

THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL MARKETING, TOURIST ATTRACTION, AND SERVICE QUALITY ON VISITOR LOYALTY WITH SATISFACTION AS A MEDIATING VARIABLE

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Abstract

This study analyzes the influence of digital marketing, tourist attraction, and service quality on visitor loyalty at Eco Active Park, Batu City, East Java, with visitor satisfaction as a mediating variable. This research is motivated by the rapid growth of the tourism industry and increasingly intense competition, making visitor loyalty a crucial factor for business sustainability. Furthermore, the instability of visitor numbers reflects that visitor loyalty remains a major challenge that needs to be addressed by destination managers. The study employed a quantitative explanatory approach with a nonprobability sampling technique through purposive sampling involving 100 respondents. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS). The results indicate that tourist attraction and visitor satisfaction have a positive and significant influence on visitor loyalty, as indicated by p-value of 0.000 and 0.001, respectively, while digital marketing and service quality do not have a significant direct effect, as indicated by p-value of 0.386 and 0.162. Furthermore, visitor satisfaction is proven to mediate the influence of digital marketing, tourist attraction, and service quality on visitor loyalty, as indicated by p-value of 0.023, 0.004, and 0.011, respectively. These findings affirm that visitor satisfaction is the key factor in building loyalty, which should be the top priority for long-term business sustainability.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Tourist Attraction, Service Quality, Visitor Satisfaction, Visitor Loyalty

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the strategic sectors that contributes significantly to regional and national economic growth through the multiplier effect it generates on related sectors, such as MSMEs, transportation, and hospitality businesses surrounding tourism destinations. Simorangkir et al. (2024) proved that the tourism sector has a significant effect on economic growth, and this finding is reinforced by Hakim et al. (2025), who emphasized that tourism contributes substantially to employment absorption, thereby generating a positive impact on the overall economy.

Batu City is a leading tourist destination in East Java with a total of 70 tourist attractions and 8.2 million visitors in 2024 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025). The city offers a wide range of tourism options, including family recreation, entertainment, educational tourism, and nature tourism. The high number of destinations creates intense competition among tourism managers, requiring each destination to pay close attention to various aspects of competitiveness. Seyidov and Adomaitienė (2016) stated that tourists' decisions in selecting destinations are influenced by tourist attractions, facilities, accessibility, destination image, pricing, and the quality of human resources. Risfandini et al. (2023) further elaborated that determinants of destination competitiveness include unique destination characteristics, safety, cleanliness, local hospitality, and the effectiveness of overall destination management.

Along with growing environmental awareness, tourist preferences have shifted toward sustainable tourism or green tourism. Hadi and Johan (2023) stated that this concept has gained increasing attention because it prioritizes environmental sustainability as a core value. Eco Active Park, part of Jatim Park Group in Batu City, emerges as a destination combining education, recreational attractions, and environmental conservation under the tagline "where

the wonders of nature and technology meet.” This approach makes Eco Active Park not merely a recreational site, but also an environmental education facility aligned with the mission of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030. Data from the Batu City Statistics Agency recorded consistent growth in visits to Eco Active Park over four consecutive years, from 142,223 visitors in 2020 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021) to 155,537 visitors in 2021 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2022), then surging to 439,459 visitors in 2022 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023), and reaching a peak of 537,611 visitors in 2023 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). The nearly fourfold increase over four years reflects management success in enhancing attractions and strengthening destination image. However, in 2024, visits dropped drastically by 58% to 221,142 visitors (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025). This phenomenon signals that high visitor volume in previous years does not necessarily guarantee sustainable visitor loyalty.

The decline in visits indicates underlying issues that require comprehensive evaluation. Visitor loyalty can only be established when tourists consistently experience satisfaction from their overall visitation experience (Bursan, 2024). Satisfaction itself is influenced by several factors, including digital marketing strategies, tourist attractions, and service quality provided by destination managers. In the rapidly evolving digital era, digital marketing has become an increasingly crucial instrument in tourism destination management strategies. Changes in tourist behavior, which now heavily depend on digital platforms for information search and travel decision-making, require destination managers to optimize their presence on social media, websites, and travel applications. Digital marketing not only functions as a promotional tool but also as an interactive communication medium that builds destination image and strengthens long-term relationships with tourists. Arifda et al. (2025) emphasized that marketing strategy is an important factor influencing the number of tourists visiting and revisiting a destination.

