

Article

Understanding International Botanical Tourists' Travel Motivations: The Role of Plant Diversity and Landscape Attributes in Turkey

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Abstract

Botanical tourism is a growing niche within nature-based travel, yet little is known about tourists who travel specifically to observe plants in their natural habitats. This study addresses this gap by examining the travel motivations of international botanical tourists visiting Turkey through the push–pull framework. A qualitative approach was adopted, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 56 tourists recruited through a specialist botanical tour operator. Reflexive thematic analysis identified six push factors: biophilia and nature centrality, psychological escape, plant passion and identity, knowledge seeking, transformative experience, and ethical reflection. Five pull factors were also identified: professional guides, endemism, natural landscapes, seasonality, and remoteness and authenticity. The findings show that botanical tourism is an identity-based and knowledge-oriented form of travel in which personal motivations are closely linked to ecological destination attributes. The study extends push–pull theory and offers practical implications for guide training, endemic-route design, phenology-based itineraries, and conservation-sensitive tourism management.

Keywords: botanical tourism; push and pull theory; travel motivation; nature-based tourism; qualitative research

1. Introduction

Botanical tourism is a specialised form of nature-based travel in which plants sit at the centre of the journey rather than its backdrop. The species themselves, their flowering periods, their endemism, and the habitats that hold them are the reason for the trip. General nature-based tourists travel to be in nature; botanical tourists travel to find particular plants where they grow, to learn about them, to photograph them, and to read their ecological context (Cohen & Fennell, 2019).

Turkey provides a relevant setting for botanical tourism because its floristic diversity, high endemism, varied topography, and short flowering windows create place-specific opportunities for plant-focused travel. The country's vascular flora has been documented since Davis's multi-volume Flora of Turkey and the East Aegean Islands and updated through supplementary checklists and the national vascular plant list (Davis, 1965; Davis et al., 1988; Güner et al., 2000; Güner et al., 2012; Özhatay & Kültür, 2006). That list records 11,707 vascular plant taxa, of which 3649 are endemic, an endemism rate of 31.2% (Güner et al., 2012).



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The figure matters here less as a biodiversity statistic than as a description of what a botanical tourist can and cannot substitute. Where roughly a third of a flora grows nowhere else, destination substitutability drops out of the travel decision: the species cannot be seen by going somewhere closer or cheaper. Many of these endemics are narrowly distributed, some restricted to single mountain massifs or to a handful of known populations, and a substantial proportion are assessed as threatened (Ekim et al., 2000). Narrow distribution and short flowering windows compress the chance of seeing a given species into one place and one fortnight. This combination, rather than floristic richness on its own, is what makes Turkey a useful setting for studying plant-focused travel. The scale of this activity is harder to state, and the difficulty is itself informative. Turkish tourism statistics do not disaggregate botanical tourism as a category. There is no official record of specialist operator numbers, participant volumes, or seasonal distribution, and inbound arrivals are not coded by activity type at this level of specificity. Supply-side studies have reached the same wall. Assessments of botanical tourism potential in Turkey rank it highly on resource grounds and then report that the activity remains undeveloped, without being able to quantify what does take place (Çelik, 2018; Kapluhan et al., 2022). The market is therefore known to exist and known to be small, but its dimensions are undocumented. This is one reason a qualitative design was chosen: in the absence of a sampling frame, the population can only be reached through the operators who serve it. The study therefore focuses specifically on foreign botanical tourists visiting Turkey, asking what drives them to make these journeys and what draws them to particular places.

Cohen and Fennell (2019) sort plant-related tourism across four settings, from fully natural to fully contrived. Almost all of the existing research sits at the contrived end, with visitors to botanic gardens, parks, and flower festivals (Ballantyne et al., 2008; Hermann & Bouwer, 2023; Phau et al., 2013; Quintal et al., 2019). That literature does not transfer cleanly. Ballantyne et al. (2008) found that botanic garden visitors show little commitment to conservation, whereas botanical tourists arrive already attached to specific taxa and willing to travel under seasonal, ecological, and geographical constraints to reach them. Their motivations are narrower and more demanding than those of the general garden visitor.

Research has covered botanic garden visitors, ecotourists, wildlife tourists, and nature-based tourists, but the tourist who travels specifically to observe plants in their natural habitat remains almost entirely unexamined. The absence matters for reasons beyond coverage. Push–pull research has generally treated the two halves of the framework as separate decision points, one about whether to travel and one about where (Klenosky, 2002), and has operationalised pull as a menu of destination attributes drawn from mass-market contexts. Botanical tourism tests both assumptions at once. Its pull factors are ecological and time-bound rather than infrastructural, and, as the findings show, they do not follow the push factors in sequence but pair with them. Reading a highly specialised market through the framework therefore does more than extend its range of application. It exposes a structural assumption the framework has carried without examination.

The aim of this study is to identify the internal motivations and destination attributes that structure the travel decisions of international botanical tourists in Turkey, and to establish how the two relate to one another within the push–pull framework. Two questions guide the analysis:

What pushes botanical tourists to travel?

Which destination attributes pull them toward a place?

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 positions botanical tourism against garden-based plant tourism and other species-focused forms of travel, reviews push–pull motivation research in special-interest contexts, and sets out the conceptual status of the

dimensions used here. Section 3 describes the qualitative design, the sampling and recruitment procedure, and the analytic process. Section 4 reports the push and pull themes and the coupling between them. Section 5 discusses what these findings imply for push–pull theory and for the sustainability tension participants described, and Sections 6–8 set out theoretical and practical implications, conclusions, and limitations.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Botanical Tourism as a Niche Form of Nature-Based Tourism

Botanical tourism is organised around the plant, and that single fact reorganises everything downstream, from the timing of a trip to the qualifications of the person leading it. Cohen and Fennell (2019) place plant-related experiences on a spectrum that runs from fully natural habitats such as forests, deserts, and wetlands, through semi-natural settings such as reserves and national parks, to the semi-contrived world of botanic and spice gardens and the fully contrived world of formal gardens, flower festivals, and markets. Research has concentrated on visitors to botanic gardens, parks, and festivals, examining their attitudes, satisfaction, and behavioural intentions (Ballantyne et al., 2008; Hermann & Bouwer, 2023; Mekhloufi & Baziz, 2025; Phau et al., 2013; Quintal et al., 2019; Sinh & Hoa, 2022). Ballantyne et al. (2008) found that botanic garden visitors show relatively low interest in and commitment to conservation, treating the garden as a pleasant setting rather than a site of ecological engagement. The botanical tourist arrives from the opposite direction. These travellers come with prior knowledge of specific plants, an attachment to particular taxa, and a willingness to accept seasonal, ecological, and geographical constraints in order to see those plants in their habitat.

The boundaries of this literature were checked directly. A Scopus search combining plant and tourism stems across titles, abstracts, and keywords returned a small set of records, and most of them turned out not to be tourism research at all. The majority are botanical or conservation studies that mention visitation incidentally: species inventories, propagule transfer, soil and air quality, garden hazard assessments. Fewer than a dozen records examine tourist behaviour, and of those, almost all concern botanic gardens, parks, or festivals rather than plant observation in natural habitat (Ballantyne et al., 2008; Crilley, 2008; Henderson, 2014; Ishchenko et al., 2020; Kebede et al., 2025; Quintal et al., 2019; Shapoval et al., 2021). The scarcity is not an artefact of how the search was framed. It is the state of the field.

