

Digital Pathways to MICE Competitiveness in Bali: Social-Media Affordances, Omnichannel Integration, and Destination Image

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Abstract: This study investigates how Social-Media Affordance Quality (SMAQ) and Omnichannel Integration Quality (OCIQ) shape Bali's MICE destination image (DI-MICE) and perceived MICE destination competitiveness (PMDC), and whether these effects differ between first-time and repeat international visitors. Data were collected through purposive intercept surveys at MICE-related hotels, venues, and attractions in Bali, targeting international visitors who had interacted with Bali's official MICE digital channels. A quantitative cross-sectional design was applied to 300 valid responses and analyzed using PLS-SEM (SmartPLS 4). The results show that SMAQ and OCIQ significantly enhance destination image and perceived competitiveness, with destination image acting as a key mediator. Multi-group analysis reveals that first-time visitors rely more strongly on social-media affordances, whereas repeat visitors respond more to seamless omnichannel integration. Once an image is formed, both groups evaluate competitiveness similarly. These findings position digital affordances and omnichannel integration as strategic signals of professional capability, offering practical guidance for MICE destination managers in Bali and comparable emerging destinations.

Keywords: Bali; Destination Competitiveness; MICE Destination Image; Omnichannel Integration; Social-Media Affordances; Visitor Experience.

History Article: Submitted 19 January 2026 | Revised 4 February 2026 | Accepted 23 February 2026

How to Cite: Nainggolan, P. P., Sutapa, I. K., Subadra, I. N., & Dewi, L. K. C.. (2026). Digital pathways to miche competitiveness in Bali: Social-media affordances, omnichannel integration, and destination image. *Journal of Applied Sciences in Travel and Hospitality*, 9(1), 11-26.

Introduction

Global meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions (MICE) are rebounding fast and getting more digital (Romanova, 2025). Contemporary industry assessments approximate the valuation of the MICE sector for the years 2024–2025 to be in the range of USD 0.87–1.23 trillion. It is anticipated that there will be mid-to-high single-digit annual growth from 2030 to 2034, as corporate travel resumes and hybrid formats expand. For various destinations, this represents a substantial and increasingly technology-influenced demand reservoir (Grand View Research, 2025). Bali sits at the center of Indonesia's quality-tourism push and is a proven MICE stage (e.g., G20 presidency meetings in Nusa Dua, 2021–2022). It fields tier-one venues such as Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center (BNDCC) with 44 rooms and capacity up to ~10,000 delegates, and other large facilities across ITDC Nusa Dua (BNDCC, 2024). Post-pandemic recovery has been sharp: official statistics recorded 625,665 foreign arrivals in July 2024 (up 20.11% MoM) (BPS-Bali, 2024), with annual international arrivals topping 6.3 million in 2024 according to industry summaries (BPS-Statistics Bali, 2025).

Bali's tourism sector is undergoing reforms by policymakers to maintain quality and sustainability, consequently urging destination marketers to enhance their digital professionalism beyond traditional volume-focused strategies. Digital marketing has become the predominant arena, with global ad expenditure exceeding USD \$1 trillion, particularly flourishing in mobile and social media; platforms like TikTok and Instagram now influence travel itineraries and

crowd dynamics, presenting both opportunities and challenges for destinations, while MICE participants expect integrated, seamless experiences across multiple channels and professional assurances to mitigate event risks (Flynn & Fischer, 2024). Three research areas are thoroughly established yet rarely amalgamated within the scope of MICE destinations, especially regarding Bali. The affordances of social media influence destination image, with recent studies indicating that interactivity, social presence, and richness of format (from a technology-affordance perspective) significantly affect cognitive and affective perceptions of destination image and subsequent intentions, though this has primarily been explored within leisure markets rather than MICE sectors (Liu et al., 2024). Omnichannel integration quality (OCIQ) research indicates that superior integration and seamless cross-channel interactions enhance engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty; however, tourism applications tend to be more focused on specific venues or firms rather than encompassing broader destination-level perspectives, with emerging empirical studies in hospitality rarely connecting OCIQ to destination image or competitiveness (Gerea et al., 2021). Destination image significantly influences perceived competitiveness in the MICE sector, with recent studies focusing on integrated models linking Social-Media Affordance Quality and Omnichannel Integration to destination image and competitiveness, yet comprehensive multi-group analyses comparing first-time and repeat business travelers remain limited (Nazir et al., 2021). Segmentation theory posits that initial visitors prioritize mediated cues, whereas returning visitors assess their cumulative experiences and cross-channel consistency; however, PLS-MGA analyses of these dynamics in MICE destinations remain scarce (Schofield et al., 2020).

This research explores the integration of technology-affordance and omnichannel perspectives within a structural model of MICE competitiveness in Bali, while examining the heterogeneity between first-time and repeat visitors. Despite extensive research on social media marketing, omnichannel integration, and destination image in tourism, three key gaps remain. First, prior studies predominantly focus on leisure tourism, with limited empirical evidence in the MICE context, where risk, professionalism, and coordination are critical. Second, omnichannel integration has rarely been examined at the destination level, particularly in relation to destination image and competitiveness. Third, few studies compare how first-time and repeat MICE visitors differ in their digital cue processing using robust multi-group PLS-SEM techniques. Beyond the theoretical gaps, a practical gap is currently observable in Bali's MICE digital journey: stakeholders' digital touchpoints often operate as disconnected channels rather than an integrated system. Prospective event organizers and attendees may encounter inconsistent information across official social media, destination/venue websites, online travel/business listings, and direct messaging channels (e.g., email/WhatsApp), including differences in venue specifications, package inclusions, availability cues, and response standards. This fragmentation creates customer effort (repeated inquiries, duplicated data submission, unclear next steps) and can weaken perceptions of professional coordination, even when the destination's physical MICE infrastructure is strong. In high-stakes MICE decision-making where reliability, time efficiency, and risk reduction are critical, such digital inconsistency becomes a salient negative signal, potentially diluting MICE destination image and reducing perceived competitiveness. Therefore, examining how social-media affordance quality (SMAQ) and omnichannel integration quality (OCIQ) shape MICE destination image and competitiveness is not only theoretically relevant but also directly addresses an operational challenge currently faced in Bali's MICE market.

