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Local Events' Marketing Mix Effect on Visit Intentions: Destination Image as a Mediator

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Abstract

Events have become increasingly significant in marketing and branding strategies. This study aims to examine the impact of local events on the destination marketing mix. It tests the effect of local events on destination image which in turn impacts visit intention and facilitates tourism recovery post-crises. To quantitatively explore the effect of local events, data were collected with an e-survey from three developing countries: the United Arab Emirates (535), Egypt (613), and Jordan (370). Using structural equation modelling, findings extended our knowledge about the positive role of local events on tourism destinations' marketing, developing destination image, and fostering tourism recovery. The study provides managerial implications for enhancing marketing and promotion strategies. It presents useful insights for marketers and event planners on the positive effect of local events on tourism destinations' images, revisits intentions, and its subsequent effect on tourism recovery. Unlike previous studies, this study focuses on the impact of events on destination marketing mix and its effect on destination image, visitation intention, and tourism recovery.

Key Words: Events, destination image, marketing mix, visit intention, tourism recovery

JEL Classification: Z30, Z32, L83

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1. Introduction

Events include sports, exhibitions, expositions, civic events, conferences, colloquiums, religious festivals, and others (Abou-Shouk et al., 2018). It helps local destinations to market and develop local and regional areas that may lack alternative industries (Dimanche, 2003; Gholipour et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2014; Mair, 2015; Moon et al., 2013; Rojas-Méndez et al., 2019; Wang & Jin, 2019; Yosa et al., 2022). In addition, many countries utilised local events to boost investment, stimulate urban reconstruction, produce income and tax revenue, and promote global trade and commerce (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021; Florek, 2009; Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2018; Marzouki, 2019; Wang & Jin, 2019).

Furthermore, events have become increasingly significant in destination marketing and branding due to their ability to generate revenue, extend the destination's peak tourist season, offer unique cultural and educational experiences, instil a sense of community pride, support the area's fragile ecosystems and cultural landscape protection, and promote sustainability (Abou-Shouk et al., 2018; C. Deng et al., 2015). Extant research has found that events could also help destinations reduce tourism seasonality (Oklobdžija, 2015), increase their market share, enhance attractiveness, build a strong destination image, retain and improve cultural heritage, and restore host destinations' reputation and competitiveness (Debbagh & Azouaoui, 2022; Mihajlovic & Maja Vidak, 2017; Rozhda & Sheresheva, 2021; Vera & Chang, 2022). In addition, it motivates people to visit a given region at a specific time, and it may also draw new or repeat visits in the case of scheduled events (Jin & Cheng, 2020; Kuusik et al., 2014). Empirical research revealed that events can promote tourist arrivals, help extend their stay, allow the destination to sell other products, support local businesses, increase hotel room occupancy rate, improve infrastructure development, exert a positive influence on a destination's image and generally create considerable economic benefits (Gholipour et al., 2020; Oklobdžija, 2015; Rojas-Méndez et al., 2019). However, as stated by Florek (2009) some countries or cities hosting events may suffer from some challenges that affect their image such as negative publicity, and doubts about the benefits of changing the destination image. Soteriades (2012); Kaiser et al. (2013) and Somsak et al. (2023) also explained that one of the main challenges facing events is to adapt to the exchanging market circumstances and the environment, customer preferences and the destination image.

According to Jin and Cheng (2020) and Ragab et al. (2020), understanding events' role and relationships with tourists' perceptions of the destination image is essential for destination marketing success, in addition to the necessity of a high level of awareness of the specific characteristics of event marketing (Kaiser et al., 2013). Furthermore, Soteriades (2012), Jin and Cheng (2020), and Sobre Frimpong et al. (2023) state that event-based destination marketing is a complex process due to event ownership, multiple stakeholders involved in the planning and delivery process, where the objectives of the event portfolio must be aligned with the goals of the destination and the interest group of stakeholders involved (Ziakas, 2019), exterior resources, market construction and competition, exogenous elements and bases of demand (Kaiser et al., 2013), event scope, and type, especially since events have different production and distribution characteristics than product marketing. Furthermore, the lack of cooperation and coordination is a major failure among destination actors.

Reviewing the previous research on events, the investigation of the event marketing mix on behavioural intentions is very rare (Mainolfi & Marino, 2020). Most studies explore topics of the impact of event quality on destination images, satisfaction, and loyalty (Jeong & Kim, 2020); destination beliefs on event satisfaction and post-visit attitudes (Mainolfi & Marino, 2020); and the relationship between events and destination image (Kaplanidou, 2009). Also, the studies of local events focus on exploring the resident's support (Chang et al., 2020); resident-tourist interaction and its impact on tourism destination images (Stylidis, 2022). Therefore, considering the previous research, the relationship between local event marketing mix and tourist destination image are still obscure.

Previous research mentioned that despite the evolution of many forms of the event marketing mix, its interaction with tourism destination image remains limited and needs further research (Jin & Cheng, 2020; Sobre Frimpong et al., 2023; Ziakas, 2019; Saura et al., 2023). Therefore additional research on the marketing mix of tourism events and their impact on the destination's image is required (Wang & Jin, 2019). Moreover, Ragab et al. (2020) suggested that further empirical research on the influence of destination image on prospective tourist behaviour is urged particularly if most extant studies focused on mega-events, especially sports events, to attract tourists (Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2018) and the few investigations on the role of local events in marketing local destinations. Furthermore, Jin and Cheng (2020) pointed out that event-based marketing is an area that is not sufficiently researched because of the novelty of products and the factors affecting their operation. Hence, the present research aims to investigate the effect of local events on destinations' marketing mix and how this marketing mix affects destination image. In addition, it tests the relationship of destination image, as a mediator, with visitor behavioural intention (i.e., visit intention). Add to this, this study has associated the behavioural intention of visitors with the quick recovery of tourism post-COVID-19 where destinations have seriously started to encourage tourist visits to compensate for the impacts of the pandemic on tourism. The current study compares visitors' perceptions of local events in the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Jordan. The UAE, Egypt, and Jordan have recently used local events as a tool to boost tourism recovery and therefore were selected as research settings for this study. The study will contribute to the existing knowledge on events-based destination marketing and provide destination marketers with a clear understanding of events' effect on each element of the destination marketing mix (i.e., products, prices, distribution channels, and promotion) on local destination's image and visit intention.

