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MODEL FOR ENHANCING E-BUSINESS IN TOURISM ENTERPRISES BASED ON BRAND AND SOCIAL MEDIA: THE CASE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

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Abstract: The aim of this research is to examine the impact of brand and social media on e-business of tourism enterprises, as well as to propose an optimal model for improving business performance in the digital environment. Methodology includes theoretical analysis of literature and empirical research conducted on a sample of 385 respondents, users of tourism products and services. An e-questionnaire was used for data collection, and data processing was performed using descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analysis in the JMP Pro 18 software package. The reliability of measurement scales was confirmed by Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Results show that the overall model explains 82% of the variance in e-business ($R^2=0.821$; $F=874.16$; $p<0.0001$). Both predictors have a statistically significant positive impact, with social media ($\beta=0.690$; $p<0.0001$) exerting twice as strong an influence compared to brand ($\beta=0.338$; $p<0.0001$). Conclusion confirms the main hypothesis that brand and social media significantly contribute to the development of e-business in tourism enterprises, emphasizing the crucial role of social media in contemporary tourism business operations in the Republic of Croatia.

Keywords: brand, social media, e-business, tourism enterprises, regression analysis

JEL classification: C52, C38, L81, L83, M31, M15

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary tourism enterprises in the Republic of Croatia are confronted with the continuous challenge of improving their sales mechanisms in order to respond to the growing expectations of consumers. The development and modernization of sales activities directly determine the level of competitiveness and long-term market sustainability; whereby digital transformation is becoming an imperative rather than a choice.

Based on the foregoing, the subject of this research is the definition and proposal of an optimal model of e-business in tourism enterprises as the dependent variable (hereinafter abbreviated as eBTE), with particular emphasis on the synergistic effects of brand (hereinafter abbreviated as BD) and social media (hereinafter abbreviated as SM) as independent predictors in the function of promotion and sales.

Consumer loyalty toward a brand is profiled as a key predictor of sales performance, since customer satisfaction generates long-term relationships and repeat purchases. Within the digital ecosystem, tourism companies must allocate significant resources to the development of innovative services and products, as well as to more efficient promotion based on contemporary forms of online advertising and the application of information and communication technologies. Active presence on social media platforms emerges as a necessary prerequisite for visibility and competitiveness in the global market.

Starting from the aforementioned considerations, the focus of this research is directed toward the analysis of the impact of brand and social media on the evolution of electronic business operations in tourism enterprises, primarily in the context of improving sales performance.

The primary scientific objective of this study is the generation of relevant and reliable information intended for the professional and academic community regarding models of e-business in tourism enterprises, with particular emphasis on the development of products and services grounded in brand strategy and social media engagement.

The main research tasks relate to determining the degree of influence of brand and social media on the e-business activities of tourism companies. The research is also oriented toward examining consumer attitudes and perceptions regarding the significance and impact of social media on the decision-making process related to the purchase of tourism products.

The research is based on a systematic approach to data analysis, combining theoretical and empirical methods. The survey method was applied using an electronic questionnaire (e-questionnaire). Data were collected from a sample of 385 respondents (users of tourism products and services). A preliminary reliability assessment of the statements and attitudes was conducted using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

The analysis of the results was performed using statistical techniques, including reliability analysis, correlation and regression analysis, as well as their multivariate forms. Data processing was carried out using the software package JMP Pro 18, and the results were presented in textual, tabular, and graphical formats. A five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate respondents' attitudes.

The research is based on relevant sources from domestic and international libraries, scientific journals, published papers, and available online resources.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand represents a complex conceptual framework that goes beyond mere visual identification, functioning as the living personality of an organization. According to “a brand embodies the reputation, values, and character of a company, shaping consumer perceptions and their interaction with the offered products and services, with the ultimate goal of building loyalty and increasing market share”. Perspectives provide a comprehensive insight into the functional and emotional dimensions of a brand, which are essential for understanding its subsequent influence on the e-business activities of tourism agencies. Building on this idea, a brand may also be perceived as “an explicit promise that a company makes to its consumers,” as emphasized by . Interpretation introduces a dynamic component into the definition of a brand and highlights its role in establishing relationships with consumers, particularly within the domain of communication through social media platforms.

