



Reinforcing Ecotourism Sustainability through Service Quality, Experiential Marketing, and Digital Engagement: Evidence from Nyaru Menteng Urban Forest, Indonesia

Sugandhie^{1*}, Yokie Radnan Kristiyono²

Faculty of Economics and Business, Pelita Harapan University

Corresponding Author: Sugandhie sugandhiesby@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Ecotourism; Service Quality; Experiential Marketing; Customer Satisfaction; Revisit Intention

Received : 29, December

Revised : 30, January

Accepted: 26, February

©2026 Sugandhie, Kristiyono: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of service quality and experiential marketing on revisit intention at Nyaru Menteng Urban Forest, Indonesia, with customer satisfaction as a mediating variable and social media engagement and user-generated content as moderating variables. Using a quantitative explanatory approach, data were collected from visitors through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings reveal that service quality and experiential marketing significantly influence customer satisfaction, which in turn positively affects revisit intention. Furthermore, social media engagement and user-generated content strengthen the relationships among satisfaction, service perceptions, and revisit intention. These results highlight the importance of integrating service excellence, experiential value, and digital engagement to support sustainable ecotourism development, particularly within urban conservation destinations.

INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism has gained increasing attention as an approach capable of harmonizing environmental conservation with community welfare. In regions where biodiversity is exceptionally rich, ecotourism offers a pathway to sustain ecological resources while providing educational and recreational benefits for visitors. Central Kalimantan is one such region, hosting extensive tropical peat forests and endemic wildlife, including Pongo pygmaeus and Nasalis larvatus. According to the Central Kalimantan Statistics Agency (2024), more than 3.6 million hectares of the province's land area remains forested, illustrating not only its ecological importance but also its substantial capacity for conservation-based tourism. Within this landscape, the Nyaru Menteng Urban Forest in Palangka Raya presents a distinctive case: a former arboretum and orangutan rescue center that has been redefined as a public urban ecotourism destination. With its unique peat ecosystem and location within an urban corridor, Nyaru Menteng carries the potential to become a model of accessible, community-oriented conservation.

Despite this promise, the revitalization of Nyaru Menteng has not been without challenges. Visitor numbers remain modest compared to the site's spatial capacity, and early observations indicate persistent issues related to cleanliness, interpretive signage, and supporting facilities. These concerns echo gaps in service quality, particularly in the tangibles and responsiveness dimensions described by Parasuraman et al. (1988). Such gaps can affect the overall visitor experience, ultimately influencing satisfaction and reducing the likelihood of return visits. Given that revisit intention is widely regarded as a cornerstone of destination sustainability (Han et al., 2010), ensuring consistently high service quality becomes essential for the long-term viability of this urban ecotourism site.

Alongside service quality, the role of experiential marketing has become increasingly prominent in shaping visitor perceptions and behaviors. Schmitt's (1999) experiential framework highlights five dimensions that collectively enrich the visitor experience beyond purely functional aspects. Previous studies have shown that memorable experiences substantially influence satisfaction and positive behavioral outcomes, including word of mouth and repeat visitation (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013; Quynh et al., 2021). However, existing research has predominantly focused on commercial tourism settings such as hospitality and theme parks. Ecotourism sites embedded in conservation settings, particularly urban forests, have received far less scholarly attention. This gap underscores the need to understand how experiential elements operate in environments where authenticity, educational value, and environmental awareness are central aspects of the visitor experience.

Visitor satisfaction itself plays a crucial role as a mediating factor. Expectancy-disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1980) explains satisfaction as an outcome derived from comparing initial expectations with actual experiences. In ecotourism, this evaluative process is more complex, as visitors often seek environmental learning, emotional connection to nature, and interactions with local culture. Alegre and Garau (2010) highlight that satisfaction in such contexts is shaped not only by service performance but also by the perceived meaning and environmental value of the experience. While the mediating role of satisfaction

has been widely examined across tourism sectors, studies specifically addressing this mechanism within urban forest ecotourism remain limited.

The rapid integration of digital platforms into tourism behavior adds further relevance to this research. Social media engagement, understood as cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement with digital content (Hollebeek et al., 2014), has become a significant component of visitors' post-experience expressions. Through actions such as liking, commenting, and sharing content, visitors extend their offline experience into the digital environment. Earlier research indicates that digital engagement may strengthen perceptions of service quality and emotional bonds with destinations (Hudson et al., 2015; Brodie et al., 2011). Yet empirical findings concerning its moderating effect remain mixed, signaling the need for context-specific investigation.

Likewise, user-generated content (UGC) plays an influential role in shaping destination image and behavioral intention. Because UGC is perceived as credible and experience-based, it often exerts stronger influence than official promotional material (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Christodoulides et al., 2012). In ecotourism settings, UGC has been shown to highlight environmental authenticity and conservation narratives (Ayeh et al., 2013), potentially reinforcing the connection between satisfaction and revisit intention. Nonetheless, few studies have positioned UGC as a moderating variable within an integrated behavioral model, especially in Indonesia's conservation-oriented tourism sites.