2. Literature review

2.1 Events as a destination-based marketing strategy and destination image

Tourism policy and planners depend on a combination of marketing strategies whose focus is on the valuable tangible originals of tourist destinations (Gholipour et al., 2020). In recent years, the events have become an increasingly important universal phenomenon (Mair, 2015; Mihajlovic & Maja Vidak, 2017; Oklobdžija, 2015), where the connection between organizing various events and attracting tourists to a host region has been growingly observed (Debbagh & Azouaoui, 2022; Gholipour et al., 2020; Setyaningtyas et al., 2021). Quinn (2006) and Alyahya (2021) illustrated that an event is a venue marketing instrument formed with the intention of destination branding.

Events denote to ceremonies, performances, parades, offerings, parties, recitals, or revels. They are meticulously designed, pre-planned and created to celebrate special occasions or to attain fixed social, cultural or corporate purposes (Mihajlovic & Maja Vidak, 2017). Successful events may create a positive imprint of a particular destination, help promote it, and can be included in integrated marketing campaigns as a tourism product (Marzouki, 2019; Setyaningtyas et al., 2021). Furthermore, events may be considered a catalyst for attracting new tourism markets, generating additional demand in the ordinary tourist season and encouraging regular customers to extend their stay (Dimanche, 2003). It plays an important role in presenting, promoting, positioning, or repositioning a destination and reflecting its societal, national, and tourism vitality (Cheng et al., 2022; Debbagh & Azouaoui, 2022; Muresherwa et al., 2022). In addition to being fundamentally important marketing propositions, events are considered a tool to achieve diversification of tourism destination products (Marzouki, 2019).

Additionally, it is widely recognized that destination image plays a substantial influence on tourists' decision-making process(Luvsandavaajav et al., 2022), including the destination selection, the length of stay, the type of activities, and the overall satisfaction with the experience (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Rozhda & Sheresheva, 2021; Santana & Sevilha Gosling, 2018; Savas & Burcin Cevdet, 2017; Souiden et al., 2017). The destination image can be shaped via actual experiences like real visits or indirect experiences like exposure to marketing activities (Florek, 2009). Zhang et al. (2014), SaatÇİ (2020), Ragab et al. (2020), and Vera and Chang (2022) believe that the destination image formed after visiting the destination is more actual, intricate, and diverse from the image that was formed before visiting. The events and the image of the hosting tourist destination have become closely entwined and complex over time (Moon et al., 2013; Muresherwa et al., 2022; Pırnar et al., 2019). According to Somsak et al. (2023), there is a strong association between the events and destination image, positive event impressions can be extended to the destination's perceived image. For example, mega-events such as Expo 2010 in Shanghai, China, and the Olympic Games in Athens and Beijing had a favourable impact on the destination's image, whether cognitive or emotional (Q. Deng & Li, 2013; Kaplanidou, 2009; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Lai, 2018; H. Li et al., 2021). Hence, the first hypothesis of our study is developed as follows:

H1. The impact of local events on the destination marketing mix greatly influences the destination image.

Local events' effect on marketing mix implies its effect on product, price, place, and promotion (Gocłowska et al., 2019; Sikora & Baranowska-Prokop, 2018; Wróblewski & Lis, 2021). Accommodation facilities also use marketing mix tools when making strategic marketing decisions (Lincényi & Bulanda, 2023). The review shows that events can develop the product portfolio, such as diversifying the portfolio by hosting distinguished events, organizing or non-conflicting the events calendar so that destination infrastructure is optimized, and cooperating through levels of local government and with external (Wang & Jin, 2019). Stakeholders therefore need to be clear about how to improve tourism impacts resulting from the event long before the event is planned (Kaiser et al., 2013). Events ensure constant tourism growth and development of the destination, in addition to cultivating an innovative tourism product (C. Deng et al., 2015). It contributes to the development of a sense of place, thereby enhancing the reputation and image of a destination. Bundling event ticket prices with those of local tourism products (e.g., attractions) is a strategy for encouraging tourism consumption (Wang & Jin, 2019). Efforts of this nature have the potential to reallocate event attendees, thereby relieving pressure on the event's central location and supporting local businesses, particularly for those local and regional areas where there could be an absence of other revenue streams (Mair, 2015; Oklobdžija, 2015).

Events also significantly promote local destinations, products, and services, and event organisers may collaborate with DMOs, tour operators, travel agencies, and public relations companies forming a cooperative marketing strategy for the event and the host destination (Quinn, 2006; Rojas-Méndez et al., 2019). Additionally, media coverage influences how individuals see other countries and thus, significant event media coverage is crucial to the host destination's image (Rojas-Méndez et al., 2019; Wang & Jin, 2019). Pırnar et al. (2019) mentioned that festivals, special events, and exhibitions are very effective and useful tools for destination promotion.

As for the effect of local events on prices, extant research paid little attention to price. However, event marketing studies show that event tourists tend to spend more than regular tourists (Pırnar et al., 2019; Wang & Jin, 2019). When tourists visit a place to attend an event, they often remain before and after the event. This allows additional local products to be sold at the destination. This results in increased spending and demand throughout the event's season which leads to boosted prices for both tourism and non-tourist services. In addition, many destinations have a seasonal problem, which means that the majority of tourist visits are done during a relatively short period. By implementing an attractive pricing strategy during the off-season, events can play a significant role in overcoming these obstacles and attracting travellers (Oklobdžija, 2015; Pırnar et al., 2019).