Turkish research on botanical tourism follows a consistent and instructive pattern. Çelik (2018) used an analytic hierarchy process with nine experts to rank five candidate ecotourism activities for Balamba Natural Park in Bartın, and botanical tourism came first, ahead of trekking, photo safari, bicycle safari, and bird watching. It held that position under both the natural-resource criteria and the land-use policy criteria, and the ranking survived sensitivity testing. Kaya and Akis (2012) reached a comparable conclusion for the lower Köprü River basin, where phytogeographic richness was treated as the primary basis of ecotourism potential. Kapluhan et al. (2022) list botanical tourism among the tourism forms available at Lake Salda, citing endemic species and monumental trees, but they also record that it has not developed on the ground, and they attribute this to the specialised knowledge the activity demands and to the absence of the organisational and interpretive infrastructure it requires.

That last observation is the most useful one for the present study. Turkish supply-side assessments repeatedly identify botanical tourism as the highest-potential use of a site and then report that the potential goes unrealised. What these studies do not examine is the tourist. They assess resources, rank activities, and infer demand from floristic inventories, without asking what actually moves a plant-focused traveller or what they look for in a

destination. The gap this study addresses is therefore not only that botanical tourism is understudied, but that it has been studied almost entirely from the resource side.

The most useful points of comparison are other species-focused travellers rather than garden visitors. Birders and wildlife watchers, like botanical tourists, pursue particular species, place a premium on the rare and the previously unseen, and depend on expert knowledge to locate and identify their target (Chen & Chen, 2015; Cole & Scott, 1999). Cole and Scott (1999) showed that serious birders are drawn by the presence of native species and rarity rather than by general amenities, a pattern that recurs in the present findings. Even within adventure tourism, the specialised interest in flora appears: Patterson and Pan (2007) reported that older adventure travellers are motivated partly by the chance to see different landscapes, wildlife, and native plants. Nature-based tourism more broadly centres on natural resources in a relatively undeveloped state, including vegetation, water features, and wildlife (Mutanga et al., 2017), but botanical tourism narrows that focus to the plant itself.

2.2. Push and Pull Motivations in Special-Interest Tourism

Dann (1977, 1981) framed tourist motivation as a state of mind that disposes a person to travel, and proposed two forces behind it. Push factors are internal: the desire to escape routine, to relax, to explore the self, to gain prestige, to learn (Crompton, 1979; Iso-Ahola, 1982; Kim et al., 2003). Pull factors are external, the attributes of a destination that draw the traveller toward one place over another, such as scenery, climate, attractions, and facilities (Andruliene et al., 2018; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009). The framework has proven durable because it explains both halves of the decision at once, why a person travels and where they go (Chen & Chen, 2015; Uysal et al., 2009). Recent work has also linked tourist motivation to satisfaction, emotions, and destination choice, showing that motivational structures shape not only the decision to travel but also how destinations are evaluated (Albayrak & Caber, 2018; Pestana et al., 2020). Pull factors also work through destination image, which filters how external attributes are read and weighed against perceived constraints (Kumar et al., 2023). For specialised markets this matters more than for general leisure travel, since image forms around the specific resource the traveller has come for rather than around amenity or atmosphere.

Klenosky (2002) read push and pull as two decisions made at different moments, one about whether to go and one about where, which is why scholars often examine them separately (Rice & Khanin, 2019). The two are not independent in practice. A well-formed push prepares the ground, and the pull of a destination then shapes and strengthens motivations that already exist (Kassean & Gassita, 2013). Rice and Khanin (2019) added a temporal twist, showing that age moderates pull motivations more than push, and that repeat visitors are held by the emotional value of a familiar place.

The framework travels well into special-interest tourism, where each form carries its own motivational signature. Chan and Baum (2007) found that ecotourists are pulled mainly by natural attractions and eco-activities rather than by conventional amenities. Caber and Albayrak (2016) showed that climbers' motivations shift with expertise, from comfortable, structured experiences for beginners to control and responsibility for experts. Giddy (2018) identified novelty and the uniqueness of natural settings as the dominant pull for adventure tourists. Valencia et al. (2022) reported that, at farm tourism sites, pull motives outweigh push. Across these cases one pattern holds: the more specialised the tourist, the more specific the pull factors become, and the further they drift from the generic destination menu.

Two further threads matter for the population studied here. Older travellers are a substantial and underused segment; Patterson and Pan (2007) and note that senior tourism

carries real potential that marketing aimed only at younger travellers misses. Repeat visitation also reshapes motivation. Prayag and Ryan (2011) found that as tourists return, their image of a destination grows richer and more detailed, and a sense of place attachment develops. Both threads describe the older, repeat botanical traveller directly. For this reason, the present study uses push–pull theory not as a generic checklist of motives, but as a way to examine whether a highly specialised plant-oriented market produces a different configuration of internal motivations and destination attributes. Recent applications of push–pull theory in tourism continue to show its flexibility across different destination and experience contexts (Duong et al., 2023; Nieves-Pavón et al., 2025; Soldatenko et al., 2023). The framework has also been applied to narrowly defined traveller groups, where push and pull operate within the specific constraints that govern whether the group can travel at all (Kumar et al., 2024). Nature-based tourism motivation has also been modelled as a configuration of internal and external forces, but such models have rarely been applied to highly specialised plant-focused travel (Xu & Chan, 2016).

2.3. *Environmental Concern and the Sustainability Paradox in Nature-Based Travel*

A further issue in specialised nature-based tourism is the tension between environmental concern and travel behaviour. Sustainable tourism research has long shown that tourists may express pro-environmental values while continuing to make travel choices that produce substantial environmental impacts. This is often discussed as an attitude–behaviour gap, where concern for sustainability does not translate neatly into lower-impact travel behaviour (Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014). Environmental psychology offers two accounts of why the gap persists. Pro-environmental self-identity predicts consistency across behavioural domains, but the consistency thins as the personal cost of a behaviour rises (Whitmarsh & O'Neill, 2010). Behavioural spillover, the expectation that one pro-environmental act makes related acts more likely, has uneven empirical support, and it is weakest precisely between behaviours that differ sharply in cost and visibility (Thøgersen & Ölander, 2003). Read together, these findings suggest that strong environmental commitment and high-impact travel can coexist without the traveller registering the combination as a contradiction. The tension is especially visible in tourism forms that depend on long-distance mobility, since aviation remains one of the most carbon-intensive elements of contemporary tourism (Higham et al., 2016). The same tension appears at destination scale, where tourism development and ecological objectives have been shown to couple only partially and to remain in a state of incomplete coordination over long periods (Hu et al., 2023).

This tension is particularly relevant for botanical tourism. Botanical tourists may be strongly motivated by ecological knowledge, conservation values, and attachment to fragile habitats, yet the act of reaching rare or endemic species often requires international and sometimes long-haul travel. The result is not simply inconsistency, but a sustainability paradox: travel is valued because it deepens environmental knowledge and attachment, while the mobility required to access those environments can contribute to the pressures that tourists recognise. This study therefore treats ethical reflection not as a peripheral concern but as part of the motivational structure of botanical tourism. Ecological citizenship sharpens what is at stake. It frames environmental responsibility as an obligation arising from the ecological space a person occupies rather than as a preference expressed through consumption (Dobson, 2007), and it predicts pro-environmental behaviour independently of general environmental concern (Jagers et al., 2014). Botanical tourists sit awkwardly inside that frame. Their ecological knowledge and sense of obligation are unusually high, and the behaviour through which both are expressed is unusually resource-intensive.

