



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



## The role of destination image in mediating the effects of memorable tourist experience and service quality on revisit intention: A study of Wae Rebo cultural village

Rebeka Golden Trully\* and Putu Yudi Setiawan

*Department of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business, Udayana University, Jalan P.B. Sudirman, Kampus Sudirman Denpasar, Bali.*

World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2026, 30(02), 1401-1406

Publication history: Received on 09 April 2026; revised on 17 May 2026; accepted on 19 May 2026

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2026.30.2.1390>

### Abstract

Despite the rapid growth of the tourism industry, cultural heritage destinations like Wae Rebo Village in Manggarai, NTT, face critical challenges in maintaining tourist loyalty due to infrastructure limitations and inconsistent service standards. This study aims to investigate the direct and indirect effects of memorable tourist experiences (MTE) and service quality on revisit intention, with destination image serving as the mediating variable. Grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework, this research employed a quantitative causal-associative approach. Data were collected through a survey using non-probability sampling (accidental and snowball techniques) from tourists who had visited Wae Rebo, and subsequently analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that a memorable tourist experience has a positive and significant effect on both destination image and revisit intention. While service quality significantly enhances destination image, it does not have a direct significant impact on revisit intention. Furthermore, destination image was found to partially mediate the relationship between memorable tourist experience and revisit intention, but it failed to mediate the effect of service quality on revisit intention. These findings suggest that for culture-based destinations, emotional and memorable experiences are more pivotal in driving long-term loyalty than basic service delivery. This research presents significant theoretical insights for tourism marketing, while also offering actionable recommendations for destination managers to emphasize cultural authenticity and enhance service infrastructure. Such strategies are crucial for fortifying the destination image and promoting sustainable intentions for revisits.

**Keywords:** Memorable Tourist Experience; Service Quality; Destination Image; Revisit Intention; Wae Rebo

### 1. Introduction

The global tourism industry has experienced rapid growth, becoming a primary driver for economic development and regional growth in developing nations [1]. Within this competitive landscape, maintaining tourist loyalty through revisit intention is vital for the long-term sustainability of destinations. Revisit intention is defined as the traveler's readiness or plan to return to a specific destination in the future [2]. Destinations that successfully encourage repeat visits can reduce marketing costs and ensure stable economic benefits [3]. However, cultural heritage destinations like Wae Rebo Village in Manggarai, East Nusa Tenggara, face significant challenges. Despite its international recognition, issues regarding infrastructure limitations and service quality that has not yet reached expected targets remain critical barriers to ensuring consistent revisit intentions [4, 5].

The experiences of visitors and the standards of service are crucial determinants that significantly shape behavioral intentions [6]. In the context of cultural tourism, a Memorable Tourist Experience (MTE) characterized by hedonism,

\* Corresponding author: Rebeka Golden Trully

meaningfulness, and novelty is seen as more influential than physical attributes alone. Numerous studies have demonstrated that positive MTE significantly enhances a tourist's emotional connection and loyalty to a destination [7, 8]. Furthermore, service quality remains a fundamental stimulus in the tourism sector, particularly in how it shapes a visitor's functional assessment of a site [9]. Nevertheless, numerous studies have reported divergent results concerning the direct impact of service quality on revisit intentions, indicating that elevated service standards do not necessarily ensure a return visit in the absence of a compelling emotional or cultural experience [10, 11]. These inconsistencies warrant further investigation, particularly in remote culture-based destinations.

Destination image is regarded as a critical construct that elucidates these intricate relationships. It encompasses the cognitive representation and overall perception that tourists possess concerning a particular location [12]. According to the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory, external stimuli (such as MTE and service quality) influence the internal psychological state of the individual (destination image), which in turn dictates the final response (revisit intention) [3, 17]. Destination image has the capability to function as a mediating mechanism, wherein a robust and favorable image, cultivated through distinctive experiences and high-quality service, fosters the likelihood of tourists' return visits. Nonetheless, empirical research examining the role of destination image as a mediating factor within the context of traditional Indonesian villages remains relatively sparse. Consequently, this study seeks to investigate the function of destination image as a mediator in the relationship between memorable tourist experiences and service quality on tourists' intentions to revisit. The findings of this study are anticipated to enhance the existing body of literature on tourism marketing by employing the SOR framework in the context of culture-based destinations. Additionally, these findings provide an empirical basis for local governments and site managers to design strategies that preserve cultural authenticity while improving basic service infrastructure to strengthen destination image.

