

# **Beyond Viral Trends: Analyzing the Impact of Service Quality, Destination Image, and Experiential Marketing on Tourist Satisfaction and Revisit Intention in West Java's Viral Nature Destinations**

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**Abstract.** The widespread use of smartphones and social media has profoundly impacted the travel industry, transforming lesser-known destinations into viral hotspots. In West Java, platforms like Instagram and TikTok have significantly increased tourist arrivals by highlighting "viral" locations. While this has led to economic benefits, concerns about the sustainability of such rapid and unpredictable growth remain, as these destinations risk over-reliance on viral trends and face potential environmental degradation. This study examines key factors—service quality, destination image, and experiential marketing—that influence tourist satisfaction and revisit intention in West Java viral nature destinations. Using a quantitative descriptive approach, data were collected from 161 travelers and analyzed via SEM-PLS. Results show that while destination image, service quality, and experiential marketing significantly affect satisfaction, only service quality has a direct impact on revisit intention. These findings emphasize the need for long-term strategies beyond viral trends to ensure sustainable tourism growth and preserve the natural environment.

**Keywords.** revisit intention, satisfaction, service quality, viral destination, nature.

## **1. Introduction**

Over the past decade, the travel landscape has been revolutionized by the widespread adoption of smartphones and social media platforms, which have redefined how people experience and document their journeys (Siegel et al., 2023; Gretzel, 2019). Travel content now focuses more on aspirational experiences that people want to showcase on their profiles (Siegel et al., 2023; Gretzel, 2019). Social media played a crucial role in raising the visibility of several previously little-known destinations. (Siegel et al., 2023). One of the things that can make tourists trust and want to visit a city or destination is what's going viral in social media (Firdaus et al., 2022). The fact is that more travelers rely on social media to make their travel choices (Wengel et al., 2022). They are likely to prefer popular or viral online sites rather than well-known destinations (Wengel et al., 2022). This phenomenon underscores the profound impact of social media on shaping contemporary travel behavior, where the desire to follow trends and showcase unique experiences on social media often outweighs conventional travel planning considerations.

Several studies show examples of places that became popular because of social media (Siegel et al., 2020; Dickinson, 2019). In fact, when people see their friends sharing travel posts, it generates what's known as "travel envy" (Oliveira et al., 2020) and can significantly shape how social media users plan their trips and behave at their destinations (Gretzel, 2019; Siegel et al., 2022). That's how 'viral' creates a destination popular overnight.

The case of West Java illustrates the impact of social media on regional tourism, where viral content has led to a significant increase in tourist arrivals over the past three years. According to the West Java Tourism and Culture Office (BPS, 2024), platforms like Instagram and TikTok have been instrumental in popularizing "Instagrammable" spots across the region, resulting in a surge of both local and international visitors. These social media trends have transformed previously lesser-known locations into must-visit destinations, driven by the desire to capture the perfect vacation photo (Si & Leou, 2024). This trend has brought significant economic benefits to the region, as the influx of tourists contributes to local businesses and the overall economy. However, the focus on capturing and sharing picturesque moments on social media has raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of such tourism growth, particularly as these destinations may become overly reliant on their viral status to maintain visitor interest.

Despite the short-term economic gains brought about by viral social media trends, there are several challenges associated with relying on such trends for tourism growth. One of the most significant issues is the sustainability of this growth, as the appeal of destinations that gain popularity through viral trends may be short-lived. The reliance on temporary social media buzz creates a vulnerability for these destinations, as they risk losing their visitor base once the trend fades. A Previous study highlighted that this dependence on viral popularity can lead to a decline in visitor numbers, which could have long-term negative impacts on the destination's economy and infrastructure (Falk & Hagsten, 2021). Additionally, the behaviors of tourists influenced by social media can often be problematic, with instances of irresponsible actions that may damage the destinations themselves (Siegel et al., 2022). The sudden influx of tourists can strain local resources and infrastructure, exacerbating the challenges of managing these destinations and raising concerns about their long-term viability.

