

Enhancing Revisit Intentions: The Role of Perceived Value, Brand Experience, and Tourist Satisfaction in Bukit Lawang Ecotourism

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of perceived value and brand experience on revisit intention through tourist satisfaction as an intervening variable at the Bukit Lawang ecotourism destination. This research employs an associative quantitative approach. The study population comprises tourists who have visited Bukit Lawang, with a sample of 180 respondents selected using purposive sampling. Primary data were collected through questionnaires, while secondary data were obtained through documentation studies. Data analysis utilized the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method with SmartPLS version 3.0 as the analytical tool. The results show that perceived value has a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. However, brand experience does not influence tourist satisfaction but has a positive and significant effect on revisit intention. Tourist satisfaction mediates the effect of perceived value and brand experience on revisit intention. This research provides practical implications for tourism managers to improve service quality and create unique experiences to enhance tourists' intention to revisit.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, with its extensive archipelago encompassing over 17,000 islands, has emerged as a global hotspot for tourism, capitalizing on its diverse cultural and natural attractions. From the pristine beaches of Bali to the historical landmarks of Java and the untouched jungles of Sumatra, the country offers an array of experiences that cater to the varied interests of international and domestic tourists. Recognizing its vast potential, the Indonesian government designated tourism as a strategic sector for national development in 2016, aiming to bolster economic growth and promote regional development (BPS, 2023). This strategy includes expanding tourism infrastructure, improving marketing campaigns, and enhancing the overall visitor experience.

Despite these efforts, the global Covid-19 pandemic severely disrupted the tourism industry, significantly impacting Indonesia's economic and social landscape. Lockdowns and mobility restrictions led to an unprecedented decline in tourist arrivals, with North Sumatra—home to numerous eco-tourism destinations—being no exception. Data from the Central Statistics Agency reveals a drastic drop in foreign tourist visits to North Sumatra, with numbers plummeting by over 80% from 2019 to 2020 (BPS, 2023). Although tourism activities have gradually resumed, challenges remain in revitalizing the sector to pre-pandemic levels.

Langkat Regency in North Sumatra holds a unique position as a hub for eco-tourism, cultural heritage, and agricultural activities. Among its many attractions, Bukit Lawang, located within the Gunung Leuser National Park, stands out as a destination renowned for its orangutan conservation efforts and its lush tropical rainforest. Bukit Lawang offers visitors an immersive eco-tourism experience, including jungle trekking, wildlife observation, and tubing along the Bahorok River. Its status as a conservation area and eco-tourism site positions it as a crucial player in promoting sustainable tourism in Indonesia.

However, Bukit Lawang faces significant challenges in attracting and retaining visitors. Preliminary data shows a decline in visitor numbers from 75,530 in 2022 to 63,697 in 2023, representing a 15.67% decrease (Tabel 1). Monthly trends reveal consistent drops, with months like March and April showing reductions of over 1,700 visitors compared to the previous year.

Table 1: Number of Visitors at Bukit Lawang Over the Last 2 Years

No	Month	2022	2023
1	January	2.891 visitors	3.420 Visitors
2	February	7.263 Visitors	7.213 Visitors
3	March	6.987 Visitors	5.233 Visitors
4	April	6.589 Visitors	4.256 Visitors
5	May	7.538 Visitors	5.320 Visitors
6	June	6.901 Visitors	6.252 Visitors
7	July	6.324 Visitors	6.325 Visitors
8	August	7.113 Visitors	6.088 Visitors
9	September	6.329 Visitors	5.820 Visitors

10	October	5.236 Visitors	6.023 Visitors
11	November	7.011 Visitors	4.720 Visitors
12	December	5.348 Visitors	3.027 Visitors
		75.530 Visitors	63.697 Visitors

Source: Department of Tourism , processed by the researcher (2024)

This declining trend underscores critical issues in tourism management, such as inadequate facilities, suboptimal environmental conservation, and insufficient promotional activities. Visitors frequently cite dissatisfaction with the cleanliness, limited amenities, and lack of distinctive experiences, as reflected in surveys showing that 76.67% of respondents are unwilling to revisit Bukit Lawang (Tabel 2). Such findings highlight the urgent need for targeted improvements to enhance visitor satisfaction and foster loyalty.

