



Tourist Satisfaction as a Bridge Between Memorable Tourism Experience and Revisit Intention: An Empirical Study of Aek

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Abstrack : *Fluctuations in tourist visits to Aek Sijorni, the lack of variety in tourism activities, inadequate facilities, limited destination information, and suboptimal social interactions have led tourists to feel that their experiences were neither unique nor satisfying. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of memorable tourism experience on the intention to revisit the Aek Sijorni tourist destination, as well as the role of tourist satisfaction as a mediating variable. This research employs a quantitative approach with a random sampling technique, involving 383 respondents who have visited Aek Sijorni. The analysis method uses Structural Equation Modeling - Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with the aid of WarpPLS 7.0 software. The results show that memorable tourism experience significantly affects both satisfaction and revisit intention. Satisfaction was found to mediate the relationship between memorable tourism experience and revisit intention, emphasizing the importance of experience and satisfaction in building tourist loyalty. The implication is that tourist destinations need to create unique experiences through cleanliness, adequate facilities, and culturally based programs. Proper facility management, friendly service, and positive interaction with the local community can enhance tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, the government and destination managers need to improve service quality, involve local communities in tourism activities, and develop marketing strategies based on cultural values. Infrastructure support and staff training must also be optimized to ensure tourist comfort and enhance the destination's competitiveness. The limitations of this study lie in its geographically restricted scope, focusing only on a single tourist destination, Aek Sijorni, which means the findings may not be generalizable to other destinations with different characteristics. Additionally, the data collected are self-reported, which may contain subjective perception biases from the respondents. This study also does not explore external factors such as digital promotion or competition dynamics among destinations that may also influence revisit intention.*

Keywords: Memorable Tourism Experience, Revisit Intention, Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Pandemi Tourism is a vital economic sector that significantly contributes to a country's economic growth. The rapid development of the tourism industry can boost regional income, create job opportunities, and stimulate infrastructure development (Ernawati, 2019; Lubis et al., 2023; Manzoor et al., 2019). According to data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the number of international tourists continues to rise annually, positioning tourism as one of the most dynamic sectors in the global economy (Cárdenas-García et al., 2024; UNWTO, 2025). However, the success of tourism is not solely measured by the number of tourist visits; tourist satisfaction and revisit intention are equally important indicators, reflecting the sustainability and competitiveness of a destination.

In the context of South Tapanuli Regency, Aek Sijorni stands out as a prominent tourist destination. Known for its crystal-clear waterfalls and refreshing natural scenery, Aek Sijorni attracts both domestic and international tourists. The local government's efforts in infrastructure development and promotional activities have contributed to an increase in tourist visits over the years. Data from the South Tapanuli Tourism Office shows fluctuations in tourist arrivals from 2015 to 2023. In 2015, Aek Sijorni reached its peak with 98,735 visitors, followed by a gradual decline to 89,058 visitors in 2018. Although there was a slight recovery in 2019, the trend declined again during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a notable drop in 2020 and 2021. By 2023, tourist numbers showed significant growth, reaching 90,453 visitors. These fluctuations highlight the challenges in maintaining the destination's attractiveness and the

need for strategies to ensure sustainable tourism growth.

Understanding the factors influencing tourists' revisit intention is crucial for the sustainability of Aek Sijorni. Revisit intention serves as a key metric of destination success, indicating tourists' satisfaction with their initial experiences (Luvsandavaajav et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2022). When tourists express a strong intention to return, it reflects positively on the quality of services and experiences provided. This is where the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) becomes relevant. TPB posits that an individual's behavioral intentions are influenced by their attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Kim & Lee, 2015). In the tourism context, TPB helps explain how factors such as memorable tourism experiences (MTE) influence tourists' decisions to revisit a destination.

Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) expands TPB by incorporating the emotional and cognitive dimensions of tourism experiences. According to Lujun, a memorable tourism experience is a subjective mental state felt during interactions with tourism services, while Bigne emphasizes that memorable experiences are those positively recalled after the event. MTE highlights factors such as hedonism, involvement, meaningfulness, refreshment, knowledge, novelty, and social interaction, all of which shape tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Bigne et al., 2020; Mahdzar, 2019; Soliman, 2021; Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018; Tabaeian et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2018). For example, hedonism reflects the pursuit of pleasure and personal satisfaction during trips, while involvement indicates the level of tourist engagement in activities (Gohary et al., 2020; Torabi et al., 2022). However, Aek Sijorni faces challenges in providing

diverse and engaging activities beyond its scenic waterfalls, which affects tourists' overall satisfaction and revisit intentions.

