

Visitor Loyalty Analysis of Lake Toba Tourism Destination through Integrated Marketing Communication

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Abstract

This study analyzes the model of increasing visitor loyalty to Lake Toba tourist destinations through destination image management, experiential marketing and integrated marketing communication. The sampling method used in this study is the convenience sampling method. The number of samples analyzed was 160 Lake Toba tourism visitors. Data collection techniques using observation, interviews, questionnaires and documentation. The data analysis method used is Partial Least Square (PLS). The results of the data analysis concluded that destination image, experiential marketing, and integrated marketing communication (IMC) have a positive and significant effect on visitor loyalty. The implications of this research explain that Lake Toba tourism actors need to measure the image of the destination regularly, the effectiveness of experiential marketing campaigns, and the impact of IMC on visitor loyalty is significant. This data can help management understand trends, identify opportunities for improvement, and evaluate the success of implemented strategies. In addition, Lake Toba tourism actors need to conduct training and develop employee capabilities to be more skilled in communicating and serving tourist visitors. Employees and staff interacting directly with visitors must be trained to provide friendly, informative service and help with visitor complaints.

Keywords: *destination image; experiential marketing; integrated marketing communications; visitor loyalty*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis model peningkatan loyalitas pengunjung destinasi wisata Danau Toba melalui pengelolaan citra destinasi, *experiential marketing* dan *integrated marketing communication*. Metode penentuan sampel yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode *convenience sampling*. Jumlah sampel yang dianalisis sebanyak 160 pengunjung wisata Danau Toba. Teknik Pengumpulan data menggunakan observasi, wawancara, kuesioner dan dokumentasi. Metode analisis data yang digunakan adalah *Partial Least Square (PLS)*. Hasil analisis data menyimpulkan *destination image*, *experiential marketing*, dan *integrated marketing communication (IMC)* memiliki pengaruh yang positif dan signifikan terhadap *visitor loyalty*. Implikasi penelitian ini menerangkan pelaku Wisata Danau Toba perlu melakukan pengukuran secara teratur terhadap citra destinasi, efektivitas kampanye *experiential marketing*, dan dampak IMC pada loyalitas pengunjung sangat penting. Data ini dapat membantu manajemen memahami tren, mengidentifikasi peluang perbaikan, dan mengevaluasi keberhasilan strategi yang diimplementasikan. Selain itu, pelaku Wisata Danau Toba perlu melakukan pelatihan dan pengembangan kemampuan karyawan agar lebih terampil dalam berkomunikasi dan melayani

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pengunjung wisata. Karyawan dan staf yang berinteraksi langsung dengan pengunjung perlu dilatih untuk memberikan layanan yang ramah, informatif, dan membantu keluhan pengunjung.

Kata Kunci: *citra destinasi; experiential marketing; integrated marketing communication; loyalitas pengunjung*

INTRODUCTION

To ensure the success of the development and development of tourism in the Lake Toba area, some aspects need to be considered in the development and development of tourism areas, including visitor loyalty, destination image, experiential marketing, and integrated marketing communication. The urgency of this research is to assist local tourism actors in increasing the number of tourist visits to Lake Toba through proper destination image management, experiential marketing and integrated marketing communication. The importance of increasing visitor loyalty is a long-term concrete step for local tourism actors to strengthen Lake Toba's position as one of the most attractive tourist destinations in Indonesia. In the tourism context, (Tanty, 2022) is gaining profits for tourism actors in the Lake Toba area. Many factors affect the level of loyalty, including the level of visitor loyalty, destination image management (Djunaedi et al., 2022); (Main, 2019), experiential marketing (Yuningsih et al., 2021), and integrated marketing communications (Fitriana et al., 2021); (Dewi et al., 2015). However, only some tourism actors in the Lake Toba area have failed to maintain visitor loyalty.

This research's main problem is improving the image management of Lake Toba tourist destinations displayed by local tourism actors. This is due to the need for connecting infrastructure connected to tourist mobility. In addition, the second problem is the management of experiential marketing which could be more optimal. Tourists visiting Lake Toba may feel bored if the products and activities are more varied and attractive. In addition, the quality of service and experience provided by tourism operators and local governments is inconsistent, so tourists only sometimes experience a consistent and satisfying experience. The next problem is that most local tourism actors must still fully apply digital-based marketing communications.

