

## The Influence of Visitor Engagement and Memorable Tourism Experiences on Revisit Intentions: Mediated by Visitor Satisfaction (A Study on Tourist Attractions In Kutai Kartanegara Regency)

Syifa Munawarah<sup>1</sup>, Iskandar, <sup>2</sup> Nilam Anggar Sari<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> S1 Manajemen, Universitas Kutai Kartanegara, Kalimantan Timur  
Correspondence: [syifamunawarah03@gmail.com](mailto:syifamunawarah03@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

This study aims to investigate how visitor engagement and memorable tourism experiences influence the intention to return to a destination, with visitor satisfaction acting as a mediating variable. To conduct this analysis, a quantitative approach was utilized, employing purposive sampling techniques to gather data from 160 respondents who have previously visited tourist destinations in Kutai Kartanegara Regency. The data were analyzed using SmartPLS software version 4.1.1.6. The findings indicate that visitor engagement and the quality of tourism experiences significantly contribute to overall visitor satisfaction. In turn, heightened visitor engagement and satisfaction are key predictors of guests' intentions to revisit a destination. However, memorable tourism experiences do not directly affect the revisit intention, but rather through the mediation of visitor satisfaction. These findings confirm that emotional engagement and meaningful tourism experience are the main factors that shape tourist loyalty. Therefore, destination managers need to increase tourist participation and create immersive tourism experience to strengthen satisfaction and revisit intention.

### Kata Kunci:

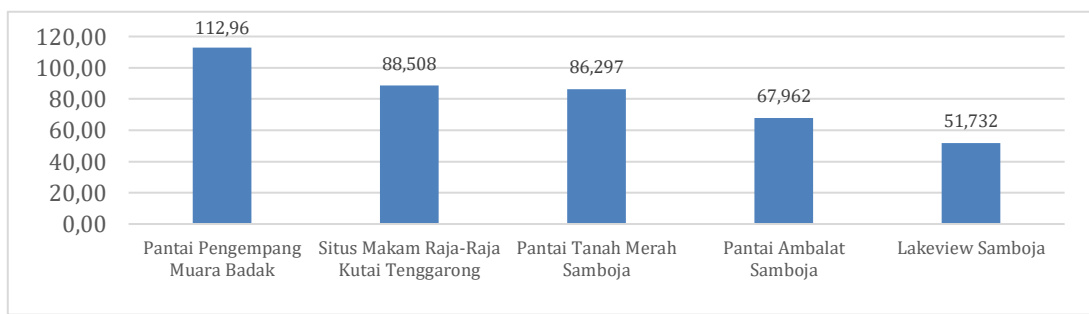
Keterlibatan Pengunjung; Pengalaman Pariwisata Yang Berkesan; Kepuasan Kengunjung; Niat Berkunjung Kembali; Kutai Kartanegara.

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki bagaimana keterlibatan pengunjung dan pengalaman wisata yang berkesan mempengaruhi niat untuk kembali ke suatu destinasi, dengan kepuasan pengunjung bertindak sebagai variabel mediasi. Untuk melakukan analisis ini, pendekatan kuantitatif digunakan, dengan teknik sampling purposif untuk mengumpulkan data dari 160 responden yang pernah mengunjungi destinasi wisata di Kabupaten Kutai Kartanegara. Data dianalisis menggunakan perangkat lunak SmartPLS versi 4.1.1.6. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keterlibatan pengunjung dan kualitas pengalaman pariwisata secara signifikan berkontribusi terhadap kepuasan pengunjung secara keseluruhan. Keterlibatan dan kepuasan pengunjung yang tinggi menjadi prediktor utama niat pengunjung untuk kembali mengunjungi destinasi. Namun, pengalaman pariwisata yang berkesan tidak secara langsung mempengaruhi niat untuk kembali, melainkan melalui mediasi kepuasan pengunjung. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa keterlibatan emosional dan pengalaman pariwisata yang bermakna merupakan faktor utama yang membentuk loyalitas wisatawan. Oleh karena itu, pengelola destinasi perlu meningkatkan partisipasi wisatawan dan menciptakan pengalaman pariwisata yang imersif untuk memperkuat kepuasan dan niat untuk kembali.

