

Behavioral intention on tropical island tourism: assessing the destination image effect through mte and satisfaction

Gusti Ayu Wulandari, Ika Barokah Suryaningsih, Shohibatun Nisa Merinda

University of Jember, Indonesia

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Abstract

East Java Province is a major driver of domestic tourism in Indonesia and has strong potential for developing its remote tropical islands. However, tourism growth in these areas is hindered by limited accessibility and inadequate infrastructure. This study examines how sustainable tourism can be promoted by analyzing the relationships among destination image, memorable tourism experiences (MTEs), tourist satisfaction, and behavioural intention. Using a quantitative approach, data from 155 visitors were analyzed with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that destination image positively influences MTEs and satisfaction but does not directly affect behavioural intention. Instead, behavioural intention is shaped through the mediating effects of MTEs and satisfaction, both of which are key drivers of tourists' intention to revisit and recommend destinations. The findings emphasize that positive perceptions of safety and infrastructure must be translated into meaningful and memorable experiences to create value for tourists. The study provides strategic insights for policymakers and destination managers, highlighting the importance of shifting tourism development and marketing efforts from image-focused promotion to experience-oriented strategies supported by adequate infrastructure, in order to strengthen tourist loyalty, encourage positive word-of-mouth, and support sustainable tourism redistribution.

Keywords: *behavioral intention, destination image, mte, satisfaction*

Introduction

As an archipelagic country, Indonesia boasts abundant geographical and ecological resources, making it one of the world's largest tourism markets. Data from 2023 shows that East Java Province is the most significant contributor to domestic tourist travel in the Indonesian archipelago (bps.go.id, 2024). However, tourist visits tend to be concentrated in popular destinations such as Kawah Ijen, Baluran, and Bromo-Tengger-Semeru. This situation overlooks the potential of other destinations, especially on remote islands with beautiful panoramic views and unique natural and marine features. Based on data, there are 229 recorded islands, including many unique island such as Sempu Island in Malang Regency, Gili Ketapang in Probolinggo, Nusa Barong in Jember, Bedil Island in Banyuwangi, and small islands around the northern sea near Madura, such as Gili Iyang, Sepeken Island, Raas Island, Kangean Island, Gili Labak, and East Java tropical island, each with their own unique features such as cultural attractions and local cuisine, the beauty of underwater coral reefs, inland lakes, atolls, endemic wildlife, the finest sand, and the highest oxygen levels. Despite their exceptional natural appeal, tourism development to these remote islands still faces serious obstacles. These tropical islands, each with its unique panorama, face

challenges in supporting infrastructure, with minimal and inadequate access to transportation and port facilities. As a result, tourists often rely on fishing boats that do not guarantee safety and comfort, and some transportation accommodations cease operations during adverse weather conditions. These challenges are crucial amid the Ministry of Tourism's efforts to strengthen the "Proud to Travel in Indonesia" campaign and achieve sustainable tourist movement targets.

With its unique marine tourism, this archipelago's coastline has the same development potential as other iconic islands such as Bali or Nusa Tenggara. Therefore, local policymakers and tourism authorities should promote positive behavioral intention to develop tourist accommodations and raise awareness of this area as a potential tourist destination in Indonesia, especially in East Java. Additionally, it considers various variables that shape behavioral intention in relation to phenomena at tropical island tourist destinations in East Java. Of the hundreds of islands scattered across East Java, only 30% are known to the public and visited as tourist destinations. This study focuses on three main islands: Gili Iyang in Sumenep, Bawean Island in Gresik, and Gili Ketapang in Probolinggo. In addition to the assumed equal distribution of island distances, similar natural landscapes with comparable topography, and island characteristics featuring indigenous populations and limited infrastructure that are also nearly identical, each island possesses its unique image. Gili Iyang in Sumenep Regency is renowned for having the second-highest oxygen content in the world, after Jordan, making it a unique health and nature destination (Jatimprov, 2023). Its natural beach scenery and fresh air are the main attractions. The second destination, Bawean Island in Gresik Regency, is a large island in the middle of the Java Sea rich in marine and natural potential, as well as culture, including hot springs, waterfalls, Kastoba Lake, and surrounding small islands like Gili Island and Noko Island, popular for snorkeling and beach activities. The island is also home to the protected Bawean deer. Finally, Gili Ketapang in Probolinggo Regency is famous as a destination easily accessible from the mainland of Probolinggo. This island is a very popular destination for snorkeling and marine activities, particularly for observing large schools of clownfish. The natural, cultural, and marine potential of these three destinations is immense. However, inadequate and limited accessibility, such as transportation facilities and supporting infrastructure, can lead to negative tourist experiences, resulting in decreased satisfaction.