In the tourism context, several factors can affect visitor loyalty, such as destination image, experiential marketing, integrated marketing communication, and safety and security as a whole can affect visitor loyalty. To increase visitor loyalty, Lake Toba tourism stakeholders can focus on improving the destination's image, promoting sustainable tourism practices through experiential marketing, and developing effective marketing strategies through integrated marketing communication. The state of the art of this research, namely the authors believe that in today's digital era, apart from the need for improvements in the destination image aspect and mature experiential marketing, the existence of integrated marketing communication is crucial in order to realize tourism governance that is ready to compete so that it is able to develop and survive even in conditions of economic recession. The next novelty lies in the aspect of measuring the integrated marketing communication variable indicators, namely by including additional indicators in the form of digital marketing to strengthen the model. From some of the problems above, the formulation of the research problem is to analyze the model of increasing visitor loyalty to Lake Toba tourism destinations through destination image management, experiential marketing and integrated marketing communication. The next novelty lies in the aspect of measuring the integrated marketing communication variable indicators, namely by including additional indicators in the form of digital marketing to strengthen the model. From some of the problems above, the formulation of the research problem is to analyze the model of increasing visitor loyalty to Lake Toba tourism destinations through destination image management, experiential marketing and integrated marketing communication. The next novelty lies in the aspect of measuring the integrated marketing communication variable indicators,

namely by including additional indicators in the form of digital marketing to strengthen the model. From some of the problems above, the formulation of the research problem is to analyze the model of increasing visitor loyalty to Lake Toba tourism destinations through destination image management, experiential marketing and integrated marketing communication.

Destination Image and Visitor Loyalty

The image of a tourist object is essential to help sell it to tourists or stakeholders (Ikhsana et al., 2019);(Campón-Cerro et al., 2017). Tourist destinations, branding, and visitor loyalty are closely related to how to create brand equity in tourist destinations (Pratiwi, Suparwan, and S, 2019); (Tuharman et al., 2022), the extent to which tourists are bound (Bordian & Gil-saura, 2021); (Chiu et al., 2016)and how to build strong tourist loyalty (Pratminingsih et al., 2018); (Nuraini, Putera. and Yuliandhivi, 2021). In addition, destination branding is not just a name and tagline but includes the destination's promise as part of a customer-based destination brand equity model (Princess et al., 2014); (Fadli et al., 2021). Regarding destination branding, visitor loyalty plays a critical role that can be considered a result of destination performance. Although tourist satisfaction is central (Wulandari et al., 2020); (Porcu et al., 2019), tourist loyalty is an asset and a valuable portfolio for the long term. Study results (Chiu et al., 2016); (Wulandari et al., 2020), emphasized that the destination's image significantly affects visitor loyalty. Therefore, based on some of the results of previous studies led to the development of the hypothesis:

H1: Destination image effect on visitor loyalty

Experiential Marketing and Visitor Loyalty

The experiential marketing approach is an approach that tries to shift the traditional marketing approach to modern marketing with digital concepts (Rizal & Nafis, 2016). Experiential marketing is a marketing method that has been used for a long time. It is a way to provide products or services that evoke consumers' emotions (Schmitt, 2010). In experiential marketing, companies delight customers by giving them memorable and unique experiences. This way, customer loyalty will be maintained and companies can stay ahead of their competitors and in business (Yuningsih et al., 2021); (Pratminingsih et al., 2018). This is supported by research from (Noor et al., 2020); (Chen & Wu, 2022), which states that tourist visitors will feel high loyalty when tour managers can establish a good emotional bond from them. Therefore, based on some of the results of previous studies led to the development of the hypothesis:

H2: Experiential marketing effect on visitor loyalty

Integrated Marketing Communications and Visitor Loyalty

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) in the context of tourism marketing aims to create a real relationship between entrepreneurs or managers of tourist destinations with tourists or potential tourists and other stakeholders (Andrews & Shimp, 2018). Furthermore, (Kliatchko, 2020)defines IMC as the concept and process of strategic management of brand communication programs that are audience-focused, channel-centered and result-oriented over time. The impact of IMC is to enable the possibility to make changeable decisions through the execution of strategic marketing based on the proper understanding of information-seeking judgments (Seric et al., 2004). IMC has been able to offer significant value to the managers of the sustainable tourism industry amidst rapidly changing communication traditions (Febriyeni et al., 2019). Study results (Porcu et al., 2019); (Fitriana et al., 2021), emphasized that integrated marketing communication significantly affects visitor loyalty. Therefore, based on some of the results of previous studies led to the development of the hypothesis:

H3: Integrated marketing communication effect on visitor loyalty

Based on the theoretical explanation and the results of the empirical studies that have been described previously, the research thinking framework can be described as follows:

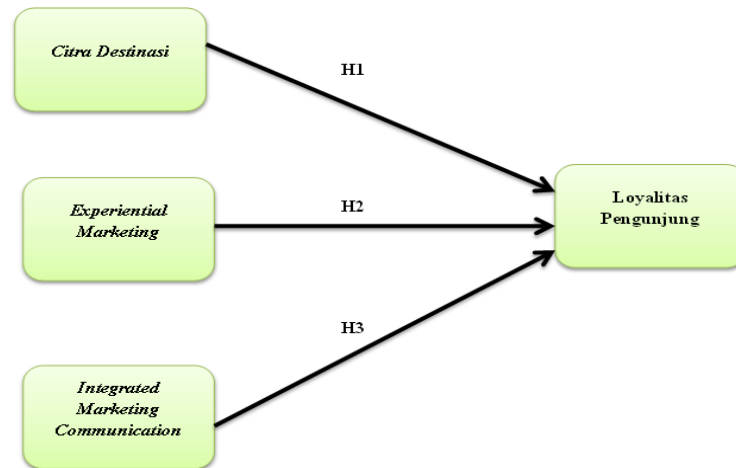


Figure 1.Research Thinking Framework

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a library and field research design with a causal associative approach to look at the relationship of several uncertain variables. (Sugiyono, 2015) Mentioning causal design helps analyze how a variable affects other variables and is also helpful in experimental research, where the researcher treats the independent variable in a controlled manner to directly see its impact on the dependent variable. The time of the research was conducted from June 2023 to August 2023. The population in this study was the total number of Lake Toba tourism visitors. The sampling method used in this study is the convenience sampling method, which was chosen because it is the fastest method due to time constraints, and anyone who accidentally meets the researcher can be sampled if that person is considered suitable as a data source. According to (Hair, 2014), if the population is unknown, the number of samples can be determined from 5-10 times the number of indicators used in a single construct. This study used 16 indicators from 4 existing variable dimensions so that the number of research samples obtained was $16 \times 10 = 160$ Lake Toba tourism visitors. Data collection in this study used the observation method by directly observing the field and documentation derived from secondary data in documents and structured interviews using a questionnaire instrument. The data analysis method used is Partial Least Square (PLS). Data analysis test tool using statistical software Smartpls 3.0. The analysis phase consists of testing the validity and reliability and evaluating the external model with convergent validity. The expected convergent validity criterion is > 0.7 (Hair, 2014). The internal evaluation model reviews the R Square (R^2) value with the criterion if the R^2 value is 0.5-0.6, which means good, 0-0.33, medium, and 0-0.19, which means weak. Then, review the F-Square value (f^2) with the assessment criteria of 0.02 which means weak, 0.15, which means medium, and 0.35 which means strong (Hair, 2014). Finally, testing the hypothesis is the criterion for measuring significance and probability value < 0.05 .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the validity test presented in table 1, the value of each loading factor and AVE on the indicator of destination image, experiential marketing, integrated marketing communications, and visitor loyalty is above 0.7 for the loading factor and above 0.5 for AVE, so it indicates that all items used in the construct are valid. Furthermore, the value for each reliability as measured by the composite reliability value and Cronbach's alpha, it is known that destination image, experiential marketing, integrated marketing communications, and visitor loyalty have a value above 0.7, thus indicating that all research variables have an excellent reliability value. Furthermore, judging from the R-square value of the endogenous variables, a value of 0.421 is

obtained for competitive advantage, this shows that overall, the ability of exogenous variables to explain visitor loyalty is strong (Ghozali, 2014).

Table 1. Validity, Reliability, and R-Square test

Variables	Items	Outer Loading	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Destination Image	Cognitive Destination Image (DI1)	0.775	0.720	0.885	0.804
	Unique Destination Image (DI2)	0.874			
	Affective Destination Image (DI3)	0.894			
Experiential Marketing	Sense (EM1)	0.909	0.734	0.932	0.907
	Feel (EM2)	0.811			
	Think (EM3)	0.910			
	Act (EM4)	0.737			
	Relate (EM5)	0.904			
Integrated Marketing Communications	Advertising (IMC1)	0.859	0.746	0.936	0.915
	Sales Promotions (IMC2)	0.901			
	Personal Selling (IMC3)	0.859			
	Digital Marketing (IMC4)	0.842			
	Social Media (IMC5)	0.858			
Visitor Loyalty	Rebuy (VL1)	0.972	0.947	0.982	0.972
	Retention (VL2)	0.960			
	Referrals (VL3)	0.987			
R-Square					
Visitor Loyalty	<i>R-square</i>	0.432	<i>R-square Adjusted</i>	0.421	

Source: Data Processing Results (2023)

