RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Influence of Government Regulation on Tourist Motivation in Indonesia's Religious Tourism: The Mediating Role of Marketing Communication Strategies

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Abstract

Religious tourism is a significant economic sector in Indonesia, yet how government regulation and marketing communication jointly shape tourist motivation remains underexplored. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior, this study treats government regulation as an exogenous antecedent linked to perceived behavioral control and institutional credibility, and marketing communication as the proximal lever acting on attitudes and subjective norms. Government regulation was operationalized through policy implementation, regulatory compliance, and stakeholder engagement; marketing communication through advertising, publicity, word-of-mouth, on-site interpretation, and direct and interactive marketing; and tourist motivation through cultural interest, spiritual significance, and recreational opportunity. An online survey was completed by 402 non-pilgrim visitors who had visited an Indonesian religious heritage site in the previous 12 months; 81.9% reported one of five focal sites (Borobudur Temple, Istiqlal Mosque, Tanah Lot Temple, Uluwatu Temple, and Jakarta Cathedral). Ordinary least squares regression showed that government regulation predicted marketing communication ($\beta = 0.676$, $p < .001$), while marketing communication ($\beta = 0.385$) and government regulation ($\beta = 0.355$) both predicted tourist motivation, together explaining 45.8% of its variance. The Sobel test ($z = 7.02$, $p < .001$) and a 5,000-resample bootstrap (95% CI [0.183, 0.344]) indicated a significant indirect effect, with 42.3% of the total effect transmitted through marketing communication (partial mediation). Regulation is therefore associated with motivation along two routes: directly, through credible site conditions, and indirectly, through the communication environment. The study offers a TPB-informed account of sacred-heritage visitation and a replicable framework for multi-religious tourism destinations.

Keywords: Government regulation, marketing communication, tourist motivation, religious tourism, Indonesia.

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1 Introduction

Religious tourism sits where spiritual practice, heritage conservation, and cultural exchange meet, and it has become a sizeable economic sector worldwide. The global market is projected to reach approximately USD 671.93 billion by 2030, growing at a compound annual rate of 15.6% between 2025 and 2030 [1]. Indonesia holds a distinctive place in this market because of its multi-faith heritage, which includes Borobudur Temple, Istiqlal Mosque, and Jakarta Cathedral. International arrivals reached 1,306,000 in May 2025, a 14.01% year-on-year increase [2]. As secular interest in sacred sites grows, site managers face trade-offs between commercial visibility and the preservation of authenticity [3].

Two institutional levers shape the secular visitor's encounter with sacred sites. Government regulation sets access rules, safety protocols, and conservation standards. Marketing communication turns those institutional conditions into pre-visit and on-site cues that influence perception and choice. Indonesian work shows that regional tourism offices promote religious heritage to foreign visitors mainly through digital channels, with persistent gaps in responsiveness and multilingual content [4]. Evidence from Bali also shows that the design of tourism governance limits how effectively destinations respond to crisis [5]. How these two levers interact at multi-religious sites, however, has not been modeled systematically.

Indonesian religious tourism research has largely been framed around halal-tourism markets, examining marketing communication in relation to Islamic financial literacy and business outcomes (e.g., [6]), so the broader influence of government regulation on visitor motivation at non-ritual religious sites remains under-examined. Marketing communication research in tourism seldom treats regulation as the institutional antecedent that conditions which messages can credibly be delivered at sacred sites (e.g., [7]). To our knowledge, no study has jointly tested the direct and indirect pathways through which government regulation and marketing communication shape secular visitors' motivation in multi-religious settings, which leaves destination managers and policymakers without an empirical basis for sequencing regulatory and communicative interventions. The present study addresses this gap by formalizing and testing a Government Regulation (GR) $\rightarrow$ Marketing Communication (MC) $\rightarrow$ Tourist Motivation (TM) pathway, while retaining a direct GR $\rightarrow$ TM path to capture the motivational value of rule clarity, custodianship, and safety. Four hypotheses (H1-H4) are derived in Section 2.6.

2 Related Work

2.1 Government Regulation in Tourism

The debate over government regulation of private affairs, public services, and business activities has continued for several decades [9–11]. Government intervention is usually justified when less intrusive policy mechanisms have failed to correct market failures [12]. In tourism, particularly at sacred and heritage sites, regulation addresses public-good under-provision, negative externalities, and information asymmetries when the expected net social benefits exceed compliance costs [13–15]. Rules that protect sacral ambience, enforce capacity limits, uphold safety standards, and set cultural-conduct codes respond directly to the externalities of overtourism and commercialization.

