



The Role of Social Connectedness in the Impact of Nostalgia Marketing on the Intention to Visit Popular Tourist Destinations: Evidence from the Saudi Tourism Sector

by

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Abstract :

This study investigates the impact of nostalgia marketing on tourists' intention to visit heritage destinations in Saudi Arabia, with a focus on the mediating role of social connectedness. As Saudi Arabia expands its tourism sector under Vision 2030, understanding the emotional and social factors influencing travel behavior has become increasingly critical. Drawing from Social Identity Theory and the Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions, the research proposes that nostalgia marketing fosters emotional responses that strengthen social connectedness, which in turn influences travel intentions.

A quantitative research design was adopted, and data were collected from 480 participants via an online survey targeting individuals familiar with Saudi heritage tourism. The study employed structural equation modeling (SEM) using SmartPLS to examine both direct and mediated relationships among nostalgia marketing, social connectedness, and visit intention.

The findings confirm that nostalgia marketing has a significant direct effect on both social connectedness and visit intention. Additionally, social connectedness partially mediates the relationship between nostalgia marketing and visit intention, suggesting that nostalgic emotions not only encourage travel behavior directly, but also indirectly by enhancing tourists' sense of belonging and emotional closeness to others.

This study contributes theoretically by integrating emotional and social constructs into tourism behavior models and provides practical guidance for destination marketers. Specifically, it recommends leveraging nostalgic narratives and socially engaging tourism experiences to promote sustainable cultural tourism in Saudi Arabia. The validated model offers new insights into how emotionally-driven marketing strategies influence actual travel decisions.

Keyword: Nostalgia Marketing, Social Connectedness, Visit Intention, Cultural Tourism, Heritage Marketing, Saudi Arabia, Emotional Marketing, Tourism Behavior, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), Vision 2030.

1. Introduction

Tourism marketing has progressively adopted emotive tactics to affect consumer behavior, with nostalgia marketing being one of the most notable. Nostalgia marketing, grounded in the evocation of treasured memories, links individuals to their personal or collective histories, enabling the re-experiencing of emotionally meaningful times through travel, branding, or narrative. In the global tourist sector, this emotional bond has demonstrated efficacy in fostering desire, loyalty, and engagement with destinations. Nostalgia engenders profound psychological connections between tourists and locals, prompting revisit through both rational incentives and emotional stimuli. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with its burgeoning tourism industry under Vision 2030, offers a conducive environment for emotional marketing methods. In its pursuit of becoming a premier global tourism destination, comprehending the impact of emotionally charged marketing on travel intentions is both pertinent and crucial.

Despite the growing implementation of nostalgia-themed marketing across tourism platforms—spanning traditional advertisements to influencer-led social media content—academic inquiry has not thoroughly examined the psychological mechanisms by which nostalgia affects travel behavior. Although numerous studies have validated the direct correlation between nostalgia marketing and visitors' intentions to visit destinations (e.g., Nguyen & Duong, 2024; Lin et al., 2023), there is a paucity of research investigating the underlying mechanisms that facilitate this link. One particularly underexamined yet theoretically significant mechanism is social connection,

defined as the emotional and cognitive perception of belonging and intimacy with others. Tourism is inherently a socially ingrained activity. Individuals travel not solely for exploration but also for connection—be it with others, cultural narratives, or their personal histories. Consequently, investigating the manner in which nostalgia marketing engenders social connectivity and subsequently affects travel choices presents considerable potential for both scholarly insight and practical implementation in tourism marketing.

This study identifies a distinct gap in the literature by suggesting that social connectivity mediates the relationship between nostalgia marketing and visitors' intentions to visit destinations. Although nostalgia has been demonstrated to enhance interpersonal connections (Fan et al., 2020; Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018), and social connectedness is extensively recognized as a catalyst for travel behavior (Shang et al., 2021; Kala, 2021), no current research has comprehensively amalgamated these three variables into a singular model. This absence constitutes both a theoretical and empirical deficiency, as it neglects a vital psychological avenue in tourism research—especially in rapidly developing destinations such as Saudi Arabia, where cultural narratives, heritage promotion, and emotional storytelling are pivotal for positioning.

This study is significant for its potential to enhance our comprehension of the mechanisms of emotional appeals in tourism marketing and their translation into behavior via social dynamics. This study seeks to elucidate the indirect influence of nostalgia marketing through social connectedness on the intention to travel, so offering a more refined understanding of how visitors make

emotionally driven decisions. This directly affects marketers, destination managers, and politicians aiming to leverage cultural memory and emotional branding for sustainable tourism development.

The project aims to address the following principal research question: In what manner can social connectivity influence the relationship between nostalgia marketing and travelers' intentions to visit prominent sites, specifically within the context of Saudi tourism? Sub-questions include: Does nostalgia marketing directly affect the inclination to visit? Does nostalgia marketing augment sentiments of social connectedness? Does social connectivity independently forecast travel intentions?

This research addresses these topics, contributing to theoretical advancements in tourist psychology and emotional marketing, while also supporting Saudi Arabia's objective of utilizing culture, tradition, and emotion to establish robust destination brands. The suggested model presents a novel viewpoint on the emotional and social dynamics behind travel behavior and may provide a basis for future study and practice in tourism promotion.

2. Conceptual framework

2.1. Nostalgia marketing

Nostalgia marketing means the deliberate use of emotionally resonant memories from the past to affect consumer behavior and enhance emotional connection. In tourism, it entails eliciting communal or individual recollections of culturally significant experiences, locations, or identities to enhance destination appeal. This marketing approach evokes sentiments of warmth, comfort, and familiarity, prompting consumers to reestablish

connections with significant experiences and, consequently, with locations that embody those experiences. Nostalgia functions as both a personal emotional reaction and a potent communal feeling, capable of strengthening group identification and interpersonal connections (Fan et al., 2020; Juhl & Biskas, 2022; Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018; Youn & Jin, 2017).

2.2. Social connectedness

Social connectedness refers to an individual's subjective perception of belonging, intimacy, and emotional bond with others. It signifies the psychological feeling of social integration and support within interpersonal or group connections. In tourism contexts, social connectivity can be expressed through collective travel experiences, emotional bonds to culturally significant sites, or participation in community-focused tourism. Studies indicate that nostalgia amplifies emotions of connectedness, thereby improving well-being, motivation, and pro-social actions, including travel participation (Wang et al., 2018; Stephan et al., 2015; Juhl et al., 2021; Sedikides et al., 2016; Tosyali et al., 2023; Kumail et al., 2021).

2.3. Visit Intention

The intention to visit tourist locations denotes an individual's deliberate plan or readiness to travel to a particular location in the future. It is regarded as a dependable indicator of genuine travel behavior and is frequently affected by cognitive, emotional, and social influences. This includes perceived destination image, emotional responses such as nostalgia, and social motivators including community belonging and interpersonal influence. When individuals have emotional or social connections to a location or community,

their propensity to visit or return to that destination markedly increases (Nguyen & Duong, 2024; Cho et al., 2020; Kala, 2021; Vuthisophon et al., 2023; Pai et al., 2020).

3. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

3.1. Nostalgia Marketing and Social Connectedness

Nostalgia marketing, characterized by the deliberate utilization of emotionally resonant memories from the past, has gained significant importance for its capacity to cultivate deeper emotional connections with consumers. Nostalgia not only influences brand perceptions and purchase intentions but also plays a vital social role by fostering individuals' sense of connection with others. Numerous studies have repeatedly demonstrated that nostalgia serves as a potent social emotion that strengthens interpersonal connections and fosters a sense of belonging.

