

Framework of Film Festival Strategy and City Branding in Dubai with a Focus on the Role of Government

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Abstract

As global cities increasingly compete for attention, investment, and tourism, cultural strategies have emerged as powerful tools for enhancing urban identity and brand value. This study aims to develop and validate a conceptual framework linking film festival strategy to city branding in Dubai, with a particular focus on the mediating role of government. Data were collected from employees of the Department of Economy and Tourism, Dubai, and analysed using SmartPLS. The measurement model demonstrated strong reliability and validity, including construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Structural model analysis revealed that the film festival strategy is the dominant driver of city branding, with a significant direct effect (path coefficient=0.741). Additionally, the government's role partially mediates this relationship, with a mediation effect strength of 0.149. Predictive assessment showed acceptable predictive relevance for all first-order constructs, and the model effectively predicted indicators at both first-order and higher-order levels. These findings offer practical insights into how cultural strategies, supported by government initiatives, can strengthen Dubai's city branding efforts.

Keywords: film festival strategy, city branding, government role, SmartPLS, Dubai, cultural policy, structural equation modelling.

1. Introduction

In recent years, film festivals have become influential platforms for cultural exchange, economic stimulation, and tourism attraction, playing a vital role in the strategic branding of cities. However, the integration of film festivals into a coherent city branding strategy often faces multiple challenges. Among these are fragmented planning, inconsistent branding messages, limited community engagement, and a lack of alignment between festival objectives and broader urban development goals (Allen et al., 2022; Karaalioglu, 2025). These issues are especially pronounced in emerging creative hubs such as Dubai, where the film industry is still developing (Ali & Al-Ali, 2025; Alradimi & Mellor, 2025).

Tourism is a key sector in Dubai's economic diversification strategy, and cultural events like film festivals are increasingly used as tools to attract global visitors. Yet, despite Dubai's ambitions to position itself as a global cultural and cinematic hub, the link between film festival initiatives and sustainable tourism attraction remains underdeveloped. According to Medeiros et al. (2025), successful film festivals should not only offer cinematic experiences but also generate emotional satisfaction and memorable tourist encounters. However, studies such as Haryono et al. (2025) reveal that many festivals fail to fully engage diverse audiences or embed themselves meaningfully within local urban identities.

The role of government in this context is both critical and complex. Governments influence the regulatory environment, funding mechanisms, cultural policies, and international promotion of festivals (Guler, 2017; Eshuis & Klijn, 2017). In cities where top-down governance shapes cultural policy, such as Dubai, the government can act as both an enabler and a bottleneck for effective branding and tourism outcomes (Hospers, 2008; Anttiroiko, 2014). As Smolyanitsky (2025) and Díez-Pisonero (2025) argue, urban festivals must be supported by robust cultural infrastructure and strategic governance to produce long-term branding effects.

Despite the growing number of studies on city branding and film festivals, several research gaps remain. First, few studies examine the integrated role of local dimensions, such as culture, economy, environment, and politics in shaping film festival strategies that are tailored for city branding (Hazegh et al., 2025; Saha et al., 2025). Second, most existing frameworks do not explicitly address how government functions as a moderating factor between cultural event strategies and branding or tourism outcomes (Zhao et al., 2025; Ooi & Pedersen, 2010). Third, limited research has been conducted in the context of the Gulf region, particularly Dubai, where film festivals are emerging but not yet widely studied as tools for global positioning (Pattanayak et al., 2025).

To address these gaps, this study introduces a novel framework of film festival strategy and city branding in Dubai with a focus on the role of government. Drawing on recent theoretical and empirical contributions (Clark et al., 2025; Medeiros et al., 2025; Mostafa et al., 2025), the framework proposes that four key domains, cultural, economic, environmental, and political, shape festival strategies, which in turn influence city branding outcomes. Government involvement is positioned as a mediator that enhances or constrains the effectiveness of these strategies in attracting tourists and shaping the global image of Dubai.

This framework not only contributes to the academic discourse on event-based city branding but also offers practical guidance for policymakers, festival organizers, and urban planners seeking to integrate cultural events into long-term tourism development strategies.

2. Literature Review

This literature review supports the theoretical foundation of the proposed framework, focusing on the relationship between film festival strategies, city branding, and the moderating role of government, with tourism attraction as a central outcome. The review is structured around four local domains which are the cultural, economic, environmental, and political that shape festival strategies, followed by a discussion on city branding attributes and the government's moderating influence.

