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From service to loyalty: Optimizing service quality and perceived value through customer satisfaction of Malang Greater Tourists

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Abstract

This study analyzes how service quality and perceived value influence tourist satisfaction and loyalty at an artificial tourist destination in Greater Malang. This study employed an explanatory quantitative approach using purposive sampling of 211 tourists who had previously visited the destination. Data were collected via a questionnaire and analyzed using SEM-PLS (SmartPLS). The results show a positive relationship among service quality, perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty. Satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and perceived value on loyalty. These findings suggest that a positive tourist experience encourages revisit intentions and recommendations. Practically, managers should improve service quality, value, and tourist experiences to build long-term loyalty.

Dari layanan ke loyalitas: Mengoptimalkan kualitas layanan dan *perceived value* melalui kepuasan pelanggan para wisatawan di Malang Raya

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh kualitas layanan dan nilai yang dirasakan terhadap kepuasan, serta konsekuensinya terhadap loyalitas wisatawan di destinasi wisata buatan Malang Raya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif eksplanatori dengan teknik purposive sampling terhadap 211 wisatawan yang pernah berkunjung. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dan dianalisis menggunakan SEM-PLS (SmartPLS). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kualitas layanan dan perceived value berpengaruh positif terhadap kepuasan wisatawan, yang selanjutnya juga memberikan dampak positif pada loyalitas. Kepuasan terbukti memediasi hubungan antara kualitas layanan dan perceived value terhadap loyalitas. Temuan ini menguatkan bahwa pengalaman wisata yang positif mendorong niat kunjungan ulang serta rekomendasi. Secara praktis, pengelola perlu meningkatkan kualitas layanan, nilai, dan pengalaman wisata guna membangun loyalitas jangka panjang.

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Tourism, a strategic sector, drives economic growth and job creation. After the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia's tourism sector has shown a significant recovery trend. Central Statistics Agency data (2024) indicate that in April 2024, international tourist arrivals reached 1.07 million, a 23.23% increase from the previous year.

In modern tourism, tourist loyalty is no longer determined solely by a destination's physical attractiveness but by service quality, perceived value, and satisfaction during the travel experience. Service quality reflects the actual interaction between tourists and service providers, such as information clarity, complaint handling, and facility comfort (Sasongko et al., 2025). Nasir et al. (2021) emphasized that service quality is a tourist's overall evaluation of the services and facilities received based on actual experiences, which has been shown to significantly influence destination satisfaction and loyalty.

Several cross-sector studies have demonstrated that service quality significantly shapes customer satisfaction; however, its influence on loyalty is frequently indirect. Chao et al. (2023) Service quality affects customer loyalty through satisfaction and trust as mediating variables. Hendri et al. (2021) and Rahmah et al. (2021) reported similar results, showing that high service quality is not sufficient to drive loyalty without satisfaction as an intermediary.

Perceived value is also an essential factor influencing tourist satisfaction and loyalty, alongside service quality. Perceived value is tourists' assessment of the benefits they get compared to the sacrifices they make, including financial, time, effort, or psychological costs (Qiu et al., 2024). Croitoru et al. (2024) emphasize the significant influence of emotional and social values on customer loyalty, while Sasongko et al. (2025) report that perceived value affects satisfaction and loyalty differently based on visitor characteristics. Arancibia et al. (2025) emphasize that perceived value indirectly affects loyalty through satisfaction, suggesting that loyalty emerges only when perceived value creates satisfaction.

Empirical findings on the relationship between service quality, perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty are inconsistent. Pujiastuti et al. (2025) found that perceived value had no significant effect on tourist satisfaction but did directly affect revisit intention. Supriyanto & Dahlan (2024) reported that service quality and brand image had no direct effect on loyalty but an indirect effect through satisfaction as a partial mediator. These discrepancies suggest a research gap regarding the strength and mechanisms of the relationship between these variables.

This research gap is relevant to examine in the context of Greater Malang, a leading tourism destination in East Java, with diverse destinations ranging from natural, educational, and cultural attractions to modern entertainment venues. Destinations such as Batu City, with its recreational parks and educational attractions; the coastal areas of South Malang; and the natural and hilly attractions of Malang Regency offer diverse tourism experiences. Greater Malang offers an intriguing empirical context to re-examine the relationship between service quality, perceived value, and tourist loyalty, with satisfaction as a mediator.