Regulation is not a cure-all. Critics point to weak institutional capacity, resourcing, enforcement, and long-term planning, all of which undermine its corrective aims [16, 17]. Poorly designed rules risk regulatory capture, bureaucratic delay, and corruption—failures that are especially pronounced in developing-country contexts where institutional capacity is limited [18]. Yet regulatory capture is not irreversible: deliberate policy entrepreneurship can drive substantial reform even in resistant institutional environments [19]. In sacred-site tourism, such failures can deepen inequality, environmental stress, and cultural commodification [5, 20]. A growing body of research therefore frames effective tourism regulation as part of adaptive governance and participatory management, in which public-private partnerships, community co-management, and staged compliance strengthen the legitimacy and outcomes of enforcement [21, 23], and in which governance resilience—the capacity to sustain regulatory functions under stress—is itself a product of institutional design [22].

Taken together, this literature treats regulation as a corrective and coordinating instrument whose effect depends on institutional capacity, proportionate design, and participatory governance. Empirical work on how regulation operates in religious heritage settings, where commercial visibility and sacral integrity must be reconciled at the same time, is still thin. The challenge is compounded when private operators gain influence over access and experience

at sacred sites, raising questions of legitimacy and domination that regulation is called upon to address [8]. The present study responds by treating government regulation as the exogenous antecedent of both the communication environment and tourist motivation at multi-faith Indonesian sites, an upstream position that the tourism-regulation studies reviewed above have not tested.

2.2 Marketing Communication in Tourism Destinations

Marketing communication is a core organizational function used to inform, persuade, and remind target audiences about products, brands, or services. Beyond transactional messaging, it shapes beliefs and expectations, reinforces identity, and supports competitive positioning [24]. Digital transformation has moved the communication landscape from one-way broadcasting to interactive, data-driven engagement. Platforms and constant connectivity make real-time information, peer reviews, and social proof available at the moment of destination choice [25, 26]. User-generated content, influencer endorsements, and targeted campaigns raise perceived credibility and trust [27, 28]. In tourism, experiential programming and public relations deepen cultural resonance, while emerging interactive and immersive technologies—from digital platforms to metaverse environments—are reshaping how pre-travel expectations are formed and perceived risk is managed [29, 30].

The field has thus converged on marketing communication as a multi-channel, two-way practice in which earned media, peer testimony, and on-site interpretation jointly shape destination beliefs. Less attention has been paid to these channels as outputs of a regulatory environment rather than as freestanding promotional levers. This study positions marketing communication as the mediating link between regulation and visitor motivation at sacred sites. The five-instrument operationalization (advertising, publicity, word-of-mouth, on-site interpretation, and direct and interactive marketing) was chosen to capture how regulatory cues reach visitors at pre-visit, on-site, and post-visit touchpoints.

2.3 Tourist Motivation in Sacred-Site Contexts

Understanding tourist motivation is fundamental to destination strategy. Motivation theory describes an interplay of needs, desires, and goals that creates psychological tension; travel decisions are goal-directed attempts to reduce that tension [31, 32]. Dann [33] identified two push factors, anomie and ego-enhancement. Crompton [34] described motives including escape, self-exploration, relaxation, prestige, novelty, and education. These studies established the push-pull and needs-hierarchy logics that still inform how motivation is operationalized. At sacred sites, visitors range from pilgrims driven by devotion to secular visitors drawn by curiosity, cultural interest, and appreciation of the setting. This study focuses on culturally oriented (non-pilgrim) visitors whose motivations combine cultural exploration, non-ritual spiritual resonance, and recreational enjoyment [35, 36].

Across these strands, motivation research identifies push and pull mechanisms organized around escape, enrichment, and meaning, and sacred sites produce their own blend of cultural curiosity, non-ritual spiritual resonance, and recreational appeal. What the literature has not yet specified is how upstream institutional and communicative conditions jointly produce motivation among secular visitors. This study tests both direct and mediated paths from governance through communication to motivation, and measures motivation reflectively along three dimensions (cultural interest, spiritual significance, and recreational opportunity) that correspond to the secular visitor profile described above.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) introduced by Ajzen [37]. TPB holds that behavioral intentions depend on three determinants: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (PBC). Attitudes are favorable or unfavorable evaluations of performing a behavior. Subjective norms are perceived social pressures from significant others or reference groups. PBC is the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior, informed by past experience and anticipated barriers or facilitators [37, 38].

