

The Effect of Nation Branding “Thoughtful Indonesia” upon the Decision Process of International Tourists to Visit Indonesia in New Normal Era / amid the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract : *The tourism sector is one of the sectors that has suffered the most losses due to the Covid-19 pandemic, namely the impact on travel supply and demand. Travel restrictions and flight cancellations and reduced flight frequencies have significantly reduced the supply of both domestic and international tour packages and trips amidst the continuing decline in demand. This poses additional downside risks in the context of a weaker world economy, geopolitical, social and trade unrest, and unequal performance among the travel markets. In an effort to reach and increase the target of foreign-tourist visits to Indonesia and compete with other countries, the government is more aggressively promoting the “Wonderful Indonesia” nation branding in order to be able to compete with other countries, and provide a better perception for foreign tourists; a good perception affects the number of tourist visits. However, during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Government issued a new nation brand, namely “Thoughtful Indonesia” which will become a nation branding for Indonesian tourism during the COVID-19 period. This study aims to analyze the effect of nation branding "Thoughtful Indonesia" on the decision to visit Indonesia during the new normal period or after COVID-19 pandemic. This research uses descriptive and verification types of research. The sampling technique used in this research was probability sampling. Based on the research and analysis and hypothesis testing, it is concluded that nation branding has a positive effect on visiting decisions.*

Keywords: *strategy, nation branding, visiting decisions, COVID 19*

1. INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus (CoV) or known as Covid-19 has spread worldwide. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a new type of disease that was discovered in 2019 and has never been identified in humans. It was suspected that this virus first appeared from the Huanan Market, Wuhan, China. The Huanan market sells a variety of unusual animal meat such as meat of crocodile, snake, wolf, mouse, hedgehog and bat. The trade of these animals eventually gave rise to a virus called Covid-19. The Coronavirus disease outbreak spread from animals to humans, then from humans to humans through interactions

The current outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to grow and the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) are committed to

working together in guiding the tourism sector in facing this global virus outbreak [1] Coronavirus is one of the main pathogens that attacks the human respiratory system. The previous outbreaks of coronavirus (CoV) which include severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) CoV and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) CoV have previously been characterized as agents that pose a widespread public health threat [2] The world has been under pressure from the new COVID-19 pandemic.

Indonesia is the fourth most populous country in the world and has been predicted to be affected significantly over a longer period of time. [3] Consequently, Indonesia faces a major impact on losses over a longer period of time, when compared to other less densely populated countries in the world [4]

The tourism sector is one of the sectors that has suffered the most losses due to the Covid-19 pandemic, namely the impact on travel supply and demand. Travel restrictions and flight cancellations and a reduction in flight frequency have significantly reduced the supply of both domestic and international tour packages and trips amidst the decreasing demand [5] This poses an additional downside risk in the context of a weaker world economy, geopolitical, social and trade tensions, and uneven performance among the travel markets [5]

UNWTO estimates that in 2020 international tourist arrivals may decline by between 1% and 3%, down from an estimated growth of 3% to 4% in early January 2020. The Asia and Pacific region are estimated to be the most affected regions with a decrease in international tourist arrivals by 9 % to 12%, decreasing from the 5% to 6% growth forecast in early January 2020 [5] Thus, the continuation of the problem and the increase in the number of victims infected by the virus will cause greater losses in the tourism sector [5]

In an effort to reach and increase the target of foreign-tourist visits to Indonesia and compete with other countries, Indonesia had promoted the nation branding termed "Wonderful Indonesia" and provided a better perception for foreign tourists. However, during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Government issued a new nation brand which is a sub-brand of the previous one, namely "Thoughtful Indonesia". The brand established by the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism has been campaigning that Indonesia is ready to face the "new-normal era" with hygiene, health and safety (CHS cleanliness, health and safety) protocols in the tourism sector. This will be demonstrated through protocols in the tourism industry, be it hospitality, restaurants and every type of attraction. Regular use of disinfectants, staff who receive health checks, and health protocols (wearing masks, providing hand washing facilities, and maintaining distance) are echoed to make tourism revive.