This study analyzes how service quality and perceived value influence tourist loyalty in Greater Malang, both directly and indirectly through tourist satisfaction. This study aims to clarify the mediating role of tourist satisfaction. In the Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT)-based loyalty model, it also offers practical implications for destination managers in formulating strategies to improve service quality and create value oriented toward visitor satisfaction and loyalty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service Quality

According to Ong et al. (2024), service quality is defined as customers' perceptions of the

superiority of the service received compared to their expectations. In this study, service quality refers to customers' perceptions of how well an online motorcycle taxi service provider meets their needs and expectations. Service quality reflects how customers assess the process and outcome of their experience using the transportation service, which ultimately has a direct impact on their level of satisfaction. Reliable, responsive, and safe service, supported by a professional driver's attitude, will shape customers' positive perceptions of service quality. Satisfied customers tend to reuse the same service if the perceived service quality meets or exceeds expectations.

H1: There is a positive and significant influence between service quality (X1) and loyalty (Y)

H3: There is a positive and significant influence of service quality (X1) on customer satisfaction (Z)

H6: There is a significant positive influence of customer satisfaction (Z) mediating the influence of service quality (X1) on customer loyalty (Y).

Perceived Value

According to Qiu et al. (2024), Tourists' overall assessment of the benefits they experience during a visit, including service quality, defines perceived value, experiences gained, and considerations of time, cost, and effort spent during the trip. In this study, tourists evaluate information, service quality, tourism assets, and the sacrifice of time, cost, and effort as part of perceived value. Perceived value is not only functional, but also includes emotional and social aspects that arise during the travel experience. When tourists perceive that the benefits they gain exceed the sacrifices they make, satisfaction increases and encourages loyal behavior. Therefore, perceived value is a key variable linking the tourism experience to visitor satisfaction and loyalty.

H2: There is a positive and significant influence of perceived value (X2) on loyalty (Y)

H4: There is a significant positive influence of perceived value (X2) on customer satisfaction (Z)

H7: There is a significant positive influence of customer satisfaction (Z) mediating the influence of perceived value (X2) on customer loyalty (Y)

Customer satisfaction

According to Muni et al. (2024), Customer satisfaction is a customer's overall assessment of the quality of service, especially how well it meets their expectations in important aspects. This study focuses on the quality of service customers receive from rail freight services. It examines the extent to which rail freight services meet expectations in various aspects, including delivery time, cost, reliability, and physical condition.

H5: There is a significant positive influence of customer satisfaction (Z) on customer loyalty (Y)

Customer Loyalty

According to Bourdeau et al. (2024), customer loyalty is defined as a deep commitment to repurchase or reuse a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts that could cause switching. In tourism, loyalty is reflected not only in revisit intentions but also in tourists' tendency to recommend a destination to others through positive word-of-mouth communication. Customer loyalty also reflects the emotional connection and trust tourists form with a destination, which develops through satisfying tourism experiences. Thus, loyalty is an important indicator of destination sustainability because it reflects the destination's success in meeting expectations and creating meaningful value for visitors.

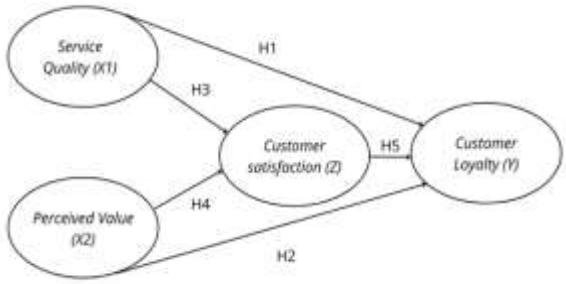

Figure: Research Hypothesis Model

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

RESEARCH METHOD

The target population of this study was domestic tourists who visited artificial tourist destinations in Greater Malang (in Malang City: Malang Smart Arena, Malang Night Paradise; in Malang Regency: Flora Wisata San Terra de Laponte, Wendit Tourism Park; and in Batu City: Jawa Timur Park 1, Batu Night Spectacular, Museum Angkut) within the last 1 year. And aged 17 years and above. This research instrument was compiled as an online questionnaire using Google Forms and distributed to tourists who have visited or are currently visiting tourist destinations in the Greater Malang area. The questionnaire was distributed online through various social media and offline by visiting several tourist destinations directly. Data collection took place from October 9, 2025, to November 19, 2025. Of all the questionnaires collected, 211 were deemed suitable for use because they were completed in full and met the research criteria, so all were analyzed in the next stage.

