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Visitor Satisfaction as the Gateway to Loyalty: Service Quality, Perceived Value, and Revisit Intention in Nature Tourism

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Abstract

This study examines the determinants of revisit intention among tourists at the Guci Natural Hot Springs destination in Tegal, Central Java, Indonesia a nature-based site exposed to recurring physical disruptions. Drawing on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework and Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory, this research investigates the direct and indirect effects of Service Quality, Physical Destination Quality, and Perceived Value on Revisit Intention, with Visitor Satisfaction as a mediator and Destination Image as a moderator. A quantitative approach was employed using purposive sampling, yielding 514 valid responses from repeat visitors. Data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). Results indicate that Service Quality and Perceived Value significantly influence both Visitor Satisfaction and Revisit Intention, while Physical Destination Quality exerts no significant effect. Visitor Satisfaction emerges as the strongest predictor of Revisit Intention and confirms partial mediation for Service Quality and Perceived Value. Destination Image moderates only the relationship between Service Quality and Revisit Intention. These findings underscore the primacy of intangible service factors and value creation in sustaining tourist loyalty within volatile natural heritage destinations.

Keywords: Revisit Intention; Service Quality; Perceived Value; Visitor Satisfaction; Nature Tourism; *PLS-SEM.*

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INTRODUCTION

Revisit intention is one of the most critical indicators of destination sustainability in tourism management, reflecting the degree to which a destination succeeds in creating lasting impressions among its visitors. While abundant literature has explored loyalty formation in urban and luxury tourism contexts, nature-based destinations present a distinct analytical challenge due to their vulnerability to physical disruptions. The Guci Tourist Destination in Tegal Regency, Central Java, exemplifies this condition: despite contributing IDR 12.97 billion in regional revenue (Setda Tegal, 2024), the destination experienced a visitor decline of up to 60% following flood-induced infrastructure damage and prior safety incidents (Laeis Zuhdiar, 2026).

This volatility raises a fundamental research question: can intangible service assets compensate for physical deficiencies in nature tourism, thereby preserving visitor loyalty? This study argues that the answer lies in examining the interplay of Service Quality, Perceived Value, Visitor Satisfaction, and Destination Image as components of a Destination Resilience Model. Contrary to conventional frameworks that emphasise physical infrastructure, this study positions intangible factors as primary drivers of tourist loyalty in risk-prone natural heritage contexts.

The study contributes to the tourism literature in three ways. First, it empirically tests the compensatory function of service quality and value perceptions in a destination recovering from physical disruption. Second, it interrogates the moderating role of Destination Image, moving beyond its traditional antecedent role to examine its boundary conditions. Third, it applies PLS-SEM to a large sample from a single natural destination, offering a replicable methodological framework for destination resilience research in developing economies.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The theoretical foundation of this study rests on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), which conceptualises environmental stimuli as inputs that influence internal psychological states and ultimately drive behavioural responses. Within this framework, Service Quality, Physical Destination Quality, and Perceived Value function as external stimuli. Visitor Satisfaction represents the organism's affective processing, and Revisit Intention constitutes the behavioural outcome.

Service Quality and Visitor Satisfaction. Service Quality in nature tourism is understood as a holistic cognitive evaluation of staff responsiveness, assurance, and tangible service delivery. Empirical studies confirm that superior staff interaction and service reliability significantly increase satisfaction and future behavioural intentions (Nazarian et al., 2024; Wahim, 2024). This study

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posits: H1: Service Quality has a positive and significant influence on Visitor Satisfaction; H4: Service Quality has a positive and significant influence on Revisit Intention.

Physical Destination Quality. Physical Destination Quality refers to tourists' perceptions of tangible attributes such as natural aesthetics, infrastructure safety, environmental cleanliness, and facility layout. These 'instrumental attributes' are considered key determinants of the holistic destination image (Chi & Qu, 2008). However, in nature-based settings, physical features may function as hygiene factors rather than active motivators of satisfaction (Yang et al., 2025). Hypotheses: H2: Physical Destination Quality has a positive and significant influence on Visitor Satisfaction; H5: Physical Destination Quality has a positive and significant influence on Revisit Intention.

Perceived Value. Perceived Value is conceptualised as the consumer's overall utility assessment based on the cognitive trade-off between benefits received and sacrifices incurred (Zeithaml, 1988). It is widely recognised as a more accurate predictor of behaviour than price or quality in isolation (Qiu et al., 2024; Yacoub et al., 2025). Hypotheses: H3: Perceived Value has a positive and significant influence on Visitor Satisfaction; H6: Perceived Value has a positive and significant influence on Revisit Intention.