There is a need to develop tourism potential by realizing and attracting the behavioral intention of tourists to visit remote tropical islands such as this one in an effort to achieve the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism's target of maintaining sustainable visits to places that have potential but are still not well known, even by domestic tourists in Indonesia itself. Behavioral intention, particularly among tourists, refers to the desire to visit, where visitors perceive a good reputation and high service quality, which can lead to future behavioral intention (Dianty & Fatur Rahman, 2023). Research in tourism marketing will focus on investigating tourists' willingness to visit destinations, namely their interest in purchasing or repurchasing tourism products, recommending them to others, and providing feedback to tourism service providers (Jeong & Shin, 2020; Tavitiyaman et al., 2021)

Behavioral interests, such as people's decisions to travel to a destination, are influenced by their assessment of tourism facilities and offerings, as well as psychological factors, particularly their experiences with the destination (Hailey Shin et al., 2021; Jeong & Shin, 2020). This is supported by findings that positive MTE also shapes behavioral intention

(Brochado et al., 2022; Muntean et al., 2023; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022; Seyfi et al., 2020). In addition to MTE, satisfaction also influences behavioral interest (Hailey Shin et al., 2021; Saut & Song, 2022; Tuncer et al., 2021; Yağmur & Aksu, 2022). Similar to the loyalty theory, which is primarily influenced by satisfaction, in the context of tourism research, it can be equated with interest in behavior, whether it is interest or the decision to revisit. Finally, as mentioned earlier, each island in this study has a unique image that differs from the others. The unique destination image of each research object is the third variable believed to influence behavioral intention based on empirical studies conducted by (Di-Clemente et al., 2022 & Nazir et al., 2021, 2022). In addition to influencing behavioral intention, MTE and satisfaction with tourist destination visits are also greatly influenced by the suitability of the destination image they received previously. Research (Hidayati et al., 2022; Novianti & Ernawadi, 2024; Kutlu & Ayyildiz, 2021) suggests that the destination image in tourists' minds can have a positive influence on MTE. Meanwhile, Yagmur and Aksu (2022) and Kralikova et al. (2020) mention that the destination image can influence satisfaction. Furthermore, interestingly, in addition to shaping destination image and satisfaction, several previous studies have revealed that MTE can also shape and influence visitor satisfaction levels (Afzal et al., 2024; La Are, 2024)

Contextually, ecotourism in Indonesia, especially in East Java, often centers on established destinations such as Bromo and Banyuwangi. Provincial tourism managers must be able to focus tourism development on less developed destinations (remote/emerging destinations), such as beautiful remote islands, which often have great potential in terms of natural beauty and cultural uniqueness on each island, but are limited by infrastructure deficits and limited accessibility (Nurhayati et al., 2023), as is the case in nearly 60% of most regions in Southeast Asia (UNWTO, 2022). This research is also critical because it fills a gap in comprehensive models that specifically integrate destination image, memorable travel experiences (MTE), satisfaction, and behavioral intent in the context of remote island destinations with unique infrastructure challenges, unlike studies that generally focus on more famous destinations such as Bali, Lombok, and the iconic Nusa Tenggara islands, which have not thoroughly tested the mediating role of MTE and satisfaction simultaneously. Thus, this research fills a theoretical and methodological gap, offering an evidence-based strategic framework to refine strategies for accelerating sustainable tourism development in emerging destinations. This framework focuses on improving the quality of experience and loyalty, thereby enhancing tourists' interest in revisiting developing destinations.

Literature Review

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), behavioral intention is a direct predictor of actual behavior, which is shaped by three main components: attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In island tourism, satisfaction represents tourists' attitudes toward tourist destinations (Lee, 2009; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). Empirical studies have shown that tourist satisfaction levels have a significant influence on behavioral intentions, including revisit intentions (Stylos et al., 2016). This theory is consistent with TPB, where positive attitudes toward an object (destination) influence intentions and behavior. Social or subjective norms in the context of tourism are often shaped by social and cultural influences that affect tourists' perceptions of

destinations (Liu et al., 2024). The influence of social norms can affect how tourists assess and shape the image of a destination through social interaction, thereby indirectly contributing to the destination image and visitation intentions. Memorable tourism experiences (MTE) encompass internal and external factors that influence tourists' perceptions of control over their visits, such as ease of access, facilities, and positive experiences that empower them to revisit (Pahrudin et al., 2021). These positive experiences reinforce perceptions of control, strengthening behavioral intention.