As for the effect of events on distribution channels, Wang and Jin (2019) and Oklobdžija (2015) noted that an integrated and coordinated distribution effort can provide tourism providers with upselling opportunities at events and expand their distribution channels beyond tourism. To maximize the benefits of events, DMOs should collaborate closely with tour operators and travel agents to promote the sale of tickets, and generate awareness (Haneef & Ansari, 2019).

2.2 Destination image and behavioural intention

Destination image is a crucial factor in the decision-making process of tourists and their willingness to visit it. Understanding the cognitive dimension of the destination image is, therefore, crucial for destination marketers seeking to attract more tourists (Artuger & Çetinsöz, 2017; Dibiku & Singh, 2019; Lehto et al., 2014; Santana & Sevilha Gosling, 2018; Tan & Wu, 2016). According to Kim

(2017), the cognitive dimension of destination image includes tourists' perceptions of a destination's physical attributes, infrastructure, services and cultural aspects. According to Baloglu and McCleary (1999), the cognitive dimension of destination image can be influenced by various factors, including tourists' past experiences, their social and cultural background, and their exposure to marketing campaigns that encourage tourists to participate in authentic local events and cultural activities.

In addition, the affective dimension of destination image implies tourists' emotional reactions to a destination. The affective dimension of the destination image is related to tourists' feelings of pleasure, excitement, and satisfaction that they experience when visiting a destination. Previous research indicates that tourists' affective responses to a destination are influenced by their perceptions of its natural beauty, climate, people, and culture (Artuger & Çetinsöz, 2017; Lehto et al., 2014; Vera & Chang, 2022).

Extant research showed that consumer decision behaviour and repeat traveller behaviour are both influenced by the experiential aspects of consumption (Kaplanidou, 2009). Furthermore, destination image can also impact the loyalty of tourists and their retention (Florek, 2009; Hossain et al., 2022). A positive image can lead to repeat visits, recommendations of destinations to others, and positive reviews, which can all contribute to the growth of the tourism industry in a destination (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Dibiku & Singh, 2019; Ragab et al., 2020; Santana & Sevilha Gosling, 2018; Souiden et al., 2017). Furthermore, the destination image is an excellent predictor of behavioural intentions. Various research demonstrates that destination image influences tourists' propensity to return to the destination (i.e., Başarangil, 2016; Pektas et al., 2019; Setyaningtyas et al., 2021; Tan & Wu, 2016). It is a key element in preconditioning tourists' behaviour before, during, and after travel (Dibiku & Singh, 2019; Lee et al., 2014; Souiden et al., 2017).

Vera and Chang (2022) and Yosa et al. (2022) pointed out that a tourist who constructs a positive image of an event makes an affirmative assessment of the host destination image and is more likely to have upcoming visit intentions. Debbagh and Azouaoui (2022) found that the destination image has a serious connection between the event and the behavioural intention and recommendation to visit the destination. Therefore, the second hypothesis of the present study is formed as follows:

H2. Destination image is significantly contributing to the intention to visit.

2.3 Local events and tourism development and recovery

Events are among the factors used by destinations to encourage and attract tourists post-crises (Gholipour et al., 2020). Tourism destinations are increasingly interested and compete in holding distinctive tourism events in addition to planning and marketing them very well, especially in developing countries (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021; Muresherwa et al., 2022; Rojas-Méndez et al., 2019; Vera & Chang, 2022; Yosa et al., 2022). Besides, events nowadays are a piece of the travel product and are considered an industry by local governments (Dibiku & Singh, 2019; Quinn, 2006). Furthermore, events offer destinations chances to develop their products, place, price and promotion (Wang & Jin, 2019), and event marketers endeavour to perform efficient promotions, media, and stakeholder involvement (Rozhda & Sheresheva, 2021), which makes a conducive environment for tourism recovery and development and helps create a region with its own identity (Nguyen, 2017).

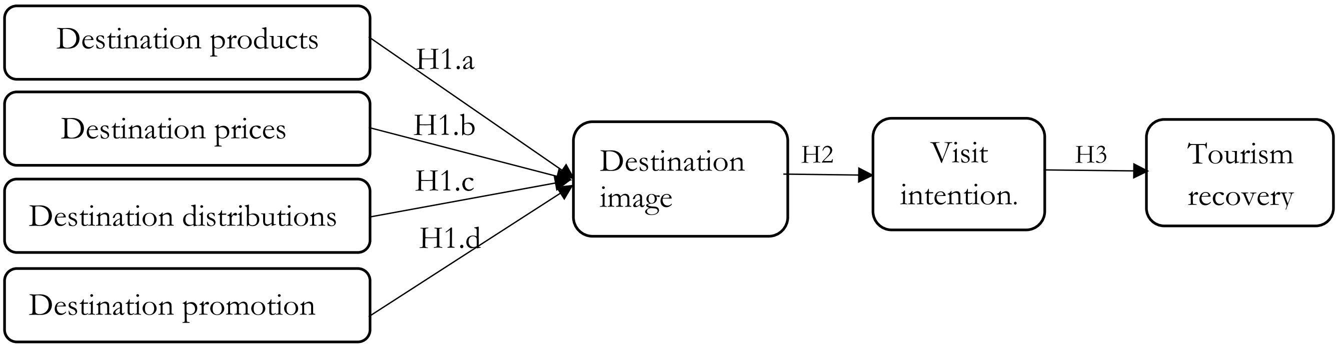
Although many destinations have found it hard to organise tourism events during COVID-19, others have invested in events to raise the number of visitors (Vera & Chang, 2022). In addition, events offer destinations chances to develop a destination marketing mix and involve many stakeholders in addition to media attention which results in an encouraging environment for tourism recovery (Quinn, 2006). After the global economic crisis in 2008, Spain adopted the strategy of attracting sports events to activate tourism and succeeded in attracting tourists who engaged in other types of tourism (Vegara-Ferri et al., 2020). Accordingly, previous research assures that holding events is an effective strategy for reviving the tourism sector and countries' economies as well. Islam and Fatema (2020) indicated that developing domestic tourism is the proper strategy for recovery that governments should focus on post-crisis through small-scale events.

