

CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN CRUISE PASSENGER MOTIVATION AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTION: INTEGRATING HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS*

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Abstract

This quantitative cross-sectional research aimed to examine cross-cultural differences in cruise passenger motivation and behavioral intention by integrating Hofstede's cultural dimensions with push-pull motivation theory. The objectives were to assess the overall levels of cultural dimensions, travel motivation, and behavioral intention; compare travel motivation between Eastern and Western passengers; test the effect of cultural dimensions on travel motivation and the effect of travel motivation on behavioral intention; and examine the mediating role of travel motivation and the moderating role of cultural background. Data were collected from 400 cruise passengers who had completed at least one cruise trip within the previous two years, with quota sampling used to obtain 200 Eastern and 200 Western respondents. The research instrument was a structured multilingual questionnaire measuring demographic information, cultural dimensions, push-pull travel motivation, and behavioral intention on a five-point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis,

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independent-samples t-test, Pearson correlation, regression analysis, Sobel mediation testing, and moderation analysis. The results showed that behavioral intention had the highest mean score ($M = 3.783$), followed by travel motivation ($M = 3.549$) and cultural dimensions ($M = 3.503$). All major scales demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.778\text{--}0.857$). Travel motivation differed significantly across cultural groups ($t = 6.370$, $p < 0.001$). Cultural dimensions significantly predicted travel motivation ($B = 0.433$, $p < 0.001$), and travel motivation significantly predicted behavioral intention ($B = 0.507$, $p < 0.001$). Travel motivation partially mediated the relationship between cultural dimensions and behavioral intention (indirect effect = 0.207, Sobel $z = 4.917$, $p < 0.001$), while cultural background significantly moderated the motivation-behavior relationship ($\beta = 0.186$, $p < 0.01$). These findings indicate that culturally informed motivation is an important mechanism for explaining cruise passengers' revisit and recommendation intentions.

Keywords: cruise tourism, cultural dimensions, travel motivation, behavioral intention, cross-cultural analysis

Introduction

Global cruise tourism remains one of the most distinctive segments of the contemporary travel industry because it combines transportation, accommodation, food service, entertainment, and destination consumption within a single experiential product. After the disruption caused by COVID-19, the sector recovered rapidly, and global ocean-going cruise passenger volume reached 31.7 million in 2023, exceeding the 2019 level reported by the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA, 2024). However, recovery has not meant a simple return to pre-pandemic demand. Passengers have become more attentive to health risk, onboard crowding, safety assurance, service reliability, and privacy expectations (Castaldo et al., 2021; Holland et al., 2021).

The internationalization of cruise demand also makes cross-cultural analysis increasingly important. Cruise ships create enclosed and interaction-intensive service environments in which passengers from different cultural backgrounds share accommodation, dining, entertainment, and shore-excursion experiences. In this context, culture is not only a demographic descriptor but also a value system that influences uncertainty avoidance, social preference, risk perception, service evaluation, and leisure expectation. Hofstede's cultural dimensions therefore provide a useful framework for explaining why passengers may interpret similar cruise products in different ways (Hofstede, 2001; Huang & Crotts, 2019; Ji et al., 2023; Manrai & Manrai, 2011).

From the perspective of tourism motivation, cruise decision making can be understood through the interaction of internal push factors and external pull factors. Push factors include relaxation, escape, novelty seeking, social interaction, and family bonding, whereas pull factors are associated with cruise attributes such as onboard entertainment, service quality, itinerary attractiveness, destination appeal, and perceived value (Crompton, 1979; Duman & Mattila, 2005; Jones, 2011; Whyte, 2017). These motivational forces are closely related to post-consumption loyalty, especially revisit intention and recommendation intention (Han & Hyun, 2018, 2019).

Although cruise motivation and tourist culture have been studied separately, fewer studies have integrated cultural dimensions, travel motivation, and behavioral intention within one empirical model. Existing cruise research also shows that the field still needs stronger theoretical integration and more context-sensitive explanations of passenger behavior (Papathanassis, 2017; Papathanassis & Beckmann, 2011). Against this background, this study examines how cultural dimensions influence cruise travel motivation and behavioral intention in the post-pandemic context. It proposes a culture-motivation-behavior framework in which travel motivation functions as a mediating mechanism and cultural background functions as a moderating condition.

