

# An Empirical Study of Validating Cultural Event Experience in Determining Jordan's Destination Competitiveness

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**Abstract:** A country's ability to attract the largest number of tourists depends on its capacity to enhance competitiveness in the tourism sector. While Jordan's tourism competitiveness focuses on tourist destinations and basic resources, including infrastructure and administration, cultural interaction remains marginalised and weak. This study aims to validate the experience of cultural events in terms of (Cognitive engagement, Affective engagement, Physical engagement, and Novelty) and to examine their role in determining Jordan's destination competitiveness from the perspective of tourists. The study adopted a questionnaire to collect primary data from 90 individuals in Jordan. SPSS was used to screen and analyse the collected primary data. Results indicated a robust connection between the independent and dependent variables. The independent variables accounted for 63.9% of the variance in the dependent variable. The F value was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, indicating acceptance of the main hypothesis and that cultural event experience can determine Jordan's destination competitiveness. The information and knowledge individuals gain from such events might facilitate word-of-mouth and the intention to recreate the experience, driven by the feelings associated with the event. The study recommended reevaluating cultural event prices to align with those of neighbouring countries that rely more on technology and artificial intelligence. Furthermore, increasing the level of competitive analysis from a single tourism project to the sector level, then to the national level, and finally to the regional level.

**Keywords:** Cognitive Engagement, Affective Engagement, Physical Engagement, Jordan, Heritage and Novelty

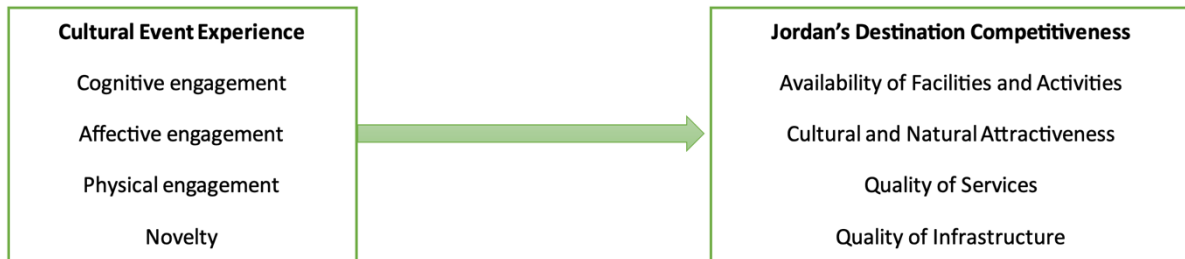
## 1. Introduction

There is an urgent need at several levels—individual, governmental, and international—to raise tourism competitiveness in order to transform it into a source of income capable of creating job opportunities, in addition to achieving growth and sustaining sustainable development. This would improve performance across various sectors nationwide and project a positive image of the nation.

Yousef (2024) argues that raising competitiveness in the Jordanian tourism sector is not based solely on pricing or services, but rather on a comprehensive set of indicators that reflect the nature of the relationships among different tourism stakeholders. Harb et al. (2025) emphasised that raising tourism competitiveness in Jordan, specifically in the tourism and travel sector, stems from indicators and regulatory and legal frameworks related to the tourism sector. Bader et al. (2024) agreed with this idea, adding that these indicators also include service and technological infrastructure, as well as business, human resources, and natural resources within the tourism sector.

Jordan's heritage is characterized by its rich cultural and traditional traditions, boasting archaeological and historical sites, cultural festivals, experiences of Bedouin life, religious celebrations reflecting its religious diversity, and various attractive tourist experiences (Abu Hamdan and Mason, 2025; Hashem et al., 2024). However, a significant gap exists in understanding how tourists' experiences contribute to these events and celebrations, thereby enhancing Jordan's tourism competitiveness. While Jordan's tourism competitiveness focuses on tourist destinations and basic resources, including infrastructure and administration, cultural interaction remains somewhat marginalized and weak. This study aims to validate the experience of cultural events in terms of (Cognitive engagement, Affective engagement, Physical engagement, and Novelty) and its role in determining Jordan's destination competitiveness from the perspective of tourists.

