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Use of Theory of Planned Behaviour for Assessing the Channel Choice Behaviour among Indian Tourists: A Moderating Effect of Previous Experience

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Abstract

The present study examines the determinants of channel selection and choice behavior in Indian tourists, utilizing the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) within a multichannel framework and enhancing it by integrating customer experience as a moderating variable. A quantitative survey was performed with a sample of 331 respondents, employing a structured questionnaire that incorporated validated scales for each construct of the Theory of Planned Behavior—attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control—while also considering customer experience as a moderating variable. The research utilized Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze the data and investigate the relationships among the variables. The results indicate that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control significantly affect channel selection intention, with customer experience moderating the relationship between selection intention and actual channel choice behavior. The findings emphasize the significance of positive attitudes and user-friendliness in influencing consumer intentions, as well as the impact of social factors on channel selection. Customer experience significantly enhances the relationship between intention and behavior, indicating that favorable initial experiences promote ongoing engagement.

Keywords: previous experience, usage intention, channel selection, TPB, moderating effect, tourists

Introduction

The Tourism and Hospitality sector, a primary service industry in India, substantially boosts the nation's economic growth and prosperity. This sector plays a vital role in the 'Make in India' initiative, acting as a significant economic driver that fosters job creation and rapid progress. It also catalyses the development of versatile infrastructure, including high-quality hotels, luxurious resorts, exceptional dining establishments, efficient transportation systems (including aviation, roadways, shipping, and trains), and cutting-edge healthcare facilities. India offers a broad geographical diversity, featuring notable world heritage sites and specialized tourism options such as engaging cruise tourism, thrilling adventure tourism, renowned medical tourism, and enchanting eco-tourism. These distinctive services have spurred a significant surge in visitor arrivals, creating extensive employment opportunities (Sahu *et al.*, 2023).

By 2028, international tourist visits are expected to hit 30.5 billion, generating revenues over US$ 59 billion. Yet, the sector's growth is likely to be driven by domestic tourism post-pandemic. By 2020, international hotel chains were expected to account for approximately 47% of the market, a share projected to increase to 50% by 2022. According to the Ministry of Tourism, there were 811,411 Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in October 2023, and from January to October 2023, the FTAs numbered 7,243,680, surpassing the 4,655,160 recorded during the same period in 2022.

In 2019, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) ranked India 10th among 185 countries for its travel and tourism's total GDP contribution. By 2022, this sector contributed Rs. 15.9 trillion (US$ 191.25 billion) to the national economy, with WTTC predicting a 7.8% average annual growth rate over the next decade. In 2020, the tourism industry employed about 39 million people, which constituted 8% of India’s total workforce. In 2021, the GDP contribution from this sector was US$ 178 billion, expected to rise to US$ 512 billion by 2028, with an anticipated 53 million jobs by 2029.

Multi-channel retailing is a marketing strategy where the retailer presents the customers with multiple ways to buy product or services (Wallace *et al.*, 2004; Mallick *et al.*, 2024; Shaikh *et al.*, 2024). A multi-channel strategy covers

various channels of purchases it can be from a brick-and-mortar store, or from an online website, ordering through mobiles, e-mail orders, interactive television (tele-shopping), catalog ordering etc. The purpose of a multi-channel retail plan is to increase income and customer's loyalty by offering your customers, convenience and their products as their preferred choice (Berman and Thelen, 2004; Mohapatra *et al.*, 2024; Kumar *et al.*, 2024).

In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, consumers have a multitude of communication channels at their disposal to interact with brands, products, and services. However, the decision-making process behind the selection of these channels remains complex and dynamic. To effectively reach and engage with target audiences, businesses must gain insight into the factors influencing consumers' channel choices. This study aims to investigate the underlying drivers and preferences guiding consumers' selection of channels for tourism. By identifying key determinants of theory of planned behaviour (TPB), we seek to develop a comprehensive understanding of channel choice behavior. Further, this will assess the moderating effect of customer experience in tourist channel choice behaviour. This study's uniqueness is its emphasis on customer experience as a moderating variable, offering a new perspective that enhances the explanatory power of the Theory of Planned Behavior in technology-driven consumer decisions.

