

The impact of digital tourism marketing applications on the mental image of a tourist destination and travel decisions: A case study of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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Abstract---This study examines how digital tourism marketing applications affect the mental image of Saudi Arabia as a leisure destination and influence tourists' travel decisions. It uses a model that connects these three factors. The research used a quantitative, descriptive-analytical method. An electronic questionnaire was sent to a random sample of 270 people from various age groups. The data were analyzed with descriptive statistics, correlation tests, and linear regression in SPSS v26 to study the relationships between the variables. The results showed that digital tourism marketing applications significantly affect mental image, and there is a strong link between mental image and tourists' travel decisions. The analysis found that mental image partly mediates the effect of digital marketing on travel decisions, meaning digital marketing shapes perceptions before they influence actual choices. The findings show that digital platforms and influencers help change Saudi Arabia's traditional image into one of a full entertainment destination. A positive mental image now directly motivates people to travel, highlighting the need to use interactive content to attract tourists. The study suggests improving digital marketing with tailored interactive campaigns and working with influencers to create a positive mental image that encourages travel. It also advises regular research to track changing perceptions and update marketing strategies to keep influencing tourist behavior.

Keywords---Digital tourism marketing, mental image, tourist destination, travel decision.

How to Cite:

Hocine, B. (2025). The impact of digital tourism marketing applications on the mental image of a tourist destination and travel decisions: A case study of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *The International Tax Journal*, 52(6), 5174–5187. Retrieved from <https://internationaltaxjournal.online/index.php/itj/article/view/537>

The International tax journal ISSN: 0097-7314 E-ISSN: 3066-2370 © 2026

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Submitted: 15 January 2025 | Revised: 27 May 2025 | Accepted: 02 August 2025

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1. Introduction

The mental image of a tourist destination is a pivotal factor in shaping visitors' impressions and guiding their travel decisions. In light of rapid digital advancements and the widespread adoption of digital communication platforms, digital tourism marketing has become an effective tool for developing and enhancing the image of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a multifaceted tourist destination. This type of marketing relies on sophisticated strategies that include delivering visual and graphic content tailored to a specific audience, utilizing diverse digital channels such as social media, websites, and interactive platforms.

The adoption of digital technologies has enabled the presentation of the destination in an attractive and diverse manner, reflecting the shift from the traditional image of the Kingdom solely as a site for Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages to a comprehensive leisure and cultural tourism destination. Digital marketing here focuses on building a positive and multidimensional image that reflects the heritage, history, modern landmarks, and diverse tourist experiences that visitors can enjoy. This, in turn, contributes to changing the public's preconceived notions about the Kingdom and strengthens the desire to visit the country.

With the increasing reliance on engaging and diverse digital messaging, opportunities to reach wider audiences have multiplied, and digital channels have become more effective in influencing travel intentions, especially when targeting younger demographics interested in modern and diverse experiences. Factors such as response time, content quality, and channel selection all contribute to shaping perceptions, directly impacting travel decisions both within and outside the Kingdom. Therefore, a better understanding of digital marketing strategies and their impact on perception is crucial for enhancing the Kingdom's tourism standing and achieving its desired tourism development goals.

1.1 Problem Statement:

The tourism sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has witnessed a clear strategic transformation in recent years, represented in expanding the concept of tourism from its traditional religious framework towards a more comprehensive vision that reflects the diversity of destinations and recreational and cultural activities. Technological development and the widespread use of digital tourism marketing platforms have contributed to reshaping this image among the public, both locally and internationally, through the use of targeted visual and media content that reflects the features of modernity, openness, and diversity. In this context, digital applications have become pivotal in shaping first impressions of tourists and influencing visitors' perception of the Kingdom as a multifaceted tourist destination. However, the effectiveness of these applications in building a new and positive image of the Kingdom, and their actual impact on travel intentions, are still under study and measurement. This leads to the following general question:

To what extent do digital tourism marketing applications influence the perception of Saudi Arabia as a leisure and tourist destination?

Several sub-questions stem from this main question:

- How does the perception formed through digital tourism marketing contribute to strengthening a tourist's intention to visit the Kingdom?
- To what extent does this perception act as a mediator in explaining the relationship between digital tourism marketing applications and the decision to travel to Saudi Arabia?

