

Boosting Tourism in South Coastal Areas: Strategic Marketing for Sustainable Growth

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Abstract: *This research investigates the interrelationships among destination branding, marketing innovation, tourist perception, and tourism growth within the context of tourist attractions in the South Coastal region during the Idul Fitri celebration in 2023. Utilizing a quantitative methodology and a random sampling technique, data were collected from 367 respondents aged 17 to 25 years. The results indicate that destination branding significantly influences both tourism growth and tourist perception, while marketing innovation plays a pivotal role in enhancing destination branding and tourist perception. Notably, although marketing innovation directly impacts tourist perception, its effect on tourism growth is less pronounced. The study underscores the importance of effective branding and innovative marketing strategies in promoting sustainable tourism development, providing valuable insights for stakeholders aiming to enhance destination appeal and drive growth in the tourism sector.*

Introduction

The tourism industry in South Coastal regions is witnessing significant changes, driven by the need for innovative marketing strategies to attract visitors and enhance their overall experience (Ren et al. 2021). As destinations strive to differentiate themselves in a competitive market, effective marketing innovation becomes essential for establishing a strong brand identity (Zhu, Zhan, and Li 2021). This dynamic interplay between marketing innovation and destination branding plays a crucial role in shaping tourists' perceptions, which ultimately influences their decision to visit (Khan and Hou 2021). With the growing importance of sustainable tourism practices, understanding how these marketing strategies can effectively appeal to diverse audiences is increasingly relevant (Fang et al. 2021).

Here is the data on visits and tourist attractions during the Eid al-Fitr 1444 H celebrations in 2023 for the Pesisir Selatan Regency:

Table 1. Data on Visits and Tourist Attractions During the Eid Al-Fitr 1444 H Celebrations in 2023 for the Pesisir Selatan Regency

No	Name of Tourist Attraction	Number of Visitors
1	Kawasan Wisata Pantai Carocok Painan	21,615
2	Pulau Setan	9,000
3	Sumedang Jaya Wisata, Kecamatan Ranah Pesisir	5,183
4	Pantai Batu Kalang, Tarusan	4,477
5	Pantai Muaro Air Haji	4,380

From the visitation statistics of the tourist attractions during the Idul Fitri holiday in the year 2023 a huge difference can be observed which indicates a maldistribution of tourism traffic in the South Coastal areas. For example, Kawasan Wisata Pantai Carocok Painan managed to have an astonishing 21615 visitors, which dwarfed other visiting places like Pulau Setan and Pantai Muaro Air Haji which earned 9000 and 4380 visitors respectively. Such differences are alarming in terms of the sustainability of the management of tourism in these destinations and the impact of over-tourism in areas with a high visitors influx leaving other areas with few visitors. Such inequalities could on the other hand also have effects over the economy of the local people, the environment and even the tourists in general, and as such, they warrant a further analysis of the factors that cause these visitation patterns and the ways in which less visited sites can be encouraged and their usage promoted.

In this research, tourism dynamics in South Coastal parts are shaped the independent variables ‘Marketing Innovation’, ‘Destination Branding’, and ‘Tourist Perception’. Enhancement or development shares tools, plan or strategies which are new or creative to the tourism operators in such a way that through (Simo-Kengne 2022). Most of these strategies are digital ones along the line of social media or any other incredible campaigns aimed at improving visibility (Pulido-Fernández and Cárdenas-García 2021). Destination Branding is the construction of an image which goes beyond the cultural and structural attributes of each tourist attraction site in a way that it can alter the minds of potential visitors towards that site (Ahmad, Menegaki, and Al-Muharrami 2020). Finally, Tourist Perception refers to the conceptual SCHEMATA of beliefs that tourists may develop towards the various destinations based on their actual experiences, the marketing they receive and endorsement by friends and peers (Ramkissoon 2023). Such perceptions can positively or negatively influence the other dependent variable i.e. overall Tourism Growth since positive experiences by tourists may result to return, positive word of mouth and better image of the destination. This relationship between these variables is important in formulating strategies that do not only promote the more visited sites but also the less travelled sites contributing to proper sustainable development of the tourism industry within the region.

