



How Destination Branding Moderates the Relationship between Destination Antecedents and Tourist Resonance: Evidence from a Philippine Destination Analysis

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of destination antecedents on destination tourist resonance, with a focus on Coron, Palawan, Philippines. Anchored in the Tourist-based Brand Equity model, the research examined how destination salience, destination performance, and imagery, tourist judgements and feelings influence tourist loyalty and emotional connections, with destination performance & imagery and tourist judgments & feelings serving as mediators. The study also evaluated the moderating role of destination branding in these relationships. Employing an explanatory-quantitative research design, data were collected through structured surveys administered to 280 sample tourists who visited Coron, Palawan, Philippines. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze the structural relationships between the constructs. The findings indicate that destination salience significantly affects destination performance and imagery, and destination tourist resonance. Destination performance and imagery, along with tourist judgments and feelings, were found to mediate the relationship between destination salience and destination tourist resonance, highlighting the importance of both cognitive and emotional evaluations. Destination branding, on the other hand, significantly moderated the relationship between destination performance, imagery, and destination tourist resonance. However, the moderating role of destination branding showed no significant impact on destination salience and destination tourist resonance, suggesting the need for more cohesive branding strategies. This research addressed gaps in the application of brand equity models to emerging destinations and provided insights for enhancing localized branding strategies.

Keywords: *Destination Branding, Destination Management, Tourist-based Brand Equity Model, Tourism Management, Coron, Palawan, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism plays a pivotal role in fostering global economic progress, cultural preservation, and sustainable development, serving as a cornerstone of prosperity for many nations. Globally, it contributes significantly to employment generation, income creation, and socio-economic advancement, reflecting its multidimensional impact on development (UNWTO, 2021). In Southeast Asia, the tourism sector remains a vital pillar of economic growth. The Philippines, in particular, has experienced steady expansion in tourist arrivals due to its rich cultural heritage and abundance of natural attractions (ASEAN, 2023). Despite this, the sector continues to face persistent challenges, including political instability, environmental risks, and the lingering repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, which have disrupted global mobility and tourism demand (Seabra & Bhatt., 2022). Against this backdrop, the competitiveness and sustainability of destinations increasingly depend on how effectively they cultivate and communicate their brand equity—an area that has gained considerable attention in tourism research and destination management.

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This study draws on the Tourist-Based Brand Equity (TBBE) model (Keller, 1993), which explains how tourists' awareness and perceptions of a destination evolve into emotional attachment and loyalty. The model posits that brand equity develops progressively from initial recognition and perceived performance to emotional connection and enduring resonance. By applying TBBE to the context of Coron, this study investigates how destination awareness, experience, and branding collectively shape tourists' loyalty and engagement. This theoretical lens provides a structured foundation for understanding the psychological and experiential pathways through which destinations transform from being merely recognized to being deeply valued by visitors. Within this theoretical framework, destination branding serves as a vital instrument in shaping perceptions and differentiating locations in a highly competitive global tourism environment. It represents a strategic process of developing and communicating a distinctive identity that encapsulates a destination's essence and unique appeal (Pike, 2015). Effective destination branding not only elevates visibility and market positioning but also fosters tourists' emotional connection to the place. Global examples such as *"Incredible India,"* *"I ♥ NY,"* and *"100% Pure New Zealand"* illustrate the transformative impact of coherent branding strategies on national and regional tourism performance (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011). As Govers and Go (2009) contend, the authenticity and consistency of the destination narrative are central to sustaining competitiveness, they emphasize that identifying a destination's most distinctive and memorable assets is key to long-term brand resonance. However, in emerging destinations, especially small island contexts like Coron, Palawan, branding efforts often lack integration and long-term strategic orientation, due to limited financial resources and inconsistent brand messaging, which weakens their ability to establish coherent market identities.

The Philippines' National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2023–2028 underscores sustainable tourism as a pathway for inclusive economic growth, environmental stewardship, and cultural preservation, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 8, 11, and 12). The plan highlights the need to strengthen destination competitiveness through authenticity, innovation, and quality experiences. Within this national framework, Coron, Palawan, stands out as a premier destination renowned for its pristine beaches, crystal-clear lagoons, coral reefs, and rich biodiversity. Positioned as an eco-tourism, diving, and adventure haven, Coron epitomizes the natural allure that defines Philippine Island destinations (Vicera et al. 2024). However, despite its inherent advantages, Coron's branding trajectory has been fragmented. The coexistence of the taglines *"I am Coron"* and *"Enchanting Coron"* used interchangeably in promotions by local government and private stakeholders has led to a lack of unified brand messaging. According to the Palawan Provincial Tourism Strategic Plan (2023–2028), local branding initiatives in Coron and northern Palawan remain "disjointed across municipalities, with limited coordination and inconsistent visual and narrative identities. These inconsistencies reflect broader challenges in translating national tourism strategies into localized, coherent brand narratives. Addressing this disjunction is critical for positioning Coron effectively within both domestic and international tourism markets.

A notable gap exists in the empirical literature on how destination brand equity operates in small island or emerging destinations such as Coron, Palawan. Prior studies have primarily focused on destination image and satisfaction but have seldom examined how different brand equity dimensions, salience, performance, imagery, judgments, and feelings interact to shape tourist resonance. Moreover, few studies have investigated how destination branding moderates these relationships, particularly in Southeast Asian contexts. Kladou et al. (2017) suggested that although destination image is essential for measuring brand strength, it alone cannot capture the emotional depth and behavioral loyalty inherent in brand resonance. This research responds to such theoretical and contextual gaps by empirically testing the mediating and moderating effects

within the TBBE framework. By situating the analysis within Coron's tourism ecosystem, this study provides localized insights into how brand antecedents and branding initiatives jointly influence tourist loyalty and emotional connection.

In alignment with the NTDP's emphasis on authenticity, product innovation, and sustainability ("Department of Tourism," 2023), this research aims to explore how Coron can strengthen its brand equity and tourist resonance through strategic branding and destination management. Specifically, it seeks to determine how destination salience affects destination performance, imagery, tourist judgments, and feelings, and how these variables collectively influence destination tourist resonance. The study also investigates whether destination branding moderates these relationships, thereby offering a comprehensive model that integrates cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of tourist-based brand equity. Understanding these dynamics will provide both theoretical and practical value: theoretically, by extending the TBBE model to emerging island destinations; and practically, by generating actionable insights for policymakers and tourism stakeholders in Coron.