1.2 Study Hypotheses:

- Digital tourism marketing applications have a statistically significant impact on the perception of Saudi Arabia as a leisure and tourism destination.
- There is a statistically significant relationship between the perception formed by tourists through digital marketing and their intention to visit Saudi Arabia.
- The perception plays a mediating role between digital tourism marketing applications and the tourist's decision to travel to Saudi Arabia.

1.3 Significance of the Study:

This study is significant because it addresses one of the most prominent recent transformations in the tourism sector in Saudi Arabia: the use of digital marketing to reshape the perception of the tourist destination and enhance travel decisions. The study's significance stems from the following points:

- Highlighting the growing role of digital tourism marketing applications as an effective tool for promoting Saudi Arabia as a destination.
- Contributing to understanding how the Kingdom's image has shifted from being a traditional religious destination to a comprehensive leisure and cultural tourism destination.
- Analyzing the impact of digital content, visual appeal, and online interaction on shaping tourists' perceptions of the Kingdom.
- Determining the relationship between the perception created by digital marketing and tourists' decisions to choose the Kingdom as a travel destination.

1.4 Study Objectives:

This study aims to analyze the impact of digital tourism marketing applications on shaping the perception of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the decision to travel there, particularly in light of the shift towards leisure and cultural tourism. It seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Measuring the impact of digital tourism marketing applications on the perception of the Saudi destination.
- Analyzing the components of the perception formed through digital campaigns (cognitive, affective, and behavioral).
- Determining the relationship between the perception and tourists' decisions to choose the Kingdom as a travel destination.
- Examining the mediating role of the perception between digital marketing and travel decisions.
- Supporting the development of digital marketing strategies that contribute to enhancing the Kingdom's competitiveness in the tourism sector.

1.5 Previous Studies:

* A study by Fahad Mohammed Al-Haqbani, "Visit intention to emerging destinations through social media marketing promotion: the case of Saudi Arabia," PhD dissertation, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 2021.

This study aimed to examine how social media marketing influences the intention to visit emerging tourist destinations in Saudi Arabia, focusing on the role of information credibility from DMOs such as ExperienceALU. The study employed a quantitative approach using a structural equation model (SEM) to test the relationships between variables. The sample consisted of 614 Twitter users interested in tourism. Data were collected via an online questionnaire. The study addressed factors such as content informativeness, online travel community support, information credibility, cognitive and emotional image, and travel intention. The results showed a strong positive impact of content informativeness ($\beta=0.70$) and information credibility on cognitive ($\beta=0.85$) and emotional image, with mental image playing a partial mediating role. Visit intention ($R^2=55.6\%$), and the rejection of the direct influence of emotional image on intention.

Recommendations: Enhance DMO campaigns on Twitter with reliable and interactive informational content to attract tourists to emerging destinations, and conduct future studies on social media platform preferences as modifiers.

* A study by Ahmed Awad, "The role of digital marketing tools in promoting tourism," *International Marketing Journal*, 2025. This study aimed to analyze the role of digital marketing tools (social media, online advertising, e-WOM) in enhancing visit intention to tourist destinations in Saudi Arabia. It employed a quantitative approach using regression analysis and SEM. The study sample consisted of 400 potential tourists from inside and outside the Kingdom, surveyed via online questionnaires. The study examined the impact of these tools on tourism brand awareness and image, and their relationship to travel intention. The results showed a statistically significant positive impact ($p<0.01$) of social media marketing on visit intention, with e-WOM playing a strong role in enhancing trust and a positive image.

Recommendations: Develop digital campaigns targeting youth and international tourists, and increase investment in interactive content to support Vision 2030.

* A study by Widarmanti, Tri, and Muhammad Rakha, "The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Destination Image and Visit Intentions," *JHSS Journal*, 2023.

This study aimed to measure the impact of social media marketing on destination image and visit intentions. It employed a quantitative approach using SEM, with a sample of 350 Indonesian social media users interested in tourism. The study examined the relationship between digital marketing, destination image (cognitive and emotional), and visit intention as the dependent variable. The results showed a direct positive impact of digital marketing on destination image ($\beta=0.45$, $p<0.001$), and a partial mediating role for destination image in visit intention.

Recommendations: Enhance interaction across social platforms and monitor content to maintain a positive image.

* A study by Dieu, Thi, Trung, and Tuan, titled "The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Cognitive and Affective Destination Image and Visit Intention," Atlantis Press, 2025.