Literature Review

Theory of planned behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has been widely applied to understand consumer channel choice behavior, particularly in omnichannel retailing. TPB posits that an individual's behavior is influenced by their attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of channel selection, these elements correspond to consumers' evaluations of various purchasing channels, the influence of social norms, and their perceived ease or difficulty in using a particular channel. Recent studies have used TPB to explore factors affecting consumers' intentions to engage with multiple retail channels. For example, Chen and Teng (2019) highlight that consumers' attitudes towards online and offline channels, shaped by convenience and perceived risk, significantly impact their channel choice intentions. Additionally, subjective norms, including peer recommendations and societal trends, play a critical role in shaping channel preferences (Kim & Park, 2020). Perceived behavioral control, involving consumers' confidence in using a particular channel and resource availability, also influences their selection of channels (Lin & Wang, 2021). By integrating TPB, researchers have gained valuable insights into the determinants of channel choice behavior, enabling retailers to tailor strategies that align with consumer preferences and enhance the overall shopping experience (Zhang & Lin, 2022).

Attitude

Attitude means an individual's positive or negative view of a particular behaviour. It is concerned with judging the possible consequences of performing the behaviour and will lead to different decisions based on different evaluations of the behaviour. Studies on tourists' green hotel visits have demonstrated that a favourable attitude towards green hotels positively influences green hotel visits (Ahn and Kwon, 2020; Line and Hanks, 2016). After visiting a green hotel, the customer's loyalty would develop a revisit intention due to the pleasure and favourable attitude towards the green hotel (Ahn and Kwon, 2020). These customers would further spread positive word-of-mouth and pay a higher premium than regular people (Rahman and Reynolds, 2016). On the other hand, Verma and Chandra (2018) found that attitude is the most critical predictor of tourists' intention to visit green hotels by incorporating the TPB within the social-psychological model.

H1: Attitude positively influences the channel selection intention among the tourists

Subjective Norms

The subjective norm reflects tourists' validation of whether their specific behaviour is socially right, ultimately guiding them to believe in a particular behaviour (Kim and Hwang, 2020). In most decision-making, a person would behave or develop intention based on approval or disapproval of other people they perceive as significant such as family, friends, colleagues and significant others (Choi *et al.*, 2015). Subjective norm consists of the normative belief that depicts other people's thinking about whether to engage in a specific behaviour (Yarimoglu and Gunay, 2020). This study tends to unveil the perception and influence of others close to the individual that led to their intention to visit a green hotel.

Individual intention to visit a green hotel will be increased as one would believe that opting for a green hotel is considered responsible and sensible. Hasan (2020) found the positive impact of Subjective norms on consumers' intention for online grocery shopping. Gopi and Ramayah (2007) also supported positive influences of subjective norm on intention to use Internet stock trading. A survey by Limayem *et al.* (2000) of online consumers revealed the significant effect of subjective norm on their intention to engage in online shopping.

H2: Subjective Norms have a positive impact on channel selection intention

Perceived behavioural control

Perceived behavioural control is also directly affects behaviour intention (Ajzen I., 2001). The meaning of perceived behavioural control can be expressed that a person makes judgement on the degree of difficulty in carrying out a particular action. In most cases, it depends on the availability of resources, such as the economic cost, effort, and time that individuals think they need to spend in the process of purchasing. It is initially manifested in the evaluation of objective factors, and then some scholars introduce self-efficacy as an important dimension into perceived behaviour control construction (Rodgers *et al.*, 2008; Bandura, 1999) emphasizing that individual behaviour in the real environment is often affected by internal and external uncertainties. This is especially true when this goes beyond the boundaries of a circle of trust such as family and friends. At the same time, some scholars have confirmed that perceived behavioural control is affected by control belief and perceived intensity, and is significantly positively correlated with behavioural intention (Hale *et al.*, 2002).