Table 2: Preliminary Survey Revisit Intention Bukit Lawang

No	Revisit Intentions	Yes	No
1	I am willing to revisit Bukit Lawang in the future.	7	23
2	Bukit Lawang becomes the primary destination for tourists.	12	18

A deeper analysis reveals that three key factors – perceived value, brand experience, and tourist satisfaction – play a pivotal role in shaping revisit intentions. Perceived value encompasses the benefits tourists derive relative to the costs they incur, such as time, money, and effort. In the context of ecotourism, perceived value extends beyond tangible factors to include emotional and experiential benefits, such as a sense of tranquility or connection with nature (Duong et al., 2021). A compelling brand experience, characterized by unique and memorable interactions with the destination, further enhances tourists’ emotional engagement and loyalty (Sahin et al., 2011). Lastly, tourist satisfaction, a measure of how well the actual experience meets or exceeds expectations, serves as a critical mediator that links perceived value and brand experience to revisit intentions (Guntoro & Hui, 2013).

However, the dynamics of these factors are not always straightforward. While some studies highlight the positive influence of satisfaction on revisit intentions (Evren et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2018), others suggest that additional elements, such as pricing strategies, destination accessibility, and the overall competitiveness of the tourism market, also play significant roles (Zhang et al., 2021). Similarly, perceived value and brand experience, while generally associated with higher satisfaction levels, may have varying degrees of impact depending on the demographic, cultural, and psychological profiles of tourists.

This research aims to explore these dynamics within the context of Bukit Lawang, providing a comprehensive analysis of how perceived value, brand experience, and tourist satisfaction collectively influence tourists’ intentions to

revisit. By focusing on Bukit Lawang, this study contributes to knowledge enrichment in several ways. First, it provides insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by a niche eco-tourism destination, emphasizing the importance of sustainable tourism practices. Second, it examines the theoretical underpinnings of consumer behavior in tourism, particularly in the eco-tourism sector, where experiential and emotional factors often take precedence. Lastly, it offers practical recommendations for stakeholders, including destination managers, policymakers, and local communities, to enhance visitor experiences and ensure the long-term viability of eco-tourism initiatives.

The findings from this study are expected to guide tourism development strategies for Bukit Lawang and similar destinations in Indonesia. By addressing gaps in infrastructure, environmental management, and promotional efforts, stakeholders can create a more compelling and sustainable tourism product. Moreover, enhancing perceived value, delivering memorable brand experiences, and fostering higher satisfaction levels can transform Bukit Lawang into a model eco-tourism destination that attracts repeat visitors and advocates for conservation and sustainable development.

Through this study, the following objectives are pursued: to analyze the influence of perceived value and brand experience on revisit intentions, to evaluate the mediating role of tourist satisfaction, and to identify actionable strategies for improving the overall tourism experience in Bukit Lawang. These objectives align with broader national goals of revitalizing the tourism sector post-pandemic, promoting sustainable tourism practices, and leveraging Indonesia's unique ecological and cultural assets to compete in the global tourism market.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism Concept

Tourism encompasses travel and visits made by individuals or groups to locations different from their usual places of residence for various purposes, including recreation, education, or business. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism is a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon involving the movement of individuals to destinations outside their usual environment for personal or professional purposes. The Indonesian Tourism Law No. 10 of 2009 defines tourism as a range of travel activities supported by services provided by the community, businesses, and the government.

Tourism Marketing

Tourism marketing plays a pivotal role in enhancing the appeal of tourist destinations, attracting visitors, and building a strong brand image. Effective marketing strategies focus on promoting tourism products, improving visitor experiences, and fostering long-term relationships with tourists. Key strategies include digital marketing, collaboration with influencers, and emphasizing local identity. Digital marketing leverages online platforms and social media to reach wider audiences. Collaborations with influencers help expand a destination's reach by tapping into their followers. Highlighting the unique cultural, natural,

and historical aspects of destinations fosters differentiation and appeals to travelers seeking authentic experiences (Sigala, 2020; Rustamova et al., 2021).