This study aimed to analyze the impact of social media marketing on the cognitive and affective image and visit intention of cultural destinations. It employed a quantitative approach using SEM, and the sample consisted of 450 potential tourists in Asia, surveyed via questionnaire. The study examined the cognitive (knowledge) and affective (emotions) dimensions as mediators between digital marketing and travel intention. The results showed a positive impact on the cognitive and affective image, with the image playing a partial mediating role ($R^2 = 0.52$ for visit intention).

Recommendations: Integrate emotional content into digital campaigns to enhance behavioral intention.

2. Theoretical Background

Addressing the theoretical background is a fundamental pillar for understanding how digital tourism marketing applications interact with the various dimensions of a tourist destination's mental image and its impact on travel decisions. A destination's mental image is not merely a mental construct, but rather is formed through a set of cognitive and emotional elements that the public creates about the destination based on the information they receive through digital media (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999, pp. 267-268). Researchers emphasize that this image is significantly influenced by the methods of presenting digital content. Positive content can enhance awareness and strengthen positive perceptions about the quality of the tourist experience, while negative content can distort the image and weaken confidence in the destination (Beerli & Martín, 2004, p. 657). Digital marketing tools, such as social media, websites, and smartphone applications, are the primary means by which tourist destinations can build a comprehensive and flexible mental image by providing concise and realistic information, focusing on the emotional elements and feelings associated with the destination. Theories of mental image building are based on the fact that the formed image is influenced by several factors, including visual content, text messages, user interaction, and experiences shared by visitors online. In addition, the importance of dependency theory is highlighted by the fact that the relationship between mental image and travel decisions is interactive, as a positive image enhances the likelihood of making a travel decision and encourages preference for a particular destination over others. Studies also confirm that digital strategies that focus on showcasing live experiences and user recommendations enhance the components of the brand image and lead to more effective consumer persuasion. Therefore, understanding the theoretical characteristics related to how brand image is formed, on the one hand, and the impact of interactive digital marketing tools, on the other, is crucial. This understanding enables the design of marketing strategies aimed at improving brand image and minimizing negative impacts, thus contributing to stronger travel decisions and achieving marketing objectives more successfully and effectively. (Dieu & et al, 2014, p. 302)

2.1 The Brand Image of a Tourist Destination

The brand image of a tourist destination is considered One of the central concepts that directly influences individuals' perceptions and expectations of the intended place is the mental image, which represents a set of impressions and meanings that the tourist forms about the destination based on the information they receive, whether visual or invisible, direct or through digital media (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999, p.

270). The mental image is formed through a set of factors, including personal experiences, information available on the internet, opinions and recommendations from the community, in addition to digital promotional and awareness campaigns directed by tourism authorities (maazi & baout, 2025, pp. (268-269)

The clarity and flexibility of the image are among the factors that influence whether tourists choose to visit a destination or avoid it. A positive and impactful image supports the perception of the quality of the visit, enhances confidence in the place, and leads to a more decisive travel decision. The mental image is also related to values and beliefs associated with the destination, such as safety, natural beauty, cultural heritage, and services provided, which intertwine to form the overall impression that is later translated into a final decision. (Nawar & Fadoul, 2020, p. 632)

2.2 Digital Tourism Marketing

Digital tourism marketing is one of the vital tools that has radically changed the methods of promoting tourist destinations, as it provides marketers with an effective means of reaching diverse segments of the target audience quickly and at a lower cost compared to traditional methods (Al-Wafi & Belkacem, 2021, p. 884) This type of marketing relies on utilizing digital tools and modern technologies, such as websites, social media, and smart applications, to present the destination's image in a more interactive and attractive way. Visual and audio content can be intensively invested in to enhance audience perceptions and change their impressions of the destination. Analytical tools allow tourism marketers to measure the effectiveness of campaigns and target them more accurately. In addition, digital tourism marketing allows for building a direct and continuous relationship with potential customers, which contributes to enhancing trust and achieving higher credibility for the destination (Ben Al-Aib, 2025, p. 449). Direct interaction via digital platforms is considered an opportunity to receive feedback and deal with it immediately, which improves the quality of services and enhances positive perceptions. In light of continuous technological development, it has become essential to develop digital marketing strategies that rely on data and advanced analytics to ensure the sustainability of a positive impact on the travel image and to support the travel decision in a more effective and realistic way. (Buhalis & Leung, 2018, p. 211)