In the United Arab Emirates, events of all kinds have emerged across all emirates, ranging from daily to large-scale occasions. Each emirate has developed an event calendar that showcases a diverse range of events and promoted them through various channels, including websites and smartphone apps, including shopping, art and culture, food, trade, conferences, and exhibitions (i.e., Abu Dhabi Calendar, 2023; Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism, 2023). Over the past two years, Egypt has also hosted and organised various events to restore its tourist image in the Middle East. With its rich cultural history and widespread ancient monuments, Egypt has showcased its heritage through events such as the Pharaohs' Golden Parade and the reopening of the Avenue of Sphinx and sports events including the World Men’s Handball Championship in 2021, and three annual Professional Squash Association tournaments which in turn attract tourists and visitors. Similarly, Jordan hosts a significant number of tourism events throughout the year, attracting visitors from around the globe. According to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the number of tourism events reached 3144 events (MOTA, 2020). The country offers a diverse range of events, combining culture, sports, and adventure that attract global tourists. Therefore, the third hypothesis of the present study is formed as follows:

H3. Intention to visit events is significantly contributing to tourism recovery.

Figure 1 shows the developed research framework including the three main hypotheses among the destination marketing mix influenced by events and its effect on destination image (H1) which in turn affects intention to visit (H2) that influences quick tourism recovery and development (H3).

Figure 1. **Research framework**



Source: created by authors

3. Method

This study quantitively tests the relationships between local events’ effect on destination marketing mix, destination image, visit intention, and tourism recovery of events’ host destinations. E-survey was used to collect data from convenient samples of the UAE, Egypt, and Jordan populations. 535, 613, and 370 responses were collected from the three countries respectively during January - April 2023. The sample size exceeded the threshold recommended by Saunders et al. (2016). Initial questionnaire validity included its piloting on sixty individuals to ensure its face and content validity and reliability. E-survey was used to access respondents and a filter question was used to limit responses to those who have already attended events in the last year (i.e., post-COVID-19) and some respondents were also accessed during attending some local events. Corrected-item total correlations were used to evaluate the construct validity of the scale adhering to the role of keeping items between loadings of

0.35 and 0.85 and the scale showed good construct validity values. Cronbach's alpha was also calculated and showed reliable values of constructs.

The questionnaire form comprised thirty-four items to measure the research model constructs based on literature studies. Five items were used to measure local events' effect on destination products (Wang & Jin, 2019), three items for the effect on prices (Pırnar et al., 2019; Wang & Jin, 2019), three items for the effect on distribution (Oklobdžija, 2015; Pırnar et al., 2019; Wang & Jin, 2019), ten for the effect on promotion (Getz & Page, 2016; Jain & Kour, 2020; Jayswal, 2008; Mihajlovic & Maja Vidak, 2017; Rojas-Méndez et al., 2019), six items to measure the destination image (Nazir et al., 2021), four for intention to visit (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003), and three items for tourism recovery (Dimanche, 2003; Folgado-Fernández et al., 2021; Kuusik et al., 2014) (Appendix 1). Structural equation modelling is used for data analysis and the validity and reliability of the scale are presented accordingly. WarpPLS software was used for data analysis purposes.

3.1 Findings

Table 1 shows that female respondents are dominant (76.4% for the UAE, 58.7% for Egypt, and 65.1% for Jordan), most of the respondents are aged between 18 and 29 years ((78.9% for the UAE, 76.8% for Egypt, and 65.1% for Jordan), the majority is single (75% for the UAE, 78.1% for Egypt, and 63.5% for Jordan), and most respondents are university students (78.1%, 62%, and 42.2% for the UAE, Egypt, and Jordan respectively). A more complete profile of the respondents is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. **Respondents' profile**

Items	Description	UAE (%)	Egypt (%)	Jordan (%)
Gender	Male	23.6	41.3	34.9
	Female	76.4	58.7	65.1
Age	18-29	78.9	76.8	65.1
	30-39	12.0	13.7	17.8
	40-49	7.7	6.5	13.0
	50-59	1.3	2.4	3.5
	60 and more	0.2	.5	.5
Marital Status	Single	75.0	78.1	63.5
	Married	22.8	20.4	33.2
	Divorced	1.9	1.0	2.4
	Widow	0.4	.5	.8
Qualification	High School Student	6.2	5.2	2.7
	University student	78.1	62.0	42.4
	Graduate	9.9	17.8	30.8
	Postgraduate	2.1	4.9	9.5
	MSc/PhD	3.2	7.3	11.6
	Other	0.6	2.8	3.0

Source: created by authors

Table 2 describes the events attended by respondents, it is revealed that tourism (56.6% for the UAE, 42.1% for Egypt, and 31.1% for Jordan) and cultural events (40% for the UAE, 20.9% for Egypt, and 29.5% for Jordan) are attended by most respondents in the last year. Most respondents prefer to attend events with their families (60.6% for the UAE, 41.4% for Egypt, and 52.4% for Jordan). Internet (71.8% for the UAE, 76.5% for Egypt, and 67% for Jordan) and social media (77.9% for the UAE, 56.3% for Egypt, and 61.4% for Jordan) were highly ranked as the source of respondents' information about events.

