Navigating MSME Growth In Tourism: The Role Of Product Quality, Networking, And Technology Through Destination Branding

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Abstract:

Background: *This study aims to explore the factors influencing the growth of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia's tourism sector, focusing on the roles of product and service quality, communication networking, and information technology, with branding as a mediating variable.*

Materials and Methods: *The findings indicate that branding has a significant direct impact on MSME growth, while information technology contributes significantly both directly to growth and indirectly through branding. However, product and service quality, as well as communication networking, significantly influence branding but do not have significant indirect effects on MSME growth via branding.*

Conclusion: *The study highlights that leveraging information technology and effective branding strategies are crucial in driving MSME growth in the tourism sector.*

Keyword: *MSME growth, tourism sector, product quality, communication networking, information technology, branding.*

I.   Introduction

The tourism sector is one of the most dynamic and globally impactful industries, showing remarkable growth in recent years. On May 21, 2024, the World Economic Forum (WEF) announced that Indonesia had risen to 22nd place in the global Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI), a significant improvement from its previous ranking. According to Hendriyani (2024), the success of businesses in Indonesia, including tourism, depends on efficiently and effectively managing resources to drive growth. The Indonesian tourism industry is now one of the top five foreign exchange earners, with tourism revenue reaching USD 14 billion in 2023, equivalent to IDR 21.4 trillion (at an exchange rate of IDR 15,600). This achievement, reported by the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, surpassed the target by 197.74%, exceeding the initial estimate of USD 7.0-9.99 billion. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2023), the rapid growth of the tourism industry presents a significant opportunity for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME), which play a key role in the local economy. MSME in the tourism sector provide essential services such as accommodation, food, transportation, and recreational activities, all of which are crucial to the tourist experience. Overall, MSME are vital in driving Indonesia's economy, accounting for 99% of all businesses in the country. In 2023, there were around 66 million MSME operators, contributing 61% to Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), valued at IDR 9,50 trillion (KADIN Indonesia, 2024). Additionally, MSME employ approximately 117 million workers, or about 97% of the total workforce in Indonesia, making them a major contributor and backbone of the national economy. With the rapid growth of tourism and the development of MSME, local economic growth is further enhanced (KADIN Indonesia, 2024).

According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the number of domestic tourist trips in 2021 reached 603.2 million, marking a 14.95% increase from the previous year, which had recorded 524.57 million trips (BPS, 2024). East Java was the most visited province, accounting for 25.79% of total domestic tourist trips, or approximately 155.49 million trips (Imaniar & Wahyudiono, 2019). One of the prominent tourism destinations in East Java is Banyuwangi, a district located at the eastern tip of Java Island, which has become a major tourist destination in Indonesia. Tourism serves as the economic growth foundation in Banyuwangi due to its abundant natural and marine resources, significantly contributing to both local and national income. Marine tourism in Banyuwangi, especially in the coastal area of Wongsorejo District, holds great potential for sustainable development (Zubaidah, Pratikto, & Zikra, 2022). This region is home to various marine tourism attractions, including Grand Watudodol, Bangsring Underwater, Mutiara Beach from Tabuhan Island, Kampe Beach, Bimo Beach, and Tabuhan Island. The development of these attractions by the local coastal communities can positively impact the economy (Destyariani, 2019). Banyuwangi has also made significant advancements in tourism infrastructure, attracting both government and private sector investments (Imaniar & Wahyudiono,

2019). These beaches play a crucial role for local MSME dependent on tourism, such as souvenir shops, restaurants, and tour guide services (Zubaidah, Pratikto, & Zikra, 2022). The success of these MSME contributes to the local economy and offers insights into the development of MSME in Indonesia's tourism sector.

