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THE EFFECT OF MARKETING MIX ELEMENTS ON THE TOURIST'S TRAVELLING DECISION DURING COVID: AN EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM ARBA MINCH, ETHIOPIA

DEMISSIE ADMASU

Ph.D. Scholar, School of Management, KIIT Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar.
Corresponding author Email: demissieadmasu@gmail.com , ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1742-219X

Dr. SASMITA SAMANTA

Professor and Vice Chancellor, KIIT Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha.
Email: drsasmita@kiit.ac.in

Dr. SHIKTA SINGH

Associate Professor, School of Management, KIIT Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar.
Email: shiktasingh@ksom.ac.in

Abstract

This study examined the effect of tourism marketing mix elements on the domestic tourists' traveling decision to Arba Minch during the pandemic times. Further, the study intends to find out which strategies the tourism services providers might adopt in the post-pandemic period for a sustainable tourist destination. The study has used primary survey data, which was collected through an online survey questionnaire along with the secondary sources of data. The primary data was collected from 380 respondents via structured questionnaires. The study has followed the convenience sampling method due to pandemic restrictions on social distancing. Data analysis has been done with regression and quantile regressions to test the hypothesis. The empirical findings indicate that tourists traveling decisions were influenced by four elements viz; product, place, physical evidence, and process. On the contrary, price, promotion, and people were no effect on tourists' travel decisions during pandemic times. This study could generate evidence for policymakers to facilitate tourist services during the crisis period. Further, it can provide guidelines to tourist service providers regarding the demand and supply side needs in future travel restrictions in the city. Adopting pertinent marketing mix factors and choosing a crisis period to explore the likely effects of a pandemic on tourists' decision-making is unique compared to the previous studies.

Keywords: To Travelling Decision, Tourism Services, Marketing Mix, Covid-19, and Arba Minch.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism's contribution to the domestic and international exchequer has long been considered a major component of revenue generation in many developing countries, including Ethiopia (Lhendup, K. & Panda, B. 2021). Literature suggests that tourist service providers use a ma.rketing mix strategy to attract tourists and also attained their corporate goals (Helhel, Y., 2022; Sarker, M. et al., 2012) .The concept of the marketing

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mix was originally coined by McCarthy (1965) that describes the four basic components of any marketing campaign: product, price, promotion, and place. Since its inception, roughly 60 years ago, the marketing mix framework has been the favored and dominating marketing paradigm. According to Nikbin et al., (2021) and Fuciu,(2020), having solid marketing mix strategies and procedures can help a corporation manage the commercial risks and challenges given by the COVID-19 circumstance. During the pandemic, making the right marketing decisions is critical to a company's survival and profitability. Managers must have awareness of various marketing approaches that can ensure achievement all through as well as post-COVID-19 pandemic as the corporate climate is unpredictable throughout the pandemic time and executives are unfamiliar with the changing professional atmosphere. The Covid-19 pandemic has created chaos in tourism destinations, companies, and service industries throughout the world.

Tourism has evolved and expanded to become one of the world's largest and fastest-growing economic industries. Pre-pandemic, the report of the world tourism organization (UNWTO, 2020), International visitor arrivals increased by 5% to 1.4 billion in 2018, while tourism-related export receipts increased by 4% to USD 1.7 trillion. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, international visitors to America increased by 2% to 216 million, generating revenue of USD 334 -13824, and Asia and the Pacific increased by 7% to 348 million, generating revenue of USD 435 -13824. International tourist arrivals to Europe increased by 5% to 710 million, generating revenue of USD 570 billion. Arrivals in the Middle East climbed by 4%, totaling 60 million+5% USD 73 billion, while earnings in Africa increased by 7%, totaling 67 million USD 38 billion. Africa earned less than other regions due to low percentage share results in Sub-Saharan Africa. The world's most visited regions, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe, both had above-average growth in tourist revenues, with Europe accounting for about 40% of global tourism revenue. (UNWTO, 2021)

However, during the pandemic, international tourist visitations (overnight tourists) were down by 72% in 2020 compared to the pre-pandemic year 2019. This was also the worst year on record for tourism, with a 73 percent drop in international arrivals (UNWTO, 2021) On the other hand, Zurab (UNWTO, 2020) stresses the importance of domestic tourism, and the UN-WTO anticipates it to rebound faster and stronger than foreign travel. This will help many locations recover from the economic effects of the epidemic while also conserving jobs, protecting livelihoods, and letting tourism's social advantages return. Ethiopia's travel and tourism business accounted for 7% of the country's overall GDP in 2019 and tourists were responsible for 2 million jobs in total (Tourism Economics, 2021).