The overarching purpose of this research is to bridge theoretical perspectives on destination brand equity with the practical realities of local tourism governance. By analyzing Coron's destination salience, performance, imagery, and emotional resonance, the study aims to inform the formulation of a Municipal Tourism Marketing and Promotions Plan (MTMPP) tailored to the island's unique cultural and environmental attributes. This integration of national frameworks and localized branding strategies can help Coron foster authentic visitor experiences, reinforce its sustainable tourism identity, and build a strong emotional bond with both domestic and international travelers. Ultimately, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 age;
 - 1.2 gender;
 - 1.3 monthly income;
 - 1.4 nationality and
 - 1.5 travel purpose?
2. How does destination salience affect:
 - 2.1 destination performance and imagery;
 - 2.2 Tourist Judgments and Feelings
 - 2.3 Destination Tourist Resonance?
3. How do destination performance and imagery affect destination tourist resonance?
4. How do tourist judgments and feelings affect destination tourist resonance?
5. What is the mediating effect of destination performance and imagery on the relationship between destination salience and destination tourist resonance?
6. What is the mediating effect of tourist judgments and feelings on the relationship between destination salience and destination tourist resonance?
7. What is the moderating effect of destination branding on the relationship between:
 - 7.1 Destination salience and destination tourist resonance; and
 - 7.2 Destination performance, imagery, and destination tourist resonance?

Theoretical Framework

The Tourist-Based Brand Equity (TBBE) model (Keller, 1993) serves as the guiding framework for this study, offering a comprehensive explanation of how tourists construct and internalize destination brands. According to TBBE, brand equity is built hierarchically through four interrelated constructs: destination salience, performance and imagery, tourist judgments and

feelings, and tourist resonance. Destination salience refers to how readily a destination comes to mind and the strength of its associations in tourists' memories. Performance and imagery capture both the functional attributes (e.g., service quality, accessibility) and symbolic meanings (e.g., beauty, cultural identity) associated with a place. These perceptions influence judgments, such as evaluations of quality or credibility, and feelings, including pleasure, excitement, or emotional satisfaction. The culmination of these cognitive and affective components is destination resonance, reflecting the depth of emotional attachment, loyalty, and advocacy that tourists develop toward the destination (Kladou et al., 2017; Pike & Page, 2014).

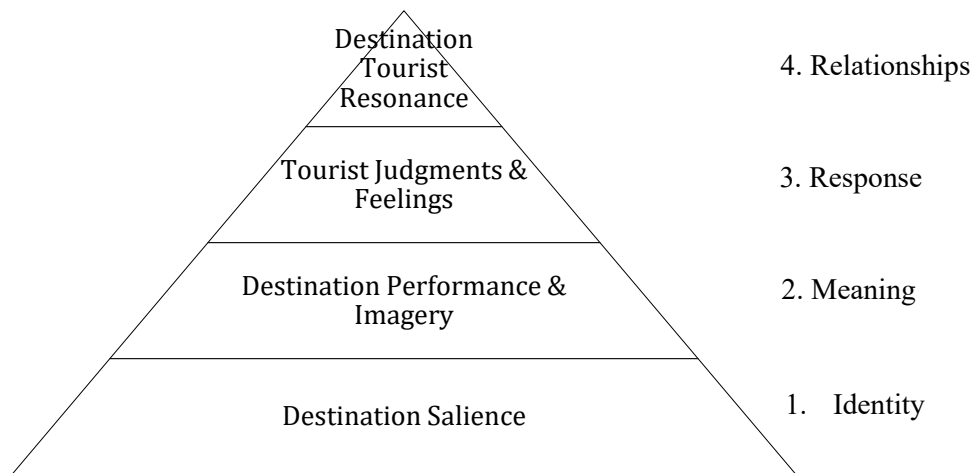


Figure 1. Tourist-Based Brand Equity Model

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study illustrates the relationships between destination antecedents, tourist judgments and feelings, and destination tourist resonance, highlighting mediation and moderation analyses. Destination salience serves as the primary antecedent, reflecting the prominence of a destination in tourists' perceptions, which significantly influences destination performance and imagery, tourist judgments and feelings, and destination tourist resonance (H1a, H1b, H1c). Destination performance and imagery, which capture the perceived quality and overall mental image of the destination, mediate the relationship between destination salience and tourist resonance (H4) and directly affect resonance (H2). Similarly, tourist judgments and feelings, encompassing cognitive evaluations and emotional responses, mediate the influence of destination salience on tourist resonance (H5) and have a direct effect on resonance (H3). Destination branding is introduced as a moderating variable, enhancing the relationships between destination salience and resonance (H6a) and between destination performance and imagery and resonance (H6b). Strong branding thus enhances the emotional payoff of positive experiences by framing them within a consistent and credible identity. In contrast, if branding is inconsistent or unsubstantiated by the on-site experience, even high performance and appealing imagery may not lead to lasting resonance.

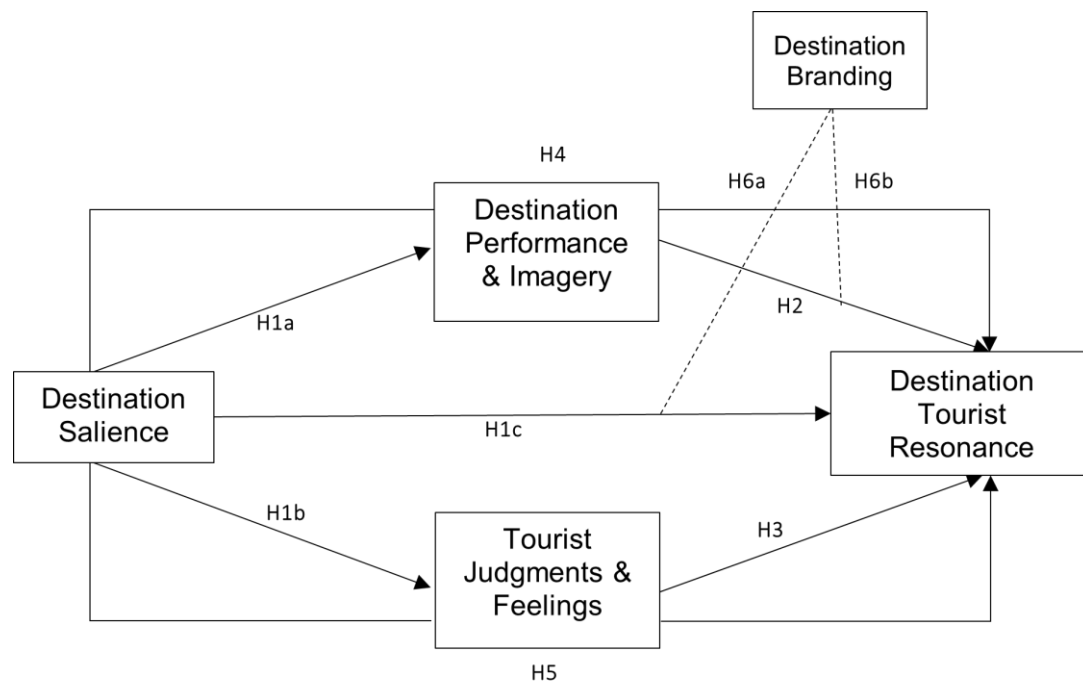


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of the Study

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourist-Based Brand Equity (TBBE) Framework

