

## TOURISM VALUE CHAIN, QUALITY TOURISM EXPERIENCE AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE: EVIDENCE FROM STAR-RATED HOTELS IN ETHIOPIA

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**Citation:** Ayele, L.A., & Singh, A. (2024). TOURISM VALUE CHAIN, QUALITY TOURISM EXPERIENCE AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE: EVIDENCE FROM STAR-RATED HOTELS IN ETHIOPIA. *Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites*, 54(2spl), 831–841. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.542spl07-1258>

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**Abstract:** The tourism value chain has been identified as a basic analytical tool in the tourism industry. The study aims to explore the relationship between quality tourism experience, tourism value chain, and competitive advantage in star-rated hotels. Three hundred twenty-eight (328) general managers and marketing managers of hotels in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, filled out questionnaires as part of a quantitative procedure, and Smart PLS was applied. The findings reveal a robust relationship between the tourism value chain and quality tourism experience, with the mediating role of quality tourism experience on competitive advantages. The developed model demonstrated high predictive relevance, estimates the relationships between quality tourism experience and competitive advantage, and makes accurate predictions.

**Keywords:** value chain, tourism value chain, quality tourism experience, competitive advantage, star-rated hotels, Ethiopia

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### INTRODUCTION

Traveling and engaging with diverse cultures, faiths, and customs allow people to broaden their perspectives, experience new things, and develop an appreciation for the natural world and humanity (Buhalis, 2022). The tourism value chain connects travelers to a wide range of goods and services at the destination, including transportation from their home location to the destination (Porter, 1985). Thus, it encompasses local and international firms (Khan and Banerjee, 2020). Travelers are not monolithic; they seek diverse experiences unique to their cultural, religious, educational, and lifestyle backgrounds (Novotny et al., 2024). Industry sector boundaries are irrelevant when managing the value chain and maximizing the consumer's value by interacting with its many components. Tourism experts and practitioners state that the conventional need for sightseeing has given way to cultural learning experiences as the primary reason for travel. Each stage-specific expertise adds up to an overall quality tourism experience, and the stages along the tourism value chain influence quality experiences (Adiyia et al., 2015). Tourism providers aim to offer travelers products and services that enhance their travel experience, understanding the value chain and its relationship to quality tourism experience (Potjanjaruwit, 2023). The emphasis is changing from a service-based to an experience-based economy due to today's smart and demanding clients, modern technology, and other factors (Jennings et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2021). Although tourism studies have accepted the value chain approach, a more thorough analysis of the research and practice showed that the idea is applied in two ways that are: 1. destination logic, which sees destinations as a group of services that tourists can use while on vacation. Tourists are more likely to spend more money in locations that offer a wide variety of openly and quickly connected items that meet all of their needs than in areas where product consistency is lacking (Liu et al., 2023). The researcher examines this reasoning by following a service or product through production (Suparman et al., 2023). 2. Supply chain logic: This line of reasoning is based on Porter's paradigm. The researcher tracks the development of a service or product while analyzing this logic. The supply logic explains the steps used to produce, sell, and deliver the service or product (Gómez et al., 2023).

Yothicar et al.'s (2023) study on Nakhon Nayok's tourism value chain in Thailand found that activities enhanced tourism products. Tourism-related activities include accommodations, activities, facilities, and access to tourist sites. The main activities that brought value to Nakhon Nayok's tourism sector were determined to include the provision of visitor experiences, money generation from tourism, and physical tourism products (Yothicar et al., 2023). Despite the study contributing to the existing literature on the tourism value chain especially in Thailand, the study didn't explore the impact on destination competitiveness and quality tourism experience. The role and importance of intermediaries in the MICE value chain were examined by Rojas-Bueno et al. (2023) using the value chain idea. The study concluded that outbound agents provide value through trust, while incoming agents do so through convenience and competitive pricing (Rojas-Bueno et al., 2023). Since the study employed a multidisciplinary approach to determine the factors contributing to intermediaries

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creating value, it adds to the literature gap regarding the tourism value chain. Due to the large number of participants in the tourism value chain, the primary suppliers, such as hotels, were not considered for integration roles in the study.