To ensure long-term sustainability and maintain consistent visitor numbers, strategies need to be developed that extend beyond the temporary effects of viral trends. This study is conducted to understand the key factors—specifically as service quality, destination image, and experiential marketing—that influence tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. By focusing on these elements, it becomes possible to develop strategies that maintain and enhance visitor loyalty, ensuring that these destinations continue to attract tourists long after their viral moment has passed, thereby fostering long-term stability and growth in the tourism sector.

## **2. Literature Review And Hypothesis**

### *2.1. Destination Image, Satisfaction, and Revisit Intention*

Image of a destination is a tourist impression in general of a tourist destination (Firdaus et al., 2022). Destination image is defined as an individual's knowledge, beliefs and feelings about a specific destination (Timor, 2018). A positive destination image significantly influences revisit intention (Stavrianea & Kamenidou, 2022). When tourists have a favorable image of a destination, their likelihood of returning increases. This effect is both direct and indirect through satisfaction. A strong destination image positively affects visitor satisfaction (Stavrianea & Kamenidou, 2022). The better the perception of the destination, the higher the satisfaction level, which in turn enhances loyalty and revisit intention.

**H1:** Destination image has a direct and positive influence on satisfaction.

**H4:** Destination image has a direct and positive influence on revisit intention.

### *2.2. Service Quality, Satisfaction, and Revisit Intention*

Offering excellent service within a destination is one of the most important criteria for success in tourism marketing (Widayati et al., 2020). Evaluating increasing customer satisfaction and re-visitation intentions was the most effective approach for improving service quality (Boro, 2022). High service quality is directly linked to increased revisit intention. Quality service creates a positive experience that encourages visitors to return, often mediated by satisfaction (Jeong & Kim, 2019). Service quality has a strong direct impact on satisfaction. Visitors who experience high levels of service quality tend to be more satisfied, which enhances their loyalty and intent to revisit (Jeong & Kim, 2019). Similarly, Oktaviani et al. (2024) found that customer satisfaction plays a mediating role, significantly linking consumer experiences with positive behavioral outcomes such as e-WOM

**H2:** Service quality has a direct and positive influence on satisfaction.

**H5:** Service quality has a direct and positive influence on revisit intention.

### 2.3. *Experiential Marketing, Satisfaction, and Revisit Intention*

Experiential marketing which consists of sense, feel, think, act, and relate is a marketing approach that can generate sensations and experiences, can be used to create tourist satisfaction and become the basis of revisit intention (Yogiswari et al., 2021). Experiential marketing directly enhances revisit intention by creating memorable experiences that resonate with visitors (Nugraha, 2019). These experiences not only increase satisfaction but also build a strong emotional connection that encourages repeat visits (Carmo et al., 2022). Positive experiential marketing efforts significantly boost visitor satisfaction. When the marketing experience aligns well with visitor expectations, it leads to higher satisfaction, which in turn fosters a desire to return (Carmo et al., 2022; Yogiswari et al., 2021).

**H3:** Experiential marketing has a direct and positive influence on satisfaction.

**H6:** Experiential marketing has a direct and positive influence on revisit intention.

### 2.4. *Satisfaction and Revisit Intention*

Tourist satisfaction positively influences their desire to return to the place (Huu et al., 2023). When visitors are pleased with a place, they are more inclined to return to that same location (Huu et al., 2023). A study discovered a significant relation between its destination attributes and tourist experience and satisfaction as well as a desire to return for more vacations (Moon & Han, 2018).