The Tourist-Based Brand Equity (TBBE) framework, adapted from Keller's (1993) Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model, provides a conceptual structure for understanding how tourists build cognitive, affective, and behavioral relationships with destinations. According to Keller (2001), brand equity evolves hierarchically from brand salience and performance to imagery, judgments, feelings, and ultimately resonance. Scholars in destination marketing have extended this model to tourism contexts to explain how tourists' awareness, experiences, and emotional connections determine brand loyalty (Boo, Busser, & Baloglu, 2009; Pike & Page, 2014; Yousaf et al., 2017). Across studies, researchers agree that TBBE offers a holistic understanding of how tangible and intangible destination elements influence tourists' perceptions, satisfaction, and loyalty. However, applications of this framework in small islands or emerging destinations remain limited, signaling the need for contextual validation (Kaushal, Srivastava, & Eisingerich, 2019; Kladou et al., 2017).

Destination Salience

Destination salience represents the extent to which a destination is top-of-mind when tourists consider travel options. It is rooted in brand awareness, recognition, and recall (Keller, 2003). Studies demonstrate that salience enhances destination choice likelihood and affects tourists' consideration sets (Prayag, 2020). Research by Pike (2015) and Styliadis and Cherifi (2018) found that destinations with strong recall associations, such as iconic imagery or unique cultural cues, tend to generate higher revisit intentions. Across studies, scholars agree that brand salience is not merely an outcome of promotional exposure but also of accumulated experience and word-of-mouth reinforcement (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). However, few empirical works have assessed salience's predictive power in developing destinations, where awareness often competes with limited international exposure. This gap is particularly relevant in the Philippine context, where

many provincial destinations lack distinct branding despite strong natural assets.

Destination Performance

Destination performance reflects tourists' perceptions of the functional and service-related attributes of a place (Boo et al., 2009). It encompasses accessibility, accommodation quality, safety, cleanliness, and infrastructure—factors shaping perceived value and satisfaction (Pike, 2016). Scholars have consistently shown that performance positively influences both cognitive evaluations and behavioral intentions (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Kim & Lee, 2018). Across studies, evidence converges that destination performance enhances brand credibility and strengthens repeat visitation. Yet divergences exist regarding the weight of tangible versus experiential factors; for instance, Baloglu and McCleary (2019) argued that service quality exerts a stronger influence in urban destinations, whereas perceived environmental quality is more salient in ecotourism sites. For small island contexts like Coron, where infrastructure challenges coexist with pristine environments, assessing performance dimensions within the TBBE structure is essential to understanding brand equity formation.

Destination Imagery

Destination imagery captures the symbolic and emotional meanings tourists associate with a place (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). It integrates cognitive impressions (landscapes, attractions) and affective responses (feelings of relaxation or excitement). Empirical evidence indicates that positive imagery enhances both perceived quality and emotional connection, serving as a bridge between awareness and loyalty (Stylidis, Shani, & Belhassen, 2018). Across studies, scholars agree that destination imagery is critical in differentiating destinations and guiding tourist expectations (Tasci, Gartner, & Cavusgil, 2007). However, research diverges on whether imagery should be treated as a mediator or an antecedent of resonance. For example, Kladou et al. (2017) positioned imagery as a mediating variable linking performance and resonance, while Bianchi et al. (2014) found that it directly influences loyalty intentions. Theoretical inconsistencies highlight the need to empirically test these relationships in diverse contexts such as Southeast Asia.

Tourist Judgments and Feelings

Tourist judgments involve cognitive evaluations of destination credibility, quality, and value (Keller, 2001), whereas feelings represent affective reactions such as joy, excitement, or pride (Hosany, Prayag, & Deesilatham, 2015). Collectively, they form the emotional and evaluative core of destination brand equity. Numerous studies confirm that positive judgments and feelings foster stronger emotional bonds and behavioral loyalty (Yousaf et al., 2017; Kaushal et al., 2019). Across studies, scholars concur that affective dimensions often exert a stronger influence than purely cognitive evaluations, especially in leisure and heritage tourism contexts (Hosany et al., 2015). Nevertheless, research diverges regarding causality, whether emotions precede judgments or vice versa (Prayag, Hosany, & Odeh, 2013). Moreover, few studies have tested these constructs in destinations where emotional engagement is tied to environmental or cultural immersion, underscoring a gap for locations such as Coron, which relies heavily on experiential tourism.

Destination Tourist Resonance

Destination tourist resonance represents the pinnacle of brand equity, where tourists experience deep psychological attachment, advocacy, and loyalty (Keller, 2001). Resonance manifests through repeat visitation, word-of-mouth promotion, and identification with the destination's identity (Boo et al., 2009). Pike (2015) revealed that resonance is strongly predicted by imagery and emotional connection rather than by cognitive attributes alone. Across studies,

scholars agree that resonance encapsulates both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty, linking emotional intensity with brand commitment. However, divergence arises in the operationalization of resonance; some measure it as behavioral intention, while others treat it as a psychological construct (Kladou et al., 2017). Limited empirical work has examined how resonance develops in emerging or peripheral destinations, where branding maturity is still evolving.

Branding as a Moderating Effect

Destination branding serves as a moderating mechanism that strengthens or weakens the relationships among TBBE constructs. When branding strategies align with destination identity, tourists' perceptions of performance and imagery are amplified (Pike & Page, 2014; Zenker & Rütter, 2019). Conversely, inconsistent or fragmented branding can dilute salience and reduce emotional attachment. Across studies, scholars agree that a coherent and authentic brand narrative enhances both the cognitive and affective dimensions of equity (Govers & Go, 2009). For instance, Kaushal et al. (2019) found that strategic brand positioning moderates the relationship between perceived quality and loyalty. However, the moderating role of branding remains empirically underexplored in emerging economies, where institutional and resource constraints hinder sustained marketing efforts. In the case of Coron, fragmented branding efforts such as the co-existence of "I am Coron" and "Enchanting Coron" suggest a weak moderating mechanism, highlighting the need for integrated destination identity frameworks.

