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Marketing Strategy for Tourism Potential in the Framework of Regional Development as a Tourist Destination

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Abstract

This study discusses the marketing strategy for leveraging the tourism potential of Aceh Province, Indonesia, with the aim of developing the region into a thriving tourist destination. The respondents who participated in the survey included 200 foreign tourists and 100 domestic tourists. The data was tested and verified using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The primary data collected in the field indicates that, on the whole, the variables related to the research are still above the average. The results also reveal that the marketing strategy does not significantly impact the attractiveness of tourism in Aceh Province. However, when examining individual constructs within the marketing strategy model, it becomes evident that some of them positively and significantly contribute to the formation of certain dimensions of the marketing strategy, even though they may not have a statistically significant effect on tourism attractiveness. Furthermore, tourism attraction has been found to have a positive and significant impact on the excellence of tourism in Aceh Province. Tourists perceive all the tourist destinations within Aceh Province as highly superior and competitive when compared to destinations in other regions. As a result, the excellence of tourism, as highlighted in this study, is a direct outcome of tourism attractiveness, which encompasses main attractions (uniqueness), natural landscapes, cultural attractions, and traditional handicrafts.



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1. Introduction

The diversity of tourist attractions, ranging from natural, cultural, and artistic sites to artificial tourist destinations like theme parks, can serve as a vital pillar of the country's economy [1]. It also has the potential to create significant employment opportunities, allowing for the optimal utilization of both human and natural resources [2]. To harness these benefits, local governments must consistently employ a variety of strategies aligned with market demands and desires while ensuring that government spending remains free from corrupt

practices in the management of their cities, districts, and regions [3–5].

Marketing represents one such strategy, aimed at meeting the needs and preferences of the target market. The marketing concept revolves around three core pillars: firstly, commencing with understanding and addressing the needs and desires of the market; secondly, executing marketing initiatives within an integrated organizational framework; and thirdly, attaining profitability by prioritizing customer satisfaction [6]. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the tourism sector represents one of the most significant investments

capable of bolstering both the global and national economies [7].

The tourism sector in Aceh Province, Indonesia, still holds significant untapped potential for development although it was hit by natural disasters in the form of a tsunami which resulted in a decline in regional economic growth, encompassing various facets such as tsunami tourism, historical tourism, marine tourism, and Islamic tourism, among others [8, 9]. Aceh Province is renowned as the first hub for the spread of Islam in Indonesia, with the Pasai and Periak kingdoms thriving during the 15th and 16th centuries BC. Additionally, the Gunung Leuser Tourism Park, boasting numerous fast-flowing rivers, stands as a magnet for both domestic and foreign tourists. Furthermore, the region's cultural richness, including customs, traditional arts, and dances, enhances its appeal to tourists from both within the country and abroad. With proper management, this tourism potential has the potential to significantly boost the income of Acehnese individuals working in the tourism sector [10, 11].

This demonstrates that Aceh Province possesses its own unique attributes within the tourism sector, which warrant careful consideration for the strategic development of Aceh Province as a tourist destination. As early as 2009, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (Depbudpar), in collaboration with SWA Magazine, organized the Indonesia Tourism Award (ITA). Furthermore, to enhance its global tourism presence, Aceh Province compiled an Aceh Tourism Calendar in 2020, featuring 107 prominent tourist attractions anticipated to exert a substantial influence on the region's economic growth [12].

This aligns with the concept of the sustainable development principle, which underscores the importance of effective management to strike a balance between human needs for improving lifestyles and the preservation of natural resources and ecosystems that are vital for both current and future generations [13, 14]. This principle promotes prudent and informed development by considering the equilibrium between economic requirements while also ensuring the safeguarding and stewardship of environmental quality for the well-being of forthcoming generations. It's undeniable that every traveler or tourist, who invests substantial resources and time in their chosen destination, does so with the intention of exploring the cultural diversity and the potential of the region's natural and other resources. They seek to encounter a different facet of life, often gaining insight into local cultural wisdom through interactions with the local community in the region they visit [15, 16].