Accordingly, this study aims to: (1) examine the effects of Social-Media Affordance Quality (SMAQ) and Omnichannel Integration Quality (OCIQ) on MICE destination image and perceived competitiveness; (2) test the mediating role of destination image; and (3) analyze differences between first-time and repeat visitors using MICOM and PLS-MGA. This study contributes theoretically by integrating affordance theory with omnichannel customer experience at the destination level. Specifically, it explains how SMAQ and OCIQ can function as signals of professional competence in B2B/B2C MICE markets through their influence on destination image. In addition, the study advances competitiveness research by positioning destination image as a key mediating mechanism linking digital marketing quality to competitive perceptions. It also incorporates visitor experience variability to clarify whether image-based persuasion is more salient for first-time visitors, while integration quality may matter more for repeat attendees.

Methodologically, the study employs PLS-SEM with bootstrapping. Measurement invariance is assessed using MICOM, and group-wise structural path differences are tested via PLS-MGA, consistent with contemporary PLS procedures and SmartPLS guidelines. Practically, the findings offer actionable direction for Bali's Destination Management Organization and venue consortium. The results identify two strategic digital initiatives, SMAQ and OCIQ, that can be strengthened to enhance MICE destination image and perceived competitiveness among event organizers and attendees, aligning with Bali's ongoing MICE capacity development and quality-enhancement agenda.

The affordances of social media namely interactivity, navigability, and format richness significantly influence audience perceptions of destinations by enhancing social presence and parasocial interactions, thereby increasing the diagnostic and credibility of digital cues, as evidenced by recent research in Tourism Management which indicates a direct, positive impact on destination image formation, particularly relevant in the MICE sector where concerns of risk and professionalism are paramount (Liu et al., 2024). Extensive studies of user-generated reviews reveal that digital content significantly influences destination perception across diverse cultures and languages, thereby altering mental frameworks regarding a destination's viability and attractiveness for events (Wang et al., 2024). Comprehensive social media studies connect platform mechanisms to image, value, and behavioral objectives, thereby elucidating the relationship from affordances to image in tourism decision-making (Keelson et al., 2024). Platform-native formats exhibit "meme-affordance" effects that enhance travel intentions through the amplification of imitation and emotional resonance, serving as a cue-rich affordance mechanism (Yhee et al., 2024). An exemplary MICE representation significantly enhances perceived competitiveness, serving as the crucial connection between online impressions and evaluative judgments of a destination's competitive capacity (González-Rodríguez et al., 2023). Furthermore, research on destination alignment indicates that social and search-driven digital marketing significantly influences tourists' perceptions and competitive assessments of locations, supporting the anticipated relationship between affordances and competitiveness, mediated by imagery (Cooper et al., 2021). Empirical evaluations of destination competitiveness underscore the significance of digitalization and data-driven communication within extensive competitiveness frameworks, reinforcing the idea that superior social media interactions can enhance perceived competitiveness in B2B/B2C MICE sectors (Song, 2024). MICE-centric research delineates determinants of destination competitiveness such as accessibility and infrastructure, positing that the quality of professional signaling and information, facilitated by social media, significantly influences selection processes, thereby reinforcing the direct relationship between SMAQ and PMDC (Cooper et al., 2021).

Hence, subsequent hypotheses were proposed :

H1a: Social-Media Affordance Quality positively influences MICE Destination Image.

H1b: Social-Media Affordance Quality positively influences Perceived MICE Destination Competitiveness.

High-quality omnichannel integration characterized by cohesive coordination of digital and physical interactions enhances business tourists' perceptions of a MICE destination's image and competitiveness, as evidenced by empirical research indicating that tightly integrated channels yield greater customer engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty through a coherent brand experience (Lazaris et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2025). Likewise, Liu et al. (2024) illustrate that enhanced quality of omnichannel integration markedly enhances cross-channel retention by diminishing friction in the customer journey and elevating perceived value. In the realm of tourism, Nasution et al. (2025) assert that omnichannel marketing significantly bolsters appealing inbound marketing and unforgettable experiences, subsequently strengthening the destination image and fostering loyalty towards Indonesian locales. When a convention city provides integrated digital resources and services, it fosters a positive MICE destination image among business event planners and delegates, which is crucial for resilience and attractiveness, as evidenced by a longitudinal study in Thailand revealing that a favorable destination image aids stakeholders in crisis recovery and in maintaining appeal for international events (Rittichainuwat et al., 2020). And also Sriraksa et al. (2021) delineate accessibility, MICE experience, accom-

modation, and supporting infrastructure as pivotal factors influencing MICE destination competitiveness, with high-quality omnichannel integration effectively facilitating the coordination of these elements, such as seamless connections between flights, venues, hotels, and city services. A hypothesis is proposed:

H2a: Omnichannel Integration Quality positively influences MICE Destination Image.

H2b: Omnichannel Integration Quality positively influences Perceived MICE Destination Competitiveness.