Across the reviewed literature, a clear pattern emerges: while the TBBE model effectively links cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of tourist behavior, most empirical studies have focused on mature destinations in developed contexts. There remains limited exploration of how brand antecedents operate in small island or developing destinations characterized by constrained marketing infrastructure and evolving brand identities. Theoretical inconsistencies also persist regarding the directionality among constructs, particularly between imagery, feelings, and resonance, and the moderating function of destination branding. These gaps justify the present study's focus on Coron, Palawan, where national branding initiatives (NTDP 2023–2028) intersect with local tourism realities. By testing the relationships among destination salience, performance, imagery, judgments, feelings, and resonance within a moderated-mediation framework, this research aims to contribute both theoretical refinement and contextual insights to the growing body of TBBE scholarship.

Hypotheses of the Study

- H1a. Destination salience has a significant effect on destination performance and imagery.
- H1b. Destination salience has a significant effect on tourist judgments and feelings.
- H1c. Destination salience has a significant effect on destination tourist resonance.
- H2. Destination performance and imagery have a significant effect on destination tourist resonance.
- H3. Tourist judgements and feelings have a significant effect on destination tourist resonance.
- H4. Destination performance and imagery mediate the relationship between destination salience and destination tourist resonance.
- H5. Tourist judgments and feelings mediate the relationship between destination salience and destination tourist resonance.
- H6a. Destination branding moderates the relationship between destination salience and destination tourist resonance.
- H6b. Destination branding moderates the relationship between destination performance, imagery, and destination tourist resonance.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted an explanatory–quantitative research design utilizing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine the structural relationships among the constructs of destination brand equity. This approach was chosen for its suitability in analyzing complex models involving mediation and moderation effects, prediction-oriented objectives, and data that may not follow multivariate normality (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2021). The research design sought to explain how destination salience, performance, imagery, judgments, and feelings influence destination tourist resonance, while testing the moderating effect of destination branding within the Tourist-Based Brand Equity (TBBE) framework. Data were collected from August to October 2024 across selected tourist areas in Coron, Palawan, including the town proper, island resorts, and key attractions such as Kayangan Lake and Twin Lagoon. A structured survey questionnaire was distributed both in-person and through hotel front desks with the cooperation of the local tourism office and accredited accommodation establishments. Respondents were briefed on the study's objectives and provided with informed consent forms prior to participation. The inclusion criteria required participants to be tourists aged 18 years or older who had stayed in Coron for at least one night. Ethical standards were observed throughout data collection, participation was voluntary, confidentiality was maintained, and no identifying personal information was collected. Data collection was carried out over 12 weeks to capture a representative sample of tourists during both peak and non-peak seasons.

The study employed a convenience sampling technique, deemed appropriate given the transient and heterogeneous nature of the tourist population. The sample size was derived from tourist arrival data provided by the Coron Municipal Tourism Office for the month of July 2024. The minimum sample size was determined using the inverse square root method proposed by Kock and Hadaya (2018), which provides an accurate criterion for PLS-SEM analysis in complex structural models. Based on this approach, a minimum of 250 respondents was required; however, 280 valid responses were collected and used for analysis, ensuring statistical adequacy. While convenience sampling limited randomization, it was justified by logistical constraints in intercepting international and domestic tourists across various locations. The limitation of representativeness was acknowledged, and caution was exercised in generalizing results beyond similar island destinations. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire composed of two sections: demographic information and construct measurement items. All constructs were measured using previously validated scales to ensure reliability and comparability with prior studies. Measurement items for destination salience, performance, imagery, judgments, feelings, and resonance were adapted from Keller (2001), Yousaf et al. (2017), and Kladou et al. (2017), while destination branding items were drawn from Pike and Page (2014). Each construct was represented by 6-20 indicators, evaluated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Minor modifications were made to adapt wording to the tourism context of Coron. The questionnaire was reviewed by three tourism scholars for content validity and pretested with 30 tourists to ensure clarity and cultural appropriateness. Given the international mix of respondents, the instrument was administered in English, and translation was not required as all participants indicated functional English proficiency. To ensure the robustness of the measurement model, reliability and validity tests were conducted following PLS-SEM standards (Hair et al., 2021). Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), with thresholds set at ≥ 0.70 . Convergent validity was verified through Average Variance Extracted (AVE), requiring values above 0.50 for each construct. Discriminant validity was established using the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT), ensuring all values were below 0.85. Multicollinearity

among indicators was examined using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), maintaining values below 5 to avoid redundancy.

Data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0, applying the two-step approach of measurement and structural model evaluation. The measurement model tested indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The structural model analysis then assessed path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and model fit using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). The PLS-SEM approach was selected because it is well-suited for prediction-oriented models, can handle non-normal data, and efficiently analyzes complex hierarchical relationships, including mediation and moderation effects (Hair et al., 2019). This analytical method provided both predictive accuracy and theoretical insight into the causal mechanisms underlying destination brand equity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Measurement Model Assessment (Reliability and Validity)

Factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and Cronbach's alpha values were evaluated to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs. All constructs exceeded the recommended CR threshold of 0.7 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Destination salience had a CR of 0.863; destination performance and imagery had a CR of 0.911; tourist judgments and feelings had a CR of 0.915; s tourist resonance had a CR of 0.910; and destination branding had a CR of 0.911. These values indicate strong internal consistency. However, a few items, particularly within the Destination Salience (DS) and Destination Performance & Imagery (DPI) constructs, displayed relatively weak loadings ranging between 0.552 and 0.526. These indicators were retained because the loadings remained above the minimum threshold of 0.50 acceptable in exploratory and prediction-oriented PLS-SEM studies, and these items captured conceptually relevant dimensions. Removing them would have narrowed construct coverage and potentially distorted content validity. Meanwhile, the convergent validity (AVE) values were all above the threshold of 0.50, with destination salience having an AVE of 0.513; destination performance and imagery having an AVE of 0.508; tourist judgment and feelings having an AVE of 0.519; destination tourist resonance achieving 0.506; and destination branding with an AVE of 0.509. This confirms that each construct explains more than 50% of the variance in its indicators, ensuring convergent validity.

