

# Strategic Cultural Event Management and Its Role in Destination Branding and Tourism Growth

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article history:</b></p> <p>Received : 15.05.2025 Revised : 11.06.2025 Accepted : 17.07.2025</p>	<p>Cultural events known to be strategic have gradually become critical tools of destination branding and tourism development in the very competitive tourism markets. This paper will explore how the strategic management of cultural events contributes towards destination branding and tourism growth stimulation, besides exploring the mediation role of destination branding between event management and tourism growth. The quantitative research design was chosen and data were then gathered using the structured questionnaire to the tourists who attended major cultural events in the study destination. To examine the proposed research model, the partial least squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used. Measurement model had been evaluated based on the indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent and discriminant validity and, structural model had been evaluated based on path coefficients, coefficient of determination (<math>R^2</math>), effect sizes (<math>f^2</math>) and predictive relevance (<math>Q^2</math>). The findings indicate that strategic cultural event management contributes largely to positive impact on destination branding and development in tourism. It was also established that destination branding contributed greatly to tourism growth; it mediated partly the correlation between cultural event management and tourism growth. These results are the addition to the literature of tourism and destination management because they offer empirical data concerning the strategic importance of cultural events in developing strong destination brands and promoting sustainable tourism development. The research also provides viable insights to destination managers and policymakers who might want to use cultural events as a strategic branding tool to improve destination competitiveness and sustainability of tourism in the long-run.</p>
<p><b>Keywords:</b></p> <p>Strategic cultural event management, Destination branding, Tourism growth, Cultural tourism, Structural equation modeling (SEM), Destination competitiveness.</p>	

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The use of cultural events has become a very strong strategic tool in the development of tourism because it has allowed the destinations to be differentiated to enrich the experience of the visitor and stimulate local economic activities. Besides attracting tourists, festivals, heritage events and cultural shows also lead to the establishment of meaningful place identities and unforgettable experiences that enhance competitiveness of destinations [6], [7]. Due to the growing pressures in the global tourist attraction markets, strategic cultural event management has emerged as a very crucial element in the destinations development policies as a booster of visitor attraction, destination image booster and growth of the tourism industry long term. Destination branding has become a key aspect in influencing the perceptions of the tourists, their

attitude and behavioural intentions on how to act in this competitive environment. A fair destination brand will assist in minimising perceived risk, gain greater destination recognition, and, in another context, create emotional feelings towards a destination [9], [11]. According to the previous research, destination branding is not limited to the level of the logo and slogan but also to the brand identity, brand equity, and a total experiential value that the destination will provide [3], [9]. A recent study also emphasises the increased role of the digital and social media in destination brand identity; through this tool, destinations do not need to sell fake cultural accounts but present the tourists with the interests more efficiently [2], [8]. Strategic cultural event management also has a direct effect upon destination branding, by portraying cultural authenticity, building local identity, and increasing perceived destination

value. Culturally well-managed events will affect the results of assessment of the quality, satisfaction and loyalty of the tourists to the festival, which consequently enhances the destination image and revisiting intentions [6], [7]. Empirical analysis indicates that attractiveness of events and festivals capes being the core aspects of destination loyalty and effectual behaviour determine cultural event as a strategic branding resources instead of an individual attraction [6], [7]. As a result, cultural event coordination in the destination brand management mixes is now necessary to realise sustainable tourism development.

Although the studies of the cultural events and destination branding in tourism research have gained some importance, a significant gap in literature still exists. Current literature tends to consider cultural events, destination branding or tourism outcomes in isolation with not much empirical research undertaking a combination of all the constructs in a framework of analytical framework. Besides, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) has been generally used in both tourism and marketing research to test the complex relationships among latent constructs [1], [4], however, there are not many studies that use SEM to study rational relationships among strategic cultural event management, destination branding, and tourism growth empirically. This gap is of particular importance because SEM makes it possible to conduct a strong evaluation of both measurement characteristics and structural correlations, which facilitates the explanatory and predictive capacity of tourism research models [1], [5], [10].

