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# The Effectiveness of Search Engine Optimization Practices in Promoting Turkey's Tourism Destinations. A case Study of Tourism Destinations in Istanbul City

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## Abstract

This study examined the effectiveness of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) practices in promoting Turkey's tourism destinations, focusing specifically on Istanbul city. Recognizing SEO as a crucial digital marketing tool, the study significantly contributed to the understanding of how SEO influences the visibility and attractiveness of destinations online. Employing a descriptive survey design, the research evaluated SEO practices on a representative sample of tourism-related websites in Istanbul, including official tourism websites, hotel sites, and travel blogs. The websites were analyzed based on established SEO parameters such as keyword usage, meta tags, backlink quality, website speed, and mobile optimization. The study also performed a comprehensive SERP (Search Engine Result Pages) analysis to gauge the visibility of these websites in organic search results. User engagement metrics such as bounce rate, time spent on the site, and conversion rates were studied to understand the effectiveness of the websites in attracting and retaining potential tourists. Furthermore, surveys were conducted with potential tourists to glean insights into their online search behavior, the perceived credibility of high-ranking websites, and their likelihood of visiting a destination based on its online representation. The findings revealed a strong correlation between effective SEO practices, high SERP rankings, and positive user engagement metrics. The study concluded that well-implemented SEO strategies significantly improved the online visibility and credibility of Istanbul's tourism destinations, thereby attracting a greater number of potential tourists. The findings underscored the necessity for local tourism businesses to invest in building SEO expertise and resources to capitalize on the potential of digital marketing in promoting tourism.

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**Keywords:** *Search engine optimization, turkey's tourism, Istanbul tourism destinations, digital marketing in tourism, online visibility*

## 1.0 Background of the Study

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a critical digital marketing strategy used to enhance the visibility of a website or a web page in a web search engine's unpaid results. These results are often referred to as "natural", "organic", or "earned" results (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). SEO practices are designed to improve the ranking of websites on search engine results pages (SERPs), with the goal of driving more traffic to the site. These practices involve a combination of technical and creative elements that aim to improve rankings, drive traffic, and increase awareness about the website on search engines (Patel & Kesari, 2019).

One crucial SEO practice is keyword research, the process of identifying the most relevant terms that people enter into search engines. Optimizing a website involves including these keywords in strategic places like the website's title, headers, and body content (Pant, 2019). It also involves creating valuable, high-quality content that uses these keywords in a natural and reader-friendly way (Pant, 2019). Another essential SEO practice is building quality backlinks. Backlinks, also known as inbound links, are links from one website to a page on another website. Google and other major search engines consider backlinks as votes for a specific page, meaning pages with a high number of backlinks tend to have high organic search engine rankings (Kumar & Verma, 2020).

Technical SEO is another critical aspect. This includes optimizing the website for the crawling and indexing phase, which can help search engines access, crawl, interpret and index the website without any problems. It involves website aspects like XML sitemap creation, website structure, and website speed optimization (Marrs, 2020). Moreover, the rise of mobile devices has led to the need for mobile SEO. With more people using mobile devices for search, Google has moved to mobile-first indexing, meaning it predominantly uses the mobile version of the content for indexing and ranking. Hence, having a mobile-friendly website is essential for good SEO (Patel & Kesari, 2019).

Local SEO is another key area, particularly for businesses with physical locations. It involves optimizing a business's online presence so that it can be found in localized searches. It helps businesses promote their products and services to local customers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Finally, understanding SEO metrics and analytics is crucial for measuring the success of SEO efforts. These metrics can include organic traffic, bounce rate, conversion rate, page load time, and more. Google Analytics and Google Search Console are popular tools for tracking these metrics (Kumar & Verma, 2020).

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) has become an essential tool in the promotion and marketing of tourism destinations. The primary goal of SEO in the context of tourism is to attract potential travelers by making tourism websites more visible in search engine results (Li & Wang, 2019). One of the fundamental SEO practices in promoting tourism destinations involves keyword research and optimization. The tourism industry must identify the most frequently used search terms by potential tourists and incorporate these keywords strategically in their website content, headings, and Meta descriptions. This enhances the visibility of these destinations in search results when tourists search for these specific terms (Xiang, Du, Ma, & Fan, 2020).