2.4. Research Gap and Conceptual Positioning

Most push–pull research still treats pull factors as a generic menu of destination attributes: accommodation, scenery, entertainment, shopping, cultural sites (Andruliene et al., 2018; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009). Botanical tourism does not fit that menu. Its likely pull factors are ecological and time-bound: endemism, flowering season, expert guides, habitat diversity, and remoteness. None of these appears in the standard list, and several work against it, since the botanical tourist often prefers the undeveloped site to the serviced one.

A note on the status of these dimensions is needed before they are used. The push and pull dimensions reported below are themes generated through reflexive thematic analysis, not latent constructs with claims to measurement properties (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019). They are patterns of shared meaning across the interview material, and their boundaries were set by what participants talked about together rather than by prior scale development. This matters for how they should be read. Two themes may draw on the same underlying disposition and still be reported separately here, because participants organised them separately in their accounts. Conversely, a theme such as plant passion and identity overlaps with several established constructs without being reducible to any of them. The distinctions are set out in Table 1.

Table 1. Relationship between the themes reported here and established constructs.

Established Construct	Closest Theme in this Study	Point of Divergence
Environmental identity (Clayton, 2003)	Plant passion and identity	Environmental identity is defined by the self's relation to nature in general. The theme here is taxon-specific and expertise-based. Participants identified less as environmentalists than as people who know particular plants.
Nature connectedness (Mayer & Frantz, 2004)	Biophilia and nature centrality	Nature connectedness is an affective trait measured as felt kinship with the natural world. The theme here also carries a practical component: participants organised time, income, and travel around access to plants, not only feeling.
Place attachment (Scannell & Gifford, 2010)	Remoteness and authenticity	Place attachment develops through repeated encounter and accrued meaning. Botanical destination choice was driven by the reverse logic. Participants sought sites they had not visited, valued for ecological access rather than accumulated bond.
Serious leisure (Stebbins, 1992)	Knowledge seeking; plant passion and identity	Serious leisure describes sustained amateur careers with skill acquisition and subcultural identity. It captures the participants well but says nothing about destination choice, which is where the pull side of this study operates.
Transformative tourism (Pung et al., 2020)	Transformative experience	Transformative tourism models locate change in liminality, disorientation, and challenge. Participants reported renewal and significance without rupture. The theme names an outcome the framework predicts, reached by a route it does not describe.

Note: The overlaps are real and are not treated here as a problem. What Table 1 shows is that no single existing construct spans both the internal motivations and the destination attributes that structure this form of travel, which is the reason a push–pull reading was adopted.

The literature has examined botanic garden visitors, ecotourists, wildlife tourists, and nature-based tourists, and Turkish research has assessed the resource base for botanical tourism without examining the tourist (Çelik, 2018; Kapluhan et al., 2022; Kaya & Akis, 2012).

The traveller who goes specifically to observe plants in their natural habitat remains largely unstudied. The gap is therefore twofold: an unexamined population, and an untested assumption about how push and pull relate to one another when both are highly specialised.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

A qualitative research design informed by an interpretivist epistemology was used. This choice followed from the research question, as the study aimed to understand how botanical tourists make sense of their plant-focused travel in their own terms. Interpretivism treats social reality as something constructed through the subjective experience and social context of individuals rather than as a single objective structure (Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 1994). Given the specialised and experience-based character of botanical tourism, this paradigm provided an appropriate basis for working with participants' own accounts.

3.2. Researcher Reflexivity

The researchers' backgrounds in tourism research and prior familiarity with nature-based travel shaped the interpretation of the interviews. This influence was kept in view throughout the coding process by checking that themes were anchored in participants' statements rather than in prior expectations. Reflexive discussion between the two researchers was used to test alternative readings of the data before themes were finalised. The push–pull framework was treated as an organising lens after inductive coding rather than as a predetermined coding grid.

3.3. Participants and Sampling

Participants were international tourists who had travelled to Turkey to take part in plant-focused tours involving the observation of species in their natural habitats. To preserve participant and operator anonymity, exact tour routes and sensitive plant locations are not disclosed. However, participants' accounts indicate that the tours involved plant observation in botanically rich, habitat-diverse, mountainous, high-altitude, and relatively undisturbed landscapes in Turkey, where flowering seasonality, altitude, habitat heterogeneity, and endemism shaped travel decisions. Purposive sampling was used because the study focused on a niche population. The inclusion criterion was prior participation in at least one botanical tour involving in situ plant observation. Participants were reached with the assistance of a specialist botanical tour operator that organises plant-focused tours in Turkey. The operator circulated the invitation to 212 eligible participants across three plant-focused tour programmes running during the fieldwork period. Fifty-six agreed to take part, a response rate of 26.4%. The operator's records do not distinguish invitations by gender, so response rates cannot be broken down on that basis, and no published data exist on the gender composition of botanical tourists as a population. Whether the predominance of women in this sample reflects the market or the clientele of one operator therefore cannot be established. Participation was voluntary, and the interviews were conducted independently by the research team. The operator did not select responses for inclusion and did not participate in coding or interpretation. Eligibility was assessed against the following criteria. Participants were included if they were resident outside Turkey, had completed at least one plant-focused tour in Turkey involving observation of species in their natural habitat, and were able to be interviewed in English. Participants were excluded if their visit had been confined to botanic gardens, arboreta, or cultivated collections, if plant observation had been incidental to a general nature or cultural itinerary, or if they were travelling in a professional capacity as guides, botanists on fieldwork, or

tour staff. No further selection was applied. All respondents meeting these criteria who agreed to participate were interviewed. The sample was predominantly female, older, highly educated, and composed mainly of repeat botanical travellers (Table 2). Although all participants were international botanical tourists, country of residence was not collected as a separate demographic variable. For this reason, nationality-based comparisons are not reported. The adequacy of this number was assessed through information power rather than against a target set in advance (Malterud et al., 2016). Three features of the study raise information power and reduce the number of participants required. The aim is narrow, confined to a single motivational question. The sample is highly specific, consisting of experienced travellers with established plant knowledge who could speak about their motivations in detail. The interviews were conducted while the trip was recent, which produced concrete accounts rather than general reflection. Coding indicated that no substantially new themes appeared after the forty-eighth interview. The remaining eight were carried out and analysed in full, and were used to confirm and refine the existing thematic structure rather than to extend it.

Table 2. Participant profile.