Nostalgic sentiments have been shown to influence customers to favor products favored by the majority, a phenomenon attributed to increased feelings of social connectedness (Fan et al., 2020). Consumers with pronounced nostalgic inclinations demonstrate a greater desire for decadent foods, a phenomenon mediated by an enhanced sense of connection to others (Wang et al., 2018). These findings demonstrate that nostalgia not only elicits personal memories but also engages societal interaction dynamics.

Scholars contend that nostalgia is really a "social emotion," as nostalgic reflections frequently encompass others and collective experiences (Juhl & Biskas, 2022). This research underscores how nostalgia-induced social

connectedness yields psychological advantages, including increased optimism, a sense of purpose, and emotional stability. Nostalgia has been demonstrated to augment life's significance primarily via the process of social connectivity (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018).

Furthermore, empirical research demonstrates that nostalgia enhances individuals' propensity to seek assistance by fostering a sense of acceptance and social support (Juhl et al., 2021). It enhances self-continuity via social connectivity, hence promoting psychological well-being (Sedikides et al., 2016). Nostalgia-induced social connectedness has been shown to enhance self-esteem and motivation, motivating individuals to pursue significant objectives (Stephan et al., 2015).

Moreover, within the realm of digital marketing, nostalgia on platforms like Pinterest exerts a more significant effect when paired with substantial social influence, hence highlighting the social aspect of nostalgic allure (Youn & Jin, 2017). Nostalgia plays a significant role in the formation of community and identity, since nostalgia marketing cultivates a shared identity, especially when it elicits collective cultural memories (Rana et al., 2020). Ultimately, even throughout catastrophes such as the COVID-19 pandemic, nostalgic stimuli facilitated the restoration of social intimacy and belonging, mitigating psychological detachment (Kirk & Rifkin, 2021).

Collectively, this body of research substantiates that nostalgia marketing exerts a significant and consistent influence on social connectivity. Nostalgia, whether elicited by traditional advertising, digital content, or personal recollections, activates social emotions and reinforces psychological

connections among individuals and their social groupings. Consequently, in light of this theoretical and empirical evidence, the subsequent hypothesis is posited:

Hypothesis (H1): Nostalgia marketing has a significant positive effect on tourists' social connectedness.

3.2. Nostalgia Marketing and Visit Intention

Nostalgia has emerged as a prevalent emotional appeal in tourism marketing, particularly for its capacity to elicit profound emotional reactions and influence consumer behavior. Nostalgia marketing leverages cherished memories from the past, enabling individuals to revisit affirmative experiences linked to particular locations, events, or cultures. This emotional bond has been demonstrated to dramatically affect travelers' intentions to visit both known and novel sites.

An increasing amount of research underscores the influence of nostalgia on travelers' behavioral intentions. A recent study indicated that nostalgic emotions felt during a journey might markedly improve a tourist's perception of the destination, hence augmenting their propensity for positive word-of-mouth and intentions to repeat (Nguyen & Duong, 2024). This suggests that nostalgia influences travelers before to their visit and also affects their experiences and behaviors upon arrival at the location. Nostalgia has been shown to establish a psychological connection between tourists and the site, fostering local attachment and enhancing the propensity to return (Wei et al., 2024).

Furthermore, virtual tourism encounters might elicit nostalgic sentiments that result in tangible behavioral repercussions in the actual world. A study conducted by Shin and Jeong (2022) demonstrated that travelers who engage in authentic and sensory-rich virtual excursions have heightened immersion, therefore eliciting nostalgic emotions. These emotions were determined to considerably augment the intention to either visit the real place in the future or explore analogous spots (Shin & Jeong, 2022). This underscores the efficacy of nostalgia marketing in both physical tourism initiatives and virtual reality and digital tourism experiences.

Nostalgia has demonstrated significant influence on specialized areas of tourism, especially within athletic tourism. For instance, a study conducted by Cho et al. (2019) examined European football enthusiasts who had never attended a match at their preferred team's stadium. The research revealed that nostalgia substantially impacted fans' travel motivation, subsequently affecting their intention to visit the stadium. The direct impact of nostalgia on visit intention was insignificant; rather, the link was entirely mediated by motivation (Cho et al., 2019). In a further study, Cho, Chiu, and Tan (2020) revealed that nostalgia enhanced psychological commitment and subjective well-being among satellite fans of European football leagues, significantly influencing their propensity to travel internationally to attend a match (Cho et al., 2020). These findings highlight the significance of nostalgia in fostering emotional allegiance, even among audiences lacking past direct experience of the site.

Nostalgia acts as a significant motivational element in cultural tourism, particularly when travelers aim to reestablish connections with historical or heritage locations. Research in Luxor, Egypt, highlighted that nostalgic tourists were motivated by a want to revisit culturally significant locations, reestablish their identities, and maintain emotional connections with the past. Nostalgia substantially enhanced plans to revisit, establishing it as a fundamental element of destination marketing strategies (Shoukat et al., 2023). Nostalgia associated with political or ideological history has been demonstrated to affect tourist loyalty. Chinese cigar tourists visiting Cuba experienced a profound connection to the country through socialist nostalgia, which fostered both their wish to revisit and their willingness to recommend the place (Wen & Huang, 2019).

Nostalgia plays a crucial part in establishing robust destination brands. Lin et al. (2023) investigated the impact of sensory and affective brand experiences, frequently incorporating nostalgic elements, on destination brand perception and the intention to visit various locations. The results indicated that these emotional experiences enhance tourists' brand evaluations and subsequently elevate their propensity to visit (Lin et al., 2023). A study conducted by Kumail et al. (2021) in the UAE revealed that destination brand authenticity, encompassing nostalgic elements like continuity and symbolism, has a direct and significant influence on the intention to visit (Kumail et al., 2021).

Nostalgic themes conveyed through social media in the digital marketing realm influence tourists' views and intentions. For instance, Eman and Refaie (2023) examined Instagram posts about El Fayoum, Egypt, and found that

nostalgic content—especially when shared by trusted influencers—positively influenced the perceived image of the destination and increased visit intention (Eman & Refaie, 2023). This indicates that nostalgia marketing can effectively function on both traditional and digital platforms to augment tourism demand.

The current literature offers substantial evidence that nostalgia marketing significantly influences the intention to visit tourist locations, functioning through emotional and cognitive mechanisms. Nostalgic cues, whether derived from in-person encounters, virtual settings, sports or cultural contexts, or social media, elicit good memories and feelings that motivate tourists to take action. Therefore, based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis (H3): Nostalgia marketing has a significant positive effect on tourists' intention to visit tourist destinations.

3.3. Social Connectedness and Visit Intention

Social Connectedness has become a significant psychological aspect affecting tourists' behavior, especially in determining their desire to visit destinations. This construct includes emotional connection, group belonging, and interpersonal influence, all of which jointly impact decision-making in tourism situations. Tourism is a socially integrated activity, with travelers motivated by both personal needs and social dynamics, as well as group attachments. Numerous researches have shown that a heightened sense of social connection is associated with a greater propensity to travel.

Shang et al. (2021) discovered that subjective norms, indicative of social influence and perceived interpersonal connections, significantly positively impacted tourists' intentions to visit rural destinations. Vuthisophon et al. (2023) similarly found that destination connection and self-brand connection, both based on emotional and social attachment, positively affected tourists' propensity to revisit local places. Zeng et al. (2021) highlighted the significance of social satisfaction and group-oriented experiences in influencing tourists' propensity to revisit mountain destinations within the wellness tourism framework.

