

The influence of social media marketing and tourism experience on tourist loyalty through tourist satisfaction in the Lake Toba tourist area

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Abstract

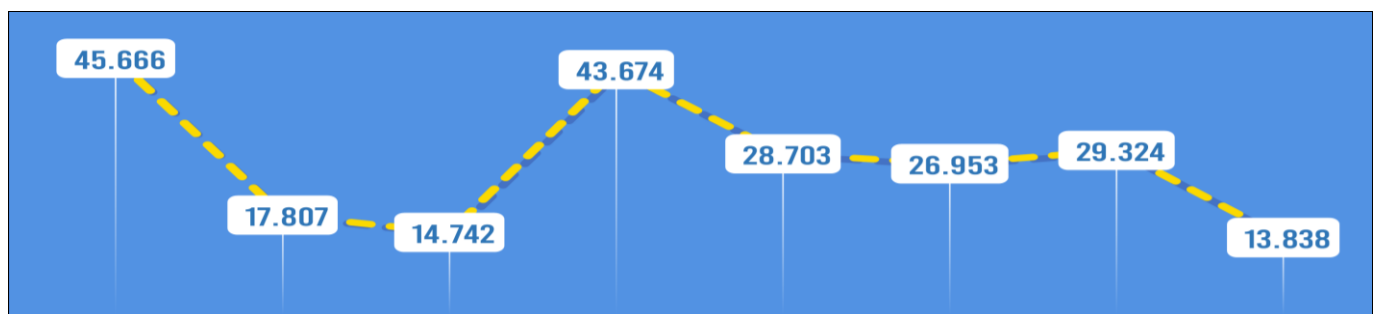
Lake Toba is a tourist area with a high potential to attract foreign tourists to Indonesia with its various natural beauty and uniqueness. The number of tourist attractions in Indonesia makes stakeholders in the business world have to make a strategy that can make a tourist area increasingly developed and in demand by many tourists. This research was conducted to look at the satisfaction and loyalty of tourists in the Lake Toba area. The number of respondents was 220 respondents. The analysis tool used is Path analysis. The results of the study show that partially social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on satisfaction and loyalty, and tourist experience has a positive and significant effect on satisfaction.

Keywords: Social media marketing, tourist experience, tourist satisfaction, tourist loyalty

Introduction

In the world of tourism, tourist loyalty to the destination is known as tourist destination loyalty. This loyalty is shown by repeated visits to the destination. By building tourist loyalty, the company also benefits from positive promotions through word of mouth and recommendations, thereby increasing its image and competitiveness in the tourism industry. In addition, acquiring new customers will cost more than retaining existing customers. Tourist loyalty to destinations is one of the important factors in the tourism industry that needs to be researched because it can provide knowledge about the factors that affect the decision and experience of tourists to make a return visit. The development of tourism is not only limited to the development of one or two objects but all things that can enter the tourism requirements can be developed into a tourist attraction. A tourist attraction or regional tourism development must pay attention to every aspect that exists

to be able to be sold to tourists and optimally provide positive results for the region itself so that it is not only created and then managed by outside or foreign parties. Indonesia is a country with a variety of natural resources and ethnic groups that make it rich in culture. These natural and cultural riches vary. This makes Indonesia one of the countries with tourist attractions that can attract foreign and local tourists to visit areas in Indonesia. Many of these tourism potentials have not been managed properly while the objects that have been developed are also not optimal and many are damaged physically, visually, and ecologically so that they do not function properly. With many tourist attractions in Indonesia, it is important to have repeat visits from tourists with proper management. One of the tourist destinations in Indonesia that is currently quite developed is Lake Toba. However, based on the data obtained, there was a decrease in the number of visitors as follows:



Source: Lake Toba Authority Agency, (2023)

Fig 1. Data on the Caldera Toba Nomanic Escape's Visit, 2023

Based on the data presented on (Lake Toba Authority Implementing Agency) website, it is known that the number of visits tends to decrease in 2023. Although there have been many international-scale events held in the region. However, there is a graph of a decrease in foreign tourist visits to the caldera of Lake Toba. This is very far from the number of visits targeted by the North Sumatra Provincial

Government, which is 300 thousand foreign tourists. This is due to the poor tourist experience when traveling to North Sumatra which of course has an impact on factors that affect the decrease in the number of tourist visits. Furthermore, a pre-survey was carried out related to tourist loyalty as follows:

Table 1: A pre-survey was carried out related to tourist loyalty

No	Statement	Respondent's answer				Total Respondents
		Yes	%	No	%	
1	I will visit the Lake Toba tourist area again	30	60	20	40	50
2	I would recommend the Lake Toba tourist area to others	35	70	15	30	50
3	I will try various interesting rides in the Lake tourist area	40	80	10	20	50

Source: Presurvey results, (2024)

Based on the results of the pre-survey conducted in the Lake Toba tourist area, there are still respondents who answered no from the various statements given. According to respondents, there are still many things that need to be fixed, including the problem of local hospitality which is considered necessary to be educated. This is also related to the sense of comfort obtained by visiting starting from shopping centers when tourists buy souvenirs to how the service is provided. This of course greatly affects tourist satisfaction and has an impact on repeat visits. Currently, the Lake Toba tourist area has become a super priority tourist area so it is a special concern. In terms of understanding, there is a growing perception in the community that this is their opportunity to be able to generate income from natural products. In addition, there needs to be an increase in social media marketing carried out by stakeholders in promoting what is an advantage in Lake Toba. The use of social media that is used effectively is one of the alternatives to promote the tourism sector.

Some of the research gaps in the study are research conducted by (Martin *et al.*, 2013; Sangpikul Aswin, 2018; Suhartanto *et al.*, 2020, 2021; Sukaris *et al.*, 2020) [30, 41] stated that experience has a positive and significant influence on loyalty (J. H. Kim, 2018; Wu, 2016) [25] stated that experience has an effect on loyalty but is not the most dominant factor. So in this case, it is necessary to apply factors that can increase tourist loyalty. The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the influence of social media and tourist experience on tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

Research Methods

This study is associative quantitative research designed to determine the influence between independent variables, namely social media marketing and tourist experience on dependent variables, namely satisfaction, and loyalty. The method used in this study is the survey method, where respondents are given several statements in the form of questionnaires. The analysis tool used is path analysis. This research was carried out in the tourist attraction of Lake Toba, Samosir Regency. In this study, the researcher used purposive sampling, which is the determination of samples based on certain reviews of the research objectives. The sample in this study is 220 respondents.

Discussion

The influence of social media marketing on the satisfaction of tourists visiting Lake Toba

The influence of social media marketing on the satisfaction of tourists visiting Lake Toba can be seen from several perspectives, including how social media affects the perception, experience, and decisions of tourists. Here are some important points that can be discussed: Social media marketing increases awareness about Lake Toba as a tourist destination. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube allow for engaging and interactive promotions, which can introduce the natural beauty, culture, and tourist facilities of Lake Toba to a wider audience. Content

presented through social media can shape travelers' expectations. High-quality images and videos and positive reviews can raise travelers' expectations. Positive reviews can increase travelers' interest and satisfaction, while negative reviews can serve as feedback for future service improvements. Visual content such as photos and videos posted on social media can evoke the emotions and interest of potential tourists. This is in line with research conducted by (Al-Dmour *et al.*, 2023; Deb & Mallik, 2023; Khan & Hashim, 2020; Pataganao *et al.*, 2020) [2, 14, 24, 35] that social media marketing significantly affects tourist satisfaction. It is also supported by research conducted by (Amir Zaib Abbasi *et al.*, 2022; Estefania & Yuwono, 2023; Floris R. & Campagna M, 2014; Jeswani, 2023) [5, 15, 16] that positive emotional experiences, such as admiration for the natural beauty and local culture, captured through social media can increase travelers' satisfaction when they experience firsthand what they see on social media. Social media provides easy access to the latest and relevant information. Updates on local events, weather changes, or emergencies can be delivered quickly to travelers, helping them adjust their plans and stay safe and comfortable during their visit. Social media marketing often involves special promotions or discounts for followers of certain platforms. These offers can attract tourists to visit and provide added value that increases their satisfaction.

The influence of social media marketing on the loyalty of tourists visiting Lake Toba

The influence of social media marketing on the loyalty of tourists to Lake Toba visitors can be seen from several aspects, including social media marketing which is known to increase tourist awareness about Lake Toba through attractive visual content, positive reviews, and testimonials from previous visitors. Interesting and informative content can make tourists more interested in visiting these destinations. In addition, Interaction and Engagement on social media allow direct interaction between destination managers and tourists, either through comments, messages, or reviews. Special promotions spread through social media, such as discounts, tour packages, or special events, can attract more tourists, and these exclusive offers can increase travelers' satisfaction and encourage them to come back. This is in line with research conducted by (Almeida-Santana & Moreno-Gil, 2017; Balakrishnan *et al.*, 2014; Jiaqi *et al.*, 2021; M. W. Li *et al.*, 2020; Mirzaalian & Halpenny, 2021; Sánchez-Casado *et al.*, 2019; van Asperen *et al.*, 2018; Zollo *et al.*, 2022) [3, 14, 23, 32, 40, 46, 50] that social media marketing can increase tourist loyalty. In addition, research conducted by (Christou, 2015; Harrigan *et al.*, 2017a; Park & Oh, 2012; Popović, 2022; Senders *et al.*, 2013) [13, 21, 34, 42] also argues that social media marketing has an important role in increasing loyalty. Social media makes it easy for tourists to provide feedback and reviews about their experiences. Quick response and resolution of issues by managers can increase travelers' trust and loyalty. Social