A brand also functions as a “mechanism for risk reduction, serving as a guarantee of quality, origin, and performance of a product or service, thereby increasing its value in the eyes of consumers”, as noted by . This aspect is particularly significant in tourism, where services are intangible and often purchased in advance, making the brand directly associated with the perception of purchase security. On the other hand, successful branding cannot substitute for a poor-quality product, as it presupposes that tangible quality underlies marketing communication. As emphasized by , “even the most effective promotion cannot compensate for a negative customer experience in the long term”. Thus, the brand, both as a marketing instrument and as a reflection of actual quality, “constitutes a fundamental basis for the argument that success on social media must be accompanied by high-quality service provision”, as highlighted by .

In contemporary business environments, social media have become an indispensable communication channel. They may be defined as “interactive, computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and exchange of ideas, information, and other forms of expression within virtual communities”, according to . Definition provides both a technological and sociological framework for analyzing their role in the promotion of tourism services. Furthermore, social media function as “web-based services that allow individuals to construct public or semi-public profiles, articulate a list of connections, and view and traverse their connections within the system”, as described by . Perspective is essential for the operationalization of the concept of social media within research and for understanding the structural framework that supports interactions between brands and consumers.

“The application of social media for business purposes brings numerous advantages, such as speed, accessibility, and networking opportunities, but also notable disadvantages, including privacy risks, superficial relationships, and potential disruptions to other activities”, as noted by . A comprehensive overview of both benefits and limitations provides a balanced foundation for research, enabling an analysis of how tourism enterprises can maximize the benefits while minimizing the risks associated with the use of social media. According to , “the contemporary business environment requires enterprises to be proactive and strategically flexible in order to create new opportunities within technologically demanding environments”. Emphasis is therefore placed on the adoption of new technologies, including social media, as an essential component of a company’s strategic orientation.

“The development of information and communication technologies (ICT) directly influences the dynamics of the business environment, becoming an integral component of strategies aimed at maintaining long-term competitiveness”, as indicated by . The connection between the macro-level trend of ICT development and micro-level business strategy is essential for understanding why tourism enterprises must integrate social media into their operations. The influence of ICT is particularly evident in consumer behavior, where a considerable amount of time is spent on social media platforms, and where “the comments and opinions of other users become a decisive factor in purchase decision-making, influencing brand choice and the willingness to modify purchase plans”, as emphasized by and the business platform .

“The ultimate objective of any enterprise is the achievement of business and economic success, which implies the optimal utilization of resources for the attainment of defined goals”, as argued by . Definition of success is particularly important for the operationalization of the future dependent variable in research on e-business, as it establishes criteria for measuring the efficiency of tourism enterprises. “The relationship between consumers and companies has evolved from passive interaction toward active participation, whereby consumers can easily distribute their opinions to a wide audience through social media platforms”, according to . Paradigm shift introduces the concept of the active consumer, “who, through engagement on digital networks, directly influences brand perception and participates in the dissemination of information via the internet”, as suggested by .

“The e-business model brings numerous advantages, including faster delivery, increased sales, and improved quality of products and services”, as noted by . However, in order to achieve these benefits, “it is necessary to establish a solid strategy that includes maintaining brand recognition, strategic positioning, the application of e-business technologies, improving operational efficiency, and ensuring system security”, as emphasized by . Principles are directly applicable to tourism enterprises in their efforts to build strong brands through digital channels. “Furthermore, the key participants in the process include enterprises, clients, and public administration, and the forms of business operations are defined precisely on the basis of their interactions”, as stated by . Perspective highlights the complexity of relational networks within modern e-business systems.