Furthermore, a spiritual and emotional connection to locations amplifies the intention to visit. Kala (2021) shown that in post-pandemic religious tourism, travelers were significantly driven by spiritual connections and place attachment, both of which are intricately linked to a sense of social and emotional belonging. This connection is further substantiated by studies on human-technology interaction. Tosyali et al. (2023) shown that interaction with tourism chatbots improved destination image, thereby affecting the intention to visit—highlighting the significance of perceived interpersonal and informational connectivity in digital environments.

Katsikari et al. (2020) identified that emotional and social incentives, such as the inclination to share travel experiences and establish connections, significantly influenced location selection among Greek visitors. Pai et al. (2020) similarly established that social well-being and happiness, derived from interconnected travel experiences, enhanced revisit intention within the framework of smart tourism. Kim and Yoon (2020) demonstrated that

compassion, as a prosocial emotion, enhanced tourists' desire to promote a crowded destination, indicating that empathy and collective sentiments might influence behavioral results.

The influence of social affiliation transcends emotional aspects to encompass perceived sincerity and loyalty. Kumail et al. (2021) observed that community engagement and perceived authenticity resulted in enhanced destination loyalty and intentions to revisit. Kamboj and Joshi (2020) demonstrated that travelers utilizing mobile travel applications reported improved social interaction and aesthetic gratification, which fostered behavioral effects including sustained app usage and intentions to revisit the destination.

These findings collectively underscore that social connectedness—manifested through social norms, emotional ties, shared experiences, or digital interactions—significantly influences travelers' desire to return or revisit countries. As tourism increasingly relies on social dynamics in both physical and digital realms, harnessing connectivity can serve as a strategic asset in destination marketing.

Hypothesis (H2): Social connectedness has a significant positive effect on tourists' intention to visit tourist destinations.

3.4. Nostalgia Marketing and Visit Intention

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3.5. The Mediating Role of Social Connectedness

As tourism transforms into a more emotionally and socially oriented experience, academics have increasingly concentrated on the psychological mechanisms that elucidate how marketing efforts affect travel behavior. One such process is social connection, which indicates the degree to which individuals experience emotional closeness, acceptance, and bonding with others. Within nostalgia marketing, social connectivity serves not just as an outcome but as a vital mediating element that conveys the emotional influence of nostalgia into behavioral intentions, such as visiting a destination.

Multiple researches have demonstrated that nostalgia enhances social connections, thereby affecting subsequent behaviors. Nostalgia has been demonstrated to enhance social connectivity, prompting customers to select products or options that correspond with group inclinations (Fan et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2018). This relational pathway has been validated across multiple domains, including consumer products, dietary selections, and digital information, indicating that nostalgia functions within a social-relational framework rather than in isolation. Researchers Juhl and Biskas (2022) characterize nostalgia as a "social emotion," emphasizing its common association with collective past experiences and individuals. Moreover, studies by Sedikides and Wildschut (2018) and Sedikides et al. (2016) demonstrate that nostalgia enriches life meaning and self-continuity by augmenting social

connectivity, which serves as the primary conduit for the resultant emotional and psychological advantages.

Simultaneously, comprehensive tourism research indicates that social connectivity significantly influences travel intentions. Tourists frequently base their selections on emotional and social influences, including a sense of belonging, shared experiences, and communal support. Research indicates that perceptions of social impact and belonging substantially enhance the intention to revisit and loyalty to tourist locations (Vuthisophon et al., 2023; Kumail et al., 2021). Shang et al. (2021) identified that social media participation and perceived group norms significantly predicted the propensity to visit rural areas. In post-pandemic religious tourism, spiritual and social connections prompted visits to sacred locations (Kala, 2021), while social factors affected the travel behavior of wellness tourists and technologically adept travelers (Zeng et al., 2021; Pai et al., 2020). Digital tourist experiences, including interactions with chatbots, have demonstrated the ability to enhance visit intention through emotionally engaging and socially related tales (Tosyali et al., 2023). These findings indicate that persons who perceive emotional support or social involvement are more likely to participate in tourism-related activities.

Notably, certain research has begun to elucidate the complete mediating mechanism. Stephan et al. (2015) discovered that nostalgia induces social connectivity, therefore motivating purposeful goal-directed action. Similarly, Juhl et al. (2021) shown that social connectedness derived from nostalgic recollection prompted participants to seek assistance or participate in prosocial

activities. This strategy may also apply to tourism, where the emotional impact of nostalgic marketing fosters a sense of belonging, thereby motivating the intention to visit sites of cultural or emotional importance. Collectively, these findings indicate a two-phase effect, wherein nostalgia marketing initially boosts social connectivity, which then affects travel plans. Consequently, social connectedness likely functions as a psychological conduit through which nostalgia marketing influences visitor behavior.

Hypothesis (H4): Social connectedness mediates the relationship between nostalgia marketing and tourists' intention to visit tourist destinations.

4. The theoretical framework

This research is based on social identity theory and the broaden-and-build theory of pleasant emotions, which collectively offer a strong theoretical framework for elucidating how nostalgia marketing can affect tourist behavior via social connectedness. Social identity theory asserts that individuals obtain a segment of their self-concept from their perceived affiliation with social groupings (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Nostalgia marketing employs emotionally resonant messaging that recall collective memories and shared cultural experiences, hence strengthening group or destination identity. Exposure to nostalgic stimuli—such as traditional festivals, historical landmarks, or culturally significant imagery—reinforces social connections, enhancing individuals' sense of belonging and alignment with a specific group or locale (Juhl & Biskas, 2022; Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018).

The broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001) posits that positive emotions, including those induced by nostalgia, enhance individuals' cognitive and behavioral options while facilitating the development of enduring personal and social resources. Nostalgia, a positive yet frequently bittersweet sensation, evokes joyful memories and enhances psychological resources such as social connectivity (Stephan et al., 2015; Juhl et al., 2021). These emotional experiences equip individuals to participate in pro-social behaviors and inspire actions such as planning future trips or revisiting significant locations.

Empirical research corroborates this theoretical connection. Fan et al. (2020) and Wang et al. (2018) shown that nostalgic stimuli markedly enhance social connectivity, thereby affecting consumer behavior. Research conducted by Shang et al. (2021) and Vuthisopon et al. (2023) indicated that persons exhibiting elevated levels of social connectivity demonstrated a heightened propensity to visit or revisit destinations, particularly when such locations elicited emotional or social significance. Collectively, these data indicate that nostalgic marketing elicits emotional responses associated with shared identity and belonging, which are subsequently transformed into behavioral intentions via the mediation influence of social connectedness. The theoretical framework posits a causal route in which nostalgia marketing elevates social connectivity, hence augmenting the intention to visit tourist places. This conceptual framework amalgamates theories from emotional and social psychology to elucidate how memory-driven marketing efforts can influence real travel behavior.