Revisit Intention

Revisit intention refers to an individual's willingness to return to a previously visited destination. Derived from repurchase intention theory (Kotler & Keller, 2016), it reflects tourists' decisions influenced by their prior experiences and satisfaction levels. Positive and memorable experiences significantly enhance revisit intention, contributing to customer loyalty and cost-effective marketing strategies (Mahdzar, 2018; Zhang et al., 2018).

Tourist Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction arises from the comparison of expectations and actual experiences at a destination. When the perceived experience exceeds expectations, tourists feel satisfied, which boosts their likelihood of returning. Satisfaction also depends on factors such as service quality, emotional appeal, price fairness, and overall experience. Positive satisfaction drives word-of-mouth recommendations and enhances destination competitiveness (Sangadji & Sopiah, 2013; Correia, 2013).

Perceived Value

Perceived value is a critical determinant of tourist satisfaction and loyalty. It involves a comprehensive evaluation of the benefits received from a destination relative to the sacrifices made, including monetary and non-monetary costs. The dimensions of perceived value include functional, emotional, economic, and social values, which collectively shape tourists' decisions to revisit destinations (Zeithaml, 2008; Watanabe et al., 2020).

Brand Experience

Brand experience refers to the sensations, emotions, and cognitive responses triggered by interactions with a brand. In tourism, brand experience involves a combination of service quality, destination atmosphere, and activities offered to visitors. Positive brand experiences leave lasting impressions on tourists, enhancing their satisfaction and loyalty. According to Brakus et al. (2009), brand experience comprises four dimensions: sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual. These dimensions help evaluate how tourists interact with and perceive destinations, influencing their overall satisfaction. Sensory experiences include sights, sounds, and scents of the destination, while affective experiences evoke emotions such as joy or excitement. Behavioral experiences relate to activities and lifestyle alignment, and intellectual experiences stimulate thought and reflection.

Based on these considerations, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: Perceived value positively and significantly influences revisit intention.
- H2: Perceived value positively and significantly influences tourist satisfaction.
- H3: Brand experience positively and significantly influences tourist satisfaction.
- H4: Brand experience positively and significantly influences revisit intention.

H5: Tourist satisfaction positively and significantly influences revisit intention.

H6: Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived value and revisit intention.

H7: Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between brand experience and revisit intention.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative survey methodology, specifically utilizing an associative approach. As delineated by Sugiyono (2019), associative research focuses on formulating research questions that explore the relationships between two or more variables. The indicators of the research variables are measured using a Likert scale, which involves constructing questions or statements wherein each item is assigned a score within the framework of the Likert scale. This scale serves as an effective tool for assessing the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of individuals or groups concerning various social phenomena.

The population for this research is tourist in the location on Bukit Lawang. A sample of 180 respondents was drawn from this population, representing individuals who had visit Bukit Lawang at least one time . The study relies on primary data collected directly from original sources to adequately address the research questions posed. Data collection techniques primarily center around the use of questionnaires.

Analytical methods employed include descriptive analysis and path analysis through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Data processing is facilitated by SmartPLS version 3.

RESEARCH RESULT

Measurement model

This section provides an overview of the measurement model results, including the loading factors, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct in the study. This comprehensive evaluation offers insights into the validity and reliability of the constructs related to, as detailed in Table 3.