2.3 The Relationship Between the Travel Image and the Personal Travel Decision

The travel image plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals' attitudes toward making travel decisions. It represents a comprehensive psychological perception that focuses on their impressions and beliefs about the tourist destination. The more positive and consistent the travel image is with realistic perceptions, the greater the likelihood of making a travel decision to that destination. This is directly reflected in the decision-making process, as the individual goes through multiple evaluation stages, and the travel image is one of the essential influences in each stage, especially during the final selection stage. (Al-Fakair, Fari, (And Aqoun, 2022, page 737) Digital tourism marketing, through the provision of distinctive and transparent content, contributes to enhancing the positive mental image, which is reflected in increasing confidence in the place and considering it a preferred destination. In addition, social media and digital platforms play an effective role in directing impressions and building a comprehensive perception that enhances the desire to travel, whether through sharing experiences with others or displaying photos and videos that confirm the quality and uniqueness of the destination. It is clear that there is a dialectical relationship between mental image and the travel decision; as the priority that an individual gives to the image of the destination affects his willingness to take risks and allocate time and resources for travel. Therefore, improving the mental image through digital marketing strategies is one of the effective means of raising the level of confidence, facilitating the decision-making process, and increasing tourism rates, which reflects the importance of paying attention to all dimensions of the mental image and employing them strategically to ensure the achievement of the desired tourism and economic goals. (Nawar & Fadoul, 2020, pp. 633-634)

3. The Saudi Context: From Religious to Leisure Tourism

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has witnessed a significant shift in its tourism strategies, moving from a focus on religious tourism, particularly Hajj and Umrah, to adopting a strategy of diversifying tourism patterns and emphasizing leisure and cultural tourism. This shift is part of an ambitious vision aimed at enhancing the Kingdom's global position as a comprehensive tourist destination that transcends its religious character. Digital marketing tools are being leveraged to cultivate this new image. These tools play a key role in reshaping the perception of the Kingdom among both domestic and international tourists by promoting new tourist attractions, opening modern communication channels, and utilizing social media and digital platforms to disseminate promotional messages more quickly and effectively.

The transition from religious to leisure tourism represents a pivotal point in the Kingdom's tourism development trajectory. It necessitates a well-considered digital strategy that integrates modern marketing with the availability of suitable infrastructure to achieve the desired goals of enhancing the Kingdom's image and attracting tourists in all its forms. 1.3 The Role of Digital Marketing in Shaping the Kingdom's Image

Digital marketing plays a vital role in shaping the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's image by using diverse methods and techniques aimed at improving the destination's self-image and enhancing its appeal to the target audience. The digital strategy relies on a range of channels and platforms, such as social media, websites, and mobile applications, which allow for the rapid and effective dissemination of promotional messages, thus contributing to conveying the positive image that the Kingdom seeks to promote. (Alhuqbani, 2021, p. 162)

The power of digital marketing in shaping the Kingdom's image is linked to the ability of these tools to highlight the diversity of tourism, from historical and cultural landmarks to modern recreational and natural destinations. This changes traditional perceptions that were closely associated with religious tourism only. Through visually appealing content, different tourism experiences are highlighted, fostering a renewed perception that reflects the economic and social developments that have taken place in the Kingdom. (Bin Ghalia & Qurain, 2025, p. 115)

Digital applications and platforms also provide opportunities To engage directly with the public, thereby fostering trust and enhancing the Kingdom's positive image as a sophisticated and welcoming tourist destination for visitors from around the world, in addition to targeted digital promotional campaigns across selected channels that focus on highlighting the destination's unique aspects and delivering tailored marketing messages that meet the aspirations and interests of different segments of potential visitors. (Al-Aslani, 2023, p. 388)

4. Methodological Framework the study

Within the methodological framework of this research, the fundamental concepts that clarify the relationship between digital tourism marketing and the destination's mental image are defined, with a focus on identifying variables associated with mental image factors, such as awareness, perception, and emotional appeal. This is followed by the selection of a systematic research approach characterized by descriptive and analytical examination, relying on diverse field studies to collect the necessary data. Accurate measurement tools are applied to ensure the objective and reliable measurement of variables. To achieve this, experimental study designs and standardized questionnaires are used, allowing for the observation of the impact of digital marketing tools on the dimensions of mental image and the determination of the relationship between mental image and travel decisions.

