

## The influence of consumer ethnocentrism, influencers, personal innovativeness, and cultural intelligence on the choice of foreign tourist destinations

### Uticaj potrošačkog etnocentrizma, influensera, lične inovativnosti i kulturalne inteligencije na izbor inostranih turističkih destinacija

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#### Abstract

*The process of globalization has implied greater interdependence of national cultures and economies, and the development of information technologies and transport services has made it easy to organize business and tourist trips to countries around the world. A certain group of people considers spending vacations at domestic tourist destinations a moral obligation and a patriotic act, while another group of people has a high level of innovativeness, follows fashion trends, technological innovations, stays informed about current events through social networks, has a pronounced openness to other cultures and different ideas, and frequently visits foreign tourist destinations. The research was conducted with the aim of examining the influence of consumer ethnocentrism, influencers, personal innovativeness, cognitive and motivational cultural intelligence on the respondents' decision to visit a foreign tourist destination. The field research was conducted using a survey method, and the respondents' answers (505) were analyzed using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) within the statistical package SmartPLS 4. The results showed that consumer ethnocentrism has a negative impact, while influencers, personal innovativeness, cognitive and motivational cultural intelligence have a positive impact on the respondents' decision to visit foreign tourist destinations. These findings are important for formulating an appropriate marketing strategy by service providers in the tourism and hospitality industry.*

**Keywords:** consumer ethnocentrism, influencers, personal innovativeness, cognitive and motivational cultural intelligence, foreign tourist destinations

#### Sažetak

*Proces globalizacije je implicirao veću međuzavisnost nacionalnih kultura i ekonomija, a razvoj informacionih tehnologija i transportnih usluga je omogućio jednostavnu organizaciju poslovnih i turističkih putovanja u države širom sveta. Određena grupa ljudi smatra da je provođenje odmora na domaćim turističkim destinacijama moralna obaveza i patriotski čin, dok određena grupa ljudi ima visok stepen inovativnosti, prati modne trendove, tehnološke inovacije, informiše se o aktuelnostima putem društvenih mreža, ima izraženu otvorenost ka drugim kulturama i različitim idejama i često posećuje inostrane turističke destinacije. Istraživanje je sprovedeno sa ciljem da se ispita uticaj potrošačkog etnocentrizma, influensera, lične inovativnosti, kognitivne i motivacione kulturalne inteligencije na odluku ispitanika da posete neku inostranu turističku destinaciju. Terensko istraživanje je sprovedeno metodom ankete, a odgovori ispitanika (505) su analizirani putem modela stukturalnih jednačina (SEM model) u okviru statističkog paketa SmartPLS 4. Rezultati su pokazali da potrošački etnocentrizam ostvaruje negativan uticaj, a influenseri, lična inovativnost, kognitivna i motivaciona kulturalna inteligencija pozitivan uticaj na odluku ispitanika da posete inostrane turističke destinacije, što su važne informacije za formulisanje adekvatne marketing strategije od strane pružaoca usluga u oblasti turizma i hotelijerstva.*

**Ključne reči:** potrošački etnocentrizam, influenseri, lična inovativnost, kognitivna i motivaciona kulturalna inteligencije, strane turističke destinacije

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## 1. Introduction

Due to the process of globalization and the development of transportation infrastructure, especially air traffic, the number of trips to countries around the world has increased (Presbitero, 2017). The emergence of multinational companies has led to an increased number of business trips, as employees come from different cultural backgrounds, and their complementary knowledge and competencies represent a true wealth and intellectual capital that allows companies to achieve a competitive advantage (Vlajčić et al., 2019). Additionally, a large number of students leave their home countries and decide to complete their studies at prestigious universities worldwide (Ricot & Ferry, 2016). On the other hand, the number of tourist trips to foreign destinations has significantly increased, as innovative individuals seek to enhance their cultural knowledge, explore new destinations, and experience authentic encounters by visiting foreign countries (Frias-Jamilena et al., 2018). The subject and aim of this research are to examine the effects of consumer ethnocentrism, influencers, personal innovativeness, cognitive and motivational cultural intelligence on the respondents' decision to visit a foreign tourist destination.