## INTRODUCTION

The government of Kutai Kartanegara Regency has been actively promoting economic transformation in recent years by decreasing reliance on the coal mining and quarrying industries, which depend on non-renewable natural resources. Over time, the focus of economic development has shifted towards sectors that utilize renewable natural resources, particularly tourism. Based on the 2025 Kukar Regional Statistics (Figure 1), the five tourist destinations with the highest visitor numbers are led by Pengempang Muara Badak Beach, attracting 112,959 visits, followed by the Kutai Kings' Tombs Site, Tanah Merah Samboja Beach, Ambalat Samboja Beach, and Lakeview Samboja. Tourist visitation statistics for 2024 indicate that a total of 959,753 tourists explored various attractions in Kutai Kartanegara Regency. This marks a decline from the previous year, when the tourist count in 2023 was 1,531,974. The drop in visitor numbers suggests several challenges in managing the tourist destinations within Kutai Kartanegara Regency. One observable indicator is the decrease in tourists' intention to return, reflecting their inclination to revisit the same location.



**Figure 1. Top Five Tourist Destinations in Kutai Kartanegara Regency 2025**

Source: (Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) Kabupaten Kutai Kartanegara, 2025)

**Table 1. Number of Tourists in Kutai Kartanegara Regency**

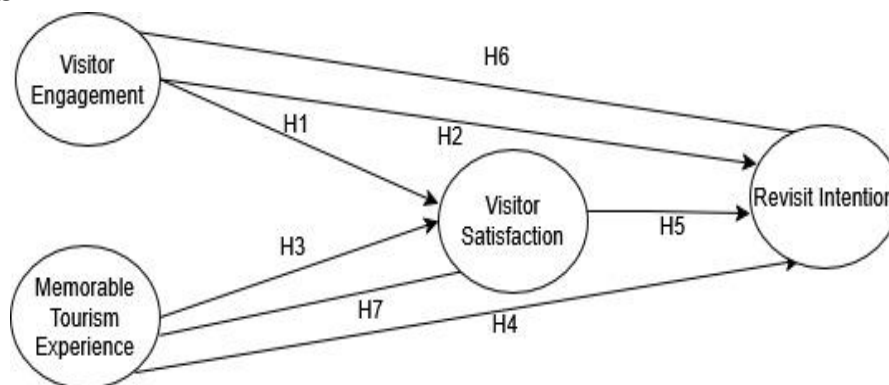
Tourist	2022	2023	2024
Domestic Tourists	1.041.254	1.530.444	956.722
Foreign Tourists	632	1530	3031
Total	1.041.886	1.531.974	959.753

Source: Regency Statistics of Kutai Kartanegara, 2024

According to Table 1, after a notable rise from 1,041,886 tourists in 2022 to 1,531,974 tourists in 2023, there was a drop in 2024 to 959,753 tourists. This decrease highlights the difficulties in sustaining interest among both domestic and international visitors. The intention to return to a destination is one of the important research topics in tourism. The assertion that the intention to return is essential for the continuous operation and advancement of the tourism industry is supported by (Johari & Anuar, 2020) who highlight that repeat tourists significantly contribute to reducing marketing expenses and enhancing overall revenue. Various factors such as visitor engagement, overall satisfaction, and memorable tourism experiences significantly influence the likelihood of revisit intentions. The relationship between visitor satisfaction and the likelihood of returning was previously articulated by (Zabkar et al., 2010, p. 540). Factors such as accessibility, available amenities, attractions,

package options, tourism activities, and support services play a significant role in enhancing service quality. Visitor engagement is fundamentally rooted in the theory of co-creation, reflecting the extent to which a visitor is actively, emotionally, and cognitively involved with the location (Brodie et al., 2011). Complementing these perspectives, (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021) and (Alrawadieh et al., 2019) emphasizes that visitors' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement with a destination is vital in influencing their intention to return. When tourists are actively involved with a location, they tend to foster a more positive attitude towards it. As a result, they are more likely to express interest in revisiting and demonstrate greater loyalty to that destination (Brodie et al., 2011; Vivek et al., 2012). Tourist experiences are fundamental to the tourism and hospitality sector's success. As competition within this industry becomes increasingly fierce, it is crucial for destinations to design and provide memorable experiences for travelers (Neuhofer et al., 2015). Memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) are interactions during travel that create significant impressions on tourists, ultimately influencing their behaviors after the visit (Kim et al., 2012). Prior research has explored the impact of memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) on behavioral intentions, loyalty, and the intention to revisit across various contexts. For instance, (Tsai, 2016) indicated that MTEs exert both direct and indirect effects on behavioral intentions, with the moderating influence of place identity being significant in this relationship. Recent research has established a significant link between memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) and overall satisfaction (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Stavrianea & Kamenidou, 2022). In this framework, the substantial decline in tourist visits to Kutai Kartanegara Regency by 37.35%, between 2023 and 2024 underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive examination of factors influencing revisit intentions.