The impact of electronic service (e-service) quality on the competitive advantages of Thailand's tourism and hotel industries was investigated by Potjanajaruwit (2023). The findings demonstrate that competitive advantages are correlated with and influenced by the efficiency and dependability of e-services. This study closes knowledge gaps about the significance of online service websites' dependability from the perspective of service providers in Thailand. The study did not look at the tourism experience throughout the consumption phase because of the inherent nature of the hotel industry. Research on visitors' experiences with opulent hospitality during the COVID-19 pandemic in Maldives recommends that travel-related goods and services connected to upscale resorts be reviewed (Kaushal and Yadav, 2024). The study adds knowledge regarding the satisfaction level of tourists in Maldives accommodation establishments, though this study does not consider the suppliers' point of view. A survey by Abdullah et al. (2019) showed how the activities of the value chain and the balanced scorecard are connected and integrated. The study fills the knowledge gap in the literature about assessing an organization's strategic performance while considering tourism enterprises, but it may not be similar in all tourism businesses. According to Berne-Manero et al. (2018), utilitarian and hedonistic factors must be considered to quantify a website's perceived quality and gain a competitive edge in attracting and retaining users. This study fills gaps in the marketing domain related to travelers' pre-tour experiences (Berne-Manero et al., 2018). Its depiction of the tourism value chain is incomplete, as the destination tour experience is not investigated. Based on a literature survey, Varvaressos (2018) examined the methods of the tourism system, the tourism value chain, and the notion of the tourism experience. The study closes knowledge gaps regarding tourism as a system and suggests a value model that can be used in the industry. This study did not imply the performance of the tourism value chain and the tourism experience.

Suleiman (2023) examined how the tourism supply chain affected sustainable performance in an African setting and offered a framework for the literature on tourism supply value. The study neglects the influence of the tourism value chain and beyond the supply chain on sustainable performance. Scholars have conducted extensive investigations into the destination logic from tourists' perspectives, focusing on how it applies to travel destinations. However, studies on value chain practices used by tourism businesses based on supply chain logic are scanty. Though studies on tourists' experiences regarding a memorable experience, cocreation, and involvement are being studied from tourists' perspectives fragmentedly, comprehensive studies focusing on tourism value chain, quality tourism experience, and competitive advantage are rare in the world and none in Ethiopia. Ethiopia has a wealth of breathtakingly diverse attractions, encompassing everything from wildlife and landscapes to cultural monuments, anthropological sites, archaeology, and history (Teklebrhan et al., 2023).

If properly managed, these resources might provide the nation an edge over other African countries in the marketplace (Bogale and Wondirad, 2019). Regarding Ethiopian tourism, there are currently relatively few studies that have been conducted among which Evidence-based policy in Ethiopia (Mitchell and Font, 2017), organizational culture in response to tourism seasonality (Senbeto and Hon, 2021), the handicraft sector and sustainable tourism development (Bogale and Tiruneh, 2022), The role of social media marketing in Ethiopian tourism and hospitality organizations (Berhanu and Raj, 2024), Community Knowledge and Support of ecotourism (Abuhay et al., 2023), Ethiopian tourism practitioners level of awareness on the tourism development policy (Geremew, 2019), political violence and hotels: economic consequences and response strategies (Chiriko, 2021), determinants of women-owned micro- and small tourism enterprise (Tegegne et al., 2024), discovery behavior and creation behavior of Ethiopian entrepreneurs (Eyana et al., 2020), the state, political trigger events and path creation in tourism destination (Belay and Adu-Ampong, 2023), potentials, opportunities and challenges of ecotourism development and (Mekonnen and Mekonen, 2023) can be named. In addition, existing studies focus on destination development, ignoring the tourism value chain, which is the basic analytical tool in the tourism industry. This study aims to fill a major gap in the present literature by demonstrating, in contrast to earlier studies, the dynamic changes in the quality tourism experience along the tourism value chain and sources of competitive advantages in the Ethiopian hotel sector. This study pioneers examining the relationships between the tourism value chain and quality tourism experiences, the tourism value chain and competitive advantage, and the mediating role of quality tourism experiences in Ethiopia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

### 1. Tourism Value Chain

Value chain analysis is a method for strategic study that aids in comprehending more about the company's competitive edge, how customer value adds value and lowers costs, and how it engages with suppliers, customers, and other industry participants (Zaman et al., 2022). A business needs to offer value to draw in and keep clients. Any feature, quality, or performance characteristic of the goods or services that a client is ready to pay for both the goods and the price they receive—typically in the form of money—is considered valuable (Simões et al., 2023).

To create jobs and revenue locally, one must always consider the value chain and what the market will bear (Jain et al., 2022). The value chain of the tourism industry is the collection of interconnected activities carried out at that destination that enhance the tourist experience (Sutomo et al., 2023). A value chain encompasses all essential value-relevant activities, including product delivery to customers, several production phases, including numerous transformations and service inputs, early conception, and final disposals following consumption (Kaplinksky and Morris, 2000). The tourism value chain is a series of primary and supporting activities strategically crucial to the tourism industry's success (Zeng et al., 2023). The tourism industry is represented by a separate cluster of firms in the value The tourism value chain comprises a set of interrelated activities that take place in the same destination and add value to the tourist experience, even though it may not be as immediately tangible as one related to products (Morales-Zamorano et al., 2020). According to Jonker (2004), the

tourism industry's value chain is divided into smaller groups of primary and support activities that cover the whole visitor experience at the destination. This results in a plan where value is added at each stage, including internal logistics, destination services, product (or service) creation, promotion, and post-sale services (Jonker, 2004).