According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and Social Conflict Theory (Sherif, 1966), during crisis situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an increase in consumer ethnocentrism, resulting unity among members of a nation in their desire to support the domestic economy. This is one of the main reasons why consumer ethnocentrism was chosen as a research variable. On the other hand, the process of globalization, advertisements on social media, and people's desire to explore other countries and their cultures imply visits to foreign tourist destinations. For this reason, influencers, personal innovativeness, cognitive and motivational cultural intelligence were chosen as research variables.

A certain group of people has a high degree of ethnocentric tendencies, which imply patriotic feelings and a sense that their culture is dominant and superior to any foreign culture (Güngördü Belbağ, 2023). Such individuals often spend their vacations at domestic tourist destinations because they believe that spending their money within the country will help maintain the stable functioning of the domestic economy (Deb & Chaudhuri, 2014). On the other hand, a certain group of people follows the advice of influencers on social media, who often promote visits to exotic tourist destinations. Additionally, a high level of personal innovativeness implies a search for variety and the exploration of other cultures (Peković et al., 2019). Individuals who have developed cultural intelligence, which includes the ability to adapt and function in a multicultural environment, are very innovative and often spend their vacations abroad (Hu et al., 2021).

Certain geopolitical crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic have led to the closure of national borders and a shift from global to deglobalization trends. This has had

a particularly significant impact on international tourism and the operations of companies in the tourism and hospitality sector (Ye et al., 2023). Additionally, the war in Ukraine has caused certain geopolitical tensions and to some extent, made transportation, especially air travel, more difficult, posing a problem in organizing certain trips (Rahbari et al., 2023). The significance of this research lies in considering recent and current geopolitical crises and tensions, which can have an impact on respondents' decisions to visit foreign tourist destinations.

After the introductory part, the literature review section will define the variables of *consumer ethnocentrism*, *influencers*, *personal innovativeness*, *cognitive* and *motivational cultural intelligence*, and analyze their interrelationships and influence on respondents' decisions to visit *foreign tourist destinations*. This part of the research will define the research hypotheses and the research model of the study. Additionally, the protection of travelers' data from a legal and ethical perspective during online travel bookings will be analyzed. The above is analyzed in accordance with the provisions of the Tourism Law and the Consumer Protection Law, which has gained particular significance following the COVID-19 pandemic. The third part will focus on the methodology, while the fourth part will present the results. In the conclusion of the study, the most significant implications enabled by the empirical research will be listed, along with certain limitations of the research.

## 2. Literature review

Ethnocentrism is a sociological concept based on the belief of members of one nation that their culture is dominant and superior to the culture of all other nations (Shimp & Sharma, 1987). From this basic concept, the term consumer ethnocentrism has developed, which implies the belief that it is necessary to purchase products and services of domestic origin and, among other things, to visit domestic tourist destinations and spend vacations there to strengthen the national economy (Cleveland et al., 2022). This type of behavior implies an increase in the gross domestic product and a growth in employment. Ethnocentric individuals believe that buying foreign products and services, as well as visiting foreign tourist destinations, brings numerous negative consequences and weakens the domestic economy (Marinković, 2017). Consumer ethnocentrism shows its most significant implications during crises, such as the recent *COVID-19 pandemic*, when it was not possible to travel abroad due to border closures, and there were also disruptions in the global market and difficulties in importing foreign products. During the pandemic, people spent their vacations in their home country and bought domestic products that were readily available (He & Harris, 2020).

Previous research has established that consumer ethnocentrism has a negative impact on the purchase of foreign brands and, among other things, on visiting foreign tourist destinations (Brečić et al., 2013; Pentz et al., 2017; Rambocas & Mahbir, 2021; Zdravković, 2020; Zdravković et al., 2020). Based on the above, the first

research hypothesis in this study can be formulated as follows:

H1: Consumer ethnocentrism has a statistically significant negative impact on respondents' decision to visit foreign tourist destinations.

Influencer marketing is gaining increasing significance today and is based on the promotion of specific products, services, brands, and tourist destinations through social media platforms such as Instagram by celebrities from the worlds of sports, music, film, and other fields (Sun et al., 2022). The effect of influencers on consumer purchasing habits is highly economically beneficial for companies. Additionally, influencer marketing is conducted electronically and has wide coverage (Peković et al., 2019). A certain number of consumers identify with the advice of celebrities as a particular reference group they trust, thereby creating an awareness that the products promoted by celebrities are of exceptional quality and reliability, and the tourist destinations are interesting and attractive to visit (Rutter et al., 2021).