**H7:** Satisfaction has a direct and positive influence on revisit intention.

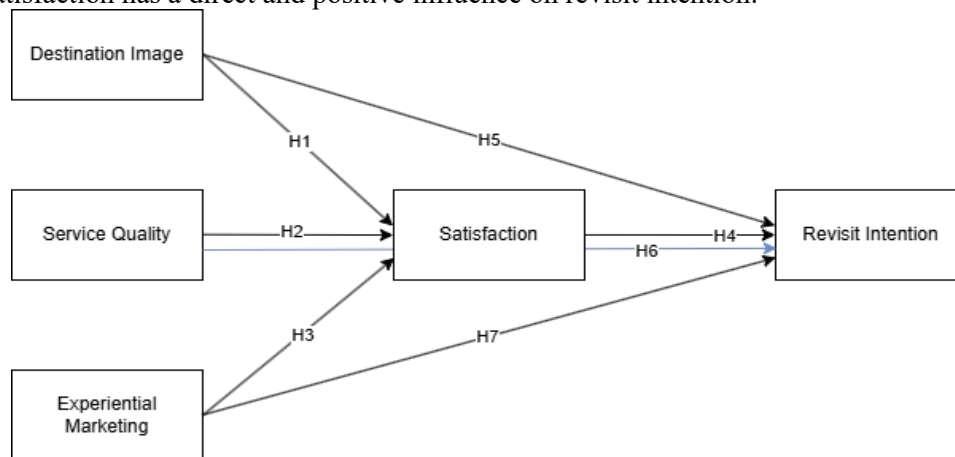


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Study; Source: Authors

## 3. Research Methods

The method used in this study is a quantitative descriptive approach. The data utilized are primary data collected through a validated and reliable questionnaire. The respondents for this research consist of 161 travelers that visited viral destinations in West Java. The sample selection was conducted using the purposive sampling method. Data analysis was performed through SEM-PLS testing.

There are five variables examined in this study: destination image, service quality, experiential marketing, satisfaction, and revisit intention. Each of these variables was measured using items developed by previous studies with modifications. The items used are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Item Measurement

Variables	Item	Source
Destination Image	1. The destination is safe and secure	Abbasi (2021)
	2. The destination offer exciting and interesting place to visit	
	3. The destination has beautiful scenery and nature attractions	
	4. The destination offers good value for money	
Service Quality	1. Service provided as promised	Ramya et al. (2019)
	2. Employees willing to help customers	
	3. The equipments provided were sufficient	
Experiential Marketing	1. The destination has appealing visual experiences	Udurawana & Wanninayake (2021) Rather & Hollebeek (2020)
	2. The destination make me feel positive emotions	
	3. I often think about my experience after visiting the tourist spot	
	4. I often participate in activities offered at the tourist spot	
	5. The tourist spot helps me feel connected with others	
Satisfaction	1. I really enjoy visiting the destination	Abbasi (2021)
	2. I am satisfied with my decision to visit the destination	
	3. This was a pleasant visit the destination	
Revisit Intention	1. I would like to revisit the destination	Abbasi (2021)
	2. If I had to decide again, I would choose the destination again	

Source: Authors

Table 2: Convergent Validity Testing Results

Variables	Item	Convergent Validity	
		Outer Loading	AVE
Destination Image	3	0,780 – 0,860	0,678
Service Quality	2	0,891 – 0,892	0,795
Experiential Marketing	3	0,736 – 0,879	0,636
Satisfaction	3	0,941 – 0,971	0,909
Revisit Intention	2	0,903 – 0,916	0,827

Source: Authors

In the validity testing, outer loading is considered valid if its value is >0.70 (Hair, et al., 2021), while AVE should be >0.50 (Hair, et al., 2017). In this study, all items have met the validity test criteria because the outer loading values for all items are greater than 0.70, and the AVE for each respective variable is greater than 0.50.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity Testing Results

	Destination Image	Experiential Marketing	Revisit Intention	Satisfaction	Service Quality
DI1	0,780	0,214	0,390	0,332	0,337
DI2	0,860	0,285	0,349	0,377	0,264
DI3	0,828	0,308	0,289	0,304	0,234
EM1	0,276	0,736	0,235	0,281	0,119