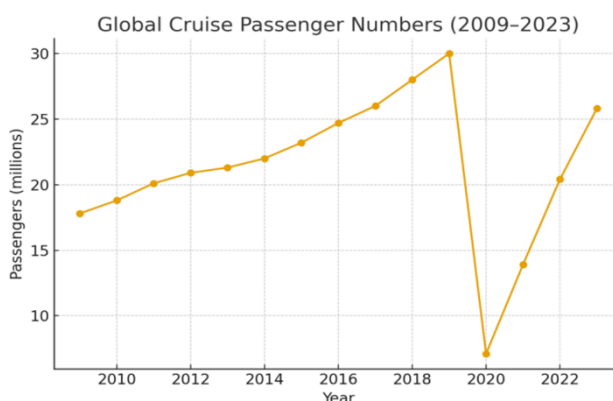


Figure 1 Global ocean-going cruise passenger numbers (2009–2023), based on CLIA (2024) passenger trend data.

Objectives

1. To assess the overall levels of cultural dimensions, travel motivation, and behavioral intention among cruise passengers in the post-pandemic context.
2. To examine whether travel motivation differs significantly between Eastern and Western cruise passengers.
3. To test whether Hofstede-based cultural dimensions significantly influence cruise travel motivation and whether travel motivation significantly predicts behavioral intention.
4. To determine whether travel motivation mediates the relationship between cultural dimensions and behavioral intention, and whether cultural background moderates the motivation-behavior relationship.

Literature Review

Cruise tourism is a hybrid tourism product in which passenger decisions are shaped by experiential value, service encounters, shipboard facilities, itinerary design, and destination consumption rather than by destination appeal alone.

This makes cruise travel different from many land-based tourism products because passengers evaluate both the ship as a contained service environment and the destinations visited during the itinerary. Earlier studies emphasize that cruise tourism research requires a specific conceptual framework because cruise consumption combines mobility, hospitality, entertainment, and social interaction (Papathanassis, 2017; Papathanassis & Beckmann, 2011).

Based on this literature, the present study proposes that cultural dimensions influence travel motivation, and that travel motivation subsequently influences behavioral intention. The study also assumes that travel motivation transmits part of the effect of culture on behavioral intention, while cultural background may change the strength of the motivation-behavior relationship. This integrated framework allows the analysis to move beyond simple group comparison and explain how culture operates through motivational mechanisms in cruise passenger decision making.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been widely used to explain cross-cultural differences in tourist behavior. Values such as individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and long-term orientation may influence tourists' preferred activities, risk tolerance, service expectations, and interpretation of social experiences (Hofstede, 2001; Huang & Crotts, 2019; Ji et al., 2023; Manrai & Manrai, 2011; Reisinger & Turner, 2003). In the post-COVID-19 cruise market, these cultural differences may become more visible because perceptions of safety, crowding, sanitation, and interpersonal contact are strongly shaped by social norms and risk-related expectations (Castaldo et al., 2021; Holland et al., 2021).

Push-pull motivation theory provides a suitable basis for explaining why passengers choose cruise travel. Push factors refer to internal psychological needs such as relaxation, escape, novelty, self-development, family connection, and social interaction, while pull factors refer to external attributes such as itinerary, onboard facilities, service quality, entertainment, and destination

attractiveness (Crompton, 1979; Whyte, 2017). In cruise contexts, motivation is not merely a pre-trip factor; it is also associated with satisfaction, perceived value, involvement, and loyalty intention (Duman & Mattila, 2005; Han & Hyun, 2018, 2019; Jones, 2011).

Methodology

1) Research design. This study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to test the proposed relationships among cultural dimensions, travel motivation, and behavioral intention. This design was appropriate because the study aimed to compare groups, measure the strength of relationships among variables, and test mediation and moderation effects using standardized questionnaire data.

2) Population and sample. The population consisted of cruise passengers who had completed at least one cruise trip within the previous two years. Respondents were required to be adults and to have sufficient cruise experience to evaluate motivation and future behavioral intention. Quota sampling was used because the study focused on cross-cultural comparison and required balanced representation between Eastern and Western respondents. A total of 400 valid questionnaires were retained, including 200 Eastern respondents and 200 Western respondents, which was consistent with common sample-size guidance for survey research (Cochran, 1977).

3) Research instruments. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire containing four sections: demographic information, cultural dimensions, travel motivation, and behavioral intention. Cultural dimensions covered individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and long-term orientation. Travel motivation included push factors such as relaxation, escape, and social interaction, and pull factors such as entertainment, service quality, and destination appeal. Behavioral intention was measured through

revisit intention and recommendation intention. All substantive items were measured on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was prepared in English, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Content validity was checked through expert review and multilingual wording comparison, and a pilot test with 30 participants was conducted before the main survey.

4) Data collection. Data were collected through online questionnaires from January 2024 to October 2025. Screening questions were used to confirm that respondents had cruise travel experience within the required period. Responses with more than 20% missing data were excluded, and attention-check items were used to reduce invalid responses. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that the collected data would be used only for academic research.