Previous research has found that individuals who follow the advice of influencers on social media often visit foreign tourist destinations (Gamage & Ashill, 2023; Norris et al., 2022; Rohde & Mau, 2021). Based on this, the second research hypothesis in this study can be formulated as follows:

H2: Social media influencers have a statistically significant positive impact on respondents' decision to visit foreign tourist destinations.

Personal innovation is defined as an individual's willingness to accept new products, methods, technologies, and that a person is constantly searching for variety and new ideas (Lu, 2014). People who possess a high degree of innovation are ready to buy new products as soon as they appear on the market, and also want to get out of their comfort zone and travel to distant and exotic tourist destinations in order to experience authentic experiences and adventures. Previous research (Beldona et al., 2012; Westman et al., 2023) states that people who possess personal innovation rarely go to tourist destinations they have already been to, but constantly look for new challenges and the opportunity to learn about culture, history and natural the beauty of different countries. Based on the above, the third research hypothesis can be formulated:

H3: Personal innovativeness has a positive statistically significant impact on respondents' decision to visit foreign tourist destinations.

Cultural intelligence is defined as an individual's ability to adapt to situations characterized by a multicultural context (Earley & Ang, 2003). People with developed cultural intelligence possess multicultural knowledge and skills that enable them to be successful and efficient when communicating with individuals from different cultures. These skills also facilitate easier adaptation when visiting foreign tourist destinations. Knowing a foreign language, value systems, rules, and customs makes staying abroad simpler and more accessible (Kromidha et al., 2022).

Cultural intelligence consists of four basic factors: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral (Earley & Ang, 2003). The metacognitive factor involves the level of cultural knowledge that a person possesses, while the cognitive factor includes knowledge of the history, legal, political, and other social systems of different countries. The motivational factor encompasses a person's willingness and enthusiasm to visit other countries, visit museums, cultural monuments, operas, etc., thus continuously developing their cultural intelligence. The behavioral factor involves the use of specific verbal (accent) and non-verbal abilities (body language) that facilitate adaptation during intercultural situations (Chen et al., 2012; Cui et al., 2019; Le et al., 2020).

For the purposes of this research, cognitive and motivational cultural intelligence are analyzed, as they have the greatest impact when visiting foreign tourist destinations. It is necessary for a person to know the customs, rules of behavior, and social systems of other countries and to have a strong desire to travel abroad, learn foreign languages, visit cultural monuments of other countries, and interact with the local population. Previous studies have found that individuals with high levels of cognitive and motivational cultural intelligence frequently travel abroad for business or tourism (Frias-Jamilena et al., 2018; Lorenz et al., 2018; Pratono & Arli, 2020). Therefore, the fourth and fifth research hypotheses can be formulated:

H4: Cognitive cultural intelligence has a positive statistically significant impact on respondents' decision to visit foreign tourist destinations.

