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Influence of Integrated Marketing Communication and Tourism Involvement on Local Experience-Based Tourism Decision

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Abstract

The purpose of this research paper is to study the influence of integrated marketing communication and tourism involvement on local experience-based tourism decisions in Thailand. In addition, it seeks to examine the effect of integrated marketing communication on tourism involvement in local experience-based tourism. The focus is on tourism along local experience routes in Buriram and Surin provinces. The population is Thai tourists with or without experience in local experiential tourism. Data was collected online using a questionnaire. 352 datasets were statistically analyzed using a PLS-SEM structural equation analysis. The results indicate that integrated marketing communication and tourism involvement have a significant positive influence on local experience-based tourism decision-making. Moreover, integrated marketing communication has a direct influence on tourism involvement. The results also reveal the direct and indirect influence of integrated marketing communication factors on local experiential tourism decisions. Government agencies and/or community operators involved in local experience-based tourism routes should focus on managing both integrated marketing communications and tourism involvement as it will encourage tourists to make local experiential tourism decisions.

Keywords: Integrated Marketing Communication, Tourism Involvement, Decision-Making, Local Experience-based Tourism

1. Introduction

The tourism industry plays a major role in the economies of many countries around the world and can significantly affect a nation's growth as it has strong ramifications with many other sectors, such as the hotel industry, the travel industry, the transport industry, and the food and beverage industry, to name a few (Manirochana, Junead, & Jamnongchob, 2021; Nootayasakul & Pasunon, 2016). Thailand, a country renowned for its beautiful sceneries and unique tourist attractions, attachment to traditions, and smiling people, is no exception (Rakmai et al., 2022; Suwannasank & Kheokao, 2019). According to the Bank of Thailand, in 2019, the year before the Covid-19 pandemic brought the world to a standstill, the gross domestic product (GDP) of the Thai tourism sector was 2.9 trillion baht (US\$78.24 billion), accounting for 20 percent of Thailand's 2019 GDP (Bank of Thailand, 2021). By comparison, in 2021, the year the world started to recover from the pandemic, Thailand's tourism GDP was a meagre 4.52 billion baht (US\$121.9 million), accounting for 2.80% of Thailand's GDP, a far cry from pre-Covid-19 statistics. Thailand is expected to return to pre-pandemic data by 2024 as travelling is slowly increasing across the globe.

The tourism industry can be broken down into many different types of tourism, each with its own specific purpose, ranging from recreational tourism to nature tourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, or medical tourism to name a few (Konwar & Chakrabarty, 2020). Given the many different purposes for which individuals travel, the list of tourism type is long and almost infinite, as new kinds of tourism keep emerging. One type of tourism for which there has been increasing interest in Thailand is community tourism, which can be defined as tourism that is specific to a community area that has wisdom, traditions, as well as cultural and historical or ecological places where the community takes part in tourism activities (Rakmai et al., 2022). The rising demand for this particular type of tourism is largely due to the Thai government's effort to build self-reliant communities (Konwar & Chakrabarty, 2020) and promote domestic tourism through the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the office in charge of articulating Thailand's tourism policy (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2022). Typically, the participation of the community stems from a sense of oneness with that community and pride in its local wisdom as well as a desire to take responsibility in developing its own locality (Nootayasakul & Pasunon, 2016, Saothong & Puyjorn, 2021). Community tourism is seen as a form of tourism that creates new experiences for tourists. Today, many tourists want to have a new and memorable experience when traveling. This is the reason why tourism activities that can provide such experiences are becoming more and more popular (Manirochana et al., 2021). It is also precisely why this kind of tourism has also been referred to as 'experiential tourism,' which has become one of the most sought-after types of tourism among tourists. Experiential tourism can be defined as a trip that creates a unique and memorable experience and leaves lasting impressions.