In this study, we have explored the tourism sector of Ethiopia in the context COVID-19 pandemic. Ethiopia is one of the Sub-Saharan African countries, and tourism in Ethiopia

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is undeveloped in comparison to the other country's diverse tourist attractions (Ajala, 2008). In the year 2020, Ethiopia recorded 518,000 tourists and produced $2.28 billion in revenue, placing it 126th in the world according to Tourism Economics 2021. According to (Geremew, 2021), and Esubalew et al., (2020), there isn't even an independent domestic tourism marketing strategy, and the lack of domestic tourism statistics at the national level weakens the generalization of data and demonstrates the sector's fallacies. Similarly, According to Gebreeyesus (2017) the tourist sector offers significant and untapped potential in the development of Ethiopia's economy. However, there are major bottlenecks that are preventing the sector from growing as expected; some of these include a lack of focus on domestic tourism, dearth of efforts by the government and private sector to promote domestic tourism, a lack of a clear strategy for promoting domestic tourism, insufficient promotion, and unaffordable prices for domestic travelers.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Tourism and COVID 19 Pandemic

Tourism sector disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic could have long-term consequences for Ethiopia's economy, as tourism revenue declines. The loss of over $1 billion in tourist spending in 2020 is expected to threaten 1.3 million jobs in the travel and tourism industry (Tourism Economics, 2021; Lulit et.al, 2020; Feyissa, Tadesse and Madda, 2020), for instance; according to Bogale, et.al, (2020), the occupancy rate of hotels fell from 80-85 percent to less than 5 percent, transportation, particularly international air travel ceased, SME's in the tourism sector lost market share, financial service providers associated with the industry ceased, and employee and customer behavior changed dramatically.

Nikbin et al., (2021), COVID-19 pandemics have had varying effects on businesses in various industries and countries. As a result, the study proposed that more research can be conducted to assess the effectiveness of marketing-mix techniques in various businesses and countries during COVID-19 pandemics. Furthermore, the marketing-mix techniques and methods, which the businesses must employ all through the COVID-19 time, were discussed in the context of a product, pricing, promotion, and location. However, the service marketing mix elements of people, physical evidence, and process have not been addressed.

2.2 Marketing mix and tourists travel decisions

The Marketing Mix is a term used to describe a company's combination of approaches for achieving its objectives by effectively marketing its products or services to a specific target consumer group (McCarthy and Perreault, 1987). The 7Ps of marketing mix elements comprised of the four core Ps of product, price, place, and promotion from

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McCarthy and the three additional Ps of people, process, and physical evidence from Booms and Bitner (W. M. Lim, 2021). The role of the marketing mix strategy is vital for the business industry to satisfy customers' needs (Hazira et al., 2022). In this regard, marketing mix 7Ps and tourists travel decision studies are very limited during COVID 19, and even though the studied papers also emphasized the pandemic impact on livelihood, national income rather than service providers controllable factors (Bogale, et. al, 2020: Feyissa et.al, 2020). For example, Massidda and Etzo, (2012); Koh,(2020); Volgger, et., al (2021) studied that domestic tourist activities account for the majority of this industry's consumption, value contributed, and employment. According to Shin et al.,(2022), the factors that influence travel decisions using three theoretical frameworks: tourist's trust, travel constraint, and extended theory of planned behavior but it failed to articulate important factors like trust in employees, place constraint, time constraint, and cost constraint. So as the 7ps marketing mix elements and travel decision concepts and their application have been illustrated in the subsequent sections.

Tourism products comprise products & services which can be presented for sale in a marketplace to satisfaction of a want or need (Philiph Kottler, 2016; Garyl L. Lilien, Philiph Kotler, 1999). Regarding tourism it is the most important factor in deciding on the degree of the marketing mix, especially for events, festivals, attractions, and surroundings, it is the product(Magat, 2015). Tourist satisfaction is influenced by the quality of the lodging, which includes clean rooms, security, safety, a nice view, and a well-ventilated room. Tourists make decisions based on their accommodations (Agyeiwaah, E., et.al, (2016); Cong, C.L. and Dam,(2017); Khoo-Lattimore, (2014), cultural sites (Gedecho and Guangul (2017), lodging, food services, retail and souvenir shops, and destination attractions, has a significant impact on domestic tourist satisfaction (Preko, 2020: Le and Dong, 2017).

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and destination attractions, has a significant impact on domestic tourist satisfaction (Preko, 2020: Le and Dong, 2017).

Based on the earlier works the present study intends to conduct the study to provide evidence on the factors the influence the decision to travel to Arba Minch.

More specifically the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What are the factors that influence the Ethiopian residents to decide to travel Arba Minch?
- Do all the marketing mix elements significantly affect the tourists travel decision?
- Within the decision making process, what is the role and impact of executing the marketing mix elements during covid 19 or any other disruption?

Hence, based on the research questions the following hypothesis were framed-

H_1. Product has a significant effect on domestic tourists' travel decisions.

The product purchased is an intangible product, in the form of experience. Even though some parts of the product are tangible and intangible (such as souvenirs, casino), the preparation is very small for the total purchase value.

H_2. Price has a significant effect on domestic tourists' travel decisions.

Price is the means of setting the exchange value between two parties(Sui P. et. al., 1997). It is difficult to set prices for tourism-related items (and everything else). In a market with intense competition, higher prices may result in fewer sales, hence reducing total revenue.