It is against this backdrop that the current paper will seek to explore the issue of strategic cultural event management and how it affects destination branding and stimulatory tourism growth through Structural Equation Modelling technique. Namely, the study aims to (i) determine the effects of strategic cultural event management on destination branding, (ii) determine the effects of a destination branding on tourism growth, and (iii) determine the mediating role of destination branding in the relationship between cultural event management and tourism growth. Through this, the current research will add to the body of literature on tourism and destination management by giving empirical-based evidence of SEM of the importance of cultural events in destination branding and destination development in tourism. Practically this means that the findings provide practical information to destination managers and policymakers on using cultural events as strategic management instruments to improve brand equity, destination competitiveness, and sustainable tourism development.

The rest of this paper will be in the following structure. Section II will provide the literature review and come up with the hypotheses of the research. Section III presents the methodology and data analysis processes used in the research. In the fourth section there are the results of the measurement and structural model. Section V covers the findings, their theoretical and practical implications. Lastly, Section VI is the final part where the study brings to the fore the major contributions, limitations, and future research directions.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

There has been a growing realisation that cultural events are more strategic to tourism development as they provide destinations with the chance to distinguish themselves, promote cultural presence and worth visitor attachment. The cultural events which are managed in a strategic manner add to the destination competitiveness because they incorporate factors such as effective planning, proper cultural presentation, collaboration with the stakeholders, and blending with destination marketing strategies. Previous research highlights that in terms of cultural tourism, events are a major asset, and cultural tourism requirements are greater than simple developmental efforts as festivals and cultural events improves the level of experience, satisfaction and loyalty of the visitors [6], [7]. Of significant importance to counteract the credibility and perceived value of cultural events towards enhance their impact on destination image and competitiveness are realness and stakeholder engagement, respectively [6], [7].

Destination branding is a multidimensional construct that includes destination brand image, brand awareness, brand loyalty and the perceived authenticity. It is a general perception and emotional affiliation of tourists with a destination, which largely affects the travel decision-making and behavioural intentions [9], [11]. The recent studies in destination branding have emphasised that branding is now more co-created based on the experiences and the interactions between the tourists and the destination attributes, such as cultural events [2], [3]. Cultural events facilitate the destination brand identity by relaying cultural distinctive messages and amplifying culture specific property. In addition, the effect of branding of cultural events has been magnified by the digital platforms and social media which has allowed destinations to send authentic and consistent brand messages to broader audiences [2], [8]. Subsequently, destination branding serves as an essential process that converts experiential aspects of the tourism (cultural events) to favourable tourism performance outcomes.

Indicators that are usually used to measure tourism growth include the number of tourists coming to the destination, tourism spending, tourism stay and the revisit intention of the destination and this are all based on destination performance and sustainability. It has been empirically indicated that the concepts of cultural events are regarded as drivers of tourism development because they bring new consumers, foster repeat tourism, and intensify the overall destination experience of the tourists [6], [7]. Organised cultural events also have direct economic effects as well as indirect behavioural effects, which lead to long-term tourism development and competitiveness of the destination. Notably, as long as the cultural event administration is aligned with the destination branding approach, the commodities of events will contribute to the realisation of sustainable tourism outcomes.

This paper is based on the Resource-Based View, the Experience Economy, and the Place Branding Theory as the conceptual framework of the study. In terms of resources, cultural events can be regarded as valuable and hard-to-copy type resources having potential to create competitive advantage when used strategically. The Experience Economy emphasises that memorable experiences are an important part of perception and loyalty of tourists, and cites cultural events as delivering experiential value. Place Branding Theory describes the ways in which experiential and cultural differentiations are transformed into brand meanings which can shape tourist behaviour [9], [11]. Based on these theoretical backgrounds and previous empirical studies, it is

presented that the study has a research model that correlates strategic cultural event management and destination branding with tourism growth and takes into account the direct effect of cultural event management on a tourism growth. Figure 1 demonstrates the proposed conceptual framework that shows such relationships.