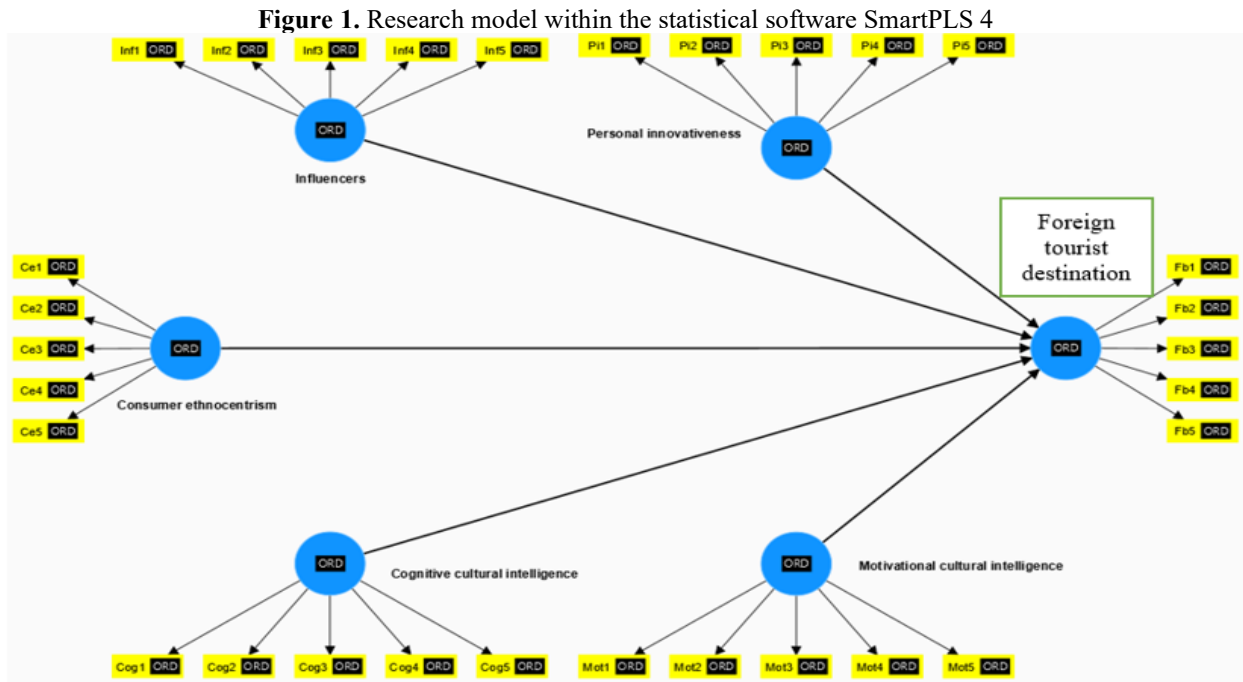
H5: Motivational cultural intelligence has a positive statistically significant impact on respondents' decision to visit foreign tourist destinations.

Figure 1. depicts the research model in which the impact of consumer ethnocentrism, influencers, personal innovativeness, and the cognitive and motivational cultural intelligence on the respondents' decision to visit foreign tourist destinations.

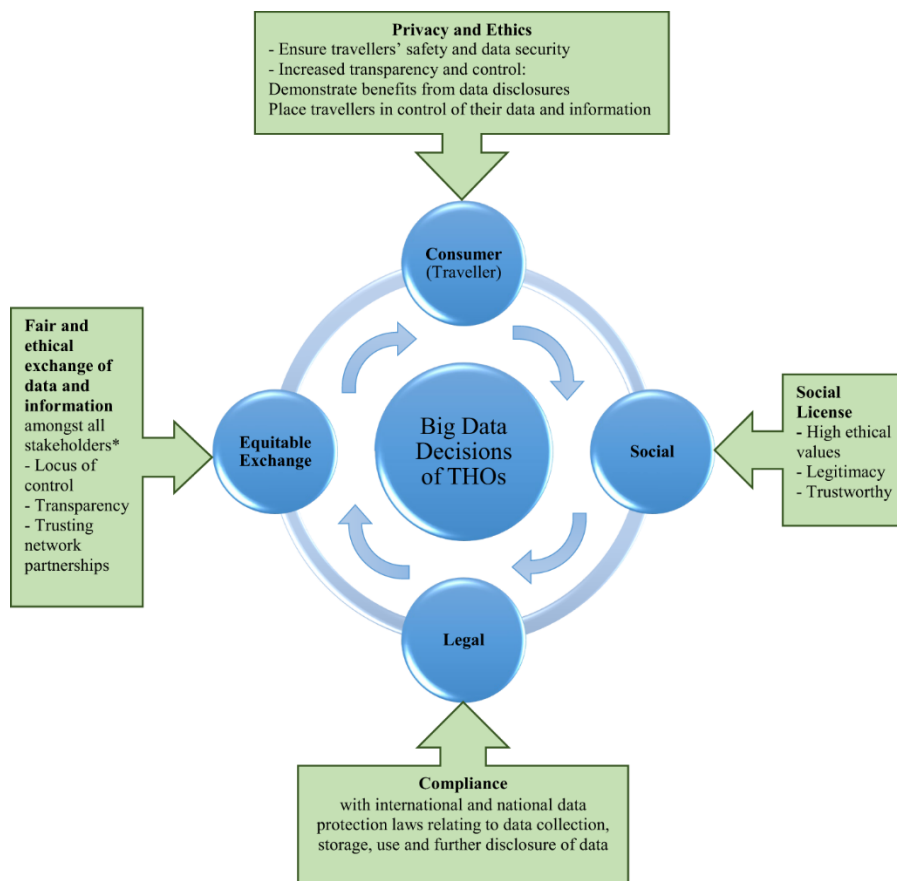
After the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of digital travel bookings has increased. Consequently, this paper analyzes the legal and ethical aspects of protecting travelers' data by travel agencies during the booking process (Figure 2). COVID-19 significantly impacted the operations of service providers in the tourism and hospitality industry. After the pandemic, an increasing number of travelers began using electronic platforms and applications for digital booking of their trips. Just as travelers seek information about the destination they plan to visit (history, cultural monuments, entertainment, restaurants) before their journey, agencies collect personal data from their clients (name and surname, ID card number, passport number, banking card information used for online payments). This raises moral and ethical questions about the management of such data. Clients need to be assured that their personal data will be protected and used exclusively for business purposes. In accordance with the provisions of the Tourism Law and