EM2	0,260	0,879	0,357	0,364	0,200
EM3	0,248	0,771	0,332	0,251	0,234
RI1	0,428	0,376	0,916	0,771	0,602
RI2	0,335	0,334	0,903	0,726	0,567
S1	0,410	0,348	0,765	0,941	0,642
S2	0,401	0,363	0,813	0,971	0,672
S3	0,371	0,373	0,778	0,949	0,619
SQ1	0,363	0,251	0,572	0,601	0,891
SQ2	0,248	0,166	0,575	0,604	0,892

In the discriminant validity testing, cross loading indicates good discriminant validity if each measurement item correlates weakly with another construct except for the ones to which it is theoretically associated (Suhartanto, 2020). In this study, the cross-loading for each construct is very low indicating good discriminant validity

#### 4. Data Analysis And Discussions

##### 4.1. Descriptive Analysis

In this study, the questionnaire was administered online to respondents. From the 161 responses gathered, a classification process was carried out to better analyze the characteristics of the respondents.

Table 4: Respondent Characteristics

Description	Amount	Percentage	
<b>Age Group</b>	Gen Z	90	55,9
	Millennials	60	37,3
	Boomers	11	6,8
<b>Occupation</b>	Workers	97	60,2
	Students	48	29,8
	Housewife	16	9,9
<b>Gender</b>	Male	94	58,4
	Female	67	41,6
<b>Nature Viral Destination Visited</b>	Sanghyang Kenit	24	14,9
	Sanghyang Heuleut	20	12,4
	Gunung Padang	12	7,5
	Pantai Ujung Genteng	14	8,7
	Gunung Papandayan	5	3,1
	Talaga Bodas	6	3,7
	Tahura Juanda	28	17,4
	Situ Panjalu	8	5,0
	Cukul	6	3,7
	Situ Gunung	4	2,5
	Curug Citambur	5	3,1
	Margawindu	13	8,1
	Lainya	16	9,9
<b>Visit Frequency</b>	First Time	142	88,2

	1-2 Times	17	10,6
	3-5 Times	2	1,2
<b>Information Source</b>	Instagram	48	29,8
	Tiktok	91	56,5
	Facebook	14	8,7
	Not from Social Media	8	5,0

#### 4.2. R Testing

Table 5: R Testing

<b>Construct</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>R Square Adjusted</b>
Satisfaction	0,527	0,518
Revisit Intention	0,704	0,696

**Source:** Authors

The magnitude of the influence of exogenous constructs on endogenous constructs can be observed in the adjusted R square values. According to Table 5, Satisfaction has an adjusted R square value of 0.518, indicating destination image, service quality, and experiential marketing collectively influences 51.8% of satisfaction. In other words, satisfaction is influenced by 51.8% from destination image, service quality, and experiential marketing, while 48.2% is influenced by other factors. On the other hand, Revisit Intention has an adjusted R square value of 0.696, meaning that destination image, service quality, experiential marketing, and satisfaction collectively influences 69.6% of revisit intention. This implies that 69.6% of behavioral intention is influenced by attitude, and 30.4% is influenced by other factors.

#### 4.3. Fit Model Testing

The Goodness of Fit test results are used to assess the overall quality of the research model (Suhartanto, 2020). There are three categories in calculating the Goodness of Fit value: small (0.10), medium (0.25), and large (0.36) (Suhartanto, 2020). In this research model, the Goodness of Fit results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Fit Model Testing