Visitor Satisfaction as Mediator. Grounded in Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980), Visitor Satisfaction is positioned as a full or partial mediator bridging quality-value perceptions and loyalty outcomes. Literature consistently identifies satisfaction as the primary psychological gateway to revisit intention (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2025). Hypothesis: H7: Visitor Satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on Revisit Intention.

Destination Image as Moderator. Destination Image is conceptualised as a multidimensional mental construct integrating cognitive and affective components of tourists' overall impressions (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Its strategic role is tested here as a moderator, with hypotheses (H8–H14) proposing that a strong destination image amplifies the effects of quality, value, and satisfaction on revisit intention.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional design targeting repeat visitors at the Guci Tourist Destination, Tegal Regency. Given an infinite population, non-probability purposive sampling was applied, restricting eligibility to visitors aged 17 years or older who had visited at least once within the preceding two years. This temporal criterion minimises retrospective recall bias (Rylander et al., 1995; Thigpen, 2019). Based on the guidelines of Wolf et al. (2013) for SEM

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with 30 indicators, a minimum of 500 respondents was targeted. Following a two-month data collection period and on-site screening, 514 valid observations were obtained.

The research instrument comprised 30 indicator items distributed across six constructs: Service Quality, Physical Destination Quality, Perceived Value, Visitor Satisfaction, Destination Image, and Revisit Intention. Data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS software, following the two-stage assessment procedure recommended by Hair et al. (2019). Validity was confirmed by loading factors > 0.70 and AVE > 0.50; reliability by Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha > 0.70. Hypothesis testing applied bootstrapping with T-statistic > 1.96 and p-value < 0.05 as significance thresholds.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As an initial stage of model testing, acceptable validity and reliability were confirmed through measurement evaluation. The retention of the instrument for Service Quality was supported by strong Composite Reliability (0.818) and Cronbach's Alpha (0.724) values, despite the AVE value being recorded slightly below the threshold (0.476). Furthermore, high multicollinearity was indicated by the results of the Common Method Bias test, where a VIF value of 7.196 was found for Visitor Satisfaction, meaning that interpretive caution is highly mandated in analyzing these findings.

Regarding the testing of Hypothesis 1 (H1), a positive and significant direct effect of Service Quality on Visitor Satisfaction was proven. This empirical support was demonstrated by obtaining a path coefficient (β) value of 0.238, a T-value of 5.485, and a probability level (p-value) < 0.001, thus allowing H1 to be convincingly accepted within this research model. From a theoretical perspective, strong alignment with the Service-Dominant Logic paradigm was confirmed by these findings. Through these results, it can be concluded that in the examined tourism context, the determination of tourist satisfaction levels is more heavily dominated by intangible assets, such as services and customer interactions, rather than merely the presence of physical infrastructure.

In contrast to the service variable, an absence of a significant effect from Physical Destination Quality on Visitor Satisfaction was found through the testing of Hypothesis 2 (H2). The data analysis produced a very low path coefficient (β = 0.025) with a probability that did not meet the significance criteria (p = 0.567), which ultimately implicated the formal rejection of H2. The insignificance of this physical variable can be comprehensively explained through the Two-Factor Theory proposed by Herzberg. Within this theoretical framework, the presence of physical destination facilities is merely positioned as hygiene factors namely, basic prerequisites required

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solely to prevent dissatisfaction, yet their presence is deemed inadequate to actively stimulate an increase in visitor satisfaction or loyalty.

Based on the testing of Hypothesis 3 (H3), Perceived Value was identified as a highly significant predictor of Visitor Satisfaction. A coefficient value (β) of 0.289, with a T-value reaching 7.209 and a p-value < 0.001, was generated on this path, thereby providing a very strong empirical foundation for the acceptance of H3. The presence of perceived value was evidently confirmed as one of the most crucial determinants of satisfaction. Through this finding, the central narrative of the research was further reinforced, wherein positive visitor sentiments were found to be predominantly shaped by evaluative elements related to the equivalence of value and service, rather than by the structural or physical quality of the tourist location itself.