H3: Perceived behavioural control will have a positive impact on channel selection intention

Channel selection Intention and Channel choice behaviour

Customer purchase intention has been widely studied in both offline (e.g., Creyer, 1997; Young *et al.*, 1998) and online contexts (Wang and Hazen, 2016). Studies throughout the years have identified a range of factors that influence customer purchase intention. Konuş *et al.* (2008) found shopping enjoyment, loyalty, and innovativeness can predict if a customer is a multichannel enthusiast, an uninvolved shopper, or a store-focused consumer. Each market segmentation has unique preferences on channel selection. Verhoef *et al.* (2007) focused on research shopping, which describes customers search and purchase behavior from different channels (e.g., searches at stores and then buy from e-retailer's website). The emerging multichannel retail of bricks and mortar store and online channel has led to complexity in the buying behaviour of the customer and also has led to differences in their channel choice as different channels are available to them for purchase (Alba *et al.*, 1997; Peterson *et al.*, 1997). Social media, digital platforms and other emerging forms of online communications have enormous impact on travel behaviour of customers and also on the planning process of travellers (Xiang *et al.*, 2015). The interactive technologies and the use of mobile technologies is making the travel purchase decision more complex and is creating an interconnection among different channels. Thus, the channels which the travellers are using for their purchase decision is becoming more and more important for the retailers (Lamsfus *et al.*, 2015). Hence, it was proposed that

H4: Channel selection intention positively influence the channel choice behaviour among the tourists.

