

Tourist Destination Loyalty in Thailand: The Impact of Digital Marketing, Destination Personalities, Experience and Satisfaction

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of destination personalities, digital marketing communication, tourism experiences, and tourist satisfaction on destination loyalty in Thailand using data from 402 tourists and PLS-SEM analysis. The objectives are to examine how destination personalities influence tourist experiences and loyalty, analyze the impact of digital marketing on satisfaction and loyalty, and study the effects of experiences and satisfaction on loyalty. The findings show that although destination personalities have no direct impact on loyalty, it highlights that destination personalities foster emotional bonds and memorable experiences, indirectly boosting loyalty through satisfaction but they do enhance tourist' satisfaction and experiences. Digital marketing enhances satisfaction without immediately affecting loyalty, the research underscores the importance of strong destination identities, effective digital marketing, and high-quality tourism experiences in enhancing tourist satisfaction and loyalty. However, loyalty is eventually strengthened by both travel experiences and satisfaction. Moreover, tourism experiences mediate the relationship between destination personalities and loyalty, while satisfaction mediates the impact of digital marketing on loyalty. Consequently, destination managers should prioritize developing distinct destination identities, investing in digital marketing, and delivering exceptional experiences to various target audiences. This research aims to deepen the understanding of how tourist experiences and loyalty are influenced by destination personality and digital marketing, focusing on the mediating roles of satisfaction and experience.

Keywords: Destination personalities, digital marketing communication, tourism experiences, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty



Introduction

Thailand's tourist sector faced a number of challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, including a sharp drop in foreign arrivals as a result of stringent travel restrictions that included mandatory quarantines and border closures (Klinsrisuk and Pechdin, 2022; Seyfi et al., 2023). In response, the Thai government began to relax laws and implement initiatives such as the "Phuket Sandbox" to attract immunized tourists without making them stay in quarantine (Siriluck et al., 2023). Other programs that helped the local businesses were aggressive immunization campaigns and the promotion of domestic travel (Wongmonta, 2021; Luangasanatip et al., 2023). Despite these efforts, the tourist sector is still unable to significantly increase GDP and create jobs (Sann and Chen, 2022; Tantrakarnapa et al., 2020). In an attempt to mitigate the effects on the economy, the government provided financial assistance and stimulus programs (Wudhikarn et al., 2024). Additionally, the sector fosters regional, cultural, and infrastructure development (Baker and Phongpaichit, 2021; Marome and Shaw, 2021). Thailand's tourism industry is broad and draws travelers who are looking for wellness retreats, adventurers, beachcombers, and culture vultures (Ongsakul et al., 2022). But in order to strike a balance between monetary gains and the protection of the environment and culture, sustainable methods are needed (Leurcharumsee et al., 2022; Sutawatnatcha et al., 2021).

The literature often overlooks the interactions between destination personalities, digital marketing communication, tourism experiences, and

tourist satisfaction. Emerging technologies and their impact on these factors are underexplored, as are the mediation effects between variables. Additionally, inconsistent measurement of constructs affects the reliability of findings, and sustainability and ethical considerations are insufficiently addressed. This research focuses on these gaps by examining the factors that influence tourism experiences, satisfaction, and destination loyalty.

As a result of previous research, the following research questions were derived:

RQ#1: What are the factors that impact tourism experiences and tourist satisfaction?

RQ#2: What are the factors that impact destination loyalty?

RQ#3: How do destination personalities influence tourism experiences, destination loyalty?

RQ#4: How does digital marketing communication influence destination loyalty and tourist satisfaction?

Research background

Thailand's tourism industry has shown a good recovery from the COVID-19 outbreak, with over 2 million visits per month between December 2022 and March 2023 (Kaewklub and Phetvaroon, 2023). Projections indicate that approximately 25 million arrivals are expected in 2023 (KASIKORN Research Center Company Limited., 2023). The number of travelers increased from 35.35 million in 2017 to 39.92 million in 2019, but the harsh travel restrictions resulting from the pandemic caused a steep decrease to 6.7 million in 2020 (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017-2020). The hotel sector was severely damaged, with



many jobs lost and financial difficulties. The country reopened in November 2021 despite the increase in delta variation, although initially not many people came (Kuai and Ser, 2021).