H1: Marketing Innovation positively influences Destination Branding.

Appropriate marketing innovation is the order of the day in the present day tourism, as it gives an edge to the destinations within an overloaded market (Godovykh, Pizam, and Bahja

2020). The use of innovative marketing designs like the ones that embrace the digital sphere, use of experiential marketing and interactive content have buffered the communication strategy on how destinations can position themselves to encourage visits (Hateftabar and Chapuis 2020). The new means of technology as well as creativity allows these destinations to develop interesting stories which appeal to the intended markets and improve the brand. Since tourists are more inclined towards having customized and unforgettable experiences, this trend of innovation in marketing and branding of the destination allows for deeper linkages between branding of the destination and changing consumer behavior, building affinity with the destination brand (Rahman et al. 2021).

Furthermore, it was discovered that engaging in efficient marketing innovation culminated in a strong tourism destination brand. Analyzing the information received from social media and visitors' feedback, the destinations can promote themselves according to what makes them special and unique: their history, nature, and leisure opportunities (Chi et al. 2020). This pointed strategy does not just create awareness, but it also helps to position the destination better in a crowded market (Ali et al. 2023). As a consequence, evocation of such a brand across key markets is likely to change and strengthen the dimensions of perceived and expected value by tourists rendering allegiance to that particular destination rather than others. In this situation, branding is regarded as closely associated with marketing innovation, because more of such will be required to penetrate potential tourists' minds and stay there (Persaud, Wang, and Schillo 2021).

Although the role of marketing innovation in strengthening destination branding is well documented, the available literature on the concern especially as it relates to emerging or relatively unknown tourist destinations which are mostly in the developing areas is still scant. Existing studies have examined how marketing strategies of corporations are related to strategies in branding in already established tourists' centers, but there is not much empirical data on how innovative marketing can be used to improve the brand identity of new destinations. This research aims to address this research gap by investigating how different marketing innovations can help accelerate destination branding and therefore increase tourism in South Coastal regions. Previous research has established the relevance of internet marketing in the leisure tourism industry (Kolapo et al. 2021), the contribution of branding in setting the tourist's ideal image (Wang et al. 2020), and the impact of marketing strategies on travelers' behavioral intentions in tourism (Cuevas-Vargas et al. 2021). When those relationships have been examined, this research will answer the question what can marketing innovation bring in the quest for better destination branding.

H2: Marketing Innovation positively influences Tourist Perception.

The application of marketing innovation within the tourism sector has a considerable impact on the tourists' images, and this should be taken into account while developing strategies (D'Attoma and Ieva 2020). The constant changes and developments in the tourism industry have led to the emergence of new marketing methods, which, in turn, help to promote the unique features of the destination and integrate the audience through various channels (Purchase and Volery 2020). This integration can be done through the use of interactive content, VR, and

individual ads that make the storytelling around the brand much richer and more engaging. Such innovations work towards getting the attention of the tourists but are equally useful in rewarding the tourists with trust and credibility, which is potent in shaping their view about the destination (Lv and Wu 2021).

In addition, the benefits of marketing innovation for any destination are that it also serves to improve the visitor's experiences, and in turn, helps develop their quality and satisfaction perceptions (Zhao, Cui, and Guo 2022). Proper marketing strategies and features lead to sales through promotion of the culture of their area, sites of nature, and events which are worth visiting these places for (Mandagi, Centeno, and Indrajit 2022). These specific marketing promotions may increase recognition and most likely, admiration, or both to the targeted audience about the place and its surroundings (Rather, Najar, and Jaziri 2020). As travelers have come to prefer and use social networks and reviews for information, changes in marketing campaigns with social and audience-focused visuals are bound to change tourist perceptions that would otherwise take ages to achieve (Tran and Rudolf 2022).