Against this backdrop, the present study aims to examine the influence of service quality and experiential marketing on revisit intention at Nyaru Menteng Urban Forest, with customer satisfaction as a mediator and social media engagement and user-generated content as moderators. This model offers several contributions. First, it extends existing literature by situating well-established service and experiential constructs in an urban conservation context that remains underrepresented in tourism scholarship. Second, it clarifies how satisfaction functions as a central evaluative mechanism in environments where environmental and educational values are pivotal. Third, by incorporating social media engagement and user-generated content, the study reflects contemporary shifts in how visitors interpret and share their tourism experiences.

Overall, examining these interrelated variables provides both theoretical enrichment and practical insights for strengthening ecotourism sustainability. For Nyaru Menteng Urban Forest, improving service quality, enhancing experiential elements, and leveraging digital engagement may provide a strategic foundation for building stronger visitor loyalty and supporting long-term conservation outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service Quality

Service quality is a central concept in services marketing that reflects consumers' evaluations of how well a service meets or exceeds their expectations. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) explain that service quality is formed through five key dimensions tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy which together provide a comprehensive evaluative framework for

both physical and nonphysical aspects of service interactions. In the tourism context, service quality is assessed not only through physical facilities but also through the interactions between tourists and service providers. Consequently, service quality becomes a fundamental factor influencing visitor satisfaction and behavioral outcomes.

Previous research demonstrates that service quality maintains a positive relationship with customer satisfaction, particularly in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Alfattahu et al. (2025) highlight that consistent and responsive service delivery enhances visitors' perceptions of provider professionalism. Additionally, clarity of information and staff friendliness have become increasingly essential in the highly competitive tourism landscape. Tourists often perceive service quality as a reflection of the overall image of the destination. Thus, service quality serves as a key element in creating positive visitor experiences.

In the context of ecotourism, evaluating service quality becomes more complex because it involves elements of conservation, sustainability, and education. Tribe and Snaith (1998) emphasize that tourists assess destinations not only based on facilities but also on environmental ambience and perceived value. For conservation-based destinations, the delivery of educational information and staff commitment to environmental stewardship serve as additional indicators of service quality. This makes the standards of service quality in ecotourism distinct from those in commercial destinations. Hence, service quality in ecotourism requires a multidimensional approach that integrates physical, functional, and ecological aspects.

Experiential Marketing

Experiential marketing emphasizes the creation of holistic consumer experiences through sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and social stimuli. Schmitt (1999) introduced five core experiential dimensions—sense, feel, think, act, and relate—which collectively shape meaningful and memorable experiences. This concept emerged as a response to traditional marketing approaches that focused primarily on functional attributes. In tourism, experiential marketing is highly relevant because visitors seek unique, irreplaceable experiences. Therefore, experiential marketing has become an effective strategy for enhancing perceived value in tourism settings.

Previous studies indicate that experiential marketing significantly influences tourist satisfaction. Schmitt and Zarantonello (2013) found that emotional and sensory experiences play central roles in creating positive tourism memories. Similarly, Quynh, Hoai, and Loi (2021) reported that creative and interactive experiences contribute to higher satisfaction and positive word of mouth. In ecotourism, experiences that resonate with ecological values have an even greater impact on visitor evaluations. Accordingly, experiential marketing becomes a key determinant shaping perceptions and loyalty among ecotourists.

Tourist experiences in ecotourism destinations typically involve interactions with nature, environmental education, and social engagement. Morgan, Lugosi, and Ritchie (2010) assert that social interactions—such as

encounters with local communities—enhance the relational dimension of experiential marketing. Visitors not only enjoy natural beauty but also acquire a deeper understanding of conservation. Environmental interpretation activities further strengthen the think dimension by enriching cognitive engagement. These characteristics demonstrate that experiential marketing in ecotourism is inherently more educational and reflective than in mass tourism.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction refers to a holistic evaluation conducted by customers after comparing their initial expectations with the experience. Oliver (1997) states that satisfaction is shaped by both cognitive and emotional processes, making it inherently multidimensional. In tourism, visitor satisfaction arises not only from service encounters but also from environmental conditions and social interactions within the destination. Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2018) note that satisfaction functions as a key long-term indicator of service success. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of tourist satisfaction is essential for destination management.

A large body of research shows that service quality and experiential marketing are primary drivers of tourist satisfaction. Han and Hyun (2015) emphasize that tourists evaluate destinations holistically, including service interactions, ambience, and experiential value. In ecotourism, educational value and authenticity play important roles in shaping satisfaction. Visitors who perceive ecological benefits and learning outcomes tend to express higher levels of satisfaction. These findings reinforce the role of satisfaction as a central variable in visitor behavior.

Satisfaction functions not only as an outcome but also as a predictor of post-visit behavior. Chen and Chen (2010) report that satisfied tourists are more likely to revisit or recommend a destination to others. In ecotourism, satisfaction also encourages tourist participation in conservation-related activities. Lee (2009) found that satisfied visitors exhibit stronger emotional attachment to nature-based destinations. Thus, satisfaction becomes a strategic element for sustaining destination competitiveness and long-term ecological stewardship.

Revisit Intention

Revisit intention reflects the likelihood that tourists will return to a destination in the future. Hellier et al. (2003) describe revisit intention as a behavioral manifestation of loyalty. In tourism, revisit intention is an important indicator of destination success because retaining existing visitors is more cost-effective than attracting new ones. Kozak (2001) emphasizes that loyalty contributes significantly to destination stability and competitiveness. Therefore, understanding the determinants of revisit intention is vital for destination development.