A nation's brand in a country serves as an image for international audience either strongly or weakly. This approach to the brand maintains the characteristics of Indonesia that are already embedded in the minds of the public and is also expected to support future tourism marketing programs (post COVID-19 pandemic). The image enhancement through this nation branding strategy will influence tourists' perception which will later become their consideration in deciding to visit Indonesia. In the process, tourists are faced with various choices of needs for travel which are influenced by relevant factors.

The formulation of the problem in this study is whether there is an effect of Indonesia's Thoughtful Nation branding upon the decision to visit Indonesia during the new normal period or after the Covid-19 pandemic. In connection with this problem, this study aims to determine how the nation branding "Thoughtful Indonesia" is described, to determine how the decision process for foreign tourists to visit Indonesia during the new normal period or after COVID-19 pandemic, and to determine the effect of nation branding "Thoughtful Indonesia" upon the decision process to visit Indonesia during the new normal period or after the COVID-19 Pandemic.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Study [6] argues that marketing a region is designing an area to be able to meet the desires of its customers. This Strategic Place Triangle is the grand design of the regional marketing strategy. Not only places, destinations, and cities that can have a brand, currently countries in the world compete with each other in terms of attracting tourists through a nation branding marketing strategy. According to [6] the Strategic Place Triangle consists of Positioning, Differentiation, and Brand.

The scale of the attractiveness of a destination or tourist destination (destination attractiveness) is the degree to which a destination can meet tourist expectations in terms of the availability of accommodation facilities, eating and drinking, natural or artificial tourist attractions, cultural wealth, recreational facilities and infrastructure. This plays an important role in the competition between destinations and will make people want to come to a certain place [7]

In marketing a destination or country, [8] states that nation branding is included in the brand. Nation branding is a complex reality of a country by summarizing culture, history, society, government in an image and logo which will provide positioning and differentiation of the brand. Nation branding aims to create a reputation about a country in the eyes of international audience; this reputation is what gives the image of the country. If a country has a positive image in the eyes of the international community, tourists will be attracted to visit that country.

According to [8] the elements of nation branding are interrelated to create a picture and perception of a country, including (1) tourism which captures the level of interest of tourists to visit a country seen from natural and artificial tourist attractions, (2) culture; because tourism development is closely related to cultural development, unique cultural resources will become a tourist attraction, (3) People, residents or communities in a country provide an assessment of the country as well as the reputation of the population, openness and the level of hospitality of the population. Besides aiming to create perception and image in the right of consumers, the purpose of holding nation branding is to position a country to be able to compete in the global market and attract tourists and foreign investors.

[9] argues that before deciding where to go on a holiday, most tourists have to make some decisions. For some people this decision is perfectly planned, but for others it is improvised or unplanned. In addition, several people can decide all at once or in different stages.

Eugenio-Martin divides the visiting decision process into six stages:

1. Participation decisions which are thoughts and considerations in advance regarding the choice to travel or not within a certain period of time,
2. Tourism budget decision in which tourists decide how much tourism expenditure they might spend,
3. Frequency and length of stay decision, which is the stage in which tourists decide how often and for how long they will stay at the chosen destination,
4. Types of tourist destination decision, the stage where tourists consider the types of tourism or destination they want, whether the destination meets the criteria and needs of tourists or not,
5. Final destination in which tourists make decisions after going through certain considerations and thoughts on the chosen destination,
6. Mode of transportation choice where tourists decide for themselves how to get to their intended destination.