the Consumer Protection Law, it is necessary to establish trust between travelers and travel agencies. Travelers must give consent for the use of their personal data, and travel agencies must commit to using the data exclusively for

trip realization and managing it appropriately. This includes not disclosing the data in a way that would compromise the privacy of clients (Yallop et al., 2023).



**Figure 2. Conceptual framework for ethically and legally managing client data by service providers in the tourism sector**



Source: Yallop, A.C., Gică, O.A., Moisescu, O.I., Coroş, M.M. and Séraphin, H. (2023). The digital traveller: implications for data ethics and data governance in tourism and hospitality. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 40(2), p. 162

The impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the operations of business entities across all sectors is rapidly increasing, and this impact is particularly pronounced in the tourism and hospitality industry. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the application of AI has grown, raising legal and ethical questions about its use. It is necessary for the state and regulatory bodies to continuously promote AI to build trust among all stakeholders (business entities, institutions, consumers, including travel agencies and their clients). The application of AI as an innovative technology certainly raises doubts among stakeholders, but by adhering to ethical and legal principles in data management, AI can be a valuable tool that facilitates the implementation of business and leisure travel (Wong et al., 2024). Additionally, a highly interesting area that generates considerable controversy and necessitates the improvement of ethical and legal standards is algorithmic pricing of travel arrangements through electronic platforms like Booking and Trivago. These electronic platforms, through their algorithms, initially present clients with the most expensive hotels and luxury locations. This results in discrimination in algorithmic pricing, which calls for stricter legal standards to prevent negative financial consequences for clients and reduce their opportunity costs. From a legal perspective, it is necessary to establish a fair system of price determination so that consumers can optimally utilize their money invested in a particular trip. Generally, there is

considerable room for improvement in legal standards by the state, which will protect consumers on one hand, and service providers in the tourism and hospitality sectors on the other. Artificial intelligence and digital booking, while simplifying travel organization, also bring certain challenges in terms of meeting ethical standards and legal requirements (Van der Rest et al., 2022).

In the next part of the research, the research methodology and the demographic structure of the respondents are presented.

### 3. Methodology and data

The research was conducted in 2024. in the Republic of Serbia using a survey method (Kragujevac, Beograd). The total number of respondents in the sample was 505, and they evaluated statements related to the variables of consumer ethnocentrism, influencers, personal innovativeness, cognitive cultural intelligence, motivational cultural intelligence, and foreign tourist destinations using a Likert scale (1-7). The respondents' answers were analyzed using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) framework within the statistical package SmartPLS 4. The respondents were segmented according to demographic characteristics such as gender, age, education, and status, and an overview is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic structure of respondents

|                  |                   | Number of respondents | Percentage of respondents |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Gender</b>    | Female            | 294                   | 58.2%                     |
|                  | Male              | 211                   | 41.8%                     |
| <b>Age</b>       | Generation X      | 124                   | 24.5%                     |
|                  | Generation Y      | 177                   | 35.1%                     |
|                  | Generation Z      | 204                   | 40.4%                     |
| <b>Education</b> | Primary education | 21                    | 4.2%                      |
|                  | High school       | 245                   | 48.5%                     |
|                  | Faculty           | 239                   | 47.3%                     |
| <b>Status</b>    | Unemployed        | 29                    | 5.7%                      |
|                  | Employed          | 187                   | 37.1%                     |
|                  | Student           | 241                   | 47.7%                     |
|                  | Retired           | 48                    | 9.5%                      |