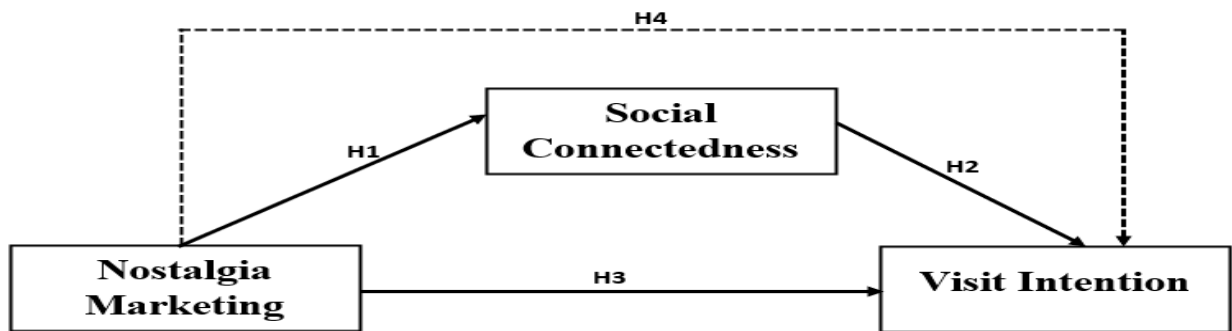


Fig 1. Research framework

5. Methodology

This study utilizes a quantitative research methodology with a survey-based cross-sectional design to investigate the mediating effect of social connectedness on the relationship between nostalgia marketing and the intention to visit tourist places. The research examines the tourism landscape in Saudi Arabia, particularly on culturally and historically significant sites like Diriyah, AlUla, and medieval Jeddah. The research aims to evaluate the direct and indirect impacts of nostalgia marketing on visitation intention via structural equation modeling (SEM) utilizing SmartPLS.

5.1. Research Design

This research used a cross-sectional survey approach, facilitating the collection of data at a single moment to investigate the links among the primary constructs: nostalgia marketing, social connectivity, and visit intention. The research seeks to ascertain direct linkages and the mediating influence of social connectivity within the context of Saudi tourism. The

approach is suitable for investigating psychological and emotional dimensions with validated multi-item Likert-scale questionnaires.

5.2. Population and Sample

The target market comprises Saudi and non-Saudi individuals aged 18 and older who have either visited or plan to visit cultural or historical places in Saudi Arabia. The sample is drawn using purposive sampling, targeting respondents who are familiar with domestic tourism experiences and emotionally engaged with Saudi heritage destinations. In accordance with the guidelines of Hair et al. (2019) for SEM analysis, a minimum sample size of 400–480 respondents is aimed for to ensure sufficient statistical power and generalizability. This allows for robust estimation of both the measurement and structural models.

5.3. Data Collection

Data is gathered through an online self-administered questionnaire disseminated across digital platforms, including social media, WhatsApp groups, and university mailing lists. The survey is bilingual (Arabic and English) and has a concise study description, a consent statement, and directives to guarantee anonymity and voluntary participation. The survey comprises four sections:

- Demographic data (e.g., age, gender, nationality, educational attainment).
- Nostalgia Marketing (NM) - Assessed by nine elements modified from previous tourism nostalgia research, tailored to the Saudi heritage setting.

- Social Connectedness (SC) - Assessed by six measures modified from Stephan et al. (2015) and Wang et al. (2018), tailored for tourism interactions.
- Visit Intention (VI) - Assessed by five items derived from Kala (2021), indicating behavioral intents to visit or endorse Saudi tourism locations.

All scale items are assessed with a 5-point Likert scale, with values ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Table 1. Sample Description

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	240	50.0%
	Female	240	50.0%
Age	18–24 years	120	25.0%
	25–34 years	160	33.3%
	35–44 years	100	20.8%
	45+ years	100	20.8%
Nationality	Saudi	390	81.3%
	Non-Saudi	90	18.8%
Education Level	High School	40	8.3%
	Bachelor's Degree	280	58.3%
	Master's/PhD	160	33.3%
Visited Historical Site in KSA	Yes	420	87.5%
	No	60	12.5%

Table 1 provides a descriptive description of the study's 480 participants, reflecting a diverse and balanced sample of both domestic and international tourists in Saudi Arabia. The gender distribution was evenly divided, with 50% male and 50% female participants, so ensuring a gender-balanced perspective in evaluating tourism behavior. A plurality (58.3%) of respondents were aged between 18 and 34, indicating that younger and early middle-aged

persons constitute the primary demographic participating in Saudi historical tourism. This corresponds with national statistics indicating an increasing interest in domestic travel among Saudi youth under Vision 2030.

The sample comprised 81.3% Saudi citizens and 18.8% non-Saudis, facilitating an examination of cross-cultural perceptions of nostalgia marketing within Saudi historical tourism. Educational attainment was significant, with 58.3% of respondents possessing a bachelor's degree and 33.3% holding postgraduate qualifications, reflecting a knowledgeable and involved participant demographic. Significantly, 87.5% of participants said that they had previously visited at least one historical place in Saudi Arabia, so underscoring the pertinence of their comments to the research subject.

The sample structure effectively aligns with the study's aims. It encompasses several demographic characteristics, highlighting persons susceptible to emotional and cultural marketing methods. This improves both the reliability and applicability of the study's findings within the wider Saudi tourism setting.

6. Results

6.1. Evaluating the Reflective Measurement Model

The reflective measurement model included a second-order factor for Sustainable Performance and was evaluated in terms of indicator consistency, internal consistency, reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Figure 2). Table 1 shows the criteria and ranges used to evaluate the reflective measurement model in this study, according to Hair *et al.* (2019).

Table 2. Evaluation criteria of the reflective measurement model

Evaluation	Criteria	Statistical Threshold
Indicator reliabilities	Reflective indicator loadings	≥ 0.708
Internal consistency reliability	Cronbach's alpha	≥ 0.70
	Composite reliability (CR)	≥ 0.70
convergent validity	Average variance extracted (AVE)	≥ 0.50
Discriminant validity	Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio	< 0.90 For conceptually similar constructs. < 0.85 For conceptually different constructs.
	Fornell-larcker criterion	The correlations of a construct with other constructs are less than the square root of its AVE.

Note: Adapted from Hair *et al.* (2019a)

Table 2 delineates the assessment criteria for evaluating the quality of the reflective measurement model within the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) framework. This phase is essential to guarantee the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments employed in the study prior to examining the structural correlations. The initial evaluation level pertains to indicator reliability, necessitating that individual item loadings on their corresponding latent structures achieve a minimum threshold of ≥ 0.708 . This signifies that more than 50% of the variance in the indicator is accounted for by the underlying component. For internal consistency dependability, both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) must be ≥ 0.70 , indicating that the indicators reliably assess the same latent variable. Convergent validity necessitates that the Average variation Extracted (AVE) be ≥ 0.50 , signifying that the concept accounts for a minimum of fifty percent of the variation of its indicators. This corroborates the unidimensionality of the latent variables.

Discriminant validity is evaluated by two established methodologies: the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT) and the Fornell–Larcker criterion. HTMT scores must remain below 0.90 for conceptually analogous constructs and below 0.85 for conceptually disparate ones, hence preserving empirical distinctiveness of constructs. Furthermore, the Fornell–Larcker criterion stipulates that the square root of each construct's Average Variance Extracted (AVE) must exceed its correlation with any other construct. The table offers a succinct and thorough explanation of the psychometric criteria necessary for validating reflective measurement models. Compliance with these standards enhances the reliability and validity of the latent constructs, hence fortifying the resilience of the structural model results.

Table 3. Measurement items of the first-order constructs

Construct and Items	Standardized Loading (sig.)	Alpha	CR	AVE
<i>Nostalgia Marketing (NM)</i>		0.917	0.931	0.602
NM1: I fantasized about the past while visiting the historical landmarks in Saudi Arabia.	0.781**			
NM2: During the visit, I imagined I was living in the historical era when these Saudi heritage sites were active.	0.805**			
NM3: The historical places in Saudi Arabia made me feel as if I had traveled back in time.	0.771**			
NM4: When I saw the heritage sites in Saudi Arabia (e.g., AlUla, Diriyah), I felt immersed in an ancient time period.	0.767**			
NM5: During the visit, I imagined stories and events from Saudi Arabia's history as reflected in the heritage sites.	0.807**			
NM6: I imagined myself in the traditional and simple lifestyle represented by the historic areas in Saudi	0.764**			

Arabia.