On the part of the literature reviewed, a number of hypotheses are formulated. It is anticipated that strategic cultural event management may have a positive effect on destination branding by supporting destination identity, authenticity and experience value [6], [7]. On its part, destination branding is expected to drive an increase in tourism through the improvement of tourist's loyalty, revisit intentions, and destination attraction [9], [11], [14]. Cultural events can also have a direct impact on the growth of tourism by creating direct visitation and economic impacts [6], [7]. Moreover, the linkage between strategic management of cultural events and tourism development is predicted to be intermediated by destination branding, which converts experience as inputs into overtime, performance indicators in tourism [11], [14]. As a result, the following hypotheses may be stated:

H1: Strategic cultural event management has a positive effect on destination branding.

H2: Destination branding has a positive effect on the growth of tourism.

H3: Strategic cultural event management has a positive impact on growth in tourism.

H4: Destination branding moderates the linkage between strategic cultural event management and growth in tourism.



**Fig. 1.** Conceptual Framework Illustrating the Hypothesized Relationships among Strategic Cultural Event Management, Destination Branding, and Tourism Growth.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The proposed study takes the shape of a quantitative, cross-sectional study research design to empirically investigate the connexions between the strategic cultural event management and destination branding, and the growth of tourism. Quantitative method is suitable since the research is meant to test the hypothesised relationships between latent constructs through the use of

statistical modelling methods. Several factors were chosen to use Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) as the main method of analysis since the proposed model is rather complex and it includes mediating relationships. It is also common knowledge in tourism and marketing research that SEM can be used to simultaneously evaluating the measurement reliability and validity and tested in structural relationships between multiple

constructs. Moreover, SEM allows strong measuring of mediation effects and forecasting possibilities implying that it is appropriate to discuss the correlations in this paper.

The samples were composed of visiting tourists to major cultural events in the destination of the sampling. The study setting was a culturally active tourism area where it organises annual festivals and heritage events where domestic and international visitors come to sightsee. The target respondents were the attendants of the event who received the cultural event first-hand as well as the tourists who experienced the cultural event directly during their visit. The non-probability purposive sampling methodology was used so that the respondents possess the relevant experience in the events. On-site surveys were conducted during the event process and followed up by the online questionnaire that was sent with the assistance of the event-specific digital platforms. Four hundred and twenty (420) questionnaires were mailed with 368 being valid and remaining after the completeness and consistency screening. The sample size is finalised in line with standard measuring parameters of SEM so that the parameter estimations of the sample adequately and the model is stable.

The measurement scale was constructed on the proven scales of the previous tourism and destination branding studies. A series of items which were modified based on the existing studies were used to measure all constructs in order to achieve content validity. Measures of strategic cultural event management were based on items of the effectiveness of the planning, authenticity, stakeholder involvement and marketing integration. The measurement of destination branding was done in terms of brand image, brand identity and perceived authenticity. The indicators that were used to operationalization of tourism growth outcomes included revisit intention, positive word-of-mouth intention, and perceived contribution to tourism performance. All questions were rated on a five-point Likert scale, where a 1 (strongly disagree) is meanwhile the 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was pre-tested to five academic experts in the field of tourism management to make it clear and relevant before actual data collection was done. A pilot test was also carried out with 30 respondents in order to optimise wording and establish preliminary reliability levels. The measurement constructs, items count, and major dimensions of this study are presented in (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Measurement Constructs and Sources

Construct	Number of Items	Key Dimensions
Strategic Cultural Event Management	4-6	Planning, authenticity, stakeholder involvement, marketing integration
Destination Branding	4-6	Brand image, identity, perceived authenticity
Tourism Growth	3-5	Revisit intention, loyalty, perceived tourism performance

The analysis of data was done through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) on SmartPLS. PLS-SEM was chosen because it is more appropriate in predictive studies, complicated mediation development and the possibility to fit non-normative data distributions. The two-stage analysing method was implemented based on the standard SEM practises. To identify indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, first of all, the measurement model was measured. Second, the structural model was checked analysing path coefficients, the level of significance at which the results were received with the help of bootstrapping, coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), the effect size ( $f^2$ ), and predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ). The high level of rigour of this two-step process provides the strength and validity of the empirical results and delivers the correct testing of the hypothesis.