From the argument presented and the main aim of the study, we have developed a conceptual framework that highlights the relationship between variables, from which study hypotheses were extracted:



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Tran-Pham et al., 2024; Nguyen and Pham, 2024; Oham and Ejike, 2024; Pratminingsih et al., 2025)**

Launching from the above conceptual framework, the study was based on the following hypotheses:

**H: Cultural events experience has the ability to determine Jordan's destination competitiveness**

**H1:** Cognitive engagement has the ability to determine Jordan's destination competitiveness

**H2:** Affective engagement has the ability to determine Jordan's destination competitiveness

**H3:** Physical engagement has the ability to determine Jordan's destination competitiveness

**H4:** Novelty has the ability to determine Jordan's destination competitiveness

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Competitiveness in Touristic Destinations

Competitive destination is the ability to increase tourism expenditure, to increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying, memorable experiences, and to do so in a profitable way, while enhancing the well-being of destination residents and preserving the natural capital of the destination for future generations (Brent Ritchie & Crouch, n.d.). Nguyen et al. (2024) argued that the economic, social, and environmental benefits that are applied sustainably, and the capacity to attract, satisfy, and retain visitors to the destination, constitute competitiveness in tourist locations. It is more than just the extraordinary aesthetic or the sightseeing. It includes a complete system; a combination of resources, infrastructure, systems, and experiences that allows locations to surpass the competition in the global tourism market (Kusumah, 2024). By 2025, the World Economic Forum's TTDI will include as primary factors and benchmarks. The shift is to robust, inclusive and technology-driven tourism, through and post the pandemic (Jangjoo et al., 2025). Wahpiyudin et al. (2025); Dolasinski et al., (2025); Turjani et al. (2024) and Kadyrbekova et al. (2024) indicated that there are aspects that are considered as drivers for destination competitiveness, such as drivers include:

#### 2.1.1 Resource Attractors

These attractors are seen to be the main assets of a destination. Such attractors include beaches, mountains, natural landscapes, cultural heritage, festivals, and unique experiences.

#### 2.1.2 Accessibility and Infrastructure

This driver is considered important because it facilitates tourists' interaction with the destination. Such aspects include well-built airports, robust transportation, IT readiness, and the destination's reputation for human safety and security. Prices are also seen as highly important, as the affordability of a place plays a huge role in making the touristic experience more enjoyable.

#### 2.1.3 Policies and Management

Having a government that takes good care of its tourist destination is an added value for the destination itself. This includes the governmental policies regarding tourists, planning, sustainability practices, marketing, and the infrastructure on which the destination is based.

#### 2.1.4 Environmental Efforts

With the current orientation towards the environment and eco-friendly practices, the degree of sustainability a destination has is considered a driver of a better cultural experience. People are normally attracted to places which care more for the environment, which may include recycling, green housing, and energy-saving options.

## 2.2 Cultural Event Experience

According to Viola et al. (2024), cultural events such as festivals, meetings, and occasions offer priceless experiences and enable tourists to engage with the place, its people, and their culture, though festivals can be so much more than a sightseeing experience. While the significant roles of cultural events or festivals in destinations' marketing plans are varied, including tourist attractions, image developers, destination branding creators, and maintainers of local heritage (Laing, 2018; Li et al., 2021) Kajdanek (2024) observed that cultural events enable tourists to identify with a destination's identity, story and people through participation, thereby enabling the traveller to have a more authentic, emotional and memorable experience. Besides the cultural activities that enhance tourists' satisfaction and perceived value during their visits, they also offer participants highly emotional experiences, a factor that fosters a sense of belonging rather than viewing. Besides involving their emotions, tourists are more likely to visit the area again when they are actively involved in cultural activities (such as dancing in the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro, Diwali in India, or flamenco shows in Spain), which will help them create memories and refer others to the place. Ngan and Lei (2025) have observed that surveys consistently indicate that tourists are more satisfied with their overall travel experience than those who visit only landmarks or go shopping, due to a stronger level of involvement in cultural events. Cultural Events (Festivals) Assist in the Development of Destination Choice and Loyalty - The need for transformative experiences has become a growing trend in the travel scene. An example of these festivals is the Oktoberfest in Munich, which attracts millions each year and generates millions of dollars for local economies through spending on hotels, food, transportation, and souvenirs. One of the significant contributors to helping destinations establish their own identity in a highly competitive marketplace is cultural events, which encourage travellers to visit destinations to experience them (Tran-Pham et al., 2024). As (Jaković et al., 2017) concluded that the socio-cultural component can create a valuable and attractive tourist product unique reflect the culture and local community identity.