“For dynamic communication between consumers and service providers, the adoption of advanced technologies, the use of mobile platforms, and engagement through virtual social networks are of critical importance”, as emphasized by . The adoption of contemporary technology is no longer merely an option but rather the most reliable foundation for survival in the market. Few communication channels are as accessible and cost-effective as direct and engaged interaction with consumers through platforms they use daily most notably, social media networks.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on the defined research problem, subject, tasks, and objectives, the following theoretical model (Figure 1) was formulated, along with the corresponding hypotheses:

- H₀: Brand and social media do not have a significant impact on the e-business operations of tourism enterprises.

- H_a : Brand and social media have a significant impact on the e-business operations of tourism enterprises.

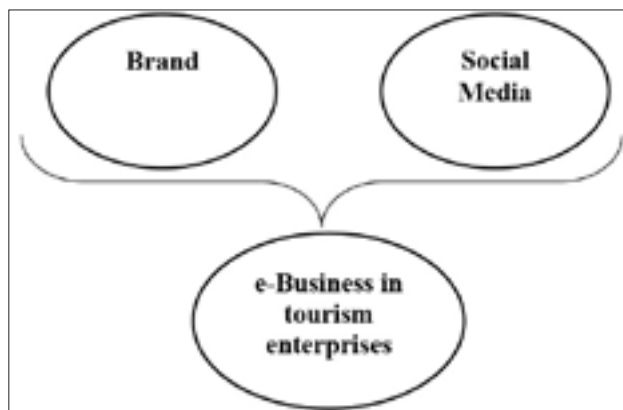


Figure 1. Theoretical model
Source: Author's calculation

The applied methodology is based on a systematic approach to data analysis that combines theoretical and empirical methods. For the purpose of collecting primary data, the survey method was employed, implemented through an electronic questionnaire using the Google Forms platform, which enabled efficient access to a broader population of respondents.

The sample consisted of 305 respondents in the Republic of Croatia who are users of tourism products and services, selected through a convenience sampling method. The sample size is adequate for the application of the planned statistical techniques and allows for the generalization of conclusions within the defined population framework.

Statistical data processing was conducted using the software package JMP Pro 18. The following analytical procedures were applied: reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales, correlation analysis to examine the relationships among the observed variables, and regression analysis (both simple and multiple) to test the proposed hypotheses regarding the impact of brand and social media on e-business.

Respondents' attitudes were measured using a five-point Likert scale, which represents one of the most commonly used instruments for measuring attitudes in social science research. The results were presented in textual, tabular, and graphical forms in order to ensure clarity and transparency in the presentation of the research findings.

Secondary data were collected through content analysis of relevant sources, including domestic and international libraries, scientific journals, and published research papers, thereby ensuring the theoretical grounding and contemporary relevance of the study.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all six statements measuring respondents' attitudes toward the brand amounts to $\alpha=0.8683$. This value falls within the category of good reliability (0.80-0.89) and approaches the level of excellent re-

liability. Therefore, it can be concluded that all statements collectively measure the same construct consistently and reliably namely, attitudes toward the brand in tourism business operations (Table 1).

