



The statement “PLS is a variance-based approach that... requires a smaller sample size” is correct but somewhat generic. Please also justify PLS-SEM in terms of model complexity, mediation testing, or predictive orientation, not only sample size.

In the paragraph “To assess convergent validity, the criteria of AVE and CR were used”, please report whether all indicator loadings exceeded 0.70, or justify retaining items with lower loadings if applicable.

The paragraph discussing Cronbach’s alpha refers to a “preliminary sample of 30 questionnaires.” Please clarify whether this pilot sample was excluded from the final analysis and whether any items were revised based on the pilot results.

While the Fornell–Larcker criterion is reported, recent literature recommends complementing it with HTMT ratios. Please justify the exclusive use of Fornell–Larcker or consider adding HTMT results.

The discussion of GOF relies on thresholds that have been criticized in recent PLS literature. Please acknowledge this limitation and clarify that GOF is used descriptively rather than as a strict confirmatory index.

In Table 4, mediation hypotheses are reported with standardized coefficients. Please clarify whether these coefficients represent indirect effects obtained via bootstrapping, and report confidence intervals to strengthen mediation claims.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the new document.

## 1.2. *Reviewer 2*

Reviewer:

The paragraph starting “Innovation represents another core dimension of smart tourism destinations” introduces innovation as a mediating construct. However, the type of innovation (process, service, organizational, digital) remains implicit. Please specify which dimensions are operationalized in the questionnaire to strengthen construct validity.

In the paragraph beginning “Despite the growing recognition of smart tourism infrastructure, governance, and innovation as drivers of destination competitiveness”, the research gap is stated broadly. Please explicitly articulate why existing mediation studies are insufficient (e.g., methodological limitations, contextual gaps, missing variables).

The final sentence of the Introduction clearly states the aim. However, it would be beneficial to explicitly mention the analytical method (PLS-SEM) in this sentence to align the theoretical aim with the empirical approach.

In the sentence “A sample of 351 respondents was selected using a convenience (non-probability) sampling method”, please justify the appropriateness of convenience sampling in relation to the study’s objectives and discuss potential sampling bias implications.

The paragraph describing the “standardized questionnaire” lacks information about item sources. Please clarify whether the scales were adapted from prior studies or developed specifically for this research, and report any translation or back-translation procedures if applicable.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the new document.

## 2. **Revised**

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.