



# Human resource management strategy with integrated marketing strategy to increase competitive advantage in tourism industry SMEs

*Estrategia de gestión de recursos humanos con estrategia de marketing integrada para aumentar la ventaja competitiva en las PYMES de la industria turística*

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Received September 9, 2024; accepted January 14, 2025

Available online June 25, 2026

## Abstract

This study aims to provide empirical evidence of collaboration from human resource management strategies that are proxied by quality of work life and rewards as well as marketing strategies that are proxied by spiritual marketing and a culture of innovation towards competitive advantage mediated by market orientation in the SMEs tourism industry in East Java, Indonesia. The population of this study is all employees of the tourism industry SMEs in East Java, Indonesia. The sample used was in accordance with the established criteria so that a total of 1320 respondents were obtained. Path analysis is used for data processing. The research findings show that spiritual marketing, innovation culture, quality of work life and rewards have an impact on market orientation. In addition, market orientation mediates between spiritual marketing relationships, a culture of innovation, quality of work life and rewards for competitive advantage. The implication of this research is the importance of collaborating between human resource management strategies and marketing strategies to increase the competitive advantage of SMEs in the

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Peer Review under the responsibility of Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

<https://doi.org/10.22201/fca.24488410e.2026.5733>

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tourism industry, considering that the tourism industry has a global impact on national income. In addition, this study can also contribute to the government in formulating policies related to SMEs in the tourism industry.

*JEL Code:* M12, M29, M31

*Keywords:* human resource; management strategy; marketing strategy; market orientation; competitive advantage; SMEs

## Resumen

Este estudio tiene como objetivo proporcionar evidencia empírica de la colaboración de las estrategias de gestión de recursos humanos que se representan por la calidad de vida laboral y las recompensas, así como las estrategias de marketing que se representan por el marketing espiritual y una cultura de innovación hacia la ventaja competitiva mediada por la orientación al mercado en la industria del turismo de las PYME en Java Oriental, Indonesia. La población de este estudio son todos los empleados de las PYME de la industria del turismo en Java Oriental, Indonesia. La muestra utilizada fue de acuerdo con los criterios establecidos para obtener un total de 1320 encuestados. El análisis de ruta se utiliza para el procesamiento de datos. Los hallazgos de la investigación muestran que el marketing espiritual, la cultura de la innovación, la calidad de vida laboral y las recompensas tienen un impacto en la orientación al mercado. Además, la orientación al mercado media entre las relaciones de marketing espiritual, una cultura de innovación, la calidad de vida laboral y las recompensas para la ventaja competitiva. La implicación de esta investigación es la importancia de la colaboración entre las estrategias de gestión de recursos humanos y las estrategias de marketing para aumentar la ventaja competitiva de las PYME en la industria del turismo, considerando que la industria del turismo tiene un impacto global en el ingreso nacional. Además, este estudio también puede contribuir al gobierno en la formulación de políticas relacionadas con las PYMES del sector turístico.

*Código JEL:* M12, M29, M31

*Palabras clave:* recursos humanos; estrategia de gestión; estrategia de marketing; orientación al mercado; ventaja competitiva; PYME

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## Introduction

The tourism aspect is a pillar of the embodiment of the principle of development with diversity, cultural and natural uniqueness, as well as human needs for travel. Indonesia's tourism sector is an important factor in economic development, which has a significant impact on the country's economy and contributes 9% to GDP, as the largest foreign exchange contributing factor. The progress of tourism, generates great opportunities for community welfare (Chawla & Guda, 2017). The government has caught the eye of the tourism industry business opportunity (Agyabeng-Mensah et al., 2020) in particular, as a priority development sector that is expected to generate large foreign exchange gains..

While the paradigm of the quantity of tourist visits is a crucial thing to consider. The decline in tourist arrivals in 2017-2023 as seen in Figure 1 is a phenomenon that requires a strategic solution.

Therefore, it is important to carry out research to solve this problem, especially by integrating human resource management strategies and marketing strategies to increase competitive advantage in the tourism sector.