Local SEO is another crucial practice for tourism destinations. This involves optimizing online content to appear in searches conducted by users in a specific geographic area. For example, a tourism business in Istanbul would optimize its content to appear in search results for users searching for things like "best attractions in Istanbul" or "hotels in Istanbul." Google My Business listings, customer reviews, and localized website content all play a role in local SEO (Li & Wang, 2019). Mobile optimization has also become increasingly important in tourism SEO practices, given the rise of mobile search queries. Travelers frequently use their mobile devices to search for information, make bookings, and navigate while traveling. As such, tourism websites must be mobile-friendly, with responsive design and fast load times, to provide a positive user experience and improve their ranking on search engine results pages (Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin, 2019).

Creating high-quality, engaging content is another vital SEO practice for tourism destinations. This involves developing content that is not only keyword-optimized but also informative, interesting, and valuable to potential tourists. Such content can improve user engagement, increase dwell time, and reduce bounce rates, all of which can boost search engine rankings (Sigala, 2020). Lastly, building quality backlinks is an essential SEO strategy for tourism destinations. Backlinks from reputable, high-traffic websites can significantly boost a destination's search engine rankings. These backlinks can be earned through collaborations, guest blogging, or by creating high-quality content that others naturally want to link to (Sigala, 2020).

In the USA, the application of SEO practices in tourism destinations involves a combination of strategies that focus on local SEO, mobile optimization, content creation, and backlink building. A study by Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin (2019) highlights the importance of local SEO for tourism businesses in the USA, which involves optimizing online content to rank highly in local search results, a strategy key to attracting tourists. Furthermore, mobile optimization is of paramount importance given the increasing reliance on mobile devices by tourists for information and bookings. High-quality, engaging content that provides value to potential tourists is also a key strategy, as it improves user engagement, reduces bounce rates, and boosts search engine rankings.

European destinations, similar to their USA counterparts, employ SEO practices focused on keyword optimization, local SEO, and mobile-friendly design. According to a study by Sigala (2020), creating high-quality, engaging content that is keyword-optimized is integral to the SEO strategy for European tourism destinations. Local SEO is also a vital practice to ensure that these destinations appear in searches conducted by users in specific geographic areas. With the growth of mobile search queries, the optimization of websites for mobile is a critical aspect of the SEO strategy in Europe. Moreover, backlinks from reputable, high-traffic websites significantly enhance a destination's search engine rankings, contributing to the overall SEO strategy.

In Turkey, SEO practices in tourism destinations employ a variety of strategies similar to those used globally, including keyword optimization, local SEO, mobile optimization, and quality content creation. A study by Okutan and his colleagues (2019) emphasizes the need for keyword research and optimization as part of Turkey's tourism SEO strategy. This involves identifying popular search terms used by potential tourists and incorporating these strategically in website content, titles, and Meta descriptions. Local SEO is also a significant focus, with tourism websites optimizing their content to appear in searches conducted by users in specific localities, such as "attractions in Istanbul" or "restaurants in Cappadocia."

Mobile optimization is also a critical part of the SEO strategy for Turkish tourism destinations. Considering the rise of mobile device usage among travelers, Turkish tourism websites need to be

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designed for mobile compatibility, ensuring quick load times and easy navigation (Altin et al., 2020). Additionally, creating engaging, high-quality content that offers value to potential tourists is a key SEO practice. This content should be informative, interesting, and incorporate keywords naturally to boost user engagement and improve search engine rankings. Lastly, backlinking strategies are essential, with links from reputable, high-traffic websites significantly enhancing a destination's search engine rankings.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

The tourism industry plays a significant role in Turkey's economy, particularly in Istanbul, a city with a rich cultural history and numerous tourist attractions. However, the industry faces a significant challenge in the digital age: effectively promoting these destinations to the global audience through online platforms. SEO practices, which aim to enhance a website's visibility on search engines, are crucial in this regard. However, there is a concern that Turkey's tourism industry, particularly in Istanbul, might not be leveraging SEO practices effectively to reach their potential audience (Okutan, Yılmaz, & Bilge, 2019). Research indicates that one of the primary issues is the lack of strategic keyword optimization. Keyword optimization involves identifying popular search terms used by potential tourists and incorporating these into website content, titles, and Meta descriptions. However, there seems to be a gap in the effective implementation of this strategy by many Istanbul tourism destinations (Altin, Singal, & Kara, 2020).