2.1 Cultural Shape Festival Strategies

Culture forms the backbone of film festival strategy, as festivals often serve as a reflection of a city's heritage, identity, and artistic vibrancy. Festivals express collective narratives and foster social inclusion, helping cities project a culturally rich image. Haryono et al. (2025) emphasize the value of inclusivity and collaboration in local film festivals, highlighting their capacity to engage diverse communities. Karaalioglu (2025) notes that visual identity design reinforces cultural themes and influences audience perceptions. Heath (2025) further explores how culturally driven film festivals shape urban space and identity, especially within marginalized communities. These cultural dimensions not only enhance city branding but also attract cultural tourists who seek immersive experiences tied to local heritage and arts (Smolyanitsky, 2025; Roh et al., 2025). Thus, cultural values embedded in festival strategies are vital for positioning a city like Dubai as a global cultural destination.

Table 1. List of items in cultural domain

Code	Item	Description
CUL1	Cultural Identity Expression	Film festivals reflect a city's heritage, identity, and artistic vibrancy.
CUL2	Social Inclusion	Festivals foster inclusivity and community engagement through shared narratives.
CUL3	Visual Identity Design	Design elements reinforce cultural themes and influence audience perception (Karaalioglu, 2025).
CUL4	Urban and Community Impact	Culturally driven festivals shape urban spaces and empower marginalized communities (Heath, 2025).
CUL5	Cultural Tourism Attraction	Festivals attract tourists seeking immersive experiences linked to local heritage and arts (Smolyanitsky, 2025; 김재훈, 2025).

2.2 Economic Shape Festival Strategies

The economic aspect of festival strategies directly links to tourism development. Film festivals contribute to local economies by increasing demand for services such as hotels, restaurants, and transportation, while also boosting the creative industries. Allen et al. (2022) note that well-managed festivals stimulate economic growth by attracting both domestic and international visitors. Díez-Pisonero (2025) underscores that festivals help reposition cities in the global urban system, enabling economic restructuring through symbolic and experiential economies. Medeiros et al. (2025) show that festival satisfaction and perceived value are critical for return visitation and tourist loyalty. In Dubai, the development of the film sector is seen as both a cultural and economic initiative, yet as Alradimi and Mellor (2025) highlight, challenges remain in ensuring sustainable investment and integration with broader tourism strategies. Overall, film festivals function as economic catalysts that enhance the city's attractiveness to visitors while supporting long-term tourism revenue.

Table 2. List of items in economic domain

Code	Item	Description
ECO1	Tourism-Driven Economic Growth	Film festivals increase demand for local services such as hotels, restaurants, and transportation.
ECO2	Stimulation of Creative Industries	Festivals support the growth of film and related creative sectors in the city.
ECO3	Urban Economic Repositioning	Festivals contribute to economic restructuring by positioning cities in the global urban system (Díez-Pisonero, 2025).
ECO4	Visitor Satisfaction and Loyalty	Festival satisfaction and perceived value influence return visitation and tourist loyalty (Medeiros et al., 2025).
ECO5	Investment and Sustainability Challenges	Sustainable investment and alignment with tourism strategies remain key challenges (Alradimi & Mellor, 2025).

2.3 Environmental Shape Festival Strategies

Environmental considerations have gained increasing relevance in the strategic design of film festivals. Sustainability-oriented festivals align with the expectations of eco-conscious travellers and contribute to the city's image as responsible and progressive. Hazegh et al. (2025) show how integrating art festivals within urban regeneration plans supports both environmental and community revitalization. Green practices, such as waste reduction, digital ticketing, and sustainable venue design, enhance a festival's reputation and its alignment with broader sustainability goals. In Dubai, environmental priorities are increasingly reflected in public policy and event management, aligning with its vision of sustainable urban growth (Mekideche et al.). When implemented effectively, these practices not only serve ecological goals but also enhance the tourism appeal of a city committed to innovation and sustainability.