Issues such as limited activity variety, difficult access to certain areas, lack of educational experiences, overcrowding, insufficient cultural information, and inadequate social interactions with local communities have been reported. For instance, tourists often feel dissatisfied due to the absence of guided tours, poor infrastructure for relaxation, and perceived unfriendly interactions with locals, especially when facing additional fees imposed by local landowners. Despite these challenges, cultural traditions like Marpangira ritual bath using herbal mixtures during Ramadan continue to attract visitors, showcasing Aek Sijorni's potential to offer meaningful and culturally rich experiences.

While previous studies have broadly acknowledged the role of MTE in shaping tourist behavior, there is still limited empirical research that specifically examines the influence of MTE on tourist satisfaction and revisit intention within the unique cultural and environmental context of Aek Sijorni. Most existing studies are focused on urban or commercial tourism destinations, leaving a gap in understanding how natural and culturally rooted destinations in rural Indonesia manage and leverage memorable experiences. Moreover, few studies have explored the mediating role of satisfaction in the relationship between MTE and revisit intention in this specific setting.

This study aims to explore how MTE influences tourists' satisfaction and revisit intentions at Aek Sijorni. By integrating TPB and consumer behavior theories, the research seeks to identify key factors affecting tourists' decisions, thus addressing the gap in literature and

providing practical insights for destination managers and policymakers to enhance tourism sustainability in South Tapanuli.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE)

Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) is an important concept in modern tourism science, which emphasizes the subjective and emotional experiences of tourists when visiting a destination (Tiwari et al., 2022). MTE is the result of interaction between tourists and various elements of the destination that produce lasting memories (Hosseini et al., 2024). MTE includes not only physical experiences, but also psychological engagements such as hedonism, novelty, involvement, refreshment, meaningfulness, knowledge, and social interaction.

Bigne explains that these dimensions shape tourists' perception of the quality of the experience they get (Hosany et al., 2022; Rusby & Arif, 2020). For example, high engagement in local tourism activities will enhance personal meaning and form an emotional bond with the destination. Mahdzar emphasized that MTE can be an important strategy in increasing the competitiveness of destinations, especially destinations based on culture and nature. In this context, the experience becomes not only the result of the service, but also the local narrative and values offered to tourists.

Traveller Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is a key factor in tourist destination management because it is directly related to loyalty and word-of-mouth promotion (Jayanti & Yulianthini, 2022). Satisfaction is the emotional evaluation of a product or service based on expectations and perceived reality. In the context of tourism, satisfaction comes not only from

service, but also from emotional experiences, interactions with local communities, and the achievement of personal goals during the trip.

Research shows that tourists who feel satisfied with their destinations tend to have a positive perception and are more likely to return (Apriliyanti et al., 2020). Satisfaction has a strategic role in shaping tourist loyalty, both through revisit intentions and through recommendations to others. In other words, satisfaction is the bridge between the tourist experience and the tourist's subsequent actions.

Revisit Intention

Revisit intent is an important indicator of a destination's long-term success. This intention reflects the extent to which tourists are willing to return to the same place after the first visit. In the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), a person's intention to perform an action is influenced by attitudes towards behavior, subjective norms, and perceptions of behavior control (Ajzen, 1991, 2011). In the context of tourism, this means that the intention of tourists to return depends largely on their previous experiences as well as their perception of the convenience and benefits of the visit.

TPB in a tourism study found that MTE strongly influenced revisit intentions, especially if travelers felt that the experience provided high personal value. Gohary's positive perception of past experiences will increase the likelihood of revisiting in the future, especially if the experience feels unique and meaningful (Ajzen, 2020). As such, strategies to increase repeat intent should include creating authentic, personalized, and memorable experiences.

The Role of Satisfaction Mediation in MTE Relationships and Revisit Intentions

Several studies have shown that satisfaction has a role as a mediator between a memorable tourist experience and the intention to revisit. A positive tourist experience does not directly lead to the intention of a repeat visit, but rather through the satisfaction felt by tourists (Rahayu & Yusuf, 2021). This means that even if tourists experience something interesting, without satisfaction, they may not be motivated to return.

This role of mediation is important to understand in destination management, as it shows that the quality of the experience must be accompanied by satisfaction in order to generate loyalty. MTE dimensions such as novelty and meaningfulness are very effective in increasing satisfaction, which then has an impact on the intention of repeat visits (Berbervisit et al., 2021). Therefore, in destination management, it is important to focus not only on improving tourist attractions, but also on how those experiences translate into the psychological satisfaction of tourists.