Applied to religious tourism, the motivation and intention to visit religious sites can be viewed as behavioral intentions shaped by attitudes toward religious travel (e.g., cultural appreciation or personal growth), subjective norms (e.g., family, social groups, and peer recommendations), and PBC (e.g., ease of access, convenience, safety, and regulatory clarity). Empirical research supports TPB as an explanatory framework for tourism behavior and travel

decision-making [39–42].

Within this framework, MC is the proximal determinant of attitudes toward visiting sacred sites: message framing, imagery, and interpretive cues create favorable evaluations of heritage value, respectful conduct, and on-site experience quality. GR makes these messages more plausible (e.g., through safety standards, crowd management, and conservation) and reduces perceived risk, which are the conditions under which attitudes form and persist. This mapping motivates H2 (MC → TM) and the attitudinal component of H4 (mediation). Subjective norms are transmitted through word-of-mouth, user-generated reviews, influencer content, and news coverage. MC, especially word-of-mouth/user-generated content (WOM/UGC) and publicity, is the planned lever for norm formation; GR supplies the normative anchor (what is permitted, recommended, or prohibited), which communication then amplifies and clarifies for secular audiences. This motivates H1 (GR → MC) and the normative channel of H4. GR is treated as the primary exogenous determinant of PBC in this model: clear access rules, safety protocols, conduct codes, and conservation standards raise visitors' confidence that a non-ritual visit is feasible and safe [43, 44]. This motivates H3 (GR → TM), while the communication channel motivates H4.

2.5 Research Paradigm and Operationalization

The model describes the hypothesized structure of visitation motivation among culturally oriented (non-pilgrim) visitors to place-embedded sacred sites in Indonesia. It specifies directional relationships among the exogenous construct Government Regulation (X), the mediating construct Marketing Communication (M), and the endogenous construct Tourist Motivation (Y). Government Regulation sets the institutional context for access, safety, conduct, and conservation. Marketing Communication turns these regulatory signals into visitor-facing messages and experiences at pre-visit, on-site, and post-visit touchpoints. Tourist Motivation reflects the proximal psychological drivers of visitation in sacred settings (Figure 1).

The constructs are operationalized as follows. Government Regulation (X) has three dimensions: X1, Policy Implementation, covering the clarity and visibility of rules, access management, and safety and conservation protocols; X2, Regulatory Compliance, covering operator and visitor adherence and the visibility of enforcement; and X3, Stakeholder Engagement, covering community participation, feedback, and coordination mechanisms. Marketing Communication (M) follows an Integrated Marketing Communication taxonomy [24]: M1, Advertising, for awareness and expectation-setting about heritage value and respectful conduct; M2, Publicity and Public Relations, providing earned media, news coverage, and third-party credibility; M3, Word-of-Mouth, including user-generated content and reviews, supplying social proof and peer endorsement; M4, Personal Selling and On-site Interpretation, covering guides, staff presentation, and interpretive signage; and M5, Direct and Interactive Marketing, using official websites, social media, and e-mail for information and service cues. Tourist Motivation (Y) is measured reflectively along three dimensions: Y1, Cultural Interest, covering learning about local history and traditions and appreciation of architecture and heritage; Y2, Spiritual Significance, covering personal reflection, inner peace, and attraction to the sacred ambience without ritual obligation; and Y3, Recreational Opportunity, covering leisure, scenery, and enjoyable non-religious activities compatible with site integrity.

2.6 Hypotheses

The model proposes that Government Regulation directly influences both Marketing Communication and Tourist Motivation, and that Marketing Communication mediates the effect of Government Regulation on Tourist Motivation. The four directional hypotheses are:

H1: Government Regulation is positively associated with Marketing Communication.

H2: Marketing Communication has a positive impact on Tourist Motivation.

H3: Government Regulation has a positive direct impact on Tourist Motivation.

H4: Marketing Communication mediates the relationship between Government Regulation and Tourist Motivation.