(Ciriković, 2014). Therefore pricing is the most important component of the marketing mix(Florence et al, (2015). Some of tourism pricing items are Fee for tour guide, Accommodation price (hotel, guesthouse, Lodge, resort, etc. Snacks, and beverages, Gifts, souvenirs, admission fees to visitor attractions, theatres, miscellaneous items, and transportation costs are all included in tourist shopping.

H_4. Place has a significant effect on domestic tourists' travel decisions.

Place: the site of all the points of sale for tourist merchandise that potential clients can buy (Middleton, 2001). In tourism, location is used to draw customers into the service system (Ciriković, 2014). For instance, tourist information provided by travel agencies to access tourist sites, travel agency booking systems, modes of transportation accessible in serving the visitors heading to tourist sites, transportation network to move from one location to another, access to tourist sites, tourism map to navigate between tourist sites (Gössling, Scott and Hall, 2018; Andrade and Smith, 2019)

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H_3: Promotion has a significant effect on domestic tourists' travel decisions.

Promotion: As part of the marketing-mix, is intended to assist in the placement of a merchandise in the tourism sector by enhancing consciousness, creating an image, and, most importantly, conducting market positioning (Ciriković, 2014 ;.Rowley, 1998 ; Demoz A. et al., 2021) Most common promotions include: consumer coupons, premiums, and contents; distributor and dealer purchasing incentives; cooperative advertising allowances; free items; industrial user discounts, gifts and bonuses; and sales contests and special bonuses for sales force personnel (Garyl L. et.al., 1999 : Sui P. et. al., 1997).

H_5.Process has a significant effect on domestic tourists' travel decisions.

Process: the service delivery process perceived as scripts: Another way in improving the performance of service delivery, at least for bigger corporations, is to have similarities with the performance of a play or film. (Middleton 2009: Sui P. et. al., 1997).For instance regarding tourism service provision process; easy provision travel information, preparation of itinerates, ticketing process, provision of payment system (ATM, Mobile banking, and insurance), accommodation reservation process.

H_6. Physical evidence has significant effect domestic tourists' travel decisions.

Physical evidence: Customers frequently rely on tangible cues, or physical evidence, to assess the service before purchasing it and to gauge their happiness with it during and after use (Valarie A. et.al,, 2013).

H_7.People has a significant effect on domestic tourists' travel decisions.

People: an important component of tourism marketing since they are the ones who attend to the demands of the visitors. (Dematel et al, 2011: Sui P.et. al., 1997). A study conducted in Thailand ranked the degree of importance of the marketing mix on tourist accommodation service purchasing decisions people at first place (Hiransomboon, 2012).

2.3 Drivers of Tourist's Travel Intentions

According to Clarke, J., and Bowen, (2021), a consumer's decision to use a product is a process of evaluating alternatives to the products that will be utilized. The consumer's decision to utilize a product, Lim,(2021), is a stage in which consumers must select between many possibilities regarding whether or not to use the product. According to (Yulita, 2016), a tourist's decision to visit a tourist attraction must be based on whether the tourist attraction meets his wishes and needs, and whether the tourist attraction delivers advantages in the form of facilities or services that meet his expectations. Tourists' intentions to revisit were influenced by the legacy brand's image, perceived quality, modes of transportation, length of stay, route, revisiting, and other factors while

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planning a trip (Mohammed, Mahmoud, and Hinson, 2021). For example, according to a study on global trends in length of stay, the weighted average length of stay for the entire sample fell from 5.4 nights in 1995 to 4.6 nights in 2015 (Gössling, Scott, and Hall, 2018). According to the findings of Gedecho and Guangul (2017), international tourists that visited different places were primarily interested in cultural sites, and the average length of their stay in South Omo was 4.78 days with standard lodgings.

To sum up, previous studies on marketing mix strategies and tourist travel decisions during Covid 19 were limited in number, the findings were not supported by research conducted during the pandemic, and their conclusions did not mention the extent of each marketing mix's influence on tourists travel decisions during the pandemic. Moreover, the marketing mix 7Ps and tourists travel decision studies are very limited during COVID 19, and even though the studied papers also emphasized the pandemic impact on livelihood, national income rather than service providers controllable factors, which is a major gap that the present student intends to eliminate. Hence, the above-mentioned gap motivated the researcher to investigate the effects of tourism marketing mix elements on tourists' travel decisions to Arba Minch during the pandemic.