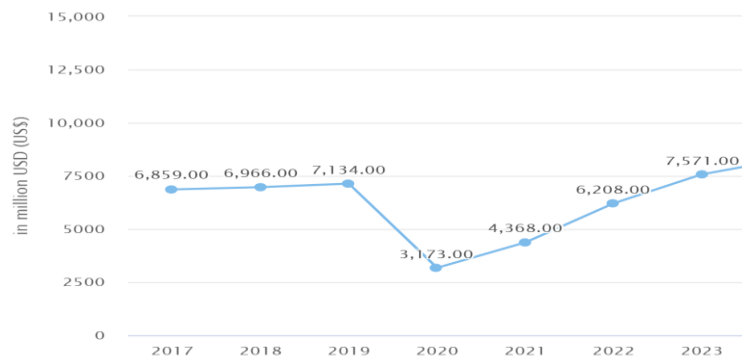


Figure 1. Tourist Arrivals 2017-2023  
Source: <https://bps.co.id>

The absolute aspect of the solution strategy for phenomena, given the perspective of tourist destinations, is an indicator of the success of the national development program in the field of sustainable tourism. The empowerment of small and medium sized enterprises in the tourism sector is a good method to implement this paradigm (Hermawati & Mas, 2017, Hermawati et al., 2020). In contrast, by providing opportunities for small and medium enterprises in the tourism sector to be empowered, Indonesia is opening up a window of opportunity for citizens to take part in maximising tourist destinations (Sengupta et al., 2013). The SMEs, which has managed to survive the multidimensional crisis of 1998 as well as the global recession in 2008, is an added value. The existence of SMEs constitutes an aspect of regional and national economic contribution which is a driver for Indonesia's economy (Njoroge et al., 2015). The tourism sector, which also includes SMEs, is currently the biggest contributor to GDP.

The empowerment of SMEs in the tourism sector is therefore essential, not only for individual but also because it has an important impact on overall economic growth. In the area of employment, SMEs in tourism activities contribute to more than 11 million people in Indonesia, thus SMEs located in cities and local authorities have an interest in tourism, absolutely prepare the right competitive advantage so that the SMEs tourism industry can be sustainable.

According to (Porter, 1985) The competitive advantage is that the company's characteristics and resources enable it to perform better than its competitors in a given sector or market. The benefits of competitive advantage include enabling a company to seize and maintain its position as a market leader, can support a company's success in the long term because competitive advantage is not easy to imitate,

and is one way to manage the SMEs business to be successful. Competitive advantage includes three aspects, namely cost advantage, differentiation advantage and focus. Competitive advantage can be influenced by many factors, one of which is market orientation.

Market orientation basically involves something new or different in response to market conditions and this behavior can be seen as a form of innovative action, especially in the resulting product innovation (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993). In line with this, market orientation is an important antecedent of a behavior, activity and product innovation performance produced by an organization (Atuahene-Gima, 2005). Market orientation is stated to be the most important factor (Balodi, 2014) and (Montiel-Campos, 2018) especially in the characteristics of a similar research locus, namely the SMEs sector (Amin et al., 2016). Market orientation has a positive and significant influence on competitive advantage (Tirtayasa et al., 2022), (Rahmadi & Dewandaru, 2021), (Retnawati & Retnaningsih, 2020). However, (Hendrayanti & Ernawati, 2022) and (Laksana et al., 2022) state otherwise that market orientation has no impact on competitive advantage.

For this reason, business people must be able to develop strategies or collaborate on strategies in order to win the competition. The aspect of optimizing the human resource management strategy, collaborating on the formulation of the right integrated marketing strategy, indicates an effective way to achieve development, strengthen SMEs in the tourism industry (Hermawati et al., 2022). In addition, tourism is expected to receive a considerable amount of international exchange as a priority development sector. It is proven that the Indonesian tourism sector has made a significant contribution to people's welfare through a national gross domestic product of 92.38% (Kalogiannidis & Mavratzas, 2020). Thus, the human resource management strategy and integrated marketing strategy are dominant for the implementation of the results.