Table 3. List of items in environmental domain

Code	Item	Description
ENV1	Eco-Conscious Branding	Environmentally focused festivals enhance a city's image as responsible and progressive.
ENV2	Urban Regeneration Integration	Festivals contribute to environmental and community revitalization through urban planning (Hazegh et al., 2025).
ENV3	Adoption of Green Practices	Waste reduction, digital ticketing, and sustainable venues improve festival sustainability and reputation.
ENV4	Policy Alignment	Environmental strategies in festivals align with Dubai's public policies on sustainable urban development (Mekideche et al.).
ENV5	Tourism and Innovation Appeal	Environmentally sustainable festivals attract tourists interested in innovation and eco-friendly experiences.

2.4 Political Shape Festival Strategies

Political institutions and policies are central to the strategic positioning and international recognition of film festivals. Governments influence festivals through cultural policy, funding, international partnerships, and regulatory frameworks. Ooi and Pedersen (2009, 2010) demonstrate how governance models affect stakeholder alignment, which is critical for consistent branding efforts. In centralized systems like the UAE, political support can enhance a festival's global visibility or constrain its creative potential, depending on how policies are implemented (Anttiroiko, 2014; Hospers, 2008). Political agendas may also determine the themes festivals are encouraged to promote, such as national identity, heritage, or cultural diplomacy (dos Santos, 2021). When aligned with tourism strategies, these policies can effectively position festivals as tools for attracting international visitors. In Dubai's case, political backing is a key factor in shaping how film festivals serve tourism development and city image building.

Table 4. List of items in political domain

Code	Item	Description
POL1	Governmental Influence	Political institutions shape festivals through policies, funding, and regulations.
POL2	Stakeholder Alignment	Governance models affect stakeholder coordination and consistent branding (Ooi & Pedersen, 2009, 2010).
POL3	Centralized Political Systems	In contexts like the UAE, political support can either enhance or limit creative freedom (Anttiroiko, 2014; Hospers, 2008).
POL4	Policy-Driven Themes	Governments may guide festivals to promote national identity, heritage, or cultural diplomacy (dos Santos, 2021).
POL5	Political–Tourism Synergy	When aligned with tourism goals, political support helps position festivals for international attraction and city image building.

2.5 City Branding from Film Festival

City branding is the strategic practice of shaping and communicating a city's identity to multiple audiences, including tourists. It relies on symbols, narratives, and experiences that make a city distinctive and attractive. Dinnie (2011) and Chan et al. (2021) emphasize that city branding is multidimensional, encompassing visual identity, stakeholder engagement, and emotional resonance. Film festivals contribute significantly by offering unique cultural experiences that enhance place image and reputation (Lim, 2016; Mostafa et al., 2025). According to Puccia et al. (2025), youth engagement in festivals not only promotes cultural capital but also fosters emotional well-being and belonging, factors that shape positive tourist experiences. Branding that incorporates festivals can position cities as creative, open, and culturally rich destinations, which is particularly relevant in globally ambitious cities like Dubai.

Table 5. List of items in city branding domain

Code	Item	Description
CB1	Strategic City Identity	City branding involves shaping and communicating a city's identity to diverse audiences, including tourists.
CB2	Multidimensional Branding	City branding includes visual identity, stakeholder engagement, and emotional connection (Dinnie, 2011; Chan et al., 2021).
CB3	Cultural Experience Enhancement	Film festivals offer unique cultural experiences that improve place image and reputation (Lim, 2016; Mostafa et al., 2025).
CB4	Youth Engagement and Belonging	Youth involvement in festivals builds cultural capital and emotional connection, influencing tourist experiences (Puccia et al., 2025).
CB5	Creative and Inclusive Positioning	Festivals help brand cities like Dubai as creative, open, and culturally vibrant destinations.

2.6 Government Role as Moderator to Film Festival and City Branding

Government plays a moderating role in the relationship between film festival strategies and city branding, particularly in shaping their impact on tourism attraction. Eshuis and Klijn (2017) argue that governments influence branding not only through planning and funding but also through regulatory alignment and stakeholder coordination. Houghton and Stevens (2011) highlight the importance of inclusive governance in maintaining consistent and effective branding strategies. In Dubai, the government acts as both facilitator and promoter of cultural events, ensuring that they align with broader economic and tourism goals (Ali & Al-Ali, 2025). When effectively managed, government involvement enhances the scalability and international reach of festivals, thereby amplifying their contribution to tourism (Guler, 2017). Conversely, excessive control or lack of cross-sector collaboration can limit innovation and weaken the authenticity of festival narratives (Heath, 2025). Thus, the role of government is crucial in determining whether festival strategies successfully translate into increased tourist flows and improved city image.