5) Data analysis. The final dataset was analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the overall levels of the major constructs. Cronbach’s alpha was used to assess internal consistency. Independent-samples t-test was used to compare Eastern and Western respondents. Pearson correlation and regression analysis were used to test relationships among variables. Sobel mediation testing was used to examine the indirect effect of cultural dimensions on behavioral intention through travel motivation, and moderation analysis was used to test whether cultural background changed the effect of travel motivation on behavioral intention.

Table 1 Research design summary

Element	Description
Research design	Quantitative, cross-sectional questionnaire survey
Population	Adult cruise passengers who had completed at least one cruise trip within the previous two years
Sampling strategy	Quota sampling with balanced Eastern (n = 200) and Western (n = 200) groups
Sample size	400 valid responses

Element	Description
Research instrument	Structured multilingual questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale
Instrument quality control	Expert review, multilingual wording comparison, 30-person pilot test, and Cronbach’s alpha reliability analysis
Field period and data collection	Online questionnaire survey conducted from January 2024 to October 2025
Statistical tools	Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, independent-samples t-test, Pearson correlation, regression, Sobel mediation testing, and moderation analysis

Table 2 Measurement framework

Construct	Operational components	Analytical role	Key source(s)
Cultural dimensions	Individualism-collectivism; uncertainty avoidance; power distance; long-term orientation	Independent variable	Hofstede (2001); Huang & Crotts (2019); Ji et al. (2023)
Travel motivation	Push factors: relaxation, escape, social interaction; Pull factors: entertainment, service quality, destination appeal	Mediating variable	Crompton (1979); Whyte (2017); Han & Hyun (2018, 2019)
Behavioral intention	Revisit intention and recommendation intention	Dependent variable	Han & Hyun (2018, 2019)
Cultural background	Eastern vs. Western respondent grouping	Moderating variable	Research design variable

Results

A total of 400 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis. The planned quota was achieved exactly, with Eastern and Western respondents each representing 50% of the final sample. This balanced distribution strengthened the comparability of the statistical tests and ensured that the group comparison component of the study was methodologically aligned with the research objectives.

Table 3 Descriptive statistics of the major constructs

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Cultural dimensions	3.503	0.445	2.250	4.750
Travel motivation	3.549	0.620	1.667	5.000
Behavioral intention	3.783	0.675	1.667	5.000

The descriptive results addressed the first objective by showing that the respondents reported moderate-to-high levels on all three major constructs. Behavioral intention obtained the highest mean score, suggesting that respondents generally showed a relatively strong willingness to revisit cruise travel and recommend it to others. Travel motivation also recorded a comparatively strong mean, indicating that both internal motives and cruise product attributes remained salient after the pandemic.

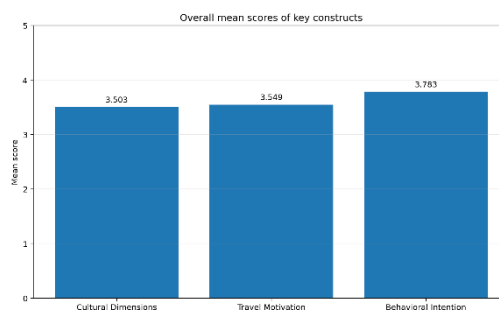


Figure 2 Overall mean scores of cultural dimensions, travel motivation, and behavioral intention.

Table 4 Reliability analysis

Scale	Indicators	Cronbach's alpha
Individualism	Ind1, Ind2	0.842
Uncertainty avoidance	Unc1, Unc2	0.778
Power distance	Pow1, Pow2	0.833
Long-term orientation	Long1, Long2	0.829
Travel motivation	Push1-Pull3	0.857
Behavioral intention	BI1-BI3	0.818

All reliability coefficients exceeded the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency for subsequent inferential testing. Travel motivation recorded the highest alpha value, suggesting particularly stable internal coherence in the set of motivational indicators.

Table 5 Correlation matrix

Variables	1	2	3
1. Cultural dimensions	1.000	0.294	0.278
2. Travel motivation	0.294	1.000	0.413
3. Behavioral intention	0.278	0.413	1.000

The correlation results reveal positive relationships among all three major constructs. The strongest association appeared between travel motivation and behavioral intention ($r = 0.413$), followed by the relationship between cultural dimensions and travel motivation ($r = 0.294$). These results provide a preliminary statistical basis for the regression and mediation analyses.

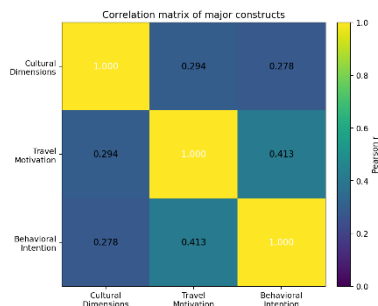


Figure 3 Correlation matrix of the major constructs.