It is linked to community-based or enterprise-based tourism. Since it involves touring a specific area or locality and creating memorable experiences and good memories for the travelers, it can be referred to as local experiential tourism or local experience-based tourism. While previous studies have highlighted the value-added benefits of using local cultural resources and related businesses for tourism in the lower Northeastern region (e.g. Boontum & Bussaparoek, 2021), research on local experiential tourism, however, is still relatively scarce, especially on travel routes in the Buriram and Surin Provinces, hence the focus of this study on these areas. More specifically, zeroing in on local experiential tourism in these two Northeast provinces, this study examines two key factors: (i) integrative marketing communication and (ii) tourist involvement and how they influence travelers' decision-making process in relation to a specific tourism route in the Buriram and Surin provinces. This study was conducted in 2021 as part of the government's policy over the last ten years to promote sustainable local development (Strategy and Planning Division of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2018). Its goal was to effectively support this tourism policy in both provinces as well as the efforts by both the public and private sectors to promote this local experiential tourism route and drive tourism growth in both provinces. The results of this study may benefit government agencies, the private sectors, and communities involved in this tourism route. It is also relevant to the fields of tourism and hotel management and may spur further studies of local experiential tourism in these provinces or others in the future.

2. Literature Review

- *Experience-Based Tourism in Thailand*

As noted in the introduction, the tourism industry in Thailand represents an important part of the country's economy. This is largely due to the fact that tourism in Thailand has many advantages such as beautiful tourist attractions and interesting local cultures (Rakmai et al., 2022; Suwannasank & Kheokao, 2019). These advantages have given rise, among others, to a form of tourism that focuses on specific local areas and communities and on creating local

experiences, referred to as we just saw as local experience-based tourism or experiential tourism (Nootayasakul & Pasunon, 2016). Experiential tourism identifies a specific local affiliation with which such localities have activities or routes that will create a positive and memorable experience for tourists traveling on the specified routes. Experiential tourism seeks authentic experiences with tourist attractions in terms of lifestyle, culture, traditions, and participation in local communities that have developed into tourism resources (Junead, Jamnongchob, & Manirochana, 2018). Current data found that modern tourists want to experience tourism that connects with the community through participation in and experience of local lifestyles, traditions, and culture (Manirochana, Junead, & Jamnongchob, 2020). The involvement of local communities in experiential tourism is critical to the operational efficiency and success of this type of tourism (Saothong & Putjorn, 2021). This is especially the case with the involvement of local communities in the decision-making process, benefit-sharing, and assessment of the success of project managements, which is an important aspect of experiential tourism (Junead et al., 2018). This is the reason why this kind of tourism requires cooperation between government agencies, the private sector, and people in local communities that are designated as tourist areas.

- Integrated Marketing Communication

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) can be defined as the utilization of multiple communication channels simultaneously to achieve desired results (Rakmai et al., 2022; Zukowska, 2014). It is a modern marketing concept that manages market communication to consumers by creating or enhancing interest and good relationships with consumers (Chenini & Cherif, 2016). It uses a variety of marketing channels to create brand awareness among consumers (Rakmai et al., 2022). In addition, integrated marketing communication involves the design of the message to be communicated to the target consumers, using various promotional tools such as advertising, public relations, sales promotions, personal selling, direct marketing, internet communication, and trade shows (Konwar & Chakrabarty, 2020; Mihaela, 2015; Wongkunya, 2013; Zukowska, 2014). The objectives of integrated marketing communication are twofold: one is financial goals, the other is the relationship with both current and future customers (Mihaela, 2015). Such communication integration is expected to lead to effective and efficient marketing to further the desired marketing communication objectives (Chenini & Cherif, 2016). Suwannasank and Kheokao (2019) determined that integrated marketing communication focuses on consumer attitudes, needs, and motivations, and, for this reason, is an effective persuasive communication to target consumers. This is also why, as prior studies indicate, integrated marketing communication does influence tourists' decisions (Konwar & Chakrabarty, 2020; Mihaela, 2015; Wongkunya, 2013).

- Tourist Involvement

Consumer or tourist involvement refers to an experience that arises from the consumer's personal relationship with the object or context of consumption (Song, Rui, & Zhang, 2020). It is a personal factor that relates to the needs, interests, or perceived value of tourism made by tourists in the consideration of travel (Lee, Bruwer, & Song, 2015; Yuan, Song, Chen, & Shang, 2019). Tourist involvement in tourism occurs when tourists realize the importance of tourism, perceive its benefits and its value, and engage in meaningful tourism (Lee et al., 2015). It is also related to marketing decisions, depending on how high or low the level of tourist involvement is (Yuan et al., 2019). Tourist involvement in tourism consists of four perspectives: emotional, psychological, cognitive, and social experiences (Song, Rui, & Zhang, 2020). Janprasit and Kunchan (2021) determined that consumer engagement is related to involvement, which in turns affects consumer engagement. Tourist participation is critical to consumer engagement and affects the sharing of information between consumers/tourists and businesses (Simumba & Nchito, 2018).

