

Determinants of visit intention: The role of city branding, tourism events, and city image in Banyuwangi, Indonesia

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Abstract

Purpose — This study examines the determinants of tourists' visit intention by analysing the roles of city branding, tourism events, and city image in the context of Banyuwangi, Indonesia. Drawing on perspectives from Tourism Marketing and Consumer Behavior, the research proposes a model in which city branding and tourism events influence visit intention both directly and indirectly through city image.

Methods — A quantitative approach was employed using survey data collected from [n = 220] respondents. Data were analysed using CB-SEM with Amos.

Findings — The findings reveal that city branding and tourism events significantly affect city image, which in turn plays a crucial role in shaping the decision to visit. Furthermore, city image mediates the relationship between marketing stimuli and tourists' behavioral intentions.

Implication — The study contributes to the literature on Place Branding by providing empirical evidence from an emerging tourism destination. Managerial implications suggest that local governments should strategically integrate branding initiatives with event-based tourism to strengthen destination image and attract visitors.

Originality — This study contributes to the literature by integrating city branding, tourism events, and city image into a unified model to explain tourists' visit decisions. It further highlights the mediating role of city image in an emerging destination context, providing empirical evidence from Banyuwangi, Indonesia

Keywords: City Branding, Tourism Event, City Image, Decision to Visit, Destination Branding

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism has emerged as one of the most important drivers of regional economic development, particularly for emerging destinations seeking to enhance competitiveness within increasingly saturated tourism markets. As destinations compete to attract visitors, investment, and broader stakeholder engagement, strategic place marketing has become essential for establishing distinctiveness and long-term appeal. Among various destination marketing approaches, city branding has gained substantial attention as a strategic mechanism for local governments to construct and communicate a destination's identity, values, and unique characteristics to target

audiences (Kavaratzis, 2004). Unlike conventional promotional campaigns, city branding represents a long-term strategic process aimed at shaping stakeholder perceptions and strengthening destination positioning.

In Indonesia, city branding has emerged as a strategic instrument for regional tourism development, as local governments seek to strengthen destination competitiveness in an increasingly crowded domestic tourism market. Numerous municipalities and regencies have introduced branding initiatives to construct distinctive destination identities, communicate local uniqueness, and attract both domestic and international tourists (Ariwibowo & Prasetyo, 2023; Zahrah, 2023). These branding efforts reflect broader decentralization-driven regional development strategies, in which local governments are encouraged to leverage place-based assets through destination differentiation and integrated tourism promotion (Astuti, 2017). Several Indonesian cases, including Bandung, Solo, Kendal, Magelang, and Singkawang, demonstrate how destination branding has been actively employed to enhance regional visibility and strengthen tourism positioning (Ismiati & Rachman, 2023; Soesanta et al., 2023).

Among Indonesia's emerging regional tourism destinations, Banyuwangi Regency in East Java provides a particularly relevant empirical context for examining the effectiveness of city branding and tourism event strategies. Over the past decade, Banyuwangi has attracted considerable scholarly and policy attention as a prominent example of destination transformation through integrated tourism development strategies centered on branding, cultural festivals, and local identity promotion. This transformation has been driven by coordinated local government initiatives emphasizing destination promotion, event-based tourism marketing, and the strategic repositioning of Banyuwangi's cultural identity to strengthen tourism competitiveness (Aisya & Yuliati, 2024; Harmawan et al., 2022). The Banyuwangi Festival, particularly flagship events such as Gandrung Sewu and Banyuwangi Ethno Carnival, has played a central role in reshaping public perception and reinforcing Banyuwangi's image as a cultural tourism destination (Suharti & Sari, 2023). These initiatives have contributed to Banyuwangi's transition from a region historically associated with negative stigma into one increasingly recognized for cultural tourism innovation and destination branding excellence (Bahar & Romadloni, 2025).

While these initiatives have significantly strengthened Banyuwangi's destination visibility, sustaining long-term tourism competitiveness remains an ongoing challenge. Compared with more established Indonesian tourism destinations such as Bali and Yogyakarta, Banyuwangi continues to face limitations in achieving stable tourist growth and maintaining strong destination recall among broader domestic and international markets. Although visitor arrivals have shown encouraging growth in recent years, this performance has not consistently translated into sustained

competitive positioning. This condition raises important questions regarding the extent to which city branding and tourism events effectively shape tourists' perceptions and influence their visitation decisions. More specifically, understanding the psychological mechanisms through which destination marketing initiatives are translated into behavioral responses remains critical for strengthening regional tourism competitiveness. In this regard, examining the mediating role of city image becomes particularly important, as tourists' evaluative perceptions often determine whether branding messages and experiential offerings successfully translate into actual travel intention.