Although the role of marketing innovation in shaping tourist perception is increasingly acknowledged, research done on this aspect still leaves much to be desired as it relates primarily to established destinations. However, while such a linkage has been drawn between certain marketing practices and their impact on tourist perception (Hanna, Rowley, and Keegan 2021), few studies have actually looked into how any specific innovative marketing campaigns have relevance in strategy formulation and execution targeting the perception of tourists to these less traveled or growing tourism areas. This research is intended to fill this void by examining how the different components of marketing innovation—fashioned as digital storytelling, experiential marketing and engagement strategies—affect the perception of tourists in South Coastal regions. In doing so, this study will advance some understanding on the use of marketing innovation by tourism targeting strategies in enhancing the attractiveness of tourism destinations to the intended audiences.

H3: Marketing Innovation positively influences Tourism Growth.

The dynamic landscape of the tourism industry necessitates the continuous evolution of marketing strategies, where innovation plays a pivotal role in driving tourism growth (Carvache-Franco et al. 2022). Innovative marketing practices, such as leveraging social media platforms, utilizing data analytics for targeted advertising, and creating immersive digital experiences, enable destinations to reach broader audiences and effectively engage potential visitors. By implementing cutting-edge marketing strategies, destinations can enhance their visibility and appeal, leading to an increase in tourist arrivals (Bob 2021). This proactive approach not only attracts new visitors but also encourages repeat visits, ultimately contributing to sustained growth within the tourism sector (Boonying et al. 2024).

Moreover, the relationship between marketing innovation and tourism growth is further reinforced by its impact on the overall tourist experience (Mnguni, Mtapuri, and Giampiccoli 2020). When destinations adopt innovative marketing techniques, they often provide unique and memorable experiences that resonate with visitors. For instance, the use of virtual tours and

interactive websites allows potential tourists to explore destinations before making travel decisions, thereby enhancing their likelihood of visiting (Pafi, Flannery, and Murtagh 2020). Additionally, innovative marketing campaigns that emphasize local culture and attractions can foster a deeper connection between tourists and the destination, enhancing visitor satisfaction and encouraging positive word-of-mouth. This holistic approach to tourism marketing is essential for fostering a loyal customer base and promoting long-term growth in the industry.

Despite the acknowledged significance of marketing innovation in stimulating tourism growth, there remains a considerable research gap concerning the specific mechanisms through which these innovations translate into growth outcomes, especially in lesser-known destinations. While existing literature has examined the effects of marketing strategies on tourism performance (Ren et al. 2021), there is limited empirical evidence exploring how different facets of marketing innovation uniquely contribute to growth in various tourism contexts. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the direct and indirect effects of marketing innovation on tourism growth in South Coastal regions, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding of how innovative practices can be tailored to enhance growth in diverse tourist markets.

H4: Destination Branding positively influences Tourist Perception.

The concept of destination branding has emerged as a fundamental component in the tourism sector, significantly shaping how potential tourists perceive a location (Zhu, Zhan, and Li 2021). A well-crafted brand identity encapsulates the unique characteristics, values, and experiences that a destination offers, effectively differentiating it from competitors. By utilizing strategic branding elements—such as logos, slogans, and thematic imagery—destinations can create a cohesive narrative that resonates with target audiences (Fang et al. 2021). This narrative, when effectively communicated, cultivates positive associations in the minds of potential visitors, thereby enhancing their overall perception of the destination.

Moreover, destination branding not only serves to attract visitors but also influences their expectations and experiences. A strong brand can establish a sense of credibility and reliability, leading tourists to develop a more favorable view of the destination (Khan and Hou 2021). This is particularly important in an era where travelers have access to vast amounts of information and rely on online reviews and social media for their travel decisions. When a destination successfully positions itself as a desirable and trustworthy option, it fosters a positive tourist perception, which can translate into increased visitation rates and tourist satisfaction. Thus, effective destination branding strategies play a crucial role in shaping tourists' experiences before, during, and after their visit (Simo-Kengne 2022).

