

AI-Generated Visual Authenticity and Perceived Justice Drive Tourist Patronage Intentions

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) has transformed destination marketing by enabling the creation of visually compelling promotional content. While AI-generated visuals offer new opportunities for tourism promotion, concerns about their perceived authenticity and fairness may influence tourists' behavioral intentions. This study examines how the perceived authenticity of AI-generated visuals and perceived justice affect tourist patronage intention toward Bali as a tourism destination. A quantitative explanatory research design was employed, using a cross-sectional survey of 130 valid respondents who had viewed AI-generated tourism visuals of Bali. Data were collected via an online questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results show that perceived authenticity of AI-generated visuals has a positive and significant effect on tourist patronage intention ($\beta = 0.299$, $p = 0.002$). Perceived justice also has a positive and significant effect on tourist patronage intention and demonstrates a stronger effect ($\beta = 0.611$, $p < 0.001$). The findings indicate that tourists' patronage intentions are shaped by both the perceived authenticity of AI-generated destination visuals and perceptions of fairness in destination management. The study contributes to the emerging literature on AI-enabled tourism marketing by integrating visual authenticity and perceived justice into a single framework and provides practical implications for destination marketing organizations to use AI-generated visual content while maintaining credible communication and responsible destination management.

Keywords *AI-generated visual content, Perceived authenticity, Perceived justice, Tourist patronage intention, Destination marketing*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed how tourists search for information, evaluate destinations, and make travel decisions (Buhalis et al., 2022). Contemporary tourism increasingly relies on digital platforms throughout the travel decision-making process, from information search and destination evaluation to trip planning and post-visit experience sharing (Mehraliyev et al., 2020). In this digital environment, destination-related information is no longer consumed solely through traditional promotional channels but is increasingly encountered on websites, social media, and other digital platforms. Consequently, tourist patronage intention has become an important outcome in destination marketing because it reflects tourists' willingness to engage with, visit, revisit, seek information about, and recommend a destination (Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2025). Understanding the factors that shape these intentions is therefore increasingly important as destinations compete for tourists' attention in highly digitalized information environments.

Visual content is one of the most influential forms of communication in digital destination marketing (Tussyadiah, 2020). Social media has further amplified this influence by enabling destination-related visual content to reach large audiences rapidly (Zhan et al., 2024). Previous

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research also indicates that online destination representations can shape tourists' perceptions of destination image and authenticity, thereby influencing behavioral intentions. Thus, visual representations have become an important informational cue through which tourists evaluate destinations when direct experience is not yet available.

The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) has introduced a new dimension to digital destination marketing by enabling marketers to generate highly realistic, attractive, and customized visual representations of tourism destinations. AI-generated visual content can provide destination marketers with greater flexibility in producing promotional materials and may increase tourists' attention and engagement (Bui et al., 2024). However, the increasing realism of AI-generated images also creates an important marketing problem: tourists may find it difficult to distinguish between visual representations that accurately reflect destination conditions and those that are substantially enhanced or artificially constructed. When promotional images create expectations that differ from tourists' subsequent experiences, the resulting discrepancy may undermine the credibility of destination communication and reduce tourists' confidence in the destination. This issue makes the authenticity of AI-generated visual content particularly important for understanding tourists' responses to AI-assisted destination marketing.

Perceived authenticity is therefore a critical issue in using AI-generated visual content for tourism promotion. Perceived authenticity refers to tourists' subjective evaluation of whether a representation appears genuine, credible, natural, and consistent with the actual destination experience (Kovács, 2019; Kirkby, 2023). Unlike objective authenticity, which concerns whether an object or representation is genuinely authentic, perceived authenticity depends on how audiences interpret and evaluate the credibility of the representation they encounter. Recent research has begun to examine the relationship among AI-generated visual content, authenticity, and tourist behavioral responses (Bui et al., 2024). When tourists perceive AI-generated destination images as authentic, such content may serve as a credible signal that reduces uncertainty and strengthens confidence in destination information. Conversely, perceptions of artificiality or excessive manipulation may weaken the credibility of promotional communication and discourage favorable responses toward the destination.