NM7: During the visit, I felt like I was participating in the cultural rituals and traditions of Saudi Arabia's past.	0.766**			
NM8: The historical landmarks in Saudi Arabia increased my desire to explore the country's past more deeply.	0.734**			
NM9: After visiting the heritage sites, my imagination was filled with thoughts and images from earlier times in Saudi history.	0.785**			
<i>Social Connectedness (SC)</i>		0.904	0.926	0.676
SC1: I feel emotionally connected to the people I interact with during my travel experiences.	0.861**			
SC2: Visiting cultural or heritage sites in Saudi Arabia makes me feel closer to others who share my values.	0.866**			
SC3: My travel experiences help me feel part of a larger community.	0.800**			
SC4: I often feel a strong sense of belonging while participating in tourism activities.	0.810**			
SC5: Being in historical places in Saudi Arabia helps me reflect on shared traditions and social identity.	0.780**			
SC6: I feel more socially connected when I engage in tourism that reflects my cultural background.	0.812**			
<i>Visit Intention (VI)</i>		0.862	0.901	0.648
VI1: I intend to visit historical tourist destinations in Saudi Arabia within the next 12 months.	0.794**			
VI2: I will recommend visiting heritage sites in Saudi Arabia to others.	0.867**			
VI3: I plan to gather more information about cultural or historical tourism in Saudi Arabia.	0.870**			
VI4: I would revisit historical destinations in Saudi Arabia if I have the chance.	0.759**			
VI5: I feel motivated to visit places that reflect Saudi Arabia's history and cultural identity.	0.724**			

Note: **: P < 0.01. Alpha denotes Cronbach's alpha; CR denotes composite reliability; and AVE is the average variance extracted.

The assessment of the measurement model commenced with an examination of internal consistency reliability, wherein both Cronbach's alpha and

composite reliability (CR) values for all constructs surpassed the suggested threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). Nostalgia Marketing (NM) exhibited a Cronbach's alpha of 0.917 and a Composite Reliability (CR) of 0.931; Social Connectedness (SC) presented values of 0.904 and 0.926, respectively; Visit Intention (VI) revealed dependable scores of 0.862 and 0.901. These findings indicate robust internal consistency among all constructs. Subsequently, convergent validity was evaluated using standardized outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). All item loadings above the 0.708 threshold and were statistically significant at $p < 0.01$, demonstrating adequate individual indicator dependability. The AVE values surpassed the minimum threshold of 0.50, with NM at 0.602, SC at 0.676, and VI at 0.648, indicating that over half of the variance in the indicators is accounted for by their corresponding latent variables (Hair et al., 2014; 2021).

These findings collectively exhibit robust convergent validity. The elevated AVE values for SC and VI indicate that the items effectively encapsulate the hidden categories of social connectedness and visit intention, respectively. The uniformity in loading values among NM questions confirms their efficacy in assessing nostalgia-induced emotional engagement within the realm of Saudi historical tourism. Although convergent validity is established, additional evaluation of discriminant validity through HTMT and the Fornell–Larcker criterion is necessary to confirm the empirical distinctiveness of each construct. According to the results in Table 3, all constructs satisfy the essential requirements for inclusion in the structural model, hence affirming

the robustness of the measuring model and its relevance to the tourism environment in Saudi Arabia.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics and correlations between constructs (Fornell-Larcker method)

NO.	Construct	1	2	3
1	Nostalgia Marketing (NM)	<i>0.776**</i>		
2	Social Connectedness (SC)	0.569**	<i>0.822**</i>	
3	Visit Intention (VI)	0.488**	0.534**	<i>0.805**</i>
	Mean	4.134	4.033	4.202
	Standard Deviation	0.723	0.765	0.790

Notes: **: P < 001; The square root of AVE is typed in *bold italic* along the diagonal

Table 4 displays the evaluation of discriminant validity utilizing the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which juxtaposes the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct (diagonal values in bold italics) against the inter-construct correlations (off-diagonal values). Fornell and Larcker (1981) assert that discriminant validity is confirmed when the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct exceeds its correlations with any other construct in the model. All constructs, as indicated in the table, satisfy this condition. The square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for Nostalgia Marketing (NM) is 0.776, surpassing its correlations with Social Connectedness (0.569) and Visit Intention (0.488). The square root of the AVE for Social Connectedness (SC) is 0.822, above its association with Visit Intention (0.534) and NM. The same applies to Visit Intention (VI), where the square root of AVE is 0.805, exceeding its association with both NM and SC. The results validate that all three notions are empirically distinct, hence corroborating the assumption of discriminant validity. Consequently, the measurement model exhibits robust construct

differentiation, facilitating significant understanding of the structural linkages within the model.

Table 5. Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) criterion values

NO.	Construct	1	2	3
1	Nostalgia Marketing (NM)			
2	Social Connectedness (SC)	0.621		
3	Visit Intention (VI)	0.543	0.603	

Table 5 presents the assessment of discriminant validity using the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), which is considered one of the most reliable and stringent methods for evaluating construct distinctiveness in structural equation modeling. According to Henseler et al. (2015), HTMT values should be below 0.90 for conceptually similar constructs, and preferably below 0.85 for conceptually distinct constructs to confirm adequate discriminant validity. In the present study, all HTMT values fall well below the conservative threshold of 0.85, indicating that each construct is empirically distinct from the others. Specifically, the HTMT ratio between Nostalgia Marketing and Social Connectedness is 0.621, between Nostalgia Marketing and Visit Intention is 0.543, and between Social Connectedness and Visit Intention is 0.603. These values reflect a moderate correlation between constructs, yet confirm that they are not conceptually redundant. Thus, the HTMT results complement the earlier Fornell–Larcker analysis, providing additional evidence that the measurement model satisfies discriminant validity requirements. This ensures that the constructs used—Nostalgia Marketing, Social Connectedness, and Visit Intention—are empirically distinguishable,

which supports the integrity of the structural model and the validity of hypothesis testing.