A. Nation Branding and Visiting Decisions

As a new concept, nation branding consists of several main sources including country of origin, branding destinations in tourism, as well as public diplomacy and national identity [10] Nation branding that originates from the marketing and branding paradigm can be seen as a means to compete for economic gain (tourists, trade and talent). Nation branding is increasingly being researched by researchers and practitioners because of the potential economic, political and strategic values inherent in it and developing a favorable image of the country [11] Nation branding also emerges as a practice in which countries focus on brand management techniques to compete effectively in the world [12] The purpose of nation branding is to promote a nation that has a positive image for the country and its people, to build brand identity, to increase export products, and to attract tourists [13] Overall, concerns about nation branding are the image and reputation of a nation enjoying the world [10] which in turn can directly affect its attractiveness as a tourist destination.

Every country has an image in an international view, positive or negative, strong or weak [10] The image of a country is an important feature that must be considered in choosing a travel destination, regardless of whether the image is a true reflection or not [14] Most potential visitors have inadequate knowledge of the characteristics of a place that has never been visited before. Thus, this study states that the image of the country plays an important role in gathering knowledge and tourist behavior that influences the decision-making process before visiting a place [15]; [16]. From the above explanation, the research hypothesis can be proposed as follows:

H1: Nation Branding has a significant effect upon visiting decisions

B. Relevant Research

Research conducted by [17] reveals that Juche ideology and North Korean nation branding packaged in vlogs about North Korean tourism, directly or indirectly, have become tools for North Korean tourism promotion.

The study conducted by [18] shows that nation branding affects the decision to visit Australian tourists to Indonesia.

C. Conceptual Framework

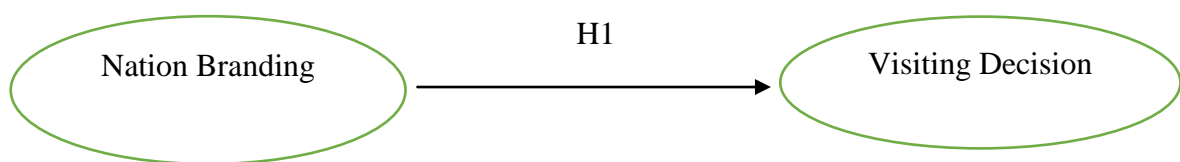


Fig. 1 Conceptual framework

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is descriptive and verification research. [19] defines descriptive research as research conducted to determine the existence of independent variables, either one or more variables (independent variables without making comparisons and / or looking for variable relationships with each other), while verification according to [19] is research that compares the existence of one or more variables in two or more different samples, or at different times. Verification research aims to obtain the truth of a hypothesis carried out through field data collection. The sampling technique used in this research was probability sampling, a sampling technique that provides an opportunity for each element to be selected as a sample in the study. The type of probability sampling used was the simple random sampling method.

It is said to be random because every element in the population has the same opportunity to be selected as subjects to become the research sample. The measurement scale used in this study was the Likert scale. The Likert scale was used to reveal the attitudes, opinions and perceptions of a person or group of people about social phenomena. In the Likert scale, the variables to be measured were translated into variable indicators. Then, these indicators were used as a starting point for compiling instrument items which could be statements or questions. The answer for each instrument item that uses the Likert scale has a gradient from very positive to negative [20] To measure the variables above, a Likert scale of six levels was used as follows: 1 = STS (Strongly Disagree), 2 = TS (Disagree), 3 = ATS (Tend to disagree), 4 = AS (Likely to Agree), 5 = S (Agree), 6 = SS (Strongly Agree)

A. Data Analysis Method

According to [21] PLS is an alternative approach that shifts from a covariance-based to variant-based SEM approach. Referring to the predetermined problem formulations, this study uses quantitative methods to test and prove hypotheses that have been made by various tests and data processing. The validity test was carried out by using construct validity which measured the extent to which measuring instruments were used. In this case, the questionnaire must be able to measure the meaning of the concept being measured. The validity test involves the content validity and the criterion validity. The content validity test is used to see the extent to which the questionnaire can measure the content of a variable to be measured. Because the variables used in this study were obtained from recognized international journals, they were quite valid to use. The validity of the criteria is used to strengthen it, by looking at the correlation between one variable and another. The method used is the convergent validity test, where the factor loading value of each question indicator must be greater than 0.60 [22] That way all observed variables, as outlined through each question in the questionnaire, can accurately measure the latent variable. Based on the results of this calculation, the variables in the questionnaire are considered valid and can be used for data processing.