Primary activities are tasks directly related to developing or delivering a product or service. They are the actions that now include packaging, promoting, and providing the tourism experience to the consumer when applied to a place (Hjalager et al., 2016). Support activities: assisting in enhancing the efficacy and efficiency of primary activities. It is difficult to provide these support services since they are provided by several governmental and private organizations that are not tourism-focused but whose effectiveness is essential to any destination's ability to draw tourists (González-Rodríguez et al., 2023). The support activities were divided into four categories: human resource development, destination planning and infrastructure, and development of products, technologies, and systems (Suleiman, 2023).

## 2. Tourism Value Chain and Competitive Advantage

A company's capacity to improve product quality, lower product costs, or increase market share or profit is a competitive advantage. By analyzing the characteristics that value chain analysis-stained resources must possess to be sources of long-term competitive advantage (Wang et al., 2020). The company's resource-based view supports this value chain logic. Only when company resources are helpful can they serve as a source of competitive advantage or long-term competitive advantage (Hadjielias et al., 2022). The set of actions and procedures that go into providing a tourism product or service, from its inception to the traveler's consumption, include the special qualities and skills that enable a company to outperform its competitors (Iloranta and Komppula, 2022). In the context of tourism, competitive advantage can be achieved through differentiation, cost leadership, or a combination of both (Wang et al., 2020). Developing a distinct competitive edge or creating value to increase profit is essential for company success (Wibowo et al., 2024). The tourism value chain uncovers multiple sources of advantage over competitors acquired from the ability to properly manage all tourism sector participants, supported by the ability of local administration to ensure the area's appeal and uniqueness from rivals (Widagdo and Roz, 2023). To provide satisfied tourists with goods and services, all participants in the tourism sector must collaborate to produce value along the value chain. Value chain management aims to help businesses gain a competitive edge by analyzing the value improvement in specific business links (Howieson et al., 2016).

Tourism companies operate in highly competitive and dynamic environments, forcing them to think strategically, act creatively, and track and assess their performance simultaneously to be effective and efficient (John and Supramaniam, 2024). Establishments and destinations looking to gain and maintain a competitive edge in the fast-paced, intensely competitive tourism business must comprehend and manage the tourist value chain. Gaining a competitive edge requires innovation in value chain steering, product creation, and marketing following management performance trends (Alonso et al., 2024). The first stage in implementing the plan is constructing a strategic concept (Rojas-Bueno et al., 2023). Value chain analysis provides additional value to these activities by highlighting the significance of quality in the implemented processes (Alsubailhi et al., 2023). Fostering a company's success requires understanding the effects of certain operational operations, such as product design, production, research and development, marketing, transportation, and other unrelated sectors in long-term competitive advantages (Steck et al., 2010). Providing quality tourism products and services can also generate a competitive advantage since it boosts customer satisfaction and raises the possibility that those interrelated processes will be reviewed in the future (Iloranta and Komppula, 2022). Customer retention strategies, by definition, can only provide a company with a sustained competitive advantage if they are distinctive in a way that appeals to its clientele (Potjanajaruwit et al., 2024). Companies' competitive advantages stem from the performance attained there (Tasnim et al., 2023). Specifically, these pertain to the destination's ability to use resources efficiently to achieve maximum performance and income from international tourism (Hsu et al., 2016). Drawing from the previously studied, the present study put forth the following hypothesis:

**H1.** The tourism value chain positively impacts competitive advantage.

## 3. Tourism Value Chain and Quality Tourism Experience

Experience economy emphasizes how the world economy shifts from a service economy to an experience economy. This message inadvertently brought consumer experience to people's notice and marked the beginning of the study of the tourist experience (Joseph and Gilmore, 1999). Scholars examine the nature and categorization of travel experiences from various disciplinary backgrounds, including consumer behavior, phenomenology, anthropology, psychology, and sociology (Iloranta and Komppula, 2022; Prentice et al., 1998). In the marketing domain, notions around the tourist experience are in flux. Experiences were deemed suitable and high quality early on, but more recently, remarkable and unforgettable encounters have emerged (Hang et al., 2023). While they are related to one another, memorable travel experiences and tourist experiences have distinct meanings and scopes (Al-Shammari, 2022).