The tourism industry has rapidly evolved into one of the world's fastest-growing sectors, creating numerous direct and indirect employment opportunities, generating revenue for local destinations and hotels, and contributing to government tax revenues [17]. Despite its abundant offerings, it has not consistently delivered maximum value to tourists, even in its role as a leading tourist destination. While the concept of perceived value has been the focus of numerous studies over the past two decades [18], it remains an area of ongoing concern within the industry. Moreover, there is a broader question surrounding how perceived value influences the emotional experiences and behaviors of tourists as a collective whole [19], a topic that has not been adequately explored. Consequently, this research aims to address the perceived value of tourist destinations, an underexplored aspect of the field, thus emphasizing its significance in initiating this study.

This research presents a comprehensive study through the implementation of a marketing mix strategy to maximize the value of tourism in Aceh Province, Indonesia. In the field of tourism business, there are typically seven key marketing mix elements to consider: Product, Price, Place/Distribution, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence. Alongside these fundamental aspects, there are several factors that consumers take into account before deciding to visit a particular tourist destination. Thus, the need for a marketing strategy for Aceh Province's tourism potential in the context of regional development as a tourist destination becomes evident, as it addresses these multifaceted considerations and aims to optimize the province's tourism industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Tourism

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism encompasses the travel and stay activities of individuals outside their usual place of residence and familiar environment for a period not exceeding one consecutive year, encompassing purposes such as leisure, business, or other activities, but excluding engagement in employment at the destination [20]. This concept shares characteristics with services, including intangibility (tourism products cannot be seen, touched, smelled, or tasted after purchase), inseparability of production and consumption (tourism products must be experienced where they are produced), perishability (tourism products cannot be stored for future use or resale), and variability (services or experiences provided to customers may vary over time) [21].

A tourist destination product is a type of tourism service rather than a physical product or construction. It is typically consumed and produced as an integrated tourist experience while traveling to a geographical area and within a specific physical setting. Tourist destination products play a crucial role in the development of tourism. Destinations represent groups and networks that effectively create tourism products and experiences. Furthermore, tourists perceived the value of their experience could be enhanced by giving more attention to and investing in infrastructure, particularly roads [22]. Adequate facilities are also important expectations in terms of accommodation and attractions [23].

Marketing plays a crucial role in ensuring the sustainability of businesses and tourist destinations. A proficient marketing manager holds responsibility for both the quantity and types of tourists visiting a destination, ultimately contributing to its economic development and growth [24]. The success of tourism marketing relies on fostering an environment where employees are motivated to provide excellent service and promote tourism to visitors. To create such an environment, four key factors are essential: hospitality and tourist relations, quality control, personal selling, and employee morale, programs, and incentives.

2.2. Marketing Mix Strategy

The marketing mix strategy comprises a set of controlled marketing variables that a company combines to achieve the desired response in the target market. This marketing mix consists of seven core variables/activities, which are the foundation of marketing: products, pricing structures, distribution systems, promotional activities, processes, people, and physical appearance [6]. Moreover, in both theory and practice, marketing activities give rise to a product marketing mix, often referred to as the "4Ps," which includes product, price, place, and promotion. Sales services introduce an additional three elements, known as the "3Ps": people/participants, processes, and physical evidence [25]. In the context of tourist destination marketing, two more elements are introduced: politics and paucity. Additionally, there has been recent contemplation of the possibility of incorporating two additional dimensions into future marketing strategy activities: internal and interactive marketing [26].

Marketing strategies related to the product will develop based on the stage of the product life cycle in which the product is located, the stages of the product life cycle include development, introduction, growth, maturity, and decline. Marketing strategy is also influenced by the position of a product obtained in a competitive market

[17]. The product is a key element in the overall market offering. These can be pure tangible goods, pure services, events, artist performances, experiences, people, and places in a broader context. Tourism products can be defined as a combination of tourist attractions [27]. Previous studies have further explained that the product variables offered can influence tourists' decisions when choosing tourist destinations [27, 28].