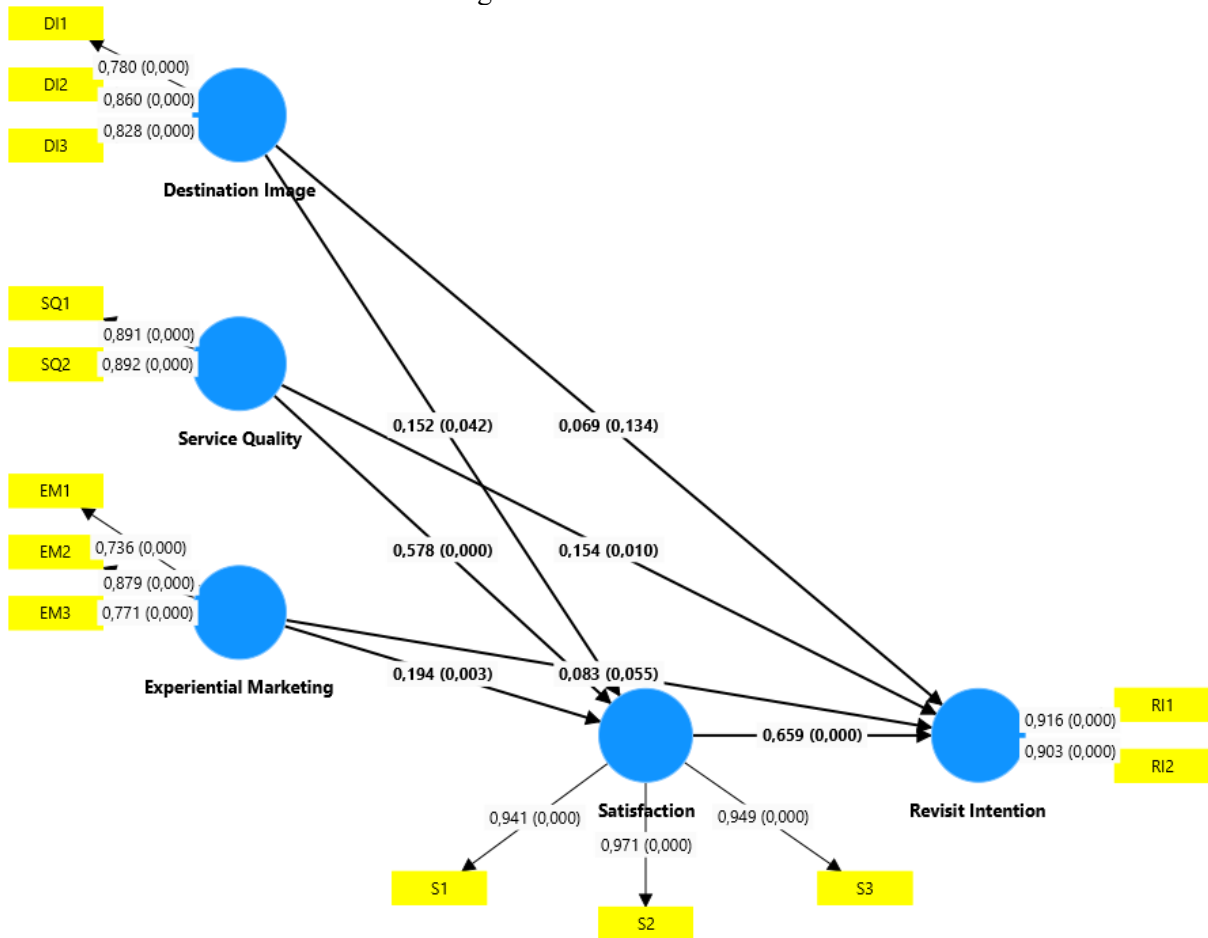
<b>Construct</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>
Destination Image	0,678	
Service Quality	0,795	
Experiential Marketing	0,636	
Satisfaction	0,909	0,527
Revisit Intention	0,827	0,704
Average	0,769	0,615
AVE x R <sup>2</sup>		0,473
GoF		0,688

**Source:** Authors

Based on Table 6, the Goodness of Fit (GoF) value for this study is 0.688, indicating a large category as it exceeds the value of 0.36. Thus, it can be concluded that the proposed model in this research is of very good quality and can be utilized.