Table 1. Reliability Analysis of the Brand Scale

Statement	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Comparison with Total $\alpha=0.8683$	Interpretation
BD ₁ Online research of the offerings of different tourism brands is an activity that I enjoy.	0.8488	LOWER than total (0.8488<0.8683)	Removing this item would reduce the reliability of the scale. BD ₁ contributes well to the measurement of the brand construct and is consistent with the other statements.
BD ₂ In the process of online purchasing and booking tourism arrangements, I prefer products and services of well-known brands.	0.8786	HIGHER than total (0.8786>0.8683)	Removing this item would slightly increase reliability. BD ₂ shows the weakest correlation with the other items and differs somewhat from what the other statements measure. However, the difference is minimal (0.0103), so the item can remain in the scale.
BD ₃ Positive word-of-mouth recommendations from friends regarding a particular tourism brand motivate me to visit its website.	0.8315	LOWER than total (0.8315<0.8683)	BD ₃ has the lowest value in the table. If removed, reliability would decrease the most. BD ₃ contributes the most to the measurement of the brand construct and is most strongly associated with the other statements.
BD ₄ I perceive internet advertisements promoting well-known tourism brands as a credible source of information.	0.8357	LOWER than total (0.8357<0.8683)	Removing this item would significantly reduce reliability. BD ₄ strongly contributes to the measurement of the brand construct and shows a high correlation with the other items.
BD ₅ Online advertising represents my primary channel for becoming familiar with the offerings of tourism brands.	0.8369	LOWER than total (0.8369<0.8683)	Removing BD ₅ would significantly reduce reliability. BD ₅ contributes strongly to the measurement of the brand construct.
BD ₆ Internet advertising of tourism brands represents an important instrument for improving companies' understanding of the target market.	0.8395	LOWER than total (0.8395<0.8683)	Removing BD ₆ would reduce reliability, although slightly less than in the case of BD ₃ , BD ₄ , and BD ₅ . BD ₆ contributes well to the measurement of the brand construct.

Source: Author's calculation

The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all six statements measuring respondents' attitudes toward social media is $\alpha=0.9281$. This value falls within the category of excellent reliability (>0.90). All statements collectively measure the same construct attitudes toward social media in tourism business operations with a very high degree of consistency and reliability (Table 2).

Table 2. Reliability Analysis of the Social Media Scale

Statement	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Comparison with Total $\alpha=0.9281$	Interpretation
SM ₁ Social media initiate revolutionary changes in the business models of contemporary tourism enterprises.	0.9128	LOWER than total (0.9128<0.9281)	Removing this item would reduce reliability. SM ₁ contributes well to the measurement of social media and is consistent with the other items.
SM ₂ Social media significantly facilitate potential tourists' access to information on a diverse range of tourism products and services.	0.9031	LOWER than total (0.9031<0.9281)	The second lowest value in the table. Removing SM ₂ would significantly reduce reliability. SM ₂ strongly contributes to the measurement of social media and is highly correlated with the other items.
SM ₃ Social media simultaneously generate value for tourists and tourism enterprises.	0.9035	LOWER than total (0.9035<0.9281)	The lowest value in the table. Removing SM ₃ would reduce reliability the most. SM ₃ contributes the most to measuring social media and is most strongly associated with the other items.
SM ₄ The intensity of tourism enterprises' activities on social media positively correlates with user base growth and financial performance.	0.95	HIGHER than total (0.9500>0.9281)	Removing SM ₄ would increase reliability to 0.9500, as it is substantially higher than the total alpha. This indicates that SM ₄ does not measure the same construct as the other items and is not consistent with the remaining five statements.
SM ₅ Social media represent a significant factor in the positioning and image formation of tourism destinations.	0.9121	LOWER than total (0.9121<0.9281)	Removing SM ₅ would reduce reliability. SM ₅ contributes well to measuring social media, although slightly less than SM ₂ and SM ₃ .
SM ₆ User-generated content in the form of comments and reviews on social media functions as a key feedback mechanism for tourism enterprises.	0.9052	LOWER than total (0.9052<0.9281)	Removing SM ₆ would significantly reduce reliability. SM ₆ strongly contributes to measuring social media.

Source: Author's calculation

The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all six statements measuring respondents' attitudes toward e-business in tourism enterprises is $\alpha=0.9137$. This value falls within the category of excellent reliability (>0.90), confirming that all statements collectively measure the same construct attitudes toward e-business in tourism enterprises with a very high level of consistency and reliability (Table 3).

