



Article

# Resources Confirmation for Tourism Destinations Marketing Efforts Using PLS-MGA: The Moderating Impact of Semirural and Rural Tourism Destination

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**Abstract:** This study presents a framework to empirically validate the relationship between the tangible and intangible measures on tourism destination marketing efforts. Uniquely, a case study was developed involving two different nature of tourism destinations (semirural and rural) and is incorporated into the framework to assess its moderating effect on the relationships among the predictors and destination marketing efforts. Two hundred and ninety-three usable responses were collected using a questionnaire survey. Partial least squares structural equation modelling was utilized to perform latent variable and multi-group analyses (MGA). The findings revealed that destination appeal was found to be the biggest concern among tourists visiting semirural and rural tourism destinations in Sarawak. For intangible components, both service quality and destination image were found to be significantly related to destination marketing efforts at a semirural tourism destination. Interestingly, for MGA results, it was worthwhile to learn that the relationship between service quality and destination marketing efforts happened to have a stronger impact on semirural than rural tourism destination. Hence, the proposed framework and research findings from this case study have provided significant insights that help various tourism stakeholders to better strategize and position semirural and rural tourism, particularly in the scenario of Sarawak, Malaysia. Future studies can examine this framework and test at other tourism destinations in Malaysia or in some other countries.

**Keywords:** hard and soft components; semirural; rural tourism; destination marketing; PLS-MGA; Malaysia

## 1. Introduction

The emergence of a novel virus, the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), has led to a coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. As a result, global business activities are now at a standstill and the tourism sector is not spared by the disease. In fact, tourism is one of the sectors most affected by COVID-19 whereby physical promotions and campaigns are no longer possible. Prior to the pandemic, the tourism sector was experiencing stellar performance and was considered one of the world's fastest-growing industries, by contributing significantly to the economies of many countries [1,2]. Realizing the significant economic contribution of the tourism sector, many countries around the world have prepared and scheduled major tourism events and campaigns throughout 2020 in efforts to boost the performance of their respective tourism industry. The emergence of COVID-19 has resulted in almost all business sectors coming to an unprecedented standstill as governments of the