



THE POWER OF MAJOR SPORTING EVENTS: TRANSFORMING DESTINATION IMAGE THROUGH PROMOTION AND EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

The Mandalika MotoGP World Championship 2023 holds a pivotal role in Mandalika's destination branding process. This study seeks to discern and evaluate the impact of the event on Mandalika's destination image, positioning it among the world's premier tourist destinations. Central to this investigation is the meticulous development of the 6A's of destination (comprising Attractions, Amenities, Accessibility, Activities, Accommodations, and Ancillary services) and the strategic promotional mix. Notably, the spectators' event experience emerges as a crucial mediator, shaping Mandalika's image. The author sent a questionnaire to motorsports event attendees to address study objectives. The questionnaire was sent directly to those who attended the Mandalika MotoGP 2023 event. The email address was obtained from many travel companies that assisted tourists attending the Mandalika MotoGP 2023. The survey includes questions regarding participants' background information such as age, gender, and occupation. The findings underscore the substantial influence of synergizing the 6A's of destination with an effective promotional mix, ultimately enhancing Mandalika's allure for travelers.

Abstrak

Kejuaraan Dunia MotoGP Mandalika 2023 memegang peran penting dalam proses pembantuan citra destinasi Mandalika. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami dan mengevaluasi dampak kegiatan balap motor tersebut terhadap citra destinasi Mandalika, serta memposisikan Mandalika menjadi salah satu destinasi wisata terkemuka di dunia. Inti dari penelitian ini adalah pengembangan yang efektif dari 6A destinasi (terdiri dari *Attractions, Amenities, Accessibility, Activities, Accommodations, and Ancillary services*) dan bauran promosi strategis. Pengalaman yang didapatkan penonton selama mengikuti kegiatan ini menjadi mediator penting yang membentuk citra Mandalika. Penulis mengirimkan kuesioner kepada para peserta acara *motorsports* untuk memenuhi tujuan penelitian. Kuesioner dikirim langsung kepada mereka yang menghadiri acara MotoGP Mandalika 2023. Alamat email diperoleh dari banyak perusahaan perjalanan yang membantu wisatawan yang menghadiri MotoGP Mandalika 2023. Survei ini mencakup pertanyaan mengenai informasi latar belakang peserta seperti usia, jenis kelamin, dan pekerjaan. Hasil dari penelitian ini menegaskan pengaruh yang signifikan dari sinergi antara 6A destinasi dengan bauran promosi yang efektif, yang pada akhirnya meningkatkan daya tarik Mandalika bagi para wisatawan.

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INTRODUCTION

Sport, leisure, and tourism have become one of the most significant contributors to the modern economy. Hosting a sporting event is a promotional tool to draw international attention to a country or tourist area. Many governments and city marketers worldwide view the staging of major sporting events as an essential priority, as they can play a catalytic role in the tourism growth of host destinations. A major event is held once or frequently for a specific time, with the primary objective of increasing the awareness, appeal, and revenues of a tourism destination in the short and long term. The event will achieve its objectives based on its ability to generate interest and garner attention through originality, prominence, or timeliness (Gammon, 2020). Sporting activities can increase tourist visits and enhance the image or reputation of a destination.

Today, a brand becomes the icon of the socio-cultural personification of ideas, and branding itself is built on archetypal motives. It seeks to develop a brand image that represents modern consumers' customized, refined aspirations and expectations. Using advancements in communications and marketing, this will be essential to combine well-known destination brands with proven past techniques in the future. Indonesia has a substantial factor endowment to promote tourism. This is particularly true about its natural beauty and geographical landscape, abundant socio-culture, and heritage. Accordingly, this is not surprising should the government of Indonesia have a high expectation of exploring, developing, and obtaining optimal benefits from tourism. Various policies have been introduced to actualize such expectations. One of the essential policies is to create ten "new" Bali in Indonesia, and five of them are categorized as super-priority tourist destinations. Mandalika has been chosen as one of the five super-priority tourism areas to develop by the Indonesian government and try to use sports events as one of such promotional strategies to echo its name as one of the world-class tourist destinations.