Table 3: Measurement Model Results

Constructs	Items	Loading factors	CR	AVE
Perceived Value			0.934	0,623
	PV1	0,711		
	PV2	0,820		
	PV3	0,848		
	PV4	0,786		
	PV5	0,778		
	PV6	0,864		
	PV7	0,770		
	PV8	0,724		
Brand Experience			0.931	0,602

	BE1	0,737		
	BE2	0,730		
	BE3	0,742		
	BE4	0,716		
	BE5	0,721		
	BE6	0,738		
	BE7	0,785		
	BE8	0,844		
	BE9	0,792		
	BE10	0,865		
	BE11	0,839		
	BE12	0,785		
Tourist Satisfaction			0.943	0,578
	TS1	0,774		
	TS2	0,744		
	TS3	0,757		
	TS4	0,733		
	TS5	0,786		
	TS6	0,714		
	TS7	0,731		
	TS8	0,791		
	TS9	0,739		
Revisit Intentions			0.938	0,614
	RI1	0,820		
	RI2	0,790		
	RI3	0,836		
	RI4	0,740		
	RI5	0,777		
	RI6	0,735		

Table 3 presents the measurement model results, highlighting four constructs: Perceived Value, Brand Experience, Tourist Satisfaction, and Revisit Intentions. These constructs are assessed through their respective indicators, with the evaluation focusing on loading factors, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE).

The results show that all indicators exhibit loading factors exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.5, aligning with the criteria outlined by Ghozali (2016). He suggests that loading factor values ranging from 0.5 to 0.6 are acceptable for confirming convergent validity. For example, the Perceived Value construct has loading factors ranging from 0.711 to 0.864, confirming the adequacy of its indicators (PV1 to PV8). Similarly, Brand Experience indicators (BE1 to BE12) show loading factors between 0.716 and 0.865, while Tourist Satisfaction indicators (TS1 to TS9) range from 0.714 to 0.791. Lastly, Revisit Intentions indicators (RI1 to RI6) exhibit loading factors between 0.735 and 0.836, ensuring all indicators contribute effectively to their respective constructs.

Composite reliability (CR) values for all constructs surpass the recommended threshold of 0.7, indicating high internal consistency. Specifically, Perceived Value achieves a CR of 0.934, Brand Experience records 0.931, Tourist Satisfaction attains 0.943, and Revisit Intentions reaches 0.938. These values affirm the reliability of the constructs, consistent with recommendations by Ghozali and Latan (2015).

The average variance extracted (AVE) values for all constructs also exceed the critical value of 0.5, as recommended by Hair et al. (2010), confirming convergent validity. The AVE values are as follows: Perceived Value (0.623), Brand Experience (0.602), Tourist Satisfaction (0.578), and Revisit Intentions (0.614). These results indicate that each construct adequately captures the variance of its indicators.

In summary, the findings in Table 3 confirm that all constructs meet the requisite criteria for loading factors, composite reliability, and average variance extracted. This validates the robustness and reliability of the measurement model, providing a solid foundation for subsequent structural analysis.

Structural model

The predictive power of the constructs examined in this study is illustrated through the R-square values for Tourists Satisfaction and Revisit Intentions. These values provide insights into the extent to which the independent variables explain the variance in each dependent variable. The R-square values are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Predictive power

Construct	R-square
Tourists Satisfaction	0.720
Revisit Intentions	0.641

Table 4 illustrates the predictive power of the constructs under investigation by presenting the R-square values for Tourists' Satisfaction and Revisit Intentions. The R-square value indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables in the model. Specifically, an R-square value of 0.720 for Tourists' Satisfaction suggests that approximately 72% of the variance in this construct is accounted for by the model, indicating excellent predictive capability. According to Hair et al. (2010), R-square values above 0.7 are considered excellent, while values exceeding 0.5 are generally regarded as good.

Similarly, the R-square value for Revisit Intentions is 0.641, meaning that about 64.1% of the variance in this construct is explained by the independent variables in the model. This value is also considered good, as it surpasses the commonly accepted threshold of 0.5 for adequate explanatory power. Overall, the R-square values suggest that the model demonstrates strong predictive power, affirming the importance of the independent variables in explaining the variations observed in Tourists' Satisfaction and Revisit Intentions.