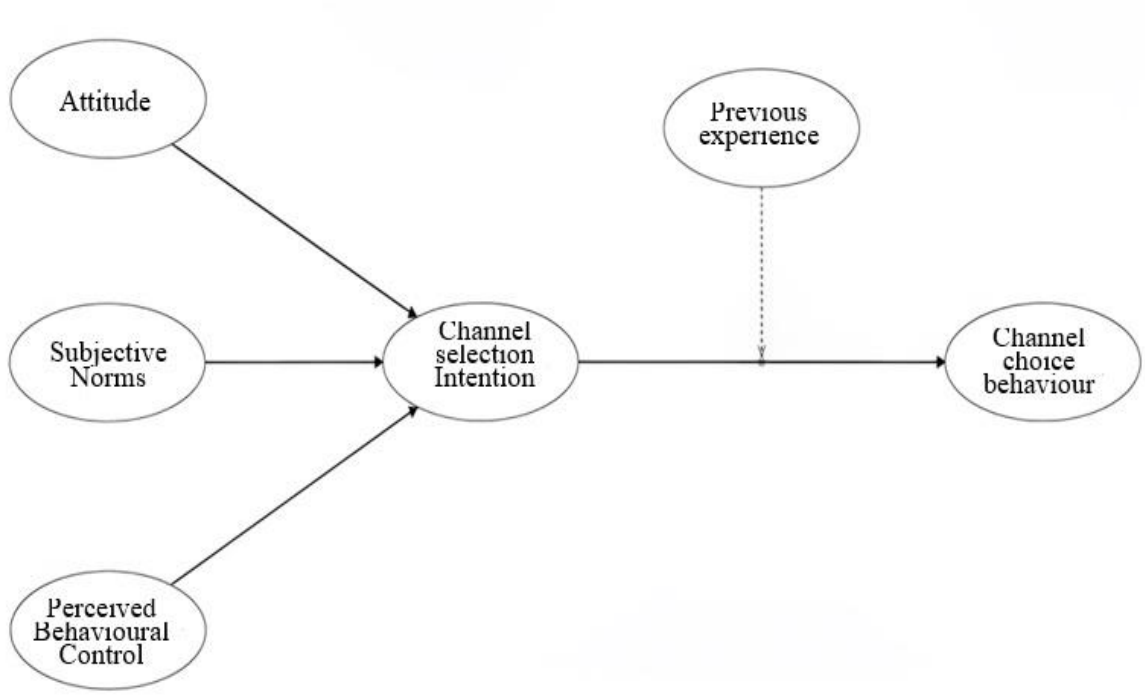
Previous experience as moderator

The concept of user experience was initially introduced by Nonnan *et al.* (1995), who posited that an effective user experience entails not only meeting customer needs but also reducing frustration and monotony. This is achieved by offering products that are intuitive, visually engaging, and enriched with delightful, unexpected features. Prior familiarity with a similar product has been identified as a critical factor in differentiating between individuals who adopt technology and those who do not (Bulmer *et al.*, 2018). Such prior experience significantly influences users' intentions to make purchases through mobile applications (Liu *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, research has shown that a positive online shopping experience via mobile apps increases the probability of repeat purchases (Jeon *et al.*, 2019; Maruping *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, familiarity with advanced technology is expected to bolster individuals' confidence in adopting similar innovations. Consequently, a favorable level of prior online experience is likely to positively impact users' propensity to adopt new technologies, such as e-commerce and mobile applications (Wang *et al.*, 2012). In general, novice users are

expected to approach the adoption of technology, particularly mobile applications, with higher levels of caution (Kaushik *et al.*, 2020). Based on this understanding, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Previous experience positively moderates the relationship between behavioural intention and Mobile Apps usage behaviour of tourists.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



Research Methodology

A quantitative survey was conducted to collect primary data from Indian tourists who had recently visited various tourist destinations. A structured questionnaire was developed, incorporating validated scales for each construct of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) model, along with a moderating variable of prior experience. The survey was administered online, targeting a diverse sample of Indian tourists to enhance the generalizability of the findings. A purposive sampling method was employed to capture insights from tourists with prior experience in travel planning and active users of mobile applications. The final sample comprised 331 respondents.

According to Westland (2010), a minimum of 10 observations per variable is recommended for structural equation modeling (SEM), setting a threshold of 240 participants for this study. With 331 valid responses, this study's sample size exceeds the required minimum, ensuring sufficient statistical power. Behavioral intention was measured using three items adapted from Jeon *et al.* (2019), while usage behavior was assessed through three items adapted from Ali *et al.* (2024). Additionally, past experience construct was evaluated using four items adapted from Kaushik *et al.* (2020). Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to analyze the proposed relationships between the UTAUT constructs and channel choice intention.

Common method biasness

Common Method Bias (CMB) refers to the variance in results caused by the measurement technique used, which can lead to inflated correlations among variables. Harman's single-factor test is a commonly applied method to detect CMB. This test involves conducting an exploratory factor analysis on all variables with an unrotated factor solution. If a single factor emerges or if one dominant factor accounts for the majority of the variance, it indicates the presence of common method bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). In this study, SPSS results reveal that the single component explains only 36% of the total variance, which is well below the 50% threshold. Thus, there is no evidence of bias in this study.

Data Analysis

Demographic Profile

Table 1 provides the demographic profile of the sample, consisting of 331 respondents. The gender breakdown reveals a higher percentage of males (64.4%) compared to females (35.6%). The majority of respondents are employed in the service sector, representing 48.6% of the sample, with business owners making up 31.4% and students accounting for 19.9%. Regarding annual income, the largest group (43.8%) earns between 1.5 to 3 lakhs INR, while 29.6% earn less than 1.5 lakhs, and 18.4% have incomes between 3 to 4.5 lakhs. A smaller segment, 8.2%, reports earning over 4.5 lakhs. In terms of educational attainment, graduates constitute the largest group at 48.0%, followed by undergraduates at 33.2%, and postgraduates or higher at 18.7%.

Table 1. Demographic Profile

Characteristics	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Gender		
Male	213	64.4
Female	118	35.6
Occupation		
Service	161	48.6
Business	104	31.4
Students	66	19.9
Annual Income (in INR)		
< 1.5 lakh	98	29.6
1.5 lakhs - 3 lakhs	145	43.8
3 lakhs -4.5	61	18.4
Above 4.5 lakhs	27	8.2
Education		
Under graduates	110	33.2
Graduates	159	48.0
Post graduates and above	62	18.7
Total	***331***	**100.0**

Assessment of Measurement Model

PLS-SEM involves a series of steps, including defining the structural and measurement models, assessing the measurement model for reliability and validity, and then evaluating the structural model to test hypotheses. The structural model examines path coefficients and predictive relevance, providing insights into the relationships among constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2017). These steps ensure a rigorous approach to SEM, enhancing the robustness of the research findings.