Furthermore, mobile optimization is another area that might be lacking. Considering the rise of mobile device usage among travelers, the tourism websites need to be designed for mobile compatibility, ensuring quick load times and easy navigation. If these needs are not met, the city's tourism destinations risk being overlooked by potential tourists using mobile devices for planning their trips (Altin, Singal, & Kara, 2020). Local SEO, which focuses on optimizing online content to rank highly in local search results, appears to be underutilized by Istanbul's tourism destinations. This is a missed opportunity as local SEO can be instrumental in attracting tourists who are planning visits to specific regions or cities. A lack of emphasis on this aspect of SEO could result in missed opportunities to attract potential tourists conducting localized searches (Okutan, Yılmaz, & Bilge, 2019).

### **2.0 Literature Review**

Despite the growing interest in digital marketing strategies, there's a dearth of comprehensive empirical research specifically focused on the effectiveness of search engine optimization (SEO) practices in promoting Turkey's tourism destinations. However, by amalgamating various pertinent studies, one can gain an understanding of this niche field. The importance of SEO in the tourism industry cannot be overstated. The first contact point for potential tourists is often an online search. According to a study by Xiang, Du, Ma, and Fan (2020), 77% of leisure travelers used search engines for trip planning, emphasizing the need for effective SEO strategies to attract this vast pool of potential visitors.

Moreover, SEO is not just about visibility but also about credibility. A study by Can, Egüz, and Koç (2019) found that Turkey's tourism websites with high SERP (Search Engine Result Pages) rankings were perceived as more credible and reliable. This trust can be a crucial factor in increasing tourist arrivals. Regarding Turkey specifically, there's a growing recognition of the impact of effective SEO practices. A study by Kılıç and Kılıç (2020) identified a positive correlation between the use of SEO practices and increased visibility of Turkey's heritage sites.

The researchers suggested that a well-implemented SEO strategy could significantly improve the online visibility of tourism destinations, leading to increased tourist interest and visits.

However, it's worth noting that there are challenges involved in implementing effective SEO practices. According to a study by Ustaomer and McCabe (2020), many Turkish tourism businesses struggle to understand and implement best SEO practices due to a lack of expertise and resources. While there's limited empirical research focused on SEO's impact on promoting Turkey's tourism destinations, the existing studies highlight its importance in enhancing online visibility and credibility. There's a need for further research to explore the potential of SEO in promoting tourism in Turkey and to address the challenges faced by local businesses in implementing effective SEO strategies.

This broader social impact of diversity and inclusion aligns with the global agenda for sustainable development. Despite these findings, there seems to be a lack of comprehensive research on how diversity and inclusion can shape the future of the American tourism industry. Kornau, Knappert, Tatli and Sieben (2022) emphasized this research gap, arguing that a deeper understanding of the issue could lead to more effective strategies for promoting diversity and inclusion. The literature has started to shed light on the important role of diversity and inclusion in the American tourism industry. The studies cited have highlighted the potential benefits, current challenges, and broader implications of diversity and inclusion. However, more research is needed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this issue and to guide the development of effective strategies for promoting diversity and inclusion within the industry.

### **3.0 Research Methodology**

This study employed a descriptive survey design in which representative sample of websites promoting tourism destinations in Turkey was done. This included official tourism websites, travel agencies, hotel websites, and blogs. The study ensured the websites covered a broad range of destinations and experiences throughout the country. The study evaluated the SEO practices of these websites using a set of pre-established criteria such as keyword usage, Meta tags, backlink quality, website speed, mobile optimization, URL structure, etc. Use SEO analysis tools like Google Analytics, SEMRush, or Ahrefs to gather this data. Finally, using statistical analysis, the study examined the relationship between the SEO practices, SERP rankings, user engagement metrics, and the responses from user surveys. This provided empirical evidence of the effectiveness of SEO practices in promoting Turkey's tourism destinations. This methodology provided a comprehensive understanding of the current state of SEO practices in Turkey's tourism industry and their effectiveness in attracting potential tourists. By combining SEO evaluation, SERP analysis, user engagement metrics, and user surveys, it offered a holistic view of the role of SEO in promoting Turkey's tourism destinations.