According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) report in 2015, the number of MSME in Banyuwangi reached 269,267, both registered and unregistered. Continuous promotion by the local government has strengthened the competitiveness of MSME, making it one of the priority sectors in Banyuwangi, alongside health and education (BPS Banyuwangi, 2024). Banyuwangi's economy grew by 5.03% in 2023, showing an increase compared to 2022 (BPS Banyuwangi, 2023). This growth was observed across various sectors, with the tourism sector seeing significant development. The tourism industry in Banyuwangi has had a substantial impact on MSME such as food and beverages, souvenirs, and accommodation, becoming a key driver of the local economy. MSME products are now gaining recognition and demand in the market, serving as a long-term economic driver for the community. The economic growth in Banyuwangi is also marked by the rise of creative sector innovations, supported by tourism initiatives rooted in local wisdom and culture. This has led to increased local income, with the economic growth forecasted to reach 6.57% in 2024 (BPS Banyuwangi, 2023). Currently, 700 MSME in Banyuwangi have received a Business Identification Number (NIB) from the government. According to the Ministry of Investment/BKPM, a total of 1,676,153 NIBs have been issued across Indonesia via the OSS system. This reflects the government's appreciation of Banyuwangi's efforts in accelerating and facilitating NIB processing for MSME. To date, 42,000 MSME in Banyuwangi have obtained NIBs, making it the highest in East Java (Restiawan & Pratiwi, 2022). With the NIB, MSME have easier access to banking finance.

This research will focus on MSME in Watudodol Banyuwangi Beach as a representation of the development of the tourism sector MSME in Indonesia. The aim of this study is to explore and analyze various factors that influence the growth of MSME in the tourism industry in Indonesia. With a thorough analysis and understanding of these factors, it is expected that more effective strategies can be developed for MSME to achieve sustainable economic growth in the ever-evolving and dynamic tourism industry.

II.   Material And Methods

This study analyzes factors influencing MSME growth in the tourism sector in Banyuwangi, Indonesia, focusing on Watu Dodol as the research site. It examines the impact of product and service quality, communication and networking, and information technology on MSME growth, mediated by destination branding.

Study Design: This research employs a cross-sectional quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire to collect data from MSME owners and managers.

Study Location: Banyuwangi, Indonesia, particularly the Pantai Watu Dodol tourist area.

Study Duration: Data collection occurred in 2024

Sample size: 232 registered MSMEs operating in Watu Dodol

Sample size calculation: The sampling framework consists of a total population of 232 MSMEs operating in the tourism sector in Banyuwangi, Indonesia, particularly within the Pantai Watu Dodol tourist area, all of which have obtained operational permits and NIB (Business Identification Numbers).

Subjects & selection method: This study employs a purposive sampling method, selecting samples based on predetermined criteria to ensure they are both representative and aligned with the research objectives.

The sampling framework consists of a MSMEs operating in the tourism sector in Banyuwangi, Indonesia, particularly within the Pantai Watu Dodol tourist area, all of which have obtained operational permits and NIB (Business Identification Numbers). To determine the sample size, the Slovin formula is applied in conjunction with a simple random sampling method, resulting in a sample size of 10 respondents.

Direct Effect Hypotheses:
1. Product and Service Quality (KPL) has a significant effect on the growth of MSMEs.
2. Product and service quality (KPL) has a significant effect on branding.
3. Network quality (KJ) has a significant effect on the growth of MSMEs.
4. Network quality (KJ) has a significant effect on branding.
5. Information technology (IT) has a significant effect on the growth of MSMEs.

6. Information technology (IT) has a significant effect on branding.
7. Branding has a significant effect on the growth of tourism sector MSMEs.

Indirect Effect Hypotheses:
1. Product and service quality (KPL) has a significant indirect influence on the growth of MSMEs through branding.
2. Network quality (KJ) has a significant indirect influence on the growth of MSMEs through branding.
3. Information technology (IT) has a significant indirect influence on the growth of MSMEs through branding.
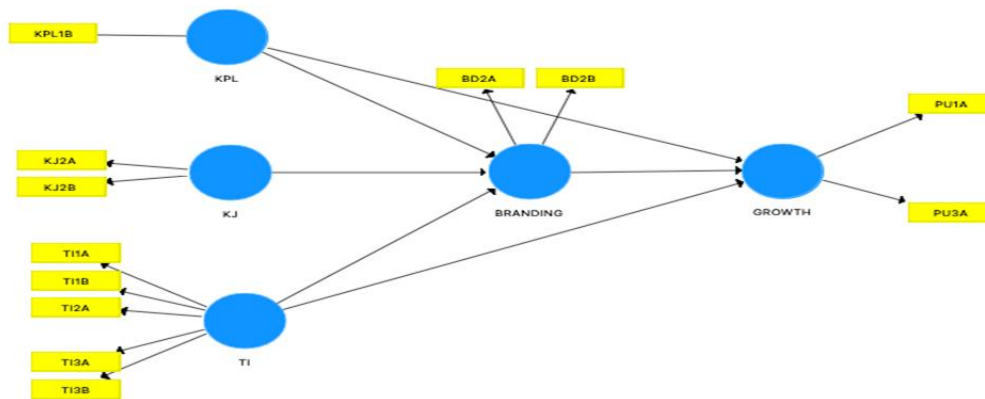