2.7 Comparative Synthesis and Research Gap

Recent related studies share several emphases but leave a structural gap. Liro and Meneghello [45] profile contemporary religious tourists at Polish pilgrimage centers through the experience-economy lens and show that socio-demographic factors shape their attributes. Mishra et al. [46] examine the role of

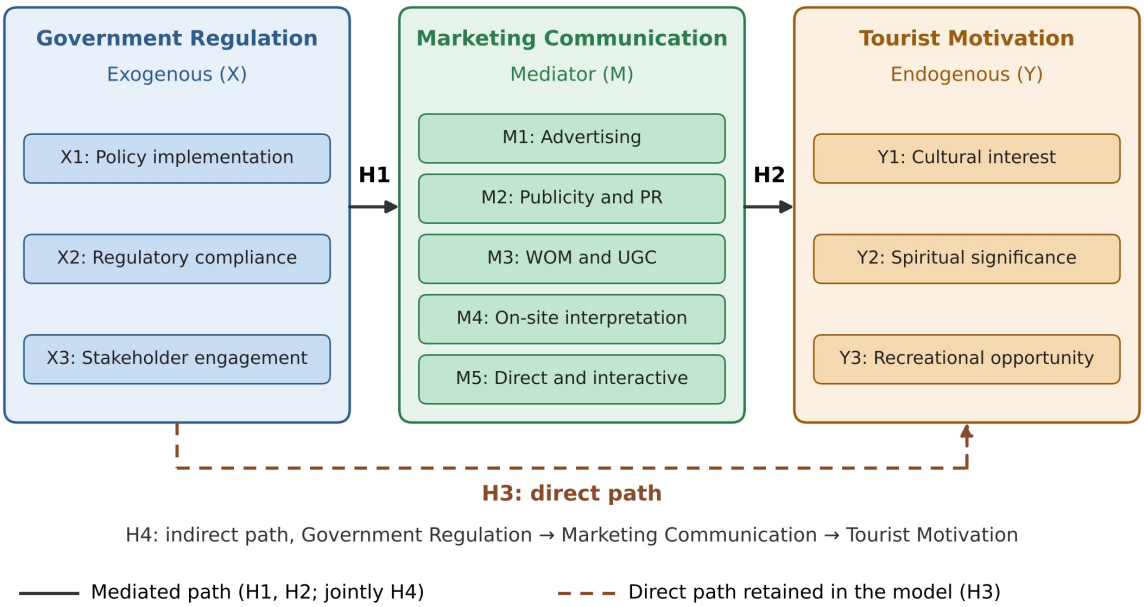


Figure 1. Research paradigm: Government Regulation (X) → Marketing Communication (M) → Tourist Motivation (Y).

technology in visitor-flow management at religious destinations. Torres and Yturralde [47] report that visitor motivation differs by religion, country of residence, and tourist type. Maharani and Rohimi [4] describe how a regional tourism office in Indonesia promotes religious heritage to foreign visitors through digital channels and exhibitions. None of these studies models government regulation as an upstream determinant of the communication environment or as a direct influence on visitor motivation, which is the GR → MC → TM pathway tested here.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study uses an explanatory, cross-sectional survey design estimated with ordinary least squares (OLS) multiple regression to test a partial-mediation model: Government Regulation (X) → Marketing Communication (M) → Tourist Motivation (Y), with a direct X → Y path. Constructs are operationalized reflectively and checked through reliability analysis and exploratory principal component analysis (PCA) before structural tests. Estimation was carried out in SPSS with model assumptions tested explicitly: normality of residuals via P-P plots, homoscedasticity via residual scatter, and multicollinearity via Tolerance and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). Mediation is assessed with the Sobel normal-theory test, a percentile bootstrap confidence interval (5,000 resamples), and Variance Accounted For (VAF) classification.

3.2 Respondents and Sampling

The target population comprised domestic and international culturally oriented (non-pilgrim) adults who had visited a public, place-embedded religious heritage site in Indonesia within the previous 12 months. Five focal sites representing Indonesia's major traditions anchored the design: Borobudur Temple (Central Java), Istiqlal Mosque (Jakarta), Jakarta Cathedral (Jakarta), Uluwatu Temple (Bali), and Tanah Lot Temple (Bali). They were selected for high visitation, clear sacred and heritage significance, and active governance and communication practices.

Data were collected through a self-administered online questionnaire (Google Forms), offered in Bahasa Indonesia and English, between 28 August and 5 September 2025. Respondents were recruited purposively and answered with reference to the religious heritage site they had visited most recently, including the date of that visit. A four-item screener required informed consent, a prior visit to an Indonesian religious heritage site, a visit lasting more than one hour, and a primarily cultural or recreational (rather than worship or ritual) purpose. Quotas were planned by site (approximately 15-20% each) and visitor origin (domestic and international). Respondents could opt into a prize draw for e-wallet credit.