Table 3. Reliability Analysis of the E-Business in Tourism Enterprises Scale

Statement	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Comparison with Total $\alpha=0.9137$	Interpretation
eBTE ₁ Promotional activities on social media positively correlate with the development, recognition, and sales performance of tourism products and services.	0.8514	LOWER than total (0.8514<0.9137)	Removing this item would significantly reduce reliability. eBTE ₁ strongly contributes to the measurement of e-business and is highly correlated with the other items.
eBTE ₂ Online promotion of tourism brands represents a significant predictor of enhancing brand image and increasing potential tourists' interest.	0.8362	LOWER than total (0.8362<0.9137)	The second lowest value in the table. Removing eBTE ₂ would drastically reduce reliability. eBTE ₂ contributes exceptionally well to measuring e-business.
eBTE ₃ Internet advertising of tourism products and services has a statistically significant impact on consumers' final purchase or booking decisions.	0.9041	LOWER than total (0.9041<0.9137)	Removing eBTE ₃ would slightly reduce reliability. This item has the highest individual alpha among all statements and is closest to the total alpha. eBTE ₃ contributes to the construct, but slightly less than others.
eBTE ₄ Social media, as a contemporary form of business communication, act as a catalyst for the development of electronic sales in the tourism sector.	0.85	LOWER than total (0.8500<0.9137)	Removing eBTE ₄ would significantly reduce reliability. eBTE ₄ strongly contributes to measuring e-business.
eBTE ₅ E-business becomes a determinant for the improvement of marketing strategies and distribution models in tourism.	0.8331	LOWER than total (0.8331<0.9137)	The lowest value in the table. Removing eBTE ₅ would reduce reliability the most. eBTE ₅ contributes the most to measuring e-business and is strongly correlated with other items.
eBTE ₆ The intensity of online sales development for tourism products and services largely depends on the digital competence and awareness of potential tourists.	0.8238	LOWER than total (0.8238<0.9137)	Removing eBTE ₆ would drastically reduce reliability. The exceptionally low value indicates that eBTE ₆ strongly contributes to the measurement of e-business.

Source: Author's calculation

High values of Cronbach's alpha across all three scales confirm that: the items within each scale are highly correlated, respondents answered related statements consistently, the constructs are clearly defined and operationalized, and the results are reliable for further statistical analyses (correlation, regression, and hypothesis testing). It can be concluded that there is a high degree of confidence in the approach to interpreting the results and drawing conclusions regarding the impact of brand and social media on e-business in tourism enterprises in this study.

Within the conducted research, the basic demographic characteristics of the respondents were analyzed, including gender, age, educational level, and years of work

experience. The total sample consisted of 385 respondents, all users of tourism products and services. The demographic structure of the sample is presented in (Table 4).

Table 4. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	192	49.87
	Female	193	50.13
	Total	385	100.00
Age	18–30	33	8.57
	31–40	105	27.27
	41–50	159	41.30
	>50	88	22.86
	Total	385	100.00
Educational Level	Secondary education (SE)	134	34.81
	Higher education (HE)	251	65.19
	Total	385	100
Years of Work Experience	≤10	76	19.74
	11–20	134	34.81
	21–30	130	33.77
	>30	45	11.69
	Total	385	100.00

Source: Author's calculation

Based on gender distribution, the sample includes 192 male respondents (49.87%) and 193 female respondents (50.13%), indicating an approximately equal representation of both genders. Regarding age distribution, the largest group consists of respondents aged 41–50 years, totaling 159 individuals (41.30%). This is followed by the 31–40 age group with 105 respondents (27.27%), respondents over 50 years with 88 individuals (22.86%), and the smallest group being 18–30 years with 33 respondents (8.57%). Thus, the most represented age category is 41–50 years, while the youngest age group is the least represented.

In terms of educational level, respondents with higher or university education (VSS) dominate the sample, numbering 251 (65.19%), whereas respondents with secondary education (SSS) are 134 (34.81%). More than two-thirds of the respondents therefore hold higher education qualifications.

The analysis of years of work experience shows that the largest number of respondents falls into the 11–20 years (134 respondents; 34.81%) and 21–30 years (130 respondents; 33.77%) categories. This is followed by respondents with up to 10 years of experience (76 respondents; 19.74%), while the least represented group comprises respondents with over 30 years of experience (45 respondents; 11.69%). Thus, the most prevalent categories are those with medium work experience, while the least represented group includes those with over 30 years of experience.