While Banyuwangi's development illustrates the strategic potential of integrated destination marketing, the mechanisms through which city branding and tourism events translate into tourists' behavioral responses remain insufficiently understood. Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that city branding significantly influences destination image and tourist behavioral intention (Zenker & Beckmann, 2013; Braun et al., 2014). Likewise, tourism events have been identified as powerful experiential marketing tools capable of enhancing destination attractiveness and strengthening image formation (Getz, 2008; Jeong & Kim, 2019). Despite these advances, existing studies have largely examined city branding and tourism events as independent predictors of tourist behavior, offering a limited understanding of the psychological mechanism through which these destination marketing stimuli jointly shape behavioral intention through perceptual evaluation. This limitation is particularly evident in studies focusing on emerging secondary destinations, where branding and event-based tourism strategies often play a critical role in destination competitiveness.

To address this gap, this study adopts the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework. The stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory is a psychological model that describes how individuals respond to stimuli in their environment. This theory was initially introduced by Robert S. Woodworth (1918) and later adapted to consumer behavior by Albert Mehrabian and James A. Russell (1974). The S-O-R model explains that external environmental stimuli trigger internal cognitive and affective evaluations, which subsequently shape behavioral responses. In tourism settings, destination marketing cues such as branding communication, and event experiences function as these external stimuli, influencing tourists' perceptual evaluations and ultimately their visitation decisions. In this study, city branding and tourism events are conceptualized as external stimuli, city image represents the organism reflecting tourists' internal perceptual evaluation, and the decision to visit constitutes the behavioral response.

The application of the S-O-R framework offers a more theoretically robust explanation of tourist decision-making processes by clarifying the psychological mechanism through which

destination marketing initiatives influence behavioral intention. Specifically, city image is positioned as a mediating construct that translates symbolic branding communication and experiential event exposure into visitation decisions.

This study aims to examine the effects of city branding and tourism events on tourists' decisions to visit Banyuwangi, with city image serving as a mediating variable. This research contributes to destination branding literature in three important ways. First, it extends the application of the S-O-R framework to the context of city branding and tourism events. Second, it examines the mediating role of city image in linking destination marketing stimuli to behavioral intention. Third, by focusing on Banyuwangi as an emerging secondary destination in Indonesia, this study provides contextual insights that broaden the predominantly metropolitan and established-destination focus of prior destination branding research. The findings are expected to provide both theoretical advancement and practical guidance for destination managers seeking to design more integrated and effective tourism marketing strategies.

Hypothesis Development

City Branding and Decision to Visit

City branding refers to the strategic process through which local governments construct and communicate a distinctive destination identity to enhance attractiveness and competitiveness among target stakeholders (Kavaratzis, 2004). Through symbolic narratives, visual identity systems, and destination positioning strategies, city branding shapes tourists' perceptions by creating favorable cognitive associations and reducing uncertainty in destination evaluation (Braun et al., 2014). In tourism contexts, effective city branding functions as a persuasive marketing mechanism that influences behavioral intention by strengthening destination awareness and perceived attractiveness.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that city branding positively influences tourists' visitation decisions. For example, Zenker and Braun (2017) argue that strong place branding enhances stakeholder engagement and behavioral response through differentiated destination identity. Similarly, Braun et al. (2014) found that place brand communication significantly influences destination-related behavioral outcomes. Within the Indonesian tourism context, Putra et al. (2019) also reported that city branding significantly affects tourists' intention to visit.

From the stimulus–organism–response (S-O-R) perspective, city branding functions as an external symbolic stimulus that directly shapes behavioral responses by influencing tourists' evaluative judgments regarding destination desirability. A clearly communicated destination brand

can therefore increase tourists' confidence and motivation to visit. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: City branding positively influences tourists' decision to visit

City Branding and City Image

City branding enables destinations to differentiate themselves from competing locations and shape favorable stakeholder perceptions (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). One of the primary objectives of city branding is to construct a strong and recognizable city image that enhances destination awareness and reinforces positive cognitive associations among target audiences (Braun et al., 2014). A well-developed city brand communicates a destination's unique attributes, cultural values, and experiential promise, thereby influencing how tourists perceive and evaluate the destination. Previous empirical studies consistently demonstrate a positive relationship between city branding and city image. Zenker and Beckmann (2013) found that place branding initiatives significantly influence stakeholders' perceptions of destination attractiveness. Braun et al. (2014) further reported that effective place brand communication strengthens positive cognitive evaluations of destinations. Other studies also show the positive relationship between city branding and city image (Capone & Lazeretti, 2016; Purwanto & Soliha, 2017).