In a geographical view, a tourism destination is a geographical area located in one or more administrative areas. There are tourist attractions, public facilities, tourism facilities, accessibility, and communities that are interrelated and complement the realization of tourism. Furthermore, in a product-oriented view, tourist destinations have tangible product attributes (hotel beds, food, transportation) and intangible product attributes such as services (Eddyono, 2019).

Morrison (2013) defined a tourist destination as a location that draws visitors, characterized by several key elements. It is a geographic area with administrative boundaries that offers accommodations for overnight stays. The destination provides access to various resources such as restaurants, events, activities, transportation, infrastructure, and hotel facilities. A tourism marketing campaign promotes the area, often overseen by a Destination Management Organization (DMO) that coordinates tourism efforts. Additionally, the location exists as a mental image for travelers, and government regulations help manage various aspects of tourism. Finally, the destination includes a mix of public and private tourism stakeholders, non-profit organizations, individuals, and other interested groups.

As a result, a tourist destination can be an entire country (for example, Australia), a region (for example, the Spanish 'Costas'), an island (for example, Bali), a town or city, a village, or a self-contained attraction (for example, Disneyland). At the same time, a tourism destination is an identified region with physical or administrative borders that visitors visit and live in while travelling; tourism activities must be essential or potentially significant for the destination's economy (Carter & Fabricius, 2006). To be classified as a tourist, the visitor must visit a destination temporarily outside their usual residence for more than 24 hours but less than one consecutive year. There are also 'purpose of visit' categories, and a distance consideration helps to delineate the 'usual environment' (Pender & Sharpley, 2005).

It is required to have a destination mix of products available where the tourist can participate (Morrison, 2013). The amalgamation of these products is regarded as the critical resource needed to ensure that a destination is thriving. These resources are known as the six A's (Attraction, Amenities, Accessibility, Activities, Available packages, and Ancillary services). They are combined to enhance

tourist experiences while enhancing the destination's benefits and earnings (Boes et al., 2015). As a result, it is critical to comprehend the factor that contributes to the success of a place.

Aside from that, promotional mix is an effective promotional activity instrument for increasing sales of items and services. Using promotion mix is a primary approach used by tourism sectors to improve communication with the goal of attracting tourists and creating event images among them. According to Kotler and Keller (2012), elements of the promotional mix include advertising, sales promotion, events and experiences, public relations and publicity, direct marketing, interactive marketing, word-of-mouth marketing, and personal selling. Promotional activities serve not only as a medium of communication between businesses and customers, but also as a tool for persuading consumers to purchase or utilize services in line with their desires and requirements. Promotion may include components of audio and visual communication with marketing to convey a message to the market.

In the modern tourism landscape, major sporting events serve as pivotal instruments for promoting destinations. These events attract global audiences, combining the appeal of sports with the exploration of unique locations. Such events—ranging from international tournaments to large-scale races—have become central to enhancing a destination's visibility, driving economic benefits, and creating a compelling narrative around the host location.

As opposed to a league, a major sporting event is referred to as a one-time or perhaps annual sporting competition, as defined by Gammon (2020). The Olympic Games, Asian Games, Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Euro Cup, Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup, and various other national and international sports competitions are examples of major sports events that can be classified in this way. Like every other section of the event industry, sports events are increasing rapidly, including both single-sport and multi-sport competitions. Sports events can attract tourists, get media attention, and produce economic benefits for host nations or locales. As a result, it has been given top priority in most government event strategies and destination marketing campaigns. It helps not just the host government, location, or organization but also the participants and provides entertainment and delight for onlookers (Bowdin et al., 2011).