Tourist satisfaction has been widely recognized as a dominant predictor of revisit intention. Han, Hsu, and Sheu (2010) found that positive experiences shape tourists' preferences for future visits. In addition to satisfaction, emotional attachment and involvement can enhance revisit intentions. Meleddu, Pulina, and Usai (2015) highlight that ecotourism visitors often exhibit higher levels of

loyalty due to the sustainability values embedded in their experiences. This underscores the importance of environmental value in shaping revisit intention.

In the digital era, revisit intention is also influenced by online information and digital tourism experiences. Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan (2008) show that online reviews significantly shape tourists' perceptions of destinations. Positive online experiences reinforce offline impressions and can strengthen revisit intention. These dynamics illustrate that revisit intention is influenced by both physical and digital interactions. Hence, destinations need to ensure consistency between online and offline experiences.

Social Media Engagement

Social media engagement refers to the extent to which tourists interact with destination-related content through digital platforms. Brodie et al. (2011) define engagement as a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral process that occurs when users actively interact with content or digital communities. Activities such as liking, commenting, and sharing represent meaningful forms of engagement. In tourism, social media enables visitors to prolong and expand their experiences beyond the physical destination. Therefore, social media engagement has become an increasingly important variable in understanding modern tourist behavior.

Studies show that social media engagement can strengthen tourists' perceptions of destinations. Hudson et al. (2015) found that digital engagement enhances visitors' emotional connection to a destination. Online activities allow tourists to maintain relationships with destinations even after their visit has ended. This ongoing interaction can reinforce positive evaluations of their experiences. Consequently, digital engagement plays a crucial role in shaping loyalty.

As a moderating variable, social media engagement has the potential to strengthen the relationship between service quality and satisfaction. Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie (2014) explain that digital engagement deepens tourists' cognitive and emotional involvement with a destination. When visitors encounter content that aligns with their offline experiences, positive evaluations are reinforced. In ecotourism, digital content emphasizing conservation and environmental education can enrich visitors' experiences. Therefore, social media engagement represents a strategic communication tool for destination managers.

User-Generated Content

User-generated content (UGC) refers to digital content created by users, including reviews, photos, and videos. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) note that UGC is influential because it is perceived as authentic and based on firsthand experiences. In tourism, visitors often rely on UGC as a trusted source of information, more credible than official promotional materials. Christodoulides et al. (2012) emphasize that UGC significantly contributes to shaping destination image. Consequently, UGC has become an increasingly important variable in understanding tourist behavior.

Prior research indicates that UGC affects value perceptions and tourist decision-making. Ayeh, Au, and Law (2013) found that trust in user-generated

content increases tourists' willingness to visit a destination. This influence arises because UGC is viewed as a truthful representation of real experiences. In ecotourism, content emphasizing natural beauty and conservation efforts is perceived as highly persuasive. Thus, UGC plays a crucial role in promoting sustainability-oriented tourism.

As a moderating variable, UGC can strengthen the relationship between satisfaction and revisit intention. Fotis, Buhalis, and Rossides (2012) highlight that satisfied tourists are more likely to share positive content, which in turn reinforces their intention to revisit. UGC also acts as a digital reminder of enjoyable past experiences. Moreover, shared content can motivate other tourists to visit the destination. Therefore, UGC serves as a strategic mechanism that amplifies satisfaction's influence on post-visit behaviors.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships among the variables, namely service quality, experiential marketing, customer satisfaction, revisit intention, and the moderating variables of social media engagement and user-generated content. This design was selected because it allows for the investigation of both direct and indirect effects through mediation and moderation mechanisms. Explanatory designs are particularly suitable when the variables under study are theoretically grounded and require empirical validation. Moreover, the quantitative approach enables objective measurement of constructs through structured instruments. Accordingly, the chosen design provides systematic and measurable empirical evidence appropriate for behavioral research in tourism.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all visitors to Nyaru Menteng Urban Forest who had visited the site within the past year. Because the exact population size could not be determined, a non-probability sampling technique was adopted, specifically purposive sampling. Respondents were required to be at least 17 years old and to have experienced the services and facilities offered at the study site. This sampling technique was deemed appropriate because it ensured the selection of respondents who were directly relevant to the research variables. The sample size followed the recommendations for PLS-SEM analysis, which require a minimum of ten times the largest number of structural paths directed at a construct; thus, a minimum of 150 respondents met the analytical requirements.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected using a structured, closed-ended questionnaire distributed to visitors who met the inclusion criteria. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale to facilitate respondents' assessment of each indicator. Distribution was conducted both on-site and through digital survey links to reach visitors who had previously visited the destination. Before formal data collection, a pilot test was administered to ensure clarity of wording and

comprehension of the indicators. This procedure aligns with commonly accepted practices in tourism and consumer behavior research.

Research Instruments

The research instruments were developed based on established theoretical foundations and previously validated measurement scales. Service quality was measured using indicators adapted from Parasuraman et al. (1988), which include tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Experiential marketing was measured using the sense, feel, think, act, and relate dimensions proposed by Schmitt (1999). Customer satisfaction utilized evaluative indicators derived from Oliver's (1997) conceptualization of satisfaction, while revisit intention relied on behavioral intention items developed by Hellier et al. (2003). The moderating variables—social media engagement and user-generated content—were measured using indicators adapted from Hollebeek et al. (2014) and Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), respectively.

Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the latest version of SmartPLS. This method was chosen because it is capable of handling complex models involving multiple latent constructs, numerous indicators, and both mediating and moderating effects. Additionally, PLS-SEM does not require normally distributed data, making it highly suitable for tourism studies where sample distributions often deviate from normality. The analysis consisted of two primary stages: evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and evaluation of the structural model (inner model). Path significance was assessed using the bootstrapping procedure.

Validity and Reliability Testing

Construct validity was assessed through convergent validity, evaluated using outer loadings ≥ 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ≥ 0.50 . Discriminant validity was examined using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio with a threshold of ≤ 0.90 , ensuring that constructs were conceptually distinct. Reliability was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability, with acceptable values set at 0.70 or higher. The results indicated that all indicators met the criteria for validity and reliability; therefore, the measurement instruments were deemed appropriate for structural analysis.

Analytical Model

The analytical model included the direct effects of service quality and experiential marketing on customer satisfaction and revisit intention. Customer satisfaction was tested as a mediating variable in its relationship with revisit intention. The moderating variables—social media engagement and user-generated content—were included to examine whether digital interactions strengthen the relationships among the constructs. Moderation testing employed the product-indicator approach combined with bootstrapping to determine the

significance of interaction effects. This model allowed for a comprehensive understanding of ecotourism visitor behavior within the context of Nyaru Menteng Urban Forest.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Evaluation of the Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The evaluation of the measurement model was conducted to ensure that the indicators consistently represented their respective latent constructs. The results show that all variables met the reliability criteria, with Composite Reliability (CR) values ranging from 0.863 to 0.966 and Cronbach's Alpha values largely exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. Although the customer satisfaction construct recorded a slightly lower alpha of 0.692, its CR value remained within the acceptable range, indicating adequate internal consistency. These findings confirm that the indicators reliably measure their intended constructs and are suitable for inclusion in the structural model.



Figure 1. Results of the Second Model Construction

Regarding convergent validity, most constructs surpassed the minimum Average Variance Extracted (AVE) criterion of ≥ 0.50 , including customer satisfaction, revisit intention, social media engagement, and user-generated content. Two variables fell slightly below this threshold. However, according to Hair et al. (2021), constructs with $AVE < 0.50$ may still be retained if $CR > 0.70$, which applies to both variables in this study. Discriminant validity was also achieved based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT values below 0.90, demonstrating conceptual distinctiveness among constructs.

Table 1. Summary of Construct Validity and Reliability

Variable	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha	Results
Service Quality	0.414	0.907	0.896	Reliable; AVE < 0.50
Experiential Marketing	0.421	0.865	0.828	Reliable; AVE < 0.50
Customer Satisfaction	0.527	0.814	0.692	Valid & Reliable
Revisit Intention	0.734	0.892	0.819	Valid & Reliable
Social Media Engagement	0.852	0.966	0.957	Valid & Reliable
User-Generated Content	0.621	0.863	0.788	Valid & Reliable

Evaluation of the Structural Model (Inner Model)

The structural model was assessed using collinearity diagnostics, coefficients of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), path significance, and Goodness of Fit (GoF). All VIF values were below 5, indicating no multicollinearity issues that could compromise model estimation. The R^2 values for the endogenous constructs further demonstrate strong explanatory power, particularly for revisit intention.

Table 2. R-Square Values of Endogenous Constructs

Endogenous Variable	R^2	Interpretation
Customer Satisfaction	0.451	Moderate
Revisit Intention	0.622	Strong

The R^2 value of 0.622 for revisit intention indicates that the independent, mediating, and moderating variables collectively explain 62.2% of the variance in revisit behavior. Additionally, the GoF value of 0.5083, which exceeds the threshold of 0.36, suggests that the model demonstrates strong and empirically adequate goodness of fit (

Hypothesis Testing (Direct, Mediation, and Moderation Effects)

Hypothesis testing was performed using a bootstrapping procedure of 5000 subsamples, in line with PLS-SEM recommendations. The results indicate that most hypothesized relationships are supported, although some pathways did not yield significant effects.

Table 3. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Code	Hypothesis	Result
H1	Service quality → customer satisfaction	Supported
H2	Experiential marketing → customer satisfaction	Supported
H3	Service quality → revisit intention	Not supported
H4	Experiential marketing → revisit intention	Supported
H5	Customer satisfaction → revisit intention	Supported
H6	Mediation of CS between service quality → revisit intention	Not supported
H7	Mediation of CS between experiential marketing → revisit intention	Supported
H8	Moderation of social media engagement on service quality → CS	Not supported
H9	Moderation of UGC on CS → revisit intention	Not supported

The findings reveal that both service quality and experiential marketing play important roles in shaping visitor satisfaction. Experiential marketing emerges as the strongest predictor of both satisfaction and revisit intention, underscoring the significance of emotional, sensory, and cognitive experiences in ecotourism settings. By contrast, the direct effect of service quality on revisit intention is not significant, suggesting that service improvements alone are insufficient to encourage return visits unless accompanied by meaningful experiential components.