Service quality is also a fundamental element that cannot be overlooked. Professional, visitor-oriented service can create a strong emotional relationship between destination managers and visitors. Sumarni et al. (2024) proved that service quality significantly affects long-term visitor loyalty because it directly influences tourists' intention to revisit and recommend the destination to others. In addition, tourist attractions are a primary factor motivating tourists to visit. Strong, unique, and relevant attractions can strengthen destination positioning while enhancing visitor satisfaction. Mahiru et al. (2024) showed that tourist attractions significantly affect visitor satisfaction, which subsequently impacts visitor loyalty.

Visitor satisfaction acts as a mediating variable that bridges the relationship between digital marketing, tourist attractions, and service quality with visitor loyalty. Satisfied tourists tend to develop positive perceptions that encourage revisit intentions and recommendations to others. Visitor loyalty is the ultimate objective that serves as the foundation for sustainable revenue and long-term destination competitiveness. Research that integratively examines the influence of digital marketing, tourist attractions, and service quality on visitor satisfaction and loyalty has not been found in the existing literature. Previous studies generally examined these variables partially, whereas their integration is essential as a basis for strategic evaluation for tourism destination managers. Based on the explanation above, this study aims to analyze the influence of digital marketing, tourist attractions, and service quality on visitor loyalty, with visitor satisfaction as a mediating variable, using Eco Active Park in Batu City, East Java, as the case study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical foundation used in this study is the Stimulus–Organism–Response Theory proposed by Albert Mehrabian and James A. Russell (1974), which explains that individual behavior is the result of processing external stimuli through internal psychological conditions. In the context of this study, digital marketing, tourist attractions, and service quality act as stimuli, visitor satisfaction serves as the organism, and visitor loyalty represents the resulting response.

Digital marketing is defined as a marketing strategy that utilizes various digital-based platforms to introduce and promote products or services, including websites, social media, online advertising, and email marketing (Utomo et al., 2024). The advantages of digital marketing compared to traditional marketing lie in its broader reach, higher level of interactivity, and ability to measure marketing performance in real time. Based on Andini et al. (2024), there are five indicators of digital marketing, namely accessibility, interactivity, entertainment, credibility, and informativeness. These five indicators reflect the capability of digital platforms to deliver relevant information, build trust, and create active consumer engagement with marketing content.

Tourist attraction is defined in the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 10 of 2009 as anything possessing uniqueness, beauty, and value in the form of natural, cultural, and man-made diversity that becomes a tourist destination. Kanom (2023) classifies tourist attractions into two categories: natural attractions formed naturally and artificial attractions created by humans to attract tourists. Wiyana et al. (2020) identified five indicators of tourist

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attraction, including educational tourism zones, arts and cultural events, the beauty of flora and fauna, the availability of relaxation areas, and recreational rides. The completeness and quality of these five elements directly influence tourists' perceptions and satisfaction toward a destination.

Service quality is an evaluation made by visitors by comparing the service received (perceived service) with the expected service (Pratama, 2016). A service is considered high quality when the experience meets or exceeds visitor expectations. Referring to the SERVQUAL Model developed by A. Parasuraman et al. (1988) in Khalid (2023), service quality consists of five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. These five dimensions collectively shape visitors' perceptions of the service standards provided by tourism destination managers.

Visitor satisfaction is defined as the result of comparing the performance of products or services received with the expectations held by visitors (Surahman et al., 2020). Satisfaction is achieved when performance meets or exceeds expectations, whereas dissatisfaction occurs when performance falls below expectations. Astuti and Dewi (2022) emphasized that tourist satisfaction is created when the service provided exceeds visitor expectations. According to Fandy Tjiptono (2001) in Pratama (2016), visitor satisfaction is determined by five factors, namely product quality, service quality, emotional aspects, price, and the costs and time incurred during the visit.