Tourist involvement has been found to be one of the most important factors affecting tourist attitudes and behaviors (Lee et al., 2015; Samad & Alharthi, 2022). For one, it directly enhances the memorability of the travel experience (Song et al., 2020). According to Lee et al. (2015), tourist involvement is one of the key predictors in the tourism decision-making process. Tourist involvement influences the perceptions and desires of tourists who want to experience tourism (Song et al., 2020). It also affects their behavior, such as, for instance, their support of tourist attractions. Khairani and Fachira (2022) found that marketing strategies, especially digital content marketing, affected tourists' engagement, i.e., the involvement of tourists in what an attraction provides. This finding is consistent with Daszkiewicz and Pukas' (2016) determination that integrated marketing communication contribute to better customer relationships and greater consumer/tourist involvement by enhancing customer connections in the marketing process.

- Tourist Decision

Decision-making is the process by which a consumer chooses what product or service to buy. Decisions are based on a number of factors such as product or service information, marketing factors, social factors, and factors related to the attitudes of the consumers themselves (Nootayasakul & Pasunon, 2016). With regard to travelers, they make their travel decisions before they actually set off by researching both internal and external factors such as income factors, market factors, and socioeconomic factors (Chatphueak & Samphanwattanachai, 2019). Previous studies reveal that marketing factors such as integrated marketing communication programs influence consumer behaviors (Konwar & Chakrabarty, 2020; Mihaela, 2015; Rakmai et al., 2022; Wongkunya, 2013). According to Nootayasakul and Pasunon (2016), factors affecting the decision to travel include convenience factors, service factors, safety factors, and family or relative factors. This is consistent with Mihaela's (2015) study which concluded that integrated marketing communication creates effective messages that affect consumer buying behaviors. This is also in keeping with Wongkunya's (2013) research that shows that integrated marketing communication impacted tourists' decisions with regard to the experience-based tourism with the Roikaensarasin ethnic group in Thailand. Konwar and Chakrabarty (2020) determined that integrated marketing communication, especially advertising, public relations, personal selling, and internet marketing, clearly influences traveler decisions. As noted above, another key predictor in the tourism decision-making process is tourist involvement in tourism (Lee et al., 2015; Song et al., 2020).

- Conceptual Framework

Based on the relevant literature reviewed in this study, the conceptual framework of this research study was developed as shown in Figure 1. It is premised on the theory of consumer behavior that suggests marketers need to focus on and study the factors related to consumer demand and decision-making (Saeed, 2019; Yin, Yu, & Xu, 2021). While consumer behavior studies examine a whole array of internal and external factors as well as the consumer's purchasing decision-making process (Peighamberi, et al., 2016), this study focuses on two factors that affect the decisions of tourists in Thailand: (i) integrated marketing communication and (ii) tourism involvement.

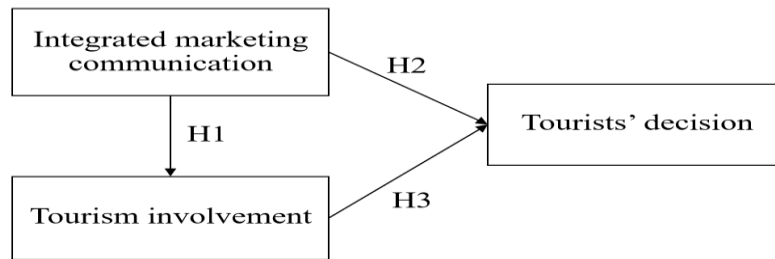


Figure 1: Research Framework (compiled by the authors for this study)

On the basis of this framework, the following hypotheses were articulated:

- H1:** *Integrated marketing communication significantly influences tourist involvement in local experience-based tourism.*
- H2:** *Integrated marketing communication significantly influences tourists' decision to choose local experience-based tourism.*
- H3:** *Tourism involvement significantly influences tourists' decision to choose local experience-based tourism.*