The marketing strategy that will be used in this study is spiritual marketing and a culture of innovation. Meanwhile, the human resource strategy used in this study is quality of work life and rewards. There are many marketing strategies that we know, however, most marketing strategies are only based on rational and emotional considerations. When only using these two considerations they only use logic and scientific concepts for financial purposes only. So, it is necessary to present a marketing strategy that uses conscience, soul calling, ethics and morality so as to foster a sense of compassion, empathy and honesty so as not to harm consumers and to prioritize their own benefits. This strategy is called spiritual marketing, with the hope that it will increase market orientation. This is in accordance with (Kumari & Sharma, 2023) and (Hajizadeh & Kazemi, 2022) which state that market orientation is influenced by spiritual marketing.

Apart from spiritual marketing, the marketing strategy used is a culture of innovation. In the current era or commonly known as Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity (VUCA), which is an era that shows fast and unpredictable environmental changes, business people must be able to adapt, so

that a culture of innovation is very important as one of the marketing strategy (Karaev & Mercan, 2023). By increasing the culture of innovation, SMEs will be able to improve their market orientation, which in turn will have an impact on competitive advantage. This is in accordance with the statement (Jogaratnam, 2017) which states that the type of innovative organizational culture is an important predictor of market orientation. This explanation is supported by (Karaev & Mercan, 2023), (Krot, 2013), (Camarero & Garrido, 2012), and (O’Cass & Ngo, 2007) that market orientation is influenced by a culture of innovation.

This marketing strategy becomes better when it is collaborated with a human resource management strategy that is proxied by quality of work life and rewards to achieve competitive advantage (Hermawati et al., 2022). A whole programme of improving the quality of working life is being put in place to increase employee satisfaction, improve workplace learning and help employees cope with change and transition more effectively, so that it will have an impact on market orientation which in turn will increase competitive advantage. This is in line with (Y. (Susan) Wei & Atuahene-Gima, 2009) who explains that his research findings provide a more refined understanding of how the interaction between marketing and human resource management influences the adoption of market orientation and new product innovation.

In addition to quality of work life, human resource management strategies can also be proxied by rewards. Benefits are compensation provided by the company to its workers. Study (Y. (Susan) Wei & Atuahene-Gima, 2009) explains that companies in China should simultaneously use a long-term oriented high-level reward system and a low-level risk-taking reward system to enhance the positive effect of market orientation on new product performance. Likewise (Y. Wei et al., 2012) which states that participation-based rewards will increase market orientation by considering the desire for performance rewards. This means that low rewards will have an impact on market orientation and high rewards will have a long-term impact, namely competitive advantage. It is always important to adapt the human resource management strategy to the needs and resources of SMEs. Remember that employees are a valuable asset in any SMEs business, and managing them well can achieve competitive advantage and sustainable growth.

This study emphasizes the interdependence between human resource management strategies, marketing strategies and sustainable competitive advantage (Queiroz et al., 2020). Market orientation is an effective and efficient mediator (Hermawati & Mas, 2017). The potential to deliver positive impacts for strengthening, managing, developing and empowering SMEs in the tourism sector with a view to achieving sustainable competitive advantage needs to be explored (Sengupta et al., 2013 , Hermawati dan Mas, 2017 , Hermawati et al., 2020). The originality of this study is that the object of research is the tourism industry SMEs in East Java Province. Another uniqueness is the approach of

this study, which combines HR management strategies with marketing strategies and uses market orientation as an intermediary, to build a more comprehensive competitive advantage model.

## **Theoretical framework**

Contingency theory is a behavioral theory that claims that there is no one best way to design an organization (Fisher, 1995). The contingency approach tries to apply various management approaches to real life or certain conditions and situations (Batillana, J., & Tiziana, C., 2012), (Chenhall, R. H., 2003), and (Donaldson, L., 2001). The best way to manage a company however depends on the internal and external situation of the company. According to this approach, the task of the manager is to identify certain techniques that are most suitable for certain situations in achieving organizational goals because there is no single universal management technique that can be applied in situations and conditions.

The competitiveness advantage is the ability of a company, through its characteristics and resources, to achieve greater efficiency than its competitors in an industry or on any given market (Porter, 1985). To achieve a competitive advantage, companies must develop strategies, and these strategies must be adapted to the circumstances of each company. This is in accordance with the contingency theory approach (Fisher, 1995). Integrating marketing strategies and human resource management strategies to achieve competitive advantage from SMEs is the right strategy (Hermawati et al., 2022), there is interdependence between the two (Queiroz et al., 2020).

