

Proactive Market Development for Business Competitiveness of Udon Thani Province Historical and Cultural Tourism

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to identify the role of proactive market development for historical and cultural business competitiveness in Udon Thani Province. The problem is that the tourism businesses in Udon Thai province were failed to build the competitiveness of business in order to get a large share of the target market. To conduct this study, the questionnaire was prepared and provided to the people who are interested in tourism, and at the same time, from the employees of the tourism-related business to reach to the discussion. Therefore, the response of more than 400 individuals were collected and it was analyzed by using Smart PLS 3. Also, this study concludes that the tourism businesses should focus on business performance, and develop consumer behavior to build competitiveness in the market. Importantly, this study provides a pathway to the businesses of tourism in Udon Thani province, that is based on well understood, and not previously recognized ideas to the historical and culture-related tourism businesses, to improve their competitiveness.

Keywords: *Proactive Market Development, Business Competitiveness, Business Performance, Historical Tourism, Cultural Tourism*

INTRODUCTION

In the historical and cultural tourism sector, it is assumed that the focus of tourism business firms is on the marketing communication of the places because it is the only way to inform the consumers about the history and culture to attract them. Moreover, the importance of proactive market development has become important when it comes to the business performance of the tourism business of Udon Thani while using marketing communication as an important tool. Also, there is an important role of consumer behavior in marketing communication, and business competitiveness, because the target market is based on people of diverse characteristics, and people are attracted by different marketing communication channels to get interested in tourism (Kayumovich, Alimovich, Khudoyazarovich, Shavkatovna, & Supiyevna, 2020).

Proactive market development refers to the understanding the future needs of the consumers and translate these needs into measurable objective to develop products and services to satisfy the needs of consumers. Also, the business entities that are working to develop proactive markets are getting more customers are making improvements in tourism business competitiveness. It is important for the tourism businesses that unique strategies should be adopted for proactive market development because it is to attract all of the consumers within the target market and make sure that their needs are being satisfied (Xu, Gong, & Law, 2022). Consumer behavior refers to the perceptions and attitudes of the consumers when it comes to interaction with business entity (Fernández, Martínez, & Martín, 2022). Indeed, there is a strong influence of proactive market development on consumer behavior because consumers are always communicated with marketing strategies, and the relationship between business and consumer would be strong if the marketing tools are effectively utilized to provide the appropriate information to the consumers. In this regard, it is important to understand that the business entities that are working to modify the consumer behavior for the tourism, in result, it the strong brand image of these businesses would be developed in the minds of consumers. Additionally, by tourism business competitiveness, it means that the tourism businesses are influential and capable to attract a large target market. The relationship between these variables is presented in theoretical framework (see Figure 1. Theoretical Framework)

Therefore, the objective of the study is to consider the role of marketing communication in proactive market development, and in business competitiveness. However, the important role of consumer behavior is also

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important to consider when it comes to the business of tourism because it is highly dependent on consumer behavior. Also, the rationale of the study is to contribute in literature, and also in practical implementations to highlight the importance of marketing proactive market communication as the mediating role between marketing communication and business competitiveness.

Importantly, this study aims to provide the tourism business, with a critical and practical approach to work on the better performance of proactive market development, and consumer behavior to get the business competitiveness, and improve the business performance while eliminating all the barriers, and increasing the revenue. This study has practical significance that is to develop business competitiveness in the historical and cultural tourism industry of Udon Thani province, the responsibility of the management of business entities is to ensure that the proactive market development is appropriately being done to understand the behavior of consumers and ensure the transactions between the consumers and the business entities. Also, by providing a unique experience to the business entities, it is important to understand that, those businesses that are working on the consumer-oriented approach are highly recommended by the consumers, and as result, the business entities developed appropriately. Importantly, the responsibilities on the tourism businesses are greater to improve the business performance, and the consumer behavior at the same time, to make them the potential buyers to the business entities and make them highly involved.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Importantly, this section of the study includes the literature from the previous studies, and it is relevantly selected, and carefully evaluated to provide a wide scope of information to develop the hypotheses. Also, the detailed definitions and descriptions including the relationship between the taken variables are incorporated from the previous quality studies to have strong pieces of evidence to move future to the research.