Table 6. List of items in government role domain

Code	Item	Description
GR1	Government Support for Festivals	Government provides effective funding and strategic planning to strengthen film festival initiatives (Eshuis & Klijn, 2017; Ali & Al-Ali, 2025).
GR2	Policy Alignment with Branding	Government policies and regulations are aligned with city branding goals through cultural events (Eshuis & Klijn, 2017).
GR3	Stakeholder Coordination	Government facilitates collaboration among public and private stakeholders involved in festivals (Houghton & Stevens, 2011).
GR4	Global Promotion Role	Government enhances the international visibility and scalability of film festivals to attract tourism (Guler, 2017; Ali & Al-Ali, 2025).
GR5	Impact of Government Control	Excessive government control may hinder innovation and weaken the authenticity of festival narratives (Heath, 2025).

3. Formulation of Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is designed to examine the strategic relationship between film festivals and city branding in Dubai, with particular attention to the role of government as a moderating variable. This framework is informed by multidisciplinary literature from cultural studies, urban policy, tourism management, and city branding theory, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Film festivals have become instrumental platforms for cultural expression, economic development, environmental consciousness, and political discourse. When strategically implemented, these events can shape the cultural identity and enhance the international image of host cities. Drawing on the perspectives of Allen et al. (2022), Haryono et al. (2025), and Karaalioglu (2025), this study conceptualizes film festival strategy through four key dimensions: cultural, economic, environmental, and political. These dimensions reflect how festivals serve as policy tools for broader urban and national agendas.

City branding is the central outcome of this framework. As emphasized by Dinnie (2011), Chan et al. (2021), and Zahrah (2023), effective city branding is essential for building a recognizable and attractive city image that appeals to global audiences, including tourists, investors, and residents. Film festivals contribute directly to city branding by promoting local narratives, showcasing creative industries, and generating international media coverage. Events like these also influence perceptions of a city's lifestyle, openness, and cultural sophistication.

The framework also accounts for the government's role as a mediating factor. Government agencies influence the planning, funding, regulation, and international positioning of film festivals. As highlighted by De Valck (2020), Iordanova (2021), and Filipov (2024), the extent and nature of governmental involvement can significantly affect the strategic direction and effectiveness of festivals in achieving branding goals. In Dubai's context, the government's cultural policies, partnerships, and infrastructure investments play a central role

in aligning film festivals with city branding strategies.

The framework suggests that film festival strategies which are cultural, economic, environmental, and political dimensions, have a direct impact on city branding. The strength of this relationship is shaped by the degree and quality of government involvement. This conceptual structure allows for a comprehensive analysis of how cultural events are leveraged as strategic tools for city promotion in the global arena.

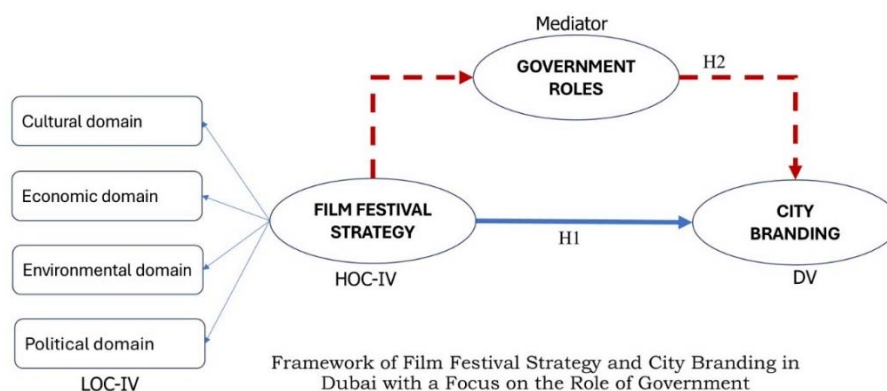


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Figure 1 illustrates how four local domains which are Cultural, Economic, Environmental, and Political that act as lower-order constructs (LOC-IV) that influence the Film Festival Strategy (HOC-IV). This strategy, in turn, is hypothesized to positively impact City Branding (DV), represented by H1. Additionally, Government Roles are introduced as a mediating variable, potentially influencing the strength or direction of the relationship between Film Festival Strategy and City Branding, represented by H2.