---

## 2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory explains that environmental stimuli (S) affect an individual's internal psychological state or "organism" (O), which subsequently triggers a behavioral response (R) [17]. In the context of tourism, external factors such as Memorable Tourist Experiences (MTE) and service quality act as stimuli that shape the tourist's cognitive and affective perceptions. In this study, destination image is positioned as the "organism" the mediating internal state that processes these stimuli to produce a final response in the form of revisit intention [13]. This framework suggests that a tourist's decision to return is not merely a direct reaction to services but is filtered through the mental representation they hold of the destination.

Memorable Tourist Experience (MTE) is characterized by high levels of hedonism, novelty, and meaningfulness that stay in a traveler's memory long after the trip has ended. Based on the SOR perspective, a unique and vivid experience serves as a powerful stimulus that encourages tourists to reciprocate by returning to the destination. Previous findings by [14] confirmed that MTE is favorably correlated with behavioral intentions, including the desire to revisit [7]. Furthermore, these experiences significantly shape how a destination is perceived; a positive MTE fosters a strong, favorable destination image in the tourist's mind [7].

- Hypothesis 1 (H1): A memorable tourist experience has a positive impact on revisit intention.
- Hypothesis 2 (H2): A memorable tourist experience has a positive impact on destination image.

Service quality provides the functional and technical stimulus necessary for a destination to be perceived as professional and reliable. Good service quality encompassing tangibility, empathy, and responsiveness demonstrates the destination's commitment to visitor satisfaction. In accordance with SOR theory, superior service acts as an external stimulus that enhances the "organism" (destination image). Numerous studies indicate that service quality is a primary driver in building a positive destination image [6, 9]. While service quality is expected to directly influence revisit intention, some empirical evidence suggests its effect may be non-significant if not accompanied by a strong emotional or cultural connection [10]. However, based on the general consensus in tourism marketing [11, 15], it can be assumed that better service quality generally fosters a desire to return.

- Hypothesis 3 (H3): Service quality has a positive effect on destination image.
- Hypothesis 4 (H4): Service quality has a positive effect on revisit intention.

Destination image refers to the cognitive representation and overall perception that tourists maintain, serving as a vital internal factor that influences subsequent behaviors. Tourists with a positive image of a destination, characterized by its unique culture and atmosphere, are more likely to exhibit loyalty and a higher intention to return [12, 13]. Beyond

its direct impact, destination image is expected to influence revisit intention indirectly as a mediating mechanism. It bridges the gap between the initial stimuli (MTE and service quality) and the final behavioral response. Positive experiences and high service standards strengthen the destination image, which in turn increases the likelihood of a return visit [2, 3]. This mediating role has been supported by findings suggesting that destination image provides the cognitive and affective foundation for long-term loyalty [15, 16].

- Hypothesis 5 (H5): Destination image has a positive effect on revisit intention.
- Hypothesis 6 (H6): Destination image mediates the effect of memorable tourist experience on revisit intention.
- Hypothesis 7 (H7): Destination image mediates the effect of service quality on revisit intention.

---

### 3. Methods

The research was conducted at Wae Rebo Cultural Village, located in Manggarai, East Nusa Tenggara, following the research academic schedule. This study explored the effects of memorable tourist experience (X1) and service quality (X2) as exogenous variables on revisit intention (Y), which serves as an endogenous variable, utilizing a quantitative methodology and a causal associative research design, with destination image (M) functioning as a mediating variable. The study population comprised both domestic and international tourists who had previously visited Wae Rebo Cultural Village. Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire administered on a five-point Likert scale, distributed via non-probability sampling using accidental and snowball sampling techniques.