Table 2. **Events attended by respondents**

Items	Description	UAE (%)	Egypt (%)	Jordan (%)
Attended events in the last year	Tourism events	56.6	42.1	31.1
	Cultural events	40.0	20.9	29.5
	Religious events	11.4	14.8	19.7
	Sport events	21.9	18.1	25.7
	Trade fairs	15.9	10.6	10.3
	Scientific	17.4	18.6	18.6
	Other	20.4	12.6	12.2
I usually attend events	Alone	20.2	25.4	20.5
	With family	60.6	41.4	52.4
	With friends/ relatives	58.7	57.7	50.8
Information sources about events	Internet	71.8	76.5	67.0
	TV	30.8	25.0	23.0
	Newspapers/ Magazines	13.5	10.3	7.3
	My workplace	19.1	20.6	10.3
	Social media	77.9	56.3	61.4
	Friends/ relatives	36.3	37.0	44.1
	Others	8.0	11.3	4.3

Source: created by authors

3.2 Measurement Scale

Table (3) shows that the used scale's constructs are reliable as Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceed 0.7. As for the AVEs values, findings revealed values greater than 0.5 for all constructs and thus convergent validity exists. Furthermore, Table (4) indicates that the AVE square root values are greater than the inter-construct correlations, hence discriminant validity exists (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This is also confirmed by values of HTMT (Table 5) that are less than 0.9 (Abou-Shouk et al., 2023). Overall, the findings provide a valid reliable scale for the three countries. The average full VIF values are 3.1 2.8, and 3.0 for the UAE, Egypt, and Jordan scales respectively indicating that multicollinearity and common method bias concerns are not violated (Abou-Shouk et al., 2021; Kock, 2023).

Table 3. **Scale validity and reliability**

Construct	Indicators	UAE				Egypt				Jordan			
		Value	Comp.	Cron.	AVE	Value	Comp.	Cron.	AVE	Value	Comp.	Cron.	AVE
Product	Prod1	0.951	0.969	0.949	0.864	0.858	0.924	0.898	0.710	0.899	0.952	0.939	0.799
	Prod2	0.940				0.827				0.880			
	Prod3	0.932				0.817				0.904			
	Prod4	0.918				0.865				0.874			
	Prod5	0.905				0.844				0.913			
Price	Pric1	0.863	0.903	0.838	0.756	0.764	0.825	0.708	0.612	0.804	0.846	0.726	0.648
	Pric2	0.900				0.847				0.863			
	Pric3	0.844				0.731				0.743			
Place	Plac1	0.941	0.949	0.902	0.861	0.908	0.922	0.883	0.798	0.907	0.941	0.910	0.842
	Plac2	0.917				0.894				0.932			
	Plac3	0.925				0.878				0.913			
Promotion	Prom1	0.797	0.958	0.931	0.695	0.701	0.937	0.917	0.600	0.753	0.947	0.919	0.641
	Prom2	0.842				0.739				0.817			
	Prom3	0.801				0.796				0.827			

	Prom4	0.759				0.760				0.835			
	Prom5	0.919				0.726				0.748			
	Prom6	0.909				0.834				0.810			
	Prom7	0.774				0.748				0.818			
	Prom8	0.867				0.775				0.736			
	Prom9	0.833				0.859				0.852			
	Prom10	0.821				0.793				0.803			
Destination Image	Imag1	0.812	0.914	0.888	0.641	0.835	0.942	0.925	0.729	0.843	0.959	0.932	0.795
	Imag2	0.800				0.837				0.909			
	Imag3	0.752				0.869				0.901			
	Imag4	0.790				0.824				0.925			
	Imag5	0.804				0.849				0.870			
	Imag6	0.843				0.906				0.898			
Visit Intention	Intn1	0.950	0.945	0.913	0.812	0.879	0.936	0.909	0.786	0.904	0.932	0.915	0.774
	Intn2	0.854				0.910				0.822			
	Intn3	0.960				0.895				0.917			
	Intn4	0.833				0.860				0.873			
Tourism Recovery	Recv1	0.878	0.897	0.827	0.743	0.908	0.916	0.908	0.785	0.934	0.892	0.875	0.734
	Recv2	0.839				0.839				0.834			
	Recv3	0.870				0.910				0.797			

Note: Comp: composite reliability, Cron: Cronbach's alpha

Source: created by authors

Table 4. **Inter-construct correlations**

		Product	Price	Place	Promotion	Image	Intention	Recovery
Product	UAE	(0.930)						
	Egypt	(0.843)						
	Jordan	(0.894)						
Price	UAE	0.737	(0.869)					
	Egypt	0.582	(0.782)					
	Jordan	0.617	(0.805)					
Place	UAE	0.844	0.806	(0.928)				
	Egypt	0.750	0.556	(0.893)				
	Jordan	0.814	0.664	(0.918)				
Promotion	UAE	0.801	0.793	0.815	(0.834)			
	Egypt	0.749	0.595	0.764	(0.775)			
	Jordan	0.753	0.612	0.792	(0.801)			
Image	UAE	0.756	0.625	0.771	0.751	(0.801)		
	Egypt	0.639	0.520	0.654	0.725	(0.854)		
	Jordan	0.715	0.570	0.755	0.743	(0.892)		
Intention	UAE	0.822	0.690	0.810	0.820	0.778	(0.901)	
	Egypt	0.583	0.540	0.593	0.663	0.675	(0.887)	
	Jordan	0.551	0.571	0.560	0.624	0.691	(0.880)	
Recovery	UAE	0.771	0.640	0.792	0.798	0.770	0.837	(0.862)
	Egypt	0.637	0.588	0.653	0.689	0.743	0.699	(0.886)
	Jordan	0.669	0.564	0.702	0.693	0.780	0.723	(0.857)

Source: created by authors

3.3 Structural model

The quantitative results found that the marketing mix of local events donates to the destination image development in the three countries, UAE, Egypt, and Jordan respectively: product b values (0.20, 14, and 0.21, and H1.a is supported), price b values (0.10, 0.11, and 0.10, and H1.b is supported), distribution b values (0.30, 0.12, and 0.35 and H1.c is accepted,), and promotion b values (0.44, 0.46. and 0.37, and H1.d is accepted). This means that local events' effect on products, prices, distribution channels, and promotion efforts is significantly contributing to developing and improving the destination image of the three countries (R^2 values respectively are: 0.79, 0.56, and 0.71).