## METHODS



**Figure 2. Research Framework**

This research utilized a quantitative methodology employing purposive sampling to select participants, specifically targeting tourists who have visited attractions in Kutai Kartanegara Regency. According to Hair, the number of samples needed for each estimated parameter of exogenous and endogenous variables is five to ten observations. The study's SEM model has 16 indicators, so the respondents is  $(16 \times 10 = 160)$ . Visitor engagement, Memorable tourism experience (MTE), visitor satisfaction, and revisit intention were measured using indicators adapted from (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019); (Kim et al., 2012); (Aziz et al., 2022); (Bigne et

al., 2001; Chen & Rahman, 2018). All items were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale. The collected data were analyzed using component-based Partial Least Squares (PLS) to evaluate the research model, utilizing the software Smart PLS Version 4.1.1.6 for this analysis.

## RESULT

**Table 2. Respondent Descriptive**

Descriptive	Category	Amount	percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Man	39	24,38
	Woman	121	75,63
<b>Age</b>	16 – 25	146	91,25
	26 – 35	7	4,38
	36 – 45	4	2,5
	>46	3	1,88
<b>Tourism Job</b>	Student	3	1,88
	College Student	121	75,63
	Civil Servants	5	3,13
	Private	25	15,63
	Other	6	3,75
<b>Income/Month</b>	< Rp 1.000.000	82	51,25
	Rp 1.500.000 – Rp 3.000.000	49	30,63
	Rp 3.000.001 – Rp 4.500.000	12	7,5
	Rp 4.000.001 – Rp 6.000.000	8	5
	> Rp 6.000.000	9	5,63

Source: Data Processed (2025)

## Discriminant Validity Test

**Table 3. Discriminant Validity Results (Cross Loading)**

Item	Visitor Engagement	MTE	Visitor Satisfaction	Revisit Intention
<b>VE 1</b>	<b>0.782</b>	0.627	0.467	0.395
<b>VE 2</b>	<b>0.864</b>	0.564	0.582	0.463
<b>VE 3</b>	<b>0.712</b>	0.416	0.482	0.271
<b>VE 4</b>	<b>0.711</b>	0.369	0.531	0.260
<b>VE 5</b>	<b>0.548</b>	0.836	0.478	0.327
<b>MTE 1</b>	0.553	<b>0.804</b>	0.449	0.401
<b>MTE 2</b>	0.427	<b>0.724</b>	0.431	0.343
<b>MTE 3</b>	0.524	<b>0.816</b>	0.478	0.301
<b>MTE 4</b>	0.551	<b>0.572</b>	0.782	0.441
<b>MTE 5</b>	0.539	<b>0.462</b>	0.834	0.488
<b>VS 1</b>	0.490	0.306	<b>0.742</b>	0.428
<b>VS 2</b>	0.405	0.402	<b>0.523</b>	0.893
<b>VS 3</b>	0.413	0.364	<b>0.498</b>	0.883
<b>RI 1</b>	0.782	0.627	0.467	<b>0.395</b>
<b>RI 2</b>	0.864	0.564	0.582	<b>0.463</b>
<b>RI 3</b>	0.712	0.416	0.482	<b>0.271</b>

Source: Data Processed (2025)

Based on the findings obtained from the discriminant validity assessment via cross-loading analysis presented in Table 2, it is evident that each indicator exhibits a superior

loading value within its respective construct in comparison to alternative constructs. Several indicators, specifically X1.4, X2.3, and Z1.3, have been excluded from the analysis due to their low loading values or misalignment with their corresponding constructs. Following these exclusions, all variables within this research model fulfilled the established criteria for discriminant validity, indicating that each construct possessed distinct measurements and that there was no intersection among the variables (Hair et al., 2021).