The reliability test in this study used the Cronbach's Alpha method which is considered reliable if it has a Cronbach's Alpha value of more than 0.6 and a composite reliability value greater than 0.6 - 0.7 for exploratory research [22] Alpha coefficient and composite reliability is greater than 0.6. This means that the questionnaire used in this study is considered reliable, because it shows a good level of consistency and accuracy.

The data analysis technique used in this study was the SEM (Structural Equation Model) analysis technique. SEM is a statistical technique that is able to analyze the pattern of the relationship between latent constructs and indicators, latent constructs with one another, and direct measurement errors. SEM is a dependent multivariate statistical family; SEM allows direct analysis among several dependent and independent variables [23]

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

A. Partial Least Square (PLS) Analysis Model Specifications

This stage relates to the formation of the initial model of the initial structural equation model, before estimating.

Conceptual Diagram of Partial Least Square Model

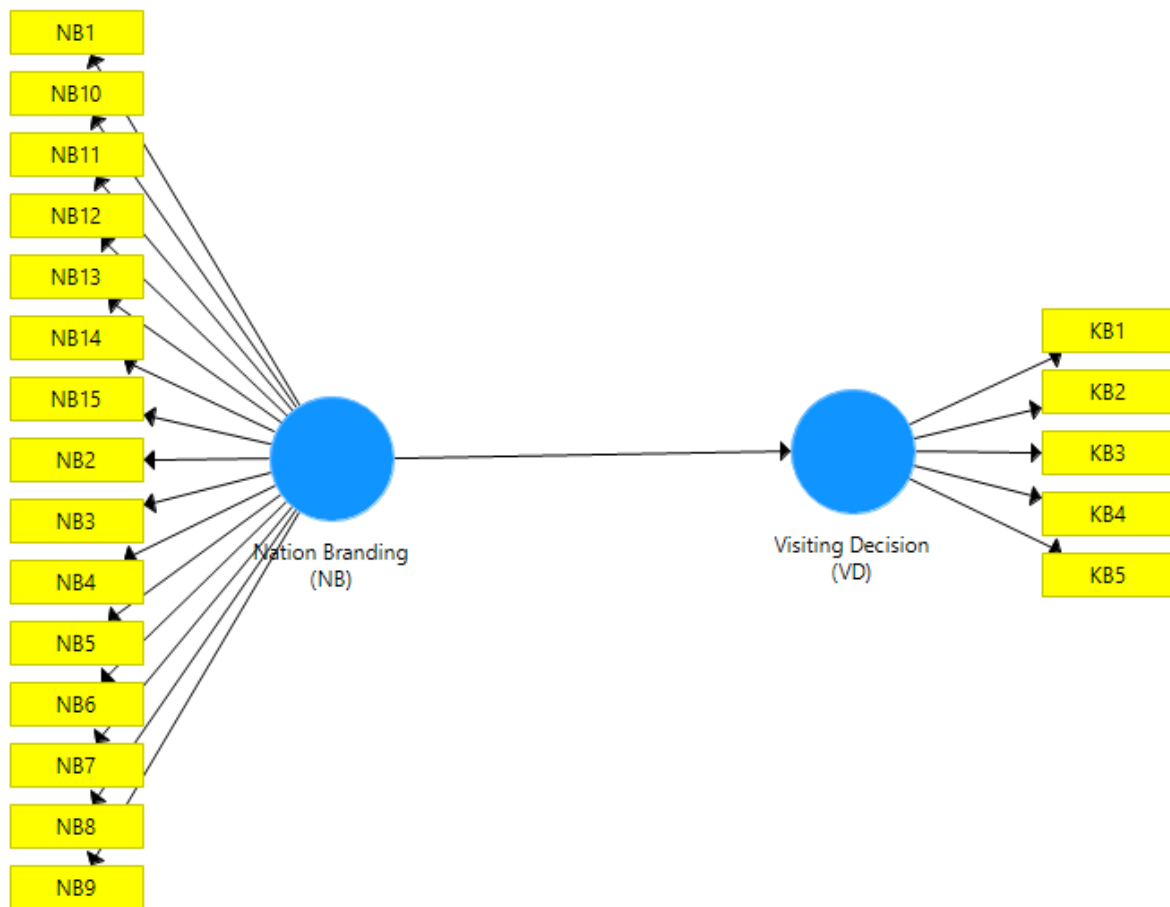


Fig 2. Model Specification

Through the conceptual diagram image above, it can be seen that the path model consists of 2 (two) sub-structures. In general, the two sub-structures can be described through the following equations:

$$Y = \gamma X + \delta$$

B. Outer Loading

- 1) *The nation branding (X) latent variable* : measured by 15 unobserved variables, namely X1, X2,.... X15.
- 2) *The decision to visit (Y) latent variable* : measured by 5 unobserved variables, namely Y1, Y2,.... Y5.

C. Inner Model

The Visiting Decision (Y) latent variable is influenced by the Nation Branding latent variable (X).

Evaluate the Outer Model

- 1) The first stage assesses the criteria for convergent validity. An indicator is said to have good validity if it has a loading factor value greater than 0.70.
- 2) While the loading factor of 0.50 to 0.60 can still be maintained for models that are still in the development stage [22]

Based on the estimation results using the help of the SmartPLS 3.0 application program, the following outputs are obtained:

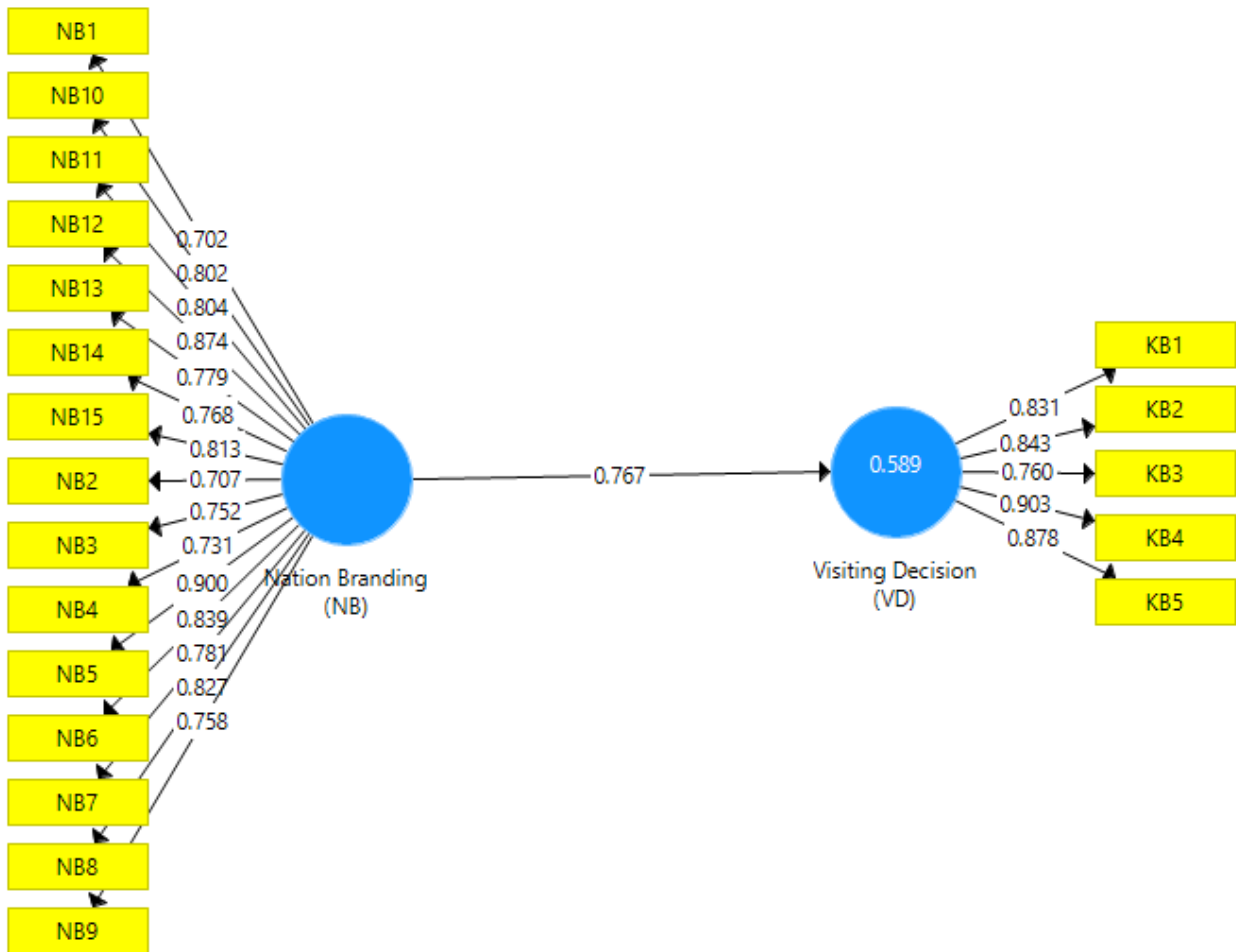


Fig 3. Validity Testing

Table 1. Reliability Test

	Visiting Decision	Nation Branding
VD1	0.831	
VD2	0.843	
VD3	0.760	
VD4	0.903	
VD5	0.878	
NB1		0.702
NB10		0.802
NB11		0.804
NB12		0.874
NB13		0.779
NB14		0.768
NB15		0.813
NB2		0.707
NB3		0.752

NB4		0.731
NB5		0.900
NB6		0.839
NB7		0.781
NB8		0.827
NB9		0.758

Source: Data Analysis Result (2020)

Based on the figure above, it appears that all loading factors are above 0.60. Thus, it can be concluded that the construct has good convergent validity.

Table 2 : Cross Loading

	Visiting Decision	Nation Branding
VD1	0.831	0.528
VD2	0.843	0.737
KB3	0.760	0.479
KB4	0.903	0.610
KB5	0.878	0.790
NB1	0.610	0.702
NB10	0.697	0.802
NB11	0.662	0.804
NB12	0.641	0.874
NB13	0.684	0.779
NB14	0.626	0.768
NB15	0.471	0.813
NB2	0.427	0.707
NB3	0.528	0.752
NB4	0.751	0.731
NB5	0.586	0.900
NB6	0.579	0.839
NB7	0.624	0.781
NB8	0.526	0.827
NB9	0.482	0.758

Source: Data Analysis Result (2020)

The value of cross loadings presented in the table above also shows good discriminant validity, where the correlation value of the indicator with its construct is higher than the correlation value of the indicator with other constructs [22]

D. Fornel-Larker Criteria

Comparison of the square root of AVE with the correlation between latent variables: to establish discriminant validity, the square root of AVE must be greater than all associated correlations [24]

Table 3 : Fornel-Larker Criteria

	Visiting Decision	Nation Branding
Visiting Decision	0.844	
Nation Branding	0.767	0.791

Source: Data Analysis Result (2020)

E. HTMT Test

Assessing discriminant validity in PLS-SEM involves the analysis [25] of the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) of the correlation. HTMT values above 0.90 indicate a lack of discriminant validity.