METHODS

The research was conducted at the Aek Sijorni tourist destination, located in Aek Libung Village, Sayurmatangi District, South Tapanuli Regency. The study took place from July 2024 to January 2025. This research adopts a quantitative approach, where data are collected in numerical form and analyzed using statistical methods. The research design is causal, aiming to test hypotheses regarding the relationship between memorable tourism experience, tourist satisfaction, and revisit intention. The population consists of tourists visiting Aek Sijorni, totaling 90,453 visitors in 2023. Using the Isaac and Michael formula, the sample size was determined to be 383 respondents. A random

sampling technique was applied to ensure that each individual in the population had an equal chance of being selected, reducing bias and enhancing the representativeness of the sample.

Primary data were collected through observations, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation from tourists visiting Aek Sijorni. The questionnaire was designed using a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), to measure responses effectively. The research variables include Memorable Tourism Experience (X) with indicators such as hedonism, involvement, meaningfulness, refreshment, knowledge, novelty, and social interaction; Tourist Revisit Intention (Y) with indicators like recommending the destination, perceived worthiness, intention to revisit, and desire for an extended stay; and Satisfaction (Z), measured through cognitive and affective approaches. Data

analysis was conducted using multivariate analysis with the SEM-PLS method, suitable for handling complex variable relationships and small sample sizes. WarpPLS 8.0 software was utilized to assess and measure the structural relationships among the research variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Outer Model

Convergent Validity was assessed through Loading Factor and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) analysis. The loading factor results indicate that all indicators for the constructs—Memorable Tourism Experience, Revisit Intention, and Satisfaction—exceeded the critical threshold of 0.7, confirming their validity. This implies that each indicator strongly correlates with its respective latent construct, ensuring that the measured variables accurately represent the intended theoretical concepts.

Table 1.
Convergent Validity Loading Factor

Konstrukt	Indicator	X	Y	Z	Critical Point	Conclusion
Memorable Tourism Experience	X1	0,850	0,098	-0,086	0,7	Valid
	X2	0,883	0,057	-0,023	0,7	Valid
	X3	0,917	-0,062	0,033	0,7	Valid
	X4	0,835	-0,069	-0,084	0,7	Valid
	X5	0,876	-0,037	-0,012	0,7	Valid
	X6	0,914	-0,042	-0,039	0,7	Valid
	X7	0,937	-0,028	-0,038	0,7	Valid
	X8	0,897	-0,078	0,002	0,7	Valid
	X9	0,890	-0,028	-0,001	0,7	Valid
	X10	0,913	-0,027	0,081	0,7	Valid
	X11	0,907	0,036	0,072	0,7	Valid
	X12	0,871	0,016	0,070	0,7	Valid
	X13	0,904	0,086	0,008	0,7	Valid
	X14	0,899	0,083	0,008	0,7	Valid
Niat Berkunjung Kembali	Y1	-0,000	0,871	-0,031	0,7	Valid
	Y2	0,027	0,885	-0,116	0,7	Valid
	Y3	-0,011	0,932	-0,003	0,7	Valid
	Y4	0,006	0,915	0,054	0,7	Valid
	Y5	0,029	0,934	-0,005	0,7	Valid
	Y6	0,012	0,956	0,007	0,7	Valid
	Y7	-0,049	0,895	0,058	0,7	Valid
	Y8	-0,015	0,952	0,030	0,7	Valid
Kepuasan	Z1	0,008	0,043	0,908	0,7	Valid

Z2	-0,090	-0,004	0,897	0,7	Valid
Z3	-0,085	-0,020	0,909	0,7	Valid
Z4	-0,056	-0,098	0,855	0,7	Valid
Z5	0,025	-0,023	0,912	0,7	Valid
Z6	0,010	0,051	0,887	0,7	Valid
Z7	0,078	0,024	0,906	0,7	Valid
Z8	0,109	0,024	0,886	0,7	Valid

Additionally, the AVE values for all latent variables (0.797 for X, 0.843 for Y, and 0.801 for Z) surpassed the minimum criterion of 0.5, indicating that more than 50% of the variance is captured by the

construct rather than by measurement error. This reinforces the constructs' ability to converge effectively in representing the underlying theoretical framework.