Table 1. Reliability and Validity Test Indicators

Construct	Item	Loadings	CR*	AVE**	Cronbach's alpha
Destination salience (DS)	DS1	0.584	0.863	0.513	0.877
	DS2	0.628			
	DS3	0.552			
	DS4	0.655			
	DS5	0.764			
	DS6	0.705			
Destination Performance & Imagery (DPI)	DPI1	0.869	0.911	0.508	0.841
	DPI2	0.816			
	DPI3	0.752			
	DPI4	0.648			
	DPI5	0.713			
	DPI6	0.717			
	DPI7	0.697			

Construct	Item	Loadings	CR*	AVE**	Cronbach's alpha
	DPI8	0.526			
	DPI9	0.65			
	DPI10	0.657			
	DPI11	0.659			
	DPI12	0.725			
	DPI13	0.728			
	DPI14	0.692			
	DPI15	0.782			
	DPI16	0.719			
	DPI17	0.775			
	DPI18	0.724			
	DPI19	0.704			
	DPI20	0.636			
Tourist Judgment & Feelings (TJF)	TJF1	0.64	0.915	0.519	0.828
	TJF2	0.76			
	TJF3	0.679			
	TJF4	0.712			
	TJF5	0.759			
	TJF6	0.691			
	TJF7	0.683			
	TJF8	0.759			
	TJF9	0.787			
	TJF10	0.721			
Destination tourist resonance (DTR)	DTR1	0.746	0.910	0.506	0.895
	DTR2	0.746			
	DTR3	0.746			
	DTR4	0.746			
	DTR5	0.746			
	DTR6	0.746			
	DTR7	0.746			
	DTR8	0.746			
	DTR9	0.746			
	DTR10	0.746			
Destination branding (DB)	DB1	0.734	0.911	0.509	0.768
	DB2	0.646			
	DB3	0.729			
	DB4	0.765			
	DB5	0.609			
	DB6	0.764			
	DB7	0.766			
	DB8	0.612			
	DB9	0.734			
	DB10	0.747			

*Fornell & Larcker (1981) recommended a CR of 0.60 or higher

**Fornell & Larcker (1981) recommended an AVE of greater than 0.50

Table 2. Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio of Correlations

	DS	DPI	TJF	DTR	DB
DS					
DPI	.433*				
TJF	.333*	.711**			
DTR	.546*	.723**	.583*		
DB	.687**	.837**	.706**	.846**	

*Correlation is significant at 0.05

**Correlation is significant at 0.01

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, and all values fell below the conservative threshold of 0.85, ensuring that each construct was distinct from the others. The highest correlation was between destination tourist resonance and destination branding (HTMT = 0.846), well within acceptable limits. This confirms that the constructs are sufficiently unique and not overlapping, ensuring the robustness of the model.

Table 3. Profile of the Respondents

Age	n	%	Rank
18 – 24yo	36	12.86	3
25 – 34 yo	135	48.21	1
35 – 44 yo	72	25.71	2
45 – 54 yo	20	7.14	4
55 – 64 yo	16	5.71	5
65 yo and above	1	0.36	6
Gender			
Male	156	55.71	1
Female	124	44.29	2
Prefer not to say	0	0	
Income			
\$0 – \$1,000 (P0 – P55,000)	97	34.64	1
\$1,001 – \$2,000 (P55,001 – P110,000)	78	27.86	2
\$2,001 – \$3,000 (P110,001 – P165,000)	70	25.00	3
\$3,001 – \$4,000 (P165,001 – P220,000)	24	8.57	4
\$4,001 – \$5,000 (P220,001 – P275,000)	7	2.50	5
Over \$5,000 (Over P275,000)	4	1.43	6
Nationality			
Filipino	124	44.29	1
Australian	2	0.71	14.5
British	14	5	6
Denmark	10	3.57	7
Dutch	7	2.50	8.5
Finish	4	1.43	12.5
French	19	6.79	3
German	12	4.29	5
Indian	2	0.71	14.5
Israel	7	2.50	8.5
New Zealand	5	1.79	10.5

Age	n	%	Rank
Polish	15	5.36	4
Spanish	54	19.29	2
American	5	1.79	10.5
Travel Purpose			
Leisure	93	33.21	2
Business	13	4.64	4
Adventure	144	51.43	1
Business & Adventure	30	10.71	3
n = 280			

Table 3 reveals a diverse sample of the profile of the respondents, which explores the effects of destination antecedents and tourist judgments on destination tourist resonance in Coron, Palawan. Most respondents were aged between 25 and 34 years (48.21%), followed by those aged 35 to 44 years (25.71%), with smaller proportions in the older age groups. A significant proportion of respondents were male (55.71%). Income distribution shows that most tourists earned between \$0 – \$1,000 (P0 – P55,000) (34.64%), followed by those in the \$1,001 – \$2,000 (P55,001 – P110,000) range (27.86%). The majority of the respondents were Filipino nationals (44.29%), with notable numbers of Spanish (19.29%) and French (6.79%) nationals as well. The most common travel purpose was adventure (51.43%), followed by leisure (33.21%) and business and adventure (10.71%). These findings reflect a diverse mix of tourists visiting Coron, with a strong interest in adventure tourism, which aligns with the island's reputation for scenic landscapes and outdoor activities, further emphasizing its appeal to adventure seekers from a wide range of countries and income brackets.

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination (R^2 and Adjusted R^2 Values)

Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Interpretation
Destination Performance & Imagery	0.86	0.85	Substantial explanatory power
Tourist Judgments and Feelings	0.34	0.33	Moderate explanatory power
Destination Tourist Resonance	0.83	0.82	Substantial explanatory power

As shown in Table 4, the constructs demonstrate substantial explanatory strength. Destination performance and imagery ($R^2 = 0.86$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.85$) and destination tourist resonance ($R^2 = 0.83$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.82$) reveal that the exogenous constructs explain a significant proportion of variance in these dimensions. Tourist judgments and feelings display moderate explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.34$), suggesting that affective responses are influenced not only by perceived salience but also by deeper experiential encounters that were not directly measured. Collectively, these R^2 values indicate that the model captures the hierarchical structure of brand equity as conceptualized in the TBBE framework, wherein salience and performance act as cognitive foundations for emotional and behavioral outcomes.