Empirical and conceptual work in tourism competitiveness consistently shows that a favorable destination image is a key antecedent of how competitive a destination is perceived to be, which supports the assumption that MICE destination image will positively influence perceived MICE destination competitiveness. Sin et al. (2021) demonstrate that tourists' evaluations of destination image have a significant positive effect on destination competitiveness in the Sibiu Heritage Trail case, arguing that a strong image helps destinations secure long-term profitability and market position. Therefore, Tse & Tung (2022) show that residents' behaviors shape destination image and, in turn, destination competitiveness, highlighting image as a strategic lever for destinations seeking to strengthen their competitive standing. In the specific MICE context, Rittichainuwat et al. (2020) find that Thailand's resilient MICE destination image, built on factors such as value for money, hospitality, and international-standard venues, underpins the country's ability to remain a competitive MICE hub during crises. Expanding this logic, González-Rodríguez et al. (2023) conceptualize tourist destination competitiveness as rooted in both comparative and competitive advantages, noting that attractiveness and reputational attributes captured in destination image are central to improving a destination's position in global rankings. A comprehensive review by Cronjé & du Plessis (2020) concludes that many of the most frequently cited determinants of destination competitiveness, such as perceived quality, uniqueness, and overall attractiveness, are essentially image-laden constructs, reinforcing the idea that managing destination image is critical for maintaining competitive advantage. More recently Ramos & Pinto (2024) show that gastronomic image, as a component of overall destination image, significantly enhances tourism competitiveness, arguing that destinations that communicate a distinctive, high-quality image gain a stronger competitive position in international markets. Taken together, these findings justify the hypothesis that a stronger, more positive MICE destination image will translate into higher perceived MICE destination competitiveness.

Thus, hypotheses were formulated:

H3: MICE Destination Image positively influences Perceived MICE Destination Competitiveness.

Recent studies indicate that social media affordances, such as interactivity and visibility, significantly influence the cognitive and affective perceptions of tourist destinations, ultimately affecting visitors' intentions and the competitive edge of these locations, as demonstrated by Liu et al. (2024) in the context of rural tourism in China, thus highlighting the importance of strategic utilization of social media in enhancing destination appeal. Omnichannel literature indicates that effective channel integration, characterized by information consistency, order process alignment, online-offline synchronization, and seamless channel switching, significantly enhances customer experience, engagement, and loyalty, thereby serving as a competitive advantage through improved customer acquisition and retention in competitive markets (Gerea et al., 2021). Empirically, Gao et al. (2021) demonstrate that channel integration quality enhances customer experience across various touchpoints and leads to favorable behavioral outcomes (e.g., repurchase intention) in the context of omnichannel retail. Quantitative analyses of omnichannel strategies indicate that mediation via customer experience and engagement is prevalent; Lazaris et al. (2021) demonstrated that enhanced omnichannel integration positively influences customer satisfaction and loyalty intentions, with satisfaction serving as a primary mediator between omnichannel intensity and loyalty outcomes. The MICE literature substantiates that destination competitiveness is crucial for attracting events and participants, thereby enhancing satisfaction. Yoon & Wang (2023) define MICE destination competitiveness as its capacity to

draw event attendees and enhance corporate performance via supply chain integration and stakeholder collaboration. And also Zazueta-Hernández & Velarde-Valdez (2024) examined the determinants of MICE competitiveness in Mazatlán, identifying demand and resources as pivotal factors. The interplay between social media affordances and omnichannel integration significantly influences the MICE destination experience/image, serving as precursors to shaping perceptions of competitiveness, with social media impacting destination image and behavior while omnichannel integration affects experience, engagement, and loyalty through mediation (Liu et al., 2024). The perceived competitiveness of MICE destinations is contingent upon market perceptions regarding their capability to effectively host events, suggesting that the MICE destination's image serves as a mediator linking SMAQ and OIQ to perceived competitiveness in hosting international conferences and exhibitions (Zazueta-Hernández & Velarde-Valdez, 2024).

A hypothesis is proposed :

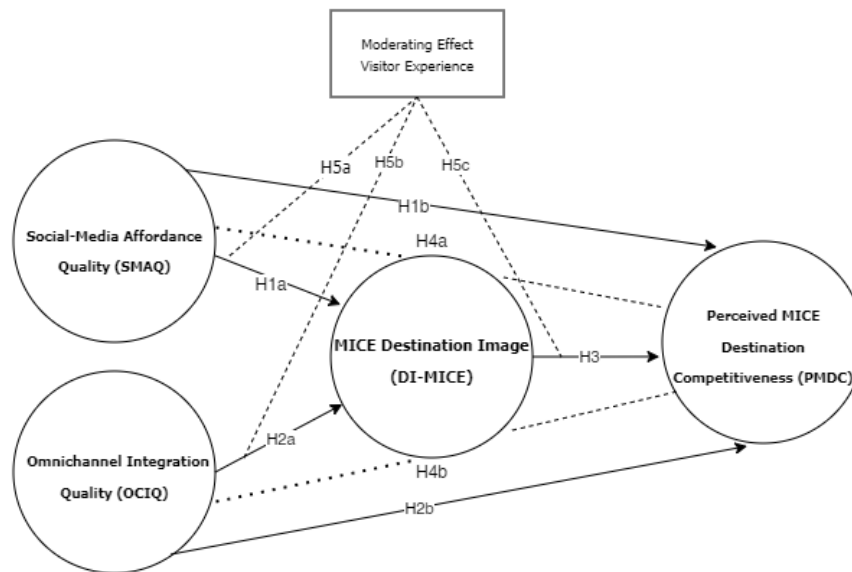
- H4a: MICE Destination mediates the relationship between Social-Media Affordance Quality and Perceived MICE Destination Competitiveness.
- H4b: MICE Destination mediates the relationship between Omnichannel Integration Quality and Perceived MICE Destination Competitiveness.