Table 2.
AVE

Variable	AVE	Critical Point	Conclusion
X	0,797	0,5	Reliable
Y	0,843	0,5	Reliable
Z	0,801	0,5	Reliabel

Discriminant Validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. The Fornell-Larcker criterion further confirmed discriminant validity, as the square root of AVE for each construct was greater than its correlations with other

constructs (e.g., MTE's AVE root of 0.893 compared to 0.634 with TRI and 0.614 with KEP). This evidence supports the constructs' uniqueness, ensuring that they capture distinct dimensions within the model.

Table 3.
Fornell-Larcker

Variable	MTE(X)	TRI(Y)	KEP(Z)
MTE(X)	0,893	0,634	0,614
TRI(Y)	0,634	0,918	0,694
KEP(Z)	0,614	0,694	0,895

Reliability was confirmed through the evaluation of AVE values, which indirectly reflect internal consistency reliability. Since all AVE values exceeded the threshold of 0.5, it indicates that the constructs possess strong internal consistency. Moreover, the high loading factors across all indicators suggest stable measurement properties, reinforcing the reliability of the instrument. This implies

that the measurement model is consistent and dependable, providing confidence that repeated measurements under similar conditions would yield consistent results. Collectively, these findings validate the robustness of the measurement model, ensuring its suitability for further structural model analysis.

Table 4.
Reliability

Variable	Cronbachs Alpha	Critical Point	Composite Reliability	Critical Point	Conclusion
X	0,980	0,6	0,982	0,7	Reliable

Y	0,973	0,6	0,977	0,7	Reliable
Z	0,965	0,6	0,970	0,7	Reliable

Inner Model

The Coefficient of Determination (R^2) test results in this study indicate the model's explanatory power for the dependent variables. The R^2 value for the Revisit Intention variable is 0.554, suggesting that 55.4% of the variance in revisit intention can be explained by the model, which falls under the moderate

category. Similarly, the Satisfaction variable has an R^2 value of 0.390, meaning that the model accounts for 39% of its variance, also classified as moderate. These results imply that while the model provides a substantial explanation for both variables, there are still other external factors not included in the model that contribute to the remaining variance.

Table 5.
Coefficient Of Determination R^2

Variable	<i>R-square</i>	Criteria
Revisit Intention	0,554	Moderat
Satisfaction	0,390	Moderat

The Effect Size (f^2) analysis measures the strength of the relationship between exogenous and endogenous variables. The findings show that Memorable Tourism Experience has a moderate effect size ($f^2 = 0.198$) on Revisit Intention, indicating a meaningful but not dominant influence. In contrast, its effect on Satisfaction is larger, with an f^2 value of 0.390, categorized as a big

effect. Furthermore, Satisfaction itself exerts a significant impact on Revisit Intention, with an f^2 value of 0.356, also in the big effect category. These results highlight that Memorable Tourism Experience plays a critical role in enhancing tourist satisfaction, which, in turn, strongly influences their intention to revisit.

Table 6.
Effect Size (f^2)

Construct	Variable	f^2	Criteria
Revisit Intension	<i>Memorable Tourism Experience</i>	0,198	<i>Moderate Effect</i>
	Satisfaction	0,356	<i>Big Effect</i>
Satisfaction	<i>Memorable Tourism Experience</i>	0,390	<i>Big Effect</i>

The Predictive Relevance (Q^2) test evaluates the model's capability to predict endogenous variables. The Q^2 value for Revisit Intention is 0.556, while Satisfaction has a Q^2 of 0.387. Both values are above zero, indicating that the model has good predictive relevance. The closer the Q^2 value is to 1, the stronger the model's predictive power. The relatively high Q^2 for Revisit Intention suggests that the model is highly effective in predicting

tourists' revisit behavior, while the Q^2 for Satisfaction also demonstrates a solid predictive capability. Overall, these results confirm that the model used in this study is reliable in forecasting the analyzed variables based on the data.