4. Modelling of the Framework

The modelling of the proposed framework was based on primary data collected through a questionnaire survey administered to employees of the Department of Economy and Tourism, Dubai. A simple convenience non-probability sampling technique was employed to gather responses. A total of 368 valid responses were retained for analysis. The data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4, which is well-suited for exploratory research and complex models involving latent constructs. The modelling process included two stages: assessment of the measurement model and evaluation of the structural model.

4.1 Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model is evaluated based on standard reliability and validity criteria as recommended by Hair et al. (2021). Indicator reliability is confirmed if item loadings exceed the threshold of 0.70. If the composite reliability (CR) value of a construct is above 0.70, it

reflects strong internal consistency. Convergent validity is established if all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceed the recommended minimum of 0.50. Discriminant validity is also confirmed using both the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, if all constructs meet the required thresholds.

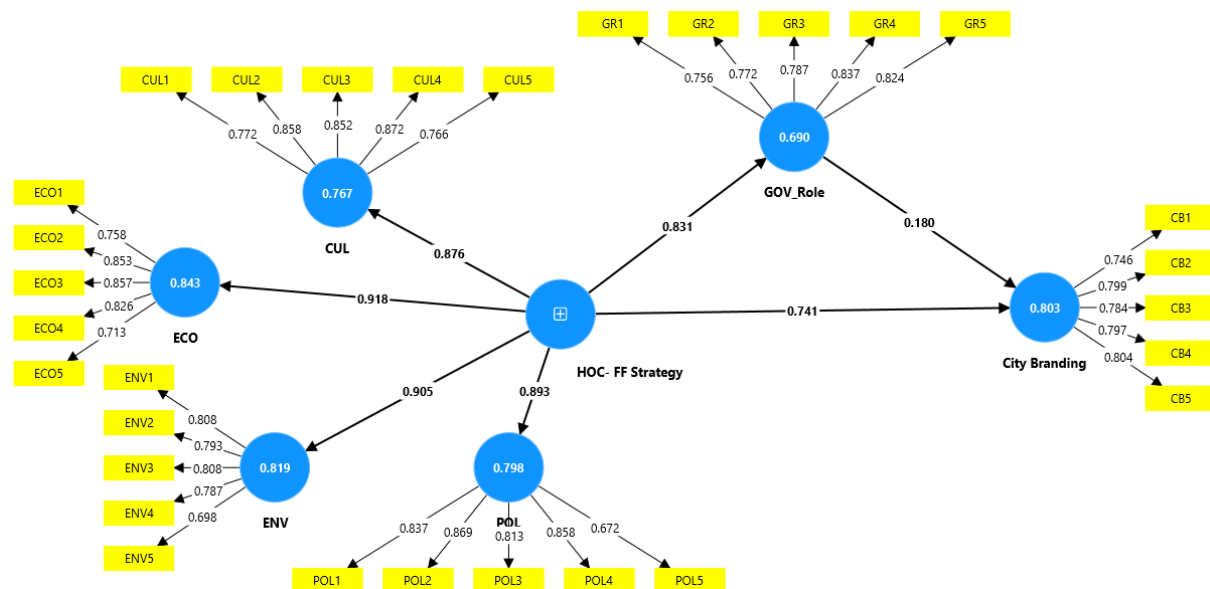


Figure 2. Model after PLS Algorithm process

The measurement assessment indexes generated from the PLS Algorithm process are tabulated and elaborated in the following parts.

4.1.1 Construct Reliability and Validity

The measurement model assessment was conducted to ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), with threshold values of 0.70 or higher indicating acceptable levels of reliability (Hair et al., 2017; Memon et al., 2021). Convergent validity was assessed through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), where values above 0.50 confirmed that each construct explained at least 50% of the variance in its indicators (Hair et al., 2019). Indicator reliability was further examined by evaluating factor loadings, and items with loadings below 0.70 were reviewed for potential refinement or exclusion (Chin, 2009).

Table 7. Results of construct reliability and validity

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Average variance extracted (AVE)
CUL	0.882	0.681
City Branding	0.845	0.618
ECO	0.861	0.646
ENV	0.838	0.608
GOV_Role	0.952	0.521
HOC- FF Strategy	0.818	0.646
POL	0.869	0.661

Table 7 shows that all constructs demonstrate acceptable levels of internal consistency, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.818 (HOC–FF Strategy) to 0.952 (Government Role). Regarding convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs exceeds the minimum acceptable value of 0.50, suggesting that each construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators. The AVE values range from 0.521 (Government Role) to 0.681 (Culture), confirming that the measurement model possesses adequate convergent validity.