3. Research Methodology

- Population and Sample

In this study of local experience-based tourism routes in Buriram and Surin provinces, conducted in 2021, the population consisted of Thai tourists interested in experiential tourism or in having new experiences, which, as explained earlier, mean being interested in learning about new cultures, traveling in new ways, or engaging with local communities. As the subject of this research, this population is of great interest to local entrepreneurs and the local government who can use the research results to manage tourism organizations aiming at this population and promote local experience-based tourism in the research area. The sample size was determined by using the Cochran formula (Cochran, 1977) with a confidence level of 95 percent and an error of 5 percent. It was therefore calculated that the sample size should be kept at 385. Since the researchers used only valid, and practical questionnaires, the final sample size for statistical analysis 352 in total.

- Research Tool

The questionnaire used in this study as a research tool was developed based on the discussion in the literature review of the three research variables: integrated marketing communication, tourism involvement, and tourism decision. As indicated in Table 1, the first variable is Integrated Marketing Communications, which consisted of 19 questions, developed on the basis of studies by Konwar and Chakrabarty (2020) and Nootayasakul and Pasunon (2016). The second variable, tourism-related, contained 4 questions adapted from studies by Song et al. (2020) and Yuan et al. (2019). The third variable, tourism decision, comprised 8 questions adapted from Nootayasakul and Pasunon's (2016) study. All the questions for the three main variables used a five-point Likert scale (1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree). Upon an examination of the reliability of the questions for each of the key variables, it was found that they were highly reliable as the value exceeded 0.70 (Hair, et al., 2014).

Table 1: Reference Sources and Reliability Test of Key Variables

Variable	Item	References	Cronbach's Alpha
Integrated marketing communication (IMC)	19 items (IMC1 to IMC19)	Konwar and Chakrabarty (2020); Nootayasakul and Pasunon (2016)	0.985
Tourism involvement (Involvement)	4 items (Inv1 to Inv4)	Song et al. (2020); Yuan et al. (2019)	0.928
Tourism decision (Decision)	8 items (Deci1 to Deci8)	Nootayasakul and Pasunon (2016)	0.956

- Data Collection

To ensure that the target respondents matched the goals of this study, the researchers used the questions at the beginning of the questionnaire to select only respondents interested in experiential tourism in a local community. For convenience and for avoiding the risk of exposure to Covid-19, data in this research was collected online. The online questionnaire was developed using Google Forms and sent via various online channels such as LINE, Facebook, and email. The convenient randomization method was used as it was found, to be more suitable for conducting research under the unusual Covid-19 situation and more convenience for collecting data on a larger scale. Since collecting information online was done through a platform whose target audience was tourists who regularly use it, the surveys could be sent to a wide national level.

- Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis of this research was done conducting a descriptive statistics analysis and a PLS-SEM structural equation model analysis. The descriptive statistical analysis consisted of frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis. For the statistical analysis of the relationship between variables in this research, the researcher used the 2.3.1 version of the ADANCO program to analyze the structural equation model. This program analyzes the structural equation model in the PLS-SEM. The analysis is divided into two phases: the first is the analysis of the measurement model, and the second is the analysis of the structural model. The use of this statistical analysis of structural equations is appropriate to draw conclusions based on the hypothesis studied about the influence of paths between independent and dependent variables in the research model.

4. Results

Data from the 352 respondents was statistically analyzed, using both a descriptive and inferential analysis, as shown in Tables 2-7.

- Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive statistical analysis results are shown in Tables 2 and 3, which provide a preliminary analysis of the respondents' data and key variables in this research. As can be seen in Table 2, the majority of the participants were females (n = 254, 72.2%) and 54.0 percent of the respondents were between twenty and thirty years old (n = 190) and single (n = 265, 75.3%). Most of the respondents' education level was a bachelor's degree (n = 259, 73.6%), and most of them had an income of less than 20,000 Baht (US\$575) (n = 268, 76.1%).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Participants' Information		Frequencies	Percent
Gender	Male	93	26.4
	Female	254	72.2
	Others	5	1.4
Age	< 20 years	45	12.8
	20 – 30 years	190	54.0
	31 – 40 years	55	15.6
	41 – 50 years	46	13.1
	51 – 60 years	10	2.8
	> 60 years	6	1.7
Status	Single	265	75.3
	Married	75	21.3
	Divorced	12	3.4
Education	Below Bachelor's degree	48	13.6
	Bachelor's degree	259	73.6
	Above Bachelor's degree	45	12.8
Income	< 20,000 Baht	268	76.1
	20,001 – 40,000 Baht	58	16.5
	40,001 – 60,000 Baht	22	6.3
	> 60,000 Baht	4	1.1