Table 5: Path Coefficients (Direct and Indirect Effect)

Path	Effect Type	β	M	SD	t statistics	Sig. (< 0.05)	Decision
Perceived Value -> Tourists Satisfaction	Direct	0,225	0,228	0,051	4,448	0,000	Accepted
Perceived Value -> Revisit Intentions	Direct	0,299	0,306	0,064	4,706	0,000	Accepted
Brand Experience -> Tourists Satisfaction	Direct	0,704	0,703	0,041	17,177	0,000	Accepted
Brand Experience -> Revisit Intentions	Direct	-0,030	-0,037	0,098	0,309	0,757	Rejected
Tourists Satisfaction -> Revisit Intentions	Direct	0,608	0,607	0,108	5,640	0,000	Accepted
Perceived Value → Tourists Satisfaction → Revisit Intentions	Indirect	0,137	0,137	0,034	3,983	0,000	Accepted
Brand Experience → Tourists Satisfaction → Revisit Intentions	Indirect	0,428	0,428	0,089	4,831	0,000	Accepted

Table 5 presents the path coefficients for both direct and indirect effects in the structural model. The table provides insights into the relationships among Perceived Value, Brand Experience, Tourists' Satisfaction, and Revisit Intentions.

The direct effect of Perceived Value on Tourists' Satisfaction shows a path coefficient (β) of 0.225, which indicates a significant positive influence, as evidenced by a t-statistic of 4.448 and a p-value of 0.000. This result demonstrates

that higher perceived value enhances tourists' satisfaction. Similarly, the direct effect of Perceived Value on Revisit Intentions is significant, with a β of 0.299, a t-statistic of 4.706, and a p-value of 0.000, suggesting that perceived value positively influences tourists' intention to revisit.

The direct effect of Brand Experience on Tourists' Satisfaction is also highly significant, with a β of 0.704, a t-statistic of 17.177, and a p-value of 0.000. This indicates that a positive brand experience substantially increases tourists' satisfaction. However, the direct effect of Brand Experience on Revisit Intentions is not significant ($\beta = -0.030$, $t = 0.309$, $p = 0.757$), suggesting that brand experience alone does not directly drive revisit intentions.

The relationship between Tourists' Satisfaction and Revisit Intentions shows a strong, significant direct effect, with a β of 0.608, a t-statistic of 5.640, and a p-value of 0.000. This demonstrates that tourists' satisfaction plays a critical role in influencing their intention to revisit.

Regarding indirect effects, the influence of Perceived Value on Revisit Intentions through Tourists' Satisfaction is significant, with a β of 0.137, a t-statistic of 3.983, and a p-value of 0.000. This highlights the mediating role of tourists' satisfaction in the relationship between perceived value and revisit intentions. Similarly, the indirect effect of Brand Experience on Revisit Intentions via Tourists' Satisfaction is significant, with a β of 0.428, a t-statistic of 4.831, and a p-value of 0.000, underscoring the importance of tourists' satisfaction as a mediator between brand experience and revisit intentions.

Overall, these results affirm the significance of perceived value and brand experience in shaping tourists' satisfaction, which, in turn, influences their revisit intentions.

DISCUSSION

The analysis demonstrates that perceived value significantly and positively influences tourist satisfaction, evidenced by a path coefficient of 0.225 and a significance value of 0.000, confirming the acceptance of Hypothesis 1. This finding indicates that as tourists perceive higher value in their experience, their satisfaction with the destination increases. This aligns with studies by Cheng et al. (2016) and Yanie et al. (2024), emphasizing perceived value as a critical determinant of positive tourist experiences. Key aspects include service quality, appropriate pricing, and emotional benefits, which collectively enhance tourists' overall satisfaction.

Similarly, brand experience is found to have a significant positive effect on tourist satisfaction, with a path coefficient of 0.704 and a significance value of 0.000, supporting Hypothesis 2. Positive brand experiences, encompassing service quality, ambiance, and unique activities, enrich tourists' emotional connection to the destination. This is consistent with research by Lemon and Verhoef (2016) and Maulina (2023), highlighting the importance of delivering high-quality, memorable experiences to elevate satisfaction.

