explanations and adopting integrative, theory-driven approaches in tourism research.

The practical implications of the study are equally significant. Policymakers and tourism marketers should explicitly account for cultural values and ethnocentric tendencies when designing strategies to promote domestic tourism. Emphasizing local traditions, cultural heritage, and national narratives, while offering structured, predictable, and culturally familiar tourism experiences, may enhance the attractiveness of domestic destinations for conservative and risk-averse travelers. Such strategies are particularly relevant in the Balkan context, where cultural continuity and national identity remain salient drivers of consumer behavior.

Despite its contributions, the study is subject to several limitations that warrant careful consideration. Although stratified and quota sampling procedures were applied to ensure balanced representation across Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the sample was not based on a fully random selection of respondents. Consequently, the statistical representativeness of the findings may be constrained, and the generalizability of the results to the broader population of tourists in these countries should be interpreted with caution. Moreover, the research design is cross-sectional

in nature, with data collected at a single point in time, which limits the ability to draw firm causal inferences and does not allow for the examination of potential changes in value orientations and ethnocentric attitudes over time. In addition, the reliance on self-reported survey data collected through Likert-scale measures may give rise to social desirability bias, acquiescence bias, and potential measurement-related effects, despite efforts to minimize such influences through careful questionnaire design. Finally, while the analytical focus on three Balkan countries is theoretically grounded in their shared historical and cultural characteristics, this contextual specificity may limit the broader applicability of the findings, as the relationships between value orientations and tourism preferences may manifest differently in other cultural or regional settings.

Future research should therefore extend this line of inquiry through cross-cultural studies that compare the Balkan region with other cultural clusters, such as Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, or non-European contexts, in order to test the robustness and boundary conditions of the proposed model. Longitudinal research designs would also be valuable for capturing how domestic tourism preferences and ethnocentric tendencies evolve over time, particularly in response to economic fluctuations, geopolitical developments, or external crises. Moreover, future studies could incorporate additional mediating or moderating variables—such as economic constraints, prior travel experience, digital media influence, or destination image—and combine quantitative approaches with qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into the underlying motivations driving domestic tourism behavior.

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## Apstrakt

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### **Konzervativizam, tradicija i izbegavanje neizvesnosti kao determinante izbora domaćih turističkih destinacija na Balkanu: moderatorska uloga turističkog etnocentrizma**

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Osnovni cilj ovog istraživanja jeste da se ispita uticaj konzervativizma, tradicije i izbegavanja neizvesnosti (jedne od Hofstedeovih dimenzija nacionalne kulture) na izbor domaćih turističkih destinacija, kao i moderatorska uloga turističkog etnocentrizma. Empirijsko istraživanje sprovedeno je početkom 2025. godine na uzorku od 977 ispitanika iz Srbije, Hrvatske i Bosne i Hercegovine, primenom anketne metode. Analiza podataka izvršena je korišćenjem softverskog paketa SmartPLS 4. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na to da konzervativizam, tradicija i izbegavanje neizvesnosti ostvaruju statistički značajan i pozitivan direktan uticaj na izbor domaćih turističkih destinacija. Takođe, nalazi potvrđuju da turistički etnocentrizam ima značajnu moderator-

sku ulogu u svim ispitivanim odnosima, dodatno jačajući vezu između nezavisnih varijabli i preferencije domaćih destinacija. Ovi rezultati ukazuju na centralnu ulogu kulturnih i vrednosnih dimenzija u oblikovanju turističkog ponašanja u balkanskom kontekstu. Teorijski doprinos rada ogleda se u integraciji kulturnih faktora i etnocentrizma u analizi potrošačkih preferencija u turizmu, dok praktične implikacije pružaju smernice za kreiranje marketing strategija usmerenih na promociju domaćeg turizma u regionu.

**Ključne reči:** *konzervativizam, tradicija, izbegavanje neizvesnosti, turistički etnocentrizam, domaće turističke destinacije, Balkan*

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