Source: Authors

In the sample, there are 294 women and 211 men. The largest number of respondents belongs to Generation Z, totaling 204 (40.4%) of the sample. In terms of education, 245 respondents completed high school, while 239 respondents completed faculty. Regarding the status, there

are the most students in the sample, 241 (47.7%). The statements, adapted from relevant literature in marketing, and used in the questionnaire for the purpose of empirical research, are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Statements from the questionnaire

| Research variables            | Statements  | Source                                      |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Consumer ethnocentrism</b> | 1. Spending vacations at domestic tourist destinations increases the gross domestic product (GDP).                              | Marinkovic (2017); Zdravković et al. (2020) |
|                               | 2. During crisis situations, it is important to visit domestic tourist destinations, in order to preserve the domestic economy. |   |
|                               | 3. The employment rate of the population increases when citizens visit domestic tourist destinations.                           |   |
|                               | 4. I exclusively visit domestic tourist destinations.   |   |
|                               | 5. I exclusively buy domestic products.   |   |

Source: Authors

**Table 2. (continued)**

| Research variables                        | Statements   | Source   |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Influencers</b>                        | 1. I visit foreign tourist destinations promoted by famous personalities on Instagram.<br>2. I visit tourist destinations promoted by famous athletes.<br>3. The opinion of famous personalities about the foreign tourist destinations they promote on social media is important to me.<br>4. I listen to the advice of famous musicians and actors.<br>5. Famous personalities are my reference group. | Peković et al. (2019)                            |
| <b>Personal innovativeness</b>            | 1. I love exploring foreign tourist destinations.<br>2. I find it interesting to experiment with new tourist destinations.<br>3. I am very innovative and have the enthusiasm to visit tourist destinations outside my country.<br>4. I spend my annual vacation exclusively abroad.<br>5. I follow innovative technologies and methods.   | Beldona et al. (2012);<br>Westman et al. (2023). |
| <b>Cognitive cultural intelligence</b>    | 1. I am familiar with the history of other countries.<br>2. I am familiar with the behavioral norm's characteristic of certain cultures.<br>3. I am familiar with the traditional values of other cultures.<br>4. I am familiar with the legal systems of other countries.<br>5. I am familiar with the customs of other cultures.   | Ang et al. (2007)                                |
| <b>Motivational cultural intelligence</b> | 1. I have a desire to learn as many foreign languages as possible.<br>2. I often go on tourist trips abroad.<br>3. I enjoy communicating and exchanging opinions with people from other cultures.<br>4. I am always motivated to travel abroad.<br>5. Understanding other cultures is a true wealth.   | Ang et al. (2007)                                |
| <b>Foreign tourist destinations</b>       | 1. I prefer foreign tourist destinations over domestic.<br>2. I recommend to my friends to visit foreign tourist destinations.<br>3. I will continue to visit foreign tourist destinations in the future.<br>4. I recommend to members of my family to travel to foreign tourist destinations.<br>5. I travel abroad several times a year.   | Frias-Jamilena et al. (2018)                     |

Source: Authors

In the next section of the paper, the research results will be presented, based on which the decision to confirm the research hypotheses will be made.

#### 4. Research results

Reliability analysis was applied to determine whether the research variables are measured by adequate statements,

i.e., whether there is an adequate level of correlation and internal consistency among these statements (Table 3). Based on the values of Cronbach's alpha and Composite reliability ( $\rho_a$ ), which are higher than the required threshold of 0.70, it can be concluded that all values are stable and precise, indicating that the research variables are measured by appropriate statements.

**Table 3. Reliability analysis**

| Research variables                 | Cronbach's alpha | Composite reliability ( $\rho_a$ ) |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|
| Consumer ethnocentrism             | 0.848            | 0.853                              |
| Influencers                        | 0.865            | 0.869                              |
| Personal innovativeness            | 0.737            | 0.744                              |
| Cognitive cultural intelligence    | 0.838            | 0.852                              |
| Motivational cultural intelligence | 0.724            | 0.805                              |
| Foreign tourist destinations       | 0.862            | 0.888                              |

Source: Authors' calculation using SmartPLS 4 software

The Structural Equation Model (SEM) was applied to examine the influence of consumer ethnocentrism, influencers and personal innovativeness, cognitive and motivational cultural intelligence on respondents' decision to visit foreign tourist destinations (Table 4).