Beyond the authenticity of promotional representations, tourists may also assess whether the destination is managed and promoted fairly and responsibly. Perceived justice reflects tourists' assessments of fairness in destination management and tourism-related interactions, including transparency, responsiveness, equitable treatment, and responsible management (Wu et al., 2023). These perceptions may arise from tourists' interactions with tourism businesses, destination managers, local communities, and tourism facilities (Lin et al., 2019). Fair and responsible destination management can strengthen tourists' confidence in the destination and encourage positive behavioral responses. Therefore, while authentic visual communication may influence tourists during the pre-visit information search stage, perceptions of justice may become particularly relevant when tourists evaluate the broader relationship between themselves and the destination.

Although previous studies have examined AI-generated tourism content, destination authenticity, and perceived justice, these streams of research have largely developed separately. Research on AI-generated visual content has increasingly focused on authenticity and its implications for tourist responses, while studies on perceived justice have primarily examined fairness in tourism services, destination management, and tourist citizenship or loyalty-related behaviors. Consequently, limited empirical attention has been given to how the perceived authenticity of AI-generated visual content and perceived justice jointly shape tourist patronage intention within a single research framework. This represents an important research gap because tourists may evaluate both the credibility of what a destination communicates and the fairness of

how the destination is managed when forming their behavioral intentions. Addressing these two dimensions together may therefore provide a more comprehensive explanation of tourist responses to contemporary AI-enabled destination marketing.

Bali offers a relevant empirical context for addressing this research gap because of its strong tourism appeal, extensive destination imagery, and ongoing exposure to digital tourism promotion. Bali's importance as a tourism destination is reflected in its substantial tourist arrivals; for example, Bali recorded 551,100 direct international tourist visits in December 2024, and the number increased to 572,668 in December 2025 ([BPS-Statistics Indonesia Bali Province, 2025, 2026](#)). Bali has also been identified in tourism research as an important destination in Indonesia where social media and visual communication play a role in destination promotion and branding. Bali's strong visual identity, combined with the intensive circulation of destination-related images through digital platforms, makes it particularly relevant for examining how tourists evaluate AI-generated representations. At the same time, the gap between idealized digital representations and actual destination experiences makes authenticity and fairness important considerations in understanding tourists' patronage intentions.

Therefore, this study aims to examine how perceived authenticity of AI-generated visual content and perceived justice influence tourist patronage intention toward Bali. Specifically, the study investigates whether tourists' perceptions of the authenticity of AI-generated destination visuals and their perceptions of fairness in destination management contribute to their willingness to support the destination through patronage-related intentions. By integrating these two perspectives into a single research framework, this study contributes to the emerging literature on AI-enabled destination marketing by demonstrating how informational credibility and fairness perceptions can jointly explain tourist behavioral intentions. The findings are also expected to provide practical implications for destination marketing organizations seeking to use AI-generated visual content while maintaining credible destination representations and fair, transparent, and responsible destination management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Signaling Theory explains how individuals rely on observable signals to reduce uncertainty in situations of information asymmetry ([Spence, 1973](#)). In tourism, prospective tourists often cannot directly verify a destination's quality or authenticity before visiting. Consequently, they rely on external cues, such as promotional images and online information, to assess destination credibility. In AI-generated destination marketing, the perceived authenticity of visual content can serve as a credibility signal that helps tourists judge whether digitally generated images accurately represent destination conditions. A stronger perception of authenticity may therefore reduce uncertainty and encourage favorable behavioral intentions toward the destination.

Complementing the signaling perspective, Equity Theory holds that individuals assess fairness by comparing the inputs they invest with the outcomes they receive ([Adams, 1965](#)). In tourism, tourists may assess whether the time, effort, and financial resources they expend are fairly balanced against the quality of services, safety, hospitality, and overall travel experiences they receive. From this perspective, perceived justice reflects tourists' overall evaluations of fairness in destination management, including equitable treatment, responsiveness, transparent communication, and responsible governance ([Wu et al., 2023](#)). When tourists perceive that a destination is managed fairly and responsibly, they may form more positive evaluations and stronger supportive behavioral intentions.