Major sporting events have multiple economic impacts: first, they can draw participants and spectators who bring money into the local economy; second, they can improve the destination's image through advertising and media coverage, resulting in increased visitors at other times of the year (Dongfeng, 2013). In their seminal work, Pine and Gilmore (2013) assert that participant experiences—whether active or passive participation and absorption/immersion—are significantly impacted by the environment. To create a compelling environment, they propose five experience-design principles. First, theming the experience ensures a coherent and consistent narrative that resonates with participants. Second, harmonizing impressions with positive cues fosters a sense of delight and engagement. Third, eliminating negative cues minimizes distractions and enhances the overall experience. Fourth, incorporating memorabilia—such as nostalgic artifacts—adds depth and emotional connection. Finally, engaging all five senses creates a multisensory encounter that leaves a lasting impression.

Sporting events have become a major attraction for thousands of fans, being at present an excellent opportunity for destinations seeking to increase their attractiveness, in terms of both the number of tourists they attract and for their economic impact (Getz, 2008). As an example, we can mention the FIFA World Cup, the Olympics, the Dakar Rally, tennis tournaments (Australian Open, Roland Garros, or Wimbledon), the FIA Formula 1, the final of the Champions League football, cycling championship (the Tour de France, and the Tour of Spain), Swimming World Championships or the FIBA World Cup.

Lai (2018) investigates the effect of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games on China's image as a tourism destination by surveying Chinese tourists in attendance at the event. According to the findings of Lai (2018), the image of this event was positively associated with more significant impacts on the

destination image than other reported formation components of the destination image. More importantly, major events represent chances for the long-term growth of the host city because their effects are felt before, during, and long after the event (Magno & Dossena, 2020). A major international sporting event, such as the Olympic Games or the World Cup, is frequently expected to improve a country's image and stimulate tourism.

Despite the recognized potential of sporting events in shaping destination image, many destinations struggle to effectively leverage these opportunities. Challenges include fragmented marketing efforts, inadequate integration of local culture into event promotion, and missed chances to deliver memorable on-site experiences. Consequently, while the immediate economic impact of sporting events is often emphasized, the long-term transformation of destination perception remains underexplored.

Every destination must comprehend its image or position in the thoughts of current and future visitors. Tourists are expected to have first awareness and then a favorable impression of a destination in order for it to succeed (Kozak & Baloglu, 2011). Because potential tourists typically have limited information about the features of a destination they have not previously visited, the image and attitude dimensions are likely to be significant factors in the destination selection process from the visitors' perspective. In the minds of visitors, a distinct picture perception may set one place apart from its competitors (Kozak & Baloglu, 2011).

In destination positioning, image is the most crucial factor. Images simplify many associations and bits of information associated with the location (Pender & Sharpley, 2005). They result from the mind's attempt to absorb and distill vast volumes of information about a location. Many tourism products are intangible and can only be competed with through imagery. Any destination positioning plan should aim to reinforce good images that target markets currently have, repair bad images, or establish a new image (Pender & Sharpley, 2005).

The destination's image impacts tourists' behaviour (Josiassen et al., 2016; Kim & Stepchenkova, 2015; Tan & Wu, 2016). The whole destination image influences tourism at three stages: before, during, and after a visit, according to Martín-Santana et al., (2017). The destination's image significantly impacts potential tourists' pre-visit intentions and decisions because of the destination's intangible nature and limited knowledge of the place. Research on behavioural intentions shows that choosing to go to a specific area is a reoccurring theme (Zhang et al., 2014). Because of its strong association with travel behaviour, the likelihood of making a trip is an important outcome variable. Tourism sites with a negative reputation are less likely to be picked by tourists, whilst those with an excellent reputation are more likely to be selected (Tan & Wu, 2016).

There are two parts to the concept of a destination's image: a perceptual-cognitive component that captures knowledge and beliefs about the features of a destination and an affective component that conveys sentiments toward a location. A site's total impression is influenced by cognitive and affective components (Papadimitriou et al., 2018). As cited, this initial response is affective (Ceylan & Çizel, 2018), which means that the focus is on creating an emotive map of the traits that tourists connect their travel experiences with a particular site. Four vectors were proposed to represent a destination's emotional positioning: pleasant-unpleasant, relaxing-stressful, energizing, and exciting-boring.