As shown in Table 1, 429 of the 465 respondents who started the survey passed the screener and completed the questionnaire. The 27 respondents who failed the embedded attention-check item were then removed

Table 1. Response flow and exclusions.

Stage	n	% of starts
Started survey	465	100.0
Passed screener (consent, prior visit, >1 h, non-ritual)	429	92.3
Completed survey	429	92.3
Excluded (failed attention check)	27	5.8
Final analytic sample	**402**	**86.5**

(11 of them had also given identical answers to all 28 items), leaving a final analytic sample of $N = 402$. Of these, 320 (79.6%) completed the Bahasa Indonesia version and 82 (20.4%) the English version. The planned site quotas were not met. The realized sample was concentrated at Borobudur Temple (38.1%) and Istiqlal Mosque (21.9%), followed by Tanah Lot Temple (12.7%), Uluwatu Temple (5.2%), and Jakarta Cathedral (4.0%); a further 73 respondents (18.1%) reported visits to other sacred sites, such as Prambanan Temple and Besakih Temple, and were retained. Among the 348 respondents who gave a valid visit date, the median interval between visit and survey was 216 days (interquartile range 87-259), so responses reflect recalled rather than in-situ experience. The sample was predominantly female (60.7%; male 30.3%, other or prefer not to say 9.0%), aged 18-27 (50.2%), 28-43 (39.3%), or 44 and above (10.5%), Indonesian (79.6%), and repeat visitors (48.8% reporting 2-3 prior visits). Social media was the most common first source of information (48.8%), followed by friends and family (30.1%). An a priori power analysis for the two-predictor model of Tourist Motivation ($\alpha = .05$, power $= .80$) indicated minimum samples of 68 for a medium effect ($f^2 = 0.15$) and 100 for a small-to-medium effect ($f^2 = 0.10$); the final $N = 402$ exceeds both.

3.3 Research Instrument

The instrument measured three latent constructs on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Government Regulation was measured with eight items (GR1-GR8) covering policy implementation, regulatory compliance, and stakeholder engagement. Marketing Communication was measured with eleven items (MC1-MC11) covering advertising (MC1-MC2), publicity and public relations (MC3-MC4), word-of-mouth and user-generated content (MC5-MC7), direct and interactive marketing through e-mail and direct messages (MC8-MC9), and on-site interpretation by guides and staff (MC10-MC11). Tourist Motivation was measured with nine items (TM1-TM9) covering cultural interest (TM1-TM3), spiritual significance (TM4-TM6), and recreational opportunity (TM7-TM9). Language equivalence between the Bahasa Indonesia and English versions was supported by forward-back translation and cognitive debriefing.

3.4 Statistical Treatment

Analysis proceeded in three stages. First, measurement checks assessed internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha, sampling adequacy with the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure, and factorability with Bartlett's test of sphericity, complemented by exploratory PCA with Varimax rotation. Second, assumption diagnostics assessed normality of residuals via P-P plots, homoscedasticity via residual-versus-fitted-value scatter, and multicollinearity via Tolerance and VIF. Third, structural estimation comprised two OLS regression models and one mediation test. Model A regressed Marketing Communication on Government Regulation (H1). Model B regressed Tourist Motivation on Government Regulation and Marketing Communication simultaneously (H2, H3). Mediation (H4) was evaluated with the Sobel test,

$$z = \frac{ab}{\sqrt{b^2 SE_a^2 + a^2 SE_b^2}}, \tag{1}$$

where a is the unstandardized GR $\rightarrow$ MC coefficient, b is the unstandardized MC $\rightarrow$ TM coefficient controlling for GR, and SE_a and SE_b are their standard errors; with a percentile bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect (5,000 resamples); and with VAF $= ab/(ab + c')$, where c' is the direct effect and values between 20% and 80% indicate partial mediation. A sensitivity analysis re-estimated all models without respondents who gave identical answers to every item.