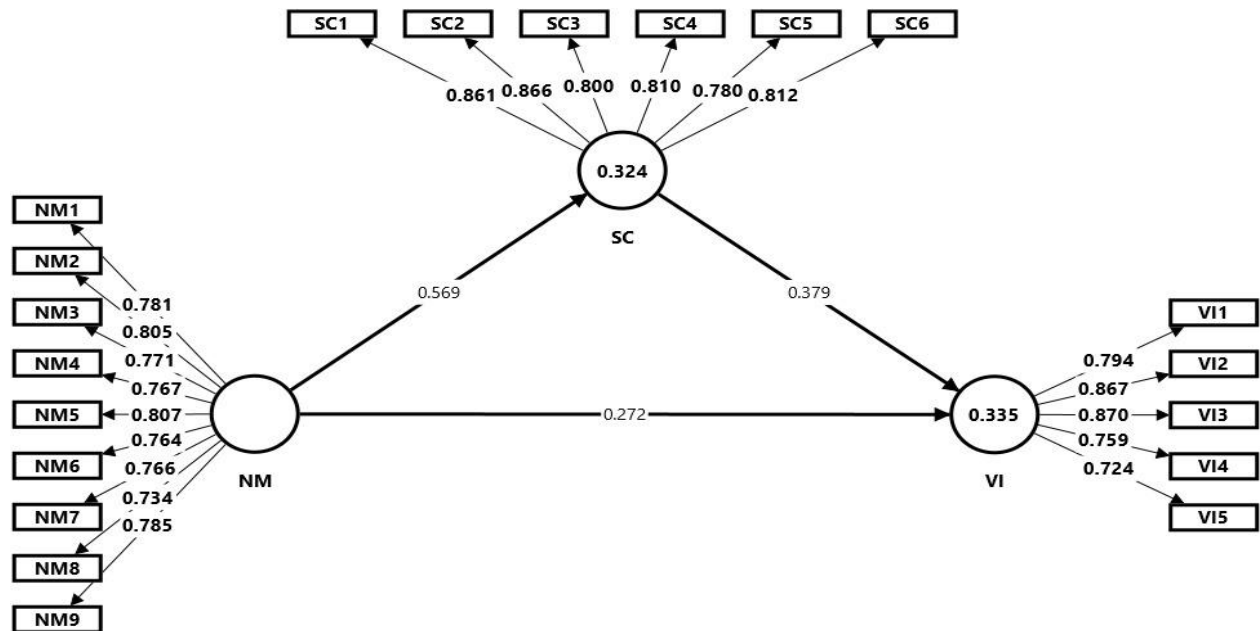


Figure 2. The reflective measurement model

Figure 2 illustrates the reflective measurement model used to test the hypothesized relationships between the study variables: Nostalgia Marketing (NM), Social Connectedness (SC), and Visit Intention (VI). All outer loadings for the observed items exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating strong indicator reliability for each construct. The model shows that Nostalgia Marketing has a direct effect on Visit Intention ($\beta = 0.272$) and an indirect effect through Social Connectedness ($\beta = 0.379$), with a notable path from NM to SC ($\beta = 0.569$). The R^2 values indicate that NM explains 32.4% of the variance in SC and that NM and SC together explain 33.5% of the variance in

VI. These results provide preliminary support for the model's reliability and the mediating role of social connectedness.

6.2. Evaluating the Structural Model

To evaluate the structural model shown in Figure 4, we used the variance inflation factor (VIF), effect size (f^2), and coefficient of determination (R^2) to assess the explained variance. The results of these three criteria are presented in Table 7.

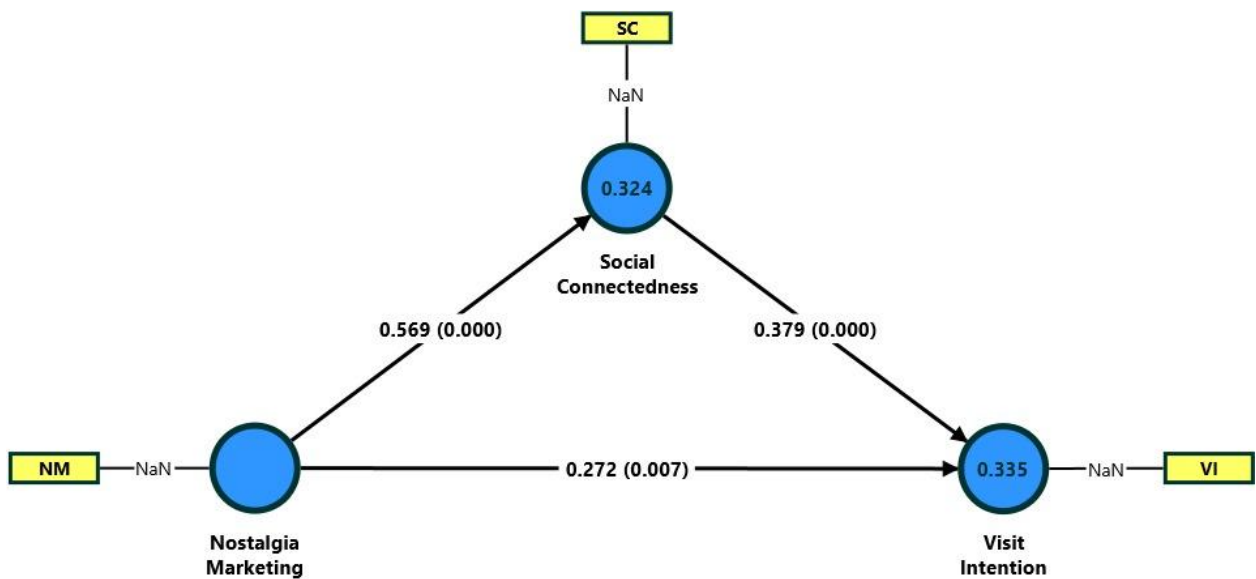


Figure 3: The structural model

Figure 3 displays the structural model results with standardized path coefficients and their corresponding significance levels (p-values). The direct path from Nostalgia Marketing (NM) to Social Connectedness (SC) is strong and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.569$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that nostalgia-based marketing strategies positively influence individuals' feelings of

connectedness. Additionally, SC significantly predicts Visit Intention (VI) ($\beta = 0.379$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that social connectedness plays an important role in motivating travel behavior. The direct effect from NM to VI is also significant ($\beta = 0.272$, $p = 0.007$), supporting the notion that nostalgic messaging independently influences tourists' intention to visit destinations. The R^2 values indicate that 32.4% of the variance in SC and 33.5% of the variance in VI are explained by the model. These results confirm the presence of both direct and indirect (mediated) effects, providing strong support for the proposed conceptual framework.

Table 6. Structural model evaluation

Construct	Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Collinearity Assessment	Confidence Intervals 95% (BCa) Bootstrap		F ² Effect Size	Level of R ²
		2.5%	97%		
Nostalgia Marketing (NM)	1.000	0.470	0.654	0.479	
	1.479	0.066	0.460	0.075	
Social Connectedness (SC)	1.479	0.254	0.520	0.146	0.324
Visit Intention (VI)					0.335

Table 6 presents a comprehensive evaluation of the structural model using key assessment indicators, including collinearity (VIF), confidence intervals from bootstrapping, effect size (F²), and the coefficient of determination (R²). These metrics offer insights into the robustness and explanatory power of the model paths. First, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values are used to assess multicollinearity among the constructs. All VIF values are well below the critical threshold of 5.0 (Hair et al., 2019), with Nostalgia Marketing (NM)

showing a VIF of 1.000 and Social Connectedness (SC) at 1.479, indicating no multicollinearity concerns in the model.

Regarding bootstrap confidence intervals, the 95% BCa intervals for all structural paths exclude zero, which confirms the statistical significance of the path coefficients. For example, the confidence interval for NM → SC ranges from 0.470 to 0.654, and for SC → VI from 0.254 to 0.520, indicating both effects are significant at $p < 0.05$. The path from NM → VI has a lower but still significant interval (0.066 to 0.460), further supporting its effect. The effect sizes (F^2) provide additional evidence of the contribution of each construct to the variance explained in the endogenous variables. The effect of NM on SC is large ($F^2 = 0.479$), while the effect of SC on VI is moderate ($F^2 = 0.146$), and the direct effect of NM on VI is small ($F^2 = 0.075$), yet still meaningful in the context of psychological and social behavior modeling.

Finally, the R^2 values show that the model explains 32.4% of the variance in Social Connectedness and 33.5% in Visit Intention. These values suggest moderate explanatory power, consistent with behavioral and social science standards (Hair et al., 2019). In sum, these results support the structural integrity and predictive relevance of the model, confirming both direct and mediated effects of nostalgia marketing on visit intention through social connectedness.