media marketing helps in building and strengthening the positive image of Lake Toba as a tourist destination. This positive image is important for building loyalty, as tourists tend to be loyal to reputable destinations. Overall, the use of effective social media marketing strategies can increase tourist loyalty by strengthening emotional connections, providing positive experiences, and ensuring that Lake Toba remains relevant and attractive to tourists (Harrigan *et al.*, 2017; Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2018) ^[19, 21].

The influence of tourist experience on the satisfaction of tourists visiting Lake Toba

The tourist experience includes various aspects ranging from accessibility, service quality, tourist attractions, and social interaction, to feelings and emotions experienced during the visit. The following are some of the main factors that can affect tourist satisfaction in Lake Toba, including adequate road access, transportation, and public facilities so that they can increase tourist comfort as well as the availability of clear information about routes, schedules, and local facilities. The services provided by accommodation providers, restaurants, and tour operators greatly affect satisfaction. In line with research conducted by (C. C. Chen *et al.*, 2016; Gkika, 2017; Maunier & Camelis, 2013; Tapar *et al.*, 2017; Umm *et al.*, 2020) ^[11, 17, 31, 43, 45] that the tourist experience significantly affects tourist satisfaction. The positive memories, feelings of relaxation, and personal satisfaction from visiting Lake Toba will have a major impact on overall satisfaction. Experiences that meet or even exceed travelers' expectations will tend to increase satisfaction levels.

The influence of tourist experience on the loyalty of tourists visiting Lake Toba

The tourist experience is a rational and emotional bond that occurs due to the response to certain stimuli by optimizing sense (sensory), feel (emotional), think (cognitive), act (action), and relate (relationship) in marketing efforts before and after purchases, information exchange, and emotional bonds. Customer experience is an internal and subjective customer response as a result of direct or indirect interaction with the company. A complete experience can be obtained by customers through five main components that combine the dimensions of distance. From the above understanding, customer experience refers to the real experience of customers with brands, products, or services to increase loyalty. (A. K. Kim & Brown, 2012; Martin *et al.*, 2013; Sangpikul Aswin, 2018; Suhartanto *et al.*, 2021; Sukaris *et al.*, 2020; Wu, 2016) ^[30, 41] stated that an interesting experience can increase repeat visits. In addition (Antón *et al.*, 2017; Chang *et al.*, 2014; H. Chen & Rahman, 2018; J. H. Kim, 2018; Suhartanto *et al.*, 2020) ^[6, 10, 25] stated that experience, perceived value, tourist satisfaction, and tourist motivation are key factors that determine loyalty.

The effect of tourist satisfaction on the loyalty of tourists visiting Lake Toba

The influence of the tourist experience on the loyalty of tourists visiting Lake Toba is an important aspect that can determine the sustainability and growth of this tourist destination. Tourist loyalty refers to the tendency of tourists to return to Lake Toba and recommend the destination to others. One of the key factors that affect traveler loyalty through their experience are Traveler Satisfaction. High

satisfaction during the first visit greatly affects the intention to return. If travelers are satisfied with the service, attractions, and overall experience, they are likely to show higher loyalty. Satisfaction can be measured through tourists' perception of various elements such as the quality of accommodation, food, service, and available activities. These experiences can be scenic views, interaction with locals, or participation in cultural events. Positive emotions such as happiness, surprise, and deep satisfaction can motivate travelers to repeat their visit. Good relationships can also encourage travelers to recommend destinations to their friends and family. This is in line with research conducted by (Akbar *et al.*, 2020; Amherst *et al.*, 2016; Campón-Cerro *et al.*, 2020; T. (Tina) Li *et al.*, 2021; Phuong & Vinh, 2020; Ramesh & Jaunky, 2020; Thi *et al.*, 2020) ^[1, 4, 8, 36, 38] that tourist satisfaction significantly affects loyalty. In addition, (Cetin, 2020; Han *et al.*, 2021; Kos & Stankovic, 2021; Loureiro & Gonzalez, 2008; Suhartanto *et al.*, 2020; Wang *et al.*, 2021; Woyo & Slabbert, 2020) ^[9, 26, 47, 48] provide results that consumer satisfaction has an important role in increasing loyalty. Consistency and improvement in service quality over time can strengthen traveler loyalty. If tourists feel an improvement in each of their visits, this will encourage them to keep coming back. Responsive, friendly, and professional service is very influential in forming a positive perception.