Thailand's tourism sector is rebounding well from the COVID-19 pandemic, as seen by the over 2 million monthly visits from December 2022 to March 2023 and the noteworthy increase in Chinese visitors in early 2023. Estimates for 2023 indicate 25 million arrivals. This resurgence follows a drastic drop from nearly 40 million tourists in 2019 to just 6.7 million in 2020 due to stringent travel restrictions. While the hospitality sector suffered severe impacts, including job losses and financial hardship, the country's reopening in late 2021 and the lifting of restrictions in 2022 facilitated a steady increase in tourist numbers. Tourism, contributing 18.4% to Thailand's GDP in 2019, remains vital to the economy, and the anticipated return of Chinese tourists is crucial. However, the sector's recovery hinges on its ability to adapt to ongoing global uncertainties, balance public health concerns, and sustain long-term growth amidst potential future disruptions.

Objective of the study

1. To examine the factors of destination personalities influencing tourist experiences and loyalty.
2. To analyze the impact of digital marketing communication on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty.
3. To study the effect of tourism experiences and tourist satisfaction on destination loyalty.

Benefits of the research

This research aims to enhance knowledge of destination personalities and digital marketing communication, with a focus on their impact on destination loyalty within Thailand's tourism industry. By examining these factors, the research provides useful data to the public and private sectors, aiding in the development of workable strategies to boost traveler loyalty. The findings will also open the door for more research on the dynamics of loyalty in the tourism sector.

The research's findings can be used by organizations to improve relationships with visitors, make strategic decisions, and raise target group involvement. It is especially relevant to the travel and tourism sectors in Thailand. The collaboration of the public and private sectors can further strengthen these programs. The study will produce useful information that may be used locally to tailor offers and break into new markets. This will eventually help travelers as well as businesses, which will boost the travel and tourism sectors.

Literature review and hypothesis formulation

Destination personalities

Since Aaker (1997) introduced the Brand Personality Scale (BPS), which includes 42 attributes categorized into five dimensions (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness), brand personality has garnered significant attention. This scale helps businesses understand and effectively communicate their brand's characteristics. The implementation of BPS has shown relatively stable dimensions across various cultures,



leading to its application in tourism. Studies on destination personality are on the rise (Kovacic et al., 2019; Lin and Roberts, 2019). Describing a destination using human traits, such as warm, nice, or charming, can enhance its appeal. For instance, Phi Phi Island is seen as an energetic and brilliant destination, while the Temple of the Emerald Buddha is regarded as cultured and traditional (Auemsuvarn and Ngamcharoenmongkol, 2022). This humanization of destinations can also boost destination equity by adding symbolic values and functions, thereby increasing revenue for tourist spots (Hanna and Rowley, 2019).

Tešin et al. (2023) found that openness to experience and a desire for knowledge significantly impact tourism experiences, influencing destination personality, satisfaction, and revisit intention. Destination personality directly affects destination image (Zhang et al., 2019) and drives behavioral outcomes. For example, positive personality perceptions are associated with intentions to both recommend and revisit, which in turn lead to destination loyalty (Pan et al., 2017). Destination personalities enhance destination loyalty by creating memorable and relatable identities that strengthen tourists' emotional connections and satisfaction, thereby increasing the likelihood of revisits and recommendations (Yang et al., 2021). Proposed Hypotheses:

H1: Destination personalities positively affect tourism experiences.

H2: Destination personalities positively affect destination loyalty.

Digital marketing communication

Digital Marketing communications, a key part of marketing strategy, use various methods and channels to convey messages to consumers. Limna et al. (2022) note a shift from traditional media to integrated digital platforms. Current research focuses on the effectiveness of different channels, technological advancements, and consumer behavior's role in marketing strategies. Kurdi et al. (2022) compare traditional channels like TV and print with digital platforms like social media and email marketing, highlighting the increased personalization and interactivity of digital channels (Chandra et al., 2022). Understanding consumer behavior is crucial. Ghorbani et al. (2022) emphasizes the need for personalized strategies in the digital age.

Melania and Ellyawati (2018) demonstrate that online promotion boosts destination loyalty by increasing awareness and tourist satisfaction. Similarly, Al-Dmour et al. (2023) reveal that social media marketing, which includes promotions and relevant content, enhances brand loyalty in the tourism sector, mediated by customer satisfaction. Bedi (2023) also supports this by showing that structured digital marketing, continuous training, and robust feedback mechanisms improve customer loyalty and satisfaction in the Sarovar hotel group. These studies collectively underscore the positive impact of digital marketing communication on destination loyalty.