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Procedure methodology

The research was conducted in several stages to ensure systematic data collection and analysis. The preparation stage involved a preliminary study to understand the characteristics of MSMEs in Pantai Watu Dodol and the development of research instruments, including questionnaire design based on literature review and expert validation. The data collection stage involved distributing structured questionnaires to selected MSME owners and managers, with follow-up interviews when necessary to clarify responses. During the data processing stage, collected data were checked for completeness and validity, coded, and entered into statistical software for analysis. The data analysis stage applied Path Analysis using the Structural Equation Model-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) method to evaluate relationships among variables. Finally, the reporting stage involved summarizing key findings and providing actionable recommendations for MSME stakeholders and policymakers.

Statistical analysis

The data previously collected in the questionnaire will be analyzed using the Path Analysis method. This method was chosen to evaluate the relationships between the research variables using the Structural Equation Model-Partial Least Square. (SEM-PLS).

III.   Result

The results of this research and the data processing were carried out using the PLS-SEM method, utilizing SmartPLS software version 3.29. The steps taken in the PLS method include designing and evaluating the outer model, designing and evaluating the inner model, and testing the hypotheses.

In this study, respondents were characterized based on several demographic factors. The respondents consisted of owners of various SMEs, including those in food and beverages, accessories and souvenirs, accommodation and lodging, clothing stores (fashion), and beauty products. Most of these businesses are small, employing between 5 and 15 people. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (SPN), the number of employees determines the size of a company in Indonesia.

Among the respondents, women represented 62 (57.4%), which was higher than men, who made up 46 (42.6%). This finding contradicts previous research that highlighted male dominance in entrepreneurship in Indonesia (Tambunan, 2021). The managers of MSME businesses in the beach tourism area were predominantly aged 21–40 years (n = 5 or 7.7%), followed by those aged 41–60 years (n = 21 or 19.4%), with a small portion aged over 60 years (n = 2 or 1.9%).

In beach tourism, MSMEs operate in various business fields, offering a range of products. The majority of businesses were in the food and beverage sector (n = 73 or 67.6%), followed by accessories and

souvenirs (n = 14 or 13%), clothing or fashion stores (n = 13 or 12%), accommodation and lodging (n = 6 or 5.6%), and beauty products (n = 1 or 0.9%).

Experience plays a critical role in the success of these businesses. Most respondents had been managing their businesses for 1–5 years, accounting for 64 (59.3%) of the sample. Those with over 5 years of experience constituted 40 respondents (37%), while those managing their businesses for less than 1 year represented the smallest group at 4 (3.7%).

Table 1. Research Demographic Results
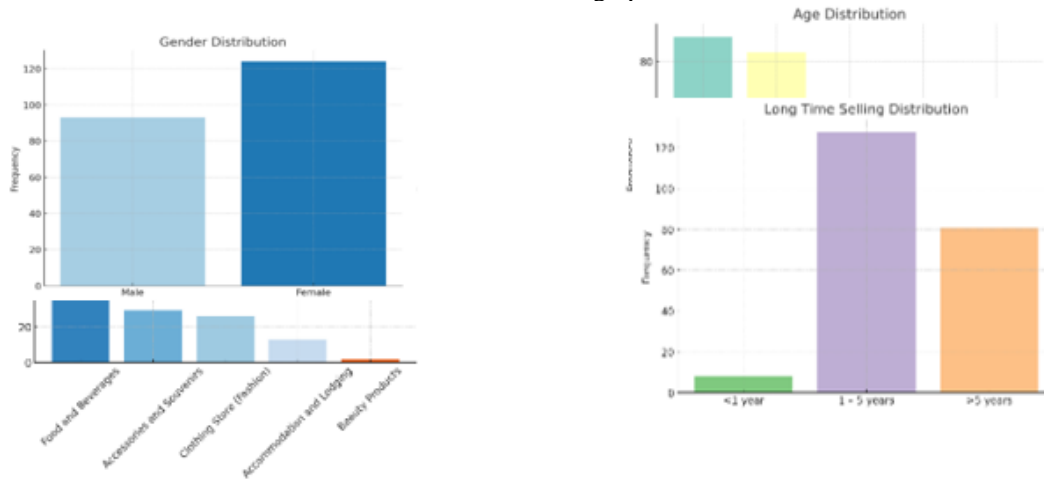
Outer Model Evaluation
Outer Loading