Travelers may view pre-trip and en-route activities as a means of improving their perception of the caliber of their in-person encounter, depending on their reasons for traveling (Hung et al., 2016). Delivering remarkable customer experiences creates excellent value and competitive advantage in today's ever-sophisticated consumer environment (Alqahtani, 2023). The tourism experience comprises several discrete experience points offered by various organizations or service providers, such as lodging facilities, rental companies, airlines, tour companies, travel agencies, and cultural and entertainment services (Hosany et al., 2022). A company may become less competitive if a guest is dissatisfied at any point throughout their experience (Varvaressos, 2018). Put another way, providing excellent tourist experiences is challenging and complex, requiring coordination and cooperation between various interrelated and public sectors. Providing top-notch travel experiences is crucial to tourism. Experiences are the reason for travel-related goods and services. Creating tourism

experiences is the ultimate purpose of making these goods and services, including concerts, lodging, and car rentals (Tahar et al., 2018). The stages along the tourism value chain impact the quality of the tourism experience; each stage-specific experience adds up to an overall quality tourism experience (John and Supramaniam, 2024). Understanding the value chain is crucial for tourism service providers who want to offer travelers goods and services that enhance travel. In tourism and hospitality, memorable travel experiences are becoming increasingly significant since they set new standards and can forecast future behavior (Kim, 2014; Morales et al., 2020). The chronological and temporal approach looks at the travel experience, from preparation to post-trip contemplation in the tourism value chain (Wang et al., 2020). Most studies define the value chain of the tourism industry as the collection of interconnected activities carried out at that destination that enhance the tourist experience. Thus, looking into the activities that make up the tourism value chain will be helpful, too. Based on the works of literature above, the researchers posed the following hypothesis:

**H2.** Tourism value chain and quality tourism experience have a mutually beneficial relationship.

#### 4. Quality Tourism Experiences and Competitive Advantage

The value chain approach makes it possible to thoroughly evaluate every tourism-related business to identify opportunities and leakages (Lara-Morales and Clarke, 2022). High-quality tourism products and services can also generate a competitive advantage (Jennings et al., 2009) since they boost customer satisfaction and raise the possibility that those interrelated processes will be revisited, which again generates a competitive advantage (Kerdpitak, 2022). It is anticipated to produce a reasonable degree of profitability as a competitive advantage, as happier and more devoted visitors earn better sales profits from repeat business (Romero et al., 2024). Researchers assure that services should also be approached via subjective perceptions, which depend on how the client interprets the experience, procedures, and concrete cues in their position (Foris et al., 2018; Smith, 2016; Sutomo et al., 2023). From the standpoint of service providers, quality tourism experiences concentrate on giving clients unique and significant experiences (George, 2023). Any tourism destination or organization's primary goal is to provide visitors with unforgettable experiences that will increase their enjoyment, give them a competitive edge, and yield better value. Value chain management aims to increase profits for all parties involved (Hadjielias et al., 2022). From the works of literature reviewed, the study proposed the following hypothesis:

**H3.** Quality tourism experience mediates the relationship between tourism value chain practices and competitive advantage

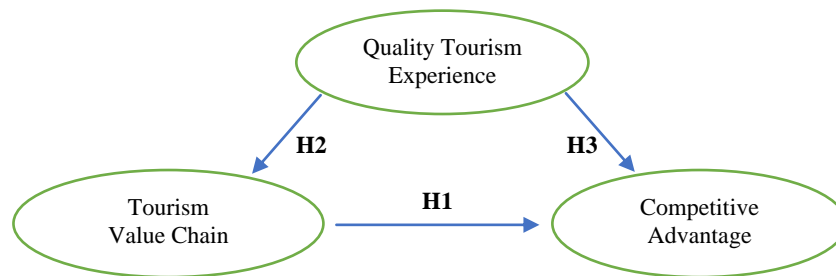


Figure 1. Conceptual model (Source: researchers own development (2024))

## METHODOLOGY

### 1. Research design

The study used an exploratory approach to examine how the tourist value chain and hotel competitive advantages are related and how quality tourism experiences mediate in this relationship. This study used a quantitative methodology to collect its data. An organized survey instrument was employed in the study to collect information on how the quality of the experience mediates the impact of the tourism value chain on competitive advantage. Five university lecturers participated in a pre-test to assess the questionnaire's validity and comprehensibility before data collection. The pilot test was conducted using the revised questionnaire, and 32 hotel managers responded. According to the findings, every variable had sufficient reliability, as evidenced by a Cronbach alpha value greater than 0.7. The participants completed the survey by choosing the appropriate responses from a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1 point) to strongly agree (5 points), depending on their experiences. The survey participants were 328 general managers and marketing managers of Addis Ababa's star-rated hotels. Their rich experience and decision-making ability about the issue made them to be part of the census survey. Due to 4.26 percent of missing data, straight-lining, or no rating differentiation, 14 of 342 completed surveys were discarded.

### 2. Instrumentation

Every item in the study was adapted from measures that had already been validated and were scored on a Likert scale of five where 1 = "strongly disagree," 2 = "disagree," 3 = "neutral," 4 = "agree," and 5 = "strongly agree. The dimensions of the tourism value chain: product creation, promotion, internal logistics, destination services, post-sale services, product development, human resource development, destination planning and infrastructure, and technology and systems development are modified constructs from Jonker (2004) and (UNWTO, 2019). Learning, activities and events, quality service, and place attachment are modified versions of the quality tourism experience aspects from Joseph and Gilmore (1999), Kim (2014), Khuong and Ha (2014) and Wang et al. (2020), dimensions of competitive advantage are also adapted from Molina-Azorín et al. (2015).