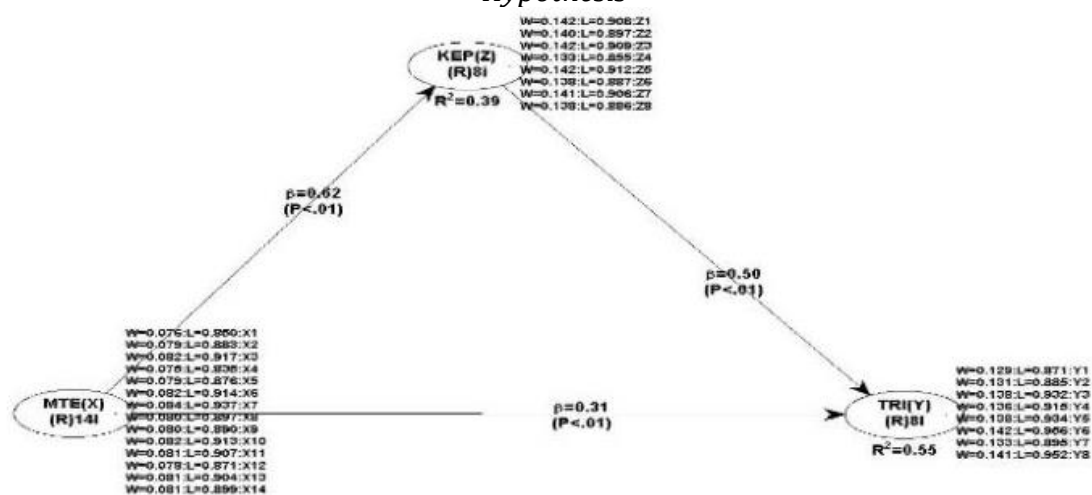
Table 7.
Predictive Relevance (Q²)

Konstruk	Q ²
Revisit Intention	0,556
Satisfaction	0,387

Hypothesis

The hypothesis testing results reveal significant direct effects between the studied variables.

Picture 1.
Hypothesis



Here's the table hypothesis testing results:

Table 7.
Hypothesis Result

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	P-Values
<i>Memorable Tourism Experience</i> → Revisit Intention	0,309	<0,001
Satisfaction → Revisit Intention	0,505	<0,001
<i>Memorable Tourism Experience</i> → Satisfaction	0,624	<0,001
<i>Memorable Tourism Experience</i> → Satisfaction → Revisit Intention	0,315	<0,001

The path coefficient between Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) and Revisit Intention (RI) is 0.309 with a p-value < 0.001, indicating a positive and statistically significant relationship. This suggests that an increase in memorable tourism experiences leads to a higher likelihood of tourists intending to revisit the Aek Sijorni destination. Additionally, the path coefficient between Satisfaction

(SAT) and Revisit Intention is 0.505 with a p-value < 0.001, which shows an even stronger positive effect. This implies that tourists who are more satisfied with their experience are significantly more inclined to return. These findings highlight the crucial role of both memorable experiences and satisfaction in influencing tourists' revisit intentions.

The analysis also demonstrates a strong direct effect of Memorable Tourism Experience on Satisfaction, with a path coefficient of 0.624 and a p-value < 0.001. This substantial positive relationship indicates that when tourists have more memorable experiences, their satisfaction levels significantly increase. This finding underscores the importance of enhancing the overall tourism experience, as factors such as unique attractions, engaging activities, and emotional connections play pivotal roles in shaping tourist satisfaction. The strength of this relationship suggests that improving the quality of tourism experiences is a key strategy for boosting tourist satisfaction, which in turn can positively affect other behavioral outcomes, such as revisit intention.

The mediating effect of Satisfaction in the relationship between Memorable Tourism Experience and Revisit Intention is also significant, with a path coefficient of 0.315 and a p-value < 0.001. This indicates that satisfaction partially mediates the effect of memorable experiences on revisit intention. In other words, while memorable experiences directly influence revisit intentions, they also have an indirect effect through the enhancement of tourist satisfaction. The structural model supports this mediating role, confirming that satisfaction acts as a bridge that strengthens the relationship between tourism experiences and revisit intentions. This highlights the importance of not only creating memorable experiences but also ensuring that these experiences translate into high levels of satisfaction to effectively encourage tourists to revisit Aek Sijorni.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study conclude that memorable tourism experiences significantly influence the intention to

revisit Aek Sijorni tourist destination. Furthermore, tourist satisfaction also plays a crucial role in encouraging revisit intentions. The research highlights that memorable tourism experiences not only have a direct impact on revisit intentions but also indirectly influence them through the mediation of tourist satisfaction. This demonstrates the importance of creating meaningful and engaging experiences that enhance both immediate satisfaction and long-term loyalty among tourists.

The implications of this study suggest that tourism managers should focus on enhancing the uniqueness of Aek Sijorni through clean environments, adequate facilities, and cultural interaction programs. This approach will not only increase tourist satisfaction but also encourage positive word-of-mouth promotion. To support these goals, it is recommended that Aek Sijorni incorporates entertainment-based attractions, participatory tourism programs, cultural workshops, and eco-friendly initiatives. Additionally, continuous staff training, well-maintained infrastructure, and targeted marketing strategies that emphasize natural beauty and authentic cultural experiences will be essential in fostering tourist loyalty and revisit intentions.

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