Perceived authenticity is tourists' evaluation of whether visual content appears genuine, credible, and representative of the destination. Unlike objective authenticity, perceived authenticity depends on how audiences interpret and assess the realism of promotional content ([Kovács, 2019](#);

Kirkby, 2023). This distinction is especially relevant in AI-generated destination marketing, where digitally generated images can produce highly realistic representations that may differ from tourists' actual experiences. When AI-generated destination images are perceived as authentic, tourists may view the promotional information as more credible and, consequently, develop more favorable behavioral intentions toward the destination.

Perceived justice concerns tourists' perceptions of fairness in destination management and tourism-related interactions. Drawing on the multidimensional justice framework proposed by Colquitt (2001), justice perceptions can encompass distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational considerations. In the present study, however, perceived justice is conceptualized as an overall perception of fairness in destination management and is measured as a single construct. This perception may be shaped by tourists' evaluations of how destination authorities respond to their concerns, provide information, fulfill public responsibilities, distribute tourism benefits, and treat local residents fairly. These perceptions align with the broader understanding of justice in tourism settings (Lin et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2023).

Tourist patronage intention reflects tourists' willingness to support a destination through behaviors such as visiting, revisiting, seeking additional information, and recommending it to others (Baker et al., 2002; Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2025). In digital tourism contexts, these intentions may be influenced by the information and visual representations encountered during pre-visit decision-making. Accordingly, both the credibility of destination representations and tourists' perceptions of destination management may contribute to favorable patronage-related intentions.

The relationship between perceived authenticity and tourist patronage intention can be explained by Signaling Theory. Because prospective tourists cannot directly verify whether AI-generated destination images accurately reflect actual destination conditions, perceived authenticity can serve as a signal that reduces uncertainty in destination evaluation. When visual content is perceived as authentic, tourists may place greater confidence in the promotional message and be more willing to engage in favorable destination-related behaviors. Previous studies provide empirical support for the positive role of authenticity in tourism behavioral outcomes. Chen et al. (2020) found that destination brand authenticity enhances revisit and recommendation intentions, while Zhou et al. (2022) demonstrated that authenticity contributes to revisit intention through memorable tourism experiences and place attachment. Similarly, Zhao et al. (2024) reported that authenticity strengthens tourist satisfaction and revisit intention in heritage tourism. Building on these theoretical and empirical arguments, this study proposes:

H1: Perceived authenticity of AI-generated visual content positively influences tourist patronage intention.

The relationship between perceived justice and tourist patronage intention can also be understood through Equity Theory. When tourists perceive that a destination offers fair treatment, responsive service, transparent information, and equitable outcomes, they may form more favorable evaluations of the destination and stronger intentions to support it. Empirical research supports this expectation. Rodríguez-Sánchez et al. (2025) found that perceived justice promotes tourist patronage intention through tourist citizenship behavior, while Ekiz (2019) demonstrated that fair complaint handling enhances tourists' loyalty intentions. These findings suggest that perceptions of fairness can lead to favorable behavioral responses toward a destination. Therefore, tourists who perceive destination management as fair and responsible are expected to exhibit stronger patronage intentions. Accordingly:

H2: Perceived justice positively influences tourist patronage intention.

Based on the theoretical arguments and empirical findings discussed above, this study proposes a conceptual framework in which perceived authenticity of AI-generated visual content and perceived justice are expected to positively influence tourist patronage intention. The proposed research model is shown in Figure 1.