From the stimulus–organism–response (S-O-R) perspective, city branding functions as an external symbolic stimulus that shapes tourists' internal perceptual evaluations. Through repeated exposure to destination branding messages, tourists develop cognitive representations that ultimately form the city image. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: City branding positively influences city image

Tourism Events and Decision to Visit

Tourism events are planned occurrences designed to attract visitors, stimulate destination awareness, and generate economic and socio-cultural benefits for host communities (Getz, 2008). As experiential marketing instruments, tourism events create unique opportunities for destinations to enhance attractiveness by offering distinctive cultural, recreational, and social experiences that cannot be replicated elsewhere. Events influence tourists' visitation decisions by creating temporary destination-specific value, increasing destination visibility, and generating emotional engagement (Lee, Lee, & Wicks, 2004). Through their ability to provide memorable experiences, tourism events function as powerful motivators that stimulate travel consideration and reduce uncertainty in destination selection.

Previous empirical studies have consistently demonstrated the positive influence of tourism events on tourists' visitation behavior. Jeong and Kim (2020) found that event quality significantly

affects tourists' behavioral intention through enhanced destination attractiveness. Similarly, Arnegger and Herz (2016) reported that event participation positively influences destination-related decision-making by increasing tourists' experiential attachment to place. In the Indonesian tourism context, event-based destination strategies have also been shown to strengthen travel motivation and increase visitation interest (Kusumawati et al., 2022).

From the stimulus–organism–response (S-O-R) perspective, tourism events function as external experiential stimuli that directly influence behavioral responses by generating excitement, perceived value, and destination appeal. Therefore, destinations that successfully organize attractive tourism events are more likely to stimulate tourists' decisions to visit. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Tourism events positively influence tourists' decisions to visit

Tourism Events and City Image

Tourism events are increasingly recognized as strategic destination marketing instruments that contribute to city image formation by creating distinctive experiences and strengthening symbolic destination associations (Getz, 2008). Through cultural festivals, sports events, and creative exhibitions, destinations can communicate local identity, values, and uniqueness to broader audiences. Events contribute to city image enhancement because they provide tangible experiential representations of a destination's cultural and social characteristics. By creating memorable visitor experiences, tourism events shape cognitive and affective perceptions, thereby strengthening positive destination associations (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). Mega-events and recurring cultural festivals are particularly effective because they provide opportunities to project destination identity and communicate the core values of the host city to both participants and wider media audiences (Zhang & Zhao, 2009).

Previous empirical studies consistently demonstrate the positive relationship between tourism events and city image. Ferrucci et al. (2016) found that urban cultural events significantly enhance regional tourism image by strengthening destination recognition and attractiveness. Similarly, Liu (2015) reported that event-based tourism positively shapes destination image through experiential engagement. Arnegger and Herz (2016) further showed that event participation improves tourists' perceptions of host destinations, while Gilboa et al. (2015) confirmed that city events contribute significantly to destination image enhancement through symbolic communication.

From the stimulus–organism–response (S-O-R) perspective, tourism events function as external experiential stimuli that influence tourists' internal perceptual evaluations. Exposure to

tourism events generates cognitive and emotional responses that shape how tourists perceive the destination, thereby contributing to city image formation. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Tourism events positively influence city image

City Image and Decision to Visit

City image refers to the totality of beliefs, impressions, ideas, and emotional perceptions that individuals hold regarding a destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). It represents tourists' overall evaluative judgment of a destination based on cognitive assessments of destination attributes and affective responses generated through prior information exposure or experience. A favorable city image plays a critical role in tourist decision-making because it reduces uncertainty, enhances destination attractiveness, and strengthens confidence in destination selection (Beerli & Martín, 2004). In highly competitive tourism markets, destinations with strong positive images are more likely to be included in tourists' consideration sets and subsequently selected for visitation.

Previous empirical studies consistently demonstrate that city image significantly influences visitation behavior. Baloglu and Brinberg (1997) argue that destination image serves as a key differentiating factor among competing destinations and plays an integral role in tourists' decision-making processes. Similarly, Wang and Hsu (2010) found that a favorable destination image significantly influences tourists' behavioral intention by strengthening destination preference and reducing perceived uncertainty. Styliadis et al. (2017) further confirmed that destination image is a significant predictor of tourists' visitation decisions.

From the stimulus–organism–response (S-O-R) perspective, the city image represents the organism component, reflecting tourists' internal perceptual evaluation. As an internal cognitive representation formed through exposure to external destination marketing stimuli, city image directly influences behavioral responses by shaping tourists' intentions and decisions to visit. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H5: City image positively influences tourists' decision to visit

Drawing upon the S-O-R framework, this study conceptualizes city branding and tourism events as external stimuli that shape tourists' internal perceptual evaluations, represented by city image, which subsequently influence behavioral responses in the form of visit decisions. Accordingly, this study proposes both direct and mediated relationships among the constructs to explain the mechanisms through which destination marketing initiatives affect tourist behavior. The hypothesized relationships provide the theoretical foundation for empirically testing the

proposed structural model within the context of Banyuwangi as an emerging regional tourism destination.