IMPORTANCE OF PROACTIVE MARKET DEVELOPMENT IN TOURISM BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS

Proactive market development refers to utilizing the existing and new strategies to attract new consumers to the business within the already targeted market. It is a fact that the business entities that are working hard to develop a strong relationship with those consumers and are committed to working for a long time are maintaining the existing and the new strategies to develop the sustainable relationship with the consumer. It is due to the reason that the consumers are the key players in the business competitiveness. Therefore, if the consumers are potential, and they become loyal to the businesses, then as result, the business would be in the stage of competitiveness (Hajar, 2022; Raju & Kunasekaran, 2022). This competitiveness of businesses is important for the new and existing businesses because, in modern times, different competitors are providing similar services particularly in the tourism industry, the role of strategies and management has been increased to find new approaches to implement to target the consumers for making transaction with the business entities. In this regard, the businesses that are working on the strategy of developing a strong relationship with the consumer, these businesses are getting competitiveness over the competitors in the target market. However, to get business competitiveness particularly in the tourism industry is not an easy job, because the competitors in this industry are increasing, and also the hospitality services are increasing (Gryshchenko et al., 2022). The role of business entities has been increased and importantly the performance of the marketing department of these business entities is crucial to develop competitive advantage and business competitiveness.

H1: In current markets, proactive market development plays a key role in tourism business competitiveness.

IMPORTANCE OF PROACTIVE MARKET DEVELOPMENT IN BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Proactive market development has an important role in business performance because the performance of the business is directly dependent on proactive market development (Gao, Ge, Lang, & Xu, 2018). In this regard, the performance of any business is referred to the set of activities conducted by any particular business to ensure the transactions with the consumer. It is understood that those businesses that are highly working in performance, the marketing teams of those businesses are working hard to develop pro-active market development to compete for the other businesses. Indeed, with the emergence of globalism, and the world as

a single unity, it has become a challenge for the local businesses to perform best because the competitors are always trying to provide high-quality services (Dou, Su, & Wang, 2019). In this way, it has become the responsibility of the businesses to work on proactive market development to ensure that the future needs of the consumers are rightly identified, the measurable objective is developed to work on and the strategies are developed to follow this objective to ensure proactive market development. The businesses entities that are highly concerned about the proactive market development, these entities are competing in the diverse world where the responsibility of the marketing teams has increased (Ottosson & Kindström, 2016). On the other hand, to ensure the proactive market development, the business entities are working on research and development by spending a huge amount of budget, like it because it is assumed that the higher research and development would be the higher response of people as a consumer would be collected, and the appropriate measurement would be taken to finalize the services.

H2: Proactive market development enhances business performance.

IMPORTANCE OF BUSINESS PERFORMANCE IN TOURISM BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS

Tourism businesses refer to the activities formed by any business to facilitate the consumers by hospitality and integrity (Sharma, Thomas, & Paul, 2021). In this way, it is a fact that the tourism business competitiveness is highly dependent on the business performance, because until and unless a business is not performing well in the target market, then it would be difficult for it to provide a competitive advantage within the market to attract the new consumers. However, the competitive advantage for tourism business is important, it is because many businesses are providing services and hospitality in the tourism industry, but at the same time, the number of competitors is increasing, therefore, the responsibility is more on the management of tourism business is to ensure that the performance of the business in the terms of quality service and experience differential the consumers are provided with appropriate opportunities to get the competitive advantage (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2021). Due to ease in visa issuance policy among different countries, and the multinational organization, it has become a challenge for the local businesses to develop a competitive advantage due to the limited resources, and the inherent culture of business activities practices (Abushaikha, Salhieh, & Towers, 2018). However, on the other hand, the business entities that are improving the performance of businesses, and integrating the businesses with consumers through proactive market development, then the competitive next of these tourism businesses are increased, and that businesses are generating competitive revenue. Also, due to the failure of maintaining standards in the tourism industry, some businesses are eliminated from the marketplace.