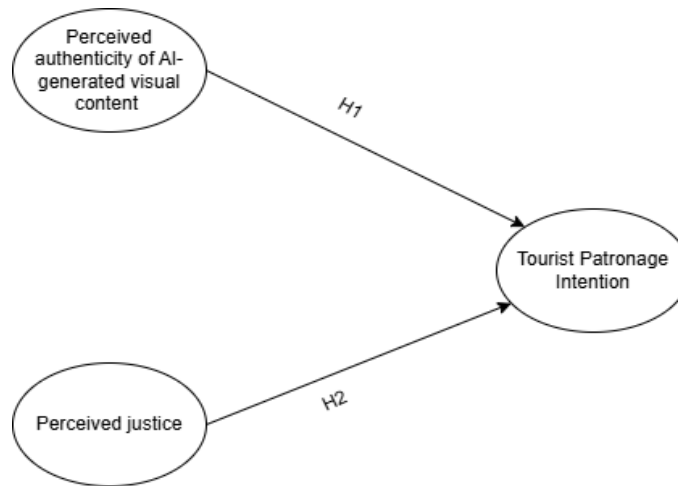


Figure 1. Research Model

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative, explanatory research design to examine how perceived authenticity of AI-generated visual content and perceived justice affect tourist patronage intention. Primary data were collected via an online survey using a structured questionnaire. All measurement items were rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The target population consisted of Indonesian domestic tourists who actively use social media to search for travel-related information. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that respondents met the study's objectives. To be eligible, respondents were required to (1) be domestic tourists, (2) have undertaken at least one leisure trip during the previous 12 months, (3) use social media as a source of destination information, and (4) be familiar with Bali as a tourism destination. The questionnaire was distributed online to Indonesian domestic tourists who used social media to obtain tourism-related information and had experience with domestic travel. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed, 138 responses were returned, and 130 responses were retained as valid after screening for completeness and eligibility. The final sample of 130 respondents was subsequently used for PLS-SEM analysis.

To operationalize perceived authenticity of AI-generated visual content, respondents were presented with a single visual stimulus depicting a tourism destination in Bali before completing the perceived authenticity measures. The visual stimulus was embedded directly in the online questionnaire and accompanied by an instruction stating that the image represented an AI-generated photograph of a tourism destination in Bali. Respondents then evaluated the visual stimulus using four perceived authenticity items assessing whether the image appeared real, authentic, and natural. Thus, all respondents evaluated the same visual stimulus before responding to the perceived authenticity items. The specific generative AI platform and original prompt used to create the visual stimulus were not systematically documented during the initial data-collection process. Therefore, these details are not retrospectively specified in this study to avoid making

unsupported claims regarding the image-generation process.

This study examined three main constructs: perceived authenticity of AI-generated visual content, perceived justice, and tourist patronage intention. Each construct was defined conceptually based on the relevant literature and operationalized using measurement items adapted from established studies. All measurement items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Perceived authenticity refers to the extent to which tourists perceive an AI-generated visual representation of a destination as genuine, real, authentic, and natural. In this study, the construct captures tourists' subjective evaluations of whether AI-generated images of Bali provide a credible, natural representation of the destination rather than appearing artificial or excessively manipulated. Perceived authenticity was measured using four items adapted from [Kirkby \(2023\)](#) and contextualized to AI-generated destination visual content. Minor wording adjustments were made to ensure the items were appropriate for the tourism and AI-generated visual content context. Perceived justice refers to tourists' overall perceptions of fairness in the management of a tourism destination and in the provision of tourism-related information, responsibilities, benefits, and treatment to relevant stakeholders. In this study, perceived justice represents tourists' perceptions of whether the Bali local government acts fairly, responds to tourists' concerns, provides timely information, fulfills its public responsibilities, distributes tourism revenues fairly, and provides reasonable compensation to local residents. The construct was measured using five items adapted from [Wu et al. \(2023\)](#) and contextualized to Bali's destination management setting. The items therefore capture an overall perception of fairness rather than treating distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice as separate constructs. Tourist patronage intention refers to a tourist's willingness or likelihood to engage in favorable behavioral responses toward a destination, including visiting, exploring, and expressing positive support for the destination. In this study, tourist patronage intention represents respondents' willingness to praise Bali, explore destinations in Bali, and travel to Bali. The construct was measured using three items adapted from [Baker et al. \(2002\)](#), with the original retail/store context modified to reflect destination patronage in tourism. These modifications were made to ensure conceptual relevance to the Bali tourism context while retaining the underlying meaning of patronage intention.

The proposed research model was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM was selected because it is appropriate for prediction-oriented research and for simultaneously estimating multiple relationships among latent constructs. Following the recommended two-stage analytical procedure, the measurement model was first evaluated by assessing indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Subsequently, the structural model was assessed by evaluating collinearity, the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and the significance of the hypothesized relationships using bootstrapping.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	52	40.0
	Female	78	60.0
Region of residence	West Java	45	34.6
	Greater Jakarta	32	24.6
	East Java	25	19.2
	Central Java	18	13.8
	Other regions	10	7.7

Travel frequency (last 12 months)	≥ 1 trip	130	100
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Source: Authors' calculation.