Mathew and Soliman (2021) highlight that Digital Content Marketing influences tourist behavior, with satisfaction and convenience driving positive attitudes. Chamidah et al. (2020) find that accurate digital communication significantly enhances tourist satisfaction in

Sitiwinangun Tourism Village. Chamboko-Mpotaringa and Tichaawa (2023) show that high-quality information in digital marketing has a substantial impact on tourist satisfaction. Suryawardani et al. (2021) link website quality and promotional strategies to impulsive buying and e-satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of digital interface design. Additionally, Suyaman et al. (2024) and Hadi (2023) demonstrate that integrated marketing communications and service quality improvements in Indonesian hotels drive consumer satisfaction. These findings collectively illustrate the positive effects of digital marketing communication on tourist satisfaction. Proposed Hypothesis:

H3: Digital marketing communication positively affects destination loyalty.

H4: Digital marketing communication positively affects tourist satisfaction.

Tourism experience

The term tourism experience refers to all aspects of a traveler's trip, from preparation to lodging and activities while on location. According to Sharma and Nayak (2019), tourist memory significantly impacts tourist choices and shapes perceptions and conditions for future transactions. Various studies have shown that tourism experiences influence tourists' behavioral intentions, such as their desire to revisit, share their experiences with others, and recommend destinations (Sharma and Nayak, 2019; Sthapit et al., 2019). The selectively reconstructed impressions and experiences of tourists play a crucial role in shaping their future attitudes. Moreover, tourists' memories significantly influence their decision-

making process regarding revisiting and sharing their experiences (Seyfi et al., 2020). The experiences tourists have at a destination often lead to loyalty behaviors, particularly the intention to revisit (Yu et al., 2019).

Kim (2018) shows that memorable tourism experiences significantly impact future behavioral intentions, directly and through destination image and tourist satisfaction, challenging the primacy of visitor satisfaction. Liu and Soutar (2021) reveal that various tourism experiences affect both attribute-based and holistic destination images, which in turn influence loyalty, including ecotourism loyalty, through satisfaction. Viet et al. (2021) demonstrate that destination image and tourist satisfaction significantly impact destination loyalty. Tourist experiences moderate the relationship between tourist motivation and loyalty.

Wu and Lai (2023) find that symbolic congruity, aligning tourists' self-image with a destination's personality, is more effective in fostering loyalty than functional congruity. Kim and Stepchenkova (2020) demonstrate that tourists' cultural backgrounds influence their perceptions of destination personality, affecting experiences and loyalty. Yang et al. (2021) propose that self-congruity and emotional experiences mediate the relationship between destination personality and tourist loyalty. Johnson and Anderson (2019), and Davis and Carter (2021) consistently show that memorable tourism experiences significantly influence destination loyalty, especially through unique attractions and adventure experiences. Proposed Hypothesis:

H5: Tourism experiences positively affect destination loyalty.



H7: Tourism experiences mediate the relationship between destination personalities and destination loyalty.

Tourist satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is the sense of fulfillment that arises when travel experiences meet or exceed tourists' objectives and expectations (Chen and Chen, 2020). It encompasses a range of beliefs and experiences before and after travel. High satisfaction levels referrals and repeat visits, which are crucial for the success of tourism destinations. Factors contributing to this satisfaction include the visitor's overall impression of the destination, the attractiveness of its natural landscapes, and the efficiency of the services provided (Lee et al., 2019). Jeong and Kim (2020) explored the connections between tourists' satisfaction, their perceptions of event quality, their sense of connection to the destination, and their intentions to change their behavior.

Lu et al. (2020) studied tourists in Hong Kong and found that tourist satisfaction positively influences destination loyalty. Their research indicates that satisfied tourists are more likely to return to the destination and recommend it to others, thus enhancing loyalty (Jeong and Kim, 2020). Additionally, Sanjaya et al. (2020) demonstrated that a positive destination image boosts destination loyalty, with tourist satisfaction serving as a mediating factor.

Fitriana et al. (2021) show that integrated digital marketing enhances destination image and guest satisfaction, fostering loyalty through personalized experiences. Khan and Hashim (2020) propose a destination tourist satisfaction index using

social media engagement to gauge the impact of digital marketing on loyalty intentions. Mirzaalian and Halpenny (2021) explore how digital information sources and positive digital feedback enhance horizontal and traditional loyalty. Proposed Hypothesis:

H6: Tourism satisfaction positively affects destination loyalty.

H8: Tourism satisfaction mediates the relationship between digital marketing communication and destination loyalty.