Visitor loyalty is defined by Huddin et al. (2024) as tourists' loyalty and strong attachment to a destination based on positive experiences, reflected in the intention to revisit and recommend the destination to others. Wayan et al. (2022) added that repeat visitation behavior formed from satisfying experiences constitutes the core of visitor loyalty. Wiyana et al. (2020) measure visitor loyalty through three indicators: willingness to recommend the destination to others, intention to revisit, and willingness to return if there are new attractions or offers from the tourism destination.

A review of previous studies shows that the variables in this research have been proven to influence one another. Elvera et al. (2025) demonstrated that digital marketing significantly affects tourist loyalty both directly and through satisfaction mediation. Wiyana et al. (2020) and Ismail and Rohman (2019) showed that tourist attractions significantly influence visitor loyalty, with satisfaction acting as a mediating variable that strengthens the relationship. Dileep Kumar et al. (2020) and Alfaredo et al. (2024) proved that service quality has a positive effect on visitor loyalty, while satisfaction mediates the relationship between the two. Meanwhile, Pratama (2016) and Khalid (2023) emphasized that visitor satisfaction significantly affects loyalty, where satisfied visitors tend to show a stronger commitment to revisit and recommend the destination. Based on the theoretical review and previous studies, this study formulates seven hypotheses examining the influence of digital marketing, tourist attractions, and service quality on visitor loyalty, both directly and indirectly through visitor satisfaction as a mediating variable.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach using an explanatory research method aimed at testing and analyzing the influence among variables objectively through numerical data. According to Sugiyono (2013), quantitative research is based on the philosophy of positivism and uses statistical analysis to test predetermined hypotheses. The primary data collection technique used in this study is a survey method with a structured questionnaire distributed to visitors of the tourist attraction. This research was conducted at Eco Active Park, Batu City, East Java, from September 2025 to May 2026.

This study employed a non-probability sampling technique using purposive sampling, in which respondents were selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2013). The respondent criteria were adopted from Elvera et al. (2025), namely individuals aged at least 17 years, users of digital media such as Instagram, websites, TikTok, and Facebook, and those who had completed a visit to Eco Active Park, enabling them to provide an evaluation of their tourism experience.

The sample size determination referred to Hair Jr et al. (2019), who suggested that Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) studies involving five or fewer latent constructs with more than three indicators for each construct require a minimum sample size of 100 respondents. Therefore, this study used 100 respondents as the research sample. This sample size was considered adequate for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis and capable of producing stable and representative model estimations.

Data were collected through questionnaires using a five-point Likert scale ranging from score 1 (Strongly Disagree) to score 5 (Strongly Agree) (Sugiyono, 2013). Primary data were obtained directly from respondents through questionnaire distribution, while secondary data were sourced from official publications such as reports from Statistics Indonesia and relevant scientific literature (Taherdoost, 2021). Data analysis used the Structural Equation Modeling approach based on Partial Least Squares with the assistance of SmartPLS. SEM was selected because it

can simultaneously analyze relationships among variables, both between latent variables and their formative indicators (Setiabudhi et al., 2025). PLS is considered suitable for small sample sizes and does not require normal distribution assumptions (Setiabudhi et al., 2025).

Model evaluation was conducted in two stages. First, outer model analysis was performed to assess instrument validity and reliability. Convergent validity was tested by examining the value of Average Variance Extracted ≥ 0.50 and outer loading > 0.70 (Rahadi, 2023). Discriminant validity was tested using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio method with a threshold value of < 0.90 (Rahadi, 2023). Reliability was assessed through composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values, both of which had to exceed 0.70 (Rahadi, 2023).