Major sporting events allow a nation to redefine or reconstruct its image from the perspective of international tourists. They can use the event to create a positive image, but in some circumstances, they can also assist a country in improving a negative image. Nonetheless, no promise that hosting a major sporting event will improve a location's reputation (Knott et al., 2017). The destination image is the pre- and post-visit perception of a location. When tourists arrange a trip, the destination's image and characteristics will likely impact their selection. Therefore, to attract tourists and place itself in the tourism market, a country must be associated with the appropriate destination image (Michael et al., 2018). After a visit, a tourist's image of a destination may change; hence, many event organizers seek to

enhance a destination's reputation by hosting a major event. Over time, sports event tourism has become a specialized tourism industry. Major sporting events can draw tourists to a particular place while enhancing the host nation's reputation abroad.

The MotoGP World Championship is the most prestigious motor racing in the world. The series' popularity rapidly rose as it attracted huge personalities, allowing the sport to expand and be formed into what it is today: one of the world's most prominent bike racing series. The series features some of the closest racing action in the world, with three separate classes colliding every weekend.

Motorsport has evolved into a kind of entertainment. The emergence of sports as a form of entertainment has resulted in events that fans may witness in person, through the internet or on television. More firms are now providing sports tourism packages, with existing destinations being expanded and new high-profile events popping up all over the globe. The sports tourism industry is thriving when paired with the rise of low-cost airlines providing new low-cost routes for weekend getaways. Racing appeals to couples or singles, corporate customers, and as an anniversary or birthday gift, sport tourism operators obtain almost half of their motorsport business via agents (Lewis, 2010). Sports tourism is currently a tool for many things, such as generating ample cash, creating thousands of new employments, revitalizing urban infrastructure, and developing or reappraising whole destinations (Lewis, 2010).

The MotoGP World Championship Indonesian Round was held at the Pertamina Mandalika International Circuit in Indonesia. Over three days, the race took place from October 13 to October 15, 2023, including free practice, time qualification, and the main race has been attracted more than 100.000 spectators (*Capai 102 Ribu Penonton! MotoGP Mandalika 2023 Jadi Ajang Promosi Wonderful Indonesia*, n.d.).

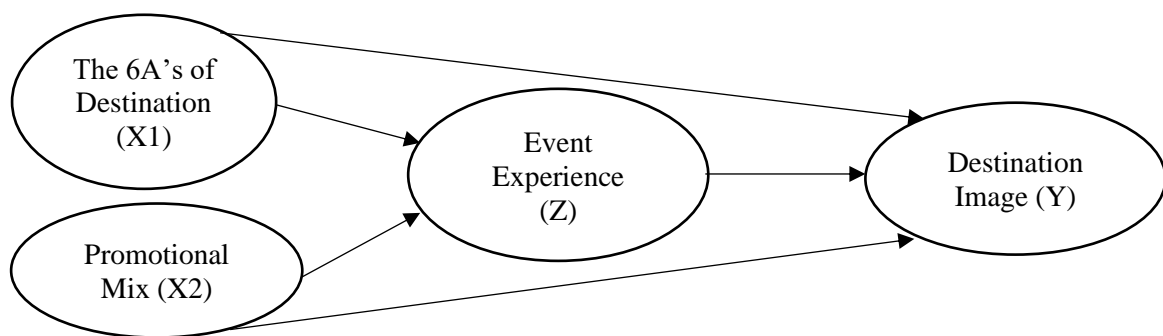
Existing studies predominantly focus on the economic implications of sporting events or their direct influence on tourism numbers. However, limited research examines the dual role of event-based promotions and experiential elements in reshaping destination image. There is a need to understand how these two aspects—strategic marketing campaigns and immersive experiences during the event—work in tandem to create lasting perceptions in the minds of visitors.

In an increasingly competitive global tourism market, destinations cannot afford to underutilize the opportunities presented by major sporting events. The urgency lies in equipping tourism stakeholders—government bodies, destination marketing organizations (DMOs), and event planners—with actionable strategies to capitalize on these events. By doing so, destinations can not only attract visitors during the event but also cultivate a positive image that sustains tourism growth over the long term.