In tourism research, it has been observed that the application of pricing strategies can significantly influence tourists' interest in selecting particular destinations [27]. Due to the intangible nature of services, price serves as a crucial quality indicator when other information is lacking [29]. Therefore, competitive pricing is essential for service-oriented companies. This study focuses on pricing based on value or perceived value, as a lower price is one of the key factors impacting a customer's consideration [30].

The place strategy entails the effective distribution of a company's products through marketing channels, such as wholesalers or retailers. Organizations must prioritize place decisions due to the significance of products and consumption occurring simultaneously and in the same location—a setting that encompasses all customer information, competition, promotional actions, and marketing tasks. The choice of location significantly influences tourists' decisions when selecting a travel destination [28].

Marketing communication is a means that companies use to directly or indirectly inform, persuade, and remind consumers about the products and brands they offer. These marketing communications encompass advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and direct marketing. In recent times, social media has emerged as a major communication tool for organizations. Furthermore, research has shown that the intensity of promotion plays a role in determining tourism attractiveness [27].

People are the most fundamental element in production and service delivery, which is a critical aspect of difference management [30]. Previous studies have demonstrated that the management of tourist sites significantly influences the growth of tourist numbers [27]. In this context, "people" refers to service employees responsible for producing and delivering services, often referred to as the "fifth P" of the marketing mix [29]. They represent a pivotal component of a customer-centric organization and contribute to differentiation along with products, services, channels, and brand image [26]. The variables within the 7P marketing strategy support the