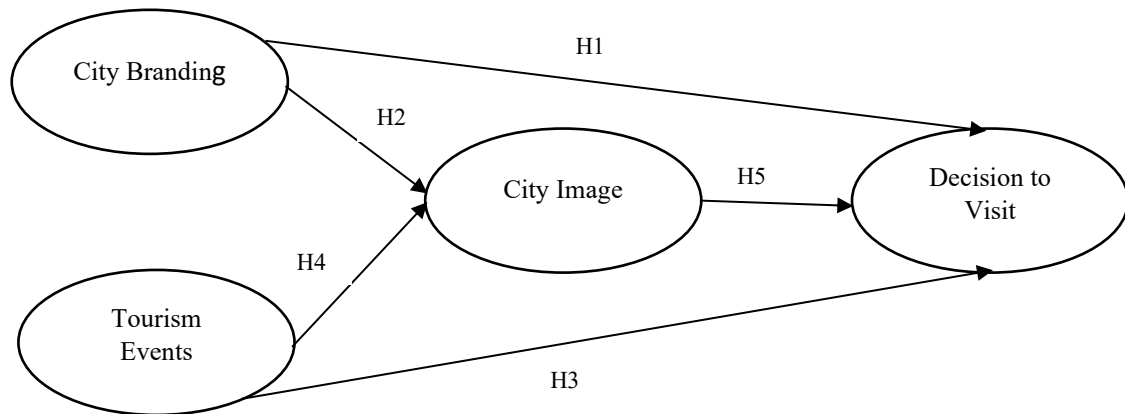


Figure 1. Research Model

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design to examine the structural relationships among city branding, tourism events, city image, and tourists' decisions to visit Banyuwangi. A cross-sectional survey approach was adopted, as the study aimed to capture respondents' perceptions and behavioral evaluations at a single point in time (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This design is appropriate for testing causal relationships among latent constructs using structural equation modeling. The unit of analysis consisted of individual tourists familiar with Banyuwangi as a tourism destination. The target population included domestic tourists who had previously visited Banyuwangi or possessed sufficient knowledge regarding Banyuwangi's tourism branding and event activities. To ensure respondents' relevance to the study context, purposive sampling was employed as a non-probability sampling technique. Respondents were required to meet at least one of the following screening criteria: (1) having visited Banyuwangi within the past twelve months, or (2) being familiar with Banyuwangi's tourism branding initiatives and major tourism events.

A total of 220 valid responses were obtained through online questionnaire distribution using Google Forms. This sample size is considered adequate for covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM), which generally requires a minimum sample of 200 observations to produce stable parameter estimates and reliable goodness-of-fit assessment (Hair et al., 2019; Kline, 2023). Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of closed-ended statements measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly

agree). The measurement instrument assessed four latent constructs: city branding, tourism events, city image, and decision to visit. Measurement indicators were adapted from established prior studies to ensure content validity and contextual relevance to the Banyuwangi tourism setting. Prior to full-scale data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed to ensure clarity, readability, and contextual appropriateness. Construct validity was evaluated through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), while internal consistency reliability was assessed using construct reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) following recommended thresholds (Hair et al., 2019).

Data analysis was conducted using covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) with AMOS software. CB-SEM was selected because the study aimed to test theory-driven causal relationships and assess overall model fit within the proposed stimulus–organism–response (S-O-R) framework (Adam, 2018). The analysis proceeded in two stages: first, evaluation of the measurement model through validity and reliability assessment; second, testing of the structural model to examine direct and mediating relationships among constructs. Model fit was assessed using multiple goodness-of-fit indices, including chi-square/df, GFI, AGFI, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA (Adam, 2018).