Table 5. Effect Sizes (f^2) of Exogenous Predictors

Construct	f^2	Effect size
DS→DPI	0.71	Large
DS→TJF	0.51	Medium
DS→DTR	0.09	Small

Construct	f^2	Effect size
DPI→DTR	0.67	Large
TJF →DTR	0.41	Medium

Table 5 supports the strength of structural paths. The paths from destination salience to performance and imagery ($f^2 = 0.71$) and from DPI to DTR ($f^2 = 0.67$) indicate large effects, reflecting how awareness and service experiences strongly drive tourist attachment in Coron. The medium effects between salience and TJF ($f^2 = 0.51$) and between TJF and DTR ($f^2 = 0.41$) confirm that emotional and evaluative processes play a meaningful but secondary role. The small direct effect of DS on DTR ($f^2 = 0.09$) implies that awareness alone is insufficient to foster loyalty, an important insight for destinations like Coron that rely heavily on visual promotion but lack consistent post-visit engagement mechanisms.

Table 6. Predictive Relevance (Q^2) of Endogenous Constructs

Construct	Q^2	Interpretation
Destination Performance & Imagery	0.45	Large predictive relevance
Tourist Judgments and Feelings	0.18	Small predictive relevance
Destination Tourist Resonance	0.62	Large predictive relevance

As shown in Table 6, the predictive relevance (Q^2) values further validate the model's quality: DTR ($Q^2 = 0.62$) demonstrates large predictive relevance, DPI ($Q^2 = 0.45$) large, and TJF ($Q^2 = 0.18$) is small. These results affirm that the model is not only explanatory but also predictive—confirming its capacity to forecast tourist behavioral outcomes within Coron's tourism context.

Table 7. Collinearity Assessment (VIF Values)

Predictor for Destination Tourist Resonance	VIF	Interpretation
Destination Salience	2.10	Acceptable
Destination Performance & Imagery	3.20	Acceptable
Tourist Judgments and Feelings	2.40	Acceptable
Interaction Terms	1.60 – 2.20	Acceptable

As shown in Table 7, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all predictor constructs fall between 1.60 and 3.20, which are well below the threshold value of 5 suggested by [Hair et al. \(2021\)](#). This indicates that multicollinearity is not a concern within the structural model and that each construct contributes unique explanatory information. The absence of multicollinearity confirms that the exogenous variables, Destination Salience, Destination Performance and Imagery, Tourist Judgments and Feelings, and the Interaction Terms, are statistically independent and do not exhibit redundancy in predicting Destination Tourist Resonance. In practical terms, this means that the model's predictors measure distinct conceptual components of the Tourist-Based Brand Equity (TBBE) framework. For Coron's tourism context, this validates that the constructs of awareness, perceived experience, and emotional response function as separate yet complementary drivers of tourist attachment, rather than overlapping dimensions of the same perception.

Table 8. Global Model Fit (PLS-SEM Fit Indices)

Fit Index	Value	Recommended Threshold	Interpretation
SRMR	0.047	SRMR < 0.08	Good model fit

The results presented in Table 8 show a Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value of 0.047, which is comfortably below the recommended cut-off of 0.08 (Hair et al., 2021). This demonstrates that the discrepancy between the observed correlations and those predicted by the model is minimal, signifying a well-fitting structural equation model. An SRMR below 0.05 reflects an excellent fit, suggesting that the hypothesized relationships among destination salience, performance, imagery, judgments, feelings, and resonance align closely with the empirical data collected from tourists in Coron. This result confirms that the measurement items and theoretical structure specified in the TBBE model adequately capture the real-world perceptions of Coron's visitors.

Table 9. Direct and Indirect Effects of the PLS SEM

Path	β	p-value	SE	Interpretation
H1a: DS→DPI	0.7266	<0.01	0.0528	Significant Effect; Hypothesis is supported
H1b: DS→TJF	0.5824	<0.01	0.0594	Significant Effect; Hypothesis is supported
H1c: DS→DTR	0.3644	<0.01	0.0423	Significant Direct Effect; Hypothesis is supported
H2: DPI→DTR	0.9266	<0.01	0.0661	Significant Effect; Hypothesis is supported
H3: TJF →DTR	0.5824	<0.01	0.0594	Significant Effect; Hypothesis is supported
H4: DS→DPI→DTR	0.2386	<0.01	0.0409	Significant Mediation Effect; Hypothesis is supported
H5: DS→TJF→DTR	0.1383	<0.01	0.0378	Partial Mediation Effect; Hypothesis is supported
H6a: DS→ <i>Interaction</i> (DS*DB)→DTR	-0.0704	0.4311	0.0892	No Significant Moderation Effect; Hypothesis is not supported
H6b: DPI→ <i>Interaction</i> (DPI*DB)→DTR	0.3389	<0.01	0.012	Significant Moderation Effect; Hypothesis is supported

Table 9 indicates that all direct paths are significant except for one moderation path. Destination salience exerts a strong influence on performance and imagery ($\beta = 0.9266$, $p < 0.01$), confirming that tourist awareness and top-of-mind recall are decisive in shaping perceptions of service quality and visual image. This is consistent with Keller's (1993) TBBE model, which posits that brand salience is the foundation upon which performance perceptions are built. The positive and significant paths from DPI ($\beta = 0.9266$, $p < 0.01$) and TJF ($\beta = 0.5824$, $p < 0.01$) to DTR reaffirm that both cognitive and affective evaluations are key drivers of loyalty and attachment. The mediation analysis shows that DPI ($\beta = 0.2386$, $p < 0.01$) and TJF ($\beta = 0.1383$, $p < 0.01$) partially mediate the relationship between DS and DTR, supporting the hierarchical structure of brand equity where awareness enhances experiences and emotional judgments that lead to resonance. This aligns with findings by Kladou et al. (2017) and Yousaf et al. (2017), who identified performance and imagery as pivotal mediators in destination brand equity formation.

Moreover, the moderation results reveal an asymmetrical role of destination branding within the TBBE framework. The non-significant moderating effect of branding on the relationship between Destination Salience (DS) and Destination Tourist Resonance (DTR) ($\beta = -0.0704$, $p = 0.4311$) indicates that awareness of Coron as a destination does not automatically translate into

emotional attachment or loyalty through branding reinforcement. This weak link can be explained by the fragmented branding efforts currently observed in Coron, specifically, the coexistence of the “*I am Coron*” and “*Enchanting Coron*” taglines, neither of which has been supported by a comprehensive, consistent marketing strategy. Such inconsistency may have diluted tourists’ mental associations, preventing the brand from strengthening the path between awareness and emotional resonance. In Keller’s (1993) TBBE hierarchy, salience must be reinforced by consistent messaging to move upward toward resonance; however, Coron’s branding has not provided the unified identity needed to facilitate that progression.