Customer satisfaction is confirmed as a central predictor of revisit intention and serves as an effective mediator in the relationship between experiential marketing and revisit behavior. However, mediation was not supported for the service quality pathway, indicating that improvements in service performance do not necessarily translate into satisfaction levels substantial enough to drive

repeat visitation. Furthermore, the moderating variables—social media engagement and user-generated content—did not exhibit significant strengthening effects. This implies that digital interactions among visitors remain relatively weak and do not meaningfully influence their perceptions of service quality or their revisit intentions.

DISCUSSION

The Influence of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction

The findings demonstrate that service quality exerts a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction, reinforcing the foundational propositions established by Parasuraman et al. (1988) that tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy shape how visitors interpret service performance. This aligns with previous evidence in tourism studies showing that high service quality consistently enhances tourist satisfaction across diverse contexts (Chen & Chen, 2010; Wu & Li, 2017). Within ecotourism settings, reliable and empathetic service delivery strengthens visitors' sense of security, comfort, and appreciation, which contributes to a more positive overall experience (Lee, 2009). Well-maintained facilities, staff who demonstrate environmental knowledge, and clear interpretive information all help shape favorable evaluations of nature-based destinations (Zhang et al., 2020). Thus, the present study supports established literature suggesting that service quality remains a core determinant of satisfaction even in low-contact tourism environments.

Recent research further emphasizes that service quality in natural destinations plays a crucial role in enabling restorative experiences. Sthapit and Björk (2020) found that visitors rely on service elements to facilitate engagement with the environment, while Abdullah et al. (2021) reported that service quality in urban forests contributes to psychological recovery and emotional stability. These findings imply that service quality supports not only functional comfort but also emotional outcomes that strengthen satisfaction. In sustainable tourism, quality service is increasingly framed as a means of enhancing educational and interpretive experiences rather than merely ensuring operational efficiency (Kim et al., 2019; Tiberghien, 2021). Hence, the significant relationship observed in this study likely reflects the synergy between supportive service elements and the intrinsic value of natural environments.

However, the findings also indicate that service quality, while important, is not the dominant predictor of satisfaction. Prior studies on ecotourism note that emotionally rich and meaningful experiences tend to outweigh technical aspects of service performance (Ballantyne et al., 2011; Packer & Ballantyne, 2016). Visitors to conservation-oriented destinations typically seek authenticity, learning, and sensory immersion dimensions that service quality alone cannot deliver. This helps explain why service quality was significant yet comparatively weaker than experiential marketing in predicting satisfaction. Thus, service quality should be viewed as a necessary foundation rather than the primary driver of satisfaction in ecotourism contexts.

The Influence of Experiential Marketing on Customer Satisfaction

The results confirm that experiential marketing exerts a strong and

significant influence on customer satisfaction, underscoring the central role of sensory, emotional, cognitive, and relational experiences. This finding supports the experiential framework advanced by Schmitt (1999), which posits that holistic experience encompassing sense, feel, think, act, and relate – creates substantial value for visitors. Empirical evidence consistently shows that emotional engagement and memorable encounters are key determinants of satisfaction in tourism (Gentile et al., 2007; Hosany & Gilbert, 2010). In ecotourism, experiential value emerges through direct interaction with nature, environmental learning, and immersive exploration (Keng & Ting, 2009; Tonge & Moore, 2019). Therefore, the strong effect observed here is consistent with theoretical and empirical expectations regarding the role of experience in shaping tourist evaluations.

The superiority of experiential marketing over service quality in predicting satisfaction mirrors findings from Oh et al. (2007), who noted that experiential elements often outweigh service performance in shaping visitor responses. Nature-based tourism particularly amplifies this effect, as visitors' emotions and cognitive engagement with the environment strongly influence satisfaction (Ballantyne & Packer, 2011; Kim & Park, 2020). Deep emotional involvement forms enduring memories, which consequently elevate satisfaction levels (Manthiou et al., 2016). Given that visitors of urban forests seek tranquility, sensory richness, and meaningful contact with nature, experiential marketing becomes a central mechanism driving their evaluations.

Experiential marketing is also closely associated with perceived value, especially when visitors encounter unique and meaningful moments (Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Even when physical facilities are limited, authentic environmental experiences can significantly raise perceived value and satisfaction (Zatori et al., 2018; Ali et al., 2021). This dynamic is evident in the context of this study, where sensory experiences – forest ambience, wildlife encounters, interpretive storytelling, and conservation messages likely overshadow technical service attributes. Thus, experiential marketing emerges as a decisive factor in driving satisfaction in modern, experience-driven ecotourism.

The Direct Influence of Service Quality and Experiential Marketing on Revisit Intention

The study reveals that experiential marketing significantly predicts revisit intention, whereas service quality does not exhibit a direct effect. This pattern is in line with research suggesting that emotional and experiential engagement exerts stronger behavioral influence than technical service performance (Jiang et al., 2016; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). Meaningful experiences foster psychological attachment and place bonding, which are key determinants of behavioral loyalty in natural destinations (Ramkissoon et al., 2013). In contrast, service quality often shapes immediate evaluations but fails to produce long-term behavioral intentions unless paired with strong experiential components (Ali et al., 2016; Wong & Qi, 2020). This distinction helps explain why service quality in the present study did not directly drive revisit intention.