Destination loyalty

Destination loyalty refers to the commitment and attachment tourists feel towards a specific destination, which influences their likelihood to revisit, choose it over alternatives, and recommend it to others based on positive experiences. If tourists view the destination experience as a product, they may decide to return or suggest it to family and friends (Stavrianea and Kamenidou, 2021). This loyalty is often measured as a behavioral intention, including both revisiting and recommending the destination. Intention to revisit a tourist destination is a type of post-consumption behavior, defined as a tourist's assessment of the likelihood of returning to the same place (Chen et al., 2020). Therefore, most studies (Cosso-Silva et al., 2019; Lv et al., 2020) define destination loyalty in terms of revisit intention and recommendation intention. Including both aspects enhances the prediction of the construct and provides a more accurate representation of destination loyalty (Cossio-Silva et al., 2019).

Research model and hypothesis

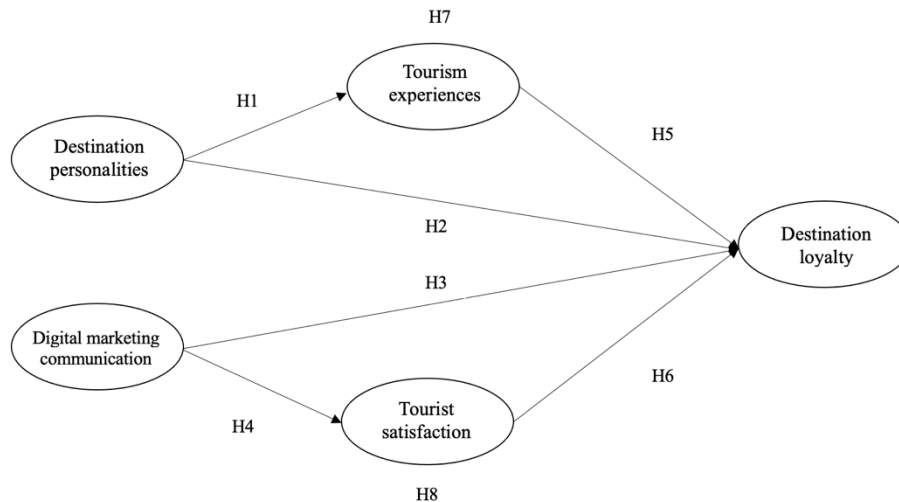


Figure 1 A proposal model

The proposed model presented in Figure 1. Key hypotheses for the proposed models are also designed to provide meaningful insights into the relationships as follows:

- H1: Destination personalities positively affect tourism experiences.
- H2: Destination personalities positively affect destination loyalty.
- H3: Digital marketing communication positively effects destination loyalty.
- H4: Digital marketing communication positively effects tourist satisfaction.
- H5: Tourism experiences positively affect destination loyalty.
- H6: Tourism satisfaction positively effects destination loyalty.
- H7: Tourism experiences mediate the relationship between destination personalities and destination loyalty.

H8: Tourism satisfaction mediates the relationship between digital marketing communication and destination loyalty.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design using a survey to collect data from participants. The target population for this study was tourists visiting Thailand. A total of 402 participants were surveyed, a sample size determined to provide sufficient statistical power for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Convenience sampling was employed to select participants, allowing for the efficient collection of data from a diverse group of tourists. A structured questionnaire was used, comprising sections on demographic information, destination personalities, tourism



experiences, digital marketing communication, tourism satisfaction, and destination loyalty. The questionnaires were distributed to participants at various tourist locations in Bangkok and surrounding areas. Participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and assured of their anonymity. Participants were required to have visited Bangkok at least once in the past twelve months and to have previously visited specific places in Bangkok, Thailand.

The survey included items measured using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represented strongly disagree and 5 represented strongly agree. Some sample survey items included: "I use digital marketing channels to search for information about tourism destinations." (adapted from Amaro et al., 2016), "I felt relaxed when traveling in Thailand." (adapted from Uriely, 2005), and "I would like to visit Thailand next time." (adapted from Jacoby et al., 1978). Before data analysis, the collected data were screened to ensure accuracy and completeness. Incomplete responses were discarded, and the remaining data were checked for outliers and inconsistencies. Normality and linearity of the data were assessed to meet the assumptions for PLS-SEM analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, and reliability tests were conducted to ensure the internal consistency of the survey items.

Data collection

To ensure validity and reliability, this research employs a multi-stage data collection process. Initially, a comprehensive questionnaire is developed to gather demographic data and utilize established scales for measuring

destination loyalty and satisfaction. A convenience sample of at least 400 respondents from Bangkok, Thailand, is selected based on accessibility and willingness. To enhance data reliability, several steps are taken: using proven criteria from previous studies, designing clear and straightforward surveys to maintain respondent interest, conducting a pilot study to refine the questionnaire, collaborating with relevant organizations to improve participation and data representativeness, and filtering out excessively harsh or irrelevant responses. Multiple rounds of data collection are conducted until data saturation is achieved. Despite its limitations, convenience sampling provides valuable insights into factors affecting traveler satisfaction and destination loyalty.