4.1 Study Methodology:

The methodology employed in this study combines descriptive and analytical approaches to measure the impact of digital tourism marketing on the mental image and travel decisions in Saudi Arabia. The descriptive approach describes the characteristics of digital marketing applications (content quality, interaction, visual appeal) and the dimensions of the mental image (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) as they exist in reality. The analytical approach analyzes the relationships between variables using correlational analysis and multiple regression to test hypotheses. This approach is applied to quantitative

questionnaire data that combines a description of the phenomenon with an analysis of its impact, enabling the drawing of conclusions that support future vision strategies for the Kingdom's tourism destination.

4.2 Study Sample:

The study sample consists of users of digital applications on social media platforms who are interested in the tourism sector, particularly in Arab countries. These users are targeted because they are the primary group affected by digital tourism marketing strategies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The sample size is estimated at approximately 270 participants to represent the main potential tourists and achieve the study's objectives.

4.3 Study Instruments:

A questionnaire was used as the primary data collection tool in this study to obtain accurate and objective results that reflect the impact of digital tourism marketing applications on the perception of and travel decisions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This survey is aimed at users of digital applications on social media platforms who are interested in tourism in Arab countries. Its purpose is to measure the relationship between digital tourism marketing applications, the perceived image of the country, and the decision to travel. This allows for hypothesis testing using correlation and regression analysis to verify the direct and mediating effects with high statistical accuracy.

The survey is divided into the following sections:

Section1: Personal and professional information related to the respondent, including gender, age, educational level, monthly income, and number of annual tourist trips.

Section2: Digital tourism marketing applications, comprising 7 statements.

Section3: The perceived image of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, comprising 7 statements.

Section4: The decision to travel to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, comprising 7 statements.

- The validity and reliability of the survey were confirmed using Cronbach's alpha.

Table (01): Validity and Reliability Test using Cronbach's alpha coefficient

Statement	Cronbach's alpha coefficient	Number of phrases
Digital Tourism Marketing Applications	0.841	7
Personal Image of Saudi Arabia	0.867	7
Decision to Travel to Saudi Arabia	0.794	7
Total Survey	0.827	21

Source: SPSS v26 output

Cronbach's alpha coefficients showed that all dimensions possessed high reliability ($\alpha > 0.70$), with mental image recording the highest reliability (0.867), reflecting strong consistency in measuring psychological perceptions. This was followed by digital marketing (0.841) and travel decision (0.794). The overall reliability of the questionnaire was 0.827, confirming the internal validity and high reliability of the instrument, making it suitable for advanced statistical analysis to reliably test relationships between variables.

5. Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

5.1 Analysis of the Psychometric Characteristics of the Study Sample

Table No. (02) Psychometric Data of the Study Sample

Ratio	Repetition	Statement	Sex
54.8%	148	male	
45.2%	122	feminine	

Ratio	Repetition	Statement	
34.1%	92	25-18years	feminine
39.6%	107	36-26years	
18.5%	50	45-36years	
6.7%	18	55-46years	
1.1%	3	55years and over	
8.1%	22	middle	Educational level
21.5%	58	secondary	
50.0%	135	University	
20.4%	55	Postgraduate studies	
23.0%	62	weak	monthly income
52.6%	142	middle	
24.4%	66	high	
100%	2700	the total	

Source: SPSS v26 output

Table (2) shows the characteristics of a balanced and representative sample of the target group of digital application users interested in tourism. Males predominate (54.8%), with a good balance of females (45.2%), reflecting a suitable demographic diversity for the study. The young adult group (18-36 years = 73.7%) represents the most interactive group with digital marketing via social media and smartphone platforms. A high level of education (university and postgraduate studies = 70.4%) ensures the accuracy and objectivity of responses regarding mental image and travel decisions. The middle income bracket (52.6%) is also dominant. This indicates a segment with sufficient purchasing power to make genuine travel decisions, making the sample ideal for measuring the impact of digital marketing applications on the studied variables. This supports the reliability of the statistical results within the context of Saudi Arabia's tourism transformation from religious to leisure tourism.