Hypotheses tests

Table 7. Structural model estimates

Hypothesis	β	Critical ratio	P-Value	Results
H ₁ Nostalgia Marketing (NM) → Social Connectedness (SC)	0.569	12.194	<0.01	Supported
H ₂ Social Connectedness (SC) → Visit Intention (VI)	0.379	5.384	<0.01	Supported
H ₃ Nostalgia Marketing (NM) → Visit Intention (VI)	0.272	2.703	<0.01	Supported
H ₄ Nostalgia Marketing (NM) → Social Connectedness (SC) → Visit Intention (VI)	0.216	4.811	<0.01	Partial mediation

Table 7 summarizes the results of the hypothesis testing within the structural model. All four hypotheses proposed in the conceptual framework are supported with statistically significant path coefficients ($p < 0.01$), indicating robust relationships among the study variables. H1 tested the relationship between Nostalgia Marketing (NM) and Social Connectedness (SC). The standardized path coefficient ($\beta = 0.569$, $CR = 12.194$, $p < 0.01$) indicates a strong and significant direct effect, supporting the idea that nostalgia-driven tourism marketing enhances individuals' feelings of belonging and connection.

H2 examined the impact of Social Connectedness (SC) on Visit Intention (VI). The result ($\beta = 0.379$, $CR = 5.384$, $p < 0.01$) demonstrates a significant positive relationship, suggesting that the more socially connected individuals feel, the more likely they are to intend to visit heritage or cultural destinations. H3 tested the direct effect of Nostalgia Marketing (NM) on Visit Intention (VI). The result ($\beta = 0.272$, $CR = 2.703$, $p < 0.01$) shows that nostalgia-based messaging alone significantly influences tourists' behavioral intentions.

However, the relatively smaller coefficient compared to the indirect path implies the presence of additional psychological mechanisms at play.

H4 assessed the mediating role of Social Connectedness in the relationship between NM and VI. The indirect effect ($\beta = 0.216$, $CR = 4.811$, $p < 0.01$) is statistically significant, and since the direct path (H3) also remains significant, this provides evidence for partial mediation. This suggests that while nostalgia marketing influences visit intention directly, it also works indirectly through enhancing social connectedness, amplifying its overall impact. In conclusion, the findings confirm that social connectedness is a key psychological pathway through which nostalgia marketing shapes tourists' intention to visit. These insights enrich our understanding of emotional marketing in cultural tourism and support the study's conceptual model.

7. Discussion

This study's findings provide significant insights into the impact of nostalgia marketing on tourists' intentions to visit heritage places in Saudi Arabia, both directly and indirectly via the psychological mechanism of social connectedness. These findings enhance the comprehension of emotional marketing in tourism by elucidating how nostalgic experiences result in tangible behavioral outcomes. In accordance with previous studies, nostalgia marketing demonstrated a substantial direct influence on visit intention (H3). This corroborates prior work indicating that emotionally charged messages grounded in cultural memory and identity can incite travel behavior (Nguyen & Duong, 2024; Lin et al., 2023; Kumail et al., 2021). Nostalgic cues,

conveyed through storytelling, photography, or immersive experiences, cultivate emotional resonance that amplifies travelers' inclination to revisit or discover sites with perceived historical significance. The study demonstrated that nostalgia marketing considerably increases social connectivity (H1), which subsequently has a big, favorable effect on visit intention (H2). This corroborates established theoretical postulations that nostalgia constitutes a "social emotion" (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018; Juhl & Biskas, 2022) and is consistent with empirical evidence suggesting that sensations of social belonging and interpersonal intimacy enhance individuals' propensity to engage in cultural or heritage tourism (Stephan et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2018; Kala, 2021).

The investigation revealed that social connectivity partially mediates the relationship between nostalgia marketing and visit intention (H4). This indicates that although nostalgic content can directly inspire travel, its impact is enhanced when it evokes emotions of belonging and interpersonal connection. The findings offer empirical validation for the theoretical framework based on Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions (Fredrickson, 2001). Nostalgic stimuli that elicit positive affect expand individuals' cognitive scope and enhance social resources, which in turn facilitate goal-oriented behaviors like visiting cultural places. This study further enhances the expanding corpus of research that situates emotional marketing methods within Vision 2030 and Saudi Arabia's initiatives to revolutionize its tourism sector. The results indicate that marketing initiatives highlighting cultural continuity, shared

identity, and collective memory might elicit emotional and social responses that enhance destination loyalty and promote domestic tourism. Practically, the findings suggest that tourist marketers and location managers in Saudi Arabia ought to incorporate nostalgia-driven themes alongside socially engaged content. Emphasizing common national experiences, historic sites, and culturally significant tales can improve the personal significance of the location and foster social connections, hence promoting travel. The study enhances comprehension of the emotional and social aspects of travel decision-making and presents a validated model that can guide future academic research and tourist marketing strategies.

8. Conclusion

This study sought to examine the influence of nostalgic marketing on tourists' intentions to visit cultural and historical sites in Saudi Arabia, emphasizing the mediating effect of social connectivity. Based on Social Identity Theory and the Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions, the study presented an innovative framework elucidating how emotionally resonant marketing messages, anchored in cultural memory and collective identity, affect travel behavior.

The outcomes of structural equation modeling validated all four presented hypotheses. Nostalgia marketing demonstrated a direct impact on visit intention and an indirect influence via social connectivity, underscoring the twin mechanisms of emotional marketing. Social connectivity significantly and positively influenced travel intention, highlighting its essential significance as a psychological and social catalyst for tourism activity. The

existence of partial mediation suggests that nostalgia affects individuals both cognitively and emotionally, while also fostering interpersonal connections that ultimately lead to action.

The research offers numerous theoretical and practical contributions. This study theoretically addresses a vacuum in tourism literature by synthesizing nostalgia, social psychology, and behavioral intention into a unified empirical model, thereby enhancing comprehension of the emotional and social dynamics that influence destination selection. The findings indicate that tourist marketers in Saudi Arabia should prioritize nostalgic themes that elicit shared cultural memories, historical pride, and emotional connection. These themes, when integrated into both digital and conventional marketing platforms, can enhance travelers' emotional connection with locations such as Diriyah, AlUla, and medieval Jeddah. Furthermore, the research is congruent with Saudi Vision 2030 by bolstering strategic initiatives to establish Saudi Arabia as a culturally affluent and emotionally impactful destination.

Given the crucial significance of tourism in economic diversification, it is imperative to comprehend how emotional and social factors affect behavior to formulate effective and sustainable marketing tactics. Future research should investigate longitudinal data to assess the impact of nostalgia marketing on tourist behavior over time, or to adapt the model to different ethnic or demographic groups. Broadening the inquiry to encompass variables such as destination image, national pride, or digital involvement could enhance our comprehension of how emotional marketing influences the dynamic realm of historical tourism in the Middle East and beyond.

8.1. Theoretical Implications

This study offers significant theoretical contributions to tourism marketing, consumer behavior, and social psychology, especially on emotional marketing and cultural tourism. This research broadens the applicability of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) inside the tourism sector by illustrating that nostalgic marketing can evoke a sense of social affiliation and collective cultural identity, thereby affecting behavioral intentions. This indicates that tourists are not solely impacted by rational information regarding places; rather, they are profoundly affected by emotional signals that bolster their social identity and cultural congruence. The study incorporates the Broaden-and-Build Theory of good Emotions (Fredrickson, 2001) by demonstrating that nostalgic experiences not only elicit good emotions but also contribute to the development of significant psychological resources, including social connectivity. This enhances the comprehension of how emotions convert into pro-social and goal-oriented behaviors, including the ambition to visit heritage sites. The research presents a verified mediational model wherein social connectedness functions as a psychological intermediary between nostalgia marketing and visit intention. This study is one of the first to empirically examine the indirect relationship between nostalgia and travel behavior through a social construct, whereas previous research has considered both independently. This underscores the multifaceted essence of nostalgia—not merely as an individual sentiment, but as a socially ingrained phenomenon that propels behavior via relational avenues.