	KPL	KJ	TI_	BRANDING	GROWTH
KPL1B	1,000				
KJ2A		0,901			
KJ2B		0,819			
TI1A			0,775		
TI1B			0,789		
TI2A			0,773		
TI3A			0,780		
TI3B			0,770		
BD2A				0,871	
BD2B				0,825	
PU1A					0,833
PU3A					0,948

The outer loading values indicate a strong and significant relationship between each indicator and the latent construct being measured, as all indicators exceed the threshold of 0.7. In KPL (Product and Service Quality), the KPL1B indicator has a perfect value of 1.000, fully representing this construct. KJ (Network Quality) is strongly measured by KJ2A (0.901) and KJ2B (0.19). For IT (Information Technology), indicators TI1A–TI3B have values ranging from 0.770 to 0.79, showing their significant contribution. In BRANDING, BD2A (0.71) and BD2B (0.25) effectively represent brand trust and appeal. Finally, for GROWTH, PU1A (Revenue Growth) scores 0.33, while PU3A (Number of Customers) scores higher at 0.94, indicating that customer numbers play a more dominant role in measuring MSME growth. Overall, the outer loading values confirm that all indicators are valid and reliable in representing their constructs, providing a solid foundation for analyzing relationships between latent variables.

Construct Reliability and Validity (Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability)

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
KPL	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
KJ	0,657	0,692	0,851	0,741
TI_	0,837	0,839	0,884	0,604
BRANDING	0,612	0,620	0,837	0,719
GROWTH	0,759	0,924	0,886	0,796

The analysis of reliability and validity shows that all research variables demonstrate good reliability and validity. The Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs exceed the threshold of 0.70, indicating high internal consistency: destination branding (0.51), business innovation (0.913), communication and networking (0.5), product and service quality (0.6), entrepreneurial orientation (0.6), MSME growth (0.904), and information technology (0.903).

Similarly, the Composite Reliability (rho_c) values confirm strong measurement consistency, with all constructs scoring above 0.70: destination branding (0.93), business innovation (0.932), communication and networking (0.904), product and service quality (0.922), entrepreneurial orientation (0.904), MSME growth (0.926), and information technology (0.933).

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values also meet the criteria for convergent validity, with values exceeding 0.50: destination branding (0.626), business innovation (0.697), communication and networking (0.701), product and service quality (0.747), entrepreneurial orientation (0.655), MSME growth (0.677), and information technology (0.776). In conclusion, all constructs in this study satisfy the criteria for reliability and validity, effectively representing the theoretical concepts and ensuring the reliability of data for further analysis.

Discriminant Validity

	KPL	KJ	TI_	BRANDING	GROWTH
KPL1B	1.000	0.291	0.420	0.398	0.059
KJ2A	0.316	0.901	0.506	0.458	0.163
KJ2B	0.168	0.819	0.356	0.345	0.144
TI1A	0.325	0.408	0.775	0.482	0.198
TI1B	0.305	0.335	0.789	0.474	0.210
TI2A	0.337	0.436	0.773	0.539	0.270
TI3A	0.380	0.432	0.780	0.561	0.214
TI3B	0.274	0.356	0.770	0.449	0.223
BD2A	0.390	0.463	0.567	0.871	0.255
BD2B	0.278	0.332	0.533	0.825	0.223
PU1A	-0.047	0.100	0.161	0.148	0.833
PU3A	0.111	0.198	0.319	0.318	0.948