Second, inner model analysis was conducted to test causal relationships among latent variables. The R-Square (R^2) value was used to measure the proportion of variance in dependent variables explained by independent variables, categorized as substantial ($R^2 = 0.75$), moderate ($R^2 = 0.50$), and weak ($R^2 = 0.25$) (Rahadi, 2023). The Q-Square value was calculated using the following formula:

$$Q\text{-Square} = 1 - [(1 - R1^2) \times (1 - R2^2)]$$

A *Q-Square* value greater than 0 indicates that the model has adequate predictive capability for dependent constructs, whereas a Q^2 value less than or equal to 0 indicates insufficient predictive relevance (Musyaffi et al., 2022).

Hypothesis testing was conducted by analyzing path coefficient values through the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS. The hypothesis acceptance criteria referred to Hair J.F et al. (2017), where hypotheses are accepted if the p-value < 0.05 or the t-statistic > 1.96 at a 5% significance level. This testing includes both direct effects and indirect effects through the mediating variable of visitor satisfaction, in order to address all seven hypotheses formulated in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Measurement Model Analysis (Outer Model)

The inferential statistical analysis in this study employed the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) approach using SmartPLS 4.0 to evaluate the measurement model (outer model), the structural model (inner model), and to test both direct and indirect hypotheses. This analytical procedure was conducted to ensure that all research constructs are valid and reliable, and to examine the hypothesized relationships among variables.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed through outer loading values and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). An indicator is considered valid if its outer loading exceeds 0.70, and a construct meets convergent validity if its AVE value is at least 0.50 (Rahadi, 2023). The results showed that the majority of indicators across all variables had outer loading values above 0.70, indicating that these indicators adequately represent their respective latent constructs. Specifically, the AVE values were as follows: digital marketing (0.590), tourist attraction (0.516), service quality (0.743), visitor satisfaction (0.578), and visitor loyalty (0.709). All AVE values exceeding 0.50 confirm that each construct explains more than 50% of the variance in its indicators, thereby satisfying the convergent validity criterion.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) method, with a threshold value of less than 0.90 (Rahadi, 2023). The results showed that all HTMT values between constructs were below 0.85. The highest HTMT value was observed between tourist attraction and visitor loyalty (0.849), while the lowest was between digital marketing and tourist attraction (0.442). All values falling below the threshold confirm that each construct in the model is distinctly different and non-overlapping, indicating that the model is suitable for further analysis.

Reliability

Instrument reliability was assessed using Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha, both of which must exceed 0.70 to be considered reliable (Rahadi, 2023). All variables demonstrated values well above this threshold. Digital marketing obtained a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.922 and Composite Reliability of 0.927; tourist attraction recorded 0.895 and 0.897 respectively; visitor satisfaction scored 0.918 and 0.922; service quality achieved the highest values at 0.961 and 0.962; and visitor loyalty obtained 0.918 and 0.921. These results confirm that all research instruments possess excellent consistency and measurement stability.

Structural Model Analysis (Inner Model)

R-Square (R²)

The R² value measures the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables, categorized as strong (≥ 0.75), moderate (≥ 0.50), and weak (≥ 0.25) (Rahadi, 2023). Visitor satisfaction obtained an R² of 0.763 and an adjusted R² of 0.756, classified as strong, indicating that 76.3% of its variance is explained by the model. Visitor loyalty obtained an R² of 0.662 and adjusted R² of 0.648, classified as moderate, meaning that 66.2% of its variance is explained by the model while the remaining 33.8% is attributed to factors outside the study.

Q-Square (Q²)

The Q² value was calculated to assess the predictive relevance of the model using the following formula:

$$Q^2 = 1 - [(1 - R1^2) \times (1 - R2^2)]$$

$$Q^2 = 1 - [(1 - 0.648) \times (1 - 0.756)]$$

$$Q^2 = 1 - (0.353 \times 0.244) = 1 - 0.0861 = 0.913$$

The Q² value of 0.913 indicates that the model possesses very high predictive relevance, with 91.3% of data variability being well explained and predicted by the model (Musyaffi et al., 2022). This value, approaching 1, confirms that the model not only captures the relationships between variables but also demonstrates a high degree of accuracy in predicting endogenous constructs.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted by examining path coefficient values, t-statistics, and p-values generated through the bootstrapping procedure. A hypothesis is accepted if the t-statistic exceeds 1.96 or the p-value is less than 0.05 (Hair et al., 2017).