Despite the critical role of destination branding in influencing tourist perception, existing research presents a notable gap in understanding how specific branding strategies impact perceptions across diverse demographic groups and geographic contexts. While previous studies have highlighted the importance of branding in tourism (Pulido-Fernández and Cárdenas-García 2021), there is limited empirical evidence examining the nuances of how branding efforts affect perceptions among different types of travelers. Additionally, the effects

of branding on less popular or emerging destinations remain underexplored, presenting an opportunity for further investigation. This study aims to address these gaps by examining the relationship between destination branding and tourist perception in South Coastal regions, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of branding's role in shaping perceptions within the tourism industry.

H5: Destination Branding positively influences Tourism Growth.

Destination branding plays a crucial role in fostering tourism growth by establishing a distinctive identity that attracts visitors and encourages sustainable economic development (Ahmad, Menegaki, and Al-Muharrami 2020). A strong brand effectively communicates the unique attributes of a destination, such as its cultural heritage, natural beauty, and recreational opportunities (Ramkissoo 2023). By creating a cohesive narrative around these characteristics, destinations can differentiate themselves in a competitive market, leading to increased visibility and attractiveness to potential tourists. This enhanced appeal not only draws in new visitors but also encourages repeat tourism, contributing to long-term growth in the local tourism sector.

Furthermore, effective destination branding cultivates a sense of loyalty among tourists, which is essential for sustained tourism growth (Godovykh, Pizam, and Bahja 2020). When visitors have positive experiences associated with a destination's brand, they are more likely to return and recommend the location to others, creating a cycle of growth fueled by word-of-mouth promotion. Additionally, well-executed branding strategies often include community engagement, fostering a sense of ownership among local residents and encouraging them to become ambassadors for their destination (Hateftabar and Chapuis 2020). This grassroots support can further enhance the destination's reputation and appeal, driving increased visitation and economic benefits for the region.

Despite the acknowledged importance of destination branding in promoting tourism growth, research on the direct relationship between these variables remains limited, particularly concerning emerging and less prominent tourist destinations. While existing literature has identified branding as a vital component of tourism marketing strategies (Rahman et al. 2021), there is a lack of empirical studies that delve into how branding impacts growth metrics such as tourist arrivals, revenue generation, and local economic development. Furthermore, many studies tend to focus on well-established tourist destinations, overlooking the potential of branding to drive growth in developing regions. This research aims to bridge this gap by investigating the influence of destination branding on tourism growth in South Coastal regions, thus contributing valuable insights to the field of tourism management.

H6: Tourist Perception positively influences Tourism Growth.

Tourist perception plays a fundamental role in shaping tourism growth by influencing travelers' decisions and experiences. When tourists perceive a destination positively, they are more likely to visit, recommend it to others, and engage in repeat visits. This relationship is particularly evident in the context of social media and online reviews, where positive perceptions can significantly impact a destination's reputation. For instance, research by (Chi et al. 2020) highlights how positive online reviews enhance potential tourists' perceptions,

leading to increased visitation rates and stronger brand loyalty. This indicates that cultivating positive perceptions is essential for destinations aiming to boost their growth and sustainability.

Moreover, the quality of the tourist experience is closely linked to perceptions formed prior to and during visits. Tourists' expectations, shaped by branding and marketing efforts, influence their satisfaction levels, which in turn affect their likelihood of returning to the destination. According to (Ali et al. 2023), the perceived quality of experiences contributes to tourists' overall satisfaction, which is a critical factor for fostering repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Satisfied tourists are more likely to share their experiences with others, creating a ripple effect that drives further growth in tourism as new visitors are drawn to the destination based on these positive testimonials.