4.1.2 Discriminant Validity

To establish discriminant validity, two complementary approaches were employed: the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). The Fornell-Larcker criterion was satisfied as the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with other constructs, confirming the uniqueness of each latent variable (Fornell & Larcker, as cited in Hair et al., 2019). Additionally, HTMT values remained below the conservative threshold of 0.85, reinforcing discriminant validity (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015).

Table 8. HTMT

	CUL	City Branding	ECO	ENV	HOC- FF Strategy	GOV_Role	POL
CUL							
City Branding	0.840						
ECO	0.892	0.868					
ENV	0.790	0.855	0.825				
GOV_Role	0.859	0.888	0.815	0.893			
HOC- FF Strategy	0.762	0.876	0.841	0.814	0.830		
POL	0.779	0.868	0.841	0.827	0.880	0.894	

Table 8 found that all HTMT values are below the conservative threshold of 0.90, indicating that discriminant validity is established and the constructs are empirically distinct. Meanwhile, the lowest HTMT value is between CUL and HOC-FF Strategy (0.762), reflecting a strong distinction between these two constructs. Overall, the results confirm that the constructs do not exhibit problematic levels of overlap, thus supporting the validity of the measurement model.

Table 9. Fornell Lacker criterion

	CUL	City Branding	ECO	ENV	HOC- FF Strategy	GOV_Role	POL
CUL	0.825						
City Branding	0.729	0.786					
ECO	0.785	0.804	0.827				
ENV	0.681	0.808	0.786	0.780			
GOV_Role	0.873	0.891	0.722	0.905	0.917		
HOC- FF Strategy	0.645	0.763	0.706	0.760	0.804	0.823	
POL	0.680	0.832	0.725	0.794	0.813	0.836	0.896

Table 9 presents the Fornell–Larcker criterion results used to assess discriminant validity among the constructs. According to this criterion, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct (shown on the diagonal) should be greater than its correlations with other constructs (off-diagonal values). All diagonal values are greater than the corresponding off-diagonal correlations in their respective rows and columns. This confirms that each construct shares more variance with its indicators than with other constructs in the model, thereby satisfying the requirement for discriminant validity.

4.2 Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was evaluated by examining path coefficients (β), coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). The R^2 values demonstrated the model's substantial explanatory power, indicating how well the independent variables accounted for the variance in the dependent constructs. The effect sizes (f^2), which measure the contribution of each exogenous construct to the endogenous variables, ranged from small to medium, reflecting meaningful but varied impacts. All path coefficients corresponding to the hypothesized relationships were tested, with significance determined by p-values less than 0.05 and t-values greater than 1.96, based on a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples. Lastly, the Q^2 values were all above zero, confirming that the model possessed adequate predictive relevance for the dependent constructs (Hair et al., 2021).

4.2.1 Model Quality

The quality of the structural model was evaluated using R-square (R^2) and f-square (f^2) values generated through the PLS-SEM algorithm. The R^2 values indicate the proportion of variance explained in the endogenous constructs, serving as a key measure of the model's predictive

accuracy (Hair et al., 2019; Memon et al., 2021). Higher R^2 values suggest a stronger explanatory power of the model in accounting for the variability in employee engagement and performance outcomes.

Table 10. R-square values

	R-square
City Branding	0.797
HOC- FF Strategy	1.000
GOV_Role	0.678

Table 10 presents the R-square (R^2) values for the key endogenous constructs in the model. The R^2 value for City Branding is 0.797, indicating that approximately 79.7% of its variance is explained by the predictors in the model. Government Role has an R^2 value of 0.678, showing that 67.8% of its variance is accounted for by the film festival strategy. The Film Festival Strategy construct shows an R^2 of 1.000, which reflects its status as a higher-order construct fully defined by its lower-order dimensions (CUL, ECO, ENV, and POL).

The f^2 values assess the effect size of each exogenous variable on the endogenous variables, thereby reflecting the relative contribution strength of each path in the structural model (Sarstedt et al., 2020). Following Cohen's (1988) guidelines, f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 are interpreted as small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively.