H3: The tourism business competitiveness can be done by improving business performance.

IMPORTANCE OF PROACTIVE MARKET DEVELOPMENT IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Consumer behavior refers to the behavior of individual consumers within any market while making transactions with business entities (Racela & Thoumrungroje, 2020). No doubt, human behavior is dynamic, and it is hard to measure it correctly, but the organization that spends a lot on research and development these organizations are capable to get the data about consumer behavior, their past purchasing, and their lifestyle. Furthermore, these organizations are involved to satisfy the consumer by getting their demographic information and modifying that information into products and services to improve the life of the consumer and satisfy their needs and wants (Petzold, Barbat, Pons, & Zins, 2019). Importantly, the role of proactive market development is necessary for shaping the consumers' behavior because when the consumers would understand the business entity, that is working on a highly recommended pattern to ensure competitiveness, then the behavior of consumers would be developed to that particular business firm (Wang & Liu, 2019). In this way, the responsibility is greater on the shoulder of the marketing department in the business entity to ensure that the future needs of the consumer should be anticipated and forecasted to produce measurable objectives and work on them to develop a strong strategy in a working environment (Kumar & Paraskevas, 2018). Moreover, it is also a fact that the consumers are communicated with marketing tools, therefore, when they are provided with

appropriate information about the differentiation, then their attitude to the business entity would be redesigned, and they would go for purchasing by these business entities.

H4: Proactive market development influences consumer behavior.

IMPORTANCE OF IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN TOURISM BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS

It is a fact that the tourism industry is a service-providing industry that depends highly on consumer behavior due to the higher involvement of consumers while experiencing the service. In this regard, to get the business competitiveness in the tourism industry, the responsibility of management has been increased to provide a different experience to the in an understandable way to make sure that the consumers are getting the products or services appropriately while making transactions with the business entities because they are highly involved in it (Trimurti & Utama, 2021). On the other hand, the business entities in the tourism industry, that are failed to ensure the quality services the consumers are less interested in these business entities because they are not creating and difference from the other business firms in the tourism industry (Jang & Hsieh, 2021). Also, due to the positive consumer behavior, the responsibility of the businesses is increased, because the perception of the consumers is important for businesses to not be reduced, and at the same time, businesses want to maintain the long-term, and loyal relationship with the consumers, and in this regard, these businesses are working to develop the competitive advantage in the market (López-Sanz, Penelas-Leguía, Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, & Cuesta-Valiño, 2021). However, to develop a competitive advantage is not a bed of roses, but it is the greater responsibility of the marketing department to ensure that the expectation of the consumers should be provided in the services, and it should be ensured that the consumers are communicating attractively, to develop the strong relationship with business, and making transactions again and again. It is also noted that the consumers in the tourism industry are interested to get effective information before going into transactions with business entities, therefore, the higher responsibility of the marketing department is to provide enough information to the consumers to develop the competitive advantage. The phenomenon is that the higher the consumer would be involved, the more the competitive advantage of that particular business would be developed in the market, of the globalized economy.

H5: Positive consumer behavior can lead tourism businesses to competitiveness.

BUSINESS PERFORMANCE AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AS MEDIATES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROACTIVE MARKET DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS

It is a fact that business performance is important to make the long-lasting relationship between proactive market development, and business competitiveness in the tourism industry (López-Arceiz, del Río, & Bellostas, 2022). It is because if the business performance is efficient and effective to develop proactive market development, then as result the higher consumers would be involved to that business, and the business would get competitiveness. Particularly, in the tourism industry the role of business performance is important because the consumers in the tourism industry are experiencing differential services, and if the services are improved by the quality enhancement department, then in result, the consumers would develop a strong relationship with the business entities, and the business competitiveness would be increased (Hameed, Nisar, & Wu, 2021). Similarly, consumer behavior is also developing relationships between proactive market development, and business competitiveness (Obermayer, Kóvári, Leinonen, Bak, & Valeri, 2021). It is due to the reason that if the proactive market development is higher, and all the progress is being made appropriately, then in result, the role of consumer would be increased, and his positive perception would help the customer to provide a quality experience, and ultimately the business competitiveness would be increased.