Table 1. Measurement Items

Construct	Measurement Items	Adapted from
City Branding	CB1. Banyuwangi contributes to the fields of culture and knowledge (like the Osing Tourism Village and the presence of the Geopark, which is recognised by UNESCO for research objects)	Putra et al. (2019)
	CB2. Banyuwangi is a pleasant city in which to open a business.	
	CB3. Banyuwangi provides knowledge of Javanese culture.	
	CB4. Banyuwangi is a comfortable place to live and has easy access	Ivani (2015)
	CB5. Banyuwangi is attractive because of its natural attractions such as Ijen Blue Fire, Green Bay, & Alas Purwo National Park.	
	CB6. Banyuwangi is attractive in terms of culture and tradition.	Putra et al. (2019)
	CB7. Local people of Banyuwangi are easy to communicate with, and they're very pleasant people.	Ivani (2015)
	CB8. The facilities and infrastructure in the city of Banyuwangi already have good quality and are well-maintained.	
	CB9. Banyuwangi provides accommodation of good quality for local tourists and foreign tourists.	Rahayu (2019)
City Image	CI1. I know that the "Majestic Banyuwangi" brand from Banyuwangi portrays cultural and natural riches.	
	CI2. I believe that the tagline "Majestic Banyuwangi" can reflect the characteristics of the city, according to its potential.	Putra et al. (2019)
	CI3. I know that Banyuwangi has many places that can be enjoyed according to the tagline "Majestic Banyuwangi"	
	CI4. I like the branding "Majestic Branding" because have many big events.	
	CI5. I believe that Banyuwangi has an attraction, and in accordance with its tagline, "Majestic Banyuwangi"	Ivani (2015)
	CI6. I believe "Majestic Banyuwangi" branding is in line with my expectations when in Banyuwangi	
Tourism Event	TE1. Majestic Banyuwangi Festival adds interest to come.	Fatiara et al. (2017)

Construct	Measurement Items	Adapted from
Decision to Visit	TE2. Majestic Banyuwangi festival increases the sense of belonging to cultural richness.	Putra et al. (2019)
	TE3. Majestic Banyuwangi Festival is in line with my expectations.	
	TE4. Majestic Banyuwangi Festival raises cultural awareness.	
	TE5. Majestic Banyuwangi Festival provides a positive impression and message.	
	DV1. I consider the type of tourism needed and desired in the city of Banyuwangi before deciding to visit.	
	DV2. I consider the event in Banyuwangi before deciding on a visit.	
Decision to Visit	DV3. The city brand "Majestic Banyuwangi" was one of the considerations before making the decision to visit Banyuwangi.	Ivani (2015)
	DV4. I consider visiting Banyuwangi because it has an image of abundant cultural majesty and beautiful natural charm.	
	DV5. I consider the price of travel before deciding to visit Banyuwangi.	
	DV6. Easy access is a consideration when visiting Banyuwangi.	

Results and Discussion

A total of 220 valid responses were included in the analysis. The respondent profile indicates that Banyuwangi's tourism market is predominantly composed of young and relatively educated domestic travelers.

Table 1. Respondent Profiles

Demographic Variables	Item	Frequency	(%)
Gender	Male	73	33.18%
	Female	147	66.82%
Age	17-22	116	52.72%
	23-28	77	35.00%
	29-35	18	8.18%
	>35	9	4.10%
	Junior High School	3	1.37%
Last Finished Education Level	Senior High School	68	30.91%
	D3	11	5%
	S1	121	55.00%
Occupation	S2	16	7.27%
	S3	1	0.45%
	Student	118	53.64%
	Entrepreneur	22	10.00%
	Private Employee	51	23.19%
	Civil Employee	12	5.45%
	Professional (doctor, lawyer, lecturer, notary)	9	4.09%
Monthly Expenditure	Others	8	3.63%
	< Rp 5.000.000	149	67.73%
	Rp 5.000.000 - Rp 10.000.000	47	21.36%
	Rp 10.000.001 - Rp 20.000.000	22	10.00%
Domicile	> Rp 20.000.000	2	0.91%
	Jakarta	47	21.36%
	Central Java	28	12.73%
	West Java	31	14.09%
	East Java	87	39.55%

Demographic Variables	Item	Frequency	(%)
Source of Awareness (Majestic Banyuwangi)	Yogyakarta	13	5.91%
	Bali	14	6.36%
	Social Media	84	38.18%
	Friends/Family	115	52.27%
	TV	6	2.73%
	Others	15	6.82%
Travel Experiences in the Past 1 Year	Never	1	0.45%
	1-2 times	131	59.55%
	> 3 times	88	40.00%

Female respondents represented 66.82% of the sample, while male respondents accounted for 33.18%. In terms of age distribution, most respondents were between 17–22 years old (52.72%) and 23–28 years old (35.00%), indicating a strong concentration of younger tourists. This demographic profile is further reflected in occupation and educational background, where students constituted the largest occupational group (53.64%), and respondents with undergraduate-level education (S1) represented the majority (55.00%).

From an economic perspective, most respondents were concentrated within the lower-to-middle expenditure segment, with 67.73% reporting monthly expenditures below Rp 5,000,000 and 21.36% within the Rp 5,000,000–Rp 10,000,000 range. This distribution suggests that Banyuwangi's tourism appeal is largely aligned with affordable and value-oriented travel experiences, consistent with its positioning as an emerging regional destination emphasizing accessible cultural and experiential tourism.