### 3. Statistical Analysis

For this inquiry, a higher-order model—also referred to as a hierarchical component model with reflective constructs—

was created. The repeated PLS-SEM indicator technique was employed to assess the model. In the structural model, second-order constructs, which are constructs of first-order factors, are used. Nineteen first-order reflective constructs were evaluated for reliability, convergent validity, and discriminate validity using the methods recommended by (Sun et al., 2018). The Heterotrait- Monotrait (HTMT) ratios swiftly approached the less than 0.85 threshold, as indicated in Table 1. In addition, the Fornell-Larcker criterion is met since the square of each variable, AVE, is bigger than the intercorrelations. All of the constructs used in this investigation met this criterion. Retain the reflective indicator when outer loading is  $> 0.40$  but  $< 0.70$  when deletion of the indicator does not improve AVE and composite reliability (Ketchen, 2013). All other indicator loadings were above 0.7, except for the seven indicators whose outer loadings were between 0.5 and 0.7. Table 2 displays the composite reliability range, greater than 0.5 threshold values, from 0.724 to 0.95, and the AVE range, greater than 0.5 threshold values, from 0.504 to 0.853. Every construct in this investigation complied with this requirement.

Table 1. Discriminant Validity (Source: Smart PLS output based on the researchers' survey data)

HTMT ration $< 0.85$	AC	CA	DS	Dp	HR	IL	Lr	P A	ps	Prc	Pd	Pro	Qs	Tec
Activities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Competitive Advantage	0.60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Destination Service	0.76	0.60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Destination planning	0.55	0.48	0.86	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Human Resource	0.50	0.60	0.73	0.53	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Internal Logistics	0.75	0.69	0.77	0.82	0.84	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Learning	0.80	0.84	0.79	0.71	0.69	0.82	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Place attachment	0.76	0.75	0.66	0.62	0.52	0.76	0.73	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Post Sale Service	0.76	0.69	0.84	0.48	0.77	0.82	0.77	0.54	-	-	-	-	-	-
Product Creation	0.71	0.77	0.84	0.49	0.71	0.75	0.74	0.61	0.80	-	-	-	-	-
Product Development	0.57	0.71	0.79	0.76	0.81	0.83	0.84	0.59	0.79	0.67	-	-	-	-
Promotion	0.54	0.50	0.73	0.59	0.84	0.84	0.46	0.43	0.55	0.73	0.67	-	-	-
Quality Service	0.33	0.83	0.48	0.56	0.66	1.03	0.78	0.60	0.53	0.58	0.76	0.71	-	-
Technology	0.48	0.81	0.72	0.68	0.79	0.81	0.78	0.61	0.85	0.74	0.85	0.75	0.79	-

Table 2. Measurement Model Evaluation (Source: Smart PLS output based on the researchers' survey data)

Tourism Value Chain Dimensions Items	Loadings	Composite Reliability ( CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
<b>Product creation</b>	0.828	0.862	0.61
Our company prepares unique hotel products	0.794		
our company designs diversified hotel products	0.823		
Our company prepares commentaries for hotel products	0.757		
Making meals, lodging, seasonal events, and activities reservations is easy.	0.748		
<b>Promotion</b>	0.748	0.893	0.807
Online and offline, comprehensive product information (hotels, restaurants, retail stores, seasonal events, and activities) is easily accessible.	0.893		
Our company ensures integrated promotion strategies (advertising, exhibitions, internet, workshops)	0.904		
<b>Internal Logistics</b>	0.887	0.794	0.564
All travel-related arrangements are handled by our company, including taking visa applications and offering comprehensive destination information.	0.71		
Our company addresses the safety and security issues of customers	0.83		
Our company warmly receives guests from the airport	0.706		
<b>Destination Service</b>	0.734	0.724	0.599
At the main destination, tourist products are safe and easy to access.	0.687		
Local transportation is efficient and accessible to tourist sites.	0.552		
There is a tourist information counter available for tourists who seek information.	0.691		
Our company assigns knowledgeable personnel to serve tourists	0.585	0.896	0.812
<b>Post-Sale Service</b>	0.783		
Our company maintains detailed information about customers	0.886		
Our company collects feedback	0.916		
<b>Human resource development</b>	0.848	0.941	0.889
Our company recruits, trains, and develops staff effectively.	0.95		
Our company Provides appropriate career paths	0.936		
<b>Product Development</b>	0.863	0.951	0.926
Our company develops new hotel products and services	0.96		
Our company strives to enhance new experiences	0.964		
<b>Destination planning and infrastructure</b>	0.68	0.846	0.648
There is responsible destination planning and resource usage.	0.888		
Roads, airports, rail ports, and suitable public transport systems are all available.	0.769		
There is the provision of appropriate infrastructure like water, electricity	0.751		
<b>Technology and Information system</b>	0.817	0.751	0.617
Our company uses integrated systems of information technology	0.958		
Our company uses a computerized reservation system	0.563		