The cross-loading analysis results indicate that each indicator has the highest correlation with its respective construct. For example, the KPL1B indicator (Product and Service Quality) shows the highest correlation with the KPL construct at 1.000, compared to its correlation with other constructs like KJ (0.291) or TI (0.420). Similarly, the TI1A indicator has the strongest correlation with the TI construct at 0.775, while its correlations with other constructs, such as KJ (0.40) or BRANDING (0.42), are lower. These findings confirm that there are no significant cross-loading issues, and each indicator accurately represents its construct without overlapping with others. Thus, the measurement model is valid and reliable for analyzing relationships between constructs with high precision.

Inner Model Evaluation
R-square

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
BRANDING	0,463	0,456
GROWTH	0,108	0,095

The analysis shows that the Branding variable has an R-square value of 0.463 and an adjusted R-square of 0.456, indicating that 46.3% of the variability in Branding is explained by the independent variables, while the remaining 53.7% is influenced by factors outside the model. This suggests the model has a moderate ability to explain the Branding variable. In contrast, the Growth variable has an R-square value of 0.10 and an adjusted R-square of 0.095, meaning only 10.% of the variability in Growth is explained by the independent variables, with 9.2% influenced by external factors. This indicates a very weak influence of the independent variables on Growth.

Hypothesis Test
Path Coefficient (Direct effects)

Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
KPL -> GROWTH	-0.106	-0.113	0.076	1.392	0.165
KPL -> BRANDING	0.136	0.131	0.063	2.155	0.032
KJ -> GROWTH	0.019	0.016	0.075	0.256	0.798
KJ -> BRANDING	0.178	0.177	0.058	3.061	0.002
TI_ -> GROWTH	0.204	0.210	0.079	2.590	0.010
TI_ -> BRANDING	0.501	0.507	0.067	7.430	0.000
BRANDING -> GROWTH	0.183	0.182	0.086	2.138	0.033

The results of the path analysis reveal the relationships among the variables studied. The influence of product and service quality (KPL) on business growth (GROWTH) is not statistically significant, as indicated by a p-value of 0.165, which is greater than the threshold of 0.05, and a T-statistic of 1.392. This suggests that product and service quality does not directly contribute to the growth of the business. However, the relationship between product and service quality and branding (BRANDING) is both positive and significant, with a p-value of 0.032 and a T-statistic of 2.155. This demonstrates that higher product and service quality significantly enhances the company's branding efforts.

On the other hand, customer satisfaction (KJ) does not have a significant impact on business growth, as reflected by a p-value of 0.79 and a T-statistic of 0.256. Nonetheless, customer satisfaction positively and significantly influences branding, with a p-value of 0.002 and a T-statistic of 3.061, indicating that satisfied customers contribute to a stronger brand image.

The results further show that technological innovation (TI) positively and significantly affects both business growth and branding. For the relationship between technological innovation and business growth, the p-value is 0.010 and the T-statistic is 2.590, confirming its importance in driving business expansion. Similarly, the relationship between technological innovation and branding is highly significant, with a p-value of 0.000 and a T-statistic of 7.430, indicating that advancements in technology play a crucial role in building a strong brand.

Lastly, branding significantly contributes to business growth, with a p-value of 0.033 and a T-statistic of 2.13. This suggests that a strong brand can directly drive business expansion and success.

Specific Indirect Effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
KPL -> BRANDING -> GROWTH	0.025	0.026	0.018	1.421	0,156
KJ -> BRANDING -> GROWTH	0.033	0.035	0.019	1.761	0,079
TI_ -> BRANDING -> GROWTH	0.094	0.096	0.046	2.048	0,041

The mediation effect of Customer Satisfaction (KJ) on Growth through Branding is positive but not significant, with a path coefficient of 0.033, a T-statistic of 1.746, and a P-value of 0.01. This indicates that branding does not significantly mediate the relationship between customer satisfaction and growth. Similarly, the mediation effect of Service Quality (KPL) on Growth through Branding is also positive but not significant, with a path coefficient of 0.025, a T-statistic of 1.403, and a P-value of 0.161. This suggests that branding does not significantly mediate the impact of service quality on growth.