Measurement development

Measurement items were developed from a thorough review of previous research, focusing on key variables such as destination personalities (DPER), digital marketing communication (DMC), tourism experiences (TEXP), tourist satisfaction (TSAT), and destination loyalty (DL). Each construct is assessed using a 5-point Likert scale to capture participants' opinions and attitudes. Aspects of marketing communication, consumer loyalty, and tourism are all covered in the questionnaire sections. The research questionnaire design, which measures opinions on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale facilitates data analysis and streamlines the survey process, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). There are two sections to the questionnaire. Verifying the ease of use, comprehension, and clarity of surveys requires pilot testing. It enables



researchers to recognize and hone possible problems prior to the primary data collection. This study's measuring scales showed excellent dependability.

Data analysis and results

Data distribution

Gathering demographic data is essential to understanding the travel preferences and inclinations of visitors to Thailand. The

demographic information on tourists visiting Thailand: The majority of tourists are female, accounting for 56.5% of the total. The most common age group among tourists is 21-30 years old, representing 42% of the tourists. In terms of marital status, 46.3% of the tourists are single. Geographically, the largest group of tourists comes from Asia, making up 26.4% of the total. Regarding their travel history, the highest frequency is observed among tourists who have visited Thailand 3-4 times, at 32.8%.

Table 1 Demographic information on tourists visiting Thailand (n = 402)

Demographic	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	175	43.5
Female	227	56.5
Age		
Less than 20 years old	76	18.9
21 – 30 years old	169	42.0
31 – 40 years old	93	23.2
More than 40 years old	64	15.9
Marriage status		
Single	186	46.3
Married	162	40.3
Divorce	54	13.4
Region origin		
Asia	106	26.4
Africa	65	16.2
North America	68	16.9
South America	54	13.5
Antarctica	30	7.5
Europe	47	11.7
Australia	32	8.0
Number of times the tourists have visited Thailand		
1 – 2 time(s)	129	32.1
3 – 4 times	132	32.9
4 – 5 times	85	21.1
More than 5 times	56	13.9



Measurement model assessment

Measurement model assessment is a critical step in structural equation modeling (SEM) to ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs being studied. It involves evaluating the measurement properties of latent variables through various criteria. The number of questions, mean scores, and standard deviations (STD) for various tourism-related variables. For destination

personalities, with 27 questions, the mean score is 4.38 with a standard deviation of 0.40. Digital marketing communication, assessed with 4 questions, has a mean score of 4.42 and a standard deviation of 0.56. Tourism experiences, based on 9 questions, have a mean score of 4.34 and a standard deviation of 0.49. Tourist satisfaction, measured with 4 questions, shows a mean score of 4.38 and a standard deviation of 0.52. Lastly, destination loyalty, with 9 questions, has a mean score of 4.40 and a standard deviation of 0.49.

Table 2 The number of questions, mean scores, and standard deviations (STD) for variables.

Variables	Number of Questions	Mean	STD
Destination personalities	27	4.38	0.40
Digital marketing communication	4	4.42	0.56
Tourism experiences	9	4.34	0.49
Tourist satisfaction	4	4.38	0.52
Destination loyalty	9	4.40	0.49

The outer loadings and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for various constructs related to tourism are assessed both their reliability and potential multicollinearity issues. All constructs have outer loadings above 0.7 and VIF values below 5, indicating good reliability and no significant multicollinearity issues.

Specifically, destination personalities, digital marketing communication, tourism experiences, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty all demonstrate these qualities, signifying that each construct is both reliable and well-differentiated from each other in the context of this study. shown in Table 3.

**Table 3** The outer loadings and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Factors	Outer loadings	VIF
Destination personalities		
DPER 20	0.712	2.485
DPER 23	0.717	2.617
DPER 24	0.714	1.835
Digital marketing communication		
DMC 01	0.819	1.985
DMC 02	0.798	2.130
DMC 03	0.820	2.001
Tourism experiences		
TEXP 05	0.768	2.212
TEXP 06	0.756	1.311
TEXP 07	0.726	1.842
Tourist satisfaction		
TSAT 01	0.775	1.791
TSAT 02	0.744	1.574
TSAT 03	0.743	1.722
TSAT 04	0.704	1.817
Destination loyalty		
DL 05	0.759	2.050
DL 06	0.734	2.157
DL 07	0.785	1.821
DL 08	0.830	1.479

The reliability and validity measures for various constructs related to tourism. All constructs pass the threshold in Cronbach's alpha, Rho_A, Rho_C, and AVE, indicating good internal consistency, reliability, and adequate convergent validity. Specifically,

destination personalities, digital marketing communication, tourism experiences, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty all demonstrate these qualities, signifying that each construct is both reliable and valid for the measurements used. shown in Table 4.

