

Enhancing Tourist Satisfaction And Revisit Intention Through Experience-Based Tourism At Rotterdam Fort

Suma Thesa¹, I Nyoman Sudiksa², I Gede Darmawijaya³

^{1,2,3} Magister of Applied Tourism Program, Bali Tourism Polytechnic, Indonesia

Email: sumathesa93@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effect of tourist experience on satisfaction and revisit intention at Rotterdam Fort, Makassar, as well as to examine the mediating role of satisfaction. The research employed a quantitative approach by distributing questionnaires to 310 tourist respondents, and the data were analyzed using Partial Least Square (PLS). The results indicate that tourist experience has a positive and significant effect on both satisfaction and revisit intention. Furthermore, tourist satisfaction also has a significant influence on revisit intention and is proven to mediate the relationship between tourist experience and revisit intention. These findings support the Expectation Confirmation Theory, which emphasizes the importance of congruence between expectations and actual experiences in shaping satisfaction. Practically, the results of this study provide valuable insights for Rotterdam Fort's management to enhance service quality, supporting facilities, and innovative attractions in order to create more satisfying experiences and foster tourist loyalty.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a strategic sector in economic and social development that contributes significantly to regional income, job creation, and cultural preservation. Within the context of regional development, tourism is not only viewed as a recreational activity but also as a means of empowering local communities and preserving cultural identity. As competition among destinations intensifies, destination management must become increasingly adaptive in meeting the needs and expectations of tourists. One of the key aspects in maintaining a destination's sustainability is to encourage tourists' revisit intention. Revisit intention represents a crucial element in sustaining tourist destinations amid evolving global trends and challenges. It not only reflects the success of a single visit but also serves as an indicator of effective destination management. Therefore, destinations seeking long-term sustainability must integrate the reinforcement of revisit intention as a core component of their tourism development strategy (Muhammad & Hidayanti, 2025).

Revisit intention, however, does not occur automatically. It emerges through a cognitive and emotional process influenced by multiple factors such as the quality of tourist experience, satisfaction with services and facilities, and perceptions of the destination's image. When tourists feel appreciated, receive excellent service, and gain meaningful experiences, they are naturally inclined to revisit. Conversely, disappointment or unmet expectations may discourage return visits and even lead to negative word-of-mouth that harms the destination's reputation (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). The sustainability and competitiveness of a destination are not only determined by its ability to attract first-time visitors but also by its capacity to create experiences that encourage repeat visits. Revisit intention, an important indicator of tourist loyalty, reflects positive perceptions, satisfaction, and emotional attachment toward previous experiences. Hence, building and maintaining revisit intention is a vital component of sustainable destination management.

Rotterdam Fort is one of Makassar's most significant historical landmarks in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Constructed in the 17th century by the Gowa Kingdom and originally known as Ujung Pandang Fortress, it was renamed "Rotterdam Fort" after Dutch colonial occupation in 1667. Architecturally, it represents a blend of local and European influences, with its turtle-shaped structure symbolizing strength and resilience. Beyond its architectural appeal, the fort stands as a cultural and educational heritage site that embodies historical narratives, aesthetic value, and national identity. In recent decades, Rotterdam Fort has become an integral part of Makassar's cultural tourism ecosystem. It functions not only as a heritage site but also as a museum, cultural exhibition space, and educational hub. Thousands of domestic and international tourists visit annually, drawn by its colonial architecture, historical artifacts, and local narratives. However, despite its appeal, a key challenge remains how to create a memorable and satisfying visitor experience that motivates tourists to return.

Based on data from the Makassar Tourism Office, monthly visits to Rotterdam Fort averaged between 12,000 and 14,000 tourists throughout 2024. Nevertheless, a preliminary survey conducted between January and March 2025 ($n = 150$) revealed that only 42% of respondents expressed an intention to revisit within the next three months, while 58% preferred to explore other destinations. This percentage is considerably lower than the national benchmark of cultural destinations, which averages above 60% revisit intention (Kemenparekraf, 2023). The gap between Rotterdam Fort's potential and actual tourist loyalty indicates that the visitor experience has yet to generate lasting emotional value. Tourist experiences at Rotterdam Fort include guided tours around the fort, visits to the La Galigo Museum, participation in cultural performances, and interactive storytelling with local guides (Achmadi & Veronika, 2020). These experiences, when delivered effectively, are not merely informative but also emotional and immersive, fostering a sense of personal connection and positive memory key determinants of revisit intention. However, fluctuating monthly visitation data (totaling 120,545 visitors in 2024–2025) suggest uneven experience quality, affected by crowding during peak months and limited activities during low seasons.