Furthermore, the study enhances the literature on Middle Eastern tourism, an area where research on the psychological and affective determinants of tourism behavior is still relatively nascent. This research utilizes global theoretical models within a Saudi setting, thereby reconciling Western-centric theories with local culture dynamics and providing a culturally nuanced perspective on destination marketing. The study underscores the necessity of integrating emotional and social variables into tourism behavior models, which have conventionally been governed by cognitive predictors like perceived value or satisfaction. It underscores that emotion and identification are crucial in influencing consumer behavior, especially when places possess historical, spiritual, or national importance.

8.2. Practical Implications

This study's findings provide significant insights for tourism marketers, destination managers, and policymakers engaged in the promotion of cultural and heritage tourism in Saudi Arabia, particularly in the context of Vision 2030. The considerable influence of nostalgia marketing on tourists' intentions to visit historical sites indicates that marketing strategies must intentionally incorporate emotive tales that elicit recollections of Saudi Arabia's cultural heritage. This encompasses the promotion of visual and narrative content that emphasizes traditional architecture, ancient landmarks such as Diriyah, AlUla, and medieval Jeddah, as well as cultural traditions integral to national identity. Nostalgic aspects can be incorporated into commercials, brochures, social media posts, and augmented reality (AR) experiences to enhance emotional involvement. The established mediating effect of social connectedness

underscores the necessity of creating tourism experiences that promote community, belonging, and interpersonal engagement. Destination planners and tour operators ought to facilitate group-oriented experiences, including guided cultural excursions, local storytelling sessions, or community-hosted events, enabling tourists to engage not just with the locale but also with individuals who share analogous cultural values. These social interactions reinforce emotional connections and enhance the probability of return visits and recommendations.

Third, digital marketing tactics must extend beyond only highlighting places. They ought to promote interactive interaction, including user-generated content campaigns in which travelers submit sentimental experiences or familial heritage narratives associated with Saudi landmarks. Motivating travelers to recount and disseminate their prior experiences online might enhance the emotional significance of the site and draw others in search of comparable connections. Furthermore, the study's findings can be utilized by governmental tourist agencies, such as the Saudi tourist Authority, to improve destination branding. Highlighting Saudi Arabia's extensive history, cultural continuity, and national pride through evocative visuals and inclusive narratives accords with the objective of establishing the Kingdom as a contemporary yet heritage-rich destination. Ultimately, these findings are beneficial for the formulation of training programs for professionals in tourism and hospitality. Frontline personnel, tour guides, and cultural interpreters must be adept at identifying and fostering emotional engagement by promoting personal connections and establishing culturally immersive settings. Nostalgia

is not merely a marketing motif; it is a strategic emotional asset that, when integrated with social connectedness, may significantly affect tourist behavior and promote sustainable tourism development in Saudi Arabia.

8.3. Limitations and Future Research

This study offers valuable insights into the emotional and social determinants of tourist behavior in Saudi Arabia, although it possesses limitations that present numerous avenues for further research. The study utilized a cross-sectional survey approach, which collects data at a singular moment in time. Consequently, it is unable to determine causality or monitor alterations in behavior or perception over time. Future study may employ a longitudinal methodology to examine the impact of nostalgic marketing and social connectivity on visit intention during several phases of the travel experience—pre-visit, during the visit, and post-visit. The sample was obtained by non-probability purposive sampling, focusing on persons with prior experience or interest in heritage tourism in Saudi Arabia. This approach, while pertinent to the research objectives, may restrict the generalizability of the findings to wider tourist demographics, such as first-time visitors or overseas travelers. Subsequent research may broaden the sampling frame to encompass a variety of demographic groups, including tourists from other areas and cultural backgrounds.

The study primarily concentrated on emotional and social elements, excluding cognitive variables such as destination image, perceived value, and service quality, which may also affect visit intention. Incorporating these constructs into future models may yield a more thorough comprehension of tourist

decision-making. Fourth, although the model exhibited substantial explanatory power (R^2 values of 32.4% for SC and 33.5% for VI), a considerable amount of variance in visit intention remains unaccounted for. Future research should investigate moderating variables such as age, past trip experience, nostalgia proneness, or digital involvement to enhance comprehension of individual differences in the impact of nostalgia marketing on behavior. The study was conducted solely within Saudi Arabia, characterized by its distinct cultural, historical, and religious tourism scene. The findings are pertinent to national tourism development initiatives like Vision 2030; however, future research should replicate the study in many cultural contexts to examine the impacts of nostalgia marketing and social connectivity across various societies and historical environments. In conclusion, this study provides a unique contribution to emotional marketing in tourism and establishes a basis for numerous future inquiries that can enhance both theory and practice in culturally based destination marketing.

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ملخص:

تبحث هذه الدراسة في تأثير تسويق الحنين إلى الماضي على رغبة السياح في زيارة الوجهات التراثية في المملكة العربية السعودية، مع التركيز على الدور الوسيط للترابط الاجتماعي. مع توسع قطاع السياحة في المملكة العربية السعودية في ظل رؤية 2030، أصبح فهم العوامل العاطفية والاجتماعية المؤثرة على سلوك السفر أمراً بالغ الأهمية. استناداً إلى نظرية الهوية الاجتماعية ونظرية توسيع وبناء المشاعر الإيجابية، يقترح البحث أن تسويق الحنين إلى الماضي يعزز الاستجابات العاطفية التي تعزز الترابط الاجتماعي، مما يؤثر بدوره على نوايا السفر.

اعتمدنا تصميم بحث كمي، وجمعت بيانات من 480 مشاركاً عبر استبيان إلكتروني استهدف أفراداً مطلعين على السياحة التراثية السعودية. استخدمت الدراسة نمذجة المعادلات الهيكلية (SEM) باستخدام SmartPLS لدراسة العلاقات المباشرة والوسيطية بين تسويق الحنين إلى الماضي، والتواصل الاجتماعي، ونية الزيارة.

تؤكد النتائج أن للتسويق القائم على الحنين إلى الماضي تأثيراً مباشراً وهاماً على كلٍّ من الترابط الاجتماعي ونية الزيارة. علاوةً على ذلك، يُسهم الترابط الاجتماعي جزئياً في العلاقة بين التسويق القائم على الحنين ونية الزيارة، مما يُشير إلى أن مشاعر الحنين لا تُشجع سلوك السفر بشكل مباشر فحسب، بل تُعزز أيضاً شعور السائحين بالانتماء والتقارب العاطفي مع الآخرين.

تُسهّم هذه الدراسة نظرياً من خلال دمج البنى العاطفية والاجتماعية في نماذج سلوك السياحة، وتُقدم إرشادات عملية لمُسوّقي الوجهات السياحية. وتوصي تحديداً بالاستفادة من السرديات الحنينية والتجارب السياحية الجذابة اجتماعياً لتعزيز السياحة الثقافية المستدامة في المملكة العربية السعودية. ويُقدم هذا النموذج المُعتمد رؤى جديدة حول كيفية تأثير استراتيجيات التسويق المُوجهة عاطفياً على قرارات السفر الفعلية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تسويق الحنين إلى الماضي، الترابط الاجتماعي، نية الزيارة، السياحة الثقافية، تسويق التراث، المملكة العربية السعودية، التسويق العاطفي، سلوك السياحة، نمذجة المعادلات الهيكلية، رؤية 2030.