This explanation is in accordance with research findings from (Tirtayasa et al., 2022), (Rahmadi & Dewandaru, 2021), (Retnawati & Retnaningsih, 2020) which states that competitive advantage is influenced by market orientation. Market orientation is influenced by spiritual marketing, this is in accordance with studies (Kumari & Sharma, 2023) and (Hajizadeh & Kazemi, 2022). In addition, market orientation is also influenced by a culture of innovation stated by (Karaev & Mercan, 2023), (Krot, 2013), (Camarero & Garrido, 2012), and (O’Cass & Ngo, 2007). Study (Hermawati et al., 2022) is in line with study (Y. (Susan) Wei & Atuahene-Gima, 2009) which states that there is an interaction between marketing and human resource management in influencing market orientation. Human resource management strategies that influence market orientation are quality of work life and employee benefits (Y. Wei et al., 2012) and (Y. (Susan) Wei & Atuahene-Gima, 2009). Based on the explanation and contingency theory, the hypothesis is:

- H1: Spiritual marketing has a significant positive effect on market orientation.
- H2: Innovation culture has a significant positive effect on market orientation.
- H3: Quality of work life has a significant positive effect on market orientation.
- H4: Employee benefits have a significant positive effect on market orientation.

H5: Market orientation has a significant positive effect on competitive advantage.

## Method

This research was conducted by surveying employees and using quantitative methods. Path analysis is used to assist data processing utilizing SPSS and AMOS software. The population in this study were all employees of the tourism industry SMEs in East Java, Indonesia. The sample size is 440 SMEs. Each SMEs was recruited by 3 employees, bringing the total number of respondents to 1320 employees. This research was applied to 11 regions in East Java, Indonesia (Pacitan, Lumajang, Malang, Batu, Surabaya, Banyuwangi, Blitar, Kediri, Jombang, Ponorogo and Pasuruan). Two stages of the sampling process, the first stage is selecting cities and regencies that represent all tourism conditions in East Java Indonesia, the second stage has tourism industry SMEs in the East Java region, Indonesia.

Path analysis in this study was conducted to determine whether there is influence or not between marketing strategy variables, namely spiritual marketing and innovation culture variables, human resource management strategies, namely quality of work life and rewards variables. With market orientation mediating variables on competitive advantage.

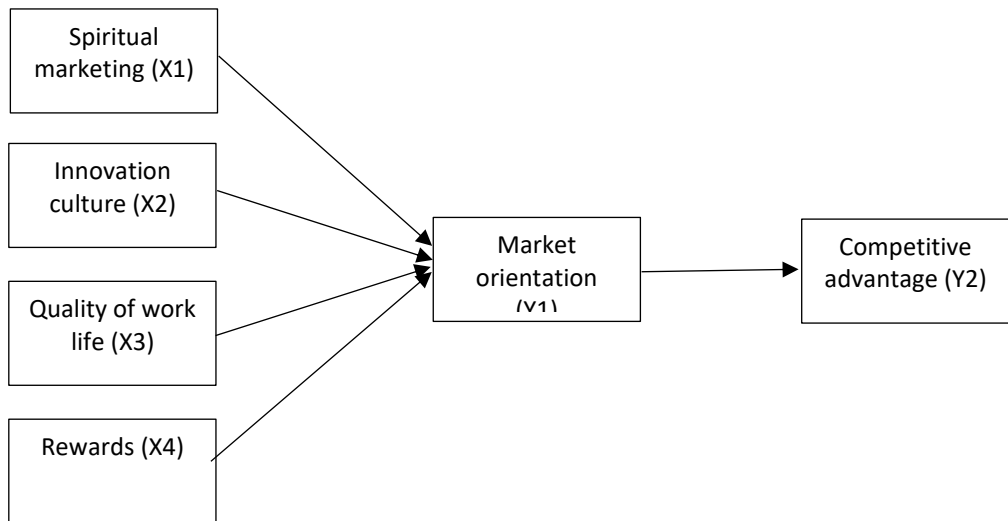


Figure 2. Research framework

## Analysis study

A total of 1500 questionnaires were sent to respondents, however, only 1320 questionnaires were completely filled out. Respondents were dominated by employees of restaurants, lodging, travel agencies and transportation services. Based on the results of observations, it is evident that SMEs employees have high loyalty due to their long tenure. In addition, the number of respondents was more dominated by men and the education level of the respondents was mostly high school graduates.