3.5 Common Method Bias

Because all constructs were measured by self-report from a single source, common method bias (CMB) was addressed both procedurally and statistically following Podsakoff et al. [48]. Four procedural remedies were built into the instrument. First, anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed and stated on the information page to reduce evaluation apprehension and social-desirability pressure. Second, the predictor (Government Regulation), mediator (Marketing Communication), and criterion (Tourist

Motivation) items were presented in separate, labeled sections, with the attention-check item placed between the mediator and criterion sections. Third, items were kept short and unambiguous, and cognitive debriefing during forward-back translation was used to remove ambiguous or double-barreled wording. Fourth, respondents who failed the attention check ($n = 27$) were excluded (Section 3.2).

Two statistical checks were then applied. In Harman's single-factor test, all 28 measurement items were entered into an unrotated principal component analysis. The conventional threshold is 50%: if a single unrotated factor accounts for less than half of the total variance, common method variance is unlikely to threaten construct validity [48]. The first factor accounted for 39.1% of the total variance, and 35.2% when the straight-lining respondents described in Section 4.3 were excluded. Because Harman's test can miss moderate method variance [48], this result is read as a necessary rather than a sufficient condition. As a second test, full-collinearity VIFs were computed by regressing each construct score on the other two [49]. All three values were below the 3.3 threshold (Government Regulation = 2.07, Marketing Communication = 2.12, Tourist Motivation = 1.85). Together with the multi-component solutions recovered in the construct-level PCAs (Section 4.1) and Cronbach's alpha values above .85, these results indicate that no single factor accounts for most of the covariance among items. The structural estimates in Section 4.3 are therefore unlikely to be driven mainly by common method variance, although some inflation of the path estimates cannot be ruled out.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Measurement Validation

Internal consistency was satisfactory for all three constructs: Government Regulation ($\alpha = .892$, 8 items), Marketing Communication ($\alpha = .893$, 11 items), and Tourist Motivation ($\alpha = .862$, 9 items). Sampling adequacy and sphericity tests supported factorability: Government Regulation (KMO = .894; Bartlett's $\chi^2(28) = 1696.710$, $p < .001$), Marketing Communication (KMO = .887; $\chi^2(55) = 2095.547$, $p < .001$), and Tourist Motivation (KMO = .851; $\chi^2(36) = 1611.909$, $p < .001$). Item validity was established on a pilot sample of 30 respondents against the critical r-table value of 0.361 at $p < .05$; every item met that threshold and was retained for the main survey. In the main sample, corrected item-total correlations ranged from .50 to .73. Exploratory PCA with Varimax rotation extracted two components with eigenvalues above 1 within each construct, explaining 70.7% (Government Regulation), 59.2% (Marketing Communication), and 64.0% (Tourist Motivation) of item variance. For Government Regulation, items GR1-GR5 (policy implementation and compliance) loaded on one component and the stakeholder-engagement items GR6-GR8 on the other. For Marketing Communication, the pre-visit publicity, word-of-mouth, and direct-message items (MC3-MC9) formed one component and the during-visit interpretation items (MC10-MC11) the other, while the advertising items (MC1-MC2) and MC6 cross-loaded on both (loadings .45 to .59). For Tourist Motivation, spiritual significance (TM4-TM6) separated from a combined component of cultural interest (TM1-TM3) and recreational opportunity (TM7-TM9). These components do not map one-to-one onto the theorized sub-dimensions (three for Government Regulation, five for Marketing Communication, and three for Tourist Motivation; Sections 2.3 and 2.5), so each construct is treated as reflective at the composite level in the analyses that follow, and its dimensional structure is noted as a limitation. No item deletion would improve alpha for any construct. Collinearity diagnostics for the Tourist Motivation model indicated Tolerance $= 0.543$ and VIF $= 1.843$, well within acceptable limits.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2. Descriptive statistics ($N = 402$; constructs scored as summed scales).

Construct	Items	Range	M	SD	Item M
Government Regulation	8	8-40	34.48	5.50	4.31
Marketing Communication	11	11-55	46.66	7.50	4.24
Tourist Motivation	9	9-45	39.02	5.47	4.34

Constructs were scored as summed scales across their items (Table 2), and all models below were estimated on these summed scores. Item-level means range from 4.24 to 4.34 on the five-point scale, indicating generally favorable perceptions, with Tourist Motivation highest at 4.34. Construct scores correlated at $r = .676$ (Government Regulation and Marketing Communication), .615 (Government Regulation and Tourist Motivation), and .625 (Marketing Communication and Tourist Motivation). Observed summed scores ranged from

16 to 40 (Government Regulation), 23 to 55 (Marketing Communication), and 20 to 45 (Tourist Motivation). Relative dispersion was similar for Government Regulation and Marketing Communication (coefficient of variation ≈ 0.16) and lowest for Tourist Motivation (≈ 0.14). P-P plots showed approximately normal residuals for both models, and residual scatter showed no heteroscedasticity.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

Table 3. OLS regression of Marketing Communication on Government Regulation (H1).