A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed to respondents meeting the predefined sampling criteria. Of these, 138 were returned, yielding a response rate of 92%. After screening for completeness and eligibility, 130 valid responses (86%) were retained for subsequent analysis. As shown in Table 1, all respondents were Indonesian domestic tourists who had taken at least one leisure trip in the previous 12 months and regularly used social media to obtain destination-related information. Female respondents accounted for 60% of the sample, while males represented 40%. Most respondents resided in West Java (34.6%), followed by the Greater Jakarta area (24.6%), East Java (19.2%), Central Java (13.8%), and other regions outside Java (7.7%). These characteristics indicate that the sample adequately represents active domestic tourists who are familiar with digital tourism platforms and therefore provides an appropriate basis for examining perceptions of AI-generated destination images and tourist patronage intention.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Measurement Items

Construct	Code	Measurement Item / Questionnaire Statement	Mean	SD
Perceived Authenticity of AI-Generated Visual Content	PAV 1	The AI-generated photo of a tourist destination in Bali looks genuine.	3.838	1.084
	PAV 2	The AI-generated photo of a tourist destination in Bali looks real.	3.885	1.009
	PAV 3	The AI-generated photo of a tourist destination in Bali appears authentic.	3.715	1.051
	PAV 4	The AI-generated photo of a tourist destination in Bali appears natural.	3.623	1.087
Perceived Justice	PJ 1	The Bali local government pays close attention to tourists' questions and suggestions.	3.238	1.055
	PJ 2	The Bali local government is very timely in publishing information about its policies.	3.323	1.013
	PJ 3	The Bali local government has fulfilled its responsibilities regarding public affairs (e.g., tourist protection).	3.262	1.008
	PJ 4	The Bali local government has been very fair in distributing tourism revenues.	3.223	0.959
	PJ 5	The Bali local government provides fair compensation to its residents.	3.300	0.937
Tourist Patronage Intention	TPI 1	I am willing to praise tourist destinations in Bali.	3.808	1.252
	TPI 2	I am willing to explore destinations in Bali.	4.069	1.196
	TPI 3	I am likely to travel to tourist destinations in Bali.	4.000	1.100

Source: Authors' calculation.

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for the 12 measurement items assessing perceived authenticity of AI-generated visual content, perceived justice, and tourist patronage intention. Overall, mean scores ranged from 3.223 to 4.069, indicating generally positive perceptions across the three constructs. Standard deviations ranged from 0.937 to 1.252, suggesting moderate variation in respondents' evaluations. For perceived authenticity of AI-generated visual content,

means ranged from 3.623 to 3.885. PAV2 recorded the highest mean ($M = 3.885$, $SD = 1.009$), indicating that respondents tended to perceive the AI-generated images as visually real. PAV4 had the lowest mean within this construct ($M = 3.623$, $SD = 1.087$), suggesting that perceptions of naturalness were comparatively weaker. Nevertheless, all four items exceeded the midpoint of the five-point scale, indicating an overall positive perception of the authenticity of the AI-generated visual content.

The perceived justice items produced relatively moderate mean scores, ranging from 3.223 to 3.323. PJ2 recorded the highest mean ($M = 3.323$, $SD = 1.013$), whereas PJ4 had the lowest mean ($M = 3.223$, $SD = 0.959$). These results indicate that respondents generally perceived the Bali local government as demonstrating a reasonable level of fairness and responsiveness, although these perceptions were less pronounced than those observed for tourist patronage intention.

Tourist patronage intention obtained the highest mean values among the three constructs. TPI2 had the highest mean across all measurement items ($M = 4.069$, $SD = 1.196$), followed by TPI3 ($M = 4.000$, $SD = 1.100$) and TPI1 ($M = 3.808$, $SD = 1.252$). These findings suggest that respondents showed a relatively strong intention to explore and travel to destinations in Bali. The relatively higher standard deviation for TPI1 indicates greater variation among respondents regarding their willingness to praise Bali as a tourist destination.

Table 3. Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Loading Range	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Perceived Authenticity of AI-Generated Visual Content	0.840–0.902	0.765	0.895	0.896
Perceived Justice	0.851–0.912	0.731	0.901	0.903
Tourist Patronage Intention	0.882–0.910	0.826	0.908	0.909

Note: Recommended thresholds: indicator loadings ≥ 0.70 ; AVE ≥ 0.50 ; Cronbach's alpha ≥ 0.70 ; Composite Reliability ≥ 0.70 (Hair et al., 2022).