Table 5. **HTMT values**

		Product	Price	Place	Promotion	Image	Intention
Price	UAE	0.816					
	Egypt	0.773					
	Jordan	0.740					
Place	UAE	0.888	0.895				
	Egypt	0.842	0.745				
	Jordan	0.881	0.809				
Promotion	UAE	0.896	0.879	0.931			
	Egypt	0.819	0.784	0.875			
	Jordan	0.796	0.735	0.862			
Image	UAE	0.815	0.722	0.847	0.851		
	Egypt	0.701	0.682	0.724	0.782		
	Jordan	0.757	0.559	0.811	0.780		
Intention	UAE	0.851	0.766	0.855	0.889	0.841	
	Egypt	0.646	0.582	0.662	0.722	0.737	
	Jordan	0.592	0.551	0.610	0.665	0.720	
Recovery	UAE	0.861	0.766	0.882	0.891	0.891	0.837
	Egypt	0.705	0.642	0.730	0.749	0.811	0.771
	Jordan	0.718	0.560	0.765	0.757	0.831	0.782

Source: created by authors

In turn, developing the destination image has a crucial impact on the intention to visit these destinations (b values: 0.79 for the UAE, 0.69 for Egypt, 0.70 for Jordan, and H2 is supported). The destination image development explains 62%, 47%, and 49% of the variance in intention visits for the three countries respectively. Furthermore, fostering the intention to visit is of definite influence on the quick recovery of the tourist arrivals into the events destinations in the three countries (b=0.84 for the UAE, 0.71 for Egypt, 0.74 for Jordan, and H3 is accepted). Visit intention explains 71%, 51%, and 54% of the variance in tourism quick recovery to the three countries respectively. Overall, these results reveal that the local events have an effective influence in presenting, pricing, distributing, and promoting the tourist products and services of the host destination and increase the individuals' intention to visit these host destinations and help recover the tourist arrivals to these host places. Table 6. sums up the hypotheses-testing outcomes.

Table 6. **Summary of hypotheses-testing results**

Relationships	B values			R2			Outcome
	UAE	Egypt	Jordan	UAE	Egypt	Jordan	
Product-image	0.20	0.14	0.21	0.79	0.56	0.71	H1.a supported
Price-image	0.10	0.11	0.10				H1.b supported
Distribution-image	0.30	0.12	0.35				H1.c supported

Promotion-image	0.44	0.46	0.37				H1.d supported
Image-intention	0.79	0.69	0.70	0.62	0.47	0.49	H2 supported
Intention- recovery	0.84	0.71	0.74	0.71	0.51	0.54	H3 supported

Source: created by authors

4. Discussion

The objective of this study is to examine how local events, utilized as a marketing tool, influence destination image, and subsequently impact tourists' intentions to visit or return. This research aims to provide insights that could assist in the recovery of tourist destinations in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. The first finding of the present study claims that holding events would help diversify destination products. The study revealed that holding local events helps expand the product portfolio of the host destination, support tourism infrastructure upgrades, enhance the reputation of offered products, and help differentiate it from competitors. This impact of holding events on products could lead to an improved and developed destination image.

Numerous research studies align with the finding that holding events can significantly contribute to the diversification of destination products, leading to an enhanced destination image. Wang and Jin (2019) argued that events may boost a destination's brand and image by expanding its product portfolio, infrastructure, and sense of place. They also claimed events offer immersive marketing-product-promotion positioning opportunities that give the location a unique opportunity to stand out. Besides, in their research, (Gholipour et al., 2020; Oklobdžija, 2015; Rojas-Méndez et al., 2019) highlight the positive impact of events on tourism infrastructure upgrades. They argue that events serve as opportunities to invest in and improve infrastructure, creating a more appealing destination for tourists and enhancing the overall visitor experience. Furthermore, C. Deng et al. (2015) emphasize the stabilizing effect of events on tourism growth and destination development through product development and diversification. Furthermore, the current study found a positive connection between destination image and place attachment in the case of local event tourism, echoing Wang and Jin (2019) emphasis on the role of cultural mega-events in enhancing a destination's attractiveness. Notable examples include The Edinburgh International Festival's success in drawing global tourists through its multicultural presentations (Prentice & Andersen, 2003).

The study findings also indicated that place attachment played a significant impact in influencing tourist behaviour, which aligns with Jeong and Kim (2020) who identified a positive a positive correlation between destination image and place attachment in sporting event tourism highlighting their impact on behavioural intentions. Further, the study revealed that attracting tourists to visit event places will contribute to a rise in tourism demand, perhaps resulting in higher costs for goods and services at the destination. However, drawing more tourists to main or regional locations during the off-season will assist in mitigating the effects of seasonality. Furthermore, utilising a bundle pricing model will assist the destination in marketing various local tourism products and services, hence increasing the economic effect of events. These results resonate with the insights shared by Wang and Jin (2019). They pointed out that mega-events, characterized by tight schedules, can worsen seasonality problems, result in higher prices, and lead to limited engagement with local tourism products, as attendees primarily focus on event-related activities. On the contrary, smaller local and regional events emerge as a possible remedy for the seasonality issue. Wang and Jin (2019) suggested practical solutions, such as introducing bundled event tickets that incorporate local attractions with the main event. Additionally, they proposed leveraging the sharing economy to address price increases by making use of underutilized destination accommodations and transportation options. In their study, Pırnar et al. (2019) discovered that festivals have a positive influence on the global popularity of Izmir city, Turkey and serve as an effective means of promoting the city, even during off-season periods.