#### 4. Measurement Model Assessment

Measurement model was tested before the structural relationships were tested so as to test reliability and validity of constructs of latency. The reliability of the indicators was determined by reviewing the factor loading of the observed variables to their respective constructs. All the standardised loadings are above the recommended standard of 0.70 meaning that the indicators are a good measure of the latent variables corresponding to them. The high factor loading indicates that the items to measure strategic cultural event management, destination branding, and tourism growth are related well with corresponding constructs, indicating the validity of indicators [5].

The internal consistency was also tested through Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Findings have revealed that the Alpha of the Cronbach of all constructs was between 0.84 and 0.91, which is greater than the acceptable value of 0.70. Likewise the Composite Reliability scores

were found to be between 0.88 and 0.93 which is good internal consistency meaning that the measurement scales are consistent to proceed with structural analysis [1], [4]. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used in evaluating convergent validity. The all the AVE values are greater than the recommended minimum of 0.50 implying that every construct describes at least 50 percent of the variance of its indicators and thus creating sufficient convergent validity [5].

Both Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio were used to assess the

discriminant validity. By the FornellLarcker criteria, the square root of the AVE of all the constructs was bigger than their correlation with other constructs, which speaks of good discriminant validity. Moreover, the empirical significance of the constructs was that all the HTMT values were less than the conservative value of 0.85 [5], [13]. Tables 2 and 3 summarise the detailed outcomes of indicator loadings, reliability, and convergent validity and provide the summary of the discriminant validity, respectively.

**Table 2.** Measurement Model Results

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Strategic Cultural Event Management	SCEM1	0.81	0.89	0.92	0.69
	SCEM2	0.84			
	SCEM3	0.86			
	SCEM4	0.83			
Destination Branding	DB1	0.82	0.88	0.91	0.67
	DB2	0.85			
	DB3	0.79			
	DB4	0.84			
Tourism Growth	TG1	0.88	0.86	0.90	0.75
	TG2	0.87			
	TG3	0.84			

**Table 3.** Discriminant Validity Assessment

**Fornell-Larcker Criterion (Square Root of AVE in Diagonal)**

Construct	SCEM	DB	TG
Strategic Cultural Event Management (SCEM)	0.83		
Destination Branding (DB)	0.62	0.82	
Tourism Growth (TG)	0.58	0.65	0.87

**HTMT Ratio**

Construct Pair	HTMT Value
SCEM - DB	0.74
SCEM - TG	0.71
DB - TG	0.79

All in all, the indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity in the measurement model are satisfactory. This means that the constructs are sound and they can be further analysed by a follow-up in the form of a structural model.

**5. Structural Model Results**

The structural model was tested to confirm the level of adequacy of the measurement model and also to test the supposed hypotheses and evaluate the predictive ability of the model. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was used to first investigate collinearity among predictor constructs. All the VIFs were in the range of 1.45 to 2.10, which are much below the conservative value of 3.30, and

this means that there is no need to be worried about multicollinearity and the estimates of all structural paths can be considered as stable and reliable. A bootstrapping process of 5,000 resamples was used to test the hypothesis and provide path coefficients (8), t-values, and p-values. As per the results provided in Table 4, H1 was accepted that strategic cultural event management positively influences destination branding (0.62, t = 12.84, p < 0.001). H2 is also supported by the fact that destination branding has a remarkable positive impact on tourism development (b = 0.48, t = 9.67, p < 0.001). In addition, H3 is proved because strategic cultural event management has a direct ( $\beta = 0.29$ , t = 5.21, p < 0.001) impact on tourism growth. According to

these results, cultural events that are well managed lead to changes in the perceptions of destination brand and have a direct impact on tourism performance results.

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was the measure of the explanatory power of the model on endogenous constructs. The  $R^2$  value of destination branding was 0.38 which means that strategic cultural event management accounts 38 percent of the difference in destination branding. The  $R^2$  value on tourism growth was 0.56 which indicates that it has moderate to substantial explanatory power. These values demonstrate that the model provides meaningful predictive capability for key tourism outcomes. Effect size ( $f^2$ ) was estimated to find out the relative effect of the exogenous constructs on the endogenous variables by the usual form:

$$f^2 = \frac{R^2_{included} - R^2_{excluded}}{1 - R^2_{included}} \quad (1)$$

It means that the strategic cultural event management influences significantly the destination branding ( $f^2 = 0.44$ ) and destination branding influences significantly tourism growth ( $f^2 = 0.29$ ). The direct impact of strategic cultural event management to the tourism growth shows a

small to medium impact ( $f^2 = 0.16$ ). The blindfolding procedure was used to predict relevance ( $Q^2$ ) in destination branding ( $Q^2 = 0.37$ ) and tourism growth ( $Q^2 = 0.24$ ) and predictive relevance of the model satisfied satisfactory levels of predictive relevance.