Memorable tourist experience was measured through dimensions including hedonism, novelty, meaningfulness, and refreshment [7, 14]. Service quality was measured through functional dimensions encompassing tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy [6, 9]. Destination image was measured through cognitive and affective perceptions of the destination [12, 13], while revisit intention was measured through the dimensions of repeat visit desires and recommendation willingness [2, 3]. The instruments utilized in this study underwent rigorous testing for validity and reliability.

Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) [18], which encompassed the evaluation of both the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model).

---

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1. Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model evaluation is conducted to ensure that all indicators meet the established validity and reliability criteria. The convergent validity is assessed based on outer loading values, which should exceed the threshold of 0.70, while the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values at both the dimension level (lower-order constructs) and variable level (higher-order constructs) must be greater than 0.50 to declare the instrument valid. Furthermore, construct reliability is evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), where values for all constructs must exceed the minimum limit of 0.70 to indicate good internal consistency. These combined assessments ensure that the research instrument is thoroughly valid and reliable before structural model testing.

#### 4.2. Structural Model Evaluation

The empirical outcomes of the structural model assessment are comprehensively delineated in Table 1. The path analysis reveals that a memorable tourist experience exerts a robust, statistically significant positive influence on travelers' revisit intention (part coefficient = 0.462, p-value < 0.05), thereby providing strong empirical support for Hypothesis 1 (H1). Regarding the antecedents of destination image, memorable tourist experiences display a prominent positive and significant impact (part coefficient = 0.499, p-value < 0.05), which confirms Hypothesis 2 (H2). Concurrently, service quality significantly and positively shapes destination image (part coefficient = 0.446, p-value < 0.05), leading to the definitive acceptance of Hypothesis 3 (H3). Conversely, service quality failed to demonstrate a significant direct effect on revisit intention (part coefficient = 0.097, p-value > 0.05); consequently, Hypothesis 4 (H4) was statistically rejected. Furthermore, destination image emerged as a vital positive predictor that significantly dictates revisit intention (part coefficient = 0.306, p-value > 0.05), validating Hypothesis 5 (H5).

**Table 1** Hypothesis Testing Result

Construct	Original sample (O)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P- values	Hypothesis Status
Memorable Tourist Experience (X <sub>1</sub> ) -> Revisit Intention (Y)	0.462	3.760	0.000	accepted
Memorable Tourist Experience (X <sub>1</sub> ) -> Destination Image (M)	0.449	5.027	0.000	accepted
Service Quality (X <sub>2</sub> ) -> Destination Image (M)	0.446	4.651	0.000	accepted
Service Quality (X <sub>2</sub> ) -> Revisit Intention (Y)	0.097	1.030	0.303	rejected
Destination Image (M) -> Revisit Intention (Y)	0.306	2.107	0.035	accepted

(Primary Data, 2026)

Furthermore, the mediation analysis revealed that destination image serves as a significant partial mediator in the relationship between memorable tourist experience and revisit intention (part coefficient = 0.153, p-value = 0.038). This relationship is classified as complementary partial mediation, as both direct and indirect pathways are statistically significant and share a common positive direction. Such findings imply that a memorable experience establishes a profound emotional and cognitive framework that bolsters a positive destination image, which subsequently catalyzes long-term revisit commitments. Concurrently, destination image was found to fully mediate the link between service quality and revisit intention (part coefficient = 0.136, p-value = 0.079). This pathway is identified as indirect-only mediation, given that the indirect effect is statistically validated while the direct effect remains non-significant. This underscores that service quality does not inherently trigger repeat visits; rather, its impact is entirely contingent upon its ability to cultivate a favorable destination image within the tourist's perception.