In the testing of Hypothesis 4 (H4), the essential role of Service Quality was proven once more, which this time was focused on Revisit Intention. The significance of the direct effect was demonstrated by obtaining a β value of 0.140, T = 3.867, and p < 0.001, allowing the hypothesis formulating a direct drive from service quality to revisit intention to be accepted. Alongside this direct effect, the influence of service quality was also strengthened by the results of the mediation analysis, which confirmed the presence of partial mediation. A significant indirect effect of Service Quality on Revisit Intention via Visitor Satisfaction was found (indirect effect β = 0.162, T = 5.020, p < 0.001), indicating that the intention to return is stimulated by the satisfaction previously triggered by service quality.

In line with the previous findings, the absence of a significant direct effect of Physical Destination Quality on Revisit Intention was proven through the testing of Hypothesis 5 (H5). A highly marginal negative coefficient value (β = -0.019) and a p-value of 0.615 were recorded on this path, necessitating the rejection of H5 within the testing model. Furthermore, the absence of a significant indirect effect (β = 0.017, p = 0.568) of physical destination quality on revisit intention via satisfaction was also confirmed by the mediation analysis. The conclusion that physical infrastructure is merely positioned as a basic operational requirement for tourism, and not as an active driver for the creation of tourist loyalty, is further reinforced by these findings.

Based on the analysis results for Hypothesis 6 (H6), the ability of Perceived Value to directly predict Revisit Intention was demonstrated with an adequate level of significance. This finding was supported by obtaining a β value of 0.116, a T-value of 2.557, and p = 0.011, thus providing valid statistical support for the acceptance of H6. As a driver of this direct finding, a strong indirect effect of Perceived Value on revisit intention via Visitor Satisfaction was also proven to be confirmed (indirect effect β = 0.196, T = 5.984, p < 0.001). This implies that when equivalence of

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value is perceived by tourists, the intention to return is not only triggered directly but is also reinforced through the creation of profound satisfaction.

The placement of Visitor Satisfaction as the primary predictor of Revisit Intention was formulated in Hypothesis 7 (H7), and its validity was empirically proven through statistical results. The highest path coefficient within the entire model was recorded by visitor satisfaction, namely at $\beta = 0.679$, accompanied by a highly substantial T-value (12.584) and $p < 0.001$, thus ensuring the acceptance of H7. The position of visitor satisfaction as the most dominant predictor in the formation of tourist loyalty was confirmed by the magnitude of this coefficient value. In this context, the function of satisfaction is operated as a highly crucial mediating bridge, wherein intangible assets such as value and service are translated into actual commitment from the tourists to revisit the destination in the future.

Out of the total seven moderation hypotheses proposed in the research design, empirical data support was only found for Hypothesis 11 (H11). Based on the test results, it was shown that the relationship between Service Quality and Revisit Intention was significantly moderated by Destination Image ($\beta = 0.076$, $T = 2.109$, $p = 0.035$), with an indication of an amplifying effect. A unique interaction dynamic is represented by this sole support for the moderation hypothesis. Although direct experience with operational services is heavily relied upon by tourists in determining attitudes, an additional drive motivating the revisit intention can evidently still be injected through a positive destination image constructed in the public sphere.

In the other moderation tests for Hypotheses 8, 9, 10, and 14, insignificant results were exhibited, leading to the conclusion that the paths between quality or value to satisfaction, as well as the path from satisfaction to revisit intention, were not moderated by Destination Image. The rejection of all these hypotheses was conducted due to the absence of the requisite empirical statistical support. The limited moderating role of destination image is reflected by the demographic characteristics and the level of familiarity of the tourist profile itself. By referring to the literature (Novita Sari & Karsono, 2025), factual field experience is relied upon more by local and repeat visitors compared to mere reputational cues, indicating the attainment of a saturation threshold regarding destination branding activities within mature local markets.

CONCLUSION

This study validates a Destination Resilience Model for nature-based tourism, demonstrating that Visitor Satisfaction and Perceived Value are the fundamental pillars of tourist loyalty. The non-significance of Physical Destination Quality challenges the Servicescape Theory's

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applicability in regional natural heritage contexts, where intangible experiential dimensions carry greater explanatory weight. Practically, destination managers at sites like Guci are advised to prioritise hospitality training and value-for-money experiences over decorative physical upgrades.

The study's findings are contextually bounded by the Guci destination's pragmatic, predominantly local visitor profile and should not be generalised without caution to other destination types. Future research should explore mixed-method designs to uncover the qualitative reasons for visitors' indifference to physical quality, and should include comparative analyses across nature-based and artificial destinations, as well as non-local tourist segments.

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