Theoretically, based on previous studies conducted on similar destinations, Afshardoots' 2020 study proves that destination image influences behavioral intention only if mediated by tourist satisfaction. (Zhang et al., 2018) emphasize that in remote destinations, destination image is only an "initial factor," but MTE is more critical for building loyalty. Other studies, such as those conducted (Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Tasia & Yasri 2021). Often, Destination Image significantly influences Satisfaction, and Satisfaction becomes a strong mediating variable for Revisit Intention (Muis et al., 2020; Sukaris, 2024). The emergence of the MTE concept as a strong predictor of Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions has also been increasingly studied. Kim and Chen (2021)) introduced the MTE concept and proved that memorable experiences are the main predictor of tourists' intentions to recommend a destination. Endah et al (2017) stated that satisfaction is a key mediator between destination perception and behavioral intention, particularly in Indonesian marine tourism. However, the complex mechanism by which Destination Image influences MTE and how MTE and Satisfaction influence Behavioral Intention (particularly in remote island destinations) still needs to be examined.

Small islands with unique panoramas along the coast of East Java still have few visitors. In fact, the primary goal of tourism managers is to ensure that tourists have behavioral intentions, such as a desire to visit, revisit, or recommend the destination, which are key factors in stable and sustainable tourism development. (Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2024). Behavioral intention refers to a tourist's desire or intention to engage in future behavior that could lead to increased business volume for a destination (Gulo et al., 2023; Konuk et al., 2015; N. R. Lee & Kotler, 2013). This includes indicators of willingness to revisit, make repeat purchases (such as local handicrafts, tour tickets, and accommodations), and recommend to others. (Kim & Bonn, 2016; Nazir et al., 2021). It is necessary to identify several factors that can increase behavioral intentions towards less popular island tourist destinations in East Java.

The remote islands along the northern coast of East Java in the Madura archipelago are still relatively unknown to Indonesians. Due to the lack of a destination image, visits to these islands are also low. A destination image refers to the general impression tourists form when visiting a destination. Destination image refers to the general impression that encompasses visitors' beliefs, impressions, ideas, and reflections of a tourist destination, which remain in their memory. (Huang et al., 2021; Jebbouri et al., 2022; Li et al., 2021; Wulandari, Sudaryanto, et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2023). Destination image is not always formed from experience or facts, but also serves as a motivating factor for tourists to travel to a tourist destination. This study utilizes indicators to assess the quality of infrastructure, level of safety and comfort, natural beauty, and other attractions, including local culture, drawing on several previous references. (Paramita et al., n.d.; Riski & Wulandari, 2022; Saragih & Taufik, 2020).

A positive destination image is believed to enhance tourists' memorable experiences and satisfaction. Previous research has shown that destination image influences MTE. (Dagustani et al., 2017; Kutlu & Ayyıldız, 2021; Tasia & Yasri, 2021; Yabo et al., 2024) And satisfaction (Jebbouri et al., 2022; Padrón-Ávila et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2022). However, there are conflicting findings (Yağmur & Aksu, 2022). Furthermore, destination image also influences behavioral intention (Di-Clemente et al., 2022; Nazir et al., 2021, 2022). Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₁: The destination image has a significant influence on the MTE of East Java's tropical island tourism.

H₂: The destination image has a significant influence on satisfaction in East Java's tropical island tourism.

H₃: The destination image has a significant influence on behavioral intention in East Java tropical island tourism.

Tourists' decisions to return to a destination are mainly influenced by their experiences. Positive experiences during a visit can potentially create a Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE). Some visitors to this beautiful and remote island, most of whom are from the Madura archipelago itself, have explored several stunning islands north of the east coast of Java, particularly within the Madura archipelago. They tend not to want to return due to several unpleasant factors, particularly the lack of facilities in some places. MTE involves strong emotional aspects, such as excitement and enjoyment, which make the trip unforgettable (Kim & Chen, 2021; Nugraha et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2023). MTE, or Memorable Tourism Experience, is a positive experience that tourists will continue to remember after their visit is over and can be recalled in the future. Kim and Chen (2021) and Seyfi et al. (2020) Use hedonism, refreshment, meaningfulness, local culture interaction, and novelty. H. Chen and Rahman (2018), Kim and Chen (2021) and Zhou et al. (2023) As an indicator to measure MTE, MTE is an important element that managers must pay attention to to directly increase tourists' behavioral intentions, a relationship supported by previous research findings.