3. Methodology

3.1 Description of the study area

Arba Minch is a well-known tourist destination town in the southern region of Ethiopia. It is the capital of Gamo Zone, an astronomical location of roughly $5^057' - 6^071'$ North latitude and $36^037' - 37^098'$ East longitude, and its distance from Addis Ababa, the Capital of Ethiopian, is 505 km. Arba Minch is situated in a beautiful place bypassing two distinct lakes namely, Lake Abaya towards the northern part and Lake Chamo towards the southern part. Measures are being taken to beautify the city of Arba Minch primarily due to the growing stream of regional, national as well as international tourists to the captivating, beautiful, and alluring ambiance of the city. The spectacular city of Arba Minch is loved and admired by tourists from all parts of the world. Konso, South Omo Zone, and the famous lower Omo valley have been the focal points of attraction and are marked as famous tourist destinations of Ethiopia. Moreover, the city is a source of attraction for discovering the neighboring several natural and social attractions including Crocodile Markets, NechSar National Park, The Forty Springs, Arba Minch Ground Water Forest, Lake Chamo, Bridges of God, The Lake Abaya, The Traditional Handicraft Products and Cultural Landscape of Dorze and Chencha area (Tamrat et.al., 2016). Looking into the ethnicity and popularity of the tourist spot, the researcher intended to conduct a study on the same. The map of the city can be referred in Figure 3 provided in the appendix.

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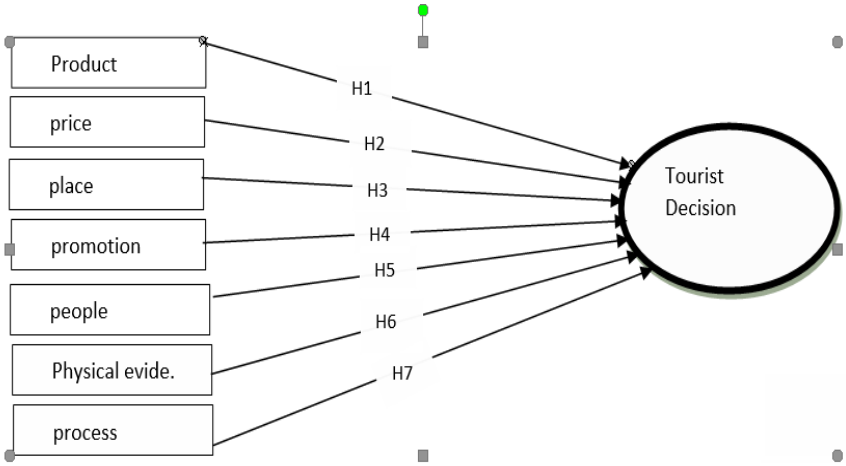
3.2 Objective and conceptual Framework

As per the literature is concerned, there has been no exploration in the area of tourism to the effects of the marketing mix elements on domestic tourists' travel decisions in the tourism destination city of Arba Minch during a pandemic. Therefore, the study has framed two objectives. First, to examine the impact of marketing mix elements on domestic tourists' travel decisions to Arba Minch during the pandemic; second, to execute a marketing mix strategy for tourism service providers that would be used in the post-pandemic times. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the proposed objectives.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



3.3 Data and sampling methods

This study has employed a mixed-method approach using both primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained using structured questionnaires, and the sample size was calculated using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula: n = N / 1+N (e) 2 where n=400. Based on this, the questionnaire was distributed to 400 domestic tourists, however, 13 of them did not respond, and 7 of them were incomplete, resulting in a total of 380 respondents for this study. There were 194 (51%) men and 184 (49%) women among the respondents. Nonprobability sampling techniques particularly the convenience sampling technique developed by Agbabiaka et al., (2017) have been used in this research. Convenience sampling could be the only option to conduct this study because details information about domestic tourist visiting timing and location was not available during a pandemic.

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3.4 Data analysis and methods

The data analysis has done through the statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 27 software and STATA. The association between marketing mix (7Ps) and tourists' travel decisions is measured using a five-point Likert scale. 5 for highly agree, 4 for agree, 3 for neutral, 2 for disagree, and 1 for strongly disagree on a five-point Likert scale(Smith, et al., 1969). Based on this, an internal consistency reliability test was undertaken with a sample of domestic visitors in Arba Minch city, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the instrument was found to be 0.847, indicating that it is an excellent test result of piloting and paves a path to go ahead with further data collection. Besides that, a significance threshold of 0.05, ANOVA, Quantile regression, and multiple linear regressions were employed to compare means between data variables. As a result, multiple regression analysis has also been used for predicting an unknown variable's value based on the known values of two or more variables. It's also about developing a model and discovering a relationship between variables. Seven explanatory factors or predictors were used to create the model, all of which have an impact on a tourist’s decision to travel.

3.5 Ethical consideration and consent

Ethical clearance was received from the institute's ethical clearance board. The consent form was signed by the respondents before the survey.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Socio-economic and demographic details of tourists

The majority of respondents came from different zones of Southern Ethiopia, with 170 (47.5%), Addis Ababa 99 (24.8%), Oromia 58 (14.5%), and other regions tourists accounting for 13.94% of the total. Their purpose of the visit was to attend a conference or conduct business within their regional state. The majority of respondents 194 (51%) are male, and their occupation, in our country's context, is that higher-level positions in government and corporate organizations are primarily filled by men. The respondents' higher frequency of age group was accounted for in the 18-55 age range (95.2 percent). The educational background of the respondents was bachelor's Degree (56%) was the most common level of education among respondents, followed by high school students and certificate (17.5%), diploma (12%), and above Bachelor's Degree (11.3%).