#### 2.2.1 Cognitive Engagement

This variable refers to the level of intellectual stimulation and knowledge gained through cultural activities, in which tourists actively engage with information about traditions, folklore, history, and associated symbols. The simplest examples of this are the events in Petra and the accompanying information about Nabataean architecture and the stories told. This variable enhances perceived authenticity and improves visitors' ability to retain the information presented to them, thereby fostering a cognitive connection and positive assessments of knowledge (Tran-Pham et al., 2024).

#### 2.2.2 Affective Engagement

The emotional engagement dimension is of paramount importance, encompassing emotional responses to cultural events such as joy, excitement, enthusiasm, and awe. This dimension stimulates emotional bonds and intense feelings, which, in turn, enhance individual satisfaction. From this, one can develop a word of recommendation or a desire to return to the destination, ultimately leading to long-term loyalty (Nguyen and Pham, 2024)

#### 2.2.3 Physical Engagement

Active physical participation is crucial for boosting individual satisfaction with a tourist destination. This includes dancing, immersing oneself in the experience, and transforming it into an interactive one. Physical participation enhances perceived value by stimulating the retention of kinetic memories, thus making the experience more appealing to the individual (Oham and Ejike, 2024)

#### 2.2.4 Novelty

The experience's uniqueness is paramount. This includes the rarity or novelty of the event compared to others. Furthermore, the uniqueness of the experience encompasses the excitement of Bedouin hospitality, exceptional service, and the stimulation of curiosity, thus enhancing tourism competitiveness by challenging the standardisation of tourism services (Pratminingsih et al., 2025).

### 2.3 Jordan's Destination Competitiveness

Yousef (2024) stated that Jordan is an exemplary destination among Middle Eastern countries in cultural tourism, leveraging its historical and living heritage to enhance its destination competitiveness. The country's cultural events, both ancient and religious festivals and contemporary heritage celebrations, can be viewed as effective attractors that set Jordan apart from competitors in the region, including Egypt, Turkey, and the UAE (Mellor, 2024). Reed (2025), Hashem et al. (2024), and Jackson et al. (2025) noted that Jordan hosts a number of Key cultural events that significantly frame its tourism destination. Among these events is the Jerash Festival of Culture and Arts (July-August), one of the oldest and largest festivals in the region, held in the spectacular Roman ruins of Jerash. It consists of international and local performances, music, theatre, folk dances, and handicraft exhibitions, where tens of thousands of people come every year. There is also Petra by Night, an unforgettable experience featuring Bedouin music and narration in the ancient Nabatean city under a moonlit sky. The religious and seasonal events are also celebrated by Christians, such as Madaba and Mount Nebo. Muslims enjoy festivals such as Eid, and Bedouins (e.g., camel racing, storytelling evenings) have their own unique traditions.

As noted by Arabeyyat and Aldweik (2024), such events made Jordan's destination more competitive by developing core attractors that create experiential value on world-class sites (Petra, Jerash, Wadi Rum) and by making an otherwise static heritage site dynamic and participatory. Also, such events increased visitors' satisfaction and loyalty through cognitive (learning), affective (emotional connection), physical (active participation), and novelty (surprising visiting) participation, which also leads to higher levels of satisfaction, revisit intention, and positive word-of-mouth. The economic impact was also apparent, as economic events generate significant revenue through tourism, local artisans, hospitality, and job creation, which aid in the sustainable development of communities. From another perspective, Hashem (2024) notes that there is a place for positioning and differentiation: Jordan boasts a unique, non-commercialised cultural experience, and thus its positioning provides a robust, distinctive brand image in the crowded Middle Eastern market. Hashem et al. (2025) agreed with this idea, adding that recent reports on tourism indicate that cultural and heritage tourism has accounted for an increasing share of visitors in Jordan, contributing to the country's recovery after the pandemic and making it a competitive destination worldwide. Jordan can also enhance its status as a best cultural destination by investing in quality event management, digital promotion, and sustainable practices.

### 3. Methods and Materials

The current study adopted a quantitative methodology to collect primary data from a large sample. The study population consisted of all tourists worldwide. A convenient sample of (135) individuals was chosen to represent the population of the study. After the application process, we were able to retrieve (90) properly filled questionnaires, which indicated a response rate (66.6%) as a statistically accepted ratio.