5.2 Statistical Description of Study Variables

Table No. (03) Agreement Analysis Regarding the Tourism Marketing Axis

Order	Relative importance	Standard deviation	arithmetic mean	Statement	
4	0,77	0,91	3,83	The digital promotional content for Saudi tourism is clear and useful.	1
3	0,77	0,80	3,85	The information provided in digital campaigns is reliable and accurate.	2
4	0,77	0,91	3,83	The promotional images and videos are attractive and reflect reality.	3
2	0,78	0,87	3,89	Interacting with Saudi tourism accounts is quick and effective.	4
5	0,76	0,86	3,78	Digital campaigns highlight the diversity of new tourist destinations	5
1	0,80	0,99	4,00	Using influencers in digital marketing is persuasive and effective.	6
6	0,75	0,97	3,75	Digital applications facilitate booking and tourist information.	7
	0.77	0.06	3.85	the total	

Source: SPSS v26 output

The axis showed a high degree of agreement with an overall average of 3.85 (77% relative importance), indicating a strong positive evaluation by the sample of Saudi digital marketing applications. The phrase "using influencers" received the highest average (4.00), ranking first, reflecting the greatest degree of influence among the elements, followed by "quick interaction" (3.89) in second place, while "facilitating bookings through applications" (3.75) fell to last place. The low standard deviations (0.06-0.99) confirm the consistency of responses and low variance, enhancing the reliability of the data for measuring the effectiveness of digital marketing in shaping mental image and travel decisions.

The high approval rating is explained by the younger demographic's preference for influencers and rapid interaction on digital platforms, which aligns with their experience using applications. The high deviation for influencers indicates a difference in influence depending on the type of influencer, while the low approval rating for bookings reflects higher expectations for the integration of digital services with the tourism decision-making process.

Table No. (04) Analysis of the extent of approval regarding the mental image of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Order	Relative importance	Standard deviation	Arithmetic mean	Statement	
1	0,75	0,95	3,74	I believe that Saudi Arabia is a unique tourist, entertainment, and cultural destination.	1
7	0,67	0,93	3,37	The Kingdom provides a modern and advanced tourism infrastructure.	2
6	0,68	1,14	3,40	I feel safe and at ease when thinking about visiting Saudi Arabia	3
2	0,72	1,00	3,59	Saudi tourist attractions are diverse and cater to my interests.	4
3	0,72	0,86	3,57	The current image of Saudi Arabia reflects openness and civilization.	5
4	0,70	0,86	3,50	I am impressed by the tourism development that the Kingdom is currently witnessing.	6
5	0,68	0,98	3,41	I recommend others visit the Kingdom as a tourist destination	7
	0.70	0.09	3.51	the total	

Source: SPSS v26 output

The axis showed a moderate level of agreement with an overall mean of 3.51 (70% relative importance), indicating a moderately positive assessment by the sample of the Saudi image. The phrase "a distinctive entertainment and cultural destination" ranked first with a mean of 3.74, followed by "diversity of tourist attractions" (3.59), while "modern infrastructure" received the lowest mean (3.37). The low standard deviations (0.09-1.14) confirm the consistency of responses, with a notable variation in the sense of security (1.14), thus enhancing the reliability of the data for measuring the evolution of the image.

Moderate agreement is explained by the sample's focus on recreational and cultural aspects as distinguishing features, while weak confidence in infrastructure reflects higher expectations for material development. High variability in aspirations indicates differing perceptions based on cultural backgrounds, highlighting the need for digital strategies to enhance trust and confidence.

Table No. (05) Analysis of Agreement Regarding the Decision to Travel to Saudi Arabia

Order	Relative importance	Standard deviation	arithmetic mean	Statement	
3	0,67	3,26	3,34	I am seriously considering visiting Saudi Arabia	1
6	0,62	1,07	3,11	Digital information positively influenced my decision to travel.	2
5	0,65	3,40	3,22	I plan to visit Saudi Arabia in the coming years.	3
7	0,62	1,03	3,09	Digital promotions have made me think about traveling.	4
2	0,71	0,78	3,53	I see Saudi Arabia as a suitable tourist destination for me.	5
4	0,66	1,16	3,31	I am ready to change my plans to visit the Kingdom	6
1	0,71	0,97	3,55	Digital campaigns encouraged me to choose Saudi Arabia	7
	0.66	1.14	3.30	the total	

Source: SPSS v26 output

The axis showed a moderate level of agreement with an overall mean of 3.30 (66% relative importance), indicating a neutral to positive assessment by the sample of the travel decision. The statement "Digital campaigns encouraged me" ranked first with a mean of 3.55, followed by "Saudi Arabia is a suitable option" (3.53), while "Promotional offers" received the lowest mean (3.09). The high standard deviations (1.14), particularly in planning (3.40), indicate significant variation in behavioral intent.

Moderate agreement reflects a gradual shift in travel intentions driven by digital campaigns. However, the weak impact of offers indicates a need to improve economic appeal. High planning deviations reflect varying levels of willingness based on financial capacity and commitments, highlighting the role of brand image in converting agreement into actual travel decisions.