4.2 Descriptive analysis

The study sought to establish respondents’ responses on marketing mix elements regarding domestic tourists' travel decisions by using a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (1 indicating Strongly Agree and 5 indicating Strongly Disagree) Table-1 indicates the

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factors the respondents have given their responses to their travel decisions to Arba Minch.

Table 1: Respondent's response summary travel decisions to town Arba Minch

Factors		Strongly agree-1	Agree-2	Neutral-3	Disagree-4	Strongly disagree-5	Mean	SD
Product	Frequency	139	181	56	3	1	3.9915	0.57748
	%	43.60%	45.40%	9.20%	0.40%	0.10%		
Price	Frequency	28	160	177	13	2	3.4268	0.53652
	%	10.50%	47.80%	31.70%	1.90%	0.10%		
Place	Frequency	61	131	130	48	10	3.427	0.79077
	%	23.00%	39.50%	24.60%	7.20%	0.80%		
Promotion	Frequency	46	103	126	84	20	3.177	0.85968
	%	19.00%	34.10%	26.30%	13.90%	1.70%		
People	Frequency	104	196	74	5	2	3.8851	0.62143
	%	33.80%	51.00%	12.30%	0.70%	0.10%		
Physical evidence	Frequency	72	166	124	13	5	3.6324	0.66105
	%	25.20%	46.50%	21.70%	1.80%	0.40%		
Process	Frequency	37	126	152	54	14	3.3571	0.73988
	%	14.60%	39.80%	29.50%	8.50%	1.10%		

Source: Author's estimation

Table 1 shows that product elements of the marketing mix had the highest on a 5-point scale (M=3.991,SD=0.577), followed by people (M=3.885, SD=0.621), Physical evidence (M= 3.632, SD=0.661), Place (M=3.427, SD=0.790), Price (M=3.426, SD=0.536), Process (M-3.357, SD=0.7398), and lastly, Promotion (M=3.177, SD=0.859). The average result suggests that the majority of the respondents agreed with each element of the marketing mix in the travel decision to Arba Minch except for promotion and process. Similar results by Hiransomboon, (2012), the study conducted in Thailand; the Influence of Marketing Mix on Purchasing Decisions for Accommodation Services, and the findings ranked from the highest 1services place, process promotion, and pricing.

4.3 Empirical test and analysis

The study has employed multiple linear regression models to regress the composite mean scores of travel decisions on the composite mean scores of the seven marketing mix variables.

$$MM = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + e \quad \text{----------} \quad (1)$$

Where, MM = Marketing Mix (7Ps), X_1= Product, X_2 = Price, X_3 = Promotion, X_4 = Place, X_5 = People, X_6 = Process, X_7 = Physical evidence, and is constant; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, are coefficients to estimate; and e is the error term, which the authors considered to be nil for this study. Before running the analysis of multiple regression models, the study

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has done some pre-estimation tests[1] to main classical linear regression assumptions. VIF test has been done to check the multicollinearity problem. The model's independent variables do not show any multicollinearity, as we discovered. Further, we have not found problems of heteroscedasticity and non-normality problems in the estimated regression functions. Therefore, we can go ahead with the quantitative analysis with ANOVA, multiple regression and quantile regression.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.856[a]	.733	.728	.43039
a. Predictors: (Constant- process, price, product, people, promotion, place, physical evidence				

According to the results of the computation in table 2, there is a substantial connection between the dependent and independent variables. And the association is 85.6 percent at a 5% level of significance. The adjusted R square is 0.728, indicating that the independent variables in this mode account for nearly 85 percent of the variation in the dependent variable. The Table depicts the ANOVA to test more than the presence of two variable.

Table 3 ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	189.553	7	27.079	146.190	.000[b]
	Residual	68.906	372	.185		
	Total	258.459	379			
a. Dependent Variable: travel decision						
b. Predictors: (Constant), process, price, product, people, promotion, place, physical evidence						

Table 3 indicates that the combination of factors predicts the dependent variable significantly. This means that if the null hypothesis is true, there is a less than 0.1 percent chance that an F-ratio this large will occur. The F-statistics value is 146.190, which is statistically significant at p 0.000. (Because the value in the column labeled Sig. is less than .001).The value of the sum of squares is 68.906, the value of the df is 372, and the value of the mean square is 0.185 in residual. In other words, a good model must have a high F-ratio (greater than one at least) because the mean square regression will be bigger than the mean square residual. Therefore, the result shows a relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable of the study with F-statistic or F-ratio of 146.190. According to Kothari, (1990), there are two hypotheses presented here: null (H_o) and alternative (H_a).The significance (sig.) value

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indicates whether the (null) hypothesis should be accepted or rejected. It's also known as the P-value. The P-value is the likelihood that the connection is one by coincidence. In this case, the lower is the P-value, the better it is. The P-value is less than the level of significance at 0.05 then the null hypothesis is rejected and if it is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. To further validate our results, the researcher has calculated Quantile regression viz. Q05, Q25, Q50 Q75&Q95. Quantile regression is an extension of linear regression employed when the criteria for linear regression are not satisfied (i.e., linearity, homoscedasticity, independence, or normality). Quantile regression is an extension of Standard linear regression that estimates the conditional median of the result variable and is applicable when linear regression assumptions are not met. The primary advantage of the quantile regression approach is that it allows for the study of interactions between variables outside of the mean of the data, making it beneficial for comprehending non-normally distributed and non-linearly related outcomes. We can show this by writing down the predictor and the predicted values for two values that are next to each other.