Based on the definitions of the variables that have been described, each follows a reflective indicator model. In this regard, the evaluation of the measurement model is carried out by looking at the loading indicators presented in table 1. Loading on each indicator can be positive or negative in forming the variable. In addition, an indicator can be declared significant if it has a p-value of not more than 0.05.

Table 1  
 The results of the measurement model

Variable	Indicator	Loading	P-value	Annotation
Spiritual marketing (X1)	Thesis (X1.1)	0.757	<0.001	Significant
	Jetis (X1.2)	0.765	<0.001	Significant
	Realistic (X1.3)	0.774	<0.001	Significant
	Humanistic (X1.4)	0.757	<0.001	Significant
Innovation culture (X2)	Creativity (X2.1)	0.793	<0.001	Significant
	Risk taking (X2.2)	0.783	<0.001	Significant
	Teamwork (X2.3)	0.794	<0.001	Significant
	Employee participation (X3.1)	0.739	<0.001	Significant
Quality of work life (X3)	Conflict resolution (X3.2)	0.740	<0.001	Significant
	Communication (X3.3)	0.721	<0.001	Significant
	Occupational health (X3.4)	0.732	<0.001	Significant
	Occupational safety (X3.5)	0.718	<0.001	Significant
	Work safety (X3.6)	0.725	<0.001	Significant
	Decent compensation (X3.7)	0.718	<0.001	Significant
	Pride (X3.8)	0.728	<0.001	Significant
	Career development (X3.9)	0.721	<0.001	Significant
	Sense of fairness (X4.1)	0.787	<0.001	Significant
Rewards (X4)	Award for appreciation (X4.2)	0.799	<0.001	Significant
	Profitable work (X4.3)	0.793	<0.001	Significant
	Customer orientation (Y1.1)	0.780	<0.001	Significant
Market orientation (Y1)	Competitor orientation (Y1.2)	0.786	<0.001	Significant
	Coordination between functions (Y1.3)	0.793	<0.001	Significant
	Competitive price (Y2.1)	0.743	<0.001	Significant
Competitive advantage (Y2)	Management capability (Y2.2)	0.751	<0.001	Significant
	Profit (Y2.3)	0.748	<0.001	Significant
	Position (Y2.4)	0.744	<0.001	Significant
	Strategic location (Y2.5)	0.730	<0.001	Significant

Source: Processed research data (2023)

The objective of testing the hypothesis in the inner model is to partially test the direct effect between exogenous variables with endogenous variables and endogenous variables with endogenous variables in each path. The results of testing the inner model hypothesis are presented in table 2 by looking at the path coefficient and p-value.

Table 2  
 Path coefficient values

Num	Predictor variable	Respon variable	Path coefficient	p-value	Annotation
1.	Spiritual marketing (X <sub>1</sub> )	Market orientation (Y <sub>1</sub> )	0.360	<0.001	Significant
2.	Innovation culture (X <sub>2</sub> )	Market orientation (Y <sub>1</sub> )	0.351	<0.001	Significant
3.	Quality of work life (X <sub>3</sub> )	Market orientation (Y <sub>1</sub> )	0.352	<0.001	Significant
4.	Rewards (X <sub>4</sub> )	Market orientation (Y <sub>1</sub> )	0.347	<0.001	Significant
5.	Market orientation (Y <sub>1</sub> )	Competitive advantage (Y <sub>2</sub> )	0.309	<0.001	Significant

Based on table 2 it is known that there are five paths formed. Everything shows a significant positive relationship, namely the relationship between spiritual marketing, innovation culture, quality of work life, rewards to market orientation. Then, market orientation towards competitive advantage because it has a p-value  $\leq 0.05$  and all show a positive direction. If detailed, the relationship between spiritual marketing and market orientation has a p-value <0.001 with a path coefficient of 0.360, meaning that spiritual marketing has a significant positive relationship with market orientation. The relationship between innovation culture and market orientation has a p-value <0.001 with a path coefficient of 0.351, meaning that innovation culture has a significant positive relationship with market orientation. The relationship between quality of work life and market orientation has a p-value <0.001 with a path coefficient of 0.352, meaning that quality of work life has a significant positive relationship with market orientation. The relationship between rewards and market orientation has a p-value <0.001 with a path coefficient of 0.347, meaning that rewards have a significant positive relationship with market orientation. The relationship between market orientation and competitive advantage has a p-value <0.001 with a path coefficient of 0.309, meaning that market orientation has a significant positive relationship with competitive advantage.