A questionnaire was developed to be the main tool of study. The questionnaire was built on Likert 5-point scale and with the aid of previous studies including (Tran-Pham et al., 2024; Nguyen and Pham, 2024; Oham and Ejike, 2024; Pratminingsih et al., 2025). The questionnaire was uploaded online, with a cover page containing a checkbox for consent to continue. If the box wasn't checked the browser won't load the main page of the questionnaire and the individual won't be able to respond to the questionnaire. We have validated the questionnaire content through the arbitration from scholars and academics in the field. Regarding reliability, we have run Cronbach's Alpha test ( $\alpha$ ) which indicated an alpha of higher than 0.70. this meant the questionnaire was reliable. See table 1.

**Table 1: Alpha Value**

| Variable                    | $\alpha$ |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| Cognitive engagement        | 0.79     |
| Affective engagement        | 0.882    |
| Physical engagement         | 0.862    |
| Novelty                     | 0.806    |
| Destination competitiveness | 0.932    |

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was chosen to screen and analyse the collected primary data. Mean ( $\mu$ ) and standard deviation ( $\sigma$ ) were calculated in addition to frequencies and percentages regarding demographic variables. Hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression.

## 4. Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1 Demographics

Results of the demographic analysis confirmed that the majority of respondents were males (53.3% of the total sample), followed by those aged 18 - 25 years (22.8%) and those aged 26 - 35 years (21.7%). In addition, most respondents held a Bachelor's Degree, accounting for 44.4% of the total sample, and 60% of the total sample were employed full-time. Results also indicated that the majority of respondents had an income of less than \$2000, accounting for 35.6% of the total sample, suggesting that respondents come from diverse origins, including Arab countries, the USA, Europe, and the Far East. The majority of them were in Jordan for tourism, education and business travel.

### 4.2 Questionnaire Analysis

We have used mean ( $\mu$ ) and standard deviation ( $\sigma$ ) in Table 2 to analyse the questionnaire. It was observed that all questionnaire variables had ratings above the mean of 3.00, indicating a positive attitude among respondents. The data in the table above reflects the mean and standard deviation of the questionnaire's variables.

**Table 2: Questionnaire Analysis**

| Statement                                                                  | $\mu$        | $\sigma$    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| I was thinking of visiting Jordan                                          | 3.553        | 1.094       |
| I used my intellect to visit Jordan                                        | 3.527        | 1.013       |
| I learned something about Jordan                                           | 3.630        | .922        |
| I acquired new knowledge about Jordan                                      | 4.114        | .792        |
| I was active                                                               | 3.974        | .860        |
| <b>Cognitive Engagement</b>                                                | <b>3.760</b> | <b>.695</b> |
| I was excited to visit Jordan                                              | 3.895        | .823        |
| I got emotionally recharged to visit Jordan                                | 4.057        | .902        |
| I experienced intimacy to visit Jordan                                     | 3.795        | .909        |
| I felt a sense of adventure to visit Jordan                                | 3.487        | 1.000       |
| I was aware of my own values                                               | 3.849        | .840        |
| I wanted to relive this later (talk about it/show pictures)                | 3.812        | .799        |
| <b>Affective Engagement</b>                                                | <b>3.816</b> | <b>.699</b> |
| I actively participated.                                                   | 3.997        | .830        |
| I had been creative.                                                       | 3.456        | .961        |
| I had fun                                                                  | 3.524        | .900        |
| All my senses were stimulated (taste, scent, hearing, smell, tactile)      | 3.621        | .954        |
| <b>Physical Engagement</b>                                                 | <b>3.650</b> | <b>.768</b> |
| I had the impression that the events in Jordan were different from others. | 3.533        | .961        |
| I experienced things unknown to me were / I was outside my "normal life."  | 3.855        | .953        |
| I thought that was unique.                                                 | 3.635        | .967        |
| I felt a sense of adventure.                                               | 3.647        | .997        |
| <b>Novelty</b>                                                             | <b>3.667</b> | <b>.771</b> |
| Jordan has available of special events, activities and facilities          | 3.000        | .000        |
| Jordan has effective promotion and publicity.                              | 3.544        | .927        |
| Suitability of nightlife and entertainment                                 | 3.917        | .902        |
| Jordan has availability of shopping facilities                             | 3.818        | 1.012       |
| Jordan has the standard of accommodation facilities                        | 3.769        | 1.169       |