Despite the recognition of the link between tourist perception and tourism growth, gaps remain in understanding the specific elements that contribute to this relationship across various contexts. While previous studies have established a connection between satisfaction and loyalty (Persaud, Wang, and Schillo 2021), there is limited empirical research examining how different dimensions of tourist perception—such as service quality, destination attributes, and personal experiences—specifically influence tourism growth. Furthermore, the impact of cultural differences on perceptions and their subsequent effects on tourism growth in diverse destinations has not been extensively explored. Addressing these gaps will provide valuable insights into how destinations can effectively leverage tourist perceptions to enhance growth and foster sustainable tourism development.

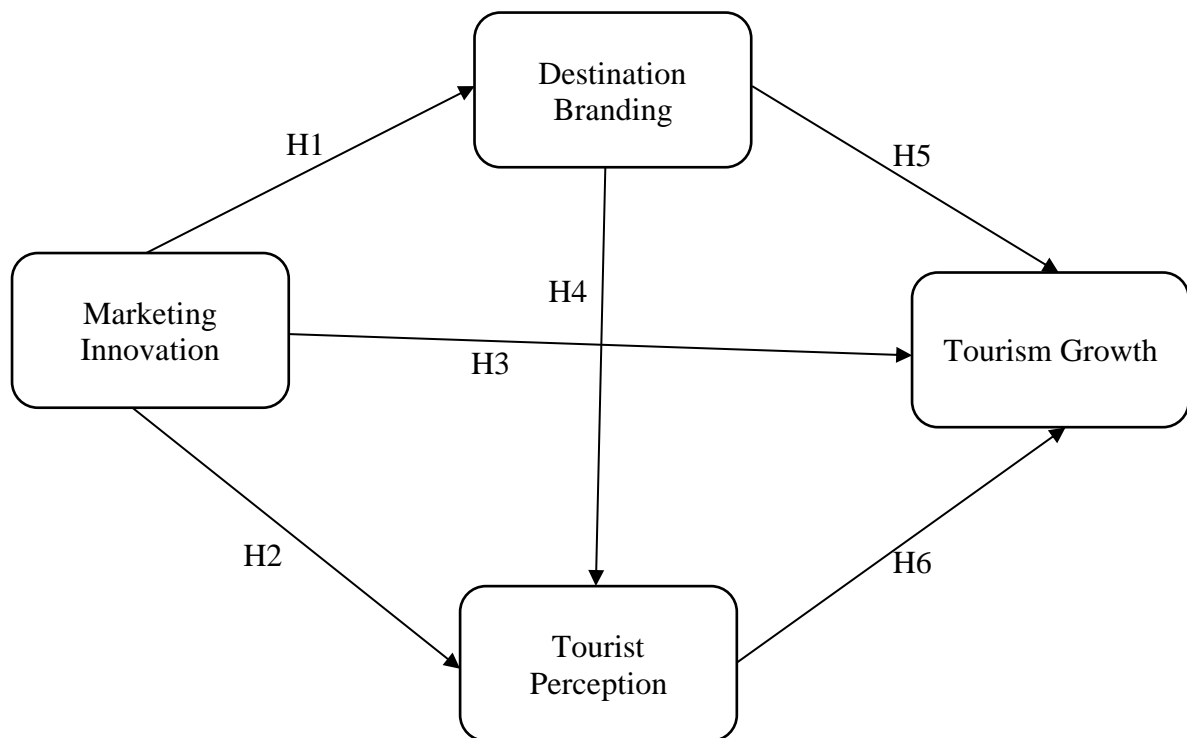


Figure 1. Framework

Research Methods

The research employs a quantitative methodology utilizing a random sampling technique across several tourist attractions in the South Coastal region during the Idul Fitri celebration in 2023. The sample criteria are specifically focused on individuals aged between 17 and 25 years, ensuring that the study captures the perceptions of a demographic that is actively engaged in tourism. To determine the sample size, the Slovin formula is applied, resulting in a total sample of 367 respondents from various tourist sites. This approach allows for a robust analysis of the data collected, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the relationships among the variables. The data will be analyzed using Smart PLS, a software tool designed for structural equation modeling, which facilitates the examination of complex relationships between the constructs involved in the study.