In the contemporary tourism industry, major sporting events are influential tools for reshaping and enhancing the image of destinations. These events draw global audiences, offering host destinations the opportunity to gain international exposure, stimulate economic growth, and create a compelling story that resonates with potential tourists. However, many destinations face challenges in fully capitalizing on these events due to disjointed marketing strategies and a lack of focus on integrating cultural identity and immersive visitor experiences. Overcoming these challenges requires a deeper understanding of how promotional efforts and the experiential aspects of sporting events can shape long-term perceptions of a destination.

Referring to this broader context, this research focuses on the Mandalika MotoGP World Championship 2023 as a pivotal case study of how a major sporting event can serve as an essential component of destination branding. Specifically, it aims to identify and assess the event's impact on enhancing the destination image of Mandalika, positioning it as one of the world's top tourist destinations. This study examines the role of the 6A's of destination development, an optimized promotional mix, and the mediated influence of spectator experiences in achieving this transformation. By bridging gaps in existing research, this study seeks to develop a comprehensive framework that

highlights how strategic promotion and experiential elements of sporting events can work together to elevate a destination's global appeal.



Source: Research Data, 2024

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Based on the research objectives and literature review, this study proposed the following research hypotheses:

H1: The 6A's of Destination affecting the Event Experience of the spectators of the Mandalika MotoGP World Championship 2023

H2: The Promotional Mix of the event affecting the Event Experience of the spectators of the Mandalika MotoGP World Championship 2023

H3: Event Experience of the spectators of the Mandalika MotoGP successfully mediating The 6A's of Destination and Promotional Mix of the event on enhancing the Image of Mandalika

H4: The 6A's of Destination directly impacting the enhancement of the Image of Mandalika

H5: The Promotional Mix of the event directly impacting the enhancement of the Image of Mandalika

RESEARCH METHOD

This research aims to determine if major sporting events impact the destination images of the host city and which factors influence visitors' perceptions of the destination concerning the event. The author sent a questionnaire to motorsports event attendees to address study objectives. The questionnaire was sent directly to those who attended the Mandalika MotoGP 2023 event. The email address was obtained from many travel companies that assisted tourists attending the Mandalika MotoGP 2023. This selection of respondents guaranteed that they were knowledgeable about and interested in the topic (Stewart et al., 2003). According to Morrison (2013), this research examined whether the critical factors required to ensure that a destination is thriving—the six A's of destination (Attraction, Amenities, Accessibility, Activities, Available Packages, and Ancillary services) – and the promotional mix concept according to Kotler & Keller (2012) have an impact on tourists' perceptions of the image of Mandalika both the cognitive and affective image (Ceylan & Çizel, 2018) through five experience-design principles (Pine & Gilmore, 2013) as mediating variable. The survey includes questions regarding participants' background information such as age, gender, and occupation. The author posed a specific question about the respondent's assessment of the destination before and after the visit to Mandalika. In addition, one question inquired as to whether or not respondents had already visited the place before the year 2021.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