A memorable tourism experience (MTE) is a positive experience that leaves a lasting impression on tourists. (X. Chen et al., 2020; Kim & Chen, 2021). Memorable tourism experiences have been shown to increase tourists. (Gao et al., 2022; La Are, 2024; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022; Seyfi et al., 2020). Moreover, it encourages behavioral intentions such as repeat visits or recommendations (Brochado et al., 2022; Muntean et al., 2023; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022; Seyfi et al., 2020). Based on this, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H₄: MTE has a significant influence on satisfaction with Tropical Island tourism.

H₅: MTE has a significant behavioral intention in tropical island tourism.

Tourist satisfaction is another determining variable that significantly influences their behavioral intentions. Satisfaction encompasses tourists' evaluations of various aspects, including service quality, destination comfort, and the appropriateness of the price. High satisfaction ultimately shapes positive perceptions of the overall quality of the destination and encourages them to return or recommend it to others. Tourist satisfaction plays a crucial role in tourists' evaluations of their travel experiences and decisions about destinations, product consumption, and intentions to return. (Lesmana & Hasbiyah, 2019;

Li et al., 2021; Liao et al., 2021).

Satisfaction is understood as a traveler's emotional or cognitive response to the quality of service and experience received, encompassing pleasure, the suitability of the service to the price, and overall satisfaction (Yağmur & Aksu, 2022). Satisfaction is a crucial element in building traveler loyalty and has been shown to influence behavioral intentions, such as the desire to revisit or recommend a destination. (Hailey Shin et al., 2021; Saut & Song, 2022; Tuncer et al., 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: Satisfaction has a significant influence on behavioral intention on East Java tropical island tourism.

Finally, previous research also confirms that destination image not only directly influences behavioral intention but also indirectly through Novianti and Ernawadi (2024), Zhou et al. (2023) and satisfaction as mediators (Caroline, 2021; Luong, 2025; Viana et al., 2021). Therefore, this study proposes an additional hypothesis:

H7: The destination image has a significant influence on behavioral intention through a memorable tourism experience on the East Java tropical island.

H8: The destination image has a significant on behavioral intention through satisfaction with East Java's tropical island tourism.

The eight hypotheses formulated above can be summarized in the conceptual framework diagram below.

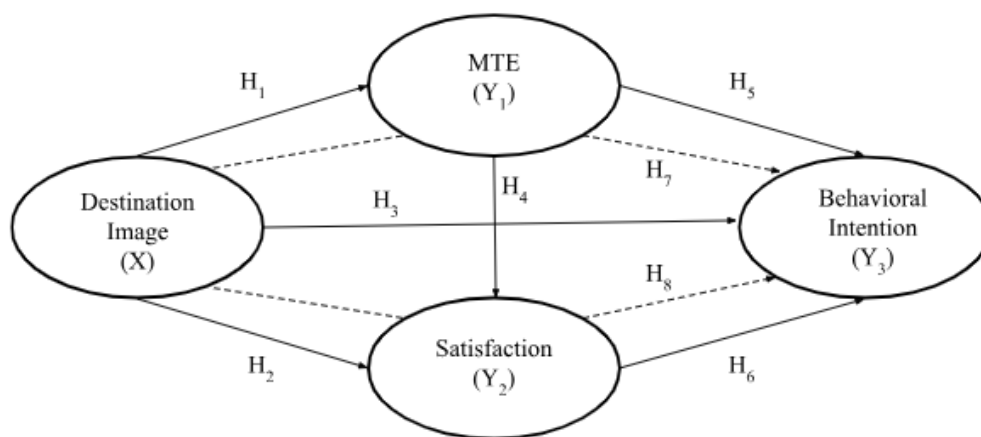


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Methods

This study employs a quantitative explanatory design, based on a survey of 155 respondents who visited various tourist attractions on remote tropical islands in East Java, Indonesia, between January and July 2025. Primary data was collected through questionnaires distributed online and offline at several ports leading to small islands in the northern sea of East Java, particularly those in the Madura region. The questionnaire tabulation results were analyzed with PLS-SEM using SmartPLS 4.0. Model testing included evaluations of validity (convergent and discriminant) and reliability (composite reliability), while hypothesis testing was conducted through bootstrapping procedures to assess the significance of the influence between variables.

Results and Discussions

The data tabulation results summarize the demographic profile of respondents across Madura and East Java.