5.3 Hypothesis Testing and Discussion of Results

-Hypothesis 1

• There is a statistically significant effect of digital tourism marketing applications on the brand image of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a leisure tourism destination.

To test this hypothesis, appropriate statistical methods were used, namely correlation as a first step to determine the strength and nature of the relationship between tourism marketing applications and brand image, followed by regression as a second step to determine the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

Table No. (06) Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis for Hypothesis 1

Results of the analysis of the relationship between tourism marketing applications and mental image		
0.713	Pearson correlation coefficient R	Tourism marketing applications
0.000	Significance probability value (sig)	
Results of simple regression analysis to measure the impact of tourism marketing applications on mental image		
Coefficient of determination (R ²) 0.509; Standard error of estimation 0.50726		
F-value: 17.681, Significance level: 0.00		

Moral T	Value T	Beta β	SE	B	Variable
0.000	5.481		0.186	0.461	The constant
0.000	6.664	0.713	0.048	0.793	Follower

Source: SPSS v26 output

The results of the correlation analysis between digital tourism marketing applications and brand image show a correlation coefficient of $R = 0.713$, which is statistically significant because the p-value (Sig = 0.000) is less than 0.05, indicating a strong positive correlation between the two variables.

The results of the simple regression analysis to measure the impact of digital marketing applications on brand image show a coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.509$). This indicates that 50.9% of the changes in brand image are explained by digital marketing, while the remaining 49.1% are attributed to other factors. The standard error (0.50726) indicates high accuracy in representing the regression line, and the F-value (Sig = 0.000) is statistically significant, exceeding the critical value.

The slope coefficient ($B=0.793$) indicates that every one-point increase in digital marketing is accompanied by a 0.793 increase in the mental image, which is statistically significant ($T=6.664$, Sig=0.000). The intersection parameter ($B=0.461$) is also significant (Sig=0.000). The significance of both parameters confirms a statistically significant effect between the two variables, thus supporting the alternative hypothesis.

-Second Hypothesis

- There is a statistically significant relationship between the mental image formed by tourists through digital marketing and their intention to visit the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Table No. (07): The Relationship Between the Tourist's Mental Image and Their Intention to Visit the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

		Intention to visit Saudi Arabia (Tourist's decision)	Tourist mental image
Intention to visit Saudi Arabia (Tourist's decision)	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	,814**
	N	270	270
Tourist mental image	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	,814**	1
	N	270	270

Source: SPSS V26 output

The results of the correlation analysis between tourists' mental image and their intention to visit Saudi Arabia show that the Pearson correlation coefficient (R) is 0.814. This value is statistically significant because the p-value (Sig = 0.000) is less than 0.05, indicating a very strong positive correlation between the two variables.

The results confirmed the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis $H1_2$, as the strong correlation coefficient ($R = 0.814$) (a highly positive relationship) showed statistical significance (Sig = 0.000 < 0.05) between mental image and travel intention. This very strong correlation confirms that an improved mental image directly translates into a significant increase in the intention to visit, highlighting the role of mental image as a primary driver of the decision to travel to Saudi Arabia. Third Hypothesis

- The mental image plays a mediating role between digital tourism marketing applications and the tourist's decision to travel to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

To test the validity of this hypothesis, appropriate statistical methods were used, namely correlation as a first step to discover the strength and type of relationship between the mental image, tourism marketing applications, and the tourist's decision. Regression was then used as a second step to determine the effect of the two variables—the mental image as a mediating variable and tourism marketing applications as an independent variable—on the dependent variable, the tourist's decision.

Table (8) shows the results of the multiple linear regression analysis for the third hypothesis

Results of the analysis of the relationship between tourism marketing applications and mental image					
0.615		Pearson correlation coefficient R		Tourism marketing applications	
0.000		Significance probability value (sig(
Results of simple regression analysis to measure the impact of tourism marketing applications on mental image					
Coefficient of determination (R ²) 0.378, Standard error of estimation 0.72796					
F-value: 81.039, Significance level: 0.00					
Moral T	Value T	β	SE	B	The variable
0.000	5.782		0.270	0.481	The constant
0.000	7.522	0.036	0.097	0.051	Tourism marketing applications
0.000	8.542	0.588	0.088	0.749	The brand image

Source: SPSS v26 output

From the results of the correlation analysis between digital tourism marketing applications and tourist decisions, the correlation coefficient $R = 0.615$ is statistically significant because the p -value (Sig = 0.000) is less than 0.05, indicating a moderate to strong positive correlation between the two variables.