Earlier findings in ecotourism also highlight that revisit intention is strongly shaped by affective responses and perceptions of sustainability rather than service attributes (Kim & Thapa, 2018; Tan et al., 2022). Nature-based

destinations typically evoke emotional resonance, which encourages visitors to return for further restorative or learning experiences (Tseng et al., 2015). Service quality becomes influential only when interactions with staff or facilities constitute a major part of the experience, such as in hospitality settings (Tasci, 2018). In a forest-based attraction like Nyaru Menteng, however, visitors' primary engagement is with nature itself rather than service providers, making experiential marketing more influential.

These findings underscore the need for management strategies that focus on enhancing interpretive and immersive experiences rather than solely improving technical service processes. Ballantyne et al. (2011) argue that interpretive programs and conservation-oriented messaging deepen emotional and cognitive engagement, which in turn cultivate loyalty. Thus, improving experiential offerings—such as guided walks, interactive exhibitions, and sensory-based activities—may yield stronger impacts on revisit intention than enhancements in conventional service quality.

The Mediating Role of Customer Satisfaction

The present study confirms that customer satisfaction mediates the effect of experiential marketing on revisit intention, but not the effect of service quality. This pattern supports earlier research indicating that experiential value strongly shapes satisfaction, which subsequently leads to behavioral loyalty (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Packer & Ballantyne, 2012). Ecotourism experiences often carry emotional and transformational components, making satisfaction an important conduit between experience and behavioral outcomes (Kang & Gretzel, 2012). In contrast, service quality typically generates functional satisfaction, which may not be sufficient to trigger revisit intentions unless experiences are meaningful and memorable (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

The absence of mediation on the service quality pathway is consistent with literature on low-contact or nature-based tourism, where environmental immersion rather than service performance drives satisfaction and loyalty (Loureiro, 2014; Kiatkawsin & Han, 2017). Even when good services are provided, they do not necessarily lead to the high emotional satisfaction needed to influence revisit intention (Su & Swanson, 2019). Therefore, satisfaction derived from experiential stimuli—not service attributes—serves as the more potent mechanism linking visitors' evaluations to their behavioral intentions.

This finding suggests that enhancing satisfaction in ecotourism requires integrating emotional, cognitive, and educational dimensions of the visitor experience. Experience-driven satisfaction is more relevant for influencing behavior than service-driven satisfaction, emphasizing the need for interpretive, immersive, and conservation-oriented programming to strengthen revisit intentions.

The Moderating Role of Social Media Engagement and User-Generated Content

The study finds that social media engagement does not moderate the relationship between service quality and satisfaction, and user-generated content does not moderate the link between satisfaction and revisit intention. Although numerous studies highlight the potential influence of digital engagement on

tourist perceptions (Harrigan et al., 2017; Mariani et al., 2019), the findings suggest that visitors' digital interactions with Nyaru Menteng remain insufficiently strong to influence these relationships. This aligns with research showing that digital engagement in nature-based destinations is often lower due to visitors' preference for direct, offline experiences and reduced screen use (Büscher & Fletcher, 2020; Kim & Lee, 2020).

Leung et al. (2013) also note that social media does not consistently affect tourist behavior when engagement levels are low or when destination content lacks depth and consistency. In the context of this study, user-generated content remains sparse and unstructured, rendering it ineffective in shaping perceptions of satisfaction or behavioral intentions. Furthermore, UGC tends to exert stronger influence when users create emotionally rich or identity-expressive content (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Mariani & Borghi, 2021), which appears not to be the case among respondents.

These nonsignificant moderating effects highlight the need for more strategic and proactive digital communication. Destination managers may need to encourage interpretive storytelling, conservation messaging, structured hashtags, and interactive campaigns to enhance digital engagement. Strengthening online–offline integration such as by linking onsite activities with digital sharing incentives may also enhance the influence of UGC and engagement on visitor evaluations.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings of this study demonstrate that experiential marketing and service quality are important determinants of visitor satisfaction; however, only experiential marketing consistently influences revisit intention both directly and through the mediation of customer satisfaction, while service quality does not exhibit a significant direct or mediated effect on return visits. These results indicate that within ecotourism settings, emotional, sensory, and interpretive experiences exert a stronger behavioral impact than functional service attributes. Moreover, the nonsignificant moderating effects of social media engagement and user-generated content suggest that digital interactions among visitors remain relatively low and insufficient to shape meaningful behavioral outcomes. Based on these insights, destination managers—such as those at Nyaru Menteng Urban Forest—should prioritize the enhancement of interpretive experiences, the cultivation of emotional connections with nature, and the development of more structured and participatory digital communication strategies to strengthen sustained visitor engagement. This study is limited by its use of non-probability sampling and its focus on a single destination, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings; therefore, future research should employ more representative sampling techniques, expand the scope to multiple ecotourism sites, and incorporate additional psychological or digital behavior variables to provide a more comprehensive explanation of revisit intention dynamics.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Future research may extend this study by integrating sustainability-oriented constructs such as environmental attitude, ecological awareness, or

perceived conservation value to better capture the unique characteristics of ecotourism destinations. Employing longitudinal designs would allow researchers to examine how satisfaction, digital engagement, and revisit intention evolve across repeated visits, while comparative studies across urban, rural, and nature-based ecotourism sites could enhance the generalizability of the proposed model. Additionally, incorporating emerging digital variables – such as influencer credibility, virtual tourism experiences, or technology-driven content personalization may provide deeper insights into how digital engagement reshapes tourist loyalty. Finally, mixed-method approaches combining quantitative modeling with qualitative exploration could enrich understanding of visitors' experiential meanings and sustainability perceptions beyond what structured surveys alone can reveal.