Table 1. Respondent's Demographic Characteristics

Criteria	Category	Amount	(%)
Tourist destination island	Gili Iyang	67	43.23
	Bawean Island	32	20.65
Gender	Gili Ketapang	56	36.13
	Male	46	29.68
Age	Female	109	70.32
	17 - 26	69	44.52
	27 - 36	46	29.68
	37 - 46	29	18.71
	>56	11	7.10
Occupation	Government Employee	50	32.26
	Military / Police Officer	0	0.00
	Entrepreneur / Private Employee	30	19.35
	Freelancer	6	3.87
	Student	56	36.13
	Unempyoyed	5	3.23
	Other	8	5.16
Wages	0 – Rp 2. 500.000,00	88	56.77
	> Rp 2.500.000,00 – Rp 5. 000.000,00	50	32.26
	> Rp 5.000.000,00 – Rp 7. 500.000,00	13	8.39
	> Rp 7.500.000,00 – Rp 10.000.00,00	3	1.94
	> Rp 10.000.000,00	1	0.65
Domicile	East Java	122	78.71
	Outside East Java	33	21.29

From the table, it can be seen that the group of respondents who have ever traveled to Bawean Island is the smallest. This may be due to convenience, as the crossing distance from the nearest port is 3–3.5 hours. The distance to Gili Iyang and Gili Ketapang from the nearest island is only 40-50 minutes. Most respondents were female, aged between 17 and 26. This is in line with Suryaningsih et al. (2020) and Wulandari et al. (2021) Research indicates that women are more willing to spend time completing questionnaires due to their diligence and thoroughness. Additionally, previous research shows that women also prefer traveling, and young adults are more likely to spend their time trying new things, shopping, or going for walks. (Wulandari, Riski, et al., 2021; Wulandari, Suryaningsih, et al., 2021). In line with the age criteria, which are mostly between 17 and 26 years old, at this age, most of them are still students who typically have low incomes. When viewed from the origin of the tourists, most of them come from around the Madura islands or within the East Java region, which indicates that this island destination is only known to people who are close to the destination, is not yet viral or famous, and does not yet have a strong destination image because it is not yet well known.

Table 2 below shows that the AVE values of all indicators for each variable are above 0.7. In contrast, according to Hair et al (2019), research variable is considered valid if the AVE value is > 0.5. All HTMT values in this study are below 0.90. Therefore, it can be said that

discriminant validity is fulfilled, meaning that each construct in this study can be empirically distinguished, and the instruments used are valid (Hair et al., 2022). According to the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, if the composite reliability value is > 0.7 , the variable is declared valid or reliable for further research analysis (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 2. Outer Model Result (Validity & Reliability Test)

Result of Validity Test - Convergent						
Variable	Indicator	Outer loadings	AVE	Information		
Destination Image	X ₁	0.705	0.579	Valid		
	X ₂	0.818		Valid		
	X ₃	0.775		Valid		
	X ₄	0.741		Valid		
	MTE	Y _{1.1}	0.817	0.662	Valid	
		Y _{1.2}	0.821		Valid	
		Y _{1.3}	0.854		Valid	
		Y _{1.4}	0.786		Valid	
		Y _{1.5}	0.787		Valid	
Satisfaction	Y _{2.1}	0.858	0.779	Valid		
	Y _{2.2}	0.895		Valid		
	Y _{2.3}	0.893		Valid		
Behavioral Intentions	Y _{3.1}	0.856	0.714	Valid		
	Y _{3.2}	0.838		Valid		
	Y _{3.3}	0.840		Valid		
Result of Validity Test - Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)						
Variable		X	Y ₁	Y ₂	Y ₃	
Destination Image						
MTE		0.811				
Satisfaction		0.831	0.865			
Behavioral Intentions		0.775	0.806	0.880		
Result of Validity Test - Fornell-Larcker Criterion						
Variable		X	Y ₁	Y ₂	Y ₃	
Destination Image		0.761				
MTE		0.673	0.814			
Satisfaction		0.678	0.748	0.882		
Behavioral Intentions		0.611	0.672	0.729	0.845	
Result of Reliability Test						
Variable	Composite reliability		Information			
	Score	Rule Of Thumb				
Destination Image	0.774	0,700	Reliabel			
Memorable Tourism Experience	0.873	0,700	Reliabel			
Satisfaction	0.858	0,700	Reliabel			
Behavioral Intentions	0.800	0,700	Reliabel			

As the next step in SEM analysis, the inner model assessment is obtained based on Table 3, which shows no multicollinearity problems ($VIF < 3$). A VIF value below 3 indicates that multicollinearity is not a concern in the measurement model (Hair et al., 2019). The R^2 values as seen in Table 6 were assessed as a moderate construct based on the guidelines by

Hair et al (2022), where all R^2 values range between 0.5, which means the model has a moderate construct, none are weak because the value is < 0.25 or strong exceeding 0.75. The f^2 confirms that the destination image has the most decisive influence on a memorable tourism experience (0.828) and is weaker on the other variables. The f^2 effect sizes are assessed using Cohen's (1988) criteria: 0.02 (small), 0.15 (medium), and 0.35 (large). A Q^2 value greater than 0 indicates that the model has predictive relevance. Q^2 Values over 0.35 represent considerable predictive relevance, respectively (Hair et al., 2022). Overall, the inner model of this study shows that the memorable tourism experience and satisfaction play an important role in explaining the relationship between constructs. This confirms that the influence of destination image on tourists' behavioral intentions is not direct, but rather through the memorable experiences and satisfaction they feel.