Next, in terms of the place aspect of the marketing mix, the study discovered that holding events helps destinations increase the number of distribution channels for their tourism local products and services, attract more tourists, and increase sales of tourism and non-tourism products. This is consistent with Haneef and Ansari (2019) discovery that travel and tourism service providers can use events as venues to sell and market their products and services, while also collaborating with local authorities and event management to showcase local products and destinations. They stated that increasing understanding of local products and venues would surely improve the destination's image. Wang and Jin (2019) stated that an effective place requires high levels of communication with complementary distribution channels to share mutual benefits. An integrated/coordinated distribution effort can give tourist providers upselling opportunities from events while also expanding their distribution channels outside of tourism. Another significant finding of the study is that local events are a powerful tool to promote the host destinations. It is revealed that cooperative marketing and co-branding by all bodies involved in events (i.e., organizers, local DMOs, tour operators, travel agencies, sponsors…etc) guarantee the success of the event. This finding concurs with other research that stated that branding is an efficient technique to strengthen or improve a brand's image (Jayswal, 2008). Jayswal mentioned that in the context of destination co-branding, the goal is to transfer a desired portion of the other brand to destination features. Co-branding between tourism and events necessitates coordinated marketing so that both can capitalise on media coverage (Wang & Jin, 2019).

In addition, the study participants believe that events are an important tool that ensures media coverage and promotion not only of the event but also of local products, local culture, and heritage sites of the destination. It also helps in raising the level of awareness of the destination, which leads to enhancing the image of the destination. This finding is consistent with earlier research, which emphasises that media exposure is one way in which country images are established and transformed (X. Li & Kaplanidou, 2011), and the media has been proven to influence how people think about other countries especially because it is perceived as communication independent of the event's sponsor (i.e. the country) (Rojas-Méndez et al., 2019). However, adverse media coverage preceding, during, and after an event possesses the capacity to shape international public perception and damage the image of a destination. It is widely acknowledged that negative news exerts a greater degree of influence compared to positive news (Buarque, 2015). Consider, for example, the media coverage of the social protests surrounding the 2014 FIFA World Cup held in Brazil. Leveraging the media and social media is vital in mobilizing local citizens to avoid potential damage to the destination brand. Stakeholders must be urged to plan this process more deliberately to leverage the opportunity more effectively, before, during, and most importantly, after the event (Rojas-Méndez et al., 2019). This highlights the importance of integrating destination and event marketing activities in the early stages of event planning to optimize tourism benefits from staging events in host destinations.

The research also identified that events present a chance to enhance social cohesion, foster greater diversity and tolerance in the destination, exhibit local heritage and values, and instil environmental awareness among visitors. All these positive outcomes collectively contribute to the enhancement of the destination's overall image. These findings are in line with earlier studies. In their research, Mihajlovic and Maja Vidak (2017) demonstrated that events yield beneficial physical and ecological outcomes, manifested in heightened environmental awareness and advancements in transportation and communication infrastructure. However, inevitable repercussions such as environmental pollution, noise, and traffic congestion arise. Yet, through the implementation of sustainable development strategies and environmental stewardship in event organizations, adverse effects can be significantly mitigated or eradicated, thereby bolstering the destination's reputation for environmental consciousness.

In conclusion, events significantly impact the four components of the marketing mix, playing a pivotal role in shaping the destination's image. The study revealed a notable and positive correlation between hosting events and strengthening the marketing mix, ultimately enhancing the destination's image, and increasing the number of visits. These outcomes affirm the study's initial hypothesis and align with prior research (C. Deng et al., 2015; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Lai, 2018; H. Li et al., 2021). The study's findings show that the destination's image is a key driver of travel intention. The research discovered that promoting a location as a secure and hygienic environment with many cultural landmarks, appealing attractions, breathtaking natural scenery, distinctive and secure local food, and excellent shopping options can attract tourists and encourage repeat visits. Significantly, these results validate the study's second hypothesis and align with previous studies conducted by Debbagh and Azouaoui (2022), Pektas et al. (2019), Setyaningtyas et al. (2021), and Yosa et al. (2022). Likewise, Kuusik et al. (2014) emphasised the role of events as a form of free sampling in destination marketing, claiming that events give tourists a taste of the area where they take place. Their research focuses on the long-term influence of events on Estonia's tourism marketing. They discovered a link between event participation and repeated visits. The efficacy of this association is determined by the type and frequency of the events.

At last, this study discovered that conducting events helps to accelerate tourist recovery following COVID-19. This supports the third hypothesis of the study. Previous experiences with events during or after crises have demonstrated their capacity to revitalise and recoup tourism to such destinations. For Example, Spain strategically utilized major sports events post the 2008 financial crisis to stimulate sports-related tourism and attract foreign tourists, contributing to the country's economic recovery (Vegara-Ferri et al., 2020). Similarly, Nica and Laceanu (2021) discovered a high level of domestic demand for local events in Sibiu, Romania, despite the ongoing epidemic. Sibiu hosts regional events focused on folklore, gastronomy, and local customs. Similarly, The UAE's strategically hosting Expo 2020 played a pivotal role in expediting the country's COVID-19 recovery, fortifying both tourism and economic resilience. The event attracted over 24 million visitors during its six-month duration, with 14 million of them being international (Abu Dhabi Calendar, 2023; Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism, 2023).