#### 4.4. Hypothesis Testing

Figure 2: SmartPLS Model



Source: Authors

The hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping method to examine the significance of independent and dependent variables. At a 5% error level, a hypothesis is accepted if the t-statistic > 1.96 or p-value < 0.05 (Hair et al., 2017). The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Hypothesis Testing

	Hipotesis	Path Coefficient	P Value	Result
<b>H<sub>1</sub></b>	Destination Image -> Satisfaction	0,152	0,042	Significant
<b>H<sub>2</sub></b>	Service Quality -> Satisfaction	0,578	0,000	Significant
<b>H<sub>3</sub></b>	Experiential Marketing -> Satisfaction	0,194	0,003	Significant
<b>H<sub>4</sub></b>	Satisfaction -> Revisit Intention	0,659	0,000	Significant
<b>H<sub>5</sub></b>	Destination Image -> Revisit Intention	0,069	0,134	Not significant
<b>H<sub>6</sub></b>	Service Quality -> Revisit Intention	0,154	0,010	Significant
<b>H<sub>7</sub></b>	Experiential Marketing -> Revisit Intention	0,083	0,055	Not Significant

Source: Authors

From the results of the hypothesis testing, it can be inferred that almost all of the hypotheses have a significant impact since their respective p-values are below 0.05, indicating the acceptance of H1, H2, H3, H4, and H6. But, for H5 and H7 the p-value is more than 0.05, indicating the result is not significant for influence from satisfaction and destination image on revisit intention.

#### 4.5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the factors influencing revisit intention to viral nature destinations in West Java. The analysis reveals that Destination Image (X1), Service Quality (X2), and Experiential Marketing (X3) significantly impact Satisfaction (Z), which in turn positively affects Revisit Intention (Y). Additionally, Service Quality directly influences Revisit Intention, highlighting its critical role in fostering repeat visits. However, contrary to expectations, destination image and experiential marketing do not have a direct significant effect on Revisit Intention, suggesting a more nuanced relationship. This finding is consistent with recent findings in tourism research (Dewi et al., 2024; Maghrifani et al., 2021; Ramdhani & Astuti, 2019; Udurawana & Wanninayake, 2021). Service Quality, in particular, has emerged as the strongest determinant of both Satisfaction and Revisit Intention, indicating its central role in the customer experience (Andayani et al., 2021; Puri & Singh, 2019).

Destination Image significantly enhances tourist Satisfaction (Abbasi et al., 2021; Huete Alcocer & López Ruiz, 2020). A positive Destination Image shapes tourists' perceptions and expectations, leading to higher satisfaction levels when these expectations are met or exceeded. Similarly, Service Quality remains a paramount determinant of Satisfaction, aligning with the SERVQUAL model (Arlı et al., 2024; Parasuraman et al., 1988) and recent affirmations which emphasize that reliable and high-quality services are essential for ensuring visitor satisfaction (Amissah et al., 2022).

Experiential Marketing also plays a crucial role in shaping Satisfaction, as evidenced by the significant relationship found in this study. This aligns with the findings which argue that experiential marketing strategies that create memorable and engaging experiences significantly contribute to overall visitor satisfaction (Bramantoko & Maridjo, 2024; Urdea & Constantin, 2021). By focusing on creating immersive and interactive experiences, destinations can enhance the emotional and psychological satisfaction of tourists.

The strong positive relationship between Satisfaction and Revisit Intention corroborates the findings of recent research (Huang & Hsu, 2009; Nguyen Huu et al., 2024). Satisfied tourists are more likely to develop a positive attitude towards the destination, increasing their intention to revisit. Satisfaction serves as a mediator that translates the effects of Destination Image, Service Quality, and Experiential Marketing into concrete behavioral intentions, reinforcing the importance of maintaining high standards in these areas.