Overall, the demographic structure of the sample provides representativeness in relation to the target population of users of tourism products and services. The balanced gender distribution, dominance of middle-age categories, and high level of education offer a solid basis for further statistical analysis and hypothesis testing.

Table 5 presents the values for each respondent's statement regarding Brand. The study indicates that well-known tourism brands and their online advertising constitute a significant and credible factor in the process of information acquisition, decision-making, and booking of tourism packages, with a strong influence of positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Digital marketing and brand strength play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior in tourism.

Table 5. Respondents' Attitudes Toward Brand

Brand Statements	1	2	3	4	5
BD ₁ Online research of the offerings of different tourism brands is an activity that I enjoy.	3	15	20	173	174
BD ₂ In the process of online purchasing and booking tourism arrangements, I prefer products and services of well-known brands.	3	15	38	155	174
BD ₃ Positive word-of-mouth recommendations from friends regarding a particular tourism brand motivate me to visit its website.	3	20	73	142	147
BD ₄ I perceive internet advertisements promoting well-known tourism brands as a credible source of information.	2	21	36	146	180
BD ₅ Online advertising represents my primary channel for becoming familiar with the offerings of tourism brands.	2	24	42	167	150
BD ₆ Internet advertising of tourism brands represents an important instrument for improving companies' understanding of the target market.	8	14	61	131	171

Source: Author's calculation

Based on the values presented in (Table 5), an analysis of respondents' attitudes was conducted, highlighting the dominant factors and their corresponding descriptions regarding Brand (Table 6).

Table 6. Dominant Factors and Descriptions of Respondents' Attitudes Toward Brand

Statement	Dominant Factor	Description
BD ₁	5 (174) & 4 (173) - 90.13%	Respondents enjoy exploring tourism brands online, indicating a positive affective attitude toward the brand. Brands have the potential to engage consumers beyond the act of purchase, extending interaction time and strengthening emotional connection.
BD ₂	5 (174) & 4 (155) - 85.45%	Brand recognition represents a key criterion in purchase decisions. The brand functions as a mechanism for reducing perceived risk, which is especially important in tourism where services are purchased in advance without the possibility of physical verification.
BD ₃	5 (147) & 4 (142) - 75.06%	Word-of-mouth acts as a strong action driver respondents do not stop at information alone but take concrete action by visiting the website. There is a high degree of trust in recommendations from personal networks.

BD ₄	5 (180) & 4 (146) - 84.68%	Brand familiarity increases the credibility of marketing messages. Well-known brands enhance the weight and impact of advertisements, and investing in brand building has a multiplicative effect on marketing campaign effectiveness.
BD ₅	4 (167) & 5 (150) - 82.34%	Online advertising has become the primary source of information about tourism brands. Respondents predominantly rely on digital channels, while traditional communication channels are losing significance.
BD ₆	5 (171) & 4 (131) - 78.44%	Respondents recognize the two-way nature of online communication: it is not only a channel for sending messages to consumers but also a mechanism through which companies collect information about their customers and gain a better understanding of the market.

Source: Author's calculation

Table 7 presents the values for each respondent's statement regarding Social Media. It can be concluded that social media represent one of the key pillars of modern tourism marketing and business operations. Social media: transform business models, enhance information access and communication, contribute to destination branding, enable interactivity and two-way value exchange, and serve as an important indicator of market success.

Overall, the results indicate a high level of digital awareness among respondents and confirm that social media have become an indispensable factor for competitiveness and sustainable development of tourism enterprises and destinations.