From the results of the multiple linear regression analysis to measure the impact of digital tourism marketing applications (independent) and the tourist's image (mediator) on their decisions (dependent), the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.378$) shows that 37.8% of the changes in travel decisions were explained by both variables, while 62.2% were due to other factors. The standard error (0.72796) indicates a small random error and good representation of the regression line. The F-value ($F = 81.039$, Sig = 0.000) is statistically significant, exceeding the tabulated value.

The table shows the value of the digital marketing application bias parameter ($B = 0.051$), indicating that a 1-degree increase in digital marketing corresponds to a 0.051 increase in the travel decision. This is statistically significant ($T = 7.522$, Sig = 0.000), less than 0.05. The image parameter ($B = 0.749$) indicates a stronger effect, where each degree increase in image is accompanied by a 0.749 increase in the travel decision. This is statistically significant ($T = 8.542$, Sig = 0.000). The intersection parameter ($B=0.481$) is significant (Sig=0.000), and the presence of significance for all parameters confirms the existence of a statistically significant effect between digital marketing and brand image on travel decisions, thus proving the partial mediating role of brand image.

Discussion and Interpretation of Results

First Hypothesis: There is a statistically significant effect of digital tourism marketing applications on the brand image of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a leisure tourism destination.

The results of this hypothesis confirm the success of digital tourism marketing applications in shaping a positive image of the Kingdom as a modern leisure destination. This reflects the effectiveness of digital platforms and influencers in transforming traditional perceptions into a comprehensive image encompassing both entertainment and adventure. This finding supports the Vision 2030 strategies for attracting tourists through targeted, interactive content that focuses on new destinations such as the Red Sea and Riyadh Season.

Second Hypothesis: There is a statistically significant relationship between the mental image formed by tourists through digital marketing and their intention to visit the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The results of the second hypothesis confirm the strong link between the positive mental image formed through

digital campaigns and the tourist's decision to travel to the Kingdom. These attractive perceptions become a direct driver of travel intention, highlighting the importance of continuing to build strong mental images to enhance demand for Saudi leisure destinations within the strategic transformation of tourism.

The third hypothesis: The mental image plays an intermediary role between digital tourism marketing applications and the tourist's decision to travel to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The third hypothesis confirms the effective mediating role of the mental image in linking digital marketing applications to the travel decision. Digital marketing works first to improve mental perceptions, which in turn indirectly stimulate tourist behavior. This result reinforces the need to focus on the quality of digital content to achieve a sustainable impact within the objectives of Vision 2030's tourism goals.

Conclusion:

This study demonstrates the crucial role of digital tourism marketing applications in transforming the perception of Saudi Arabia as a global tourist destination. The statistical results confirmed all hypotheses linking digital marketing, image, and travel intention, proving the effectiveness of these tools in shifting from the traditional perception of religious tourism to one that combines leisure, adventure, culture, and nature.

The significance of these findings lies in their alignment with future goals aimed at making leisure tourism a fundamental component of economic diversification. Digital platforms and influencers have become essential tools for reaching youth and international markets, enhancing the Kingdom's competitiveness with tourist destinations such as the UAE, Turkey, and Dubai. The study indicates that a brand image is not merely a reflection of reality, but a psychological construct shaped through digital marketing that influences people's decisions. The mediating role of brand image highlights the importance of investing in engaging and interactive digital content to link marketing with actual tourist behavior.

Theoretically, the study contributes to the Arabic literature on digital tourism marketing by presenting a model that integrates three interrelated variables. This model provides a foundation for future studies in different cultures and helps in developing methods for measuring brand image using modern digital tools. Practically, the study offers scientific guidance for policymakers in the Saudi Tourism Authority and the Ministry of Tourism on the importance of strengthening partnerships with influencers and digital platforms. It recommends developing campaigns targeting youth and emerging markets, with a focus on new destinations. The study also points to the importance of combining digital marketing with real-world experience, where digital promises must be transformed into distinctive, on-the-ground tourism experiences. This ensures the continuation of a positive brand image and converts intentions into repeat visits.

This study represents an important step in understanding tourism marketing in the digital age. It confirms that the success of tourism in the Kingdom depends on digital innovation and building a strong brand image that supports economic and social goals, thus enhancing the Kingdom's position as a global tourist destination.

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