5. Conclusion

The current research provides a comprehensive examination of various aspects related to events, destination marketing, and tourism recovery. The analysis focuses on the impact of local events on destination marketing in the UAE, Egypt, and Jordan. Findings revealed that local events have a significant effect on destination marketing mix, which in turn affects destination image, visit intention and tourism recovery.

The current study has theoretical implications and contributions to extant knowledge of event-based destination marketing. It is one of the very few studies that discussed how the events affect the marketing mix of destinations in detail. It has also tested the research model on respondents belonging to three developing countries with different scopes and the nature of events. The study has also looked at the consequences of using events in marketing and extended the research model to test the effect of events on destination image, revisit intention, and tourism recovery. Furthermore, the present study has focused on the role of local events and domestic tourism differentiating it from other studies looking at international tourism and global events. It illustrates the role of events in decreasing the seasonality effects on tourism, developing destination image, developing tourism product portfolios, and promoting local, regional, or even neglected destinations. The focus on domestic tourism is a contribution to extant knowledge as it is a potential category of tourists that may contribute to tourist destinations' development as a recovery strategy from tourism post crises and is a segment of tourism representing over 70% of total tourist flow and 73% of total overnight stays (Islam & Fatema, 2020; Stylidis et al., 2017). The results of this study contribute to the literature on destination image by empirically investigating events' effect on destination image in three countries with different characteristics UAE, Egypt, and Jordan.

As for managerial implications, the findings of this research found that events help improve destination image and increase intention visits. However, for successful events, organisers should collaborate with local DMOs, and service providers (i.e., tour operators, travel agencies, hotels, heritage sites… etc.) to promote the concept of co-branding of the destination and the event. In addition, destination planners and marketers should diversify the locations of local events to help decrease the seasonality effects. Adopting the strategy of bundle pricing is also recommended to be adopted as it increases upselling opportunities for local products and services. Additionally, engaging local actors in the event may help market the event and the host destination. For example, inviting local travel agencies, airlines, hotels, and restaurants to distribute their services through the events will engage them in marketing the event and the host destination. Similarly, inviting local media to cover the event will significantly affect the marketing efforts of both the event and the host destination. Diversifying the event type is also recommended to attract niche markets to the host destination including art and culture, sport, entertainment, culinary, expos, and fairs. Destination marketers need to identify the destination brand they want to promote and use it through the events. Having a clear activity portfolio of the event may help engage tourists and form memorable experiences that will encourage them to repeat visits to the event and the destination. The destination identity needs to be clear and highlighted through the event promotion materials (brochures, social media campaigns, printed leaflets…etc.). Highlighting environmental awareness and practices might help form an improved image of the destination. Finally, event evaluation should be of great importance to local DMOs, marketers and planners to identify the negative aspects and learn to improve them in future events. Moreover, events highlight a destination's cultural heritage and provide opportunities for cultural exchange and marketing these events can help preserve and promote local cultures. Successful marketing of tourism events requires collaborations, partnerships, and involvement of local communities to ensure its success. By leveraging the potential of events and implementing effective marketing strategies, destinations can enhance their competitiveness, stimulate economic growth, and create positive socio-cultural impacts.

The current study has some limitations. One limitation is the focus on local events only and targeting domestic tourism. Therefore, future research may focus on the impact of global events on destination marketing mix. Another limitation is that the focus of the current research was on the benefits of events from visitors' point of view and did not include local authorities' or service providers' viewpoints regarding the role of events in destination marketing. Therefore, future research may include service providers and DMOs to explain the effects of events on the destination marketing mix and may need to use qualitative research for more deeply and detailed results. The study did not also distinguish between respondents' age, education, and gender and therefore, the upcoming investigation may focus on the effect of demographic characteristics of respondents and potential differences in opinions. The last limitation is using random sampling and its effect on the results' generalization.

Disclosure statement

The authors have no conflicts of interest.

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Appendix 1. **Survey items**

Product: (Wang & Jin, 2019): Events help:
1. expand the product portfolio of the host country
2. upgrade tourism infrastructure
3. reinforce building a sense of place
4. enhance the reputation of destination products
5. differentiate products from competitors

Price: (Pırnar et al., 2019; Wang & Jin, 2019). Events help:
1. increase the prices of products
2. decrease seasonality effects
3. with promotional price bundling

Place: (Oklobdžija, 2015; Pırnar et al., 2019; Wang & Jin, 2019).
1. Events help up-selling
2. Events extend distributions
3. Events attract tourist visits

Promotion: (Getz & Page, 2016; Jain & Kour, 2020; Jayswal, 2008; Mihajlovic & Maja Vidak, 2017; Rojas-Méndez et al., 2019). Events:
1. support co-branding
2. guarantee media coverage
3. promote collaborative marketing
4. help positioning/ differentiation of destination
5. raise the awareness of the destination
6. foster a positive destination image
7. offer social cohesion
8. offer destination tolerance and diversity
9. expose destination heritage and local values,
10. expose destination environmental awareness

Destination Image: (Nazir, Yasin, & Tat, 2021). My destination:
1. has a variety of unique and safe attractions
2. is rich with unique heritage sites
3. is safe to travel locally
4. has appealing clean local cuisine
5. is a good and safe place for shopping
6. is a pleasant place to visit

Visit Intention: (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003).
1. I plan to attend local events in my destination
2. I intend to attend local events in my destination
3. I will try to attend local events in my destination
4. I will recommend others to visit local events in my destination

Tourism Recovery: (Dimanche, 2003; Folgado-Fernández, Duarte, & Hernández-Mogollón, 2021; Kuusik et al., 2014). Events will:

1. help destinations generate visits
2. help destinations to quickly restart tourism post covid-19
3. increase community involvement and visitation post-covid