H6: Business performance mediates the relationship between proactive market development and tourism business competitiveness.

H7: Consumer behavior mediates the relationship between proactive market development and tourism business competitiveness.

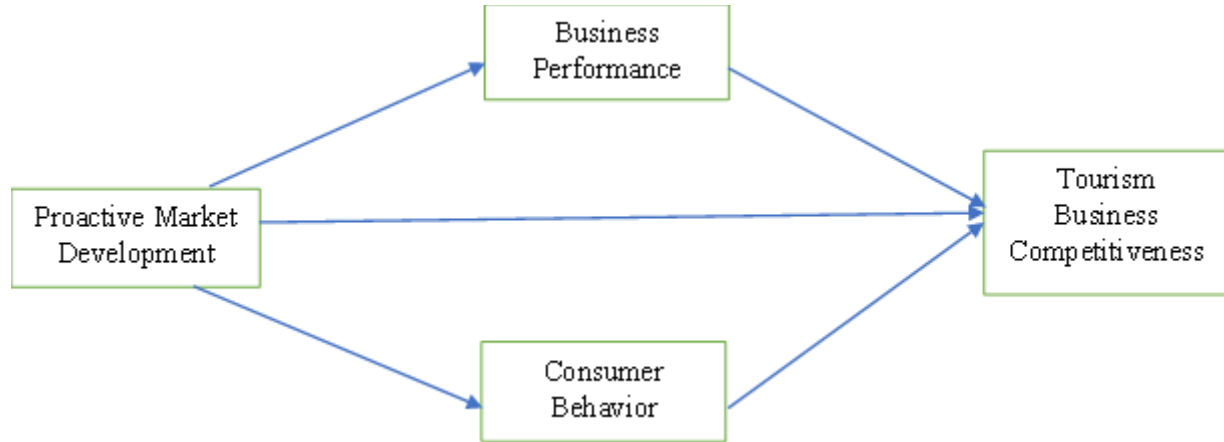


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

METHODOLOGY

PREPARE QUESTIONNAIRE

For this study, the questionnaire was carefully prepared into two different sections; the first one was based on the demographics, in which the questions were divided into a category to get the information about the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Furthermore, the second section of this study was based on the questionnaire that carried the scale items for all the variables in the format of the Likert scale. There was a clear distinction between the items of all variables for proper understanding.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD

To collect the data for this study, the questionnaire was provided to 400 respondents from different cultures and ethnicity, to get a more accurate impersonal response for this study, and the data was collected by 400 respondents. In this regard, to begin with, the introduction and the purpose of the study were provided to the students, to provide an understanding of the research. Secondly, they were asked for their consent to provide the questionnaire, and after their approval, the questionnaire was provided to them, to make sure that they are easy to respond to the questionnaire. In this way, if they face any difficulty, it was eliminated at that time to make sure that they are getting all the information in the right way. Lastly, their response was collected, and they were ensured that their response is for the research purpose only, that it would be confidential, and not shared with any third party.

FINDINGS

To analyze the data, Smart PLS 3 was used in this study, and with the help of the PLS Algorithm, and Bootstrapping, the values of variables, loading, composite reliability (CV), and average variance extracted (AVE) were identified. Furthermore, the role of mediators between the relationships among variables was identified with the help of Path Coefficient, Direct Effect, and Specific Indirect Effect, because Smart PLS is recommended tool to get accurate values by (Wong, 2013).