Table 4 The reliability and validity measures for variables.

Construct and Measurement Items	Cronbach's alpha >0.7	Rho_A >0.7	Rho_C >0.7	AVE >0.5
Destination personalities	0.757	0.861	0.860	0.510
Digital marketing communication	0.853	0.757	0.757	0.660
Tourism experiences	0.795	0.854	0.853	0.563
Tourist satisfaction	0.829	0.795	0.794	0.550
Destination loyalty	0.861	0.831	0.830	0.605



The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values assess the discriminant validity of constructs in tourism, ensuring they are distinct from each other:

Destination loyalty has an HTMT value of 0.822 with destination personalities, 0.745 with digital marketing communication, 0.751 with tourism experiences, and 0.748 with tourist satisfaction. These values indicate a moderate to high distinction between constructs.

Destination personalities have an HTMT value of 0.850 with digital marketing communication, 0.813 with tourism experiences, and 0.795 with tourist satisfaction. These higher values reflect a

closer relationship but still confirm distinct constructs.

Digital marketing communication has an HTMT value of 0.703 with tourism experiences and 0.727 with tourist satisfaction, showing a clear distinction while highlighting meaningful relationships.

Tourism experiences have an HTMT value of 0.616 with tourist satisfaction, indicating they are related yet distinct constructs.

Overall, these HTMT values confirm that the constructs in the model are sufficiently distinct, ensuring the model accurately represents the relationships within the tourism domain.

Table 5 The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values for the relationships between different constructs in tourism.

	DL	DPER	DMC	TEXP	TSAT
Destination loyalty (DL)					
Destination personalities (DPER)	0.822				
Digital marketing communication (DMC)	0.745	0.850			
Tourism experiences (TEXP)	0.751	0.813	0.703		
Tourist satisfaction (TSAT)	0.748	0.795	0.727	0.616	

Structural model and hypotheses testing

This study uses Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) due to its suitability for exploratory research, complex model handling, and robustness with smaller samples. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) is included for its historical significance and straightforward assessment of model fit.

The structural model assesses the overall fit and specific relationships between constructs in tourism. The SRMR (0.051) and NFI (0.913) values for both models

are within acceptable ranges, indicating a good fit. The Chi-square values are higher for the estimated model, which is typical as it includes fewer parameters than the saturated model. The discrepancies (d_ULS and d_G) are slightly higher for the estimated model, suggesting some loss of fit compared to the saturated model. Overall, both models fit the data reasonably well, with the saturated model generally showing a slightly better fit across the indices. It's important to interpret these indices considering the specific model, its complexity, and the sample size, as each index has its limitations.

Table 6 Model Fit

Model fit	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.036	0.051
d_ULS	0.199	0.402
d_G	0.153	0.171
Chi-square	309.123	335.513
NFI	0.919	0.913

The results of hypothesis testing in the context of tourism. The analysis shows that destination personalities have a significant positive effect on tourism experiences, with a coefficient (B) of 0.814, a t-value of 23.454, and a p-value of 0.000, thus supporting Hypothesis 1 (H1). However, Hypothesis 2 (H2), which posited that destination personalities positively affect destination loyalty, is not supported, as indicated by a coefficient of 0.303, a t-value of 1.165, and a p-value of 0.244. Similarly, Hypothesis 3 (H3) is not supported, as digital marketing communication does not significantly affect destination loyalty (B = 0.111, t = 0.867, P = 0.386).

On the other hand, Hypothesis 4 (H4) is supported, demonstrating that digital marketing communication positively affects tourist satisfaction (B = 0.726, t = 18.845, P = 0.000). Further, the analysis supports Hypothesis 5 (H5), indicating that tourism experiences positively affect destination loyalty, with a coefficient of 0.270, a t-value of 2.130, and a p-value of 0.033. Lastly, Hypothesis 6 (H6) is also supported, showing that tourism satisfaction positively affects destination loyalty, with a coefficient of 0.259, a t-value of 2.220, and a p-value of 0.026.