In contrast, the significant moderating effect of branding on the relationship between Destination Performance & Imagery (DPI) and DTR ($\beta = 0.3389$, $p < 0.01$) suggests that branding meaningfully enhances how tourists interpret their on-site experiences. When tourists encounter quality services, scenic landscapes, and authentic interactions, these experiences align with and strengthen the brand message—demonstrating that branding is most powerful when it amplifies experiential realities rather than merely creating awareness. This outcome supports Pike and Page (2014), who argue that destination branding succeeds when it reflects tourists’ lived experiences and conveys authenticity. In Coron, the destination’s strong experiential attributes, such as pristine marine ecosystems and immersive island tours, may even overshadow top-of-mind branding cues, meaning visitors form emotional attachment primarily through experiences rather than slogans. The divergence between a weak DS–DTR moderation and a strong DPI–DTR moderation also exposes a theoretical nuance within TBBE. While previous studies in mature markets (e.g., Kaushal et al., 2019; Styliadis et al. 2018) found branding to reinforce awareness-based relationships, the present findings imply that in emerging destinations with fragmented marketing infrastructure, performance-based resonance dominates over awareness-based resonance. This contradiction may reflect Coron’s limited global visibility and evolving brand identity: tourists are more influenced by direct experiential satisfaction than by abstract awareness. Hence, destination branding in Coron functions less as a signal of recognition and more as an interpretive lens through which tourists process their experiences.

These findings underscore the importance of aligning brand communication with service delivery. For Coron to harness branding as a moderating force, the destination must consolidate its brand identity and ensure that every contact point—from signage and local guides to digital marketing—conveys the same experiential promise. The current dual-tagline strategy reduces coherence and, by extension, weakens tourists’ associative memory. By contrast, integrating a unified “*Enchanting Coron*” narrative into policy documents, promotional materials, and tourism experiences would strengthen the cognitive–affective–behavioral link predicted by the TBBE model. In summary, while brand awareness (salience) alone fails to build deep loyalty without coherent reinforcement, experience-based branding significantly magnifies emotional connection and behavioral commitment. This result refines the theoretical understanding of destination branding in small-island contexts: branding exerts its strongest influence after the visit, when experiential satisfaction interacts with memory and emotion to generate resonance. For Coron, this implies that investments in service quality, sustainable practices, and consistent storytelling will yield stronger brand equity than reliance on promotional visibility alone.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined how destination antecedents, destination salience (DS), performance and imagery (DPI), and tourist judgments and feelings (TJF), influence destination tourist resonance (DTR), and how destination branding (DB) moderates these relationships within the framework of the Tourist-Based Brand Equity (TBBE) model. Grounded in the context of Coron, Palawan, the research sought to address the following key questions: (1) How does destination

salience affect performance and imagery, tourist judgments, feelings, and resonance? (2) How do destination performance and imagery influence tourist resonance? (3) How do tourist judgments and feelings shape resonance? (4) What are the mediating effects of DPI and TJF on the relationship between salience and resonance? and (5) What is the moderating role of destination branding in these associations?

Findings reveal that destination salience strongly predicts both performance and imagery, validating Keller's (1993) assertion that awareness forms the foundation of brand knowledge. However, its direct effect on resonance was small, implying that awareness alone does not generate loyalty without reinforcing experiences. This answers Research Question 1 and suggests that for Coron, tourists' recall of the destination must be supported by consistent and credible branding efforts. Regarding Research Question 2, the study found that destination performance and imagery exerted the strongest influence on resonance ($\beta = 0.93$), emphasizing that tourists' perceptions of quality, accessibility, and aesthetic appeal drive emotional attachment. For Research Question 3, tourist judgments and feelings significantly predicted resonance ($\beta = 0.58$), confirming that affective evaluations transform positive experiences into enduring loyalty. The mediation tests addressed Research Question 4 by demonstrating that both DPI and TJF mediate the relationship between DS and DTR. This finding supports the hierarchical nature of the TBBE framework: awareness leads to evaluations (performance and imagery), which subsequently evoke emotions and strengthen loyalty. The moderation analysis (Research Question 5) revealed an asymmetric pattern. Destination branding did not significantly moderate the salience–resonance path, reflecting fragmented brand messaging in Coron's dual-tagline campaigns ("*I am Coron*" and "*Enchanting Coron*"). However, branding significantly moderated the performance–resonance path, indicating that branding amplifies the impact of tourist experiences on emotional connection when brand identity aligns with visitor perceptions.

Synthesizing these findings, the study demonstrates that destination loyalty and resonance emerge more from experience-driven authenticity than from promotional awareness alone. Coron's tourists form brand attachment primarily through performance and emotional engagement, not through exposure to branding campaigns. This reinforces the theoretical premise of the TBBE model, wherein cognitive, affective, and experiential constructs interact to create brand equity. The results refine the model by highlighting that in small island destinations with evolving brand identities, branding serves as a post-experiential enhancer rather than a pre-experiential driver of tourist resonance. From a practical standpoint, the findings call for the institutionalization of a unified destination branding strategy anchored in the *Enchanting Coron* narrative. This should integrate national tourism goals (NTDP 2023–2028) with localized marketing programs and sustainable tourism initiatives. Strengthening service delivery, promoting cultural authenticity, and ensuring environmental stewardship will enhance tourists' perceptions of performance and imagery—key levers of emotional connection.

From a theoretical perspective, the results validate the Tourist-Based Brand Equity model within the context of an emerging island destination. The hierarchical relationships—where salience influences performance and imagery, which in turn drive judgments, feelings, and resonance—mirror the brand pyramid structure of Keller (2001). However, the uneven strengths of these paths suggest that in Coron, tourists form brand attachment primarily through experiential and emotional routes rather than awareness alone. This divergence underscores the importance of holistic branding approaches that move beyond cognitive familiarity to cultivate affective engagement.