Table 4: Quantile Regression Estimation

Travel decision	Coeff.	Std.Erorr	t	P>/T/
Q05				
product	0. 3559287	.1313615	2.71	0.007***
price	-0. 0283147	.0844154	- 0.34	0.737
place	0. 2694 652	.0030521	3.24	0.001***
promotion	-0. 0723 698	. 1276562	-0. 57	0 . 571
people	- 0. 3270 825	. 1254752	-2 . 61	0 . 010*
Physical evid.	0. 769932	. 0772516	9.97	0.000***
process	0. 1862435	.0671866	2.77	0.006***
_cons	-1.553461	. 4736006	-3.28	0.001***
Q25				
product	0. 0665114	.1072888	0.62	0.536
price	0. 0014594	.0612413	0.02	0.981
place	0.1718782	. 0746961	2.30	0.022**
promotion	0. 0497062	.0501812	0.99	0.323
people	0. 0365494	.0660623	0.47	0.635
Physical evid.	0. 7 345498	.0756504	9.71	0.000***
process	0. 2 637694	. 0713121	3.70	0.000***
_cons	-1 . 553461	. 4083889	-3.80	0.000***
Q50				
product	. 02 68 664	0.0436415	0.62	0.539
price	. 0321121	.0632477	-0.51	0.612
place	. 1718 036	.0573147	3.00	0.003***
promotion	. 020 751	.0532886	0.39	0.697
people	. 0214256	0.059273	0.36	0.718
Physical evid.	. 7 62174	0.0464757	16.40	0.000***
process	. 2507765	.051226B	4.90	0.000***
_cons	. 9116429	0.2977435	-3.06	0.002***
Q75				
product	. 080 587	. 0453157	1 . 78	0 . 076*
price	. 0 630145	. .0648914	-0. 97	0 . 332
place	. 1 095857	. 057 3392	1 . 91	0 . 057*
promotion	. 0315334	0.0532560	0.59	0.554
people	. 0136777	0.0442807	-0.31	0.758
Physical evid.	. 7154766	0.0700600	10.21	0.000***
process	. 2 673471	.0534216	5.00	0.000***
_cons	. 3 400918	. 3075636	-1.11	0.270
Q95				
product	.1868363	. O521732	3.58	0.000***
price	.0661354	. 060 5513	1.09	0.275
place	. 0 787557	.0497172	1.58	0.114
promotion	- . 0 326517	.0514914	-0.63	0.526
people	. 0112 344	.0627992	0.18	0.858
Physical evid.	.7164987	.07575551	9.46	0.000***
process	.214206***	.0656134	3.26	0.001

Source: Author's own calculation using STATA
NB- *** P<0.01, ** p<0.05, * P<0.1

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As depicted in Table- 4 the quantile regression coefficient tells us how much the predicted value of the other factor will go up or down for every one unit change in the other factor. It states that for the one unit change the predicted value increases by how much extent in the other is what has to be found in the analysis.

With respect to product in the 5 th quantile, one percent of median value of product, tourists travel decision will be increased by 0.36 percent and 95 th quantile also increase by 0.18 percent. However, 25 th , 50 th , and 75 th quantiles product has no significant effect on tourists' travel decisions (P- value; .53, 0.539, 0.076 respectively).

In the all quantiles, there is inverse relationship between price with tourists travel decision (P- value; 0.737, 0.981, -0.1564, 0.332, 0.275 respectively).

As far as place is considered tourists travel decision increase by 0.27 percent in 5 th quantile and then its results decline in 25th , 50th ,75th , and 95th (p- value: 0.001, 0.022, 0.003, 0.057), and place has significant effect on tourists travel decision.

But in the 95th quantile, place has no effect on tourists travel decision (p-value 0.114).

The factor Promotion In the 5th quantile, tourist's decision increase by 0.072 percent but decline in 25th and 50th quantiles. On the other hand in the 75th quantile the tourists' decision increase by 0.0315 percent and decline by -0.0326 in the 95^{th} quantile. Therefore there is inverse relationship between promotion and tourist's decision.

As far as People are concerned in the 25th quantile the tourists travel decision declined by -0.327 percent and then increase by 0.365 in 25th quantile. Since 50th quantile the decision of tourists declined from 0.0214 to 0.011 percent. In general, people have no significant effect on each quantile category (p- value & lt; 0.05; so accepted Ho; -2.61, 0.635, 0.718, 0.858).