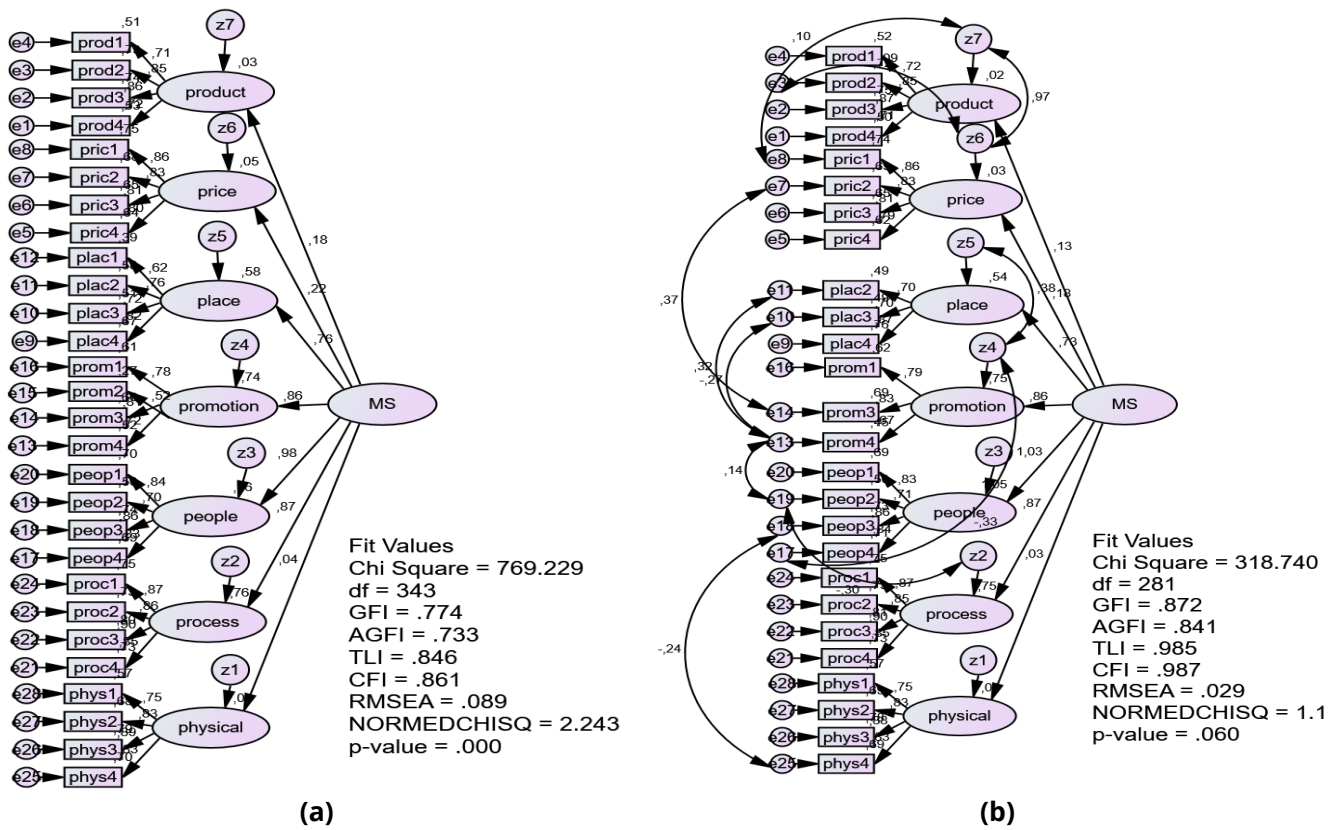


Figure 1. Marketing strategy construct (a) before indicator elimination, and (b) after indicator elimination.

argument that there is a positive correlation with tourist satisfaction and loyalty [30].

The service process defines how a service is delivered to the end-user. Previous study explained that an easy and straightforward service process significantly influences the decision to choose a tourist destination [27]. People and processes are inseparable; in the service process, when service providers can focus carefully and patiently on customer service, they can create the impression of high-quality service, resulting in high customer satisfaction. Therefore, the service management process is key to enhancing service quality [31].

Physical evidence is the final and most crucial element in an expanded marketing mix. Elements of physical evidence encompass aspects related to the company's interior design, equipment used, employees, and environmental cleanliness. Among these elements, environmental management and the provision of adequate facilities play a significant role in creating a sense of security and comfort for visitors [27].

3. Materials and Methods

The research method employed is descriptive research, which primarily aims to assess the potential of Aceh Province as a tourist destination and its future prospects

for use in action research. Data sources encompass both secondary data and primary data, which include questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The surveyed respondents included 200 foreign tourists and 100 domestic tourists who agreed to participate. E-surveys serve as a means of obtaining secondary data through the internet, allowing access to published data such as BPS data, statistical data, and the latest relevant tourism trends. The data analysis conducted is descriptive analysis with Amos software in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), aimed at portraying the data related to each research variable, particularly to gain a comprehensive understanding of tourist responses and categorize them accordingly.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Validity Test

A validity test was conducted to assess the research instrument (questionnaire) using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for each construct variable's validity. In this study, the marketing strategy construct consists of seven dimensions, with each dimension comprising four measurement indicators. However, not all of these indicators can be included in the research model. The results of the CFA and construct validity testing reveal that several indicators from each dimension must be

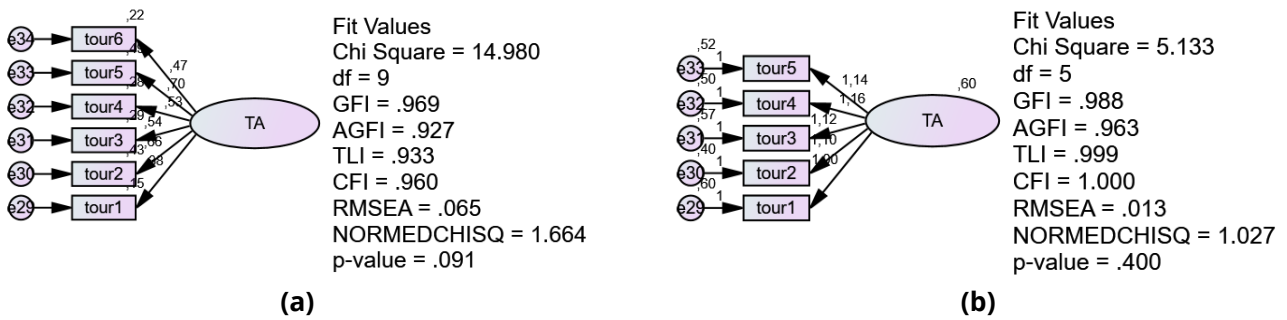


Figure 2. Tourism attractiveness construct (a) before indicator elimination, and (b) after indicator elimination.