The results of the statistical analysis shown in Table 3 indicate that the mean values of the three research variables that reflected the opinions of the respondents were at a high level. The mean variables for integrated marketing communications, tourism involvement, and tourism decision making were 3.71, 3.99, and 3.95, respectively. Moreover, the standard deviations of the three variables were found to be within the reasonable distribution of the data. The distribution was not excessive. The skewness and kurtosis analysis in the normal distribution curve showed that the data was normally distributed (Hair, et al., 2014).

Table 3: Statistical Analysis of Key Variables

Variable	Means	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
IMC	3.71	0.72	-0.12	-0.55
Involvement	3.99	0.71	-0.40	-0.27
Decision	3.95	0.71	-0.35	-0.32

- Assessment of the Measurement Model

The results for the measurement model are shown in Tables 4 and 5. The measurement model was evaluated to verify the suitability of the observed variables for each latent variable before proceeding with the final analysis of the structural equation model. Table 4 reports the weight of the observed variables in each latent variable and indicates that all the observed variables were suitable for the three latent variables. To assess the construct reliability of the measurement model, three evaluation values were used: Cronbach's Alpha, Dijkstra-Henseler's rho, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). To verify the reliability of all the constructs with Cronbach's Alpha and Dijkstra-Henseler's rho evaluations, the standard value must be greater than 0.70 and the standard value for estimating the AVE value be 0.50 or higher (Gelhard & Delft, 2015; Hair, et al., 2017). As shown in Table 4, the three reliability assessments of the measurement model (Cronbach's Alpha, Dijkstra-Henseler's rho, and AVE) were appropriate and met the requirements

Table 4: Construct Reliability of the Measurement Model

Construct	Item	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Dijkstra-Henseler's rho	Average Variance Extracted
IMC	IMC1	0.837	0.974	0.977	0.687
	IMC2	0.856			
	IMC3	0.703			
	IMC4	0.682			
	IMC5	0.844			
	IMC6	0.875			
	IMC7	0.879			
	IMC8	0.875			
	IMC9	0.858			
	IMC10	0.860			
	IMC11	0.894			
	IMC12	0.872			
	IMC13	0.715			
	IMC14	0.726			
	IMC15	0.773			
	IMC16	0.833			
	IMC17	0.862			
	IMC18	0.875			
	IMC19	0.873			
Involvement	Inv1	0.875	0.883	0.919	0.741
	Inv2	0.890			
	Inv3	0.828			
	Inv4	0.850			
Decision	Deci1	0.790	0.948	0.957	0.734
	Deci2	0.876			
	Deci3	0.864			
	Deci4	0.790			
	Deci5	0.891			
	Deci6	0.879			
	Deci7	0.887			
	Deci8	0.868			

To assess the discriminant validity of the research model, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) method was used. To carry out an evaluation with this method, every pair of constructs is to be considered. The acceptance criterion is that every construct pair must be less than 0.90 (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). As the results of the discriminant validity analysis reported in Table 5 indicate, all the pairs of variables were less than 0.9. Therefore, it can be concluded that this measurement model has good discriminative validity.

Table 5: Discriminant Validity Using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Method

Construct	IMC	Involvement	Decision
IMC			
Involvement	0.645		
Decision	0.695	0.653	

- Assessment of the Structural Model

The final step of the statistical analysis conducted in this research was to analyze the structural model. The results are shown in Figure 2 and Tables 6 and 7. Figure 2 shows the result of structural model analysis. It can be seen that the influence relationships of the three paths in the model were statistically significant at the .001 level (***). Details of path coefficients and others are shown in Table 6.