The measurement model was evaluated by assessing convergent validity and internal consistency reliability. As shown in Table 3, all constructs met the recommended measurement criteria. Indicator loading ranged from 0.840 to 0.912, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, and AVE values ranged from 0.731 to 0.826, confirming satisfactory convergent validity. In addition, both Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating adequate internal consistency reliability across all constructs. Overall, these results demonstrate that the measurement model has satisfactory psychometric properties and is appropriate for subsequent structural model evaluation.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity (Fornell–Larcker Criterion)

Construct	PAVC	PJ	TPI
Perceived Authenticity of AI-Generated Visual Content	0.875		
Perceived Justice	0.xxx	0.855	
Tourist Patronage Intention	0.xxx	0.xxx	0.909

Diagonal values (bold) represent the square root of the AVE.

As shown in Table 4, the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with other constructs, confirming satisfactory discriminant validity based on the Fornell–Larcker

criterion.

Table 5. Structural Model Assessment

Construct / Relationship	VIF	R ²	Adjusted R ²	f ²	Interpretation
Perceived Authenticity of AI-Generated Visual Content → Tourist Patronage Intention	1.743	–	–	0.155	Medium effect
Perceived Justice → Tourist Patronage Intention	1.743	–	–	0.647	Large effect
Tourist Patronage Intention	–	0.727	0.723	–	Substantial explanatory power

Note: VIF < 5 indicates no multicollinearity; R² values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 indicate substantial, moderate, and weak explanatory power, respectively; f² values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicate small, medium, and large effect sizes (Hair et al., 2022).

The structural model was subsequently evaluated by assessing collinearity, explanatory power, and effect size. As shown in Table 5, all VIF values were below the recommended threshold of 5.0, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern. The model explained 72.7% of the variance in Tourist Patronage Intention (R² = 0.727; Adjusted R² = 0.723), indicating substantial explanatory power. Furthermore, the effect size analysis showed that Perceived Justice had a large effect (f² = 0.647), whereas Perceived Authenticity of AI-Generated Visual Content had a medium effect (f² = 0.155). These results indicate that both constructs contributed meaningfully to explaining tourist patronage intention, with perceived justice being the stronger predictor.

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Structural Path	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	Perceived Authenticity of AI-Generated Visual Content → Tourist Patronage Intention	0.299	3.158	0.002	Supported
H2	Perceived Justice → Tourist Patronage Intention	0.611	7.194	< 0.001	Supported

Note: Hypotheses are considered significant at p < 0.05.

The proposed hypotheses were tested using bootstrapping. As shown in Table 6, both hypothesized relationships were positive and statistically significant, supporting H1 and H2. Perceived Authenticity of AI-Generated Visual Content positively influenced Tourist Patronage Intention, indicating that tourists were more likely to support a destination when AI-generated promotional images were perceived as authentic. Furthermore, Perceived Justice had a stronger positive effect on Tourist Patronage Intention than Perceived Authenticity, suggesting that fairness perceptions are the dominant factor shaping tourists' behavioral intentions toward the destination.

The findings indicate that Perceived Authenticity of AI-Generated Visual Content has a positive and significant effect on Tourist Patronage Intention, suggesting that tourists are more likely to visit, seek additional information, and recommend a destination when AI-generated promotional images are perceived as authentic. This finding supports [Spence's Signaling Theory \(1973\)](#), which argues that individuals rely on credible signals to reduce uncertainty under conditions of information asymmetry. Since prospective tourists cannot directly verify destination quality before visiting, authentic visual content serves as a trustworthy signal that enhances

destination credibility. This result is consistent with previous studies showing that authenticity positively influences tourists' behavioral intentions, including revisit and recommendation intentions (Bui et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2024).