CONVERGENT VALIDITY

In this section of the study, the convergent validity was checked by using Smart PLS 3, as found as a useful tool to reach a conclusion (see Figure 2. Measurement Assessment Model). Firstly, the loadings of all items were greater than the recommended value of 0.60. Secondly, the values of CR for all five variables were greater than 0.80, but the value is 0.70 recommended by (Ringle, Da Silva, & Bido, 2015). Lastly, the value of Cronbach alfa for all the variables was greater than the recommended value of 0.70 (see Table.1 Factor Loadings).

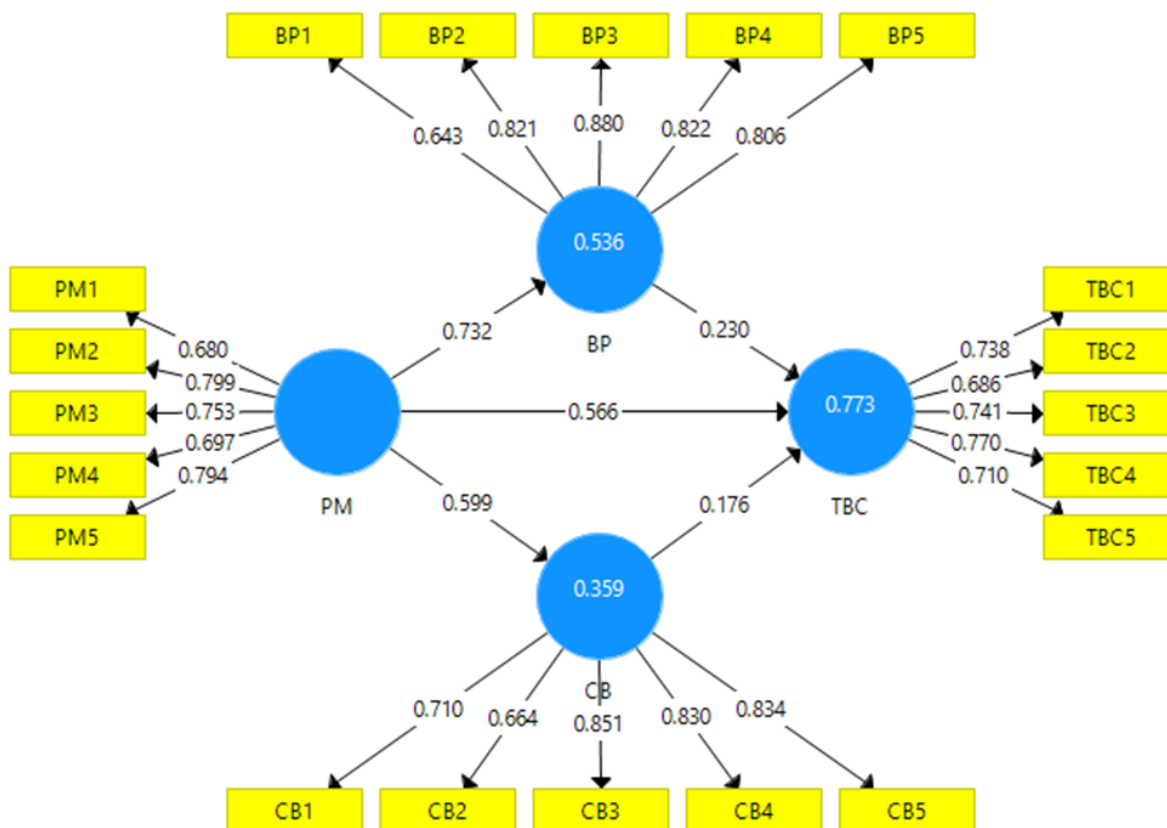


Figure 2. Measurement Assessment Model

Table 1. Factor Loadings, CR and AVE

Variables	Items	Loadings	Alpha	CR	AVE
Business Performance	BP1	0.643	0.855	0.897	0.638
	BP2	0.821			
	BP3	0.880			
	BP4	0.822			
	BP5	0.806			
Consumer Behavior	CB1	0.710	0.839	0.886	0.610
	CB2	0.664			
	CB3	0.851			
	CB4	0.830			
	CB5	0.834			
Proactive Market Development	PM1	0.680	0.800	0.862	0.557
	PM2	0.799			
	PM3	0.753			
	PM4	0.697			
	PM5	0.794			
Tourism Business Competitiveness	TBC1	0.738	0.783	0.85	0.532
	TBC2	0.686			
	TBC3	0.741			
	TBC4	0.770			