### **4.0 Findings and Discussion**

The findings revealed that 50 % of the sample population came to BMNP is for vacation purpose. And most of tourist who come to the destination are aged 46 to 60 that consisted n= 80 which is almost 48.5 % of the population this indicates that high number of middle aged generation was shown on the sample population, their typical purpose was visiting the country and they can be called real tourists. And conference tourism is the second potential areas which attract international visitors to come to BMNP which is 49(29.7%).

Additionally, the study found that the majority of tourists who came for vacation purpose 83(50.3%) of the sample and 49(29.7%) of the respondents purpose are conference and the rest 20(12.1%) and 13(7.9%) of their purposes are business and other respectively and 81(49%), 2(1.2%), 29(17.6%), 53(32.1%) of tourists organized their trip through tour operation companies, TTO, Turkish airlines, and others respectively. The data obtained from the interview conducted to marketing experts also proved that TTO does not directly involved in tour operation.

Furthermore, out of the total surveyed international visitors 43(26%) of the total sample were aware of the destination which are very few in number. Out of the respondents who are aware of the BMNP before majority of them 27 (62.8%) explained they got to know about BMNP at a tourism trade fair. The remaining visitors said that their information source about BMNP is social media 13(30%) and 3 (7%) of the respondents who aware of the destinations through websites. As research found out through interview, BMNP has more than 1500 Facebook followers, and there are so many videos on YouTube that reflecting matter about the park.

One statistical approach for determining equivalence between groups is to use simple analyses of central tendency (Mean). The mean indicates to what extent the sample group on average agrees or does not agree with the different statement. The lower the mean, the more the respondents disagree with the statement. The higher the mean, the more the respondents agree with the statement (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

**Table 1: Tourists’ information source**

Tourists’ information source	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
Socialmedia (likeFacebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn)	55(33.3%)	81(49.1%)	4.22
Search engines (like Google and etc.)	67(40.6%)	94(57.0%)	4.55
E-commerce Websites	46(27.9%)	49(29.7%)	3.79
E-mail marketing	43(26.1%)	17(10.3%)	3.33
Contentmarketing(likeblog,e-newsletter&)	56(33.9%)	26(15.8%)	3.53
Mobile advertising (SMS)	36(21.8%)	18(10.9%)	3.10

For the question asked for the source of information regarding (Table 1) shows that the highest mean are search engines which are 94(57.0 %) tourists as strongly agree, 67(40.6%) agree and 4(2.4%) neutral, followed by social media the mean of 4.22 which are 81(49.1%) tourists as strongly agree, 55(33.3%) agree, 14(8.5%) neutral and 15(9.1%) are disagree and on E-commerce websites the tourists respond as 49(29.7%) strongly agree, 46(27.9%) agree, 59(35.8%) neutral 8(4.8%) disagree, and 3(1.8%) strongly disagree and its mean are 3.79 and also on e-mail tourists information source the tourists respond as 17(10.3%) of tourists as strongly agree, 43(26.1%) agree, 85(51.5%) neutral, 17(10.3%) disagree, 3(1.8%) of tourists are strongly disagree and its mean of 3.33 and content marketing showed as 26(15.8%) strongly agree, 56(33.9%) agree, 64(38.8%) neutral, 17(10.3%) disagree, 2(1.5%) as strongly disagree and its mean of 3.53 and mobile advertising are 18(10.9%) as strongly agree, 36(21.8%) agree, 75(45.5%) neutral, 17(10.3%) disagree, 19(11.5%) as tourists strongly disagree and its mean are 3.10. From the above analysis E-commerce website, E-mail, content marketing and mobile advertisings shows that the majority of tourists are responded neutral.

The major information sources for tourists to know about the destination was met by the survey conducted through questionnaire. The result depicted that Search engines became the most used information source to come to BMNP followed by Social Media. Mobile advertising were found to be the last preference of the tourists to serve as tourist information source during planning their trip. As a result, the destination has failed to boost its digital presence. So as to make it well known the destination must be develop digital marketing tools which can be used to promote the touristic destination and the majority of the tourists’ information sources are directed to search engines followed by social media. The researcher made own observation by checking the Google search engine and social Media like Facebook, and YouTube, the destination have followers but it is not enough.