To assess the measurement model in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM), several key steps and criteria must be examined. The measurement model's reliability and validity are evaluated through factor loadings, composite reliability (C.R.), average variance extracted (AVE), and Cronbach's alpha values, as per the standards suggested by Hair *et al.* (2017). Factor loadings above 0.7 indicate adequate indicator reliability, while values between 0.4 and 0.7 are acceptable in exploratory research. Composite reliability (C.R.) values above 0.7 demonstrate internal consistency reliability.

Table 2: Assessment of measurement model

Constructs	**Loading**	Alpha	**C.R.**	AVE
Attitude	0.966	0.941	0.95	0.894
	0.926			
	0.944			

Channel selection intention	0.886	0.822	0.889	0.668
	0.922			
	0.493			
	0.892			
Customer Experience	0.869	0.741	0.762	0.549
	0.725			
	0.605			
Perceived Behavioural Control	0.922	0.943	0.943	0.897
	0.962			
	0.958			
Subjective Norm	0.882	0.812	0.817	0.727
	0.826			
	0.849			
Channel Choice Behaviour	0.833	0.905	0.995	0.764
	0.816			
	0.923			
	0.919			

In this analysis, all constructs surpass this threshold, with values ranging from 0.762 to 0.995, suggesting robust reliability (Hair *et al.*, 2017). The AVE values, which assess convergent validity, should be above 0.5 to ensure that the constructs explain more than half of the variance in their indicators. Here, the AVE values meet or exceed this benchmark for the construct indicating acceptable convergent validity. Cronbach's alpha values, all above 0.7, further confirm the reliability of the constructs.

Table 3: discriminant analysis

	Attitude	Channel Choice Behaviour	Channel selection intention	Customer Experience	Perceived Behavioural Control	Subjective Norm
Attitude	0.946					
Channel Choice Behaviour	0.152	0.874				
Channel selection intention	0.754	0.119	0.817			
Customer Experience	0.024	-0.065	-0.023	0.741		
Perceived Behavioural Control	0.723	0.124	0.774	0.028	0.947	
Subjective Norm	0.694	0.164	0.727	-0.006	0.844	0.852

Discriminant validity in table 3 assesses whether constructs in a model are distinct from each other, ensuring that each construct captures unique variance. In Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), one of the most widely used methods for assessing discriminant validity is the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which requires that the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct should be greater than its correlations with other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In the provided table, the diagonal values represent the square roots of the AVEs, while the off-diagonal values indicate the correlations between constructs. This pattern holds for all constructs in the table, indicating that each construct meets the Fornell-Larcker criterion and thus has adequate discriminant validity (Hair *et al.*, 2017).