Geographically, respondents were primarily domiciled in East Java (39.55%), followed by Jakarta (21.36%) and West Java (14.09%). This indicates that Banyuwangi's tourism reach remains strongly concentrated within domestic regional markets, particularly among geographically proximate travelers. Regarding awareness sources, friends and family (52.27%) and social media (38.18%) emerged as the dominant channels through which respondents became familiar with Banyuwangi's "Majestic Banyuwangi" branding initiative. This finding highlights the importance of both electronic word-of-mouth and digital promotion in shaping destination awareness. Furthermore, travel experience data show that 59.55% of respondents had visited Banyuwangi one to two times during the past year, while 40.00% reported visiting more than three times. The relatively high proportion of repeat visitors suggests that Banyuwangi has developed a degree of destination attractiveness and visitor retention, reinforcing the relevance of examining how city branding, tourism events, and city image contribute to tourists' decision-making processes.

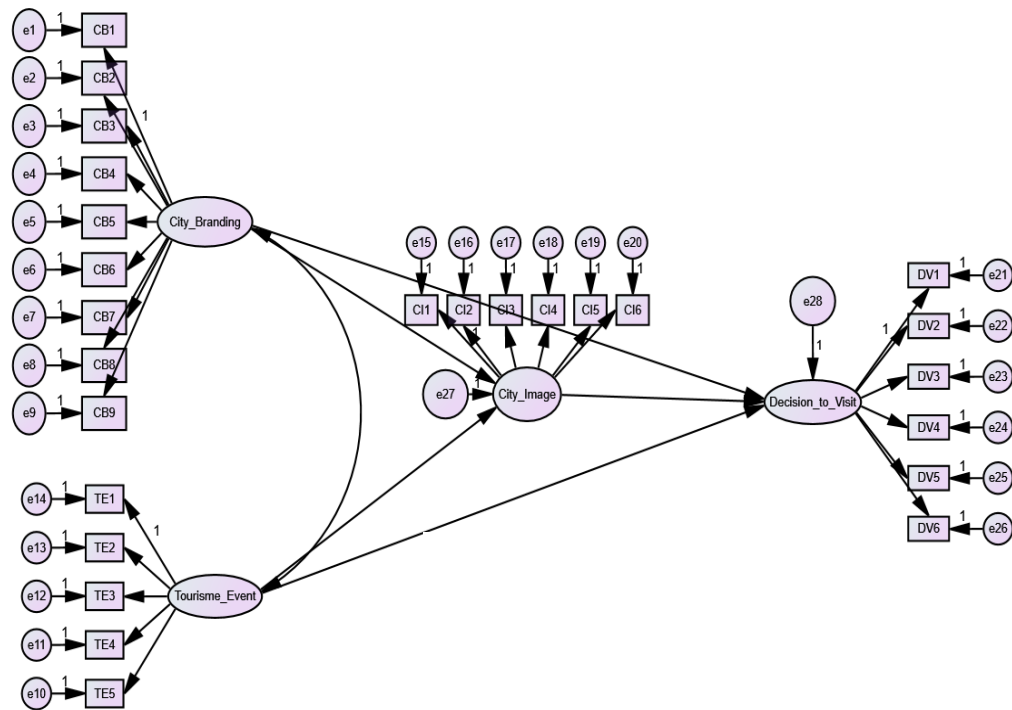


Figure 2. Structural Equation Modeling

Overall Model Fit Evaluation

The results of the goodness-of-fit evaluation indicate that the model demonstrates an acceptable level of fit. The chi-square statistic (χ^2) is sensitive to sample size; therefore, additional fit indices were considered to provide a more comprehensive evaluation. The ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom (CMIN/DF) falls within the acceptable range of less than 3.0, indicating a good model fit. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is below the recommended threshold of 0.08, suggesting a reasonable approximation of the model to the data. Furthermore, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) exceed the minimum threshold of 0.90, indicating a good incremental fit. The Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) and Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI) also meet acceptable criteria, supporting the adequacy of the model. Overall, these results confirm that the proposed structural model fits the data well and is suitable for hypothesis testing.