Table 7. Respondents' Attitudes Toward Social Media

Statements for Social Media	1	2	3	4	5
SM ₁ Social media initiate revolutionary changes in the business models of contemporary tourism enterprises.	3	16	41	122	203
SM ₂ Social media significantly facilitate potential tourists' access to information on a diverse range of tourism products and services.	3	9	58	114	201
SM ₃ Social media simultaneously generate value for tourists and tourism enterprises.	3	9	58	118	197
SM ₄ The intensity of tourism enterprises' activities on social media positively correlates with user base growth and financial performance.	8	49	80	132	116
SM ₅ Social media represent a significant factor in the positioning and image formation of tourism destinations.	14	4	46	133	188
SM ₆ User-generated content in the form of comments and reviews on social media functions as a key feedback mechanism for tourism enterprises.	9	27	51	93	205

Source: Author's calculation

Based on the values presented in (Table 7), an analysis of respondents' attitudes was conducted, highlighting the dominant factors and their corresponding descriptions regarding Social Media (Table 8).

Table 8. Dominant Factors and Descriptions of Respondents' Attitudes Toward Social Media

Statement	Dominant Factor	Description
SM ₁	5 (203) & 4 (122) - 84.42%	Respondents perceive social media as a transformative factor, not merely an additional communication channel. Social media fundamentally change the way tourism enterprises operate, justifying their treatment as a key independent variable.
SM ₂	5 (201) & 4 (114) - 81.82%	Respondents recognize the informational function of social media as crucial. Social media are not only a space for entertainment but also a significant source of information that facilitates the decision-making process in tourism.
SM ₃	5 (197) & 4 (118) - 81.82%	Respondents demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the role of social media, as they simultaneously generate value for both parties. Social media function as an ecosystem in which all participants can benefit.
SM ₄	4 (132) & 5 (116) - 64.42%	Respondents acknowledge the business value of social media and their potential to generate concrete, measurable results. Activity on social platforms is linked to the growth of the user base and financial outcomes.
SM ₅	5 (188) & 4 (133) - 83.38%	Respondents believe that the image of destinations is built not only through traditional marketing campaigns but increasingly through content shared on social media, such as photos, videos, and travelers' experiences.
SM ₆	5 (205) - 53.24%	Respondents place high importance on comments and reviews, not only for other consumers but also for enterprises. They understand that through their feedback, they actively participate in shaping offerings and service quality.

Source: Author's calculation

Table 9 presents the values for each respondent's statement regarding E-Business in Tourism Enterprises. The results confirm that respondents recognize e-business as a strategic determinant in the development of tourism enterprises, particularly in relation to brand strengthening, enhancement of marketing activities, and development of online sales.

Respondents perceive e-business in tourism enterprises as an indispensable component of modern tourism management. E-business in tourism: enhances market visibility and brand image, transforms marketing and distribution strategies, stimulates the development of electronic sales, but does not act in isolation in the consumer purchase decision-making process.

Overall, the results indicate that digital transformation in tourism is a systemic process, requiring the integration of: social media, online advertising, online presentation, and users' digital competence. E-business can therefore be defined as a key factor for the long-term competitiveness and sustainable development of tourism enterprises.

Table 9. Analysis of Respondents' Attitudes Toward E-Business in Tourism Enterprises

Statements for E-Business in Tourism Enterprises	1	2	3	4	5
eBTE ₁ Promotional activities on social media positively correlate with the development, recognition, and sales performance of tourism products and services.	6	20	55	130	174
eBTE ₂ Online promotion of tourism brands represents a significant predictor of enhancing brand image and increasing potential tourists' interest.	11	14	66	106	188
eBTE ₃ Internet advertising of tourism products and services has a statistically significant impact on consumers' final purchase or booking decisions.	24	59	89	91	122
eBTE ₄ Social media, as a contemporary form of business communication, act as a catalyst for the development of electronic sales in the tourism sector.	14	15	63	129	164
eBTE ₅ E-business becomes a determinant for the improvement of marketing strategies and distribution models in tourism.	6	14	57	121	187
eBTE ₆ The intensity of online sales development for tourism products and services largely depends on the digital competence and awareness of potential tourists.	6	22	59	135	163

Source: Author's calculation

Based on the values presented in (Table 9), an analysis of respondents' attitudes was conducted, highlighting the dominant factors and their corresponding descriptions regarding E-Business in Tourism Enterprises (Table 10).