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	37	66.1%
	Male	18	32.1%
	Other/Not specified	1	1.8%
Age	35–50 years	5	8.9%
Age	51–65 years	9	16.1%
Age	66–75 years	22	39.3%
Age	76–85 years	19	33.9%
Age	86+ years	1	1.8%
Education	University/bachelor’s degree	26	46.4%
Education	Master’s/postgraduate	16	28.6%
Education	Doctorate/PhD	8	14.3%
Education	Professional/vocational/other	3	5.4%
Education	Other/not specified	3	5.4%
Botanical tourism experience	No prior botanical trip	1	1.8%
Botanical tourism experience	1–5 trips	13	23.2%
Botanical tourism experience	6–15 trips	20	35.7%
Botanical tourism experience	16–50 trips	13	23.2%
Botanical tourism experience	50+ trips	4	7.1%
Botanical tourism experience	Unclear/qualitative answer	5	8.9%

3.4. Data Collection

Data were collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews conducted between April and May 2026, in English. Interviews were conducted in quiet settings during or shortly after botanical tour activities, depending on participants’ availability, so that participants could reflect on their experiences while the trip context was still recent. Specific tour locations are not reported in order to protect participant and operator anonymity. Interviews lasted approximately 45–50 min and were audio-recorded with participants’ permission. Recordings were transcribed verbatim before analysis. Where participants preferred not to be recorded, detailed interview notes were taken immediately after the interview. An interview guide consisting of open-ended questions allowed participants to describe their motivations in their own words, without being steered into preset categories. Representative questions included: “What motivates you to travel to see plants?”, “What makes a destination attractive for botanical travel?”, and “How important are endemic species, guides, flowering seasons, and natural landscapes in your travel decisions?”

The open format allowed participants to raise what mattered to them rather than merely confirming researcher assumptions. Although the interviews were conducted in English, participants varied in linguistic background. During transcription and analysis, attention was paid to meaning rather than grammatical form, and quotations were lightly edited only where necessary for readability without changing substantive content.

3.5. Data Analysis

The data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019), following six phases: familiarisation, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up. Coding was mainly inductive. The analytic path can be stated in numbers. Familiarisation and line-by-line coding produced 88 initial codes across the 56 interview records, which comprised verbatim transcripts and, where participants preferred not to be recorded, detailed interview notes. These codes were clustered into sixteen candidate themes and reviewed against the full dataset for coherence, distinctiveness, and consistency across accounts. Two candidates were dropped at this stage because they rested on too few accounts to constitute a pattern of shared meaning, and three were absorbed into adjacent themes where the boundary between them could not be sustained across cases, leaving eleven. The final structure comprises 27 sub-themes under these eleven themes, six on the push side and five on the pull side. The push–pull framework entered the analysis only at the final stage, as a way of organising themes that had already emerged from the data, rather than as a grid imposed on the material. The study is qualitative, and the frequency counts reported in the findings indicate the prominence of each theme across the sample. They are not statistical claims. The numerical indicators are used only to show how visible each theme was across the interview material; they are not intended to rank motivations statistically or to imply that theme importance is reducible to frequency. A participant was counted under a theme when their account included an explicit statement corresponding to that theme. Because themes could overlap, counts do not sum to the sample size.

3.6. Methodological Integrity

The transcripts were read repeatedly during familiarisation, and codes and themes were reviewed several times for coherence and distinctiveness. Disagreements between the researchers were discussed until a shared interpretation was reached, which helped sharpen the boundaries between themes. Each theme is illustrated with direct quotations so that readers can follow the reasoning from data to interpretation. An audit trail of coding decisions was also maintained. Participation was voluntary, identities were kept confidential, and all statements were anonymised and reported with codes such as P1 and P2.

4. Findings

An examination of the participant profile gives a sharp picture of who travels this way. Women made up most of the sample, the great majority were 66 or older, and every participant was highly educated. Travel was repetitive: most had been on botanical tours many times over.

The concentration of older, educated, and repeat participants shapes what follows in a specific way. Motivations built on accumulated knowledge, such as knowledge seeking and plant passion, are likely to be more prominent in this group than they would be among first-time or casual plant travellers, for whom escape and general nature contact might carry more weight. The findings should be read as an account of the committed core of this market rather than of everyone who joins a botanical tour.

Table 3 summarises the thematic structure of the analysis and shows the relative prominence of each theme across the sample. In line with the qualitative and reflexive character of the analysis, the counts are presented as descriptive indicators of thematic visibility rather than as measures of statistical prevalence. The following sections develop these themes in greater depth by showing how botanical tourists described the internal motivations that pushed them to travel and the destination attributes that pulled them toward particular places. Illustrative quotations were selected to represent the clearest expression of each theme rather than to imply that only the quoted participants contributed to that theme. The frequency counts in Table 3 indicate that each theme was supported by a broader set of accounts across the sample.

Table 3. Push and pull themes, sub-themes, descriptive visibility, and illustrative quotations.

Dimension	Theme	Sub-Theme	n	Illustrative Quotation
Push	Biophilia & Nature Centrality	Essential connection to nature	51	"Nature is by far the most important part of my life. I always want to be outside" (P4)
		Deep belonging & emotional connection	36	"I feel connected to earth when I am out in the nature. I feel recharged after all" (P12)
Push	Psychological Escape & Restoration	Escape from routine	48	"I travel for plants to relax and to clear my head from other problems in my life" (P5)
		Mental restoration & stress relief	35	"I am feeling relaxed and positive after touring in nature based travels" (P12)
Push	Plant Passion & Identity	Seeing plants in the wild	46	"Seeing things that I can grow at home growing in their natural habitat" (P46)
		Aesthetic & beauty seeking	42	"Beauty may be found everywhere and is not necessarily associated with rareness" (P25)
		Horticultural background	38	"I used to own a rare-plant nursery, and I'm still an avid gardener and amateur botanist" (P8)
Push	Knowledge Seeking	Learning & expanding botanical knowledge	40	"Learning new cultures and seeing new species" (P1)
		Novelty & discovery	39	"Mainly desire. To see something I haven't seen before" (P5)
		Scientific understanding & professional background	28	"I am a botanist and like the alpine flowers" (P36)
Push	Transformative Experience	Personal meaning & life perspective	32	"Every time I return from a botanical trip, I feel like I've discovered the world again" (P5)
		Spiritual & deeply meaningful experience	24	"The sheer experience of being there can make you feel invigorated and inspired for a long time" (P6)
Push	Ethical Reflections	Carbon footprint concerns	28	"I am always troubled by the greenhouse emissions of my trips" (P2)
		Indirect conservation benefits	18	"By increasing my knowledge about issues in other places . . . I can increase my effectiveness in my home ecosystem" (P14)
Pull	Professional Guides	Expert guides	54	"I don't know what I am looking at if I don't have a guide" (P4)
		Local knowledge & interpretation	48	"A good knowledgeable guide is essential when visiting a strange (to me) flora" (P32)
		Tour organization & logistics	6	"A reputable tour guide also includes transportation and logistics so I don't have to make all those arrangements" (P15)

Table 3. *Cont.*

Dimension	Theme	Sub-Theme	n	Illustrative Quotation
Pull	Endemism & Uniqueness	Endemic species	53	“Endemism is quite the treat . . . it fulfils the purpose of travelling to a particular place/habitat” (P5)
		Botanical diversity	44	“Unique landscapes and floral abundance. Not after super rare species. Prefer diversity” (P19)
Pull	Natural Landscapes	Mountain landscapes & scenic beauty	50	“Landscapes that combine different elements: interesting geology, good views, varying ecotones, floral diversity” (P13)
		Unspoiled & pristine nature	42	“No infrastructure for mass tourism, simplicity, unspoilt landscapes” (P16)
		Habitat diversity & ecological context	31	“Aesthetic appeal, ecological and biological interest” (P24)
Pull	Seasonality & Timing	Flowering season priority	46	“All that matters is flowering time of plants. If it’s the rainy season, then I will travel in the rainy season” (P5)
		Weather & climate preferences	34	“If it is too cold, the plants are not out” (P4)
Pull	Remoteness & Authenticity	Wild preference	34	“Wish to see plants in the wild in their natural setting” (P37)
		Pristine & undisturbed environments	22	“Places that still have sufficient plants in their natural habitats that haven’t been trampled by Instagram mobs” (P51)
		Remote exploration	18	“Endemic species, unique and wild land, far from the madding crowd” (P26)

Note. The numerical indicators show the descriptive visibility of themes across the interview material. They are not intended as statistical rankings or as measures of theme importance. Because themes could overlap, counts do not sum to the sample size.