So far as Physical evidence is concerned, in the 5th quantile, one percent of median value of physical evidence, the tourists decision increased by 0.769 percent, next decline the tourists decision by 0.734 percent and by 0.715 percent in the quantile 25th and 75th , and the increases. In the 75th quantile, 50th and 95th quantiles by 0.76 percent and 0.72 percent. Therefore physical evidence has significant effect on tourists travel decisions (P& lt; 0.05).

Tourism service process has significantly affect the decision of tourists. The service process increase by one percent, tourist's travel decisions also increases by 0.18, 0.26, 0.25, 0.27, and 0.21, percent in 5 category quantiles (5th, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 95th).

Indeed, in the 5 th quantile, one percent of median value of the independent variables like; product, place, physical evidence and process have significant effect on tourists decision, in the 25 th quantile the variable which have effect on tourists decision were; place, physical evidence, and f process. Next, one percent of median values of place,

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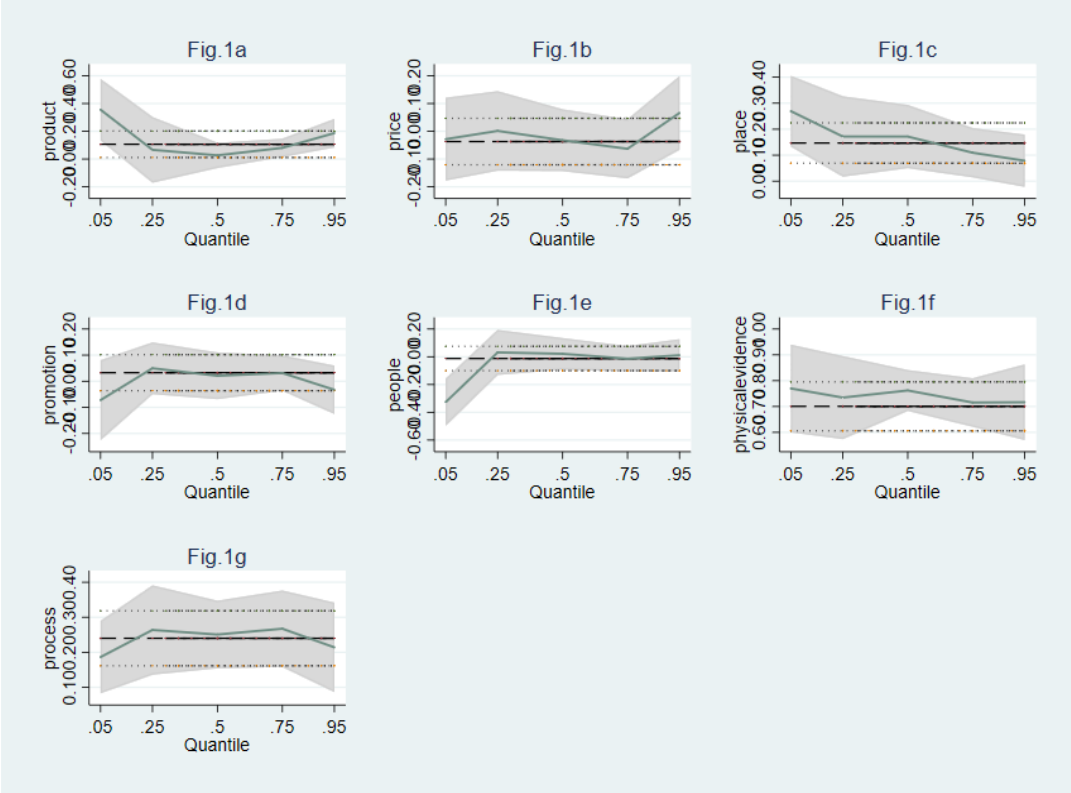
physical evidence, and process have significant effect in the 50th quantile. In the 75th quantile, physical evidence and process, and product, physical evidence, and process have significant effect in the 95 th quantile.

The following Figure 1 gives a visual description to the results shown in table-4.

In fig.1a lower quantile shows value in 25th quantile for product and higher till 95th quantile. In fig.1b lower quantile shows value in 75th quantile for product and higher till 95th quantile. In fig.1c lower quantile shows lower value and higher quantile has lower value. The similar line of analysis can be done with the following figures.

Figure 2: 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 1f, 1g Figure depicting the Quantile Regression



Source: Author's own using STATA

Table 5 shows that the combination of factors tells us a lot about the dependent variable. This means that if the null hypothesis is true, there is less than a 1% chance that an F-ratio this big will happen. At p = 0.000, the F-statistics value of 146.190 is statistically significant. (Because the of number in the Sig. column the is lower than.001). The sum of squares is worth 68.906, the df is worth 372, and the mean square is worth 0.185 in residual. In other words, a good model must have a high F-ratio

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(at least greater than 1) because the mean square regression will be bigger than the mean square residual. So, the F-statistic or F-ratio of 146.190 shows that there is a relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables of the study.