Table 10. Dominant Factors and Descriptions of Respondents' Attitudes Toward E-Business in Tourism Enterprises

Statement	Dominant Factor	Description
eBTE ₁	5 (174) & 4 (130) - 78.96%	Respondents recognize a direct link between promotional activities on social media and business performance. Social media are not merely a channel for raising awareness but also a channel that can directly influence sales.
eBTE ₂	5 (188) & 4 (106) - 76.36%	Respondents believe that brands not present online risk remaining unnoticed and having a weaker image. Online presence is crucial for building brand image and generating consumer interest.
eBTE ₃	5 (122) & 4 (91) - 55.32%	Respondents express divided opinions: while one-third consider that online advertising has a significant impact, a substantial portion remains skeptical. Purchase decisions are influenced by a combination of factors, not advertising alone.
eBTE ₄	5 (164) & 4 (129) - 76.10%	Respondents recognize social media as a driving force for the development of electronic sales. Social media are not only a communication channel but also a mechanism that directly stimulates and accelerates online sales growth.
eBTE ₅	5 (187) & 4 (121) - 80.00%	Respondents perceive e-business as a key factor shaping modern marketing and distribution. E-business is not merely an addition to traditional models but becomes a determinant that defines how marketing is conducted.
eBTE ₆	5 (163) & 4 (135) - 77.40%	Respondents identify consumer digital literacy as a critical factor in the development of online sales. The growth of online sales depends not only on the enterprise but also on consumers' readiness to use digital channels.

Source: Author's calculation

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To examine the impact of Brand and Social Media on E-Business in Tourism Enterprises in the Republic of Croatia, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. The results indicate that the model is statistically significant as a whole ($F=874.16$; $p<0.0001$). The coefficient of determination value, $R^2=0.8206$, indicates that an exceptionally high 82.06% of the variance in e-business among tourism enterprises can be explained by the influence of Brand and Social Media. The adjusted $R^2=0.8197$ confirms the stability of the model and the absence of redundant predictors.

When considered individually, both predictors demonstrate a statistically significant positive effect on e-business in tourism enterprises. Brand has an impact of $\beta=0.338$ ($p<0.0001$), while Social Media exerts a stronger effect of $\beta=0.690$ ($p<0.0001$). The standardized Beta coefficients allow for comparison of the relative contribution of predictors, showing that Social Media has approximately twice the influence on e-business compared to Brand.

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)= 2.97 for both predictors is below the threshold of 5, confirming the absence of multicollinearity, i.e., the predictors are not excessively correlated.

Based on the unstandardized coefficients, the regression equation can be expressed as follows (Formula 1):

$$eBTE = -0.130375 + 0.3984428 \cdot BD + 0.6001498 \cdot SM \quad (1)$$

Source: Author's calculation

All identified effects are positive, indicating that an increase in favorable attitudes toward Brand and Social Media leads to a corresponding increase in positive attitudes toward E-Business in Tourism Enterprises.

The results of the regression analysis support the alternative hypothesis (H_a) that Brand and social media have a significant impact on the e-business operations of tourism enterprises. Of particular note is the finding that Social Media exerts approximately twice the influence of Brand, highlighting its critical role in modern tourism business in the Republic of Croatia.

CONCLUSION

The theoretical contribution of this research lies in the formulation of conclusions and recommendations for future studies, thereby verifying the proposed hypotheses and advancing the existing body of knowledge in the field of e-business in tourism. By applying the proposed model, the study provides new insights into the influence of Brand and Social Media on the operations of tourism companies and the development of their services, thereby addressing a previously identified gap in the literature.

The practical contribution of the research is reflected in the fact that the obtained empirical results, combined with theoretical models, can serve as a relevant foundation for guiding marketing and managerial activities in the tourism sector. Particularly significant are the implications for enhancing digital promotion and developing brand-building strategies for tourism enterprises.

Given the current relevance and significance of the topic, the research outcomes are expected to have dual importance. The study opens avenues for future research in

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