Table 11. f-square values

	CUL	City Branding	ECO	ENV	GOV_Role	HOC- FF Strategy	POL
CUL							
City Branding							
ECO							
ENV							
GOV_Role		0.051					
HOC- FF Strategy	3.287	0.862	5.357	4.518	2.226		3.952
POL							

Table 11 displays the f-square (f^2) values, which indicate the effect size of each exogenous variable on the corresponding endogenous construct. The Film Festival Strategy (HOC-FF Strategy) shows large effect sizes on its lower-order dimensions, ECO ($f^2 = 5.357$), ENV (4.518), POL (3.952), and CUL (3.287), confirming its strong contribution to the formation of the higher-order construct. It also exhibits a substantial effect on City Branding ($f^2 = 0.862$) and a mediates effect on Government Role ($f^2 = 2.226$). Additionally, Government Role has a

small but meaningful effect on City Branding ($f^2 = 0.051$). These values suggest that film festival strategy is the dominant driver within the model.

4.2.2 Path Analysis

Path analysis examines the hypothesized relationships among constructs by estimating the magnitude, direction, and statistical significance of the path coefficients. In this study, path analysis was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure within the PLS-SEM framework, which is particularly suitable for complex models with hierarchical constructs and small to medium sample sizes (Hair et al., 2019; Memon et al., 2021).

Bootstrapping, a non-parametric resampling technique, generated t-statistics and p-values to determine the significance of each path. The structural model after bootstrapping is illustrated in Figure 3, which visualizes the validated path coefficients and their significance levels.

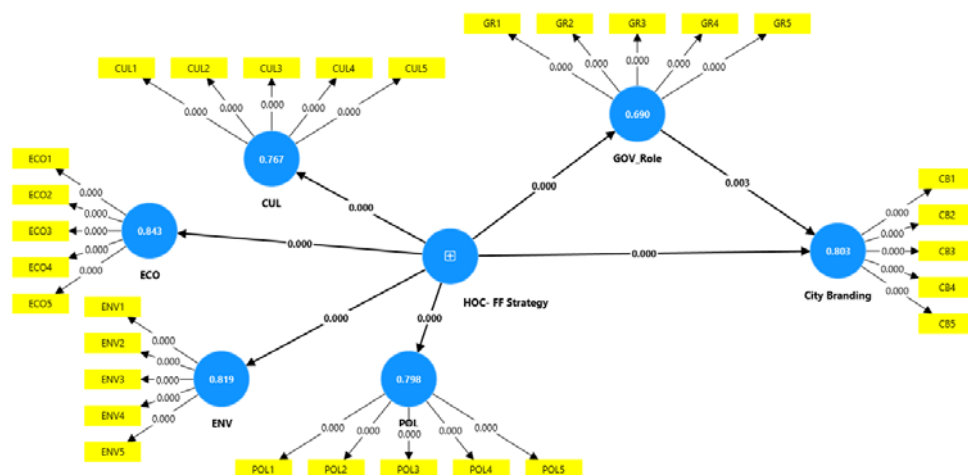


Figure 3. Model after bootstrapping process

This analysis offers empirical support for the proposed theoretical framework, confirming the significant influence of the film festival strategy on city branding in Dubai, with a particular emphasis on the mediating role of government (Sarstedt et al., 2020; Hair et al., 2017). The results of the hypothesis testing, which further substantiate these relationships, are presented in Tables 12 and 13.

Table 12. Results of direct relationship

Direct relationship	Path strength	P values
GOV_Role -> City Branding	0.180	0.003
HOC- FF Strategy -> CUL	0.876	0.000
HOC- FF Strategy -> City Branding	0.741	0.000
HOC- FF Strategy -> ECO	0.918	0.000
HOC- FF Strategy -> ENV	0.905	0.000
HOC- FF Strategy -> GOV_Role	0.831	0.000
HOC- FF Strategy -> POL	0.893	0.000

Table 12 presents the results of the direct relationships among the key constructs. The government role has a significant direct effect on city branding (path strength = 0.180, $p = 0.003$). The higher-order construct (HOC) Film Festival Strategy shows strong and statistically significant paths to all its lower-order dimensions: cultural (CUL = 0.876), economic (ECO = 0.918), environmental (ENV = 0.905), and political (POL = 0.893), all with p -values of 0.000. Additionally, film festival strategy has significant direct effects on both government role (0.831, $p = 0.000$) and city branding (0.741, $p = 0.000$), confirming its central role in the model.