The significant direct effect of Service Quality on Revisit Intention highlights that beyond enhancing Satisfaction, high-quality services directly encourage tourists to return. This finding is supported by recent studies which emphasize that exceptional service quality can lead to increased loyalty and repeat visitation independently of overall satisfaction levels (Gholipour Soleimani & Einolahzadeh, 2018; Manyangara et al., 2023). This underscores the importance for destination managers to continuously improve service standards to retain visitors.

In the context of viral nature destinations, the findings of this study highlight the importance of maintaining and enhancing the natural appeal to complement service quality. While social media plays a vital role in popularizing these destinations, the long-term sustainability of such growth requires a focus on preserving the natural environment and offering high-quality services that enhance visitor experiences (Swati, 2019). Nature-based attractions often rely on their pristine beauty and serene atmosphere, which can be easily compromised by over-tourism driven by viral trends. Thus, it should be ensured that visitors do not diminish the natural allure, which is a significant component of the destination image. This aligns with recent discussions in ecotourism, where the balance between economic growth and environmental preservation is critical (Ali et al., 2023). By integrating sustainable practices with outstanding service quality, viral nature destinations can ensure that their appeal remains strong, encouraging tourists to return not just for the trends but for the enduring value of the experience itself (Nordin et al., 2023; Brochado & Pereira, 2017)

Contrary to the hypotheses, Destination Image (H5) and Experiential Marketing (H7) do not directly influence Revisit Intention. This suggests that while these factors are essential for shaping Satisfaction, they do not independently drive the intention to revisit. This outcome aligns with recent studies which

indicate that the influence of Destination Image and Experiential Marketing on repeat visitation is fully mediated by Satisfaction (Li et al., 2021; Reyes & Dael, 2023). It implies that enhancing Destination Image and Experiential Marketing should primarily aim at improving Satisfaction, which in turn fosters Revisit Intention.

Interestingly, the non-significant direct impact of Destination Image and Experiential Marketing on Revisit Intention suggests that satisfaction plays a critical mediating role. This aligns with a recent study which highlighted that although destination image is essential in forming initial perceptions, it does not always translate directly into revisit behavior (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). Similarly, experiential marketing may create memorable experiences, but it requires a positive satisfaction level to drive return visits (Boro, 2022; Huete Alcocer & López Ruiz, 2020). This indicates that satisfaction remains a key factor, mediating the effect of these variables on revisit intention.

#### Implications for Destination Management

The findings of this study have several practical implications for destination managers in West Java. Firstly, enhancing Service Quality should be a priority, as it not only boosts Satisfaction but also directly encourages repeat visits. This can be achieved through continuous training of service personnel, improving infrastructure, and ensuring consistency in service delivery.

Secondly, while Destination Image and Experiential Marketing are crucial for creating a positive perception and memorable experiences, their primary impact lies in elevating Satisfaction. Therefore, destination marketing strategies should focus on building a strong and appealing Destination Image and designing experiential activities that resonate with tourists' preferences to maximize Satisfaction.

Lastly, understanding that Satisfaction is a key mediator in fostering Revisit Intention suggests that efforts to enhance overall visitor experience should be comprehensive, addressing various aspects that contribute to tourist satisfaction. This holistic approach can effectively translate positive perceptions and experiences into loyal repeat visitors.

## 5. Conclusion, Recommendations And Limitations

The study concludes that service quality is the key factor influencing both tourist satisfaction and revisit intention at viral nature destinations in West Java, while destination image and experiential marketing significantly affect only satisfaction. This suggests that to increase revisit intentions, destination managers and tourism stakeholders should prioritize enhancing service quality through comprehensive training and consistent service improvements. While destination image and experiential marketing are important for boosting satisfaction, the focus should remain on delivering high-quality services to convert satisfaction into repeat visits, thus ensuring the long-term success of tourism in the region.

Future research should investigate additional factors that may moderate the relationships identified in this study, such as cultural differences, tourist motivations, and competitive dynamics among destinations. Moreover, exploring the impact of digital marketing and social media influence on these relationships could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the drivers behind Revisit Intention in the contemporary digital age.

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