Table 4 : Discriminant Validity

Fornell-Larcker Criteria	Cross Loadings	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio
	Visiting Decision	Nation Branding
Visiting Decision		
Nation Branding		0.783

Source: Data Analysis Result (2020)

Table 4 indicates that the discriminant validity test has been fulfilled, namely the root value of AVE is greater than the correlation value between variables. At the output, the HTMT value is 0.783. It can be concluded that the discriminant validity is fulfilled.

The next stage is the assessment with Cronbach's Alpha criteria, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Each construct is said to be reliable if it has Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability greater than 0.70, while the AVE value expected to be greater than 0.60 [22]

Table 5. Measurement Model

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Visiting Decision (VD)	0.900	0.922	0.925	0.713
Nation Branding (NB)	0.957	0.960	0.961	0.626

Source: Data Analysis Result (2020)

Based on the table above, it can be seen that all constructs have Cronbach's Alpha and composite Reliability values that are greater than 0.70. The same thing is seen in the AVE value; all constructs have an AVE value that is greater than 0.60. Thus, it can be concluded that all constructs are reliable.

Inner Model Evaluation

Inner model evaluation is an analysis of the results of the relationship between constructs. The relationship between constructs can be said to be significant if it has a T-Statistics value greater than 1.96. The results of the estimation of the relationship between constructs can be seen in the following table.

Hypothesis test

Hypothesis 1:

- H0 → There is no significant effect of Nation Branding (X) upon visiting decision (Y);
- H1 → There is a significant influence of Nation Branding (X) to the Decision to Visit (Y).

Statistic test

The *t* test at the significance level (α) = 5%.

Test criteria

Reject *H0* and accept *H1* if $t \geq 1,96$;
 Accept *H0* and reject *H1* if $t < 1,96$.

By using the help of the SmartPLS 3.0 application program, the estimation results are obtained: the difference between average and probability values are as follows:

Table 6 : t Test

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Nation Branding -> Visiting Decision (VD)	0.767	0.774	0.027	28.638	0.000

Source: Data Analysis Result (2020)

From table 6 it can be seen that Hypothesis 1: The influence of (X) on Y has a path coefficient of 0.767 with a statistical value of *t* that is greater than the critical value (28.638 > 1.96). Thus, *H0* is rejected and *H1* is accepted, meaning that Nation branding has a significant effect upon the visiting decision (Y).

F. R Square (R²) Test

Table 7 : R² Test

	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Visiting Decision (VD)	0.589	0.587

Source: Data Analysis Result (2020)

Table 7 explains that the construct of visiting decisions is 0.58 or 58.9%, which means that the inner model is explained by this variable, while the remaining 41.1% is influenced by other variables not observed in this study.

G. Collinearity Testing

The collinearity test aims to analyze whether the research model has a collinearity tendency; if the VIF value limit is more than 5.0, then there is a tendency for collinearity (Hair et al., 2014). Table 8 shows that the VIF value in the model is below 5.0, so it can be concluded that there is no collinearity in the model.

Table 8 : *Collinearity Test*

Outer VIF Values	Inner VIF Values	
	Visiting Decision	Nation Branding
Nation Branding	1.000	
Visiting Decision		

Source: Data Analysis Result (2020)

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and hypothesis testing, it is concluded that nation branding has a positive effect upon visiting decisions. Through the results of this study, it is concluded that nation branding which originates from the marketing and branding paradigm can be seen as a means to compete for economic gain (tourists, trade and talent). A good and positive image will influence tourists’ decision to visit a tourism destination. The results of the study are in line with what [18] state that the nation branding has an effect upon the Australian tourists’ decision to visit Indonesia.

It is suggested that further researchers add other research variables and use covariance statistical analysis based on structural equation modeling that can test the feasibility of the research model.

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