The results further demonstrate that Perceived Justice positively influences Tourist Patronage Intention and has a stronger effect than Perceived Authenticity. This finding suggests that although authentic AI-generated visual content can attract tourists during the information search stage, tourists place greater importance on whether destinations are managed fairly and responsibly when forming their behavioral intentions. This finding is consistent with Equity Theory (Adams, 1965), which posits that individuals evaluate fairness by comparing the resources they invest with the benefits they receive. In tourism, fair treatment, responsible destination management, and high-quality services strengthen tourists' confidence and encourage supportive behaviors, including revisit and recommendation intentions. This result also corroborates previous studies emphasizing the importance of perceived justice in shaping tourist behavior (Ekiz, 2019; Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2025).

Overall, the findings suggest that both authentic AI-generated visual content and perceived justice strengthen tourist patronage intention. However, the stronger influence of perceived justice indicates that attractive digital promotion alone is insufficient to sustain tourists' behavioral intentions. Destination management organizations should therefore ensure that AI-generated promotional content accurately reflects actual destination conditions while maintaining fair, transparent, and responsible destination management. Aligning authentic digital representation with positive tourism experiences is likely to strengthen tourists' trust and encourage long-term destination support.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined how perceived authenticity of AI-generated visual content and perceived justice affect tourist patronage intention toward Bali. The findings show that both perceived authenticity of AI-generated visual content and perceived justice have positive and significant effects on tourist patronage intention. These results indicate that tourists are more likely to develop favorable patronage intentions when AI-generated destination visuals are perceived as genuine and destination management is perceived as fair and responsible. Among the two predictors, perceived justice had the stronger effect, suggesting that tourists' behavioral intentions are influenced not only by the credibility of destination representations but also by broader perceptions of fairness in destination management.

The study contributes to the emerging literature on AI-enabled tourism marketing by integrating two complementary perspectives, authenticity of AI-generated visual content and perceived justice, within a single framework of tourist patronage intention. While previous research has examined authenticity in AI-generated tourism content and justice in tourism-related interactions, this study provides empirical evidence that these two dimensions can jointly explain tourists' behavioral intentions toward a destination. The findings therefore extend the discussion of AI in tourism beyond the effectiveness and attractiveness of generated content by emphasizing the importance of maintaining credibility and fairness throughout the destination experience.

From a practical perspective, destination marketing organizations and tourism authorities should not rely solely on the visual appeal of AI-generated promotional content. AI-generated images should be developed and communicated in ways that remain consistent with actual destination conditions to reduce unrealistic expectations and maintain tourists' confidence. At the same time, destination authorities should strengthen transparent communication, responsiveness to tourists, responsible destination management, fair distribution of tourism benefits, and appropriate treatment of local communities. The stronger effect of perceived justice further

suggests that the use of AI for destination promotion should be accompanied by responsible governance and destination management practices. An integrated approach combining credible AI-generated visual communication with fair destination management may therefore provide a stronger foundation for sustained tourist patronage.

LIMITATIONS & FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has several limitations to consider when interpreting the findings. First, the study employed a cross-sectional survey design, which captures respondents' perceptions and behavioral intentions at a single point in time and therefore does not allow changes in these perceptions to be observed over time. Second, the empirical context was limited to Bali, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings to other destinations with different tourism characteristics, governance contexts, and levels of digital development. Third, the study focused on perceived authenticity of AI-generated visual content and perceived justice as predictors of tourist patronage intention, while other potentially relevant factors, such as trust in AI-generated content, perceived risk, destination image, or technology acceptance, were not included in the model. Finally, although an AI-generated visual stimulus was embedded in the questionnaire, the specific generative AI platform and original prompt used to produce the stimulus were not systematically documented during the initial data-collection process. This limits how fully the exact image-generation procedure can be replicated. Future research could address this issue by systematically documenting the generative AI platform, model or version, prompts, and relevant image-generation parameters to enhance methodological transparency and reproducibility.

Future research could address these limitations by employing longitudinal or experimental designs to examine how tourists' responses change after exposure to different levels of AI-generated visual realism and authenticity. Comparative studies across destinations could also determine whether the relationships identified in this study remain consistent across different cultural, geographical, and tourism contexts. Future research could also extend the proposed model by incorporating mediating or moderating variables such as trust in AI-generated content, perceived risk, destination image, prior destination experience, or AI literacy. Such extensions would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how tourists evaluate AI-generated destination representations and how these evaluations translate into long-term destination-related behavioral intentions.

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