|                                                            |              |             |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Jordan's distance to my home country.                      | 3.946        | .920        |
| Jordan has the attractiveness of historical sources        | 3.937        | .863        |
| Jordan has the attractiveness of cultural sources.         | 3.869        | .910        |
| Jordan has the attractiveness of a natural environment.    | 3.761        | .916        |
| Jordan has the Diversity of tourism products.              | 3.564        | 1.053       |
| Jordan has the quality of sea and beaches                  | 3.704        | 1.054       |
| Jordan has the quality of services                         | 3.419        | 1.136       |
| Jordan has a standard of hygiene and sanitation.           | 4.134        | .951        |
| Jordan has a Level of hospitality and friendliness.        | 4.054        | .916        |
| Jordan has the quality of local food and beverage          | 3.538        | .952        |
| Jordan has the overall value for money                     | 3.553        | .889        |
| Jordan has the quality of banking services.                | 3.795        | .976        |
| Jordan has the Quality of telecommunication network.       | 3.772        | .894        |
| Jordan has the Quality of health services.                 | 3.892        | .759        |
| Jordan has the Quality of the destination airport.         | 3.670        | .988        |
| Jordan has a quality local transport network and services. | 3.875        | 1.067       |
| <b>Destination Competitiveness</b>                         | <b>3.740</b> | <b>.615</b> |

### 4.3 Multicollinearity Test

VIF and Tolerance calculations were conducted on the independent variables to assess multicollinearity. The subsequent findings are identified. All VIF values in the referenced table are below 10, and all Tolerance values exceed 0.10, indicating that the data are free of multicollinearity. See Table 3.

**Table 3: Multicollinearity**

| Variable             | Tolerance | VIF   |
|----------------------|-----------|-------|
| Cognitive engagement | .256      | 3.909 |
| Affective engagement | .329      | 3.041 |
| Physical engagement  | .277      | 3.612 |
| Novelty              | .292      | 3.425 |

### 4.4 Hypotheses Testing

The researchers used multiple linear regression to test the study's hypotheses, as shown in Table 4 below. Results indicated an R-value of 0.799, signifying a robust connection between the independent and dependent variables. The independent variables accounted for 63.9% of the variance in the dependent variable. The F value was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, indicating acceptance of the main hypothesis and that cultural event experience can determine Jordan's destination competitiveness. In addition, the t-values for each variable were significant at the 0.05 level. That meant:

- Cognitive engagement has the ability to determine Jordan's destination competitiveness
- Affective engagement has the ability to determine Jordan's destination competitiveness
- Physical engagement has the ability to determine Jordan's destination competitiveness
- Novelty has the ability to determine Jordan's destination competitiveness

**Table 4: Testing Hypotheses Results**

| <b>H: Cultural Events Experience has the Ability to Determine Jordan's Destination Competitiveness</b> |                      |                                    |                   |                                  |          |             |          |                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------|-------------|----------|----------------------|
| <b>Model</b>                                                                                           |                      | <b>Unstandardized Coefficients</b> |                   | <b>Standardized Coefficients</b> | <b>t</b> | <b>Sig.</b> | <b>R</b> | <b>R<sup>2</sup></b> |
|                                                                                                        |                      | <b>B</b>                           | <b>Std. Error</b> | <b>Beta</b>                      |          |             |          |                      |
| 1                                                                                                      | (Constant)           | .964                               | .116              |                                  | 8.295    | .000        | .799a    | .639                 |
|                                                                                                        | Cognitive engagement | .262                               | .057              | .296                             | 4.630    | .000        |          |                      |
|                                                                                                        | Affective engagement | .193                               | .050              | .219                             | 3.893    | .000        |          |                      |
|                                                                                                        | Physical engagement  | .121                               | .049              | .151                             | 2.453    | .015        |          |                      |
|                                                                                                        | Novelty              | .167                               | .048              | .209                             | 3.497    | .001        |          |                      |

#### 4.5 Discussion

The current study shed light on the validation of cultural event experience in terms of (Cognitive engagement, Affective engagement, Physical engagement, and Novelty) and its role in determining Jordan's destination competitiveness from the perspective of tourists. The study adopted a questionnaire to collect primary data from 90 individuals. SPSS was used to screen and analyse the collected data. The analysis indicated that cultural event experience can determine Jordan's destination competitiveness, with an R value of 0.799, suggesting a robust relationship. The independent variable (cultural events experience) explained 63.9% of the variance in the dependent variable (Jordan's destination competitiveness).