### Reliability Test

**Table 4. Results of Reliability Test of the Construct**

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
<i>Visitor Engagement</i>	0.769	0.853	0.593
<i>MTE</i>	0.806	0.873	0.634
<i>Visitor Satisfaction</i>	0.732	0.853	0.619
<i>Revisit Intention</i>	0.692	0.829	0.789

Source: Data Processed (2025)

The empirical findings indicate that each of the variables possesses Cronbach's Alpha coefficients and Composite Reliability metrics that surpass the 0.70 benchmark, thereby affirming their reliability. Furthermore, AVE values for all variables surpassed the 0.50 threshold, signifying that the constructs demonstrated substantial convergent validity. Consequently, all variables examined in this research were both valid and reliable, rendering them appropriate for subsequent analysis. Analysis also presents an R-square statistic of 0.243, signifying that 24.3% of the variance in visitor satisfaction is accounted for by the research framework. In contrast, an R-square value of 0.557 reveals that 55.7% of the variance in revisit intention can be elucidated by the variables encompassed within the model. Additionally, an adjusted R-square value that closely aligns with the R-square indicates that the model demonstrates significant predictive power.

### Hypothesis Test

**Table 5. Results Hypothesis Test**

	<i>Original sample (O)</i>	<i>Sample mean (M)</i>	<i>Standard deviation (STDEV)</i>	<i>T statistics ( O/STDEV)</i>	<i>P values</i>	<i>Result</i>
<b>VE -&gt; VS</b>	0.310	0.302	0.118	2.634	0.008	Supported
<b>VE&gt;RI</b>	0.417	0.410	0.098	4.243	0.000	Supported
<b>MTE -&gt; VS</b>	0.231	0.244	0.105	2.206	0.027	Supported
<b>MTE -&gt; RI</b>	0.174	0.189	0.111	1.565	0.118	Not Supported
<b>VS-&gt; RI</b>	0.308	0.297	0.066	4.649	0.000	Supported
<b>VE-&gt; VS -&gt; RI</b>	0.096	0.089	0.041	2.359	0.018	Supported
<b>MTE-&gt; VS -&gt; RI</b>	0.071	0.072	0.034	2.110	0.035	Supported

Source: Data Processed (2025)

According to the hypothesis testing results presented in Table 5, among the five examined relationships, four were found to be significant (accepted) while one was not significant (rejected).

## **DISSCUSION**

### **The Effect of Visitor Engagement on Visitor Satisfaction**

The findings indicate that visitor engagement positively and significantly impacts visitor satisfaction. Through increased interaction with engaging features, visitors can gain deeper insights into the cultural narratives of the site, often enhancing their satisfaction during the visit (Polishchuk et al., 2023). In line with (Taheri et al., 2014), Visitor engagement with a particular attraction serves as a significant precursor to satisfactory experiences. This engagement reflects a strong commitment and connection to the brand or destination, which can enhance tourists' emotional responses and behaviors (Hollebeek, 2011; So et al., 2012). Empirical evidence from (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022) and (Pratiwi & Astuti, 2025) indicate that visitor engagement indirectly influences behavioral intentions through visitor satisfaction acting as a mediating variable. Consequently, developing tourism programs that prioritize social interaction and direct engagement with local cultures can be a strategic way to boost visitor satisfaction in Kutai Kartanegara.

### **The Effect of Visitor Engagement on Revisit Intention**

A greater level of tourist engagement in tourism activities corresponds to a higher likelihood of revisiting those destinations. Additionally, (Loureiro & Sarmento, 2018) Visitors who forge emotional or personal attachments to a site are more likely to engage on a deeper level, actively participate, and seek out repeated or extended experiences. This study adopts five indicators of visitor engagement by (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019), including: enthusiasm, attention, absorption, interaction, identification supported by the respondents' answers. The predominance of "agree" responses regarding the visitor engagement indicator reflects a high level of engagement among visitors, contributing to the creation of a positive experience. This heightened engagement fosters an increased intention to revisit, as visitors who are emotionally and behaviorally involved typically exhibit a stronger desire to return to the destination. To further enhance visitor engagement, it is beneficial to utilize social media platforms and account such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube both on the influencer's personal account and on the official account belonging to Kukar tourism department, Visitingkutaikartanegara.com to create video series that feature curators and artisans discussing unique tourism destinations in Kutai Kartanegara could increase engagement. The results of this study are also in line with studies conducted by (Baldi et al., 2025; Elfiondri et al., 2021).