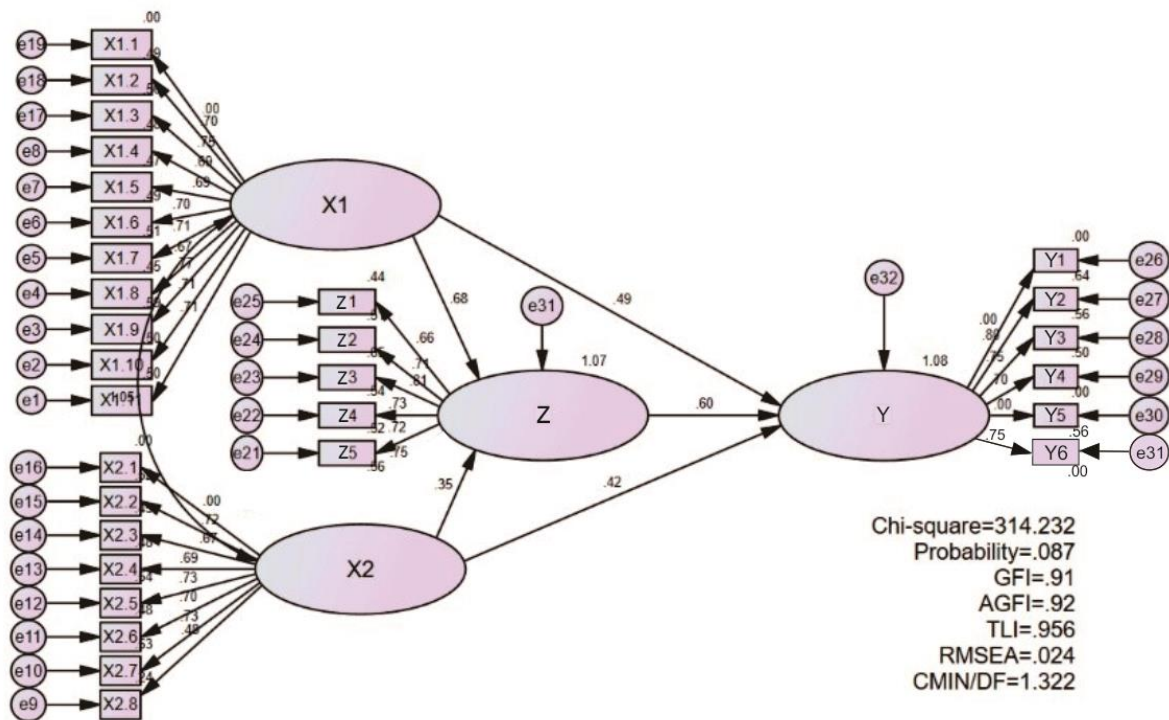
This research uses a purposive sampling approach where samples are taken based on criteria and considerations determined by the author himself. The sample in this study must meet several criteria, namely:

1. Been to Mandalika before 2021
2. Watching the Mandalika MotoGP World Championship 2023 live at Mandalika

Table 1.
Profile of Respondents ($N = 150$)

Demographic Profile		Percentage
Gender	Male	48,30
	Female	51,70
Age (Years)	16-25	18,30
	26-35	50,00
	36-45	28,30
	46-55	3,30
	>55	0,00
Occupation	Civil Servant	21,70
	Private Employer	30,00
	Entrepreneur	16,70
	Teacher	8,30
	Student	11,70
	Architect	1,70
	Journalist	1,70
	Household	6,70
Undecided	1,70	
Geographic Profile		Percentage
Origin City	Mataram	53,30
	West Lombok	11,70
	Central Lombok	3,30
	East Lombok	3,30
	North Lombok	1,70
	Surabaya	1,70
	Sidoarjo	1,70
Demographic Profile		Percentage
	Bantul	1,70
	Denpasar	5,00
	Kupang	1,70
	Jakarta	6,70
	Tangerang	3,30
	Samarinda	1,70
	Jepara	1,70
	Bandung	1,70

Source: Research Data, 2024



Source: Research Data, 2024

Figure 2. Full Model Analysis

The data analysis revealed that the six A's of Destination, Promotional Mix, and Event Experience significantly contribute to enhancing the Destination Image of Mandalika. This finding supports the hypothesis that both the six A's of Destination and Promotional Mix have a significant impact on Mandalika's Destination Image. Therefore, all hypotheses in this research are accepted, indicating the importance of these factors in shaping the perception of this destination.

The data analysis using the Structural Equation Model (SEM) was conducted in two stages: (1) Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and (2) regression weight analysis in the full model. During the CFA stage, the constructs or indicators demonstrated a high level of significance, with a probability value less than 0.05 and a Critical Ratio (C.R) value greater than the t-table value (2.0518 for a probability level of 0.05 and degrees of freedom $df = N-K-1 = 30-2-1 = 27$). Therefore, it can be concluded that all indicators (a total of 30) are valid measures for each variable. Following the confirmatory analysis of the indicators forming the latent variables, the subsequent analysis involved the full model SEM analysis. The results of the data processing for the full SEM model analysis are presented in Figure 2.