Furthermore, to prove the hypothesis testing, a significance test was carried out to determine the relationship between the exogenous variables and the endogenous variables. The significance criterion was seen from the p-value. With a significance level of 5%, if the p-value between the exogenous variable and the endogenous variable is less than 0.05, it means that the exogenous variable significantly affects the endogenous variable. In contrast, if the value is higher than 0.05, the exogenous variables do not significantly build the endogenous variables. The results of the hypothesis test are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Hypotheses Results

Hypothesis	Coefficients	t-Statistics	P-Value	Results
Destination Image → Visitor Loyalty (H1)	0.277	3,537	0.000	Accepted
Experiential Marketing → Visitor Loyalty (H2)	0.370	5.156	0.000	Rejected
Integrated Marketing Communications → Visitor Loyalty (H3)	0.188	4,170	0.000	Accepted

Source: Data Processing Results (2023)

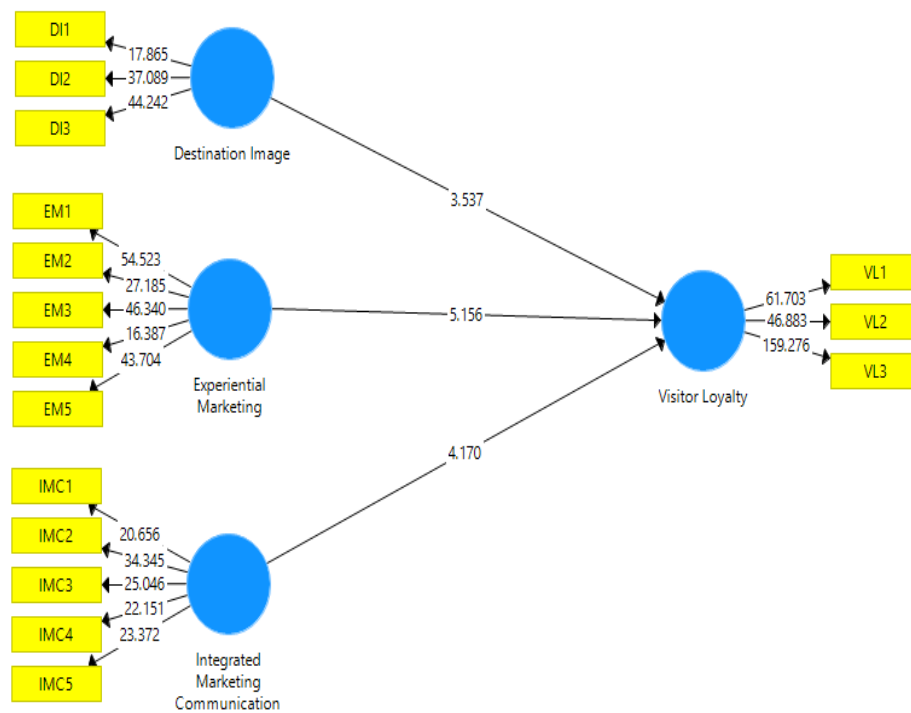


Figure 2. Hypotheses Result

Based on the results of testing the first hypothesis (H1), the results that lead to positive and significant intermediate results are obtained destination image with visitor loyalty. These results prove that a good tourism image will also create a good perception, which encourages visitors to return to the attraction. Destinations aware of the importance of a positive image in building visitor loyalty may develop loyalty programs, discounts, or unique experiences to entice tourists to return (Chiu et al., 2016); (Ratu, et al., 2021). Based on the results of interviews and questionnaire recapitulation, positive experiences following the image of the destination that has been formed can strengthen visitor loyalty. For example, when tourists find that a destination meets their expectations, they are more likely to be satisfied and want to return. In addition, a good destination image can also impact the destination's reputation (Tiris Sudrartono et al., 2022); (Sudirman et al., 2022). Travelers who are satisfied with their visit have a greater chance of speaking positively about the destination to others. In the age of social media, this can also sway the views of potential diners. Suppose the image of Lake Toba Tourism is positive in the eyes of tourists (for example, perceived as an exotic, beautiful, tourist-friendly destination). In that case, they will likely develop feelings of affinity for the destination. This can encourage them to return for visits and even encourage recommendations to friends and family.