Measurement

The survey instrument, developed based on a comprehensive literature review, used a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) to Measure service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and loyalty using 15 items each, adopted from Ong et al. (2024), Qiu et al. (2024), Bourdeau et al. (2024), and Hallencreutz & Parmler (2019).

We analyzed the data using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS because it is robust and flexible for analyzing relationships between latent variables, especially for theory development and with imperfect data (Ghozali & Kusumadewi, 2023). PLS-SEM supports prediction and theory confirmation with minimal assumptions. Model evaluation involved two stages: the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). We evaluated the outer model using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability for reliability and internal consistency, and convergent and discriminant validity tests with factor loadings ≥ 0.708 and AVE ≥ 0.50. The inner model was evaluated based on path coefficients, R^2, predictive relevance (Q^2), and effect size (f^2). Mediation effects were tested using indirect-effect bootstrapping, as recommended in PLS-SEM analysis (Hair et al., 2022).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Respondents Profile

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of respondents who visited tourist destinations in Greater Malang. The research sample consisted of 211 respondents. By gender, most respondents were female (n=139; 65.9%), while 72 were male (34.1%). The age distribution of respondents shows that the 17–22 age group dominates (n=125; 59.2%), followed by the 23–28 age group (n=58; 27.5%), the 29–34 age group (n=19; 9%), the 35–40 age group (n=8; 3.8%), and those over 40 years old (n=1; 0.5%).

Table 1. Respondent Demographics (n=211)

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Man	72	34.1
Woman	139	65.9
Age		
17-22	125	59.2
23-28	58	27.5
29-34	19	9
35-40	8	3.8
> 40	1	0.5
Frequency of Visits		
1 time	78	37
2-3 Times	105	49.8
> 3 Times	28	13.3

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

Based on the frequency of visits to tourist destinations in Greater Malang, most respondents visited 2–3 times (n=105; 49.8%), followed by one visit (n=78; 37%) and more than three visits (n=28; 13.3%). These demographic characteristics and visit patterns suggest that most respondents are young tourists who actively explore various tourist destinations in Greater Malang.

This study used Partial Least Squares (PLS) to assess construct validity and reliability (Table 2). PLS-SEM is recommended for reliability assessment using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability, with a minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2021). Construct validity was assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and cross-loadings. An AVE of at least 0.50 indicates that a construct explains more than half of the variance in its indicators (Hair et al., 2021). All indicators met the validity criteria, with outer loading values exceeding 0.70 and AVE values of at least 0.50. Service quality (0.665), perceived value (0.655), customer loyalty (0.635), and customer satisfaction (0.846) had good convergent validity. Discriminant validity was confirmed through cross-loading and HTMT, with HTMT values <0.90, indicating empirical distinctness. Construct reliability was confirmed by high Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability: Service Quality (0.957; CR = 0.961), Perceived Value (0.957; CR = 0.962), Customer Loyalty (0.961; CR = 0.965), and Customer Satisfaction (0.819; CR = 0.917), indicating consistent representation of constructs by indicators.

Table 2. Construct Measurement

Variable/item	Means	CA	CR	AVE
Service Quality		0.957	0.965	0.665
SQ 1	3.60			
SQ 2	3.65			
SQ 3	3.59			
SQ4	3.64			
SQ5	3.66			
SQ6	3.61			
SQ7	3.62			
SQ8	3.56			
SQ9	3.59			
SQ10	3.66			
SQ11	3.63			
SQ12	3.64			
SQ13	3.58			
SQ14	3.66			
SQ15	3.65			
Perceived Value		0.957	0.962	0.655
PV1	3.53			
PV2	3.45			
PV3	3.40			
PV4	3.58			
PV5	3.52			
PV6	3.52			
PV7	3.61			
PV8	3.63			
PV9	3.64			
PV10	3.64			
PV11	3.64			
PV12	3.56			
PV13	3.62			
PV14	3.60			
PV15	3.60			
Customer Loyalty		0.961	0.965	0.635
CL1	3.55			
CL2	3.52			
CL3	3.57			
CL4	3.58			
CL5	3.50			
CL6	3.58			
CL7	3.49			
CL8	3.48			
CL9	3.62			
CL10	3.58			
CL11	3.57			
CL12	3.44			
CL13	3.56			
CL14	3.41			
CL15	3.37			
Customer Satisfaction		0.819	0.917	0.846
CS1	3.58			
CS2	3,62			