TBC5	0.710
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DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY

In this section of the study, the discriminant validity was identified with the help of HTMT by using Smart PLS 3 which is recommended for the advanced studies (see Table 2. Discriminant Validity). In this regard, the values of the constructs of all variables were less than the recommended value of 0.90 by (Ramayah, Cheah, Chuah, Ting, & Memon, 2018). It shows that there is a significant distinction between the variables.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity

	BP	CB	PM	TBC
BP	0.799			
CB	0.741	0.781		
PM	0.732	0.599	0.746	
TBC	0.774	0.685	0.839	0.729

BP= Business Performance, CB= Consumer Behavior, PM= Proactive Market Development, and TBC= Tourism Business Competitiveness

THE SMART PLS – SMES RESULTS

After evaluating convergent and discriminant validity, the hypotheses of this study were tested to check their significance or insignificance (see Table 3. Direct Effects) . Firstly, H1 was tested to check its significance and according to the results PM has a significant effect on TBC ($\beta = 0.556, t = 16.425, p = 0.000$), and H1 is supported. Secondly, H2 was tested to check its significance the results show that PM has a significant effect on BP ($\beta = 0.732, t = 31.966, p = 0.000$) and H2 is supported. Thirdly, H3 was tested to check its significance the results determine that, BP has a significant effect on TBC ($\beta = 0.230, t = 4.929, p = 0.000$), and H3 is supported. Fourthly, H4 was tested to check its significance and by results, PM has a significant effect on CB ($\beta = 0.599, t = 20.149, p = 0.000$), and H4 is supported. Lastly, H5 was tested to check its significance and by getting results, CB has a significant effect on TBC ($\beta = 0.176, t = 3.476, p < 0.001$), and H5 is supported (see Figure 3. Structural Model).