Figure 1 sets the themes out in order of descriptive visibility. Two features are worth noting before the themes are discussed individually. The pull side is more evenly distributed than the push side, with four of five themes appearing in more than four fifths of accounts, which suggests that botanical destination requirements are more uniform across this population than the motivations that send people travelling. The lowest-ranked push theme, ethical reflection, is also the only theme participants described as unresolved, and its position in the ranking should not be read as a measure of how much weight it carried for those who raised it.

4.1. Push and Pull Factors

Figure 2 visualises the central argument of the study: push and pull motivations in botanical tourism operate as mutually reinforcing dimensions rather than as separate lists. The left-hand side shows the internal motivations that make botanical travel meaningful, while the right-hand side shows the ecological and interpretive destination attributes through which those motivations are fulfilled.

The pairings shown in Figure 2 were derived in two different ways, and the distinction matters for how the figure should be read. Some pairings are present in the interview material itself, where participants linked an internal motivation and a destination attribute within a single account. Knowledge seeking and professional guides is the clearest case: participants did not describe wanting to learn and, separately, wanting a guide, but described the guide as the condition under which learning was possible. Plant passion and endemism operate the same way, with participants framing in situ encounter as what

distinguishes botanical travel from cultivation at home. Other pairings are interpretive. The link between biophilia and natural landscapes, and between psychological escape and remoteness, was not stated by participants but inferred from the pattern of what they valued across their accounts. Figure 1 does not distinguish the two visually, and the reader should treat the second group as an analytic proposition rather than a reported association.

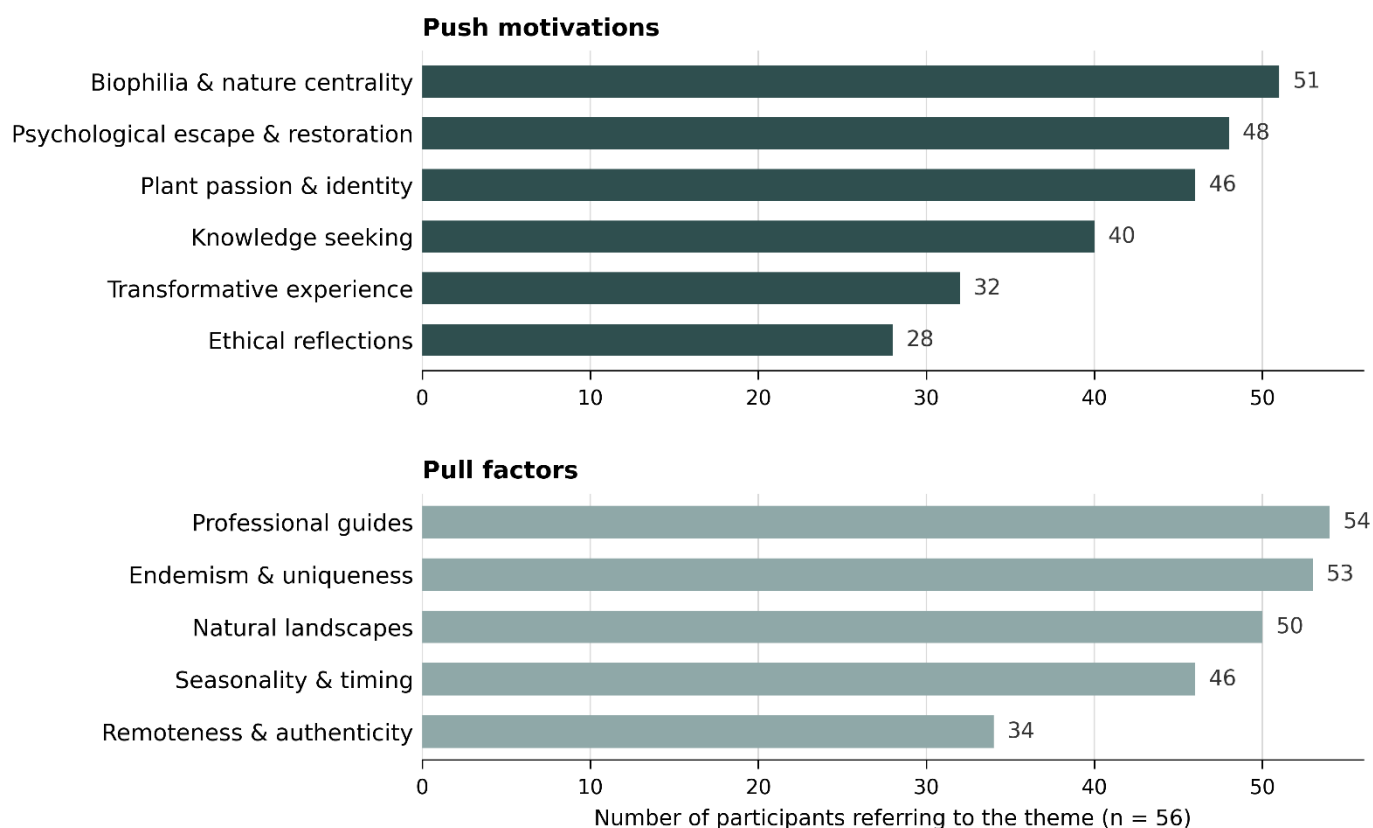


Figure 1. Descriptive visibility of push and pull themes across the interview material (n = 56). Note. Values indicate the number of participants whose accounts included an explicit statement corresponding to the theme, taken from the most prominent sub-theme within each. They describe how visible a theme was across the material and are not statistical rankings, measures of importance, or estimates of population prevalence. Themes could co-occur within a single account, so values do not sum to the sample size.

The figure also shows fewer connections than exist. Every push theme relates in some degree to every pull theme, and a fully connected diagram would be accurate but uninformative. What is shown is the subset of pairings that appeared most consistently across accounts. Seasonality and timing is deliberately left unpaired, because participants treated it not as an attraction that answers a motivation but as a precondition governing whether any of the others can be satisfied at all.

4.2. Push Factors

Six push motivations ran through the interviews: biophilia and nature centrality, psychological escape and restoration, plant passion and identity, knowledge seeking, transformative experience, and ethical reflection. These themes show that botanical travel was not described as a casual leisure choice. It was presented as an extension of participants' existing relationships with nature, plants, learning, and environmental concern.