On the other hand, the mediation effect of Technology Integration (TI) on Growth through Branding is both positive and significant, with a path coefficient of 0.092, a T-statistic of 2.020, and a P-value of 0.044. This implies that branding plays a significant role in mediating the influence of technology integration on growth.

IV. Discussion

The hypothesis test results reveal some interesting relationships among the variables studied. The direct effect of product and service quality (KPL) on business growth (GROWTH) is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.165, T-statistic = 1.392), suggesting that product and service quality alone does not contribute directly to business growth. This finding aligns with previous research, which suggests that while high-quality products and services are essential for business sustainability, they might not immediately translate into growth if other factors, such as customer acquisition and market conditions, are not adequately addressed (Schwarz et al., 2021; Weng & Huang, 2020). From a logical standpoint, the role of product and service quality in growth is indirect and mediated by several key elements such as brand positioning, customer base expansion, and operational effectiveness. While high-quality offerings create customer satisfaction and trust, these factors alone are not sufficient to generate substantial growth unless accompanied by effective marketing strategies, robust sales channels, and an overall favorable market environment (Schwarz et al., 2021; Weng & Huang, 2020). Thus, while quality is important, it acts more as a foundation for sustained business operations rather than as an immediate driver of growth (Schwarz et al., 2021).

However, product and service quality has a significant positive effect on branding (p-value = 0.032, T-statistic = 2.155), which is consistent with studies indicating that quality products and services help create a strong brand image, ultimately enhancing brand loyalty and consumer trust (Homburg et al., 2017; Ryu et al., 2021). This relationship can be understood through a rhetorical lens where product and service quality act as a signal of the company's commitment to excellence, which can resonate deeply with consumers. When customers perceive that a brand consistently delivers high-quality offerings, they are more likely to form emotional and cognitive connections with it (Homburg et al., 2017). This, in turn, strengthens brand equity—an intangible asset that influences customer decision-making and fosters brand loyalty (Ryu et al., 2021). Over time, this branding effect can create a competitive advantage that not only retains existing customers but also attracts new ones, contributing indirectly to business growth. Therefore, while quality itself does not drive growth immediately, it plays a crucial role in shaping the brand's reputation and consumer perception, ultimately facilitating growth through enhanced customer loyalty and brand recognition (Ryu et al., 2021; Homburg et al., 2017).

Communication and networking quality (KJ) does not significantly impact business growth (p-value = 0.79, T-statistic = 0.256), which aligns with findings from prior studies suggesting that while communication and networking are important for business success, they are not always direct drivers of growth. Jain and Sharma (2020) argue that although effective communication and strong networks are essential for business

sustainability, they may not directly result in growth unless complemented by other strategic efforts such as market expansion and technological innovation. Other factors, such as innovation and strategic market efforts, may play a more significant role in growth outcomes (Jain & Sharma, 2020). Logically, business growth is influenced by a multitude of factors, and communication and networking quality are necessary but insufficient conditions for expansion (Jain & Sharma, 2020). Therefore, while effective communication and networking are critical for maintaining relationships and stability, they do not guarantee growth without the integration of other strategic actions like innovation and market diversification.

However, communication and networking quality (KJ) has a significant positive effect on branding (p-value = 0.002, T-statistic = 3.061), confirming the findings of previous research that emphasizes the critical role of these elements in establishing a strong brand image and fostering customer loyalty (Anderson et al., 2020; Sweeney et al., 2020). This result supports the argument that effective communication and strong networks contribute to enhancing the brand experience, which is a key element in business success. As Anderson et al. (2020) highlight, good communication and networking not only enhance consumer perceptions but also lead to positive word-of-mouth, which is vital for brand development. Furthermore, Sweeney et al. (2020) emphasize that strong communication and networks are fundamental in cultivating brand loyalty, as loyal customers are more likely to return and advocate for the brand. This relationship underscores the importance of communication and networking in developing a trusted brand, which can drive business growth through customer retention and increased market share (Sweeney et al., 2020).