In the preceding illustration, it is evident that the research model has satisfied the Goodness of Fit criteria, with all criteria being categorized as good. Subsequently, the researcher tested the hypotheses by examining the critical ratio (C.R) value and the significance value (p) resulting from data processing, comparing these values with the required statistical thresholds. In this study, the critical ratio values for all hypotheses exceed the required value (2.0518), and the probability values are significantly lower than 0.05. The path coefficient (β) values for each hypothesis are as follows: (hypothesis 1) $\beta_1 = 0.68$; (hypothesis 2) $\beta_2 = 0.35$; (hypothesis 3) $\beta_3 = 0.60$; (hypothesis 4) $\beta_4 = 0.49$; and (hypothesis 5) $\beta_5 = 0.42$.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, if the West Nusa Tenggara government and the Mandalika MotoGP World Championship organizing committee enhance all aspects of the 6A's of Destination and bolster promotional activities, it will significantly impact the spectators' experience of attending the Mandalika MotoGP World Championship. This, in turn, will indirectly enhance the destination image of Mandalika in the minds of attendees. Additionally, the research indicates that the 6A's of Destination and Promotional Mix have the potential to directly improve the destination's image. Therefore, it is essential for the West Nusa Tenggara provincial government to focus on continuously improving and developing the six main components of the destination to leave a favorable impression on tourists, thereby enhancing Mandalika's destination image. Moreover, the Mandalika MotoGP World Championship organizing committee should intensify promotional activities both before and during the event. By leveraging modern digital marketing strategies, such as social media campaigns, influencer partnerships, and targeted online advertising, the promotional efforts can reach a broader and more diverse audience, thereby increasing interest and attendance. The committee should also consider incorporating interactive and engaging promotional content, such as behind-the-scenes footage, interviews with racers, and virtual tours of the event facilities, to create a more immersive and compelling pre-event experience. Furthermore, enhancing the infrastructure and amenities associated with the 6A's of Destination is crucial. This includes improving accessibility to the venue, ensuring high-quality accommodation and dining options, and offering a variety of entertainment and leisure activities for tourists. By addressing these elements, the overall visitor experience will be significantly improved, making Mandalika a more attractive destination not just for the MotoGP event but for tourism in general. Additionally, the provincial government and event organizers should collaborate with local businesses and communities to create a supportive environment that fosters positive interactions between visitors and residents. This collaboration can lead to the development of unique cultural and recreational offerings that showcase the local heritage and natural beauty of Mandalika, further enriching the tourist experience. The combination of a well-developed destination and robust, appealing promotional activities will significantly enrich the experience of attending the MotoGP event. Ultimately, these efforts will contribute to a more positive and enduring image of Mandalika as a premier tourist destination, encouraging repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. By prioritizing continuous improvement and strategic promotion, Mandalika can solidify its reputation and attract a steady stream of tourists, ensuring long-term success and growth in the tourism sector.

With a focus on the 6A's of Destination and promotional mix, this study provides a thorough foundation for improving Mandalika's destination image. This study's unique addition is its examination of the MotoGP Mandalika visitor experience as a mediator in forming the perception of the site. It emphasizes the significance of the spectator experience as a crucial mediating element. The results indicate that visitors' overall perception of the place and their propensity to return are greatly influenced by the quality of their visitation experience at high-profile events like as the MotoGP. This research offers important insights for policymakers and tourism planners looking to leave a lasting impression on tourists by comprehending how the visitor experience affects perceptions and eventually forms the destination image. The study's recommendations, which focus on enhancing the visitor experience through the 6A's and effective promotional strategies, offer a roadmap for Mandalika to achieve its long-term goals of becoming a premier tourism destination.

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