Table 7 The results of hypothesis testing for various relationships in tourism

Hypothesis	B	STDEV	t	P	Result
H1: Destination personalities positively affect tourism experiences.	0.814	0.035	23.454	0.000	Supported
H2: Destination personalities positively affect destination loyalty.	0.303	0.260	1.165	0.244	<i>Not Supported</i>
H3: Digital marketing communication positively effects destination loyalty.	0.111	0.128	0.867	0.386	<i>Not Supported</i>
H4: Digital marketing communication positively effects tourist satisfaction.	0.726	0.039	18.845	0.000	Supported
H5: Tourism experiences positively affect destination loyalty.	0.270	0.126	2.130	0.033	Supported
H6: Tourism satisfaction positively effects destination loyalty.	0.259	0.117	2.220	0.026	Supported

The results of mediation analysis in the context of tourism. Hypothesis 7 (H7) posits that tourism experiences mediate the relationship between destination personalities and destination loyalty. This hypothesis is supported, with a coefficient (B) of 0.220, a t-value of 2.074, and a p-

value of 0.038. Similarly, Hypothesis 8 (H8) suggests that tourism satisfaction mediates the relationship between digital marketing communication and destination loyalty. This hypothesis is also supported, with a coefficient of 0.187, a t-value of 2.215, and a p-value of 0.027.

Table 8 Presents the results of hypotheses regarding mediation effects in tourism.

Hypothesis	B	STDEV	t	P	Result
H7: Tourism experiences mediate the relationship between destination personalities and destination loyalty.	0.220	0.106	2.074	0.038	Supported
H8: Tourism satisfaction mediates the relationship between digital marketing communication and destination loyalty.	0.187	0.086	2.215	0.027	Supported

Discussion

The study supports the theories connecting traveler experiences, destination personalities, and loyalty. Destination personalities significantly enhance tourism experiences and emotional bonds, contributing to destination loyalty (Aaker, 1997; Kovacic et al., 2019; Lin & Roberts, 2019). These personalities create memorable identities that strengthen tourists' connections and satisfaction, which are crucial for increasing revisit intentions and recommendations (Yang et al., 2021; Tešin et al., 2023).

Despite these strong connections, the direct effect of destination personalities on loyalty is not supported (H2). This may indicate that the impact of destination personalities on loyalty is more complex and relies on the mediating effects of other factors such as tourist satisfaction and tourism experiences. Tourists may require tangible and emotional experiences to translate the perceived personality of a destination into loyalty behaviors (Lu et al., 2020; Sanjaya et al., 2020).

Additionally, destination personalities might need to interact with personal experiences and satisfaction to effectively influence loyalty.

Digital marketing communication, while enhancing tourist satisfaction significantly (H4), does not directly affect destination loyalty (H3). However, it indirectly influences loyalty through increased satisfaction and personalized experiences (Al-Dmour et al., 2023; Bedi, 2023). This suggests that while digital marketing can create positive perceptions and satisfaction, it might not be sufficient on its own to drive loyalty without the reinforcing effect of actual travel experiences and satisfaction.

Tourism experiences have a significant positive impact on destination loyalty (H5) and mediate the relationship between destination personalities and loyalty (H7). Memorable experiences drive loyalty behaviors, particularly the intention to revisit and recommend destinations (Kim, 2018; Liu & Soutar, 2021; Yu et al., 2019).

Tourist satisfaction is a critical factor that directly affects destination loyalty (H6)



and mediates the relationship between digital marketing communication and loyalty (H8). High satisfaction levels lead to increased referrals and repeat visits, essential for the success of tourism destinations (Chen & Chen, 2020; Jeong & Kim, 2020).

Contribution to the literature

This research significantly advances the academic field of tourism management and marketing by elucidating the roles of destination personality and digital marketing communication in shaping tourism experiences and destination loyalty. It systematically examines how destination personality traits, such as competence, excitement, sophistication, and ruggedness, influence tourist experiences and behavioral intentions, thereby enriching theoretical frameworks around destination branding. The study also provides comprehensive insights into the impact of digital marketing on tourist satisfaction and loyalty, emphasizing personalized digital interactions and real-time data usage. By identifying the mediating roles of tourism experiences and satisfaction, the research links destination personality and digital marketing directly with destination loyalty, offering a nuanced perspective on tourist behavior. By emphasizing the importance of cultural and symbolic alignment in bringing travelers' self-identities into line with the personalities of their locations, this study contributes to the cultural elements of tourist marketing theories. By offering a comprehensive examination of the complex connections between destination personality, experiences, satisfaction, and loyalty, it outperforms the existing loyalty models. These results add to the theoretical

knowledge and have practical implications for marketing and tourism administration.