Table 3. Inner Model Result

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)			
Variable	Indicator	VIF	Information
Destination Image	X_1	1.358	No multicollinearity
	X_2	1.551	
	X_3	1.649	
	X_4	1.557	
MTE	$Y_{1.1}$	1.977	No multicollinearity
	$Y_{1.2}$	2.060	
	$Y_{1.3}$	2.453	
	$Y_{1.4}$	1.894	
	$Y_{1.5}$	1.885	
Satisfaction	$Y_{2.1}$	1.909	No multicollinearity
	$Y_{2.2}$	2.369	
	$Y_{2.3}$	2.346	
Behavioral Intentions	$Y_{3.1}$	1.780	No multicollinearity
	$Y_{3.2}$	1.660	
	$Y_{3.3}$	1.702	
Variable	R-square	Adjusted R-square	Information
MTE	0.453	0.449	Moderate
Satisfaction	0.616	0.610	Moderate
Behavioral Intentions	0.578	0.570	Moderate
Variable Effect	f-square		Information
Destination Image $\rightarrow$ MTE	0.828		Large
Destination Image $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction	0.144		Medium
Destination Image $\rightarrow$ Behavioral Intention	0.024		Small
MTE $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction	0.406		Large
MTE $\rightarrow$ Behavioral Intention	0.050		Small
Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Behavioral Intention	0.191		Medium
Variable	Q^2 predict		Information
MTE	0.428		Strong predictive relevance
Satisfaction	0.444		Strong predictive relevance
Behavioral Intention	0.363		Strong predictive relevance

Table 4. Results of Path Coefficients

Variable	Path Coefficient	t-statistic	p-value	Description
Destination Image → MTE	0.673	12.618	0.000	H ₁ Accepted
Destination Image → Satisfaction	0.318	3.458	0.001	H ₂ Accepted
Destination Image → Behavioral Intention	0.145	1.574	0.116	H ₃ Rejected
MTE → Satisfaction	0.534	6.613	0.000	H ₄ Accepted
MTE → Behavioral Intention	0.232	2.352	0.019	H ₅ Accepted
Satisfaction → Behavioral Intention	0.457	4.768	0.000	H ₆ Accepted
Destination Image → MTE → Behavioral Intention	0.146	2.526	0.012	H ₇ Accepted
Destination Image → Satisfaction → Behavioral Intention	0.156	2.154	0.031	H ₈ Accepted