Information Technology (TI) positively and significantly influences both business growth (p-value = 0.010, T-statistic = 2.590) and destination branding (BD) (p-value = 0.000, T-statistic = 7.430), aligning with recent research that underscores the importance of technological advancements in driving business expansion and enhancing brand equity. As Pappas et al. (2022) indicate, the integration of information technology is a critical enabler for business operations, providing efficiencies and facilitating stronger customer engagement, which ultimately leads to business growth. Additionally, advancements in technology help strengthen destination branding by enhancing the tourist experience and providing more personalized services (Chong et al., 2020). In the context of the MSME sector in the tourism industry, technology plays a crucial role in differentiating destinations and boosting their competitiveness in a crowded market. From a logical standpoint, technological innovations allow MSMEs in the tourism sector to streamline operations, improve customer satisfaction, and create distinctive brand identities, which significantly influence both business growth and branding (Pappas et al., 2022; Chong et al., 2020).

Destination branding (BD) itself is a significant contributor to the growth of MSMEs in the tourism sector (p-value = 0.033, T-statistic = 2.13), supporting the idea that a strong brand can drive market success and expansion. Studies have consistently shown that well-developed destination brands attract more tourists, fostering business growth and creating economic opportunities (Aaker, 2021; Tuli et al., 2021). As Aaker (2021) highlights, a robust brand image builds consumer trust and loyalty, which is vital for MSMEs in the tourism sector aiming for long-term sustainability. Tuli et al. (2021) further emphasize that destination branding enables businesses to differentiate themselves in the marketplace, which is crucial for MSMEs in competitive environments such as tourism. A strong destination brand enhances the perceived value of services, leading to increased tourist inflow, customer retention, and ultimately, growth.

Regarding the mediation effects, the results suggest that destination branding (BD) does not significantly mediate the relationship between customer satisfaction (KJ) and business growth (p-value = 0.01, T-statistic = 1.746), nor the relationship between service quality (KPL) and growth (p-value = 0.161, T-statistic = 1.403). This suggests that while destination branding is important, other factors beyond branding may be more crucial in translating customer satisfaction and service quality into business growth. Previous research has suggested that branding, while vital for consumer perceptions, may not always act as a mediator in the growth process, particularly in sectors with high competition like tourism (Xu et al., 2020). However, the mediation effect of technology integration (TI) on business growth through destination branding (BD) is positive and significant (p-value = 0.044, T-statistic = 2.020), confirming that branding plays a vital role in amplifying the effect of technological innovation on business growth. This supports the idea that when technology is combined with strong branding, it can accelerate growth and enhance the competitive position of MSMEs in the tourism sector (Ranjan & Sharma, 2022; Hosseini et al., 2021).

In conclusion, these findings indicate that while communication and networking quality, customer satisfaction, and service quality play important roles in branding, their direct effects on growth in the tourism sector are limited. Information technology and destination branding emerge as the most influential factors driving business growth, suggesting that MSMEs in the tourism industry should prioritize technological advancements and brand development to ensure long-term success.

V.   Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal several crucial insights into the factors influencing business growth and branding in the MSME tourism sector. First, while Information Technology (TI) and destination branding (BD) are significant drivers of both business growth and branding, the direct impact of customer satisfaction (KJ) and service quality (KPL) on growth is limited. This emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to business strategy, where factors such as technological advancements and a strong brand identity play a more substantial role in driving expansion. The positive and significant effects of TI and BD highlight the need for MSMEs to prioritize technological integration and brand development to stay competitive and achieve sustainable growth in the tourism sector.

Furthermore, although customer satisfaction and service quality are vital for building a positive brand image, they alone do not guarantee business growth without the support of other strategic elements such as technological innovation and market expansion. The mediation analysis also reinforces the notion that while branding plays a role in influencing business outcomes, its effect is often amplified when combined with technology-driven strategies. These findings suggest that MSMEs in the tourism industry must focus on a balanced approach, leveraging both digital transformation and brand differentiation, to foster growth and long-term success.

In conclusion, MSMEs in the tourism sector should consider technological innovation and destination branding as key priorities for fostering business expansion. By integrating these elements into their business models, MSMEs can enhance their market position, attract a loyal customer base, and ensure sustained growth in an increasingly competitive tourism industry.

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