High social-media affordances (interactivity, navigability, format richness) enhance diagnostic and social presence, which strengthens destination image formation (Liu et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023). Yet this effect should be stronger for first-time visitors, who rely more on mediated cues than on memory of prior trips; segmentation work documents systematic image differences by experience status (Schofield et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023). Evidence from social-media information-quality studies also shows moderation by prior knowledge/experience in digital persuasion, implying that novices are more susceptible to high-affordance content (Wang et al., 2023). Event/participation contexts similarly show digital/program cues shaping image formation, again consistent with stronger impacts among less experienced visitors (Avloniti et al., 2025). Omnichannel integration quality (consistency and seamless handoffs across web–email, app–messaging–on-site) improves evaluations and experience quality (Buckley & Feldman, 2024). In services and hospitality, integrated channel attributes and “seamless journeys” raise perceived professionalism and reduce risk, which should map onto destination image in MICE (Alim et al., 2025). Because repeaters have richer episodic memories of a place, they weigh cross-channel consistency more heavily than first-timers when updating image; this aligns with experience-contingent processing in destination evaluations (Schofield et al., 2020). Contemporary competitiveness research treats destination image as a proximal antecedent of perceived destination competitiveness (demand-side) (González-Rodríguez et al., 2023; Song, 2024). As an image crystallizes professional capability and comparative advantages in the audience’s mind, stronger images yield higher competitiveness assessments—especially in risk-sensitive B2B/B2C MICE decisions (Ban et al., 2025; Litvinova-Kulikova et al., 2023). Because first-timers lack experiential baselines, they lean more on image signals when judging competitiveness; repeaters temper image with accumulated performance knowledge, implying a stronger DI-MICE to PMDC effect for first-timers (Lee & Kim, 2023; Schofield et al., 2020).

A hypothesis is proposed:

- H5a: Visitor experience moderates the effect of Social-Media Affordance Quality on MICE Destination Image.
- H5b: Visitor experience moderates the effect of Omnichannel Integration Quality on MICE Destination Image.
- H5c: Visitor experience moderates the effect of MICE Destination Image on Perceived MICE Destination Competitiveness.

This research formulates hypotheses based on theoretical and empirical insights, depicted in Figure 1.



(Source: Author's Data, 2025)

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Methodology

We employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey and estimated the model with PLS-SEM (SmartPLS 4) in line with the study followed established PLS-SEM procedures for tourism and hospitality research. The context was international visitors in Bali evaluating the island's MICE capability during their stay. The study employed a sample size of 300 respondents to ensure adequate statistical power and robust estimation in PLS-SEM, consistent with the recommendations (Hair et al., 2019). The measurement model included four reflective latent variables: Social-Media Affordance Quality (SMAQ), Omnichannel Integration Quality (OCIQ), MICE Destination Image (DI-MICE), and Perceived MICE Destination Competitiveness (PMDC)—operationalized by a total of 17 indicators (SMAQ = 4, OCIQ = 4, DI-MICE = 4, PMDC = 5). Following Hair et al. (2019), the minimum sample size in PLS-SEM should be evaluated based on (i) the maximum number of indicators used to measure a construct and (ii) the maximum number of structural paths directed at an endogenous construct. In this model, the largest indicator block is 5 indicators (PMDC), and the most complex endogenous construct (PMDC) has three incoming paths (from SMAQ, OCIQ, and DI-MICE). Therefore, even under conservative heuristics (e.g., the 10-times rule as a lower-bound check), the minimum required sample would be well below 300, and the chosen $n = 300$ provides a stronger basis for stable bootstrapping results and effect estimation. Moreover, because the analysis also compares first-time vs repeat visitors using MICOM and PLS-MGA, a larger sample is necessary to maintain reliable estimation in each subgroup; the balanced split (150/150) further supports measurement invariance testing and meaningful group-wise comparisons. Fieldwork followed the attachment's timetable (February–August 2025). Sampling was purposive intercept at hotels, venues, and attractions with a QR link, respondents were aged 18 years or older, stayed in Bali for at least one night, and con-confirmed prior interaction with Bali's official MICE digital channels (social media and web-site/app/WhatsApp), and consistent with the attachment's emphasis on recruiting tourists who directly interacted with the destination's digital marketing. The questionnaire operationalized four reflective constructs: Social-Media Affordance Quality (SMAQ), Omnichannel Integration Quality (OCIQ), MICE Destination Image (DI-MICE), and Perceived MICE Destination Competitiveness (PMDC)—each measured with five items on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011); a small expert pretest (~30) ensured clarity and reliability before the main run (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

All respondents provided informed consent before participation and were assured anonymity in line with ethical research standards. We screened for data quality (e.g., straight-

lining, extremely short completion, failed attention checks), and then followed the standard two-phase PLS workflow: first validating the measurement model (outer loadings, $CR \geq .70$, $AVE \geq .50$, $HTMT < .90$, and inner $VIF < 5$) and, second, testing the structural model using bias-corrected bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) with reports of β , confidence intervals, f^2 , and Q^2 (Hair et al., 2019). Mediation was assessed for SMAQ/OCIQ \rightarrow DI-MICE \rightarrow PMDC via bootstrapped indirect effects (with effect-size interpretation), and moderation by visitor experience was examined via MICOM (configural and compositional invariance; equality of means/variances) followed by PLS-MGA and permutation tests to compare paths across first-time versus repeater groups; directional hypotheses were evaluated one-tailed (Cheah et al., 2023). The mediation effect is analyzed using the statistical measure ν , derived from the mediation coefficient. According to Lachowicz et al. (2018) and Ogbeibu et al. (2022), a value of $\nu = 0.02$ indicates minimal mediation, 0.075 indicates moderate mediation, and 0.175 indicates strong mediation. Visitor experience was operationalized as a binary moderator, distinguishing first-time visitors (first visit to Bali) from repeat visitors (two or more prior visits), following destination image segmentation theory.

