

How does the perceived aesthetic quality of a destination rank against price and accessibility as a determinant in the destination choice model of international tourists?

Aesthetic quality often outranks **price and accessibility** in destination choice, but its relative position varies by tourist segment and context.

Aesthetic and scenic attributes consistently emerge as leading determinants of destination attractiveness. Among Korean outbound tourists, "natural and scenic beauty" ranked as one of the five leading attributes defining overall destination attractiveness, while travel cost and language barriers affected choice behaviors separately (Chen & Hsu, 2000). In the Croatian destination of Dubrovnik, destination appearance exerted the strongest impact on tourists' perceived value, followed by emotional experience, while the impact of monetary and nonmonetary costs was significantly lower (Bajs, 2013). Aesthetic quality factors—including multisensory and "sublime" dimensions—showed more significant associations with tourist preferences than physical quality factors in rural Chinese settlements (Jiang et al., 2023).

Comparative Ranking Across Studies

Study Context	Aesthetic/Scenic Quality	Price/Cost	Accessibility
Korean outbound tourists	Leading attribute of attractiveness (Chen & Hsu, 2000)	Affected choice behavior (Chen & Hsu, 2000)	Not a leading attribute (Chen & Hsu, 2000)
Dubrovnik, Croatia	Primary driver of perceived value (Bajs, 2013)	Significantly lower impact (Bajs, 2013)	Not separately ranked (Bajs, 2013)
Taiwanese package tours to Japan	"Attraction" ranked most important (Liao & Chuang, 2020)	Ranked 4th of 7 attributes (Liao & Chuang, 2020)	Transport ranked 6th of 7 (Liao & Chuang, 2020)
Developing economy destinations	Not directly tested	Direct and indirect impact on satisfaction (Kubickova & Campbell, 2021)	Fully mediated by expectations (Kubickova & Campbell, 2021)
Accessible tourist destinations (Portugal)	Not tested	Not significant in CFA (Leiras et al., 2025)	Essential dimension (Leiras et al., 2025)

FIGURE 1 Relative ranking of aesthetic quality, price, and accessibility across five destination choice studies

Price as a Moderated Determinant

Price and distance effects on destination choice are not fixed but are moderated by tourist motivations (Nicolau & Más, 2006). High prices do not always deter demand; the concept of value for money can make price an attraction factor rather than a deterrent (Nicolau & Más, 2006). In Ho Chi Minh City, perceived price positively influenced perceived value and tourist loyalty, though travel cost competitiveness remained a concern for budget-conscious tourists (Mai et al., 2019). Perceived value acts as a stronger mediator between involvement and satisfaction than perceived price reasonableness in island destinations (Moon & Han, 2018).

Accessibility and Contextual Variation

Accessibility's role depends heavily on the tourist segment and destination type. In developing economies, destination accessibility has no direct relationship with satisfaction and is fully mediated by expectations (Kubickova & Campbell, 2021). For accessible tourist destinations, accessible infrastructure and safety are essential, while price and inclusive messaging were not significant (Leiras et al., 2025). International tourists rely more on cognitive associations than affective ones in forming quality judgments, suggesting cultural distance shapes how attributes are weighed (Herrero, 2019). Destination image and reputation function as overarching decision factors that can supersede individual attribute rankings (Mihai et al., 2023).

Perceived aesthetic quality tends to rank at or near the top among destination choice determinants, frequently above price and accessibility, but its dominance is context-dependent: price effects are moderated by motivation and value perceptions, and accessibility effects are mediated by expectations and segment-specific needs.

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