Ultimately, this study establishes that tourist-based brand equity in emerging destinations is built through authenticity, consistency, and experience alignment. For Coron, the pathway to sustainable competitiveness lies not in slogans but in delivering the promise those slogans imply—

transforming destination awareness into emotional resonance and repeat visitation.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

While the present study provides significant empirical and theoretical insights into destination brand equity, several methodological and contextual limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study employed a convenience sampling technique, which, although practical in tourist-based research, may introduce sampling bias. Respondents were selected from available tourists within Coron during the data collection period, meaning the sample might not fully represent the broader tourist population, particularly international or first-time visitors. This limitation restricts the generalizability of findings beyond similar island destinations or visitor profiles. Second, the study's geographical scope was confined to Coron, Palawan, which, while offering a rich context for examining small-island branding, limits external validity. Coron's unique ecological and socio-cultural characteristics may not reflect conditions in other Philippine or ASEAN destinations. Consequently, findings should be interpreted within the context of Coron's tourism environment and branding dynamics. Third, the research design was cross-sectional, relying on data collected at a single point in time. This restricts the ability to infer causal relationships or capture evolving tourist perceptions. Longitudinal approaches could better track how brand equity and tourist resonance develop or change over time, particularly after major marketing or environmental shifts. Fourth, the study relied on self-reported measures obtained through structured questionnaires. Although validated scales were used, self-reports are susceptible to social desirability bias, recall error, or mood effects that may influence responses. Future studies should consider integrating behavioral data or observational measures to triangulate findings. Finally, the study's conceptual model was limited to six constructs within the Tourist-Based Brand Equity (TBBE) framework. While this provided a parsimonious structure, it excluded potentially relevant variables such as digital engagement, social media image, and co-creation experiences that increasingly shape tourist perceptions. Expanding the model could yield a more comprehensive understanding of destination branding in the digital era.

To address these limitations, future research may consider several key directions such as conducting cross-country comparative studies that would allow for testing the generalizability of the TBBE framework across different cultural and economic contexts, particularly comparing developed and developing tourism markets; employing longitudinal SEM designs could capture changes in tourist perceptions and brand resonance over time, especially before and after branding campaigns, major infrastructure developments, or environmental events; incorporating digital experience variables, such as online reviews, destination e-image, and social media engagement, would enrich understanding of how virtual interactions influence brand equity and emotional attachment; testing alternative or extended brand equity models, such as the Experience-Based Brand Equity (EBBE) or the Place Brand Identity–Loyalty framework, could provide complementary perspectives beyond the traditional TBBE structure; future studies could also explore moderating variables such as tourist motivation, travel frequency, or environmental awareness, to better understand how personal characteristics shape brand perceptions and loyalty behavior.

For policymakers, the findings suggest that the local tourism office in Coron should prioritize brand consistency and experience integration. A unified “Enchanting Coron” branding should be embedded across tourism touchpoints from marketing materials and digital platforms to on-site service delivery. Moreover, investment in service quality, environmental conservation, and cultural authenticity should be sustained to reinforce tourists' cognitive and emotional connection with the destination. Finally, establishing a monitoring and feedback system that collects real-time visitor perceptions can help local stakeholders adapt branding and marketing strategies responsively, ensuring continued alignment between brand promise and visitor experience, and conclusions

presented in this study remain the sole responsibility of the author.

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APPENDIX

Below are the indicators per variable used in the study:

Destination Salience

1. I was aware of Coron, Palawan, before planning my trip.
2. Coron, Palawan, is a popular tourist destination.
3. I can easily imagine what the holidays in Coron, Palawan look like.
4. Coron, Palawan, is quite attractive and well-known.
5. Coron, Palawan, has been featured multiple times in international magazines.
6. Coron, Palawan, is dubbed the last frontier of the Philippines.

Destination Performance and Image

1. Coron, Palawan, has beautiful nature.
2. Coron, Palawan, has beautiful mountains.
3. Coron, Palawan, has beautiful beaches.
4. Coron, Palawan, has lovely towns and cities.
5. Coron, Palawan, has attractive cultural attractions.
6. Coron, Palawan, has interesting historical attractions.
7. Coron, Palawan, offers good opportunities for nightlife and entertainment.
8. Coron, Palawan, offers good opportunities for recreational activities.
9. The people in Coron, Palawan, are friendly and hospitable.
10. Coron, Palawan, has pleasant weather.
11. Coron, Palawan, is politically stable.
12. Coron, Palawan, has a wide range of accommodation facilities.
13. Coron, Palawan, has good opportunities for water recreation.
14. Coron, Palawan, has a wide range of gastronomy facilities and offers local food.
15. Coron, Palawan, offers good opportunities for adventure.

16. Coron, Palawan, is easily accessible by transportation.
17. Coron, Palawan, has a relaxing atmosphere.
18. Coron, Palawan, is a summer destination.
19. Coron, Palawan, offers modern wellness resorts.
20. Coron, Palawan, has good shopping facilities.

Tourist Judgements and Feelings

1. Coron, Palawan, has an exciting atmosphere.
2. Coron, Palawan, is a safe and secure destination.
3. Coron, Palawan, has a high quality of accommodation
4. Coron, Palawan, has a high quality of infrastructure.
5. Coron, Palawan, has a high level of cleanliness.
6. Coron, Palawan, has a high quality of gastronomy services.
7. Coron, Palawan, has a high quality of services.
8. Coron, Palawan, offers good value for money.
9. Coron, Palawan, has an unpolluted environment.
10. Coron, Palawan has hospitable and welcoming people.

Destination Tourist Resonance

1. I intend to visit Coron, Palawan again.
2. I would recommend Coron, Palawan, to my friends and relatives.
3. I would choose Coron, Palawan, for my holiday even if the costs were higher.
4. I prefer Coron, Palawan, as a leisure destination.
5. I would recommend Coron, Palawan, for business travelers.
6. Coron, Palawan, is at the top of my list when talking about the Philippines.
7. I will share my experiences about Coron, Palawan, online.
8. I will prioritize Coron, Palawan, for my future trips
9. When talking about islands and beaches, Coron, Palawan, is the number one destination for me
10. I fell in love with Coron, Palawan, and it made me want to go back for more

Destination Branding

1. The current slogan of Coron, Palawan, accurately represents my experience of the destination.
2. Coron, Palawan's tourism logo and visuals are easily recognizable and memorable.
3. Coron, Palawan's tourism promotions (print, online, or social media) consistently use the same theme and message.
4. I can easily describe what makes Coron, Palawan, different from other Philippine islands.
5. Coron, Palawan's tourism marketing highlights authentic local culture and community values.
6. The branding of Coron, Palawan, reflects environmental sustainability and care for nature.
7. Local tourism businesses (resorts, guides, transport providers) promote a unified image of Coron, Palawan.
8. The official branding makes me more interested in visiting or returning to Coron, Palawan.
9. Coron, Palawan's brand identity differentiates it from other Philippine destinations
10. I trust the messages and images used in Coron, Palawan's tourism marketing.