Results and Discussions

Results

Demographic Respondents

Table 1 indicates that the 300-responder sample is intentionally balanced by visit status (first-time vs repeater = 150/150), which strengthens the validity of the measurement invariance assessment (MICOM) and supports interpretable group-wise comparisons (PLS-MGA). This design reduces the risk that observed differences in structural paths are artifacts of unequal group sizes rather than genuine experience-based differences. The sample also provides a strong basis for evaluating digital-quality mechanisms because it is dominated by the working-age cohort (25–34 = 39.7%; 35–44 = 24.3%). Working-age travelers are typically frequent users of mobile and platform-based travel planning and are therefore more likely to engage with multiple digital touchpoints (social media discovery, website verification, messaging, booking interfaces, and on-site updates). This demographic profile increases the likelihood that respondents' assessments of SMAQ (interactivity, navigability, format richness) and OCIQ (cross-channel consistency and seamlessness) are grounded in actual usage rather than limited exposure. The geographic composition (Asia–Pacific = 55.7%, Europe = 20.0%, North America = 10.3%) also adds analytical value because respondents bring different digital habits and information-validation norms shaped by market and platform ecosystems. Such origin diversity introduces variance in how destination cues are interpreted, which is beneficial for testing whether SMAQ and OCIQ operate as broadly credible signals when forming DI-MICE and PMDC, rather than reflecting a single-region bias. Importantly, the travel-purpose distribution supports the study's MICE framing. While leisure/holiday remains dominant (72.3%), the presence of a substantive business/work segment (14.3%) increases the relevance of the competitiveness construct because business-oriented travelers typically evaluate destinations through a more instrumental lens (reliability, coordination efficiency, and time costs). This segment, therefore, strengthens the logic for testing OCIQ as a professionalism and readiness signal, while leisure travelers provide a complementary context where SMAQ-driven persuasion and image formation may be more salient. Length of stay further reinforces this relevance. Stays clustering at 4–7 nights (50.7%) are consistent with typical conference or event durations, while the 8+ nights segment (27.0%) suggests "bleisure" extensions where travelers engage with a broader set of destination services and information sources. Longer exposure increases the opportunity to experience cross-channel transitions (pre-trip information \rightarrow booking \rightarrow in-stay service/updates \rightarrow post-stay sharing), which makes evaluations of omnichannel integration more meaningful. Accommodation patterns also support construct validity. The dominance of hotels/resorts (54.7%) aligns with Bali's MICE infrastructure because hotels are central nodes for meetings, venue coordination, concierge services, and event logistics. At the same time, villas/private rentals (30.0%) introduce behavioral variance in touchpoint usage (greater reliance on digital self-service and messaging rather than standardized hotel channels), which can enrich the meas-

urement of OCIQ and reduce the risk that results are driven only by one accommodation ecosystem. Finally, the sample's high education level (79.3% diploma/bachelor or postgraduate) is a methodological advantage for this topic. Evaluating SMAQ and OCIQ requires respondents to compare information across channels, detect consistency/inconsistency, and judge credibility and completeness. Higher educational attainment supports the assumption that respondents can provide reliable, discriminating judgments about digital touchpoints, thereby strengthening the interpretability of the paths from SMAQ/OCIQ to DI-MICE and PMDC. Overall, these demographic characteristics provide both relevance (MICE-related purpose, stay duration, hotel-based infrastructure) and heterogeneity (origin, accommodation, and experience status), which enhances the study's ability to test the proposed digital pathways and to meaningfully interpret differences between first-time and repeat visitors.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents (n = 300)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	171	57.0
	Female	129	43.0
Age (years)	18–24	42	14.0
	25–34	119	39.7
	35–44	73	24.3
	45–54	42	14.0
	55+	24	8.0
Region of Residence	Asia–Pacific	167	55.7
	Europe	60	20.0
	North America	31	10.3
	Latin America	17	5.7
	Middle East & Africa	25	8.3
Visit Status to Bali	First-time visitor	150	50.0
	Repeat visitor	150	50.0
Primary Trip Purpose	Leisure / Holiday	217	72.3
	Business / Work	43	14.3
	VFR	27	9.0
	Wellness / Other	13	4.3
Length of Stay in Bali	≤ 3 nights	67	22.3
	4–7 nights	152	50.7
	8+ nights	81	27.0
Accommodation Used	Hotel / Resort	164	54.7
	Villa / Private Rental	90	30.0
	Guesthouse / Homestay	36	12.0
	Other (eco-lodge, hostel, etc.)	10	3.3
Education Level	High school or below	62	20.7
	Diploma / Bachelor's	171	57.0
	Postgraduate (Master / PhD)	67	22.3

(Source: Author's Data, 2025)

Reliability and Validity

The constructs delineated in Table 2 exhibit robust psychometric characteristics, thereby substantiating the reliability and validity of the measurement model. All latent variables demonstrate elevated internal consistency, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) values that surpass the established benchmarks of 0.70 and 0.80, respectively, signifying stable and trustworthy measurement across the items. Furthermore, each construct attains an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeding 0.50, thereby affirming sufficient convergent validity and implying that the indicators accurately encapsulate their respective underlying constructs. The consistently elevated factor loadings (spanning from 0.768 to 0.867) further corroborate that individual indicators make substantial contributions to the constructs they are designed to assess. Collectively, these findings validate that the measurement model satisfies the requisite criteria for reliability and validity, thus providing a formidable foundation for subsequent analysis of the structural model.