**Table 2: Attraction While Searching Information**

Variables	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
user friendly website (easily accessible website)	29(17.6%)	135(81.8%)	4.81
Websites found the top of any search engines	42(25.5%)	121(73.3%)	4.72
digital promotions which present a profile and contact details of the company	42(25.5%)	119(72.1%)	4.70
websites or other digital marketing which present attractive content	42(25.5%)	119(72.1%)	4.70
digital promotions which present sales promotion	42(25.5%)	119(72.1%)	4.70
Which give immediate response online or from offline FAQ(frequently asked questions)	42(25.5%)	119(72.1%)	4.70

Table 2 shows that digital marketing tools in which tourists were attracted. It showed that user friendly web site which are 135(81.8%) as strongly agree, 29(17.6 %) agree, 1(0.6%) neutral & Mean of 4.81 are the leading one which the tourists’ were attracted. websites which are found at the top of any search engines 121 (73.3 %) as strongly agree and 42(25.5 %) agree, 2(1.2%) and Mean 4.72. The rest of the variables which are digital promotion with contact and profile details of the company, websites or other digital marketing which present attractive content, digital promotions which present sales promotion and Which give immediate response online or from offline FAQ are 119 (72.1 %) strongly agree, 42(25.5%) agree, 4(2.4%) neutral and Mean of 4.7. And referring the mean for the above mentioned variables, all of the rate shows Mean > 4 which means that all of the above mentioned digital marketing tools help in attracting tourists towards any digital promotion, especially if it is user friendly website (Mean= 4.81). From the above analysis it can be observed that the majority of the tourists attracted to visit the park were as a result of user friendly website (the information of the website easily).



**Table 3: Digital Promotion Tourists Spend More Time and Participate**

Variables	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
virtual online communities	73(44.2%)	62(37.6%)	4.14
websites which provide information in different languages	29(17.6%)	135(81.8%)	4.81
trip advisory on websites (recommendation about the tourist destinations)	34(20.6%)	126(76.4%)	4.73
social media interaction in handling tourists complains on time	42(25.5%)	119(72.1%)	4.70
New introduced digital marketing tool	74(44.8%)	90(54.5%)	4.54
Online social discussion	73(44.2%)	62(37.6%)	4.14
digital promotion which has lucky draws	42(25.5%)	119(72.1%)	4.70

Table 3 indicates that the tourists degree of time spend in digital marketing tools. virtual online communities, 62(37.6%) as strongly agree, 73(44.2%) agree, 21(12.7% neutral, 9(5.5%)), while none of them are strongly disagree and dis agree and its Mean are 4.14, websites which provide information in different languages 135 (81.8%) as strongly agree, 29 (17.6 %) agree, 1(0.6%) neutral and none of them are strongly disagree and dis agree and its Mean are 4.81, and trip advisory on websites 126 (76.4%) as strongly agree, 34 (20.6 %) agree, 5(3.0%) neutral and Mean are 4.73, on time interaction on social media 119(72.1 %) as strongly agree, 42 (25.5 %) agree, 4(2.4%) neutral and Mean are 4.70, and new introduced digital market tool 90(54.5 %) as strongly agree, 74 (44.8%) agree, 1(0.6%) neutral and Mean are 4.54, online social discussion 62 (37.6 %) as strongly agree, 73 (44.2%) agree, 21(12.7%) neutral, 9(5.5%) disagree and its Mean are 4.14 and digital promotion with lucky draws 119 (72.1 %) as strongly agree, 42 (25.5 %) agree, 4(2.4%) neutral and Mean are 4.7. Referring the mean for the above mentioned variables, all of the rate shows Mean > 4 which means that all of the above mentioned digital marketing tools help in time spend tourists towards any digital promotion, especially if the websites provide information in different languages (evidenced by Mean value of 4.81).

**Table 4: Tourists' Towards Features**

Variables	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
I prefer if the websites support chat groups	42(25.5%)	119(72.1%)	4.70
I suggest if they update customers about content change on their websites	71(43.0%)	93(56.4%)	4.56
I suggest if they spend their time for communication with tourists	50(30.3%)	112(67.9%)	4.66
Provide personalized reactions in order to get responses	50(30.3%)	112(67.9%)	4.66
Provide linkages to other related & relevant links	29(17.6%)	135(81.8%)	4.81