**Table 2** Mediating Testing Result (Specific Indirect Effect)

Construct	Original sample (O)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P- values	Hypothesis Status
Memorable Tourist Experience (X <sub>1</sub> ) -> Destination Image (M) -> Revisit Intention (Y)	0.153	0.073	2.065	0.038	accepted
Service Quality (X <sub>2</sub> ) -> Destination Image (M) -> Revisit Intention (Y)	0.136	0.077	1.755	0.079	accepted (as full mediation)

(Primary Data, 2026)

## 5. Discussion

The empirical findings of this study demonstrate that a memorable tourist experience (MTE) serves as a critical determinant in augmenting revisit intentions among visitors to Wae Rebo Cultural Village. Tourists who partake in hedonistic, novel, and meaningful engagements tend to establish enduring emotional bonds with the locale. This outcome substantiates the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework, positing that environmental stimuli represented here by unique socio-cultural and psychological encounters act as primary catalysts for internal organismic states, which subsequently trigger behavioral responses, specifically the propensity to return.

These observations are congruent with the work of [7,14], who contends that MTEs significantly bolster behavioral intentions through robust cognitive and affective pathways. Furthermore, the results resonate with [8], who suggests that idiosyncratic experiences can cultivate a sense of place attachment and long-term loyalty. The consistency across these findings underscores that experiential quality remains a stable and pivotal factor in fostering loyalty within heritage tourism, thereby reinforcing the theoretical positioning of this research within the broader tourism management discourse.

To sustain competitive advantage, stakeholders at Wae Rebo must prioritize the preservation and enhancement of the MTE dimensions, particularly novelty and refreshment. This may be achieved through the rigorous conservation of *Mbaru Niang* architectural authenticity and the promotion of genuine host-guest interactions. Strengthening these elements is anticipated to consolidate Wae Rebo's position as a top-of-mind destination within East Nusa Tenggara.

The profound influence of MTE on destination image suggests that high-quality experiences facilitate a favorable and trusting perception of the site. This cognitive-affective development encourages tourists to categorize the village as a premium cultural asset. Such findings align with [13], who identifies positive experiences as fundamental drivers in constructing a robust destination image. Moreover, the results corroborate the assertions of [12], emphasizing that the emotional resonance derived from a memorable stay is indispensable for fostering a positive brand image.

Intriguingly, the data reveals that service quality does not directly precipitate revisit intention; rather, its influence is entirely contingent upon its role in shaping a favorable destination image. This implies that in remote cultural settings like Wae Rebo, functional service attributes such as infrastructure are perceived as "hygiene factors" rather than direct motivators of loyalty. Nevertheless, service quality remains a critical antecedent to destination image, a finding supported by [6], who confirmed that service excellence enhances the overall perceived value of a destination. Consequently, while service quality may not be the primary catalyst for repeat visitation, it constitutes a non-negotiable prerequisite for maintaining institutional reputation.

The partial mediation of destination image in the nexus between MTE and revisit intention indicates that while experiences can directly stimulate the desire to return, a potent destination image significantly amplifies this mechanism by enhancing perceived reliability and emotional resonance. These results align with [9], who argued that destination image serves as a vital internal mechanism that elucidates how tourism-related factors translate into behavioral outcomes.

From a practical standpoint, these findings suggest that management should adopt a dual strategy safeguarding authentic cultural experiences while simultaneously elevating service standards to sustain a positive destination image. This integrated approach is expected to facilitate sustainable tourist loyalty and yield positive economic impacts for the Manggarai region.

---

## 6. Conclusion

In summary, this research establishes that a memorable tourist experience (MTE) exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on revisit intentions at Wae Rebo Cultural Village, operating through both direct pathways and indirect mechanisms via destination image. Destination image is identified as a critical mediator that intensifies the link between experiential quality and the propensity for repeat visitation. Conversely, service quality was found to have no direct impact on revisit intentions; rather, its influence is manifested exclusively through its capacity to shape destination image. From a theoretical standpoint, these findings contribute to the existing body of literature by affirming the applicability of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework within the specific context of remote cultural heritage tourism.

From a practical standpoint, destination management organizations (DMOs) and local stakeholders should prioritize the conservation of authentic socio-cultural assets and the enrichment of visitor engagement to ensure the delivery of high-quality, memorable encounters. Furthermore, while service quality functions primarily as a "hygiene factor," it remains imperative for relevant agencies to upgrade infrastructure and accessibility to consolidate a professional and favorable destination image. It is essential for organizations to develop a holistic tourism ecosystem that harmonizes authentic social interactions with standardized service reliability, thereby fostering long-term tourist loyalty and ensuring the sustainable development of the tourism sector in the Manggarai region.