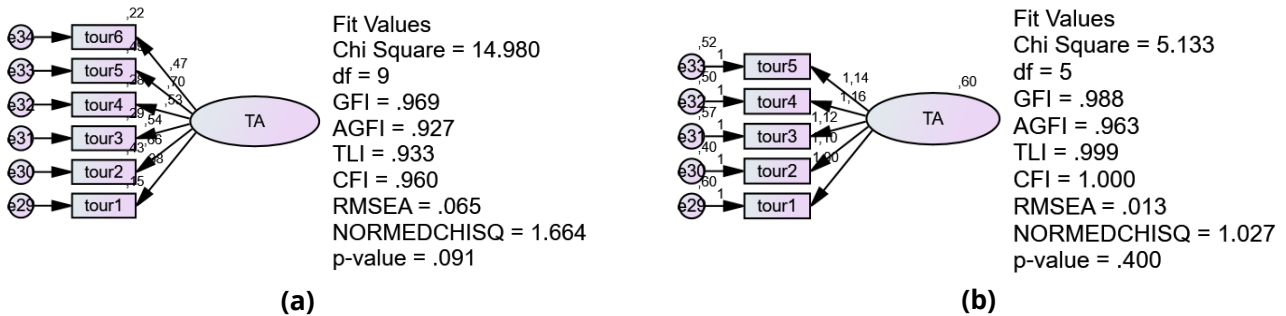


Figure 3. Excellence tourism construct (a) before indicator elimination, and (b) after indicator elimination.

excluded from the model. Figure 1a and Figure 1b demonstrates that, after removing several indicators with Standard Estimate values below 0.60, the GFI, AGFI, TLI, and CFI values for the marketing strategy construct have exceeded the cutoff values. Therefore, we can conclude that the Goodness of Fit Test criteria have been met.

Moving forward, the tourism attractiveness construct comprises six measurement indicators, but not all of them are suitable for inclusion in the research model. The results of the CFA analysis and construct validity testing indicate that one indicator, namely "tour6," should be removed from the model. As illustrated in Figure 2a and Figure 2b, after eliminating this indicator with a Standard Estimate value below 0.60, the GFI, AGFI, TLI, and CFI values for the tourism attractiveness construct surpass the cutoff value. Consequently, it can be inferred that the Goodness of Fit Test criteria have been satisfied.

Furthermore, the Leading Tourism construct encompasses six measurement indicators. However, not all of these indicators are applicable in the research model. The results of the CFA analysis and construct validity testing suggest that two indicators, namely "sup1" and "sup," should be excluded from the model. As depicted in Figure 3a and Figure 3b, after removing these indicators with Standard Estimate values below 0.60, the GFI, AGFI, TLI, and CFI values for the Leading Tourism construct surpass the cutoff value. Consequently, it can be inferred that the Goodness of Fit Test criteria have been met.

4.2. Normality Test

The normality test indicates that the data exhibits high quality and ensures that in the SEM analysis, all steps and criteria for the skewness ratio fall within the range of ± 2.58 at a significance level of 0.01. It can be concluded that the data follows a normal distribution if the critical ratio skewness value is below the absolute value of ± 2.58 .

In this study, during the assessment of data normality in the univariate analysis, all critical ratio skewness values fall within the range of ± 2.58 . Furthermore, in the multivariate analysis, all critical ratio kurtosis values are also well below the absolute value of ± 2.58 . Therefore, it can be concluded that both univariate and multivariate data in this study exhibit normality.