Regarding the adopted sub-variables (Cognitive engagement, Affective engagement, Physical engagement, and Novelty), they all influenced Jordan's destination competitiveness, with cognitive engagement scoring highest at  $B = .262$ . Cognitive engagement (interaction) involves tourists actively learning and understanding the cultural events. Visitors to the Jerash Festival are informed about the Roman past through guided performances, archaeological lectures, and interactive exhibitions. Such intellectual appeal enhances knowledge of Jordan's rich background (Nabatean, Roman, Islamic) and perceived genuineness and learning experience. Tran-Pham et al. (2024) agreed with these results, adding that visitors who walk away with a better understanding of the country will promote Jordan as a cultural destination, likely enhancing its competitiveness relative to neighbouring countries such as Egypt or Turkey.

In the second rank came affective engagement, with  $b = 0.193$ . Affective engagement shares this same attribute but involves emotional reactions, joy, awe, wonder, or spiritual interaction, which are the responses of a person to events. Emotional ties are created when seeing Petra by Night, as the Treasury is lit up by thousands of candles and Bedouin music fills the air. Nguyen and Pham (2024) agreed and added that such positive attitudes are associated with greater satisfaction, stronger emotional attachment to the destination, increased revisit, and a greater likelihood of positive word of mouth. The emotional experiences will make Jordan a more soulful, less strictly historical tourist destination, and will attract the growing number of experiential and transformational travellers.

The third rank was novelty, with  $B = 0.167$ . Novelty means the sense of originality and astonishment as one of the primary driving forces in the competitive tourism world today. Activities such as the floating lantern festival at the Dead Sea or the integration of ancient ruins with modern art at the Jerash Festival are new and surprising stimuli. Novelty fulfils the need for originality of the modern tourist and hopes to make Jordan unique compared to other cultural offerings, which are more predictable in the region, as according to results by Pratminingsih et al. (2025)

The least influential variable was physical engagement, with  $B = 0.121$ . Physical interaction focuses on active involvement, turning passive observation into active participation. Visitors who attend traditional Dabke dances at festivals, study Bedouin coffee-making, or explore camel treks in Wadi Rum experience a sense of embodiment and immersion. This interaction within the body generates intense, memorable experiences that stand out in a saturated global market, enhancing satisfaction and loyalty. Such results were reported in rhyme (Oham and Ejike, 2024).

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is impossible to discuss the global competitiveness of the tourism sector without addressing it locally. These experiential benefits in the competitive Middle Eastern tourism market will be further enhanced by investing in quality management, events, promotion, and sustainability. There is a critical need for those responsible for the Jordanian tourism sector to conduct a thorough audit of its competitiveness to assess its level locally, regionally, and internationally. Furthermore, this audit should not be limited to metrics such as market share, profits, revenues, and income, but must also encompass other elements that shape the Jordanian tourism product. Jordan's events will not only increase tourists' satisfaction and loyalty but also support the destination's global positioning as a genuine, immersive, and emotionally evocative cultural tourism experience. A simple example is that, in terms of tourism service pricing, Jordan has yet to reduce service costs without compromising quality. Additionally, there is a noticeable gap in perceptions that tourism programs are not competitive and that their prices exceed those in neighbouring countries. Accordingly, the current study offers the following recommendations:

- Working to employ technology and artificial intelligence in tourism services to take advantage of their role in reducing the cost of these services without harming their quality.
- Employing high-quality human skills in order to provide high-quality and competitive services.

## Ethics Declaration

In this study, the ethical principles set out in the Declaration of Helsinki and the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (2021) were followed. All the data were retrieved from published, peer-reviewed literature published not later than 2019-2025. No primary data was collected, and no human subjects were used. The study adhered to intellectual property standards, provided a good representation of sources, and was transparent about methodology and limitations. There is no conflict of interest.

## AI Declaration

There was no employment of AI tools in this current document. All the content was critically vetted, edited, and checked by the author to ensure accuracy, originality, and scholarly integrity. Verbatim text (generated by AI) was not used without significant human revision of the text. The author accepts the final copy to his full responsibility.

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