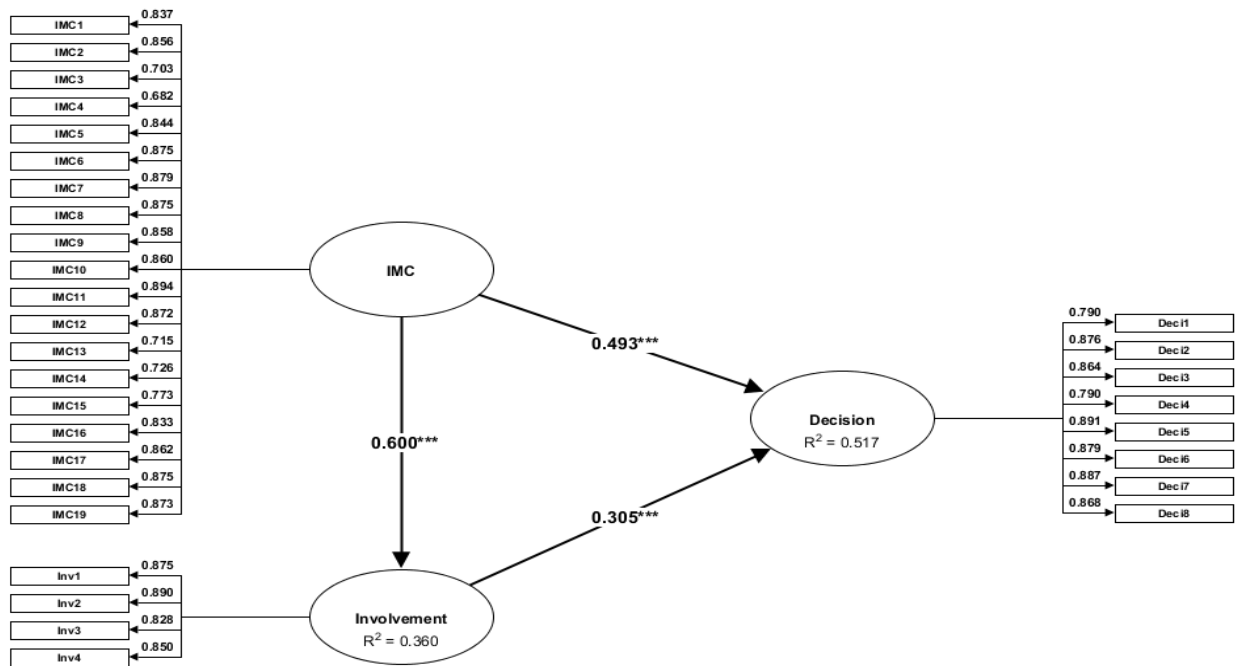


Figure 2: Final PLS-SEM Model

As indicated in Table 6, the path coefficient (Beta) of the effect of integrated marketing communication on tourism decision making is equal to 0.493 ($P < .001$), the path coefficient of influence of tourism involvement on tourism decision making is equal to 0.305 ($P < .001$), and the path coefficient of influence of integrated marketing communications on tourism involvement is equal to 0.600 ($P < .001$). In determining the effect among variables, it was found that the direct influence of tourism involvement on tourists' decision making was equal to 0.305, the direct influence of integrated marketing communications on decision making was equal to 0.494, and the direct influence of integrated marketing communication on tourism involvement was equal to 0.600. As to the indirect influence of integrated marketing communications on decision-making, it was equal to 0.183. However, when comparing the direct and indirect influence of integrated marketing communications on tourists' decision-making, direct influence was shown to be greater than indirect influence. When determining the effect size of the predictive variable with the Cohen's f^2 value, the criterion that the Cohen's f^2 value should be greater than 0.35 indicates that the effect size is large (Gelhard & Delft, 2015). Based on the results of the analysis of the research model, it was found that the effect of IMC on the involvement variable was high (f^2 value = 0.56) while the effect of IMC on Decision and that of Involvement on Decision were both moderate (f^2 values = 0.32 and 0.12 respectively).

Table 6: Results of Structural Analysis

Effect	Beta	Indirect effects	Direct effect	Total effect	P value	Cohen's f^2
Involvement -> Decision	0.305		0.305	0.305	0.000***	0.123
IMC -> Involvement	0.600		0.600	0.600	0.000***	0.563
IMC -> Decision	0.493	0.183	0.494	0.676	0.000***	0.322

Note: *** means the statistical significance at .001 level.

The analysis of the predictive ability of the model using R^2 value reveals that the explained variance of the Involvement variable was equal to 0.360, which indicated a moderate predictive ability. With an R^2 value of 0.517, the explained variance of the decision variable, however, was found to have a good predictive ability (Gelhard & Delft, 2015).