4.3. Reliability Construct Test

The reliability construct test is a measure of the internal consistency of the construct indicators that shows the degree to which each indicator identifies a common construct [32]. The reliability test was carried out in 3 ways, namely construct reliability (CR), average extracted (AVE/VE), and discriminant validity (DV). In this study, the CR, AVE/VE, and DV were simultaneously calculated. The Calculation results are shown sequentially below. Based on the results shown in Table 1, it can be explained that all categories have CR values greater than 0.70. Thus, it can be concluded that the product dimension exhibits very good reliability.

Table 1. Reliability construct.

Category	Construct Reliability (CR)	Variance Extracted (VE)	Discriminant Validity (√VE)
Product Dimension	0.870	0.627	0.792
Price Dimension	0.894	0.678	0.823
Place Dimension	0.841	0.639	0.799
Promotion Dimension	0.822	0.607	0.779
People Dimension	0.884	0.658	0.811
Process Dimension	0.925	0.755	0.869
Physical Evidence Dimension	0.898	0.688	0.830
Tourist Attractiveness Variable	0.891	0.622	0.789
Excellence Tourism Variable	0.886	0.661	0.813

Table 2. Goodness of fit test results.

The goodness of Fit Index	Cut-off Value	Result	Model Evaluation
χ^2 -Chi-Square	Expected to be Small	947.009	Good
Probability	≥ 0.05	0.000	Marginal
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.783	Marginal
AGFI	≥ 0.90	0.754	Marginal
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.691	Marginal
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.668	Marginal
CMIN/DF	≤ 2.0	1.525	Good
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.058	Good

Table 3. Modification indices.

		M.I.	Par Change	
z5	<->	z4	5.121	0.065
z7	<->	z6	128.282	0.639
e19	<->	z2	8.488	-0.089
e19	<->	e13	8.747	0.118
e17	<->	z4	6.938	-0.069
e11	<->	e13	17.408	0.183
e10	<->	e13	8.073	-0.116
e8	<->	z7	10.986	0.137
e7	<->	e14	10.467	0.102
e3	<->	z6	11.61	0.171

Furthermore, the VE value for all categories obtained is also greater than the required 0.60, indicating that the product dimensions have good convergent validity.

Meanwhile, the discriminant validity value in each category is as follows: 1) Product Dimension category interpreted simultaneously at 0.792 for all variables; 2) Price Dimension category interpreted simultaneously at 0.823 for all variables; 3) Place/Location Dimension category interpreted simultaneously at 0.799 for all variables; 4) Promotion Dimension category interpreted simultaneously at 0.779 for all variables; 5) People Dimension category interpreted simultaneously at 0.811 for all variables; 6) Process Dimension category interpreted simultaneously at 0.869 for all variables; 7) Physical Evidence Dimension category interpreted simultaneously at 0.830 for all variables; 8) Physical Evidence Dimension category interpreted simultaneously at 0.869 for all variables; 9) Tourist Attractiveness

Variable category interpreted simultaneously at 0.789 for all variables; and 10) Excellence Tourism Variable category interpreted simultaneously at 0.789 for all variables.

4.4. Structural Model Analysis

The primary aim of the full SEM model test is to evaluate the extent to which the basic model, as initially formulated, can describe the research phenomenon without any modifications or prior to incorporating the full model. Based on the information from Figure 4 and Table 2, it can be inferred that the model is not statistically adequate. This conclusion is drawn because all the required model values still fall below the specified threshold. Specifically, the probability, GFI, AGFI, CFI, and TLI values remain at marginal levels. Therefore, it can be concluded that the model is not statistically adequate and does not align with the provided data.

The next step in achieving a model that meets the criteria for the Goodness of Fit (GoF) Test involves modifying the Indice/Covariance model. This modification entails connecting (Covariance) several measurement errors items (Measurement Error) or structural error items (Structural Error) with large values. Table 3 and Figure 5 illustrate some of the Indice/Covariance modifications carried out in this study.