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	14.863	1.754	-	8.475	$< .001$
Gov. Regulation	0.922	0.050	0.676	18.361	$< .001$

$R = 0.676$, $R^2 = 0.457$, $F(1, 400) = 337.119$, $p < .001$, $N = 402$.

Government Regulation was strongly associated with the perceived communication environment ($\beta = 0.676$, $p < .001$; Table 3), explaining nearly half of the variance in Marketing Communication on its own. H1 is supported.

Table 4. OLS regression of Tourist Motivation on Government Regulation and Marketing Communication (H2, H3).

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	13.754	1.390	-	9.892	$< .001$
Gov. Regulation	0.353	0.050	0.355	7.089	$< .001$
Marketing Comm.	0.281	0.037	0.385	7.692	$< .001$

$R = 0.677$, $R^2 = 0.458$, $F(2, 399) = 168.777$, $p < .001$, $N = 402$.

Both predictors were positive and significant (Table 4). Together, perceived regulation and communication explained 45.8% of the variance in motivation scores. The Marketing Communication coefficient ($\beta = 0.385$) is slightly larger than the Government Regulation coefficient ($\beta = 0.355$), although the difference was not tested formally. H2 and H3 are supported.

Table 5. Mediation analysis: normal-theory Sobel test and VAF (H4).

Path	B	SE	ab	SE_{ab}	z	p
a: GR $\rightarrow$ MC	0.922	0.050	0.259	0.037	7.02	$< .001$
b: MC $\rightarrow$ TM	0.281	0.037				
c': GR $\rightarrow$ TM	0.353	0.050				

Total effect $c = c' + ab = 0.612$; VAF $= ab/c \approx 42.3\%$, indicating partial mediation. SE_{ab}: standard error of the indirect effect, Eq. (1).

The indirect effect was statistically significant (Sobel $z \approx 7.02$, $p < .001$; Table 5). A percentile bootstrap with 5,000 resamples gave a 95% confidence interval of $[0.183, 0.344]$ for the indirect effect, which excludes zero. The total effect of Government Regulation on Tourist Motivation corresponds to a standardized coefficient of 0.615 and $R^2 = 0.378$; adding Marketing Communication raises the explained variance to 45.8%. With VAF at approximately 42.3%, a little over two-fifths of regulation's total association with motivation runs through communication. The mediated component is substantial but does not exhaust the total effect. H4 is supported, indicating partial mediation.

Forty-two respondents (10.4%) gave the same answer to all 28 items, 38 of them "strongly agree". Because such patterns can inflate correlations among constructs, all models were re-estimated without them ($N = 360$). Every path remained positive and significant ($p < .001$): Government Regulation to Marketing Communication $\beta = 0.634$ ($R^2 = .401$), Government Regulation to Tourist Motivation $\beta = 0.340$, and Marketing Communication to Tourist Motivation $\beta = 0.354$ ($R^2 = .394$). The indirect effect was 0.221 (95% bootstrap CI $[0.145, 0.303]$; VAF $= 39.7\%$). The conclusions therefore do not depend on these respondents.

4.4 Discussion

The strong upstream path ($\beta = 0.676$) indicates that visitors who perceive regulation as clear and well enforced also perceive the communication environment more favorably. This is consistent with the view that the regulatory context conditions what marketing can credibly promise: permit rules, conduct codes, sacred-time restrictions, and safety provisions provide substantive content for communication. It also echoes the view of regulation as the rule-setting environment that structures organizational action [50] and sustainable-tourism scholarship on the coordinating role of the state [10]. Bali's Governor Circular Letter No. 7 of 2025, which set conduct rules for foreign visitors at temples and other sacred places, shows how regulatory updates enter the messaging space [51]. Stakeholder participation may strengthen this link: when community groups help set norms and stewardship practices, their participation becomes part of the story marketers can credibly tell [23]. Because both constructs were reported by the same respondents, part of this association may also reflect shared perceptual evaluation, a point taken

up in the limitations.