## **Discussion**

Spiritual marketing is a marketing strategy that uses conscience, calling, ethics and morality, not only based on logic and scientific concepts, so as to foster a sense of compassion, empathy and honesty. By using spiritual marketing, the orientation of the organization is not only financial, but more spiritual so that this will provide more benefits to consumers because the organization does not only fulfill its own interests, namely to get the maximum profit. The findings of this study are supported by (Kumari & Sharma, 2023) and (Hajizadeh & Kazemi, 2022) which state that market orientation is positively influenced by spiritual marketing. In addition, the findings of this study are also in accordance with the contingency theory (Fisher, 1995) which explains that company strategy must be adapted to the circumstances of each company. So that the more companies improve spiritual marketing, the market orientation will increase.

A culture of innovation is a work environment developed by leaders to encourage unconventional thinking, keep up with the times and quickly adapt to change. In the current era it is very appropriate for companies to develop a culture of innovation, this has an impact on market orientation which will ultimately have an impact on competitive advantage. The findings of this study indicate that market orientation is positively influenced by a culture of innovation, which is in line with (Karaev & Mercan, 2023), (Krot, 2013), (Camarero & Garrido, 2012), and (O' Cass & Ngo, 2007) and according to contingency theory (Fisher, 1995). This means that the more companies improve the culture of innovation, the market orientation will also increase.

To increase employee satisfaction, strengthen learning and help employees become better known as quality of work life which has an impact on market orientation and will increase competitive advantage. This is in line with contingency theory (Fisher, 1995) because it must be adapted to the circumstances of each company. The findings of this study indicate that market orientation is influenced by quality of work life, meaning that the more companies improve the quality of work life, the more market orientation will increase, which is supported by (Y. (Susan) Wei & Atuahene-Gima, 2009) which explains that there is interaction between marketing and human resource management affect the application of market orientation and new product innovation.

In addition, the findings of this study also show that rewards also have an influence on market orientation, because rewards are compensation provided by companies to their workers, and in accordance with contingency theory (Fisher, 1995). The findings of this study are in accordance with the Study (Y. (Susan) Wei & Atuahene-Gima, 2009) which explains that a long-term oriented high-level reward system and a low-level risk-taking reward system enhance the positive effect of market orientation on new product performance. The findings of this study are also supported by (Y. Wei et al., 2012) by explaining

that participation-based rewards will increase market orientation. This means that the more the company increases the reward, the increase in market orientation can be achieved.

Competitive advantage in the findings of this study is influenced by market orientation. In order for companies to achieve competitive advantage, companies must create something new that is not the same as competitors, so companies can demonstrate innovative actions through new product innovation, this is in accordance with contingency theory (Fisher, 1995). The findings of this study are in accordance with (Tirtayasa et al., 2022), (Rahmadi & Dewandaru, 2021), (Retnawati & Retnaningsih, 2020) which state that competitive advantage is influenced by market orientation. This means that the more companies improve market orientation, the competitive advantage will increase.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the results of path analysis on tourism industry SMEs in East Java, Indonesia show that the collaboration of human resource management strategies and marketing strategies can have an impact on market orientation. In addition, market orientation is also able to have an impact on competitive advantage. The limitation of this study is that the sample used in this study was only SMEs in the tourism industry in one area in Indonesia, so the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other industries and organizations. Suggestions for future research are to expand the research sample so that the research findings can be generalized or to compare research samples between countries so that the results can be generalized and compared. The implication of this research is the importance of collaborating between human resource management strategies and marketing strategies to increase the competitive advantage of SMEs in the tourism industry, considering that the tourism industry has a global impact on national income. In addition, this study can also contribute to the government in formulating policies related to SMEs in the tourism industry.

## **Acknowledgments**

The author would like to thank the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia.

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

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