Table 7: Coefficient of Determination

Construct	Coefficient of determination (R^2)	Adjusted R^2
Involvement	0.360	0.358
Decision	0.517	0.514

5. Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of integrated marketing communication relations and tourism involvement on tourism decision-making and study the impact of tourism involvement on tourism decision-making. The study was conducted on the experiential tourism route located Buriram and Surin provinces. This research supported H1. The results confirm that integrated marketing communication has a significant influence on tourism involvement. The findings pertaining to H1 are consistent with several previous studies, including a recent study by Khairani and Fachira (2022), who found that marketing strategies such as content marketing can affect tourist engagement and another by Daszkiewicz and Pukas (2016), who concluded that integrated marketing communication created better customer relationship, and connection in the marketing process. Both studies focus on the involvement of tourism and the utilization of appropriate marketing strategies, especially marketing communications.

This research also supported H2, which examined the influence of integrated marketing communications on tourism decision-making. It was found that integrated marketing communication significantly influence tourism decision making. This is consistent with previous studies, including a study by Mihaela (2015), who concluded that integrated marketing communication created effective content which is apt to affect the behavior of consumers. This study, on integrated marketing communications and consumer behavior, determined that integrated marketing communication was an important tool for consumer behavior in terms of perception, relationship, preference, and decision behavior. This is also in keeping with a study by Wongkunya (2013) who pointed out that integrated marketing communication affected tourists' decisions in experience-based tourism and with one by Konwar and Chakrabarty (2020) who found that integrative marketing communication clearly influenced tourism decisions. In these two studies, the results confirmed that integrated marketing communication influences consumer travel decisions.

H3 focused on the influence of tourism involvement on tourism decision making. The findings supported this third hypothesis. Tourism involvement was shown to have a significant influence on travel decision-making. This is consistent with Lee et al.'s (2015) study, in which they concluded that tourism involvement was the key predictor in the tourism decision-making processes. This is also in line with a study by Song et al. (2020) who determined that tourism involvement influenced the perceptions and desires of tourists keen on experience tourism; and another by Yuan et al. (2019), in which they concluded that tourism involvement affected the behavior of tourists. These studies, which took place in Korea, China's Beijing and China's Huangshi, respectively, also concluded that tourism involvement influences tourist behavior.

Thus, this research confirms the significant influence of integrated marketing communications and tourism involvement on tourism decision-making and the influence of integrated marketing communications on tourism involvement in the local experience-based tourism route located in Buriram and Surin provinces. Consequently, the following recommendations can be made:

- Stakeholders, including government agencies, entrepreneurs, enterprises, the private sector, and communities in the local experiential tourism journey, should pay attention to both integrated marketing communication and tourism involvement for tourists who want to experience the local areas.
- Integrated marketing communication should focus on integrating various channels or forms of communication, both offline and online, including the development of information or content that will arouse the interest of tourists, such as content in the area of community or local tourism experiences. \
- Regarding tourism involvement, stakeholders should understand the attitudes and needs of tourists in order to develop forms or activities that promote the participation or involvement of the latter. This will encourage tourists to have a positive attitude towards local experiential tourism, resulting in a desire to participate in such tourism activities and ultimately support their decision-making in local experiential tourism.

This study is theoretically useful as it emphatically makes clear the fact that integrated marketing communication influences both tourism involvement and tourists' decision-making. That said, it has limitations. Since it focuses only on one experiential tourism area (in Buriram and Surin provinces), its results may not be directly applicable to other areas in Thailand involved in this particular type of tourism. Further studies, however, can use the findings in this research as a guide for similar studies in other areas in the country. Another limitation is that it only includes Thai tourists. Given the high contribution of foreign tourists to the Thai tourism industry, it may be well worth exploring whether, in spite of the obvious language barrier, this type of tourism would be amenable to foreigners travelling to Thailand. Thus, for future studies, the authors suggest that this model be studied with other local experiential tourism routes or with international tourists as participants so as to see how this type of tourism is viewed in different parts of the country by different stakeholders. Such studies would be beneficial in terms of policies to government agencies, to the communities involved, and to the private sector for the planning of community activities and the drafting of business plans.

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