The influence of social media marketing on loyalty through Lake Toba tourist satisfaction

The influence of social media marketing on loyalty through tourist satisfaction in Lake Toba can be explained through several mechanisms that show how marketing strategies on social media can increase tourist satisfaction, which in turn contributes to increasing their loyalty. Here are how social media marketing can influence traveler satisfaction and loyalty. Visual Content and Narrative Social media allow tourist destinations to share interesting photos, videos, and stories about Lake Toba. Satisfied travelers often share their experiences through photos and reviews on social media, which serves as a strong recommendation for other potential travelers. Additionally, positive reviews on social media can enhance Lake Toba's image, attract more tourists, and encourage repeat visits from those who are already satisfied. According to (Balakrishnan *et al.*, 2014; M. W. Li *et al.*, 2020; Sánchez-Casado *et al.*, 2019; Zollo *et al.*, 2022) ^[7, 40, 50] Social media marketing has a significant influence on traveler loyalty through increasing their satisfaction. By conveying interesting and accurate information, Interacting directly with tourists, encouraging experience sharing, offering exclusive promotions, and managing the reputation well, tourist destinations such as Lake Toba can increase tourist satisfaction. This satisfaction then drives loyalty, where travelers are not only more likely to return but also recommend destinations to others, creating a sustainable cycle of positivity.

The influence of consumer experience on loyalty through Lake Toba tourist satisfaction.

The influence of consumer experience on loyalty through tourist satisfaction in Lake Toba can be analyzed by identifying how different aspects of the tourist experience contribute to their satisfaction levels, which ultimately affects loyalty. Furthermore, several studies state that (A. K.

Kim & Brown, 2012; J. H. Kim, 2018; Martin *et al.*, 2013; Sangpikul Aswin, 2018; Sukaris *et al.*, 2020) ^[25, 30, 41] positive consumer experiences play an important role in increasing tourist satisfaction in Lake Toba. This satisfaction, in turn, is a key factor that drives traveler loyalty. Through the provision of quality services, adequate facilities, attractive attractions, positive social interactions, good value perception, and deep emotional experiences, tourist destinations can increase tourist satisfaction. Satisfied tourists are not only more likely to return but will also recommend Lake Toba to others, creating a sustainable cycle of loyalty (Almeida-Santana & Moreno-Gil, 2017; Park & Oh, 2012; Senders *et al.*, 2013) ^[3, 34, 42]. The traveler experience plays a very important role in the tourism industry, influencing various aspects from satisfaction to loyalty and even the reputation of a destination. Here are some of the important roles of the traveler experience. A satisfying experience can increase tourist satisfaction, which is one of the main goals in the tourism industry. When the experience meets or exceeds expectations, travelers feel satisfied, which can encourage them to return and recommend the destination to others.

Conclusion

Social media marketing plays a crucial role in enhancing the satisfaction of tourists visiting Lake Toba. When tourists are engaged through well-crafted social media campaigns, their overall experience and perception of the destination improve, leading to higher satisfaction levels. This satisfaction, in turn, fosters loyalty among tourists, encouraging them to return to Lake Toba and recommend it to others. Additionally, the personal experiences of tourists at Lake Toba significantly contribute to their satisfaction. Positive interactions, memorable activities, and the overall ambiance of the destination elevate their satisfaction, which then translates into greater loyalty.

Moreover, tourist satisfaction is a key driver of loyalty. When tourists have a fulfilling and enjoyable experience, they are more likely to develop a sense of loyalty towards the destination, revisiting and advocating for it. Furthermore, social media marketing indirectly boosts loyalty through the satisfaction it generates. Engaging content and interactive campaigns on social media platforms not only attract tourists but also enhance their satisfaction, leading to increased loyalty. Similarly, the direct experiences of tourists at Lake Toba, when positive, enhance their satisfaction, which in turn strengthens their loyalty. In essence, the interplay between social media marketing, tourist experiences, satisfaction, and loyalty forms a comprehensive framework that drives the overall success and popularity of Lake Toba as a premier tourist destination.

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