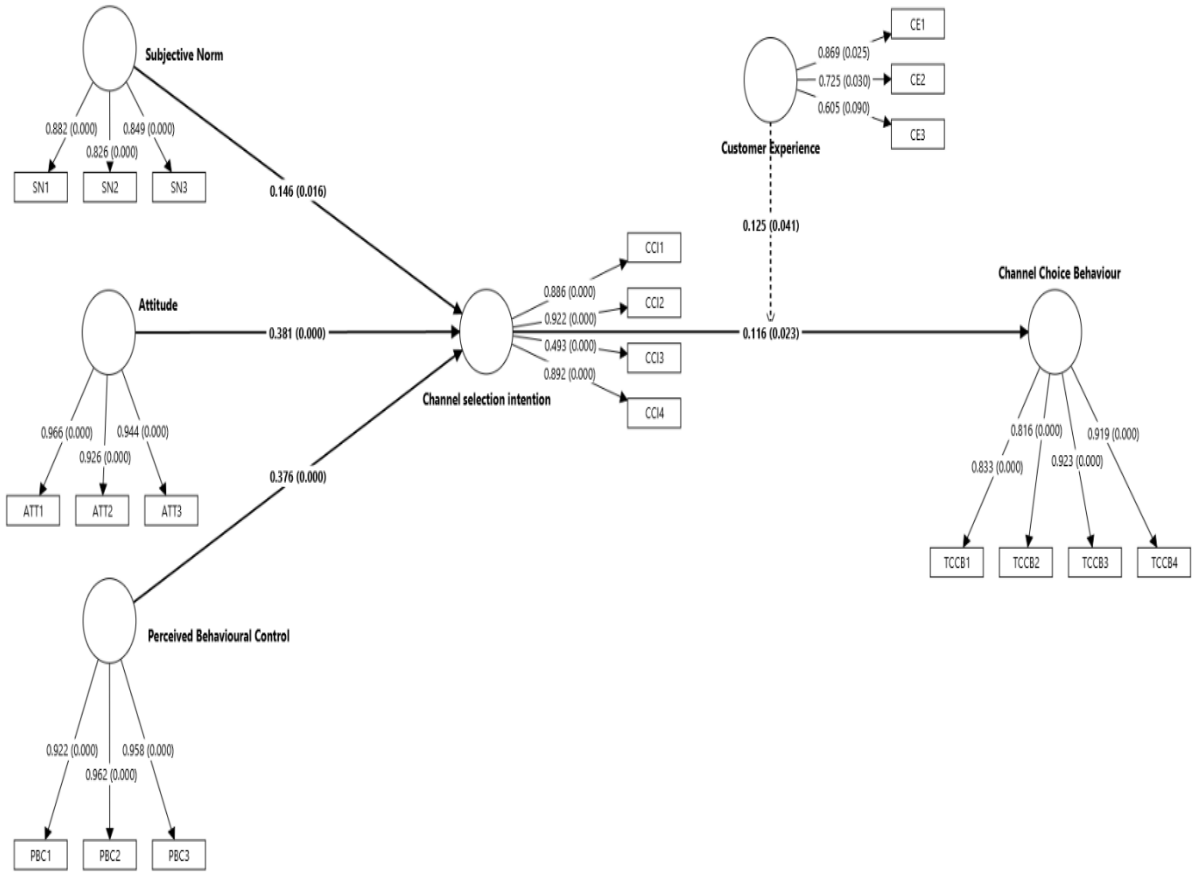


Figure 2. Measurement and structural model assessment

Assessment of Structural Model

To assess the structural model in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), researchers generally follow a sequence of steps. First, the model's path coefficients are evaluated to determine the strength and direction of relationships between constructs. Next, the significance of these path coefficients is assessed using t-values and p-values, often obtained through bootstrapping, which helps confirm the robustness of the relationships. Additionally, the R-squared values of the endogenous constructs are examined to understand the variance explained by predictor variables. Finally, the effect size (f-squared) and predictive relevance (Q-squared) are analyzed to ensure the model's practical relevance and predictive accuracy (Hair *et al.*, 2017).

Table 4: Path analysis and hypotheses testing

Path	**Beta**	**T-stats**	**P values**	**Result**
Attitude -> Channel selection intention	0.381	7.908	0.000	H1 Supported
Subjective Norm -> Channel selection intention	0.146	2.408	0.016	H2 Supported
Perceived Behavioural Control -> Channel selection intention	0.376	6.917	0.000	H3 Supported
Channel selection intention -> Channel Choice Behaviour	0.116	2.267	0.023	H4 supported
Customer Experience x Channel selection intention -> Channel Choice Behaviour	0.125	2.047	0.041	H5 supported

In the provided table, the path "Attitude -> Channel Selection Intention" has a significant positive effect with a beta coefficient of 0.381 and a t-value of 7.908 (p = 0.000), indicating strong support for H1. Similarly, "Subjective Norm -> Channel Selection Intention" is supported, with a beta of 0.146 and a t-value of 2.408 (p = 0.016), suggesting a moderate relationship, thus supporting H2. The path "Perceived Behavioral Control -> Channel Selection Intention" also shows a strong positive effect (beta = 0.376, t = 6.917, p = 0.000), confirming H3. Additionally, "Channel Selection Intention -> Channel Choice Behaviour" has a beta of 0.116 and a t-value of 2.267 (p = 0.023), indicating a significant but relatively weaker impact, supporting H4. Lastly, the interaction effect, "Customer Experience x Channel Selection Intention -> Channel Choice Behaviour," is significant with a beta of 0.125, t-value of 2.047, and p-value of 0.041, confirming H5.

