

CULTIVATING TOURIST LOYALTY WITH THE VIBRANT RELATIONSHIP QUALITY (V-RQ) MODEL: INSIGHTS FROM MUSLIM FRIENDLY TOURISM DESTINATIONS

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Abstract

With the largest population, Indonesia is a promising market for Muslim-friendly tourism. However, the development of Muslim-friendly tourism in Indonesia is still suboptimal. To increase the number of tourists visiting Muslim-friendly tourism destinations, there is a need for the management of these destinations to formulate the right strategies. This can be done by focusing on customer relationship quality, which includes building trust and satisfaction. This study aims to test the relationship among destination coolness, tourist trust, and tourist satisfaction in determining tourist loyalty to visit Muslim-friendly tourism destinations. Three hundred and forty-two participants participated in this study. A covariance-based SEM technique with confirmatory factor analysis was used to analyze the data. The hypothesis test indicated that destination coolness, tourist trust, and tourist satisfaction are the determinants of tourist loyalty. In addition, this study found that tourist satisfaction and trust mediated the effect of destination coolness on tourist loyalty. Upon completing the research objectives, this study contributes to theoretical and practical perspectives.

Keywords: Destination Coolness; Tourist Trust; Tourist Satisfaction; Tourist Loyalty; Muslim-Friendly Tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest Muslim population in the world. As one of the countries with a Muslim majority, Indonesia has very promising market potential for Halal products. Tourism is a sector that has the potential to be developed in the Indonesian halal market. The variety of Indonesia's nature and culture are strengths for the development of Muslim-friendly tourism. Although it has many advantages and a large market, Indonesian Muslim-friendly tourism is yet to develop.

Many types of tourism in Indonesia cause competition between tourism sites to attract tourists. Therefore, there is a need for the management of tourism destinations, especially Muslim-friendly tourism destinations, to formulate the right strategy to increase the number of tourists visiting the Muslim-friendly tourism destinations.

The right strategies and programs will increase visitation by tourists and, in the end, create a more sustainable, sustainable destination for Muslim-friendly tourism.

To formulate strategies and attractive programs, the management of Muslim-friendly tourism destinations must be capable of understanding the behavior of tourists. Referring to the concept of *relationship quality* that has been used in studies of marketing, specifically marketing tourism, it is necessary for the management of Muslim-friendly tourism destinations to create loyalty among tourists.

Choi and Choi (2014) and Arslan (2020) explained that loyal consumers will repeat purchases and give recommendations or positive word of mouth about brands to other people. Tourists who are loyal to a particular destination will visit the destination in the future.

The Relationship Quality Model explains that to create loyalty, there is a need to create a strong connection between the consumer and marketer (Ndubisi, 2007; Reichheld, 1994; Ngoma and Ntale, 2019; Chang, 2021). The longer and stronger the relationship between consumer and marketer, the higher the quality of the connection.

Marketing literature suggests that customer trust is a key determinant of long-term customer relationships. Customers who believe that the marketer is capable of fulfilling their promise are more loyal than customers who do not believe in the marketer's capabilities. Apart from customer trust, satisfaction was also suggested to have a strong effect on creating loyalty (Ozdemir et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2022; Hamzah et al., 2021; Ahmad and Akbar, 2023).

While the idea of customer relationship quality has been tested widely, there is still a comment regarding this model. Scholars believe that image is also important in shaping individual behavior. In the context of tourism, a positive image will affect tourist behavior when revisiting the destination. In this current day, the image of coolness is interesting to investigate in the area of tourism.

This study aims to build a conceptual model to predict the loyalty of tourists visiting Muslim-friendly tourism destinations by integrating the customer relationship quality model and the notion of perceived destination coolness. Upon completion of the research objective, this study provides both theoretical and practical contributions. For a theoretical contribution, this study builds a conceptual model integrating the customer relationship quality model and the notion of destination coolness. For practical contribution, this study suggests a guideline for Muslim-friendly tourism destination management to enhance loyalty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourist Loyalty, or what is usually called tourist/customer loyalty (*customer loyalty*), is a customer's intention to revisit a destination or recommend it to other people through positive experiences and perceptions of that destination. In the context of service marketing, customer loyalty can be defined as a customer's willingness to build long-term relationships with a particular brand and recommend that brand to others.

The concept of customer loyalty is understood as a combination of customer preferences, attitudes, and behaviors, or repeat purchases. This is revealed through the customer's willingness to recommend the product or service to others and make repeat purchases.

Therefore, this research considers customer loyalty as a combination of attitudinal and behavioral loyalty.