---

## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Acknowledgments*

The authors wish to convey their heartfelt appreciation to the local community, elders, and the management body of Wae Rebo Cultural Village (Lembaga Pelestari Budaya Wae Rebo) for their exceptional warmth, willingness to participate, and for providing valuable insights and data for this study. Gratitude is also expressed to the academic supervisors and colleagues at Universitas Udayana, along with the anonymous reviewers, whose insightful feedback

and academic guidance greatly enhanced the quality of this research. Finally, the authors express their gratitude for the institutional and administrative support that effectively enabled the successful completion of this study.

#### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

#### *Statement of ethical approval*

The present study approved by the institutional research ethics committee of Universitas Udayana. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee.

#### *Statement of informed consent*

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

---

## References

- [1] Ginting, J. E. B., Tobing, A. D. R., and Sidabutar, I. S. (2025). Pariwisata Belanja Sebagai Penggerak Ekonomi Masyarakat Lokal:(Studi pada Pasar Buah Berastagi). *Jurnal Pariwisata Tawangmangu*, 3(1), 25-31.
- [2] Chi, C. G. Q., & Qu, H. (2008). Examining the structural relationships of destination image, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty: An integrated approach. *Tourism management*, 29(4), 624-636.
- [3] Kim, W. G., Kim, S., & Kim, Y. (2012). The effect of memorable tourism experiences on satisfaction, emotional engagement, and loyalty. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 36(1), 122-141 .
- [4] Peong, H. K., and Astawa, I. N. D. (2023). Pengaruh Aksesibilitas Dan Kualitas Pelayanan Dalam Meningkatkan Kepuasan Wisata Di Desa Adat Wae Rebo. *Jurnal Akademisi Vokasi*, 2(1), 1-10.
- [5] Pramono, R. (2025). Desa Wisata: Membangun Keberlanjutan dan Pemberdayaan Komunitas. Penerbit NEM.
- [6] Wahim, I. (2024). A study on service quality, tourist value perception, and destination image for revisit intention in Lombok. *Jurnal Kepariwisata (JK)*, 8(2), 146-160.
- [7] Wahdiniawati, S. A., Apriyani, A., and Perkasa, D. H. (2024). Dampak Memorable Tourism Experiences terhadap Revisit Intention pada Kunjungan Wisata ke Bali. *Jurnal Ekonomi dan Ekonomi Syariah*.
- [8] Altasia Jurnal Pariwisata Indonesia (2024). Peranan Memorable Tourist Experience dalam Memediasi Hubungan antara Tourist Engagement dan Revisit Intention.
- [9] Arevin, A. T. (2024). The effect of tourism facilities and service quality on return intention through visitor satisfaction. *Research Horizon*, 4(2), 129-140.
- [10] Timur, B. (2018). Service Quality, Destination Image and Revisit Intentions of Thermal Hotels. *International Journal of Tourism Management*, 1(1).
- [11] Arum Sari, W., and Najmudin, M. (2021). Pengaruh Kualitas Layanan terhadap Minat Berkunjung Kembali wisatawan. *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen*.
- [12] Wei, J. (2024). A study on the impact of tourism destination image and local attachment on revisit intention. *PLOS ONE*.
- [13] Widodo, N. T. S. (2025). The effect of tourist experience and destination image on revisit intention through satisfaction. *International Journal of Applied Business and Management*.
- [14] Kim, J. H. (2017). The Role of Memorable Tourism Experiences in Shaping Destination Image and Loyalty. *Journal of Travel Research*.
- [15] Baloglu, S., & Brinberg, D. (1997). Affective images of tourism destinations. *Journal of travel research*, 35(4), 11-15.
- [16] Gartner, W. C. (1994). Image formation process. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 2(2-3), 191-216.
- [17] Jacoby, J. (2002). Stimulus-organism-response reconsidered: an evolutionary step in modeling (consumer) behavior. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 12(1), 51-57.
- [18] Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., and Sarstedt, M. (2022). *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.