Table 13. Results of indirect relationship

Indirect relationship	Path strength	P values
HOC- FF Strategy -> GOV_Role -> City Branding	0.149	0.004

Table 13 shows that the indirect relationship from the higher-order construct (HOC) Film Festival Strategy to City Branding, mediated by Government Role, is statistically significant. The path strength is 0.149 with a p -value of 0.004, indicating a meaningful mediation effect of Government Role in the relationship between film festival strategy and city branding.

4.2.3 Predictive Relevance

The predictive relevance of the structural model was evaluated using the blindfolding procedure, which assesses the model's capacity to predict data points of the endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2021). This method generates two key indicators: Cross-Validated Communalities (CCVC) and Cross-Validated Redundancy (CCVR). The CCVC evaluates the model's ability to predict the manifest indicators (measurement model), while the CCVR reflects the model's predictive performance at the construct level (structural model). Both indicators are measured using Stone-Geisser's Q^2 values, where values greater than zero indicate that the model exhibits acceptable predictive relevance (Stone, 1974; Geisser, 1975).

Table 14. CCVR

	SSO	SSE	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
CUL	1990.000	963.955	0.516
City Branding	1990.000	1021.567	0.487
ECO	1990.000	923.425	0.536
ENV	1990.000	1018.740	0.488
GOV_Role	1990.000	1136.725	0.429
HOC- FF Strategy	7960.000	7960.000	0.000
POL	1990.000	960.078	0.518

Table 14 shows that all constructs, except for the HOC–FF Strategy, exhibit Q² values greater than 0, indicating that the model has sufficient predictive relevance for these endogenous constructs. Specifically, ECO (0.536) and POL (0.518) show the highest predictive accuracy, followed by CUL (0.516), ENV (0.488), City Branding (0.487), and GOV_Role (0.429). The HOC–FF Strategy has a Q² value of 0.000, which is expected because it is a higher-order construct and does not have directly measured indicators. Therefore, predictive relevance is not assessed at this level. The results confirm that the model possesses acceptable predictive capability for all first-order constructs.

Table 15. CCVM

	SSO	SSE	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
CUL	1990.000	960.200	0.517
City Branding	1990.000	1145.540	0.424
ECO	1990.000	1063.100	0.466
ENV	1990.000	1175.115	0.409
GOV_Role	1990.000	1104.755	0.445
HOC- FF Strategy	7960.000	4223.099	0.469
POL	1990.000	1015.377	0.490

Table 15 reports that all constructs show Q² values above zero, indicating that the model has satisfactory predictive relevance at the measurement (indicator) level. The Q² values range from 0.409 (ENV) to 0.517 (CUL), reflecting mediate to strong communality-based prediction. Notably, CUL (0.517), POL (0.490), and ECO (0.466) exhibit the strongest predictive accuracy. The higher-order construct HOC–FF Strategy also records a substantial Q² value of 0.469, further supporting the model’s ability to predict indicator performance for second-order constructs. The CCVM results demonstrate that the model effectively predicts the measurement indicators of both first-order and higher-order constructs, reinforcing its measurement-level predictive validity. In this study, all Q² values for first-order constructs were above zero, confirming the model’s predictive capability

5. Conclusion

This study developed and validated a conceptual framework linking film festival strategy to city branding in Dubai, with a particular emphasis on the mediating role of government. Using data collected from employees of the Department of Economy and Tourism, Dubai, the model was analysed in SmartPLS through a two-stage validation process. At the measurement level, the model demonstrated satisfactory construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. At the structural level, results revealed that the film festival strategy is the most influential factor in driving city branding, with a strong direct effect (path coefficient = 0.741). Additionally, the role of government was found to partially mediate this relationship, with a mediation effect strength of 0.149, highlighting its strategic importance in supporting and amplifying cultural initiatives. The predictive assessment further confirmed that the model possesses acceptable predictive relevance for all first-order constructs and accurately predicts measurement indicators at both the first-order and higher-order levels. These findings reinforce the robustness of the proposed model and provide valuable insights for policymakers and urban planners in leveraging cultural events like film festivals to enhance Dubai's global city image.

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