In terms of return visit intention, perceived value also shows a significant positive effect, with a path coefficient of 0.299 and a significance value of 0.000, confirming Hypothesis 3. Tourists who perceive a destination as providing high

value are more likely to revisit. This finding aligns with studies by Rizan et al. (2022) and Chotimah (2019), which underscore the role of perceived value in fostering destination loyalty. Effective strategies, such as enhancing service quality and offering unique experiences, can strengthen tourists' intention to return.

Interestingly, the analysis reveals that brand experience does not have a significant direct impact on tourist satisfaction, with a path coefficient of -0.030 and a significance value of 0.757 (>0.05), leading to the rejection of Hypothesis 4. This divergence from prior research by Phan Thant Hai et al. (2020) and Boya Li (2018) could be attributed to varying tourist perceptions of brand experience elements or potential dominance of other factors, such as service quality, in determining satisfaction.

However, the mediating role of satisfaction is crucial in explaining the indirect effects. For instance, perceived value significantly influences revisit intention through satisfaction, as indicated by a path coefficient of 0.137 and a significance value of 0.000. This highlights the importance of perceived value in creating memorable and satisfying experiences that translate into stronger revisit intentions, consistent with findings by Cheng et al. (2016).

Likewise, brand experience significantly impacts revisit intention through satisfaction, with a path coefficient of 0.428 and a significance value of 0.000, confirming Hypothesis 5. High-quality brand experiences strengthen satisfaction, which in turn fosters loyalty and revisits intentions. This supports research by Pansari and Kumar (2020), emphasizing that emotional and sensory connections developed through brand experience enhance destination loyalty.

Lastly, tourist satisfaction directly influences revisit intention, with a path coefficient of 0.608 and a significance value of 0.000, confirming Hypothesis 6. This finding reiterates satisfaction's pivotal role as a driver of loyalty and aligns with prior studies by Hassan (2016) and Nurfaizal and Mustika (2023). Positive satisfaction not only encourages repeat visits but also promotes positive word-of-mouth, further strengthening a destination's appeal.

In conclusion, the study highlights the integral roles of perceived value and brand experience in shaping tourist satisfaction and revisit intention, either directly or indirectly. Destinations should focus on delivering superior value, crafting unique brand experiences, and ensuring overall tourist satisfaction to maintain competitiveness and foster long-term loyalty.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study reveal that perceived value has a significant and positive effect on tourist satisfaction at the destination. Similarly, brand experience also exerts a considerable positive influence on tourist satisfaction. Perceived value significantly enhances revisit intention at the destination. In contrast, while brand experience positively affects revisit intention, this relationship lacks statistical significance. Furthermore, tourist satisfaction positively and significantly impacts revisit intention at the destination. It is crucial to emphasize that tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived value and revisit intention, as well as between brand experience and revisit intention.

Given these findings, several recommendations are proposed for destination managers. First, it is advisable to focus on increasing tourist comfort by improving facilities such as clean rest areas and toilets, while also implementing loyalty programs like discount cards for repeat visitors. Additionally, introducing new attractions such as cultural festivals or interactive experiences can further enhance tourist satisfaction and intention to revisit.

Moreover, the findings highlight the importance of providing opportunities for tourists to gain local insights, such as offering guided tours, interactive workshops, or informational exhibits that showcase the culture and traditions of the destination. Managers should also enhance the aesthetic appeal of the environment by maintaining cleanliness, creating photo-friendly observation areas, and sharing unique stories about the destination's beauty through guides or visual media.

To foster positive emotions among tourists, destination managers should create a welcoming atmosphere through relaxation zones with scenic views, calming background music, or mindfulness-based activities like nature therapy. For future researchers, it is suggested to explore additional variables such as destination image, service quality, or emotional attachment, and to expand the scope of research to different types of destinations to gain more comprehensive insights. Alternative methodologies, including qualitative or mixed-method approaches, may also provide a deeper understanding of tourist experiences.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

In completing this study, the researcher acknowledges that there are still many shortcomings in terms of language, structure, and presentation due to the limitations of the researcher's knowledge and abilities. Therefore, the researcher welcomes constructive criticism and suggestions from all parties for the improvement and perfection of this work.

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