Quality Tourism Experience Dimensions Items	Loadings	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
<b>Learning Experience</b>	0.917	0.808	0.59
Emphasize "learning opportunities" for our customers as a theme of the business	0.601		
Some guides and brochures help tourists to learn and understand the topics.	0.802		
Create products that catch customers' curiosity to learn something new	0.875		
<b>Activities and Special Events</b>	0.7540	0.831	0.622
The Hotel offers a variety of sports, games, and leisure pursuits.	0.787		
The Hotel offers unique and captivating events unavailable in the tourists' home country.	0.833		
The Hotel arranges different contests where tourists are the participants.	0.743		
<b>Quality of Service</b>	0.768	0.944	0.85
Our service personnel is kind and amiable.	0.851		
We provide incredibly personalized service.	0.942		
Our service team delivers exceptional customer service.	0.968		
<b>Place attachment</b>	0.837	0.852	0.658
We build a hotel with a distinct ethnic identity	0.795		
The Hotel helps visitors form cultural bonds.	0.826		
There are a lot of locations within the Hotel that travelers will find interesting.	0.812		
<b>Competitive Advantage</b> Items	Loadings (item Reliability)	Composite Reliability	Average variance extracted
Competitive Advantage		0.91	0.629
development of a brand that represents the company	0.746		
A great number of supplementary services are offered, adding value for customers	0.861		
Significant advancements are made in the service	0.872		
General costs are minimized	0.753		
An attempt is made to improve productivity	0.737		
Efforts are taken to achieve economies of scale or high occupancy rates	0.778		

The tourism value chain and quality tourism experience were assessed using the second-order reflecting constructs' measuring path coefficients between first-order and second-order dimensions and CR and AVE based on path coefficients. The tourism value chain had an AVE of 0.64, a CR of 0.94, an AVE of 0.67, and a CR of 0.89 for the quality tourism experience. As shown in Table 3, they all seem to confirm the scales' reliability and validity.

Table 3. Second Order Validity Result (Source: Smart PLS output based on the researcher's survey data)

Second order Construct	First order Constructs	Construct loading	CL square	Error	CR	AVE
Tourism Value Chain	Product creation	0.828	0.686	0.314		
	Promotion	0.748	0.560	0.440		
	Internal Logistics	0.887	0.787	0.213		
	Destination Service	0.734	0.539	0.461		
	Post-Sale Service	0.783	0.613	0.387		
	Human resource development	0.848	0.719	0.281	0.94	0.64
	Product Development	0.863	0.745	0.255		
	Destination planning and infrastructure	0.68	0.462	0.538		
Technology and Information system	0.817	0.667	0.333			
Sum		7.19	5.78	3.22		
Quality Tourism Experience	Learning Experience	0.917	0.841	0.159		
	Activities and Special Events	0.754	0.569	0.431		
	Quality of Service	0.768	0.590	0.410	0.89	0.6749
	Place attachment	0.837	0.701	0.299		
Sum		3.28	2.70	1.30		

## RESULTS

In line with the two-stage PLS-SEM technique, the tourism value chain's quality tourism experience and second-order latent variable scores were obtained utilizing the first stage's repeated indicator approach. The structural model was evaluated using the two primary findings (i.e., the path coefficients and  $R^2$  values; Figure 2). At the 0.001 threshold level, the path coefficient value between the tourism value chain and competitive advantage was 0.269 ( $P=0.019$ ), suggesting a link between the two. The first hypothesis was confirmed: a firm's significant competitive advantages are more likely to be improved the more tourism value chain activities there are. The tourism value chain directly impacts quality tourism experiences, as indicated by the standardized path coefficient value of 0.780 ( $P=0.000$ ) between it and quality tourism experiences at the 0.001 confidence level. When a business uses higher-value tourism practices in product development, marketing, internal logistics, destination services, post-sale services, technology, human resources, and internal logistics, the quality of tourism experiences improves. As a result, hypothesis two is confirmed.

The strong relationship between quality tourism experience and a competitive advantage lends credence to hypothesis three. A higher probability of obtaining a competitive advantage is linked to higher quality tourism

experiences, as indicated by a standardized path coefficient value of 0.582 (P=0.000).R<sup>2</sup> illustrates how each construct's independent variable accounts for its variance. The tourism value chain explains 60.8% of the variation in quality tourism experiences within the model utilized in this study, according to the quality tourism experience's R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.608. The competitive advantage's R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.655 indicates that the two antecedents, the tourist value chain and quality tourism experience, account for 65.5% of the variance in competitive advantage. The two antecedents are the industry's main sources of competitive advantage: the quality tourism experience and the tourism value chain.