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025); Note: CA= Cronbach's Alpha, CR=Composite Reliability, AVE=Average Variance Extracted

Discriminant validity is assessed using the Fornell–Larcker Criterion, comparing the square root of the AVE (diagonal value) with the correlation between constructs (Table 3). The diagonal values (Customer Satisfaction: 0.920, Service Quality: 0.790, Customer Loyalty: 0.797, Perceived Value: 0.791) exceed their correlations with other constructs, indicating a stronger ability to explain their own indicators. Thus, discriminant validity is met, and all constructs are empirically different.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1) Customer satisfaction	0.920			
(2) Quality of Service	0.593	0.790		
(3) Customer Loyalty	0.657	0.541	0.797	
(4) Perceived Value	0.573	0.351	0.588	0.791

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

Table 4 and Figure 2 present the results of direct and indirect relationship testing in PLS-SEM,

evaluating the strength and significance of path coefficients according to the research hypothesis. Customer satisfaction positively and significantly affects customer loyalty (β = 0.451; t = 6.488; p < 0.001), confirming that higher tourist satisfaction leads to greater loyalty.

Service quality positively and significantly influences customer satisfaction (β = 0.429; t = 7.448; p < 0.001) and directly affects customer loyalty (β = 0.210; t = 3.518; p < 0.001). Tourists' perceptions of service quality increase satisfaction and directly encourage loyalty. Perceived value positively and significantly influences customer satisfaction (β = 0.391; t = 6.067; p < 0.001) and customer loyalty (β = 0.202; t = 2.887; p = 0.002), indicating that tourists' evaluations of benefits during visits shape satisfaction and loyalty.

Customer satisfaction acts as a significant mediating variable. Service quality has an indirect effect on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction (β = 0.193; t = 4.385; p < 0.001), and perceived value has an indirect effect through customer satisfaction (β = 0.177; t = 5.369; p < 0.001). These findings support the mediating role of customer satisfaction in the relationship between service quality and perceived value on customer loyalty.

Table 4. Statistical Effects And Hypothesis Testing

Paths	Immediate effects (ß)	Indirect Effects (ß)	t-statistics	p-value	Conclusion
Customer Satisfaction (Z) → Customer Loyalty (Y)	0.451		6.488	0.000	Accepted
Service Quality (X1) → Customer Satisfaction (Z)	0.429		7.448	0.000	Accepted
Service Quality (X1) → Customer Loyalty (Y)	0.210		3.518	0.000	Accepted
Perceived Value (X2) → Customer Satisfaction (Z)	0.391		6.067	0,000	Accepted
Perceived Value (X2) → Customer Loyalty (Y)	0.202		2.887	0.002	Accepted
Service Quality (X1) → Customer Satisfaction (Z) → Customer Loyalty (Y)		0.193	4.385	0.000	Accepted
Perceived Value (X2) → Customer Satisfaction (Z) → Customer Loyalty (Y)		0.177	5.369	0.000	Accepted

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

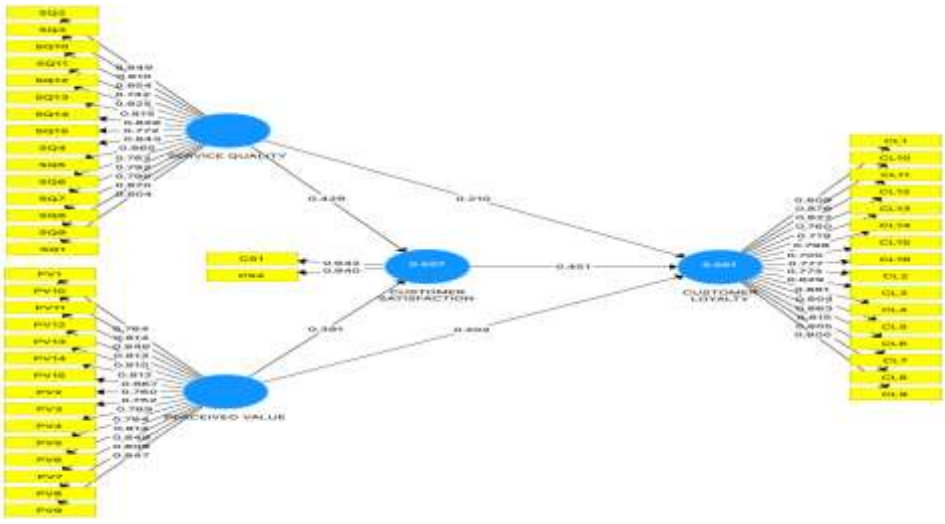

Figure 2. Hypothesis Test Results
Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