Previous studies suggested that destination coolness significantly affects loyalty. Previous researchers found that the cooler the destination image, the more loyal tourists will be (Chen and Chou, 2019; Ridhani and Roostika, 2020; Jamshidi et al., 2023).

Apart from its positive effect on loyalty, destination coolness also has a significant positive effect on tourist trust. A destination that is seen as appealing by tourists will instill a belief in the tourist that the destination possesses the ability to deliver on its promised offerings. Similar to its effect on trust, destination coolness also has a significant positive significant effect on satisfaction. Based on the literature, it is predicted:

H1: Destination coolness has a significant positive effect on tourist loyalty.

H2: Destination coolness has a significant positive effect on tourist trust.

H3: Destination image has a significant positive effect on tourist satisfaction.

Besides destination coolness, tourist loyalty is also affected by tourist trust. Previous research revealed that tourist trust significantly affects tourist loyalty. The more believe travelers to the ability of destination management to fulfil promises delivered, the more loyal tourist will be.

Similar to the tourist trust, tourist satisfaction is also outlined as a significant influence on loyalty. Satisfied tourists to the destination visited will increase the loyal (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000; Chen and Tsai, 2007). Based on the description the

H4: Tourist trust has a significant positive effect on tourist loyalty.

H5: Tourist satisfaction has a significant positive effect on tourist loyalty.

Previous studies showed that destination coolness has positive and significant effects on both tourist trust and tourist satisfaction. In addition, this study indicated that both tourist trust and satisfaction are important determinants of tourist loyalty. For that reason, there is a possibility that tourist trust and satisfaction mediate the effect of destination coolness on tourist loyalty. For that reason,

H6: Tourist trust mediates the effect of the coolness of the destination image on tourist loyalty.

H7: Tourist satisfaction mediates the effect of cool destination image on tourist loyalty.

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual model tested in this study.

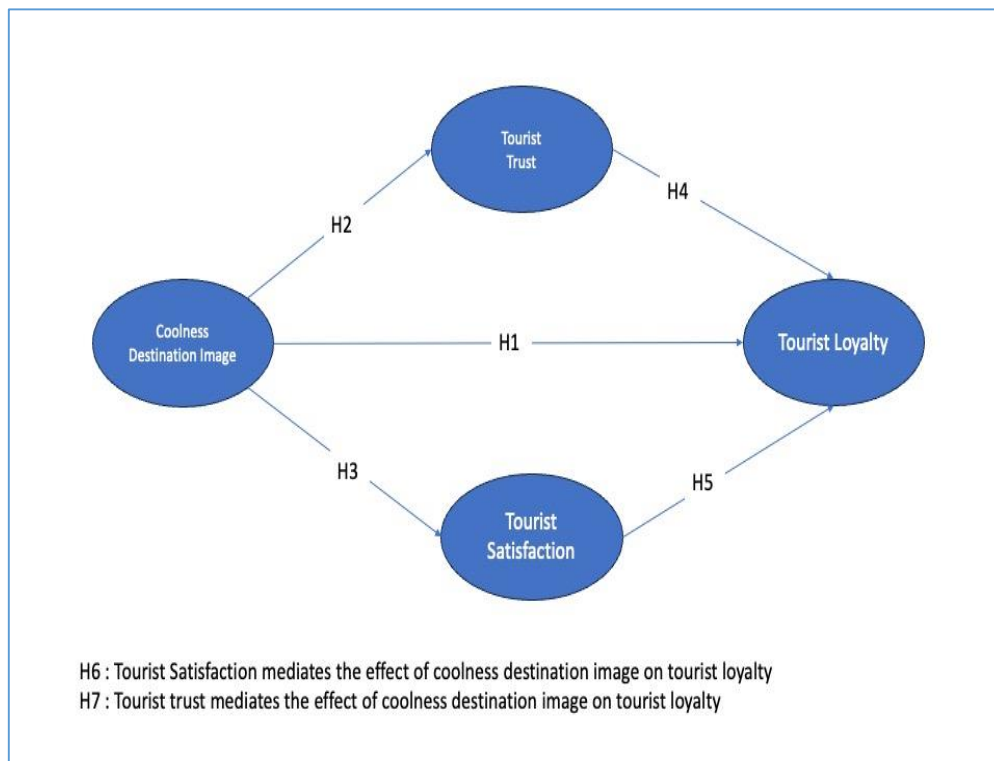


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

METHOD

An explanatory research design with self-administered questionnaires was used to answer the proposed research objectives. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section asked about the demographics of respondents, and the second section asked about the variables investigated. A five-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) was used in this study. The measures were adapted from several previous studies. For this study, three hundred and forty-two participants were recruited from several Muslim-friendly tourism destinations in East Java Province, Indonesia, using a purposive sampling technique.