Table 2. Overall Model Fit Evaluation

Goodness of Fit Parameters	Recommended Value	Result	Interpretation
Chi-square (χ^2) / DF	≤ 3	1.581	Good Fit
P-value of chi-square	≥ 0.05	0.000	Poor Fit
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.052	Good Fit
GFI	$0,80 \leq GFI < 0,90$	0.865	Marginal Fit
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.925	Good Fit

Goodness of Fit Parameters	Recommended Value	Result	Interpretation
NFI	$0,80 \leq \text{NFI} < 0,90$	0.821	Marginal Fit
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.917	Good Fit
IFI	≥ 0.90	0.926	Good Fit
AGFI	$0,85 < \text{AGFI} < 0,90$	0.838	Marginal Fit

Measurement Model Fit Evaluation

The measurement model was evaluated to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs, including city branding, tourism events, city image, and decision to visit. The evaluation followed standard procedures by examining indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity. Indicator reliability was assessed by examining the standardized factor loadings of each measurement item. The results indicate that all indicator loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Adam, 2018), demonstrating that the items adequately represent their respective constructs. A few items with loadings slightly above 0.60 were retained as they still met acceptable levels for exploratory research and did not compromise construct reliability. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using composite reliability (CR). The results show that all constructs achieved CR values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the measurement items. Convergent validity was assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE). All constructs achieved AVE values above the recommended threshold of 0.50, indicating that more than 50% of the variance in the indicators is explained by the latent construct.

Table 3. Measurement Model Fit Evaluation

Construct	Indicator	SLF	Critical Ratio (C.R.)	Composite Reliability (CR)	Variance Extracted (VE)
City Branding	CB1	0.63	*	0.97	0.77
	CB2	0.52	6.75		
	CB3	0.66	8.17		
	CB4	0.59	7.48		
	CB5	0.65	8.11		
	CB6	0.71	8.71		
	CB7	0.69	8.51		
	CB8	0.65	8.07		
	CB9	0.66	8.26		
Tourism Events	TE1	0.78	9.77	0.82	0.87
	TE2	0.68	8.75		
	TE3	0.57	7.48		
	TE4	0.74	9.38		
	TE5	0.67	*		
City Image	CI1	0.67	*	0.98	0.79
	CI2	0.68	8.68		
	CI3	0.66	8.50		
	CI4	0.66	8.55		
	CI5	0.71	9.08		

Construct	Indicator	SLF	Critical Ratio (C.R.)	Composite Reliability (CR)	Variance Extracted (VE)
Decision to Visit	CI6	0.69	8.85	0.92	0.75
	DV1	0.63	*		
	DV2	0.61	7.59		
	DV3	0.62	7.69		
	DV4	0.75	8.97		
	DV5	0.60	7.48		
	DV6	0.63	7.84		

Notes: * = not estimated by AMOS. Targeted > 1.96

Overall, the measurement model demonstrates satisfactory levels of reliability and validity. All constructs meet the recommended thresholds for factor loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted, indicating that the measurement model is robust and suitable for subsequent structural model analysis.

Structural Model Fit Evaluation

The hypothesis testing was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS. The significance of each relationship was evaluated based on the standardized loading factor (SLF), critical ratio (C.R.), and p-value. A hypothesis is supported when the C.R. value exceeds 1.96, and the p-value is less than 0.05 (Adam, 2018).

Table 4. Structural Model Fit Evaluation

Proposed Hypothesis	Path	SLF	C.R.	P-Value
H1. City branding has a positive influence on the decision to visit	CB ----> DV	0.344	3.491	0.000
H2. City branding has a positive influence on the city image	CB ----> CI	0.491	4.363	0.000
H3. Tourism event has a positive influence on the decision to visit	TE ----> DV	0.257	3.352	0.000
H4. Tourism event has a positive influence on the city image	TE ----> CI	0.322	3.662	0.000
H5. City image has a positive influence on the decision to visit	CI ----> DV	0.304	3.300	0.000

Direct Effects Analysis

H1: City Branding → Decision to Visit

The results indicate that city branding has a significant positive effect on the decision to visit ($\beta = 0.344$, C.R. = 3.491, $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that a well-established and consistent city branding strategy can directly influence tourists' intention to visit Banyuwangi. Therefore, **H1 is supported**. This result highlights that branding is not only a perception-building tool but also a direct driver of tourist behavior.

H2: City Branding → City Image

City branding is found to have a significant positive influence on city image ($\beta = 0.491$, C.R. = 4.363, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that effective branding plays a crucial role in shaping tourists' perceptions of the destination. Thus, **H2 is supported**. Among all relationships, this path shows the strongest coefficient, emphasizing that branding is a key determinant of how Banyuwangi is perceived by tourists.

H3: Tourism Events → Decision to Visit

Tourism events have a significant positive effect on the decision to visit ($\beta = 0.257$, C.R. = 3.352, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that events serve as an important attraction factor that motivates tourists to visit Banyuwangi. Therefore, **H3 is supported**. This finding confirms that experiential elements, such as festivals and events, can directly influence tourist behavior.

H4: Tourism Events → City Image

The results show that tourism events significantly influence city image ($\beta = 0.322$, C.R. = 3.662, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that tourism events contribute to shaping a positive perception of the destination. Thus, **H4 is supported**. This finding reinforces the role of events as a strategic tool in enhancing destination image.