### **The Effect of Memorable Tourism Experience on Visitor Satisfaction**

The study results reveal that memorable tourism experiences significantly enhance visitor satisfaction. Memorable tourism experience are the core of the experience economy, and long-lasting vivid memories are the desirable outcome of tourism experience (Cao et al., 2025). This connection is illustrated through the genuine experiences of tourists at Tanah Merah Beach, who expressed their satisfaction while celebrating the New Year at the site. Tourists say that the beach is "perfect for family gatherings" and that "many people camp there." These positive emotional and social experiences underscore the importance of memories, connection, and a welcoming atmosphere as critical elements in creating

unforgettable tourism experiences. Prior studies (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Gohary et al., 2018; Kim, 2018; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Zhong et al., 2018) have demonstrated the positive influence of MTE on tourists' satisfaction, which can further lead to revisits, positive word-of-mouth, and loyalty to the destination.

### **The Effect of Memorable Tourism Experience on Revisit Intention**

The analysis indicates that memorable tourism experiences do not have a significant effect on the intention to revisit. Many tourists have experienced repeated visits and familiarity with destinations like Kutai Kartanegara, which may diminish the novelty of their experiences, making it less of a driving force for repeat visits. These findings are consistent with the results of a study (Zhang et al., 2018) which states that MTEs only had effects on positive word-of-mouth, but no significant effect on revisit intention.

### **The Effect of Visitor Satisfaction on Revisit Intention**

The findings of the study demonstrate that visitor satisfaction significantly and positively impacts the intention to return to a destination (Sthapit et al., 2020). When tourists do not have a satisfying travel experience, they are less likely to return to that destination or recommend it to others (Chen & Chen, 2010; Kim, 2018). To effectively function as attractive tourist destinations, smart locations must prioritize offering enriching experiences to visitors, as visitor satisfaction is crucial for nurturing lasting relationships between tourists and the destinations (Jeong & Shin, 2019; Lee et al., 2018; Tan, 2017) (Torabi et al., 2022).

### **The Mediating Effect**

The mediation test results show that visitor satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between visitor engagement, MTE and the intention to revisit. Thus, tourist engagement does not solely have a direct influence on the intention to revisit a destination. This mechanism explains how immersive experiences reinforce the satisfaction–revisit intention relationship through emotional intensity and memory anchoring (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019). This perspective is consistent with studies conducted by (Kim, 2018; Wang & Azizurrohman, 2024; Zheng & Khong-khai, 2025). Furthermore, visitor satisfaction also mediates the relationship between MTE and revisit intention, as MTE enhance emotional intensity and exceed prior expectations, leading to higher satisfaction and stronger intention to revisit the destination (Tsai et al., 2021). While unforgettable experiences can lead to heightened satisfaction, it's important to note that satisfaction alone does not guarantee an unforgettable experience (Kim & Ritchie, 2014; Kozak, 2001; Lehto et al., 2004). Essentially, it is these memorable experiences that motivate tourists to consider revisiting a destination.

## **CONCLUSION**

Visitor engagement and visitor satisfaction have a positive and significant effect on tourists' revisit intention to destinations in Kutai Kartanegara Regency, indicating that satisfied tourist are more likely to revisit. Additionally, memorable tourism experience and visitor engagement have a positive and significant effect on visitor satisfaction. The findings also reveal that visitor satisfaction mediates the relationship between visitor engagement and

memorable tourism experience with revisit intention. However, memorable tourism experience does not have a significant direct effect on revisit intention, as many studies indicate that these experiences often enhance emotional connections and satisfaction, thereby encouraging return visits. This study has several limitations. The respondents were visitors to various tourist attractions in Kutai Kartanegara Regency, resulting in a range of tourist experiences that do not specifically represent any single location. Differences in attraction types, facilities, and management levels may influence visitor engagement, memorable tourism experiences, satisfaction, and revisit intention. Therefore, future research should focus on a specific tourist attraction to obtain a more in-depth and contextual understanding. In addition, future studies should consider including additional relevant factors such as destination image, smart tourism, perceived value, and travel motivation.

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