Figure 5 illustrates that, after undergoing the Indice/Covariance modification process, the structural model of this research meets the criteria for the Goodness of Fit Test. This indicates that the data utilized in this study effectively explains the model. Specifically, this structural model boasts GFI, AGFI, TLI, and CFI values surpassing the Cut Off threshold. Additionally, both the RMSEA and CMIN values are smaller than the Cut Off threshold. For further details, please refer to Table 4.

4.5. Discussion

4.5.1. The Effect of Marketing Strategy on Tourism Attractiveness

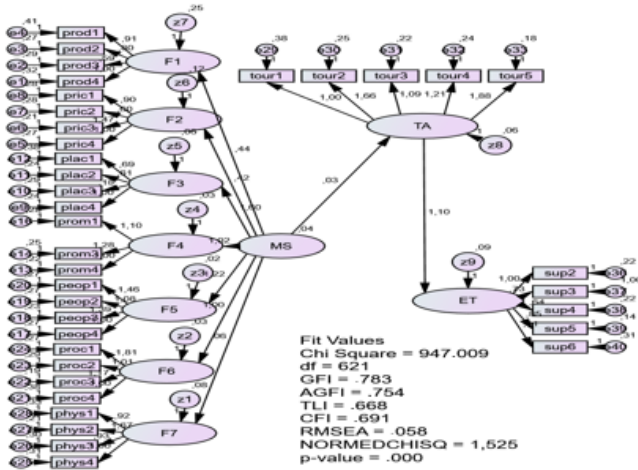


Figure 4. Model before modification.

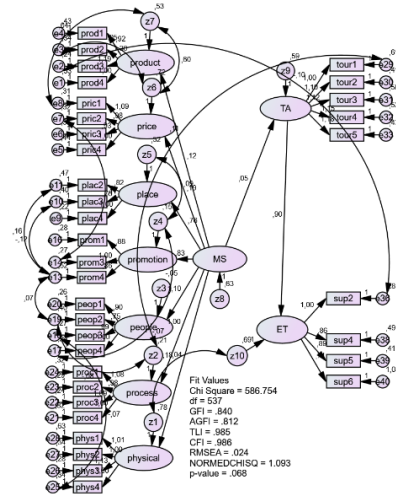


Figure 5. Structural model of modification indices.

Table 4. Goodness of fit after modification indice.

Criteria	Cut Off	Result	Conclusion
Chi-Square	Expected to be small	586.754	Good
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.840	Good
AGFI	≥ 0.90	0.812	Good
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.985	Good
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.986	Good
RMSEA	≤ 0.80	0.024	Good
Normedchisq/CMIN	≤ 2.00	1.093	Good
Probability	≥ 0.05	0.068	Good

Table 5. Regression weight.

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
TA	<---	MS	0.046	0.083	0.555	0.579
product	<---	MS	0.121	0.08	1.516	0.13
price	<---	MS	0.191	0.093	2.053	0.04
place	<---	MS	0.756	0.092	8.249	***
promotion	<---	MS	0.835	0.087	9.562	***
people	<---	MS	1.1	0.103	10.685	***
process	<---	MS	1	-	-	-
physical	<---	MS	0.041	0.093	0.438	0.661
ET	<---	TA	0.903	0.128	7.06	***

Note: Significant ***(1%)

Based on Table 5, it is evident that the marketing strategy has a positive yet insignificant effect on tourism attractiveness in Aceh Province, as indicated by a coefficient of 0.046 at a significance level of 0.555. A positive coefficient aligns with the theoretical framework, while the small coefficient suggests a limited implementation of marketing strategies in promoting Aceh Province's appeal on both the national and international stages. Nevertheless, when examining the application of various marketing strategy dimensions, some of these strategies exhibit notable effectiveness in influencing the marketing activities of tourist destinations in Aceh Province. This is attributed to the fact that tourists consistently evaluate individual activities and marketing strategies implemented in Aceh's tourism products.