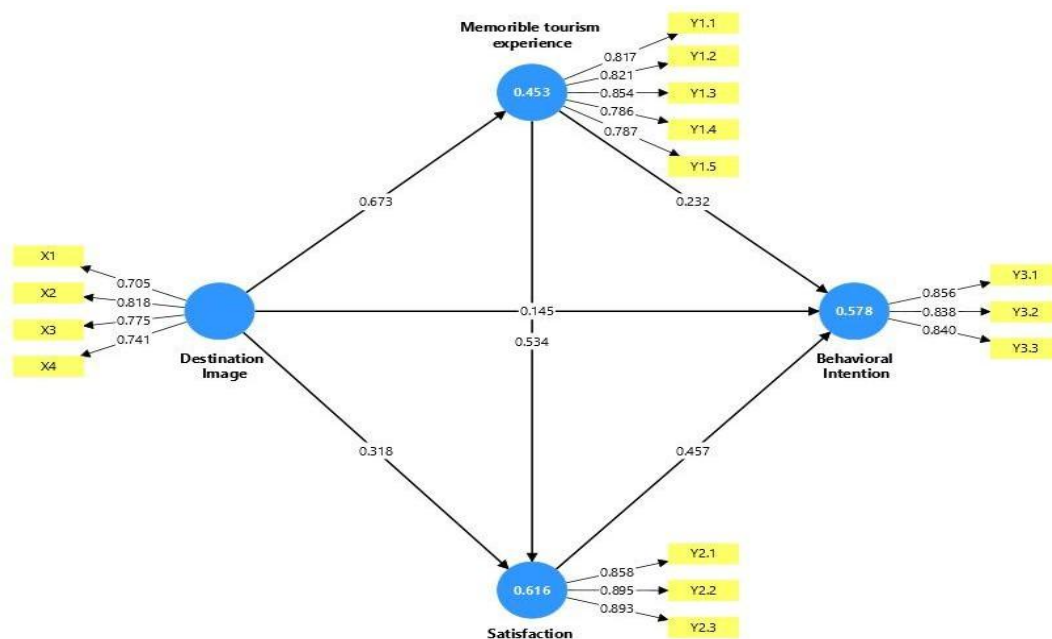


Figure 2. Path Diagram Construction Results

The direct influence test demonstrates that destination image exerts a positive and significant effect on MTE, as indicated by a p-value of 0.000 (below the threshold of 0.05) and a t-statistic of 12.618 (exceeding the critical value of 1.96), thereby supporting H₁. Similarly, destination image shows a positive and significant influence on Y₂, corroborated by a p-value of 0.001 (less than 0.05) and a t-statistic of 3.458 (greater than 1.96), supporting H₂. However, the effect of destination image on behavioral intention is not significant, as reflected by a p-value of 0.116 (greater than 0.05) and a t-statistic of 1.574 (below 1.96), leading to the rejection of H₃. In contrast, MTE has a positive and significant impact on satisfaction and behavioral intention, as evidenced by p-values of 0.000 and 0.019 (less than 0.05), with t-statistics of 6.613 and 2.352, respectively. This supports H₄ and H₅. Likewise, satisfaction has a significant effect on behavioral intention, with a p-value of 0.000 and a t-statistic of 4.768, confirming H₆. Additionally, MTE has a significant influence on behavioral intention, as indicated by a p-value of 0.012 and a t-statistic of 2.526, thereby

supporting H₇. Furthermore, the indirect effect test reveals that destination image has a significant effect on behavioral intention through the intervening variable of satisfaction, as evidenced by a p-value of 0.031 (less than 0.05) and a t-statistic of 2.154 (exceeding 1.96), thereby supporting H₈. These results confirm that intervening variables such as MTE and satisfaction play a crucial role in strengthening the relationship between destination image and behavioral intention.

Discussion

According to this study, destination image positively and significantly impacts memorable tourism experience. Most respondents were mostly Gen Z. They came from East Java (79%), showing that young local visitors are more familiar with East Java's tropical islands and form stronger perceptions of the destination. Safety and comfort were the strongest indicators of destination image, while meaningfulness was the leading indicator of memorable tourism experience. This implies that when tourists feel safe and comfortable, they are more likely to create meaningful and memorable experiences. These findings are in line with previous research by (Dagustani et al., 2017; Kutlu & Ayyıldız, 2021; Tasia & Yasri, 2021; Yabo et al., 2024).

According to this study, the destination image has a positive and significant impact on satisfaction. Most respondents were students (36%) with an income of Rp0–2,500,000 (57%), indicating that tourists tend to consider spending efficiency. Safety and comfort during visits were identified as the strongest indicators of destination image, while service-price suitability was the leading indicator of satisfaction. This suggests that when tourists feel safe and comfortable, and the services they receive are aligned with the costs, their satisfaction increases. These findings are consistent with previous studies by (Jebbouri et al., 2022; Padrón-Ávila et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2022; Yağmur & Aksu, 2022).

The findings of this study imply that cognitive destination image alone cannot directly drive future behavioral intentions of tourists. Unlike the research results used as the basis for the previous hypothesis, this finding is also supported by research from Endah et al. (2017) and Banki (2014), which suggests that cognitive destination image has a direct and positive influence on behavioral intentions. Although in the context of this study, the image of an island destination was based on different measurements, based on the results of respondents' answers, the indicators of infrastructure quality, safety, and comfort levels, and other attractions such as local culture still did not meet a good perception score, even though the indicator of natural beauty received the highest perception score. This can trigger visitors' reluctance to return. Even though a destination has a famously unique image, it must be supported by a variety of comfortable supporting accommodations if people are to return.

The findings suggest that a memorable tourism experience has a substantial impact on overall satisfaction. Most respondents were young, suggesting they value emotional and meaningful experiences. A positive, memorable experience during a visit to a destination will create satisfaction when expectations are met or even exceeded. Meaningfulness was the strongest indicator of memorable tourism experience, while service-price suitability best represented satisfaction. This implies that positive and memorable experiences enhance satisfaction when services are perceived to be a good value for the costs. These findings are consistent with (Gao et al., 2022; La Are, 2024; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022).