Implications for practice

The findings from this research provide several key implications for tourism management and marketing practices. Firstly, it is crucial to manage and align the destination's personality with marketing strategies to positively influence tourist behavior and expectations. By doing so, destinations can enhance tourist engagement and satisfaction. Secondly, the importance of digital marketing is underscored; adopting innovative digital marketing strategies is essential to effectively engaging target audiences and boosting destination loyalty.

Moreover, improving the quality of tourism experiences and ensuring high levels of satisfaction are pivotal, as these factors mediate the relationship between marketing efforts and loyalty. Destinations should also focus on aligning their offerings with tourists' cultural expectations to strengthen emotional and psychological connections, which in turn enhances loyalty. Addressing the multifaceted nature of destination loyalty requires a comprehensive approach that integrates personality, experiences, satisfaction, and effective marketing strategies.

Recommendations

To capitalize on this data, destinations should employ targeted marketing campaigns to accurately articulate and showcase their unique selling points. Highlighting unique aspects of the place



could help you live up to visitor expectations. Enhancing digital marketing initiatives with real-time data, personalized content, interactive platforms, and social media can significantly improve tourist involvement.

Creating distinctive travel experiences that speak to tourists' interests and convey the spirit of the place is also essential. Using data analytics to customize experiences for different visitor segments can increase satisfaction and loyalty. Marketing and operational initiatives can be optimized with the help of ongoing feedback tools, such as online review analysis and monthly questionnaires.

In conclusion, local businesses and stakeholders can gain from training programs that highlight the significance of distinctive destination features in attracting repeat visitors. By educating local stakeholders, destinations can ensure the widespread implementation of best practices in digital marketing. Employing these strategies allows venues to stay ahead of competitors, increase their attractiveness, and achieve consistent growth in visitor numbers and loyalty metrics.

Limitations and future research directions

This study provides insightful information about the dynamics of digital marketing, tourism experiences, destination personality, and loyalty. It does, however, have a number of shortcomings that provide opportunities for more study.

The results may not apply to all tourist groups or types of places because of the diversity of traveler demographics, personal preferences, and cultural

backgrounds. The results are based on a specific sample of visitors. Tracking changes in attitudes and behaviors over time is difficult with the cross-sectional methodology since it collects data at a single moment in time, especially in reaction to changing destination features or marketing strategies. More sophisticated measurement methods might also be necessary due to the intricacy of the variables involved, as the study might not have fully caught indirect or interaction effects. The reliance on self-reported data to measure subjective constructs like destination personality and tourist satisfaction introduces potential biases such as social desirability or response tendencies.

Future studies could use longitudinal studies to overcome these limitations by providing a clearer examination of causality and a better understanding of how visitor actions and views change over time. The generalizability of the results can be improved by broadening the sample to include visitors from other cultural backgrounds and demographic categories. It would also be helpful to investigate similar patterns in different destination categories, such as urban versus rural or popular versus growing places. To gain deeper insights, more research should look into other mediating or moderating variables, such as competitive dynamics, economic issues, or individual differences in travel motivation.

By uncovering underlying reasons behind visitor preferences and satisfaction that are not immediately apparent through quantitative measures alone, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies could improve our understanding of how tourists perceive



and respond to destination personalities and digital marketing initiatives. Finally, future studies should evaluate the effects of cutting-edge technology like advanced analytics, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence on visitor experiences and satisfaction as digital marketing technologies improve. By addressing these limitations and exploring the suggested areas for future research, scholars can deepen understanding of the intricate relationships that define tourism marketing and management, ultimately leading to more effective strategies for enhancing tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

Conclusion

This study was found that destination personalities significantly improve tourism experiences, which in turn enhance destination loyalty. Digital marketing communication also plays a

critical role in boosting tourist satisfaction, which further impacts loyalty. However, the direct influence of destination personalities and digital marketing communication on loyalty is mediated by tourism experiences and satisfaction.

For Thailand's tourism sector, these results imply that improving tourist experiences and satisfaction can strategically enhance destination loyalty and promote repeat visits. The study recommends a holistic approach to tourism management, integrating destination personality, experiences, satisfaction, and effective digital marketing strategies, while aligning cultural aspects to strengthen emotional ties with visitors. This strategy not only enriches theoretical understanding but also provides practical methods for boosting tourist loyalty and achieving sustainable growth.

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