Discussion

The structural model analysis results provide significant insights into the determinants of channel selection and choice behavior, consistent with the theoretical framework of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The significant relationship between attitude and channel selection intention indicates that favorable evaluations of a specific channel increase the likelihood of its consideration during the selection process. This finding aligns with prior research, suggesting that positive attitudes improve behavioral intentions by bolstering consumers' confidence in their channel selection, thereby serving as a key factor in their decision-making process. Subjective norms significantly influence channel selection intention, though to a lesser extent than attitude. This suggests that social influence contributes to shaping individuals' channel preferences, although it may not be as significant as personal attitudes. The significance of subjective norms must not be overlooked, as it indicates the degree to which individuals are influenced by social expectations, peer pressure, and current trends. This is consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior, which asserts that social factors influence the formation of intentions, especially when individuals pursue social validation in their decisions.

Perceived behavioral control is a significant predictor of channel selection intention, indicating that individuals who feel confident in their ability to navigate a channel and perceive few obstacles are more likely to engage with it. This construct encapsulates the ease and feasibility of use, which are essential for adoption, particularly in a technology-mediated context where usability can affect decision-making. The intention to select a channel has a significant impact on actual channel choice behavior, albeit with a modest effect size. This finding suggests that although intentions serve as a foundation for behavior, other factors may also influence the ultimate decision. The moderating role of customer experience supports this perspective, as favorable past experiences increase the probability of consistent usage. This interaction underscores the significance of facilitating positive initial experiences, as they enhance the shift from intention to actual behavior.

Managerial Implications

The findings offer important managerial insights for improving customer engagement and facilitating effective channel adoption strategies. Initially, considering that a positive attitude markedly impacts channel selection intention, it is essential for managers to prioritize the development of an engaging and intuitive user experience that cultivates favorable perceptions. This may entail investing in intuitive interfaces and providing clear value propositions to motivate customers to favor particular channels. The influence of subjective norms indicates that social influence strategies, including endorsements, testimonials, and social proof, may prove effective. Managers can utilize social media and community engagement initiatives to enhance positive perceptions and foster a supportive environment that meets customer expectations. Moreover, perceived behavioral control serves as a significant predictor, underscoring the necessity of reducing barriers to channel utilization. Managers must prioritize the reduction of complexity and the provision of sufficient support, including tutorials and responsive customer service, to improve user confidence and facilitate ease of use. The moderating effect of customer experience highlights the importance of facilitating positive initial interactions, which subsequently influence future engagement. Managers should strive to deliver a smooth and satisfactory initial experience to facilitate the conversion of intent into action. The emphasis on continuity in customer experience can enhance long-term loyalty and increase the probability of repeat usage, thereby reinforcing customer retention.

Conclusion

The study provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing channel selection and choice behavior among consumers, highlighting the critical roles of attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and

customer experience. The findings align with the Theory of Planned Behavior, underscoring how both psychological and experiential factors shape consumers' intentions and actual behaviors in channel selection. These insights not only contribute to theoretical knowledge but also offer actionable strategies for managers aiming to enhance channel engagement and customer satisfaction. However, there is scope for future research to expand upon these findings. First, exploring other variables such as trust, perceived risk, or technological innovation could provide a more nuanced understanding of channel choice dynamics. Finally, qualitative research could offer deeper insights into the motivations and barriers faced by consumers, providing a richer context for the quantitative findings. Overall, this study lays a strong foundation for future work on consumer behavior in multichannel and omnichannel environments.

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