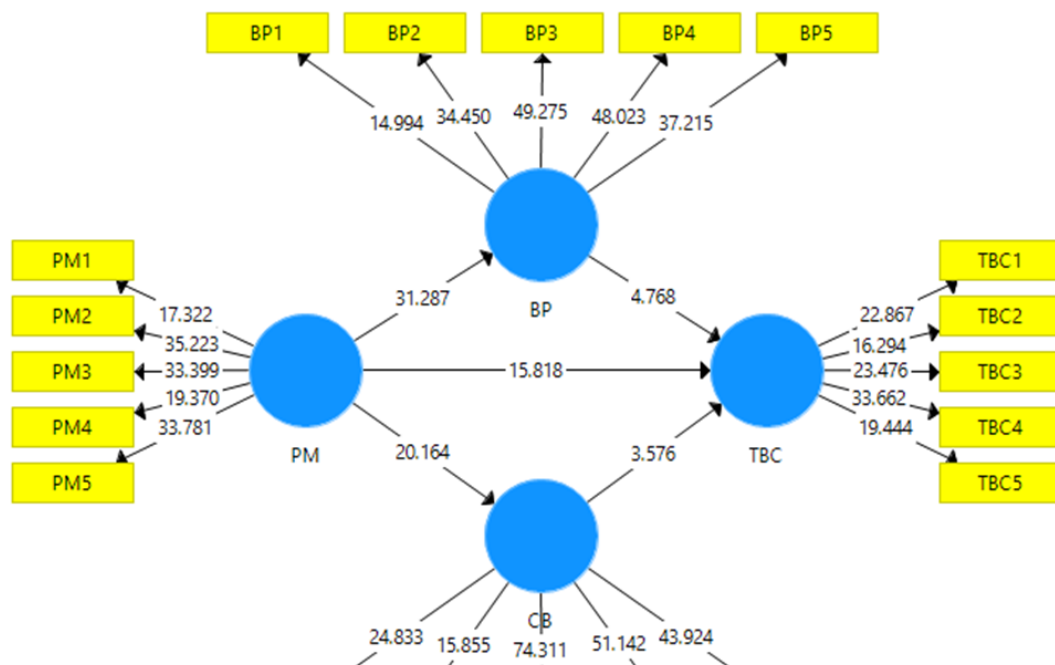


Figure 3. Structural Model

Table 3. Direct Effects

Hypothesis	B	(STDEV)	T	P	Decision
PM -> TBC	0.566	0.034	16.425	0.000	Supported
PM -> BP	0.732	0.023	31.966	0.000	Supported
BP -> TBC	0.230	0.047	4.929	0.000	Supported
PM -> CB	0.599	0.030	20.149	0.000	Supported
CB -> TBC	0.176	0.051	3.476	0.001	Supported

BP= Business Performance, CB= Consumer Behavior, PM= Proactive Market Development, and TBC= Tourism Business Competitiveness

MEDIATION ANALYSIS

To analyze the role of mediators, the results of mediation analysis are identified to highlight the mediating role of BP on the linkage between PM and TBC. Interestingly, the results shows that the total effect of PM on TBC was significant ($\beta = 0.839, t = 62.618, p = .000$). Additionally, with the mediating role of BP, the impact of PM on TBC is also significant ($\beta = 0.168, t = 3.668, p = .000$). Also, the indirect effect on PM on TBC was significant ($\beta = 0.247, t = 10.031, p = .000$). According to the results, PB partially mediates the relationship between PM and TBC (see Table 4. Mediation Analysis). Moreover, the mediating role of CB between the relationship of PM and TBC was identified, and according to the results, the mediator CB provides a significant impact between the relationship of PM and TBC ($\beta = 0.271, t = 12.077, p = .000$).

Table 4. Mediation Analysis

Total Effect (PM -> TBC)		Direct Effect (PM -> TBC)		Indirect Effect of (PM on TBC)				
Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value		Coefficient	SD	T value	P value
0.839	0.000	0.566	0.000	PM->BP->TBC	0.168	0.035	4.766	0.000
(PM-> TBC)		(PM-> TBC)		(PM->CB-> TBC)				
0.839	0.000	0.566	0.000		0.105	0.029	3.668	0.000

BP= Business Performance, CB= Consumer Behavior, PM= Proactive Market Development, and TBC= Tourism Business Competitiveness

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

First off, the results of H1 and H2 show that there is a significant relationship between proactive market development and business performance, also, between market development and tourism business competitiveness. Indeed, the business entities that are working on the strategy of developing proactive market by utilizing all of the resources to attract the consumers, as result, the business performance of these entities increase. However, the importance of a proactive market is not limited to the business performance, but when it comes to the competitive advantage in the globalized market, there is more responsibility on business entities to ensure the quality of services provided to the customer by the tourism sector (Mathafena & Msimango-Galawe, 2022).

Similarly, the results of H3 demonstrate that the tourism business competitiveness also depends on business performance, because the performance of any business refers to the level of management, and the working environment in which a business entity is providing satisfaction to the consumers by services or production. In this way, if unique services are provided in the tourism industry, then ultimately as a result, the business competitiveness would be increased (Potrich, Cortimiglia, & de Medeiros, 2019).

On the other hand, the results of H4 and H5 show that there is a significant relationship between proactive market development and consumer behavior, also, and between consumer behavior and tourism business

competitiveness. Also, this strong image of tourism businesses in the mind of consumers could help to increase tourism business competitiveness. Therefore, it is the responsibility of business entities to develop the proactive market, engage the left behind customers to the business, and ensure that their needs are satisfied with the delivery of customized services to match their requirements (Singjai, Winata, & Kummer, 2018).