H5: City Image → Decision to Visit

City image has a significant positive effect on the decision to visit ($\beta = 0.304$, C.R. = 3.300, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that tourists' perceptions of Banyuwangi play a central role in influencing their travel decisions. Therefore, **H5 is supported**. This result confirms that city image acts as a key determinant in the decision-making process.

Overall, the results demonstrate that both city branding and tourism events significantly influence the decision to visit, either directly or indirectly through city image. Among all predictors, city branding has the strongest effect on city image ($\beta = 0.491$), highlighting its critical role in shaping destination perception. Meanwhile, city image emerges as a key mechanism that translates marketing efforts into behavioral outcomes, as evidenced by its significant effect on the decision to visit ($\beta = 0.304$). This suggests that improving tourists' perceptions is essential for increasing visit intention. Tourism events also play a dual role by influencing both city image and the decision to visit, confirming their importance as experiential marketing tools. However, their effect is slightly lower compared to city branding, indicating that while events attract attention, branding provides a more consistent and long-term impact.

Mediation Effects Analysis

The mediating role of city image was examined through indirect effect estimation based on the multiplication of standardized path coefficients. The indirect effect of city branding on the

decision to visit through city image was calculated at 0.149, while the indirect effect of tourism events on the decision to visit through city image was 0.098. These results indicate that city image may function as an important explanatory mechanism linking destination marketing stimuli to tourists' decision-making processes. However, because formal bootstrapping procedures were not conducted to assess indirect effect significance, these findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than conclusive evidence of mediation.

The mediation analysis indicates that city image serves as an important psychological mechanism through which destination marketing initiatives influence tourists' visitation decisions. The stronger indirect effect observed for city branding suggests that symbolic destination communication plays a particularly important role in shaping tourists' internal destination perceptions, which subsequently influence behavioral responses. Meanwhile, tourism events contribute both directly through experiential attraction and indirectly through image enhancement. These findings support the stimulus–organism–response framework by confirming that external destination marketing stimuli affect behavioral outcomes through internal perceptual evaluation processes.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effects of city branding and tourism events on tourists' decisions to visit Banyuwangi, with city image positioned as a mediating variable within the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) framework. The findings provide empirical evidence that all hypothesized direct relationships are positive and significant, confirming the importance of integrated destination marketing strategies in influencing tourist behavioral responses. The results indicate that city branding exerts a significant positive influence on both the city image and tourists' decision to visit. Among all examined relationships, the strongest structural effect was observed between city branding and city image, suggesting that destination branding plays a critical role in shaping tourists' cognitive and perceptual evaluations of Banyuwangi. This finding reinforces the strategic importance of developing a consistent and distinctive destination identity to strengthen market positioning.

Tourism events were also found to significantly influence both city image and decision to visit, confirming their role as effective experiential marketing instruments. However, compared with city branding, the magnitude of tourism events' influence was relatively lower, indicating that event-based tourism strategies are likely to generate stronger outcomes when supported by a coherent destination branding framework.

Furthermore, city image significantly influences tourists' decisions to visit and appears to function as an important explanatory mechanism linking destination marketing stimuli to behavioral outcomes. This finding supports the central proposition of the S-O-R framework that external marketing stimuli shape behavioral responses through internal perceptual evaluation processes.

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends destination branding literature by integrating city branding and tourism events within a unified explanatory framework and empirically applying the S-O-R model in the context of an emerging secondary tourism destination. The findings contribute to tourism marketing scholarship by providing evidence that tourist decision-making is shaped not only by direct destination promotion but also by the perceptual image formed through branding communication and experiential exposure.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that local governments and destination managers should adopt a more integrated destination marketing strategy. City branding initiatives should be communicated consistently across digital and conventional channels, while tourism events should be strategically designed to reinforce destination identity and strengthen positive destination associations. Given the strong role of social media and interpersonal communication in shaping destination awareness, digital engagement and electronic word-of-mouth strategies should receive greater strategic emphasis.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, the use of non-probability purposive sampling limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the sampled respondents. Second, the focus on Banyuwangi as a single destination restricts broader contextual comparison. Third, the cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation over time.

Future research is encouraged to examine additional variables such as digital engagement, tourist satisfaction, destination attachment, and social media interaction. Comparative studies involving multiple emerging destinations and longitudinal research designs would further enrich the understanding of destination marketing effectiveness. Formal mediation analysis using bootstrapping can be conducted to prove that the mediation effect exists empirically.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that successful destination competitiveness depends not only on promotional intensity but also on the ability to create strong destination meaning in tourists' perceptions. An integrated strategy combining city branding and tourism events is essential for strengthening the city's image and ultimately influencing tourists' decisions to visit.

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