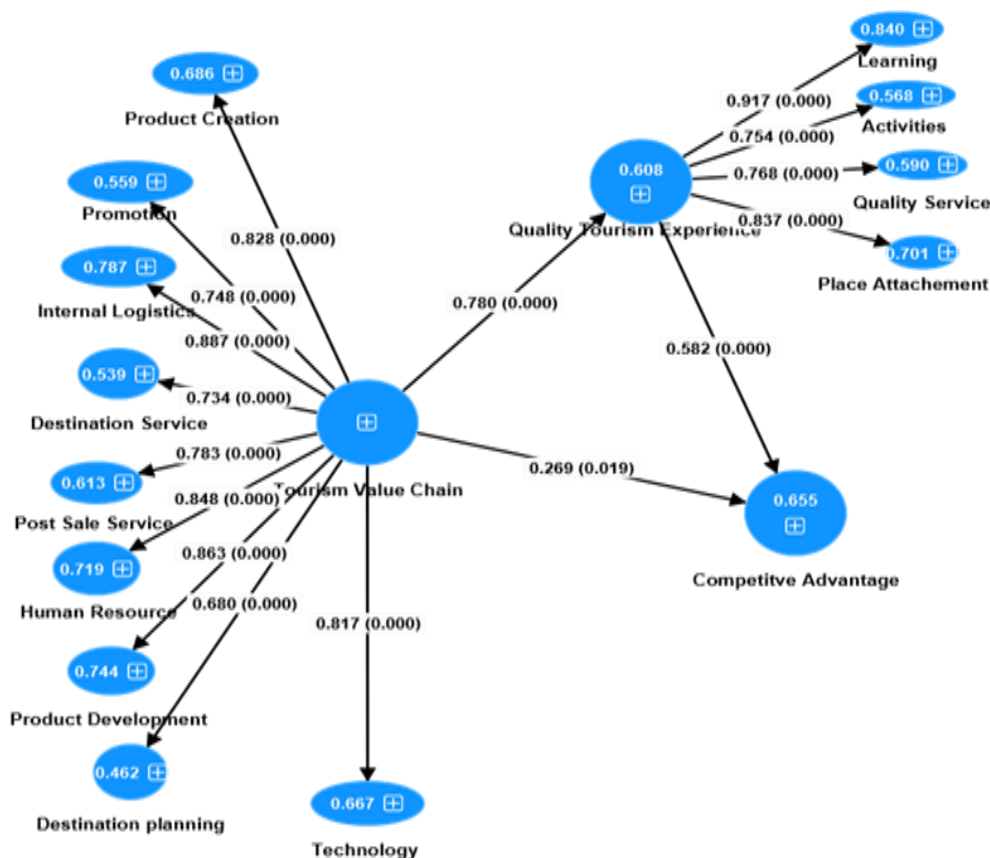


Figure 2. Path Coefficient and P Value (Source: Smart PLS output based on the researchers' survey data)

At the 0.001 level, all R<sup>2</sup> values are significant and exceed the recommended limit. R<sup>2</sup> verified the structural model's explanatory power, whereas Q<sup>2</sup> illustrated its predictive relevance. The quality of the tourism experience gets a Q<sup>2</sup> value of 0.562, while the competitive advantage value is 0.452. The model's ability to predict high-quality significant p-value negative average loss difference is indicated by the Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test results. These two parameters show that the predictive potential of this model is higher (Liengard et al., 2020). The direct, indirect, and total effects among the explanatory and explained variables were computed to provide a more comprehensive picture of the relationships between the constructs and the mediating influence of quality tourism experience (Table 4).

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing (Source: Smart PLS output based on the researcher's survey data)

Type of Effect	Path Coefficient	T statistics	P value	Remark
Total Effect, Tourism Value Chain -> Competitive Advantage	0.724	16.595	0.000	Sig total effect
Indirect effect, Tourism Value Chain -> Quality Tourism Experience -> Competitive advantage	0.456	4.346	0.000	Sig indirect effect
Direct Effect, Tourism Value Chain -> Competitive Advantage	0.268	2.355	0.019	Sig direct effect
Strength of Mediation VFA (Variance accounted for) IE/TE		63%		Strong Mediation Effect