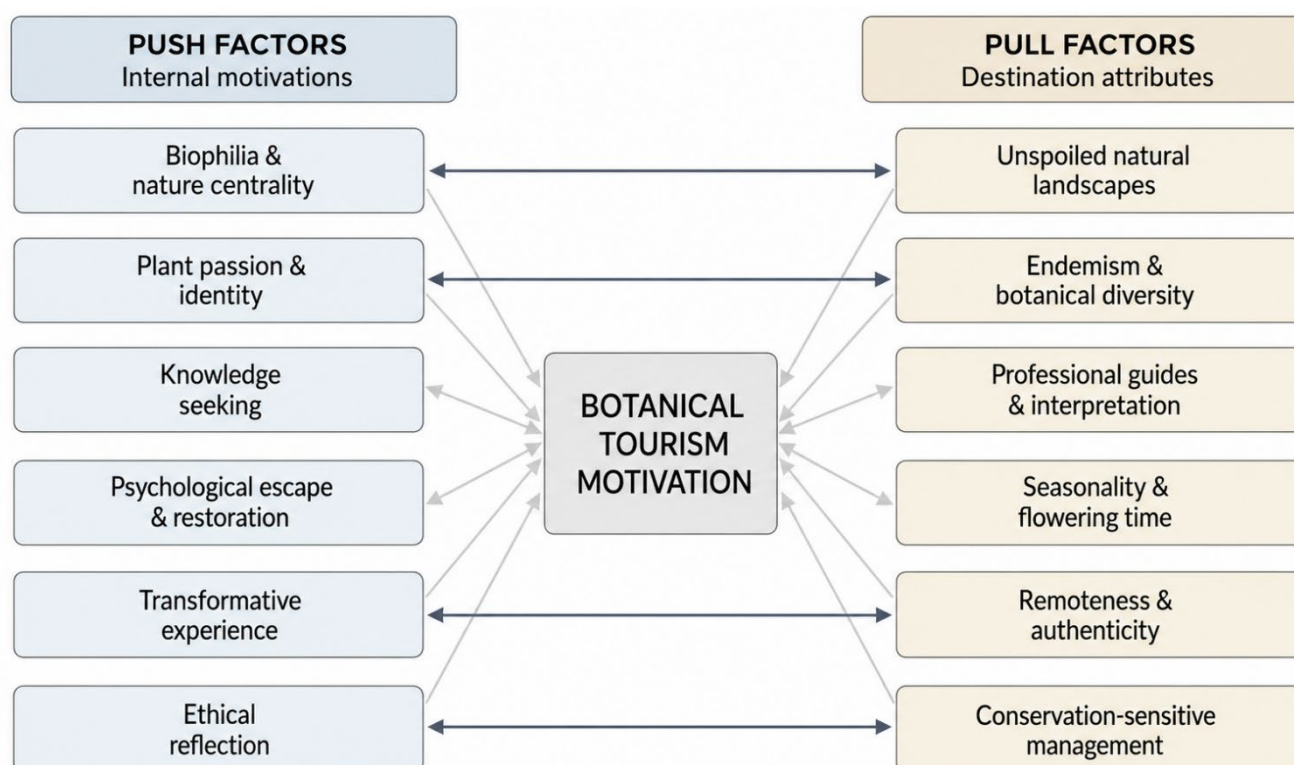


Figure 2. Coupling of push and pull motivations in botanical tourism. Note. Dark arrows indicate pairings that participants stated directly within single accounts. Lighter arrows indicate pairings inferred by the researchers from patterns across accounts. The figure shows the most consistent pairings only, not the full set of relationships between push and pull themes.

4.2.1. Biophilia and Nature Centrality

Biophilia and nature centrality formed the broadest push motivation. Participants described nature as a central part of their lives rather than as a background feature of travel. This was captured clearly by P4, who stated, “Nature is by far the most important part of my life. I always want to be outside.” For others, the connection with nature was emotional and restorative. P12 explained, “I feel connected to earth when I am out in the nature. I feel recharged after all.” These accounts suggest that botanical tourism begins from an already established orientation toward the natural world.

4.2.2. Psychological Escape and Restoration

Psychological escape and restoration also appeared strongly in the interviews. Participants described botanical travel as a way to step away from everyday pressures and recover mentally through contact with nature. P5 explained this directly: “I travel for plants to relax and to clear my head from other problems in my life.” P12 similarly linked nature-based travel with emotional recovery, stating, “I am feeling relaxed and positive after touring in nature based travels.” In this sense, botanical tourism worked not only as plant-focused travel but also as a restorative practice.

4.2.3. Plant Passion and Identity

Plant passion and identity distinguished botanical tourists from more general nature tourists. Many participants already had long-standing personal, professional, or horticultural relationships with plants, and travel extended those interests into the field. The desire to see plants in their natural habitat was expressed by P46 as “Seeing things that I can grow at home growing in their natural habitat.” Aesthetic appreciation also shaped motivation, although rarity was not always the only source of value. P25 noted, “Beauty may be

found everywhere and is not necessarily associated with rareness.” For participants with horticultural backgrounds, botanical tourism was closely tied to personal history. P8 stated, “I used to own a rare-plant nursery, and I’m still an avid gardener and amateur botanist.”

4.2.4. Knowledge Seeking

Knowledge seeking was another important push factor. Participants travelled not only to view plants but to learn through direct encounter. For P1, botanical tourism involved “Learning new cultures and seeing new species.” Novelty and discovery were also central. P5 described the motivation as “Mainly desire. To see something I haven’t seen before.” Some participants connected this desire to formal botanical or scientific knowledge. P36 stated, “I am a botanist and like the alpine flowers.” These statements show that botanical tourism functions as an experiential learning practice in which field observation matters.

4.2.5. Transformative Experience

For many participants, botanical travel carried meaning beyond leisure or education. P13 described it as something that “connects you to the world in a profound way.” For P53 the significance lay in the depth of engagement rather than in the destination itself, offering “a way of connecting more deeply with the travel experience, rather than just visiting the standard, ‘famous’ spots on a cursory level.” P8 located the effect in learning and in what was unplanned: “Learning is always transformative. Often, the things you don’t expect . . . are the things that leave the most lasting impressions.”

A substantial minority rejected the framing. P55 accepted meaning but not transformation, describing the travel as “meaningful for me in helping me put the world together. Transformative? Not so much. I am who I am.” P25 went further, characterising the activity as “largely . . . specialised entertainment,” transformative for a few but for most “thoughtful entertainment, the pursuit of a hobby.” These accounts came from participants with extensive botanical travel histories, which suggests the disagreement is about how the experience should be described rather than about how deeply it is felt.

Botanical travel therefore appears capable of generating a sense of renewal and personal significance for some participants, without this being a general property of the experience. What the accounts share is depth of engagement. Whether that depth amounts to transformation is contested within the sample itself.

4.2.6. Ethical Reflections

Ethical reflection formed the most ambivalent push theme, and was the only one participants described as unresolved. Concern centred on aviation, which several named as the largest single component of their environmental impact. P4 put it plainly: “Flying is my largest use of carbon.” P17 extended the concern beyond emissions to conduct at the destination, describing worry about “my carbon footprint whilst travelling and my actual footprints when I reach the destination.” For P51 the arithmetic was decisive, and the answer to whether botanical travel contributes to conservation was “no, given the amount of air travel involved.”

Others reached the opposite conclusion from the same premises. P39 set out the reasoning most fully: “Although I understand the damaging effects of travel, visiting such places puts a value on the habitats which I hope makes it more likely that they will be preserved. It’s a balance though with the carbon footprint from the travel.” The structure of that answer is characteristic. The harm is acknowledged, a justification is offered, and the justification is then marked as incomplete by the participant themselves.