Covariance-based SEM (CBSEM) analysis with the maximum likelihood method was employed in this study. In analyzing the data, a confirmatory analysis was conducted to determine the robustness of the model. The fit of the model was reflected in three fit indices. They were absolute fit indexes (Goodness of Fit/GoF and Root mean square error of approximation/RMSEA), incremental fit indexes (Normed Fit Index/NFI and Comparative Fit Index), and parsimonious fit indexes (Normed Square and Parsimony Goodness-of-Fit Index/PGFI). The cut-off values for GFI, NFI, and CFI are above 0.9; normed square less than 2, PGFI is more than 0.5, and RMSEA is less than 0.08 (Kline, 2005). Upon the completion of CFA, the hypothesis test was performed.

RESULTS

Prior to testing the proposed hypothesis, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed. The results of CFA indicated that the model was marginally fit, as some indicators were accepted while others were close to being fit (RMSEA = 0.087; GFI = 0.838; NFI = 0.875; CFI = 0.902; TLI = 0.886). To confirm the robustness of the proposed model, this study also tested model validity and reliability.

The validity test showed that all indicators had factor loadings above 0.6 and AVEs greater than 0.5. These findings mean the model is free from convergent validity problems. Apart from the convergent validity problem, this study also tested discriminant validity. The discriminant validity test showed that the correlation among constructs was less than 0.85. Thus, there are no discriminant validity problems.

In addition to validity, this study evaluated model reliability. The score of Cronbach's alpha varies between 0.882 and 0.906. As Cronbach's alpha for each variable has been above 0.7, the model is free from reliability problems. Table 1 summarizes the results of validity and reliability tests.

Table 1: Validity and Reliability Analysis

	Indicators	Factor Loading	AVE	Alpha	Correlation			
					TS	TL	TT	CDI
Tourist Satisfaction	TS1	0.786	0.66	0.884		0,781	0,806	0,635
	TS2	0.841						
	TS3	0.852						
	TS4	0.768						
Tourist Loyalty	TL1	0.786	0.62	0.866			0,840	0,737
	TL2	0.769						
	TL3	0.849						
	TL4	0.743						
Tourist Trust	TT1	0.799	0.602	0.882				0,650
	TT2	0.712						
	TT3	0.774						
	TT4	0.824						
	TT5	0.765						
Coolness Destination Image	CDI1	0.763	0.618	0.906				
	CDI2	0.846						
	CDI3	0.798						
	CDI4	0.803						
	CDI5	0.754						
	CDI6	0.750						

After completing CFA, seven hypotheses were tested in this study. The following sections discuss the results of hypothesis tests.

Hypothesis 1 predicted the effect of the coolness of the destination image on tourist loyalty. The statistical analysis showed that cool destination image has a significant positive effect on tourist loyalty ($b = 0.261$; $t = 4.3820$). It means Hypothesis 1 is supported. Apart from its effect

on tourist loyalty, cool destination image was predicted to have a significant positive effect on tourist trust, as suggested by Hypothesis 2. The results indicated that the coolness of the destination image significantly affected tourist trust ($b = 0.681$; $t = 10.848$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported. Similar to its effect on both tourist trust and tourist loyalty, this study revealed the effect of cool destination image on tourist satisfaction as proposed by Hypothesis 3 ($b = 0.625$; $t = 10.613$). Hypothesis 4 suggests the effect of tourist trust on tourist loyalty. The hypothesis test found that tourist trust has a significant positive effect on tourist loyalty ($b = 0.467$; $t = 6.838$). Similar to the effect of tourist trust on tourist loyalty, this study suggested the effect of tourist satisfaction on tourist loyalty ($b = 0.250$; $t = 3.861$). Hence, hypothesis 5 is supported. Hypothesis 6 and 7 tested the mediating role of tourist trust and satisfaction in the relationship between destination coolness image and tourist loyalty. The mediation analysis found that tourist trust ($b = 0.308$; $p = 0.000$) and tourist satisfaction ($b = 0.156$; $t = 0.000$) mediate the effect of cool destination image on tourist loyalty. Thus, hypotheses 6 and 7 are supported.

CONCLUSION

Seven hypotheses were tested in this study. Based on the hypotheses test, it can be concluded that destination coolness, tourist trust, and tourist satisfaction are the predictors of Muslim-friendly tourist destination loyalty. In addition, it revealed that, apart from its direct effect on tourist loyalty, destination coolness has indirect effects on tourist loyalty through both tourist trust and satisfaction. Hence, the effect of destination coolness on tourist loyalty is the sum of direct and indirect effects.

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