Direct Effect

Table 1. Direct Effect Hypothesis Testing Results

Relationship	Orig. Sample	Sample Mean	STDEV	T-Stat.	P-Value	Result
Digital Marketing → Visitor Loyalty	0.077	0.080	0.089	0.867	0.386	Not Significant
Tourist Attraction → Visitor Loyalty	0.533	0.542	0.110	4.822	0.000	Significant
Service Quality → Visitor Loyalty	-0.151	-0.158	0.108	1.398	0.162	Not Significant
Visitor Satisfaction → Visitor Loyalty	0.407	0.400	0.125	3.246	0.001	Significant

Source: processed data, 2026

The direct effect test results show that two out of four hypotheses were accepted. Digital marketing had no significant direct effect on visitor loyalty (β = 0.077; t = 0.867; p = 0.386), thus H1 was rejected, indicating that digital exposure alone is insufficient to build loyalty without a satisfying visit experience. Tourist attraction demonstrated the strongest positive and significant direct effect on visitor loyalty (β = 0.533; t = 4.822; p = 0.000), thus H2 was accepted, consistent with Wiyana et al. (2020) and Ismail & Rohman (2019). Service quality showed a negative and non-significant effect (β = -0.151; t = 1.398; p = 0.162), thus H3 was rejected, suggesting its influence on loyalty operates indirectly through satisfaction. Visitor satisfaction proved to be a strong and significant direct predictor of visitor loyalty (β = 0.407; t = 3.246; p = 0.001), thus H7 was accepted, affirming that satisfaction is a key driver of long-term loyalty as confirmed by Bursan (2024) and Sulistyowati & Maliyan (2015).

Indirect Effect

Table 2. Indirect Effect Hypothesis Testing Results

Relationship	Orig. Sample	Sample Mean	STDEV	T-Stat.	P-Value	Result
Digital Marketing → Satisfaction → Loyalty	0.094	0.093	0.041	2.277	0.023	Significant
Tourist Attraction → Satisfaction → Loyalty	0.167	0.167	0.059	2.854	0.004	Significant
Service Quality → Satisfaction → Loyalty	0.156	0.151	0.062	2.537	0.011	Significant

Source: processed data, 2026

Based on the results of the indirect effect test, all hypotheses (H4–H6) were accepted. Digital marketing has a positive and significant indirect effect on visitor loyalty through satisfaction ($\beta = 0.094$; $t = 2.277$; $p = 0.023$). Tourist attraction also shows a positive and significant indirect effect on visitor loyalty through satisfaction ($\beta = 0.167$; $t = 2.854$; $p = 0.004$). In addition, service quality was found to have a positive and significant indirect effect on visitor loyalty through satisfaction ($\beta = 0.156$; $t = 2.537$; $p = 0.011$). Overall, all three variables digital marketing, tourist attraction, and service quality have significant indirect effects on visitor loyalty through the mediating role of satisfaction. This confirms that visitor satisfaction plays an important mediating role in strengthening the relationship between these variables and visitor loyalty.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that of the seven hypotheses tested, five hypotheses were accepted and two were rejected. Digital marketing (H1) and service quality (H3) did not have a significant direct effect on visitor loyalty, indicating that these two variables are not able to establish loyalty without a mediating mechanism. In contrast, tourist attraction (H2) was proven to have a positive and significant direct effect on visitor loyalty, making it the main factor in building long-term visitor attachment. Visitor satisfaction (H7) was also found to have a positive and significant effect on loyalty, positioning it as a strong predictor of long-term loyalty. In the indirect effect testing, digital marketing (H4), tourist attraction (H5), and service quality (H6) all had positive and significant effects on visitor loyalty through the mediation of satisfaction. Overall, visitor satisfaction was proven to play a strategic mediating role in bridging the influence of digital marketing, tourist attraction, and service quality on visitor loyalty.

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