Result and Discussion

Here are the results regarding the validity and reliability of the constructs.

Table 2. Construct Validity and Reliability

Variable	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Destination Branding	0,768	0,822	0,863	0,678
Marketing Innovation	0,793	0,883	0,872	0,696
Tourism Growth	0,811	0,829	0,888	0,726
Tourist Perception	0,814	0,828	0,889	0,729

The validity and reliability of the constructs in this research are assessed through various statistical metrics, including Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The results indicate strong internal consistency across all constructs, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.768 to 0.814, surpassing the commonly accepted threshold of 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Furthermore, rho_A and Composite Reliability values are also above the acceptable limit of 0.7, indicating that the constructs are reliable. The AVE values for all constructs, which range from 0.678 to 0.729, exceed the recommended threshold of 0.5, suggesting that the constructs capture a significant amount of variance in their respective indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Collectively, these findings confirm that the measurement model is valid and reliable, thereby providing a solid foundation for further analysis of the relationships among destination branding, marketing innovation, tourist perception, and tourism growth in this study.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

Variable	Destination Branding	Marketing Innovation	Tourism Growth	Tourist Perception
Destination Branding	0,823			
Marketing Innovation	0,628	0,834		
Tourism Growth	0,736	0,624	0,852	
Tourist Perception	0,686	0,651	0,658	0,854

Discriminant validity is assessed to ensure that the constructs in the study are distinct and measure different concepts. The results presented indicate satisfactory discriminant validity, as evidenced by the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each

construct being greater than the correlations among the constructs. Specifically, the square root of AVE for Destination Branding (0.823), Marketing Innovation (0.834), Tourism Growth (0.852), and Tourist Perception (0.854) exceeds the inter-construct correlations, which range from 0.624 to 0.736. This indicates that each construct is sufficiently distinct from the others, supporting the assertion that they represent unique theoretical concepts (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Establishing discriminant validity is critical in ensuring the robustness of the measurement model, as it affirms that the constructs do not merely overlap but rather contribute uniquely to understanding the relationships within the framework of destination branding, marketing innovation, and tourism growth (Hair et al., 2011).

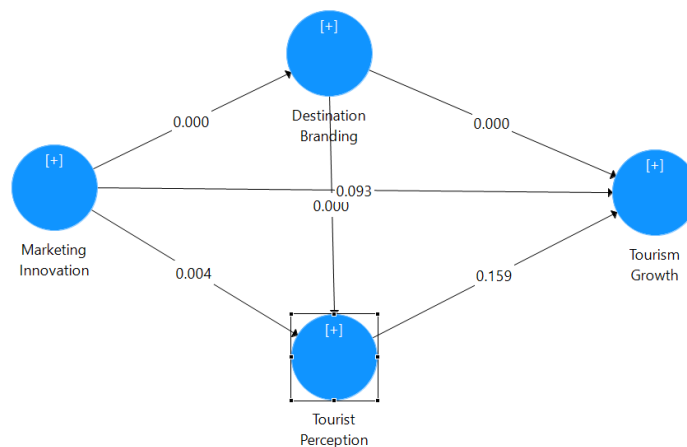


Figure 2. Bootstrapping

The next test is the hypothesis test which is presented in the following table:

Table 4. Hypothesis

Hypothesis			Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	Statistic	P Values
Destination Branding	Tourism Growth	->	0,471	0,455	0,105	4,486	0,000
Destination Branding	Tourist Perception	->	0,458	0,481	0,110	4,151	0,000
Marketing Innovation	Destination Branding	->	0,628	0,646	0,066	9,461	0,000
Marketing Innovation	Tourism Growth	->	0,191	0,205	0,114	1,681	0,093
Marketing Innovation	Tourist Perception	->	0,363	0,345	0,126	2,871	0,004
Tourist Perception	Tourism Growth	->	0,211	0,214	0,149	1,410	0,159

The hypothesis testing results provide significant insights into the relationships among the constructs within the study, revealing both strong and nuanced interactions between destination branding, marketing innovation, tourist perception, and tourism growth. The findings indicate that destination branding has a substantial positive impact on tourism growth, with a standardized path coefficient of 0.471 and a T-statistic of 4.486, which is well above the critical value of 1.96. This result is statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.000, affirming the hypothesis that effective destination branding contributes significantly to tourism growth.

This aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of branding in enhancing a destination's appeal and fostering economic growth through increased tourist arrivals (Morgan et al., 2003).

In addition, the relationship between destination branding and tourist perception also shows a strong positive effect, as indicated by a path coefficient of 0.458 and a T-statistic of 4.151, yielding a p-value of 0.000. This highlights that how a destination is branded significantly influences how tourists perceive it, ultimately shaping their attitudes and decisions regarding travel (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). Positive perceptions fostered through effective branding can enhance tourists' overall satisfaction and likelihood of recommending the destination to others, creating a cycle of positive reinforcement that supports long-term growth in tourism (Chen & Rahman, 2018).

Conversely, the impact of marketing innovation on destination branding is remarkably strong, with a path coefficient of 0.628 and a T-statistic of 9.461, accompanied by a p-value of 0.000. This result underscores the critical role of innovative marketing strategies in shaping a destination's brand identity. As destinations increasingly rely on modern marketing techniques—such as social media engagement, experiential marketing, and personalized communication—they can enhance their branding efforts, effectively reaching and engaging target audiences (Pike, 2009). This finding resonates with the literature emphasizing the need for destinations to adopt innovative practices to remain competitive in an ever-evolving tourism landscape (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

While the path from marketing innovation to tourism growth yields a coefficient of 0.191 and a T-statistic of 1.681, the p-value of 0.093 indicates that this relationship is not statistically significant at the conventional 0.05 level. This suggests that, although marketing innovation may influence tourism growth indirectly through branding and perception, its direct impact is less pronounced in this context. This finding prompts further exploration into the mechanisms through which marketing innovations can translate into tangible growth outcomes, especially in less established tourist markets (Baker & Cameron, 2008).

The relationship between marketing innovation and tourist perception shows a more substantial impact, with a path coefficient of 0.363 and a T-statistic of 2.871, yielding a p-value of 0.004. This indicates that innovative marketing strategies positively influence how tourists perceive a destination, aligning with findings in the literature that highlight the role of customer experiences and expectations in shaping perceptions (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). By enhancing tourists' experiences through innovative approaches, destinations can foster favorable perceptions that contribute to overall satisfaction and encourage repeat visits.

Finally, the direct impact of tourist perception on tourism growth, with a path coefficient of 0.211 and a T-statistic of 1.410, reveals a p-value of 0.159, indicating it is not statistically significant at the conventional levels. This suggests that while tourist perception may play a role in influencing growth, its effect is likely mediated by other constructs such as branding and marketing innovation. Future research should delve deeper into understanding the interplay between these variables, especially considering the diverse contexts of different destinations

and their unique challenges in cultivating positive tourist perceptions that can effectively drive growth (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2011).

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, this study demonstrates the significant interplay between destination branding, marketing innovation, tourist perception, and tourism growth, highlighting the crucial role of effective branding and innovative marketing strategies in enhancing tourist experiences and perceptions. The findings indicate that strong destination branding positively influences tourism growth and shapes tourist perceptions, which in turn contribute to increased visitation rates. Furthermore, while marketing innovation significantly affects destination branding and tourist perception, its direct impact on tourism growth appears to be mediated through these constructs. Overall, this research underscores the importance of adopting innovative marketing practices and robust branding strategies for destinations aiming to foster sustainable tourism growth, thereby providing valuable insights for stakeholders in the tourism industry.

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