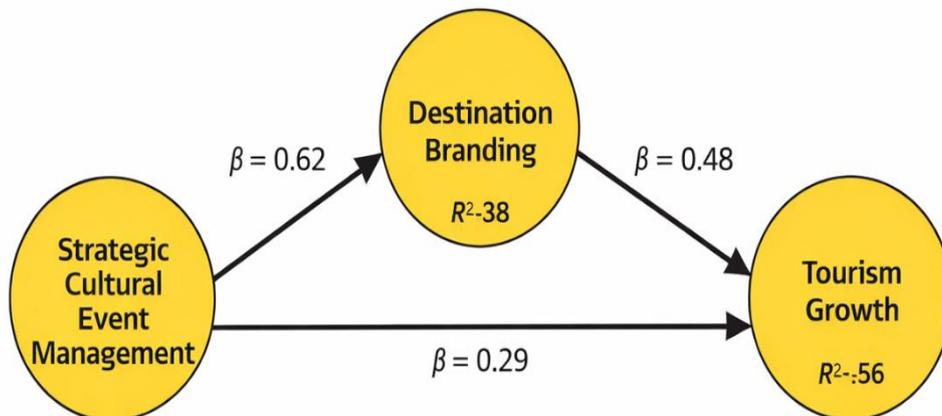
Bootstrapping was used to determine the importance of the indirect effects on the mediation effect of destination branding concerning strategic cultural event management and tourism growth. The significance of the indirect effect (SCEM → DB → TG) was high ( $\beta = 0.30$ ,  $t = 8.11$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and thus it is seen that destination branding mediates the relationship to some extent. Both the direct and indirect impacts are important hence, the mediation can be denoted as partial mediation. This observation supports the strategic importance of destination branding in converting the cultural event management activities into quantifiable tourism growth impacts. The analysis of the results of the detailed structural model is summarised in Table 4 and Table 5, and Figure 2 shows the standardised path coefficients of the proposed model and Figure 3 gives the results of the bootstrapping significance.

**Table 4.** Structural Model Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

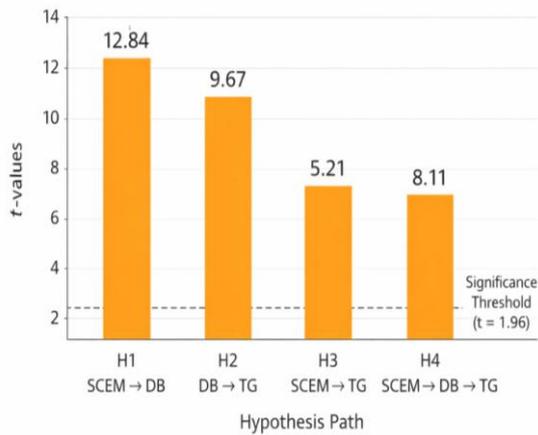
Hypothesis	Path	$\beta$	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	SCEM → DB	0.62	12.84	<0.001	Supported
H2	DB → TG	0.48	9.67	<0.001	Supported
H3	SCEM → TG	0.29	5.21	<0.001	Supported
H4	SCEM → DB → TG (Indirect)	0.30	8.11	<0.001	Supported

**Table 5.** Model Fit, Effect Size, and Predictive Relevance

Construct	$R^2$	$f^2$	$Q^2$
Destination Branding	0.38	0.44	0.24
Tourism Growth	0.56	0.29 / 0.16	0.37



**Fig. 2.** Structural Model with Standardized Path Coefficients and Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ) Values.