As noted above, the two coefficients on Tourist Motivation are of similar size, so the results show that both paths carry comparable weight rather than that communication dominates. The positive direct path from Government Regulation to Tourist Motivation indicates that clear access rules, safety protocols, and respectful-conduct codes are associated with higher motivation even after communication effects are taken into account. In heritage settings, proportionate regulation protects authenticity and limits externalities, which visitors may read as signs of quality and care [44].

The partial mediation points to complementary routes. Read through the Theory of Planned Behavior, the pattern is consistent with governance cues raising perceived behavioral control and signaling intrinsic value in sacred contexts, while marketing communication works mainly on attitudes and subjective norms. Because the TPB components were not measured directly, this mapping is interpretive rather than tested. Policy design and message design appear to work together in turning sacred-site stewardship into secular visitor motivation. This two-route account places contextual control and communication framing within a single explanatory lens that is compatible with classic motivation research [31, 33] and destination-marketing theory [24].

5 Conclusion

This study examined how Government Regulation and Marketing Communication relate to Tourist Motivation among secular visitors to Indonesia's religious heritage sites ($N = 402$). All four hypotheses were supported: GR $\rightarrow$ MC ($\beta = 0.676$), MC $\rightarrow$ TM ($\beta = 0.385$), GR $\rightarrow$ TM ($\beta = 0.355$), and partial mediation (VAF $\approx 42.3\%$). The findings support a two-channel account in which Government Regulation acts as contextual control that reduces uncertainty and protects authenticity, while Marketing Communication turns those conditions into value propositions visitors can understand. The partial mediation shows that governance retains a direct association with motivation in sacred contexts even when communication is taken into account. The study makes two contributions. It offers a TPB-informed account of sacred-heritage tourism that places regulation upstream of communication, and it provides a replicable regulation-communication-motivation framework for multi-religious destinations.

For policymakers and destination managers, governance can be framed as a benefit rather than a constraint, with rules expressed in clear, visitor-centered terms. Marketing communication can serve as the layer that makes governance intelligible and motivating, and regulatory updates should prompt a coordinated content refresh across touchpoints. Implementation should be co-produced with communities and religious authorities so that governance instruments and messages are legitimate, trusted, and culturally precise.

The study has several limitations: cross-sectional self-report data; a purposive, self-selected online sample restricted to secular visitors; retrospective reports of visits made up to 12 months earlier (median 216 days); an optional prize-draw incentive; an uneven site distribution in which Borobudur Temple and Istiqlal Mosque supplied 60.0% of respondents and 18.2% came from sacred sites outside the five focal sites, with site effects not modeled; potential common-method variance; and unmeasured moderators (perceived sacredness, crowding, religiosity, and service quality). The TPB components (attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) were used to interpret the paths but were not measured directly. The exploratory component solutions did not reproduce the theorized sub-dimensions of the three constructs, so all three were analyzed as composites. Four Marketing Communication items referred to channels that some respondents may not have used (e-mail or direct messages, guides, and staff) but required a response. Straight-lining responses were retained in the main analysis, although the sensitivity analysis without them led to the same conclusions. Future research should collect data on site at the time of the visit, use longitudinal or experimental designs, test measurement invariance across languages and visitor origins, include additional moderators, extend outcomes to behavioral endpoints, and replicate the model in other multi-religious destinations in Southeast Asia.

Data Availability Statement

The dataset is not publicly deposited. It is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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Conflicts of Interest

Felina C. Young served as an Associate Editor of the *PWU Journal of Research, Innovation, and Transformation* at the time of manuscript submission. To ensure the integrity of the peer-review process, Felina C. Young was not involved in the editorial handling, peer review, or decision-making process for this manuscript, which was handled independently by another editor. The remaining authors declare no conflicts of interest.

AI Use Statement

Generative AI (Claude, Anthropic) assisted with language editing, reference formatting, and statistical checks under the authors' direction. The authors verified all outputs and take full responsibility for the content.

Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate

This study was conducted as part of the first author's doctoral dissertation at Philippine Women's University, and its instrument and procedures were reviewed by the doctoral dissertation committee. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Review Board of Philippine Women's University (PWU) (Approval No. 2025-162). Participation was voluntary. Respondents read the study information and gave electronic informed consent before beginning the questionnaire, could stop at any time, and were asked only for optional initials rather than names. Contact details were collected only from respondents who chose to enter the optional prize draw.

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