The theme was not universal. P23 treated sustainability as peripheral to destination choice, describing it as something that “does not influence our choice,” and others did not raise environmental cost at all. Ethical reflection therefore describes a substantial part of

this sample rather than a defining feature of botanical tourism, and where it appeared, participants negotiated it by assigning educational, emotional, or conservation value to the journey while continuing to recognise its costs.

4.3. Pull Factors

Five pull factors shaped destination choice: professional guides, endemism and uniqueness, natural landscapes, seasonality and timing, and remoteness and authenticity.

4.3.1. Professional Guides

Professional guides were the strongest pull factor in the study. Participants described guides as essential because botanical tourism depends on identification, interpretation, and local ecological knowledge. In this sense, the guide operated as part of the destination's interpretive infrastructure, translating habitat, identification, timing, and ecological relationship into something the visitor could make sense of in the field. P4 explained, "I don't know what I am looking at if I don't have a guide." P32 similarly stated, "A good knowledgeable guide is essential when visiting a strange (to me) flora." For some participants, tour organisation also mattered because it removed practical barriers and allowed them to focus on the botanical experience. P15 noted, "A reputable tour guide also includes transportation and logistics so I don't have to make all those arrangements."

4.3.2. Endemism and Uniqueness

Endemism and uniqueness were central to destination choice. Participants were strongly attracted to plants that could only be seen in particular places or habitats. P5 described this appeal directly: "Endemism is quite the treat . . . it fulfils the purpose of travelling to a particular place/habitat." Botanical diversity also mattered. P19 explained a preference for "Unique landscapes and floral abundance. Not after super rare species. Prefer diversity." These accounts show that the destination is attractive not simply because it is natural, but because it contains plant life that is place-specific, distinctive, or botanically rich.

4.3.3. Natural Landscapes

Natural landscapes mattered because they provided the ecological setting in which plants could be encountered. Participants did not describe landscape only as scenery; they connected it to habitat, geology, ecotones, and plant diversity. P13 stated that attractive landscapes were those combining "interesting geology, good views, varying ecotones, floral diversity." Others valued less developed environments. P16 preferred "No infrastructure for mass tourism, simplicity, unspoilt landscapes." P24 linked landscape choice to "Aesthetic appeal, ecological and biological interest." These accounts suggest that landscape functioned as ecological context rather than visual background alone. For participants, landscapes mattered because they held the plant-habitat relations that made botanical observation possible.

4.3.4. Seasonality and Timing

Seasonality and timing were decisive because botanical tourism depends on the biological visibility of plants. Flowering time structured when participants were willing to travel. P5 stated, "All that matters is flowering time of plants. If it's the rainy season, then I will travel in the rainy season." Weather and climate were still relevant, but mainly because they affected the plants themselves. P4 explained, "If it is too cold, the plants are not out." This shows that, in botanical tourism, the travel calendar is organised around plant life rather than around conventional tourist seasons. Botanical mobility was therefore

phenological and seasonally constrained, with travel decisions shaped by flowering periods, altitude, weather, and habitat conditions.

4.3.5. Remoteness and Authenticity

Remoteness and authenticity also shaped destination appeal. Participants valued wild settings and natural habitats over managed or highly visited environments. P37 expressed this through the “Wish to see plants in the wild in their natural setting.” Some participants were concerned about disturbance caused by over-visitation and social media-driven tourism. P51 referred to “Places that still have sufficient plants in their natural habitats that haven’t been trampled by Instagram mobs.” For others, remoteness itself added to the appeal. P26 described the attraction as “Endemic species, unique and wild land, far from the madding crowd.” These accounts show that remoteness was not experienced as a disadvantage but as part of the authenticity of botanical travel.

5. Discussion

5.1. Botanical Tourism as an Identity-Based Form of Nature Travel

Three push motivations dominate the data: biophilia, plant passion, and a horticultural background. Together they place botanical tourists well outside the category of occasional nature consumers. Their travel extends a working or lifelong involvement with plants rather than interrupting ordinary life with a dose of scenery. This cuts against Ballantyne et al.’s (2008) account of low conservation commitment among botanic garden visitors and supports treating botanical tourists as a separate, more committed segment. This also connects botanical tourism to wider debates on place attachment and restorative environments. Place attachment research shows that emotional bonds to place are shaped through the interaction of person, place, and psychological process (Scannell & Gifford, 2010), while restorative environment theory emphasises the psychological value of contact with natural settings (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). In the present study, participants were not attached only to a named destination but to the ecological conditions that allowed plants to appear in place: habitat, season, altitude, remoteness, and landscape integrity. In this sense, attachment was directed as much toward plant–place relations as toward place alone.

5.2. Knowledge, Expertise, and the Role of Interpretation

Knowledge seeking is a leading push motivation, and the professional guide is the strongest pull factor in the study ($n = 54$). Read together, they reposition guiding. In most tourism the guide is a service laid on top of the attraction. Here the guide is part of the attraction, supplying access, identification, and ecological meaning that the tourist cannot reach alone. This extends Chen and Chen’s (2015) work on birders and argues for treating expert interpretation as a primary pull factor rather than a supporting one. It also makes guide competence an organisational matter rather than an individual one, since environmental performance in hospitality settings depends on how staff are recruited, trained, and retained (Hossain et al., 2025). For botanical tourists, interpretation is not added after destination choice; it helps make the destination desirable in the first place.

5.3. Destination Attractiveness as Ecological Specificity

Much push–pull research treats pull factors as a generic set of destination attributes such as accommodation, scenery, and entertainment (Andruliene et al., 2018; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009). The pull factors here were ecologically specific: endemism, flowering season, habitat diversity, and remoteness. Destination choice turned on phenological timing and habitat integrity, not on comfort or infrastructure. Pull factors in

botanical tourism therefore carry a phenological and ecological character that the standard list does not capture, which sharpens Giddy's (2018) emphasis on the uniqueness of natural settings and indicates that destination image in specialised markets forms around the resource rather than the amenity (Kumar et al., 2023).

5.4. Botanical Tourism as Landscape-Sensitive Mobility

The findings also show that botanical tourism is a landscape-sensitive form of mobility. Participants were not attracted only to plants as isolated objects, but to the ecological conditions that make those plants visible: altitude, geology, flowering season, habitat continuity, remoteness, and low disturbance. This finding extends Cohen and Fennell's (2019) argument that plant-related tourism must be understood through the settings in which plant encounters occur, particularly the distinction between natural and contrived environments. It also resonates with place attachment and restorative environment perspectives, which suggest that human experience of nature is shaped by the interaction between people, ecological settings, and psychological meaning (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Poorly managed access, excessive promotion of rare species, or mass-tourism infrastructure may weaken the very landscape qualities that attract botanical tourists. For land and landscape management, this is the key implication: botanical tourism should be managed not as a conventional tourism product but as a low-volume, habitat-sensitive use of biodiverse landscapes, an alignment that destination-scale research suggests is rarely achieved without deliberate coordination (Hu et al., 2023).