**Fig. 3.** Bootstrapped t-Values Indicating the Significance of Structural Model Path Relationships.

## 6. DISCUSSION

This study gives good empirical data as to why cultural event management works as a strategic approach in enhancing destination branding and tourism development. The findings reveal that the relevance of strategic cultural event management on destination branding is significant and can be confirmed that planned, genuine and professionally-organised cultural events hold great significance to positive destination perceptions. This implies that cultural events are not only entertainment processes, but are also tactical branding tools that have the potential of strengthening destination identity and competitive positioning. The high path coefficient of the strategic cultural event management and the destination branding suggests that the concept of authenticity, involvement of stakeholders as well as integration of marketing plays a significant role in brand equity creation in tourism destinations.

It is also indicated in the study that destination branding has the huge positive impact on the development of tourism. The result is in line with the current tourism and branding literature that highlights the relevance of brand image, perceived authenticity and brand loyalty in predicting revisit intention, positive word-of-mouth and general destination performance. A good destination brand lowers and improves uncertainty, brings emotional commitment and enhances behavioural intentions among the tourists which are ultimately measurable in terms of growth in tourism. The high predictive ability that has been noted with regard to the growth of tourism also goes to affirm the fact that branding is a highly important process that involves the conversion of experiential inputs into economic and behavioural outputs.

Notably, the findings suggest that strategic cultural event management does not only indirectly affect tourism development by creating destination

brand, but also affects the tourism growth positively. Such a dual route brings out the idea that cultural events bring short term and long term improvements. The impacts of such direct effects might be the growth due to greater height of visits, length of stay, and tourist spending during the times of events and indirect effects happen via the greater brand perceptions that are generated as a result of the events to promote future visitations and loyalty to the destination. The high mediation value of destination branding proves the central role of destination branding in transforming strategic event initiatives into sustainable tourism performance metrics.

Theoretically, the study makes contribution to the area of cultural event management and destination brand as it will incorporate these constructs into a cohesive Structural Equation Modelling framework. Basing the model on the resource-based and experiential approaches, the study makes a contribution on the comprehension of the functioning of cultural events as strategic resources that could bring a competitive advantage. The results build on the place branding theory by empirically showing that experiential cultural resources make a very important contribution to brand identity and tourism performance. Also, the research addresses the need to develop more detailed empirical models that would study the processes related to different event management, branding, and tourism development results together.

Generally, the findings explain how strategic cultural event management contributes to the development of tourism. Good planning of events, true cultural representation and watertight involvement of stakeholders promote branding destination, which raises the loyalty and revisit intentions of tourists. Meanwhile, strategically controlled events have both direct and behavioural economic effects that strengthen short-term and long-term tourism development. The results also emphasise the need to match cultural event strategies with destination branding goals in an attempt to realise sustainable and competitive tourism development.

## 7. Practical and Managerial Implications

The conclusions of this research have a number of valuable practical implications on destination managers, event organisers and policymakers who hoped to work towards increasing the competitiveness of their destination using cultural events. Firstly, the high positive correlation of strategic cultural event management and destination branding emphasise the fact that destination management organisations (DMOs) must start seeing cultural events as long-term strategic resources and not short-term

promotional instruments. The cultural events must be incorporated into the wider tourism development programmes, wherein the policy makers must be able to make them aligned to the brand development goals of the region, and also to the economic growth plans. The strategic positioning of cultural events in the destination policy agendas can even be enhanced by institutional support, funding mechanisms and cross-sector collaboration structures.

The outcomes in terms of management support the role of the professional approach to event organisation, genuineness, and engagement with stakeholders. By focusing on the authentic cultural representation, where the event exhibitors convey the local culture or identity, event organisers ought to remember authenticity as a key to the higher brand perception and visitor involvement. Local communities, tourism businesses, cultural institutions as well as government agencies must coordinate their actions on a strategic level to ensure that their events are coherent and of quality. Also, incorporation of cultural events as part of the destination marketing campaigns (offline and online) can increase the brand awareness and provide promotional exposure across time out of the event duration.

The fact that destination branding is a strong mediating factor implies that branding strategies must be well aligned to event management efforts. Utilising cultural events, destination management can use the opportunity to convey an unified, unique brand storey which underlines the cultural richness, uniqueness and sensual experience. The strategy of visual identity, storytelling, and digital interactions can be built around such events in the cultures of the flagship to enhance the memorability of the brand and connexion with the emotion. Additional methods can promote co-creation of the brand to grow international presence of the destination and attract more attention to the destination and destination-related activities through the use of social media marketing activities, influencer relations, and user-created content.