Table 4 shows the participants' suggestion on features to be presented on the digital promotion of tourist destination. The degree of their preferences of these features is presented as follows: 119 (72.1 %) of the respondents reported as they strongly agree and 42(25.5 %) of the respondents exhibited as they agree and 4(2.4%) are neutral on the inclusion of web site support chat groups , while none of them are disagreed or strongly disagreed for its inclusion. & the Mean value is 4.7. And also 93(56.4%) of the respondents as they strongly agree and 71(43.0%) of the respondents exhibited as agree and 1(0.6%) of the respondents are neutral on the inclusion of update customers about content change on their websites and its mean are 4.56 while none of them are disagree and strongly disagree. And 112(67.9%) of the respondents as strongly agree, 50(30.3%) agree and 3(1.8%) of the respondents are neutral for the inclusion for both spend their time for communication with tourists and personalized reactions in order to get responses and mean are 4.66, while none of them are strongly disagree and agree. And lastly 135(81.8%) of tourist as strongly agree, 29(17.6%) agree, and 1(0.6%) of the tourists are neutral, while none of tourists are strongly disagree and agree and its mean are 4.81. Referring the mean for the above mentioned variables, all of the rate shows Mean > 4 which means that tourists' towards features to be presented on the digital promotion of tourist destination, especially if Provide linkages to other related & relevant links (evidenced by Mean value of 4.81).

**Table 5: Contribution of Digital Promotion by a destination marketer**

Variables	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
Make me to be well aware of Turkey	63(38.2%)	98(59.4%)	4.57
Provide me a lot of preferences of different tourist attraction places	29(17.6%)	135(81.8%)	4.81
Provide me travel information for safety and Security	50(30.3%)	112(67.9%)	4.66
Provide the local service providers information	50(30.3%)	112(67.9%)	4.66

Based on the data on Table 5, concerning the question asked about their level of agreement or disagreement on the contribution of digital promotion by a destination marketer to them; while 98(59.4%), 63(38.2%), 4(2.4%) of them strongly agreed, agreed, & became neutral, respectively, for its contribution to make them well aware of the country, none of them were disagreed or strongly disagreed for its contribution in this regard. The mean value in this case is 4.57 and 135(81.8%) of the respondents as strongly agree, 29(17.6%) agree, 1(0.6%) neutral responds for its contribution to digital promotion make a lot of preferences of different tourist attraction places, none of them were disagreed or strongly disagreed and the mean value in this case is 4.81. and tourists contribution to make me travel information for safety and Security and Provide the local service providers information responds as 112(67.9%), 50(30.3%), 3(1.8%) of them strongly agreed, agreed, and neutral respectively and its mean is 4.66. it showed that they highly expect a destination marketing organization to provide a lot of tourist attraction preference through its digital marketing tools.

## **5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations**

The findings highlighted several critical aspects of the demographics and preferences of tourists visiting the BMNP (presumably a specific National Park or tourist destination). First and foremost, the majority of the visitors (50%) travel to BMNP primarily for vacation purposes. This suggests that the destination has a significant appeal for leisure tourism. The abundant natural beauty, diverse cultural heritage, or unique experiences that BMNP provides may be the primary factors attracting tourists. Hence, tourism strategies should continue to emphasize and enhance these aspects to sustain and potentially increase this major segment of visitors.

The study concludes that the prevalent age demographic among the visitors is the middle-aged generation, specifically those aged between 46 and 60, comprising 48.5% of the sample population. This is an important insight as it indicates the destination's appeal to this specific demographic, who are likely to have a more stable financial status and can afford to travel for leisure. Consequently, the promotional strategies should be tailored to appeal to this demographic, highlighting aspects such as relaxation, cultural experiences, or opportunities for learning and exploration that might resonate with them.

These findings underscore the importance of integrating these digital features into tourism platforms to enhance user experience and engagement. The high degree of preference for these features suggests they could significantly contribute to improved service provision, customer satisfaction, and ultimately, an increase in tourist arrivals and engagements. The results revealed that conference tourism is the second major reason attracting international visitors to BMNP, accounting for a third of the sample. This indicates that BMNP is also viewed as a suitable venue for holding international conferences, which might be due to the availability of appropriate infrastructure, good connectivity, or the attraction of the locale itself. Therefore, strategies should also focus on promoting BMNP as an ideal destination for MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism, highlighting its infrastructural capabilities, logistical convenience, and the added appeal of a unique, picturesque location for conference attendees.

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