The group comparison addressed the second objective. The independent-samples t-test showed a significant difference in travel motivation between Eastern and Western respondents ($t = 6.370$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that cultural grouping was meaningfully associated with motivational variation. This result indicates that cruise motivation should not be interpreted as culturally neutral.

The regression, mediation, and moderation results addressed the third and fourth objectives. Cultural dimensions significantly predicted travel motivation ($B = 0.433$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.087$), and travel motivation significantly predicted behavioral intention ($B = 0.507$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.171$). Mediation analysis further showed that travel motivation partially transmitted the effect of cultural dimensions on behavioral intention, while the significant interaction term confirmed that cultural background moderated the motivation-behavior relationship.

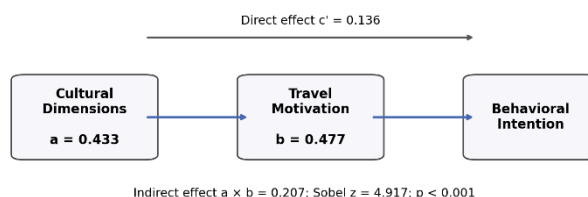


Figure 4 Mediation pathway from cultural dimensions to behavioral intention through travel motivation.

Table 6 Hypothesis testing summary

Hypothesis	Statement	Statistical evidence	Result
H1	Travel motivation differs significantly across cultural groups.	$t = 6.370, p < 0.001$	Supported
H2	Cultural dimensions positively affect travel motivation.	$B = 0.433, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.087$	Supported
H3	Travel motivation positively affects behavioral intention.	$B = 0.507, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.171$	Supported
H4	Travel motivation mediates the relationship between cultural dimensions and behavioral intention.	Indirect effect = 0.207; Sobel $z = 4.917; p < 0.001$; direct effect $c' = 0.136$	Supported
H5	Cultural background moderates the effect of travel motivation on behavioral intention.	Interaction $\beta = 0.186, p < 0.01$	Supported

Discussion

Overall, the culture-motivation-behavior framework contributes to cruise tourism research by integrating cultural dimensions with motivational and behavioral variables. It responds to the need for more theoretically connected cruise research and provides an empirical explanation of how culture operates through travel motivation rather than only as a background classification variable. In the post-pandemic market, where health risk, social distance, trust, and service

reliability remain important, culturally informed motivation analysis can help explain why passengers respond differently to similar cruise products.

The moderation result further indicates that the same level of travel motivation may not produce identical behavioral outcomes across cultural groups. In this study, the motivation-behavior link was stronger among Eastern respondents, suggesting that culturally grounded expectations may intensify the connection between positive travel motives and future loyalty intention. This finding has practical significance because it shows that universal marketing messages may not produce the same behavioral return in all source markets.

The results also confirm the central role of travel motivation in explaining behavioral intention. Travel motivation had the strongest direct association with revisit and recommendation intention, which indicates that loyalty in the cruise market is not produced by cultural background alone. Instead, cultural values appear to influence the motivational meaning attached to cruise travel, and these motivations then affect passengers' future behavioral responses. The partial mediation result supports this interpretation and is consistent with cruise studies that connect motivation, satisfaction, involvement, and loyalty behavior (Han & Hyun, 2018, 2019; Whyte, 2017).

The findings show that cross-cultural differences are structurally embedded in cruise passenger behavior. The significant difference in travel motivation between Eastern and Western respondents suggests that passengers from different cultural backgrounds do not assign the same meaning to cruise travel. For some passengers, cruise tourism may be valued more for safety, family bonding, collective experience, and service assurance; for others, it may be more closely associated with personal relaxation, novelty, autonomy, and destination exploration. This result is consistent with the view that cultural values shape tourist expectations and service evaluations (Hofstede, 2001; Huang & Crotts, 2019; Ji et al., 2023).

Recommendation

Future research should expand this framework by using probability-based sampling, broader cross-national comparisons, longitudinal data, and mixed-method designs. Additional variables such as perceived value, satisfaction, trust, perceived risk, and destination image could also be included to clarify how cultural values are transformed into loyalty outcomes. Qualitative interviews would be particularly useful for explaining why specific cultural groups attach different meanings to cruise safety, social interaction, and service experience.

Cruise operators should refine market segmentation by integrating culturally informed motivational profiling into product design and communication strategy. For passengers with stronger uncertainty-avoidance tendencies, marketing messages should emphasize safety protocols, service reliability, transparent information, and risk reduction. For passengers motivated by social connection and family experience, cruise products should highlight group activities, family-oriented services, shared entertainment, and culturally familiar service arrangements. For passengers motivated by novelty and autonomy, operators should emphasize itinerary diversity, personalized excursion choices, and flexible onboard experiences.

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