DISCUSSION

The Partial Least Squares (PLS) model analysis reveals that Service Quality (X1) positively and

significantly impacts Customer Satisfaction (Z). Good service quality, especially in safety, comfort, and professionalism, shapes tourists' positive travel experiences. Better service quality at artificial tourist destinations in Greater Malang leads to higher satisfaction. These findings support Chao et al. (2023) and Nasir et al. (2021), who emphasize service quality as the main determinant of tourist satisfaction.

Perceived Value (X2) also positively and significantly influences Customer Satisfaction (Z). Tourists who perceive benefits and experiences as equal to or exceeding sacrifices tend to be more satisfied. Emotional values, such as pleasure and enjoyment, are crucial in shaping satisfaction. This aligns with Arancibia et al. (2025), which states that perceived value is the strongest influencing pathway to customer satisfaction, and Croitoru et al. (2024), which highlights the importance of benefits-sacrifice congruence in post-consumption evaluation.

Service Quality (X1) also positively and significantly impacts Customer Loyalty (Y). Consistent, safe, and comfortable service builds trust and encourages tourists to choose the same destination. This finding supports Agarwal & Dhingra (2023) and Nasir et al. (2021), who show that service quality drives repeat use intentions and positive recommendations.

Perceived Value (X2) positively and significantly affects Customer Loyalty (Y). Tourists who have a valuable and enjoyable travel experience are more likely to revisit and recommend the destination. This aligns with Qiu et al. (2024) and Croitoru et al. (2024), who found that high perceived value strengthens loyalty and reduces the tendency to switch destinations.

Customer Satisfaction (Z) positively and significantly affects Customer Loyalty (Y). Satisfied tourists are more likely to return and recommend the destination. This finding aligns with Agarwal & Dhingra (2023) and Nasir et al. (2021), confirming satisfaction's role in building loyalty.

Service Quality (X1) positively and significantly mediates the influence of Customer Satisfaction (Z) on Customer Loyalty (Y). This suggests service quality directly impacts loyalty and enhances it by increasing satisfaction. A similar mechanism exists between Perceived Value (X2) and Customer Loyalty (Y), where Customer Satisfaction (Z) acts as a significant mediator. Perceived value leads to stronger loyalty when tourists are initially satisfied with the tourism experience.

These findings align with Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT), which explains that satisfaction arises from comparing initial expectations with perceived performance or benefits after consumption. This satisfaction forms the basis for customer loyalty (Jiang et al., 2023; Jiang et al., 2024). Thus, this study confirms that service quality and perceived value are crucial factors in shaping satisfaction, and satisfaction serves as the primary mechanism linking tourism experiences with customer loyalty at artificial tourism destinations in Greater Malang.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study shows that service quality and perceived value are crucial factors in tourist satisfaction and loyalty at man-made tourist destinations in Greater Malang. Service quality, reflecting safety, comfort, and professionalism, significantly enhances tourist satisfaction. Similarly, perceived value—both functional and emotional—has been shown to strengthen satisfaction through the congruence between perceived benefits and perceived sacrifices. Service quality and perceived value directly influence loyalty, and indirectly through tourist satisfaction as a mediator. Tourist satisfaction is a key factor linking tourism experiences to loyalty, including revisit intentions and positive recommendations. These findings reinforce the

Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) framework, suggesting that satisfaction from expectation confirmation drives customer loyalty. Therefore, improving service quality and creating superior value are crucial strategies for building sustainable tourist loyalty.

In practice, managers of artificial tourist destinations in Greater Malang are advised to improve service quality through human resource training, service standardization, and the provision of safe, comfortable facilities. Furthermore, tourism value creation needs to be strengthened by providing unique, enjoyable experiences that are commensurate with the costs incurred by tourists, both functionally and emotionally. Marketing strategies should also focus on experiential marketing to increase satisfaction and encourage long-term loyalty. Theoretically, further research is recommended to develop the model by adding other variables, such as destination image, trust, or electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), to enrich understanding of tourist behavior. Furthermore, research can be expanded to other destination contexts or use a longitudinal approach to dynamically observe changes in tourist loyalty

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