The results of testing the second hypothesis (H2) resulted in positive and significant intermediate results in experiential marketing loyalty. These results prove that experiential marketing can create an unforgettable experience for visitors. In Lake Toba Tourism, this can involve experiences such as enjoying beautiful lake views, local culture, water tourism activities, and cultural events. These experiences can generate positive memories that visitors will remember and encourage them to return. Immersive experiences can trigger strong emotions and engagement. Experiential marketing in Lake Toba Tourism can include cultural events, art performances, or interactive activities that allow visitors to feel directly involved. Positive emotions can increase a visitor's emotional bond with a destination, contributing to long-term loyalty (Chen & Wu, 2022); (Sudirman et al., 2020). Furthermore, experiential marketing allows personalizing experiences according to individual preferences and interests. At Lake Toba Tourism, this can involve providing customized tour packages or exceptional cultural experiences. When visitors feel that their experience is tailored to their needs and wants, they

tend to be more satisfied and potentially more loyal (Sudirman et al., 2021). Memorable experiences often encourage visitors to share their stories and photos with friends and family. In the era of social media, this can significantly impact further marketing. If their shared experience is positive, it can encourage others to visit and try similar experiences (Silalahi et al., 2020).

The results of testing the third hypothesis (H3) resulted in positive and significant intermediate results that integrated marketing communication with visitor loyalty. These results prove that IMC helps create a cohesive experience from start to finish. A cohesive experience can mean the visitor feels aligned with the marketing communication promises. If their experience aligns with the expectations IMC has built, they are more likely to be satisfied and return (Porcu et al., 2019); (Sudirman et al., 2020). IMC aims at delivering consistent and targeted messages through multiple communication channels, such as advertising, promotions, social media, and more. In the tourism context, consistent messages about the beauty and uniqueness of destinations can build a positive image in the minds of visitors. If these messages reflect the experience visitors have encountered, they are more likely to be satisfied and more likely to return. IMC utilizes multiple communication channels to reach a wider audience. In the context of Lake Toba Tourism, social media, websites, brochures, advertisements, and even hands-on experiences such as promotional events or tourism exhibitions can provide comprehensive information and invite visitor participation (Sundulusi et al., 2022). Visitors engaged through these channels may feel closer to the destination (Sudirman et al., 2022). With consistent messages and integrated communications, destinations can strengthen their image and identity in the minds of visitors. This helps visitors identify Lake Toba Tourism destinations with their unique characteristics, which can influence their decision to return.

CONCLUSION

From the results of this study, it was concluded that destination image, experiential marketing, and integrated marketing communication (IMC) had a positive and significant effect on visitor loyalty. Destination image, experiential marketing, and integrated marketing communication (IMC) positively and significantly influence visitor loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism because these concepts mutually support and reinforce one another in shaping visitor perceptions and experiences. A positive image of Lake Toba Tourism destinations can form positive expectations before visitors arrive. Visitors with a favorable view of a destination will likely revisit to meet their expectations. Experiential marketing creates memorable and unique experiences for visitors. The relationship between experiential marketing and visitor loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism can be very relevant because visitors' unique and positive experiences can contribute to their loyalty to the destination. These experiences can create a solid emotional bond between the visitor and the destination. Memorable experiences produce lasting impressions that impact visitor loyalty. On the other hand, IMC helps ensure consistent messaging and communication across multiple channels. This helps form a uniform and positive image of Lake Toba Tourism in the minds of visitors.

The managerial implications of this study conclude that Lake Toba tourism management needs to focus on creating unique and memorable tourist experiences for visitors. This could include developing cultural activities and events, exciting attractions, and personalized service. Designing creative and engaging experiential marketing programs, such as interactive tours, local art workshops, or cultural events, can increase visitor engagement. This program can help create valuable memories that impact loyalty. In addition, social media and online platforms can strengthen messages, share visitor experiences, and provide helpful information. Management can use engaging visual content and actively interact with visitors to strengthen the bond with the destination. Management must be open to continuous evaluation and adjustment. They can continuously improve and optimize their marketing strategy and travel experience using visitor feedback, campaign performance data, and industry trends. The most important thing is that

tourism actors can work with local parties, such as cultural communities or tour providers, to increase the diversity of experiences offered. These partnerships can enrich destinations and increase their appeal to different types of visitors.

For further research regarding the loyalty of visitors to Lake Toba Tourism can develop and explore matters relating to variables that are suspected to have a relationship with visitor loyalty. Variables suspected to be related to visitor loyalty at Lake Toba Tourism can include various aspects that influence the decision of visitors to return and visit the destination repeatedly, such as satisfaction, experiential quality, word of mouth, service quality, accessibility, and emotional attachment. Research can focus on visitor segmentation based on demographic characteristics, preferences and behavior. Then, analysis can be performed to understand how each visitor segment relates to loyalty. This can assist the destination in developing a more focused marketing strategy. Furthermore, The sample size used in this study is still small and has yet to be able to provide general generalizations, for further research it is necessary to increase the sample size to a larger one from different regions. On the other hand, for larger sample sizes and more complex models, data analysis methods using the Amos application can be used.

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