In the same way, according to the results of H6, it is identified that business performance mediates the relationship between proactive market development and tourism business competitiveness. However, this mediation is partial, but it is too strong to consider in the tourism business competitiveness. In this regard, the top management of tourism business entities should ensure that the business performance is according to the vision and mission of the organization, and the delivery of quality services should be in a way to develop proactive market and competitiveness of tourism businesses (Mashika et al., 2021; Streimikiene, Svagzdiene, Jasinskas, & Simanavicius, 2021).

Lastly, the results of H7 show that consumer behavior is mediating the relationship between tourism business competitiveness and proactive market development. It is important to understand that if human behavior is positive, and the needs of consumers are being satisfied by the business activities and service delivery in the tourism business, as result, the consumers would react more frequently to proactive market development, and it would help in business competitiveness. Therefore, the responsibility is on the top management to ensure that proactive market development is according to the expectations of the consumers, and the transaction is being made by the consumers frequently.

IMPLEMENTATIONS

ACADEMIC IMPLICATIONS

This study highlights the relationship of business performance between proactive market development, and business competitiveness, the mediating relationship of consumer behavior between tourism business competitiveness and proactive market development, and it was not earlier discussed in literature. Moreover, the rationale of the study is important for future research because by analyzing this research and data, it would be easier for businesses to analyze the marketing strategy, and the current situation of tourism businesses, and work in an appropriate way to develop a competitive advantage within the target market. Interestingly, the academic contribution of the study is understandable and well-acknowledged for providing literary information to the business firm involved in the tourism sector.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study are rational and recommend the strategies to the tourism business in Udon Thani Province to build business competitiveness in the target market. To begin with, it is important and understandable that the role of proactive market development is important in the competitiveness of business activities because the businesses which are working on the strategies of developing the long-term relationship with the consumer, and when the consumers are highly involved, and result in the businesses are required to anticipate the expectation and desires of the consumers by forecasting and working on the research and developments, and later translate the measurement related to the demographics of the consumer into the adaptable strategies to develop the business of tourism appropriately. Secondly, it is also important to consider that proactive market development has a strong influence on business performance. It is due to the reason that when the business performance would be increased, as result the working of organization would be increased, and the consumer would become more loyal to that particular business. In this regard, it is the responsibility of tourism businesses of Udon Thani Province to understand the relationship between business performance, and business competitiveness to ensure that the business performance is appropriately managed by the quality management team. Importantly, the business entities that are working to provide a unique experience to the consumers in the tourism industry these entities are considered superior in the mind of consumers, and their image is creating a difference in services. On the other hand, the consumers are always interested to get strong relationships and becoming potential buyers of the business entities that are working highly to provide all the facilities to the consumers in the tourism industry. At the same time, this study has concluded that there is a strong relationship between the proactive marketing strategy, and consumer behavior because consumer

behavior is directly dependent on proactive marketing strategy, as the greater proactive marketing strategies would result in, the highly adaptive behavior of consumers. In short, if these measurements are considered by the business entities, then as result, the business competitiveness of the tourism industry would be developed, and with the delivery of unique and different services of the business, the entity can ensure the unique selling point and competitive advantage in the target market. Additionally, the consumers are more involved in the tourism industry, there, the more practical approach to developing a proactive market should be to increase the competitive business in the tourism industry, particularly, in Udon Thani province.

LIMITATIONS

This research is carefully conducted to understand the relationship of proactive market relationship to historical and cultural tourism business competitiveness in Udon Thani Province. Also, the influence of business performance and consumer behavior is considered in it to identify the relationship of these factors in the business competitiveness of tourism. However, it is recommended to the future researchers, that they should focus on the role of unique selling points, inherited resources, and consumer purchasing power in tourism business competitiveness in Udon Thani Province, and other historical and cultural sights.

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