5.5. The Sustainability Paradox of Botanical Tourism

The most distinctive result is a contradiction the tourists carry themselves. They are motivated by conservation awareness and ecological sensitivity, yet their travel is typically long-haul and aviation-dependent, and it produces the very impacts they say they want to avoid. This pattern reflects the wider attitude-behaviour gap identified in sustainable tourism research, but it appears here in a particularly specialised form because the same ecological values that motivate travel also make participants aware of its environmental costs (Higham et al., 2016; Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014). Participants named this openly and resolved it only partially, most often by appealing to the indirect conservation value that visitation confers on a habitat. What is notable is that they did not present this move as sufficient. P39's account, quoted above, states the justification and then immediately marks it as a balance rather than a settlement, and this pattern recurs across the theme. That move does not close the gap. It marks botanical tourism as an ethically reflexive niche, and the unresolved tension is itself a finding worth carrying into the nature-based tourism literature.

Against the spillover literature this pattern looks less anomalous. Spillover is weakest between behaviours separated by cost, and long-haul flight sits at the opposite end of that scale from the low-cost domestic behaviours through which environmental identity is ordinarily enacted (Thøgersen & Ölander, 2003). What participants displayed was not a failure of identity but its boundary: a self-concept (Whitmarsh & O'Neill, 2010) that governs most of their conduct and stops at the single behaviour through which that self-concept is most fully realised. Framed as ecological citizenship, the issue becomes one of obligation rather than consistency (Dobson, 2007; Jagers et al., 2014). The partial resolution participants offered was not evasion. The ways they managed it, through slower itineraries, disciplined conduct in the field, and support for conservation, are better understood as attempts to discharge an obligation they could not avoid incurring than as attempts to reconcile a contradiction.

5.6. Revisiting Push–Pull Theory Through Botanical Tourism

The cleaner contribution to theory is that push and pull do not behave as separate decision points here (cf. Klenosky, 2002). They lock together. Plant passion pairs with endemic species, knowledge seeking is completed by the expert guide, and biophilia maps onto unspoiled landscape. Internal motivation and ecological destination attribute reinforce each other rather than operating in sequence. The push–pull framework holds for botanical tourism, but only once the coupling between its two halves is built in. This matters beyond botanical tourism because it suggests that, in highly specialised forms of travel, motivation is not only a pre-trip psychological state but a relationship between identity, knowledge, and the material qualities of the destination. The destination becomes attractive because it allows travellers to enact an already meaningful attachment. Botanical tourism therefore shows how non-human objects of interest, such as plants, can organise human mobility and give structure to travel decisions.

6. Implications

6.1. Theoretical Implications

Botanical tourism deserves to be treated as a distinct special-interest form of nature-based tourism, not a variant of general nature travel. The push–pull framework describes it well after one adjustment: the two sides are coupled rather than independent. The segment also sits apart from botanic garden visitors, since it is defined by in situ, seasonal, expert-mediated, and identity-linked experience that garden settings cannot provide.

6.2. Practical Implications

Destination management organisations. Botanical tourism cannot be marketed on a conventional seasonal calendar. Promotion and product design should be organised around flowering calendars, published at species or habitat group level and updated annually, so that visitors can plan against biological rather than commercial seasons. Dispersing demand across suitable periods and locations reduces pressure on the small number of highly visible endemic sites without reducing volume. Marketing should target the traveller this study describes, who is older, highly educated, and likely to return, rather than treating botanical tourism as a high-volume diversification product.

Protected-area authorities. Carrying capacity should be assessed at habitat rather than site level, since the plants that draw visitors are often confined to small areas within larger protected zones. Route planning should route groups around rather than through populations of narrowly distributed species, and exact locations of the most sensitive taxa should not be published. Group size limits, trail discipline protocols, and seasonal access rules are more effective as conditions of guide licensing than as visitor-facing regulations, because the guide controls where the group actually goes.

Tour operators and guides. Guide certification is the highest-leverage intervention available. The guide was the strongest single pull factor in this study and is also the point at which the product fails if competence is absent. Certification should cover field identification within the destination's flora, interpretation of habitat and ecological context, and conduct protocols in sensitive sites, and it should be assessed in the field rather than through classroom testing. Operators should treat ecological conduct as a criterion in guide recruitment and training rather than as a code issued after hiring (Hossain et al., 2025). Pre-trip botanical material raises the quality of the experience before arrival and reduces the interpretive load carried in the field.

7. Conclusions

This study examined the travel motivations of international botanical tourists through the push–pull framework. The findings indicate that botanical tourism is not simply a form of nature-based leisure in which plants are one attraction among many. It is a specialised form of travel shaped by plant attachment, biophilia, knowledge seeking, psychological restoration, transformative experience, and ethical reflection. On the destination side, professional guides, endemic species, natural landscapes, flowering periods, and remoteness emerged as decisive pull factors.

The main contribution is not that push–pull has been applied to a new setting. It is that the framework's treatment of push and pull as sequential decisions does not hold here. In botanical tourism, the two are coupled: internal motivations make specific ecological attributes legible as attractions, and those attributes in turn give the motivations somewhere to go. Whether this coupling is peculiar to botanical tourism or characteristic of specialised travel more generally is an open question, and one this study is not positioned to settle. Botanical tourism therefore offers a useful case for rethinking tourist motivation as a relationship between identity, knowledge, non-human life, and place.

Future research can build on these findings by comparing botanical tourists across destinations, levels of expertise, age groups, and plant-focused travel markets.

8. Limitations

The sample is older, mostly female, and highly educated, and it does not represent botanical tourists as a whole. In addition, country of residence was not collected as a separate demographic variable, which prevents nationality-based comparison among international botanical tourists. Three limitations follow from how the sample was reached. First, recruitment through a single specialist operator introduces self-selection at two points: the operator's clientele is not a random slice of botanical tourists, and those who agreed to be interviewed may differ systematically from those who declined, most plausibly in the strength of their commitment to the activity. The direction of this bias is towards the more engaged end of the market, which means the prominence of knowledge seeking and plant passion in the findings should be treated as an upper bound rather than an estimate. Second, the interviews were conducted face to face, during or shortly after the tours, and in the presence of a researcher whose interest in the topic was evident. Social desirability is a live concern throughout, but it is most acute in the accounts of environmental concern and aviation. Participants may have overstated their unease about emissions, or understated it, and the design cannot distinguish between the two. Third, the profile is skewed towards older, highly educated, experienced travellers, and motivational patterns among younger or less experienced botanical tourists may differ in kind rather than degree. The coupling of push and pull reported here depends on prior plant knowledge. Where that knowledge is absent, the pull factors that carried most weight in this study, particularly endemism and expert guidance, may not be legible as attractions at all. The findings are qualitative and not built for statistical generalisation, and the study does not compare motivations across nationalities, destinations, or experience levels. Each of these is a direct line into further work. Four directions follow. A quantitative or mixed-method design could test whether the pairings proposed in Figure 2 hold at scale, and whether the coupling of push and pull is measurable as an interaction rather than an additive relationship. Comparative work across destinations would establish whether the pull factors identified here are properties of botanical tourism or of Turkey specifically, since endemism, expert guidance, and remoteness may carry different weight where the flora is less distinctive or the guiding infrastructure more developed. Cross-cultural comparison of source markets would test whether the motivational structure travels, as it has been shown to vary with the

constraints acting on particular national groups (Kumar et al., 2024), given that this sample was drawn from a single operator serving a largely Western European clientele. Finally, longitudinal designs could track whether the sustainability tension described here shifts behaviour over time or remains, as it did in these accounts, an attitude that participants carry without resolving.

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