Table 2. The constructs of the model

Variable/Indicator	Loading	Alpha	CR	AVE
Social-Media Affordance Quality (SMAQ)		0.853	0.901	0.694
Bali's official MICE posts feel interactive (I can easily comment, DM, or get a response).	0.811			
The content is easy to navigate (clear menus/links/hashtags to detailed venue info).	0.841			
The rich media formats (video/360/live) help me evaluate venues and logistics	0.862			
From posts, I can reach the right contact/RFP quickly when I need specifics.	0.816			
Omnichannel Integration Quality (OCIQ)		0.839	0.892	0.674
Information is consistent across website, email, WhatsApp, and the event app	0.853			
I can seamlessly switch channels without repeating my details (e.g., RFP → follow-up)	0.817			
Pre-event to on-site handoffs are smooth (registration, wayfinding, updates)	0.794			
Updates are synchronized in real time across all official channels.	0.818			
MICE Destination Image (DI-MICE)		0.835	0.890	0.670
Bali appears professionally capable of hosting large-scale events	0.768			
Bali's MICE ecosystem looks innovative and tech-ready	0.810			
It seems easy and reliable to organize MICE in Bali	0.831			
Bali communicates sustainable, responsible event practices	0.863			
Perceived MICE Destination Competitiveness (PMDC)		0.879	0.892	0.675
Compared with rivals, Bali is a top choice for meetings and conventions	0.867			
Bali offers superior support services for planners and delegates	0.817			
Bali provides high value for money for MICE	0.809			
Bali meets international standards for MICE infrastructure and operations	0.839			
I would recommend Bali over competing destinations for future events	0.771			

(Source: Author's Data, 2025)

Discriminant Validity

Table 3. Discriminant validity measures the differentiation of constructs

Variables	DI-MICE	OCIQ	PMDC	SMAQ
Fornell-Larcker				
DI-MICE	0.819			
OCIQ	0.716	0.821		
PMDC	0.662	0.661	0.821	
SMAQ	0.697	0.699	0.643	0.833
Heterotrait-Monotrait				
DI-MICE				
OCIQ	0.851			
PMDC	0.763	0.760		
SMAQ	0.822	0.824	0.734	

(Source: Data Analysis SmartPLS4, 2025)

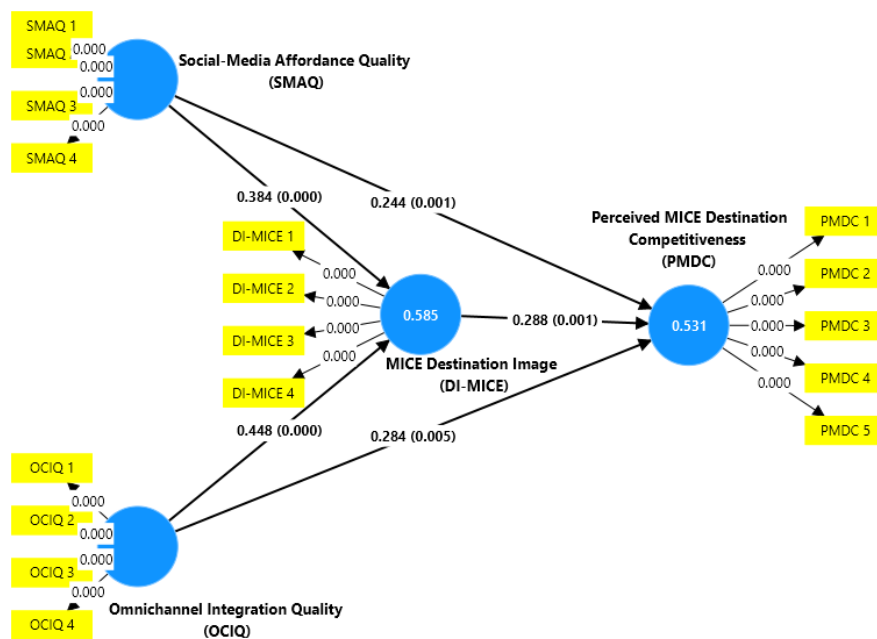
Table 3 shows that the Fornell–Larcker results confirm that each construct demonstrates adequate discriminant validity, as the square root of the AVE for every variable (0.819–0.833) is higher than its correlations with other constructs. This indicates that DI-MICE, OCIQ, PMDC, and SMAQ are conceptually distinct and capture unique dimensions of the model. Complementing this, the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratios (HTMT = 0.734–0.851) all fall below the recommended threshold of 0.90, further supporting the differentiation among constructs. Together, these findings demonstrate that the model’s variables do not overlap excessively and measure clearly distinguishable theoretical concepts, thereby satisfying the criteria for discriminant validity.

Structured Framework and Hypothetical

Table 4. Structured framework and hypothetical outcomes

Hypothesis	β	t-value	p-value	97.5% confidence path interval		VIF	f ² /Upsilon V	R ²	Q ²	Report?
				Upper	Lower					
Direct Effect										
SMAQ -> DI-MICE	0.384	4.788	0.000	0.215	0.530	1.958	0.183			Yes
SMAQ -> PMDC	0.244	3.265	0.001	0.093	0.391	2.315	0.055	0.585	0.578	Yes
OCIQ ->DI-MICE	0.448	5.463	0.000	0.298	0.617	1.958	0.249			Yes
OCIQ-> PMDC	0.284	2.827	0.005	0.089	0.481	2.445	0.071	0.531	0.484	Yes
DI-MICE -> PMDC	0.288	3.432	0.001	0.123	0.450	2.429	0.074			Yes
Indirect Effect										
SMAQ -> DI-MICE -> PMDC	0.129	2.860	0.004	0.041	0.199		0.012			Yes
OCIQ -> DI-MICE -> PMDC	0.111	2.700	0.007	0.052	0.229		0.017			Yes

(Source: Analyzed by SmartPLS4, 2025)



(Source: Data Analysis SmartPLS4, 2025)