REFERENCES

- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211.
- Akama, J. S., & Kieti, D. M. (2003). Measuring tourist satisfaction with Kenya's wildlife safari: A case study of Tsavo West National Park. *Tourism Management*, 24(1), 73–81.
- Alalwan, A. A., Baabdullah, A. M., Dwivedi, Y. K., & Rana, N. P. (2023). Examining the impact of social media engagement on customer satisfaction and loyalty. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 60, 102481.
- Alén, M. E., Rodríguez, L. C., & Fraiz, J. A. (2007). Assessing the quality of service in rural tourism establishments: A case study in Spain. *Tourism Management*, 28(6), 1496–1502.
- Alfattahu, I., Yulianto, A., Pangestuti, E., & Worodinanti, B. (2025). The influence of service quality and experiential marketing on revisit intention through customer satisfaction with social media as a moderating variable. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 52, 112–125.
- Alegre, J., & Garau, J. (2010). Tourist satisfaction and dissatisfaction. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 37(1), 52–73.
- Ayeh, J. K., Au, N., & Law, R. (2013). "Do we believe in TripAdvisor?" Examining credibility perceptions and online travelers' attitude toward using user-generated content. *Journal of Travel Research*, 52(4), 437–452.
- Baker, D. A., & Crompton, J. L. (2000). Quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(3), 785–804.
- Beerli, A., & Martín, J. D. (2004). Factors influencing destination image. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(3), 657–681.
- Bilgihan, A., Barreda, A., Okumus, F., & Nusair, K. (2016). A social media framework for the hotel industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 28(2), 193–210.
- Boulding, W., Kalra, A., Staelin, R., & Zeithaml, V. A. (1993). A dynamic process model of service quality: From expectations to behavioral intentions. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 30(1), 7–27.

- Brodie, R. J., Hollebeek, L. D., Jurić, B., & Ilić, A. (2011). Customer engagement: Conceptual domain, fundamental propositions, and implications for research. *Journal of Service Research*, 14(3), 252–271.
- Ceballos-Lascurain, H. (1996). *Tourism, ecotourism, and protected areas*. IUCN.
- Chiesura, A. (2004). The role of urban parks for the sustainable city. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 68(1), 129–138.
- Chi, C. G., & Qu, H. (2008). Examining the structural relationships of destination image, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty: An integrated approach. *Tourism Management*, 29(4), 624–636.
- Christodoulides, G., Jevons, C., & Bonhomme, J. (2012). Memo to marketers: Quantitative evidence for change—How user-generated content really affects brands. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 52(1), 53–64.
- Cronin, J. J., & Taylor, S. A. (1992). Measuring service quality: A reexamination and extension. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(3), 55–68.
- Fennell, D. A. (2008). *Ecotourism* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Filieri, R., McLeay, F., Tsui, B., & Lin, Z. (2021). Consumer perceptions of information helpfulness and determinants of purchase intention in online user reviews. *Journal of Business Research*, 130, 793–804.
- Fotis, J., Buhalis, D., & Rossides, N. (2012). Social media use and impact during the holiday travel planning process. In M. Fuchs, F. Ricci, & L. Cantoni (Eds.), *Information and communication technologies in tourism 2012* (pp. 13–24). Springer.
- Gentile, C., Spiller, N., & Noci, G. (2007). How to sustain the customer experience: An overview of experience components that co-create value with the customer. *European Management Journal*, 25(5), 395–410.
- Goyette, I., Ricard, L., Bergeron, J., & Marticotte, F. (2010). e-WOM scale: Word-of-mouth measurement scale for e-services context. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 27(1), 5–23.
- Grönroos, C. (1984). A service quality model and its marketing implications. *European Journal of Marketing*, 18(4), 36–44.
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2019). *Multivariate data analysis* (8th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Han, H., & Hyun, S. S. (2015). Customer retention in the medical tourism industry: Impact of quality, satisfaction, trust, and price reasonableness. *Tourism Management*, 46, 20–29.
- Han, H., & Kim, Y. (2010). An investigation of green hotel customers' decision formation: Developing an extended model of the theory of planned behavior. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 29(4), 659–668.
- Han, H., Hsu, L., & Sheu, C. (2010). Application of the theory of planned behavior to green hotel choice: Testing the effect of environmental friendly activities. *Tourism Management*, 31(3), 325–334.
- Hellier, P. K., Geursen, G. M., Carr, R. A., & Rickard, J. A. (2003). Customer repurchase intention: A general structural equation model. *European Journal of Marketing*, 37(11/12), 1762–1800.
- Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., Walsh, G., & Gremler, D. D. (2004). Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: What motivates