According to this study, a memorable tourism experience has a positive and significant influence on behavioral intention. Respondents were primarily female and residents of East Java, showing a tendency for higher loyalty when experiences are meaningful. The key indicator of a memorable tourism experience was meaningfulness, while behavioral intention was represented by willingness to revisit. These findings indicate that tourists are more likely to return when they gain valuable and emotional benefits from their visit. This result is in line with (Brochado et al., 2022; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022; Seyfi et al., 2020).

This study demonstrates that satisfaction has a significant impact on behavioral intention. Respondents were predominantly students with low incomes, indicating that they tend to weigh the balance between service quality and costs. The strongest satisfaction indicator was service-price suitability, while willingness to revisit represented behavioral intention. These results confirm that when tourists perceive the services received as worth the cost, they are more likely to revisit. This is consistent with the findings by (Hailey Shin et al., 2021; Saut & Song, 2022; Tuncer et al., 2021; Yağmur & Aksu 2022).

The analysis reveals that destination image indirectly influences behavioral intention through memorable tourism experience. Meanwhile, destination image cannot directly influence behavioral intention. Therefore, it can be said that without MTE, a destination image alone is insufficient to influence behavioral intention. Respondents were predominantly young (17–26 years, 45%) and from East Java, Madura (79%), indicating that local youth build behavioral intentions based on meaningful experiences. Safety and comfort represented destination image, meaningfulness represented memorable tourism experience, and willingness to revisit represented behavioral intention. This indicates that positive perceptions of safety and comfort lead to meaningful experiences, which in turn encourage intentions to revisit. These findings are supported by (Novianti & Ernawadi, 2024; Zhou et al., 2023) Research.

According to this study, destination image can not influence behavioral intention directly, but significantly affects behavioral intention with satisfaction as mediation. Respondents were predominantly students (36%) with low to moderate incomes (57%), reflecting their concern for cost efficiency. Safety and comfort were identified as the strongest indicators of destination image, while service-price suitability and willingness to revisit represented satisfaction and behavioral intention, respectively. This suggests that when tourists perceive the destination as safe and comfortable, and services as fair in relation to the costs, their satisfaction increases, strengthening their intention to revisit. These findings align with previous findings by (Caroline, 2021; Luong, 2025; Viana et al., 2021).

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that destination image significantly affects memorable tourism experience and satisfaction, but does not directly influence behavioral intention. Tourists' behavioral intentions, such as their willingness to revisit or recommend the destination, are more strongly shaped by memorable tourism experiences and overall satisfaction. Furthermore, a memorable tourism experience has a significant impact on both satisfaction and behavioral intention, while satisfaction also has a significant impact on behavioral intention. Thus, meaningful experiences and satisfaction are important mediating factors that strengthen the influence of destination image on tourists' intentions

to revisit the East Java tropical island.

The managerial implications that can be recommended to tourism managers based on the research results are: 1) in an effort to shape and renew the image of a relevant destination, transparent information is needed regarding infrastructure facilities to meet visitor expectations, highlighting the uniqueness of each island through various media platforms. In addition, amid infrastructure limitations, managers can utilize authenticity and authentic adventure experiences as unique ecotourism image points while still paying attention to tourist comfort and safety; 2) developing positive and memorable tourism experiences through unique activity packages that offer unforgettable moments, such as holding local cultural events, trekking, and participation in nature conservation, as well as training human resources to increase visitor emotional engagement through friendly and personalized service; 3) to support tourist satisfaction, it is necessary to pay attention to the safety and comfort of important facilities such as docks and signboards, as well as improving service and friendliness when interacting with residents so that tourist expectations can be met. Better attraction management can be achieved through multi-stakeholder collaboration between investors, local communities, tour operators, and accommodation providers.

This study has several limitations, including the limited generalizability of the results due to the relatively small sample size (155 respondents) and the fact that it only represents one group of tourists, thus not fully representing the population of East Java tourists or other remote island destinations. The focus of the study was only on tourists who had already visited, so the perspective of potential tourists who were influenced by the negative image of the destination was not represented. Using a purely quantitative approach with PLS-SEM enables the modeling of variable relationships. However, it cannot explore the deeper reasons or narrative experiences that make a tourist experience memorable. Further research should conduct comparative studies or tests with remote islands or other leading island destinations in East Java or even throughout Indonesia by measuring indicators from the same variables or other aspects. In addition to quantitative research, in-depth qualitative research can also be conducted by exploring the elements that shape sustainable tourism behavior, integrating environmental concern and green practice variables to assess their impact on behavioral intention in sustainable exotic island destinations.

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