Figure 2. Results of structural equation models' evaluations

Table 4 and Figure 2 illustrate that the structural model results indicate that all proposed hypotheses (H1a–H4b) are supported, with strong statistical evidence. H1a is supported, showing that Social-Media Affordance Quality positively influences MICE Destination Image ($\beta = 0.384$, $t = 4.788$, $p < 0.000$), with a 97.5% confidence interval ranging from 0.215 to 0.530, VIF = 1.958, and a moderate effect size ($f^2 = 0.183$). H1b is also supported, as Social-Media Affordance Quality significantly predicts Perceived MICE Destination Competitiveness ($\beta = 0.244$, $t = 3.265$, $p = 0.001$), with a confidence interval of 0.093 to 0.391, VIF = 2.315, and a small but meaningful effect ($f^2 = 0.055$). H2a is supported, demonstrating that Omnichannel Integration Quality has a strong positive effect on MICE Destination Image ($\beta = 0.448$, $t = 5.463$, $p < 0.000$), with a confidence interval from 0.298 to 0.617, VIF = 1.958, and a substantial effect size ($f^2 = 0.249$). H2b is supported as well, indicating that Omnichannel Integration Quality significantly enhances Perceived Competitiveness ($\beta = 0.284$, $t = 2.827$, $p = 0.005$), with a confidence interval of 0.089 to 0.481, VIF = 2.445, and a small effect size ($f^2 = 0.071$). Additionally, H3 is supported since MICE Destination Image significantly predicts Perceived Competitiveness ($\beta = 0.288$, $t = 3.432$, $p = 0.001$), with a confidence interval ranging from 0.123 to 0.450, VIF = 2.429, and a small effect contribution ($f^2 = 0.074$). The mediation results further confirm the model: H4a is supported, revealing that Social-Media Affordance Quality indirectly influences Perceived Competitiveness through Destination Image ($\beta = 0.129$, $t = 2.860$, $p = 0.004$), with a confidence interval of 0.041 to 0.199 and an indirect effect size of $f^2 = 0.012$. Finally, H4b is supported, indicating that Omnichannel Integration Quality also exerts a significant indirect effect through Destination Image ($\beta = 0.111$, $t = 2.700$, $p = 0.007$), with a confidence interval between 0.052 and 0.229 and an indirect effect size of $f^2 = 0.017$. The mediation effects of destination image are small but meaningful (upsilon $v = 0.012$ for SMAQ and 0.017 for OCIQ), indicating minimal-to-moderate mediation strength. The model demonstrates strong explanatory and predictive power, with $R^2 = 0.585$ and $Q^2 = 0.578$ for DI-MICE, and $R^2 = 0.531$ and $Q^2 = 0.484$ for PMDC, confirming substantial variance explained and high predictive relevance.

Table 5. MICOM summary

Construct	Step 2: Compositional Invariance (p-value)	Step 3a: Mean Difference (p-value)	Step 3b: Variance Difference (p-value)	MICOM Conclusion
DI-MICE	0.652	0.517	0.517	Invariant
OCIQ	0.445	0.936	0.936	Invariant
PMDC	0.949	0.383	0.383	Invariant
SMAQ	0.731	0.803	0.803	Invariant

(Source: Analyzed by SmartPLS4, 2025)

Table 5 shows that all constructs exhibit $p > 0.05$ in Step 2, Step 3a, and Step 3b, indicating partial measurement invariance is established. This confirms that MGA comparisons between groups are valid and unbiased (Cheah et al., 2023). Since all p-values in Steps 2 and 3 exceed 0.05, partial measurement invariance is established, which is sufficient to justify meaningful multi-group comparisons using PLS-MGA.

Table 6. MGA final result

Hypothesis	Ft-V	R-V	Difference (Ft-V - R-V)	2-tailed P value	Report?
SMAQ -> DI-MICE	0.537	0.185	0.352	0.012	Yes
OCIQ -> DI-MICE	0.304	0.638	-0.334	0.020	Yes
DI-MICE -> PMDC	0.254	0.364	-0.109	0.501	No

Explanation Ft-V : First-time visitor; R-V : Repeat Visitor

Table 6 shows that the MGA results reveal meaningful differences between first-time visitors (Ft-V) and repeat visitors (R-V). For H5a, visitor experience the path SMAQ → DI-MICE, first-time visitors show a substantially stronger effect (0.537) compared with repeat visitors (0.185), and the difference is statistically significant (2-tailed $p = 0.012$), indicating that users

encountering Bali's MICE marketing for the first time respond more strongly to social-media affordances. Likewise, for H5b visitor experience, the effect of OCIQ → DI-MICE differs significantly between groups (2-tailed $p = 0.020$), with repeat visitors (0.638) responding more strongly to omnichannel consistency than first-time visitors (0.304), suggesting that repeated engagement enhances sensitivity to integrated digital touchpoints. In contrast, for H5c visitor experience, DI-MICE → PMDC shows no significant group difference ($p > 0.05$), indicating that both groups evaluate competitiveness similarly once their destination image is formed. These findings confirm that group-specific differences exist in selected structural paths, supporting hypotheses related to the moderating role of the visitor. The results support H5a and H5b, indicating that visitor experience moderates the effects of SMAQ and OCIQ on destination image. However, H5c is not supported, as the effect of destination image on perceived competitiveness does not differ significantly between first-time and repeat visitors.

Discussions

Effects of Social-Media Affordance Quality

Social-Media Affordance Quality (SMAQ) significantly strengthens Bali's MICE destination image and perceived competitiveness. Interactive and media-rich official content functions not only as an information source but as a professional signal that enhances trust, credibility, and perceived capability. This extends social-media affordance theory from leisure tourism to high-stakes MICE decision-making contexts characterized by higher risk and coordination demands (Keelson et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024).

Effects of Omnichannel Integration Quality

Omnichannel Integration Quality (OCIQ) positively influences both MICE destination image and perceived competitiveness. Seamless integration across digital and on-site touchpoints signals operational readiness and professional coordination, reducing friction across the MICE journey. These findings confirm omnichannel quality as a key competitive signal for destinations hosting complex international events (Gerea et al., 2021; Lazaris et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2024).