This is evident in Table 5, where the product strategy exhibits a coefficient of 0.121 and a significance level of 0.013. This signifies that the implementation of the product strategy can enhance tourism product marketing activities by 12.1%. Additionally, the price strategy shows a coefficient of 0.191 and a significance level of 0.040, indicating that employing a price strategy can boost tourism product marketing activities by 19.1%.

Subsequently, the location/destination strategy reveals a coefficient of 0.756 alongside a significance level of 0.000. This underscores the high level of importance tourists attach to evaluating the location or destination of tourist spots, as it can boost tourism product marketing activities by a significant 75.6%. Furthermore, support for marketing activities is assessed through the

implementation of promotional strategies, indicated by a coefficient of 0.835 with a significance level of 0.000. This suggests that the promotional efforts conducted by tourist destination managers can greatly enhance Aceh's tourism marketing performance by a substantial 83.7%.

Moreover, tourists' evaluations of individuals, including managers and local communities, are notably positive, as evidenced by a coefficient of 1.1 and a significance level of 0.000. This suggests that those involved in marketing tourism products, such as managers and communities, exhibit excellent qualities, such as politeness and responsiveness, making them very effective in their roles. On the other hand, when considering the physical environment construct with a coefficient of 0.041 and a significance level of 0.661, it becomes apparent that the environment and supporting infrastructure for Aceh's tourism products marketing performance are lacking in adequacy and support. Therefore, it is recommended that managers or government entities prioritize the enhancement of facilities and infrastructure to bolster tourist destinations.

4.5.2. The Effect of Tourism Attractiveness on Excellence Tourism

Based on Table 5, it is evident that tourism attractiveness has a positive and significant impact on excellent tourism in Aceh Province, as demonstrated by a coefficient of 0.903 with a significance level of 0.000. The positive coefficient affirms the consistency of the estimated value with the theoretical framework. Notably, the 90.3% coefficient underscores the high regard and attention that tourists bestow upon Aceh's tourism attractiveness. This heightened attention is attributed to Aceh's tourism potential, which can be harmonized and effectively compete with similar offerings in other regions and provinces. As a result, this condition positions Aceh's tourist destinations with significant potential to lead the way in fostering superior and sustainable tourism.

5. Conclusions, Implications and Limitations

Primary data obtained in the field show that, generally, the variables related to the research are still above the good average. Descriptively, tourists' perceptions of product strategy, price strategy, promotion strategy, place/location strategy, people strategy, and physical environment strategy are good in Aceh Province, where tourism products are perceived well. Additionally, tourists also assess that Aceh Province's tourist destinations are highly competitive with other regional/provincial tourism products. Regarding the verification analysis in this study, it yields two conclusions.

First, the marketing strategy does not significantly affect the attractiveness of tourism in Aceh Province. However, some constructs within the marketing strategy model do have a positive and significant impact on the formation of marketing strategy dimensions, although they do not statistically influence tourism attractiveness. Second, tourist attractions have a positive and significant impact on the excellence of tourism in Aceh Province. Tourists consider all tourist destinations in Aceh Province to be highly superior and competitive compared to destinations in other regions.

Thus, the excellence of tourism found in this study is a function of tourism attractiveness, which comprises uniqueness, panorama and natural beauty, cultural attractions, and traditional handicrafts. The results of this study can have implications both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study implies the development of a theory of superiority for tourism products by involving various marketing variables. Practically, this implies the enhancement of tourism attractiveness, which includes the addition and strengthening of main attractions (uniqueness), maintenance and beautification of panoramas and natural beauty, strengthening of cultural attractions, and the expansion of the types and numbers of traditional handicrafts. On the other hand, it is also important to acknowledge the limitation of this study, which primarily employs a descriptive approach. We recommend that future studies consider applying a more comprehensive econometric approach to this topic, as it can yield more detailed and robust empirical evidence.

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