The tourism value chain directly impacted 0.269 (P=0.019) on competitive advantage and an indirect effect of 0.456 (P=0.000) through the mediating role of quality tourism experience. Consequently, the tourism value chain's overall impact on competitive advantage is as high as 0.724 (P=0.000), suggesting that it plays a significant role in explaining enterprises' competitive advantage. The variance account, calculated by dividing the indirect effect by the total effect, is 63%. The result shows a strong mediation effect, i.e., quality tourism experience mediates the relationship between the tourism value chain and competitive advantage.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The study aims to investigate the relations between the tourism value chain, quality tourism experience, and competitive advantage. It has been proven that the tourism value chain is a set of interrelated activities that begins with

preparing and creating tourism products and services that could influence potential tourists to think about a vacation and ends with post-sale service provided on home return. Within the tourism system, the service providers in the host country are supposed to perform basic activities like promotion, facilitating transportation, and helping deliver travel documents, all during stay services. The task of service providers also includes their ability to retain and attract knowledgeable and skilled human resources, develop demand-driven products, be proactively involved in destination planning and infrastructure development, and utilize advanced technologies in their operations. These findings align with the United Nations World Tourism Organization's definition of tourism value chain in 2019. A value chain is a tool for tourism that can be used to assess and improve competitive advantage (Ensign, 2001).

Quality tourism experience is also an important concept for service providers to examine critically the changing demands of tourists. It has been confirmed that quality tourism experience dimensions like learning mean service providers should strive to educate their customers, engage tourists in different events and activities, provide quality service, and create place attachments that could create memorable experiences. The main goal of travel is to have an amazing experience, and competitive advantage is determined by each tourism player's ability to support the best travel experience (Varvaressos, 2018). The study assessed service providers' perceptions in creating a quality tourism experience within the tourism system. The current study sheds light on the value chain, quality tourism experience, and competitive advantage from the service providers' perspective. The need for research to better understand the role of quality tourism experience in gaining competitive advantage has been attested. This study has discussed the concepts of tourism value chain dimensions, quality tourism experiences, and competitive advantage. Then, it follows with testing a structural model of the relationships between the tourism value chain, quality tourism experience, and competitive advantage. Besides its explanatory power, the predictive power of the structural model is found to be high.

### 1. Theoretical Implication

The first hypothesis of the study's results suggested a connection between competitive advantage and the tourism value chain in line with the findings of earlier research. The tourism value chain is a series of primary and supporting activities strategically important to the tourism industry's success (Sutomo et al., 2023). To the researcher's knowledge, this study is a pioneer in applying the concept of quality tourism experience to the tourism value chain from the service provider context. The findings supported the study's second hypothesis, which also endorsed earlier research showing a connection between the tourist value chain and quality tourism experience (Pralhad and Ramaswamy, 2004). The first steps in preparing a vacation trip for a tourist are choosing, organizing, and planning the trip; then, they set up transportation to the vacation spot. There is a tourist experience at every step of the tourism value chain (Suparman et al., 2023). Thus, this study proved that the tourism value chain helps enhance the quality of the tourism experience. The results of the 3<sup>rd</sup> hypothesis showed that quality tourism experience helps to gain a competitive advantage while following the tourism value chain approach, and this study discussed quality tourism experience as a mediating variable in achieving competitive advantage. In addition, the structural model developed has strong explanatory power and highly predictive relevance.

### 2. Managerial Implications

The current study's findings convey implications for each actor involved in the tourism value chain. Understanding the major activities along each chain enables tourism industry actors to attain a common goal in terms of competitiveness in the industry. Policy-making and planning are the purview of the planners or designers of the core tourism offering. Suppliers deliver the products and services directly or indirectly (via intermediaries) to visitors (Kaplinsky and Morris, 2000). The findings suggest that managers of hotels need to be aware of the tourism system, starting from tourists' origin to final destinations and return trips. A skilled manager can provide a quality tourism experience at each stage of the tourism value chain. Consequently, to be effective in an era where tourist demand varies spontaneously, managers need to understand the changing needs of tourists and cater services accordingly to sustain customers' and companies' competitive advantage. In addition, hotel managers need to evaluate their organizational performance considering their engagement in the tourism value chain and quality tourism experience.

### 3. Limitations and Future Study

Though this study has contributed to the tourism study kinds of literature, its limitations provide an opportunity for further research. The first problem is regarding the target population. Tourism is a multifaceted industry that needs the involvement of many actors. Thus, the findings of hotels might vary in other tourism companies. The second problem is this study was conducted from a supply-side perspective, and the results cannot be extended to the demand-side perspective. Future investigations could examine the replication of the conceptual framework in other tourism enterprises, encompassing the supply and demand aspects of the tourism industry.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, L.A. and A.S.; methodology, L. A. and A. S.; software, L.A.; validation, L. A. and; formal analysis, L. A; investigation, L.A. and A.S.; data curation, L.A. and A.S; writing - original draft preparation, L.A.; writing - review and editing, A.S.; visualization, L.A. supervision, A.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** Not applicable.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.



**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data presented in this study may be obtained on request from the corresponding author.

**Acknowledgments:** The research undertaken was made possible by the equal scientific involvement of all the authors concerned.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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