According to Kothari, (1990), two hypotheses are presented here: the null (H_o) hypothesis and the alternative (H_a) hypothesis. The significance (sig.) value indicates whether the (null) hypothesis should be accepted or rejected. It's also known as the P-value, which is the likelihood that the connection is one by coincidence. In this case, the lower the P-value, the better it is. If the P-value is <0.05 level of significance, then the null hypothesis is rejected and if it is >0.05 level of significance, then the null hypothesis is accepted.

Table 5: Multiple Regression estimation (Dep: Travel decision)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.814	.235		-3.467	.001
	product	.107	.048	.075	2.201	.028
	price	-.037	.043	-.024	-.867	.386
	place	.147	.039	.141	3.723	.000
	promotion	.033	.035	.034	.933	.352
	people	-.012	.045	-.009	-.276	.782
	physical evidence	.701	.048	.561	14.539	.000
	process	.240	.040	.215	6.009	.000

a. Dependent Variable: travel decision

Table 5 reveals that the relationship between the dependent variable and each independent variable is shown via coefficient analysis. According to Kothari, (1990), the null hypothesis is rejected if the P-value is less than the level of significance at 0.05, and the null hypothesis is accepted if it is more than 0.05. As shown in the results; the product, place, physical evidence, and process (P values are 0.028, 0.000, 0.000, and 0.000 respectively) have a strong influence on visitors' travel decisions. But Price, promotion, and people have a lower sig. values than table sig. values and these elements have no bearing on travel decisions. During the Pre pandemic studies, empirically the finding of this study supported the study that was conducted by Bazhan et al., (2018); Bhattacharya and Kumar, (2017); Le and Dong, (2017), Hiransomboon, (2012) the most important factors influencing tourist destination brand selection behavior and tourism product development were product, place, physical evidence,

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process, and people. However, the price has no significant dependent variable but during pandemic studies; Haryani, Abriyoso, and Kurnia, (2022); Preko, (2020), the quality of tourism service was positively influenced by the tourism products, tourism product distribution services, and people and these three variables influenced tourists' decisions to visit various regions in Indonesia.

We have found that pricing had no significant impact on tourism decisions: This possibly indicates that the tourists are not price-sensitive and/or “value-conscious”. This also indicates that the current pricing strategy is ineffective and should be altered. This finding is connected to the result that promotion has no significant impact on tourism travel decisions and is not effective. Hence, it is recommended the funds used for promotion can be optimized and utilized on some other 7P (such as improving service quality or expanding infra, etc.)

To summarize the findings, the 7Ps of the marketing mix influenced tourism decisions to travel to Arba Minch, with varying degrees of significance. Product, location, physical evidence, and the service delivery procedure are the most significant aspects pre-pandemic and during the pandemic. Whereas, promotion, price, and people have little impact. the results are supported by Muhammad E. et al., (2019).

5. CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In assessing the effect of tourism marketing mix elements on domestic tourists’ tourism decisions, the study reveals that four out of the seven independent variables (product, place, physical evidence, process) have shown statistically significant effect on the tourist’s travel decision whereas three independent variables (price, promotion, people) have no significant effect on tourists travel decision during the pandemic. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that the city administrators and tourism policymakers should build an image of Arba Minch by creating a network among tourism sector actors for accessing tourism services such as maintaining convenient accommodation and attraction sites, alternative modes of transportation, booking, and reservation, bank service process, and related activities. In this regard, research institutions and universities would be able to assist city administration by preparing a tourism map to facilitate access to tourism products, and by creating good awareness in schools, universities, and the community by forming tourism and hospitability clubs to contribute to the town's long-term tourism development. Furthermore, environmental hazards such as pandemic incidences should be factored into the marketing strategy. Hence, the onus of responsibility rests on city administrators, planners, and policymakers to take proper steps in the beautification of Arba Minch in tune with the needs and satisfaction of tourists to make it one of the world’s most attractive tourist cities and enhance its contribution to its financial exchequer as a major source of revenue through Tourism.

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This study focused solely on domestic tourists' perceptions of tourism in Arba Minch, focusing on marketing mix variables exclusively, rather than the entire country, and was limited to a subset of domestic tourists who visited Arba Minch. When focusing on other Ethiopian towns, the results may differ. As a result, the following suggestions for future research are made: To learn more about the factors that influence the town's tourism demand, and to compare domestic and foreign tourists from a point of sustainable tourism development. This paper recommends that the city administration should build an image of Arba Minch by creating a network among tourism actors for accessing tourism products/services such as maintaining convenient accommodation and attraction sites, alternative modes of transportation, booking, and reservation, bank service process, and related activities, based on the research findings. In this regard, research institutions and schools would be able to assist a town administration by preparing a tourism map to facilitate access to tourism products, and by creating good awareness in schools and the community by forming tourism and hospitability clubs to contribute to the town's long-term tourism development.

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APPENDIX

Figure 3: Map of Arba Minch, Ethiopia