- consumers to articulate themselves on the internet? *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18(1), 38–52.
- Holbrook, M. B., & Hirschman, E. C. (1982). The experiential aspects of consumption: Consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(2), 132–140.
- Hollebeek, L. D., Glynn, M. S., & Brodie, R. J. (2014). Consumer brand engagement in social media: Conceptualization, scale development and validation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28(2), 149–165.
- Honey, M. (2008). *Ecotourism and sustainable development: Who owns paradise?* (2nd ed.). Island Press.
- Hosany, S., & Witham, M. (2010). Dimensions of cruisers' experiences, satisfaction, and intention to recommend. *Journal of Travel Research*, 49(3), 351–364.
- Hudson, S., Roth, M. S., Madden, T. J., & Hudson, R. (2015). The effects of social media on emotions, brand relationship quality, and word of mouth: An empirical study of music festival attendees. *Tourism Management*, 47, 68–76.
- Jim, C. Y. (2004). Green-space preservation and allocation for sustainable greening of compact cities. *Cities*, 21(4), 311–320.
- Jim, C. Y., & Chen, W. Y. (2009). Ecosystem services and valuation of urban forests in China. *Cities*, 26(4), 187–194.
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59–68.
- Kiper, T. (2013). Role of ecotourism in sustainable development. In M. Özyavuz (Ed.), *Advances in landscape architecture*. IntechOpen.
- Királová, A., & Pavlíčka, A. (2015). Development of social media strategies in tourism destination. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 175, 358–366.
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing management* (15th ed.). Pearson.
- Kozak, M. (2001). Repeaters' behavior at two distinct destinations. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 28(3), 784–807.
- Ladhari, R. (2009). A review of twenty years of SERVQUAL research. *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, 1(2), 172–198.
- Lee, T. H. (2009). A structural model for examining how destination image and interpretation services affect future behavior: A case study of Taiwan's Taomi eco-village. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 17(6), 727–745.
- Litvin, S. W., Goldsmith, R. E., & Pan, B. (2008). Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management. *Tourism Management*, 29(3), 458–468.
- McKinney, V., Yoon, K., & Zahedi, F. M. (2002). The measurement of web-customer satisfaction: An expectation and disconfirmation approach. *Information Systems Research*, 13(3), 296–315.
- Meleddu, M., Pulina, M., & Usai, A. (2015). The determinants of revisit intentions: A case study of Italian museums. *Tourism Economics*, 21(1), 105–118.
- Miller, D., Hodge, I., & Donovan, D. (2017). Urban ecotourism: A contradiction in terms? *Journal of Ecotourism*, 16(2), 152–165.
- Mollen, A., & Wilson, H. (2010). Engagement, telepresence and interactivity in online consumer experience: Reconciling scholastic and managerial perspectives. *Journal of Business Research*, 63(9–10), 919–925.

- Morgan, M., Lugosi, P., & Ritchie, J. R. B. (2010). *The tourism and leisure experience: Consumer and managerial perspectives*. Channel View Publications.
- Muntinga, D. G., Moorman, M., & Smit, E. G. (2011). Introducing COBRAs: Exploring motivations for brand-related social media use. *International Journal of Advertising*, 30(1), 13–46.
- Oliver, R. L. (1980). A cognitive model of the antecedents and consequences of satisfaction decisions. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 17(4), 460–469.
- Oliver, R. L. (1997). *Satisfaction: A behavioral perspective on the consumer*. McGraw-Hill.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12–40.
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1999). *The experience economy: Work is theatre & every business a stage*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Prayag, G., & Ryan, C. (2012). Antecedents of tourists' loyalty to Mauritius: The role and influence of destination image, place attachment, personal involvement, and satisfaction. *Journal of Travel Research*, 51(3), 342–356.
- Rather, R. A., & Hollebeek, L. D. (2020). Customers' service-related engagement, experience, and behavioral intent: Moderating role of age. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 60, 102453.
- Scheyvens, R. (1999). Ecotourism and the empowerment of local communities. *Tourism Management*, 20(2), 245–249.
- Schmitt, B. (1999). Experiential marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15(1–3), 53–67.
- Schmitt, B., & Zarantonello, L. (2013). Consumer experience and experiential marketing: A critical review. *Review of Marketing Research*, 10, 25–61.
- Smith, A. N., Fischer, E., & Yongjian, C. (2012). How does brand-related user-generated content differ across YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter? *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(2), 102–113.
- Spreng, R. A., MacKenzie, S. B., & Olshavsky, R. W. (1996). A reexamination of the determinants of consumer satisfaction. *Journal of Marketing*, 60(3), 15–32.
- Tribe, J., & Snaith, T. (1998). From SERVQUAL to HOLSAT: Holiday satisfaction in Varadero, Cuba. *Tourism Management*, 19(1), 25–34.
- Tsai, S. (2011). Strategic relationship management and service brand marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, 45(7/8), 1194–1213.
- Um, S., & Crompton, J. L. (1990). Attitude determinants in tourism destination choice. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 17(3), 432–448.
- Vivek, S. D., Beatty, S. E., Dalela, V., & Morgan, R. M. (2014). A generalized multidimensional scale for measuring customer engagement. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 22(4), 401–420.
- Wearing, S., & Neil, J. (2009). *Ecotourism: Impacts, potentials and possibilities* (2nd ed.). Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Weaver, D. B. (2001). *Ecotourism*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Xiang, Z., & Gretzel, U. (2010). Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism Management*, 31(2), 179–188.