Within the context of sustainable tourism development, the results put emphasis on the sustaining concerns about the need to find equilibrium between the development of the economy and culture together with community welfare. The sustainable cultural event management must include the sustainability ideas of responsible use of resources, management of the environment, and the involvement of the communities. Destinations can make tourism resilient in the long run by instilling a sense of ownership locally and ensuring that cultural events have a socio-economic impact on the locals. Ensuring that the event strategies are in line with

sustainable tourism goals does not only enhance brand credibility, but also helps in maintaining growth in tourism generation, without reducing cultural integrity. Altogether, this paper recommends to destinations aiming at sustainable tourism development to embrace an integrated strategy comprising of joint management of strategic cultural events, consistent branding strategy, and sustainable planning approach. In so doing, destination managers and policymakers are able to realise the maximum immediate economic benefits of cultural events as well as its long term contribution to destination brand equity and competitiveness.

### **8. Limitations and Future Research Directions**

Regardless of the theoretical and practical achievements, this research has a number of limitations that cannot be denied. To begin with, the study is a cross-sectional design, and this survey design only takes the perceptions of the respondents at any given time. Although this methodology is suitable in investigating structural relations between constructs, it does not allow making causal inferences and tracking transformation of destination branding and tourism growth to relate between past and present. The cultural events can have short run and long-term effects and the cross-sectional model may not be able to well reflect the dynamism of the brand perception and the tourism performance is achieved after repetitive or recurring events.

Second, the sample of the study was limited to tourists who visited cultural events in a particular context of destination. Despite the fact that the sample size was sufficient to conduct Structural Equation Modelling analysis, it is possible that the geographic and contextual scope of the study restricts the average ability of the results to the other destinations with various cultural, economic, or governance features. The effects of cultural events in different regions can be different in terms of magnitude, nature of events, the interest of various parties, and the maturity of the destination. Hence, care must be taken with regard to transferring the findings to other tourism contexts.

These limitations can be overcome in future research through the incorporation of longitudinal research designs to monitor the changes of destination branding perception and measuring tourism growth indicators across many event cycles. Longitudinal studies would also give more information on the sustainability of branding impacts and how cultural events would make a long-term impact on tourism competitiveness. Contrasting is also another method to those in various destinations or different forms of cultural

events (e.g., heritage festivals, arts events, and mega-events) would also increase the external validity of the results and make it possible to cross-culturally analyse event-based branding strategies.

The further study can also be enriched with mixed-method studies which will involve both quantitative SEM analysis with qualitative tools like interviews, focus group, or case studies. Qualitative informational data may add on the knowledge about the views of the stakeholders, the interaction process with the community and the contextual elements that determine strategic and event management. Theoretical models would be further optimised by advanced SEM methods, e.g., multi-group analysis or higher-order construct modelling, or longitudinal SEM, which would enable the study of moderating influences, e.g., destination size, governance structure, or event frequency. Improvement of proper analytic methods and a wider methodological layout would enhance the empirical research of cultural event management and give more information on the connexion of events, branding and tourism development.

#### CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to investigate the inclusion of strategic cultural event management in destination branding and tourism stimulation based on a Structural Equation Modelling methodology. The results prove that well-planned and really communicated cultural events play a very important role in promotion destination brands and have a direct impact on tourism development, and destination branding has important and central mediating roles in implementing event-related customer experiences into enduring tourism performance results. This study addresses the tourism, culture and management literature as it brings about a perfect combination of cultural event management, destination branding and tourism growth on a single empirical platform in which it can be seen that cultural events become key assets that enable competitive positioning mechanism and long-term destination succession. The findings emphasise the fact that cultural events cannot be regarded only as the cross-temporary leisure and cultural activities but used as essential strategic tools with a strong capacity of enhancing brand name, visiting, and sustainable tourism development. Finally, the coordination of cultural event policies with consistent branding and long-term planning in destination development is the necessary step to staying competitive and gaining success in tourism on the long run.

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