Mediating Role of MICE Destination Image

MICE Destination Image acts as a central mediating mechanism linking digital quality to perceived competitiveness. While SMAQ and OCIQ directly enhance competitiveness, their indirect effects through destination image underscore the role of image as a cognitive filter through which digital signals translate into competitive evaluations. This supports destination competitiveness theory and extends it by embedding digital affordances and omnichannel integration in the MICE context (González-Rodríguez et al., 2023; Song, 2024).

Moderating Role of Visitor Experience

Visitor experience moderates selected relationships. First-time visitors rely more heavily on social-media affordances to form destination image, whereas repeat visitors respond more strongly to omnichannel integration quality, reflecting experience-based evaluation processes. However, once an image is formed, both groups assess competitiveness similarly, indicating the stabilizing role of destination image across experience levels (Avloniti et al., 2025; Gerea et al., 2021; Schofield et al., 2020).

Managerial Implications for Bali's MICE Sector

For practitioners, the results suggest a dual digital strategy. Interactive social-media content should be prioritized to attract first-time MICE visitors, while seamless omnichannel integration across websites, messaging platforms, and event applications is essential for retaining repeat clients and professional planners. Aligning these digital tools across the MICE journey can strengthen Bali's position as a competitive, high-quality MICE destination.

Evidence that is inconsistent or contingent

Although our findings support positive effects of SMAQ and OCIQ on DI-MICE and perceived competitiveness, prior literature also suggests that digital-channel effects are not universally positive and can be context-dependent. First, some studies report that social-media engagement and rich digital content do not always strengthen destination evaluations when audiences question credibility (e.g., perceived promotional bias, influencer commercialization) or when negative user-generated content is salient; under these conditions, high interactivity or vivid formats may amplify skepticism rather than improve image. This implies that the impact of SMAQ on DI-MICE can weaken or even become ambiguous when trust cues and information authenticity are insufficient. Second, omnichannel integration benefits can also be mixed. Research on omnichannel experience shows that integration quality may yield limited gains when cross-channel “seamlessness” raises expectations that are not matched during on-site delivery, creating a confirmation gap (high digital promise but uneven service reality). In such cases, integrated messaging may increase perceived risk because consumers interpret inconsistency as a signal of operational weakness.

Therefore, OCIQ may not uniformly strengthen competitiveness perceptions unless integration is paired with consistent operational performance. Third, some destination and service studies indicate that destination image does not always translate strongly into competitiveness or choice once decision-makers prioritize functional constraints such as budget, flight connectivity, venue availability, and risk management requirements. In MICE contexts specifically, competitiveness judgments can be driven by tangible capacity and organizational readiness, meaning image can play a smaller role when decision criteria are dominated by logistical feasibility. These mixed findings help interpret our multi-group results. The non-significant difference in the DI-MICE → PMDC path between first-time and repeat visitors suggests that, once an image is formed, competitiveness judgments may converge across experience levels, consistent with the notion that competitiveness is partly anchored in functional considerations beyond image alone. Overall, incorporating these inconsistent findings indicates that SMAQ and OCIQ operate as strategic signals, but their effectiveness depends on credibility, expectation management, and the alignment between digital communication and on-site delivery.

Conclusions

This study examined how Social-Media Affordance Quality (SMAQ) and Omnichannel Integration Quality (OCIQ) influence Bali’s MICE destination image (DI-MICE) and perceived MICE destination competitiveness (PMDC), while comparing first-time and repeat visitors. The findings confirm that both SMAQ and OCIQ have significant positive effects on DI-MICE and PMDC. In addition, DI-MICE functions as a critical mediating mechanism, indicating that digital-quality investments strengthen competitiveness perceptions largely by enhancing the destination’s professional and trustworthy image. The model demonstrates strong explanatory power for the proposed digital pathways. The multi-group results further suggest that digital mechanisms are experience-contingent: first-time visitors depend more heavily on social-media quality to form MICE-related perceptions of Bali, whereas repeat visitors are more influenced by seamless omnichannel integration across platforms and touchpoints. This pattern aligns with the logic that first-time visitors rely more on digitally mediated persuasion and cues, while repeat visitors evaluate consistency and coordination based on accumulated interactions. Theoretically, this study extends destination competitiveness research by integrating digital experience and affordance perspectives into MICE tourism. The results show that digital channels are not merely informational but operate as strategic signals of competence that shape destination image and, through image, influence competitiveness judgments in B2B/B2C MICE markets.

Based on the results, three actionable recommendations are proposed for Bali’s DMO and MICE stakeholders.

1. Strengthen SMAQ to convert attention into confidence (first-time market): prioritize interactive and navigable content, including venue walkthroughs, short-form videos, live Q&A, and clear calls-to-action that reduce uncertainty and communicate readiness.

2. Institutionalize OCIQ through cross-channel alignment (repeat market and professional planners): ensure consistency of venue specifications, packages, contacts, and response standards across websites, apps, email/WhatsApp, and partner listings, so inquiries, quotations, registration, and follow-up feel seamless rather than fragmented.
3. Segment digital strategy by visitor experience: deploy image-building and credibility cues for first-time visitors, while emphasizing frictionless coordination, continuity, and service integration for repeat visitors and business-oriented users.

This study is cross-sectional and focused on Bali; thus, it cannot capture how perceptions evolve over time or whether the pattern generalizes to other destinations. The sample also comprises users who engage with Bali's official digital channels, which may bias responses towards digitally engaged visitors. Future research should apply longitudinal or multi-destination designs and expand the model to include additional determinants such as sustainability signals, perceived risk, and AI-driven personalization. Mixed-method designs that combine surveys with interviews of event planners and MICE organizers would also deepen understanding of how digital cues translate into destination choice and competitiveness assessments.

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