**Table 4. Structural Equation Model (SEM)**

| Hypothesis   | Original sample (O) | Standard deviation (STDEV) | T statistics (IO/STDEVI) | P values |
|--|---------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Consumer ethnocentrism → Foreign tourist destinations  | -0.282              | 0.065                      | 4.332                    | 0.000**  |
| Influencers → Foreign tourist destinations             | 0.397               | 0.053                      | 7.474                    | 0.000**  |
| Personal innovativeness → Foreign tourist destinations | 0.183               | 0.043                      | 4.283                    | 0.000**  |

Level of statistical significance: \*\*0.01; R square=0.494  
Source: Authors' calculation using SmartPLS 4 software

**Table 4. (continued)**

| Hypothesis  | Original sample (O) | Standard deviation (STDEV) | T statistics (IO/STDEVI) | P values |
|---|---------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Cognitive cultural intelligence → Foreign tourist destinations    | 0.219               | 0.042                      | 5.204                    | 0.000**  |
| Motivational cultural intelligence → Foreign tourist destinations | 0.333               | 0.060                      | 5.549                    | 0.000**  |

Level of statistical significance: \*\*0.01; R square=0.494  
 Source: Authors' calculation using SmartPLS 4 software

The coefficient of determination (R square) is 0.494, which implies that 49.4% of respondents' decision to visit foreign tourist destinations is explained by the independent variables in the regression model. Based on the results, it can be concluded that consumer ethnocentrism (coefficient= -0.282, p values=0.000) has a negative statistically significant impact on respondents' decision to visit foreign tourist destinations, confirming research hypothesis H1. On the other hand, influencers (coefficient= 0.397, p values=0.000), personal innovativeness (coefficient= 0.183, p values=0.000), cognitive cultural intelligence (coefficient= 0.219, p values=0.000), and motivational cultural intelligence (coefficient= 0.333, p values=0.000) have a positive statistically significant impact on consumers' decision to visit foreign tourist destinations, confirming research hypotheses H2, H3, H4, H5.

The research also highlights the growing trend of booking travel through electronic platforms, especially post the COVID-19 pandemic. It underscores the need to enhance standards in accordance with the provisions of the Tourism Law and the Consumer Protection Law, regarding managing client data and ensuring their privacy.

## 5. Conclusion

The research was conducted with the aim of examining the impact of consumer ethnocentrism, influencers, personal innovativeness, cognitive and motivational cultural intelligence on the respondents' decision to visit a foreign tourist destination. The results showed that consumer ethnocentrism has a negative impact on the choice of foreign tourist destinations, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic and during the current Ukrainian crisis, confirming research hypothesis H1. On the other hand, the results showed that influencers, personal innovativeness, cognitive and motivational cultural intelligence have a positive impact on the choice of foreign tourist destinations, thus confirming research hypotheses H2, H3, H4, and H5. Also, based on the research, it can be concluded that there is a need to develop a conceptual framework whereby travel agencies manage their clients' personal data while adhering to legal and ethical principles, using them solely for the purpose of trip execution. The use of artificial intelligence facilitates travel organization, but on the other hand, it is essential to enhance systems based on data encryption and legal security.

The theoretical implications of the study lie in expanding academic knowledge about the effects of these variables

on the choice of foreign tourist destinations. Additionally, the research model was designed based on a holistic approach, considering the comprehensive impact of these variables on the respondents' decision to visit a foreign tourist destination. The research model is uniquely designed to fill the research gap that exists in the academic literature in the field of marketing and management. Practical implications of the study relate to providing useful information to marketers, which they can use when designing marketing strategies. Individuals who follow the advice of influencers and have a high degree of personal innovativeness, cognitive, and motivational cultural intelligence often travel abroad. However, during crises, ethnocentrism becomes prominent, leading individuals with ethnocentric tendencies to avoid traveling abroad, which can be problematic for service providers in the tourism sector offering foreign tourist destinations. It is necessary for travel agencies to design an optimal marketing strategy that, in addition to foreign tourist destinations, also offers domestic tourist destinations to cater to individuals with strong ethnocentric tendencies. The limitation of the research is the relatively small sample size and the fact that it was conducted in one country, while future studies could include additional variables that may have significant effects on people's decision to visit foreign tourist destinations, such as cosmopolitanism, xenocentrism, and so on.

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