Interviews with site managers revealed that repeat visitors are predominantly satisfied tourists especially school groups and cultural communities who find educational value in their visits. Thematic programs such as cultural festivals and temporary exhibitions have also proven effective in boosting repeat visits, especially during low season periods (Buhari et al., 2022). International tourists, moreover, tend to revisit when they experience emotional engagement through immersive storytelling, aligning with the Expectation Confirmation Theory Yusuf et al., (2023) which posits that the congruence between expectations and actual experiences strengthens perceived value and revisit intention. Empirical evidence highlights that revisit intention in cultural destinations is strongly influenced by tourist experience and satisfaction (Pujiyati & Sukaatmadja, 2020). Positive experiences create satisfaction, which in turn fosters loyalty. Satisfied tourists are more likely to recommend destinations through word-of-mouth and digital platforms, contributing to sustainable marketing efficiency and long-term destination viability. In the modern tourism landscape, where travelers demand authenticity, sustainability, and emotional connection, fostering loyalty through meaningful experiences is more critical than ever (Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2020).

In the context of Rotterdam Fort, tourist experiences are shaped by a combination of architectural uniqueness, educational interpretation, cultural interaction, and service quality (Wattimury & Kurniawati, 2022). However, challenges such as limited interactive facilities, language barriers in signage, and inconsistent storytelling remain. Reviews on Google and

TripAdvisor often mention conventional presentation methods and insufficient engagement, particularly among younger and international visitors seeking deeper, personalized experiences (Rajab, 2020). Addressing these gaps is essential to transforming one-time visits into repeat visits and ensuring economic and cultural sustainability. This study therefore seeks to analyze the influence of tourist experience on satisfaction and revisit intention at Rotterdam Fort, Makassar, and to examine the mediating role of satisfaction. The findings are expected to provide theoretical insight into the relationship between experiential tourism and loyalty formation, while offering practical recommendations for heritage destination managers in enhancing tourist satisfaction, sustaining competitiveness, and fostering long-term visitor loyalty.

METHODS

This study adopts an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design at Rotterdam Fort, Makassar (March–June 2025). The population comprises tourists who visited the site during 2023–2025. The quantitative phase used a structured questionnaire (5-point Likert) administered on-site and via Google Forms to 310 respondents, determined using Hair et al.'s rule of thumb (≈ 31 indicators $\times 10$). Constructs measured were Tourist Experience (escape, peace of mind, uniqueness, staff, learning; (Suhartanto et al., 2020), Tourist Satisfaction (Rajab, 2020) and Revisit Intention (Usman et al., 2022). The qualitative phase purposively interviewed site managers and selected tourists to deepen and explain the quantitative findings. Data sources included primary (surveys, interviews, observation, documentation) and secondary materials (policies, books, and journal articles). Quantitative data were analyzed using PLS-SEM (SmartPLS 3). The measurement model assessed convergent validity (indicator loadings ≥ 0.70 ; 0.50–0.60 acceptable in scale development; AVE ≥ 0.50) and reliability (Composite Reliability and Cronbach's $\alpha \geq 0.70$), and discriminant validity via cross-loadings and the Fornell–Larcker criterion ($\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ greater than inter-construct correlations). The structural model was evaluated using R^2 (benchmarks: 0.75 strong, 0.50 moderate, 0.25 weak), bootstrapped path coefficients ($t > 1.96$; $p < 0.05$), and predictive relevance Q^2 (0.02 small, 0.15 medium, 0.35 large). Common Method Bias was screened using collinearity statistics (VIF < 3 not serious; 3–5 usually acceptable; ≥ 5 critical). Mediation was tested following Hair et al., (2021) complementary, competitive, or full mediation. Qualitative data were analyzed with the Miles Huberman interactive model (data collection, reduction, display, conclusion/verification) to contextualize and triangulate the quantitative results

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Respondents

The study surveyed 310 visitors to Rotterdam Fort (Makassar) who had visited the site within 2023–2025. The sample is slightly male-dominant (55.2% male; 44.8% female) and strongly skewed toward younger cohorts: 51.6% are < 20 years, followed by 21–30 years (32.3%), 31–40 years (9.7%), and > 40 years (6.5%). In terms of occupation, students constitute the largest group (41.0%), then private-sector employees (31.9%), entrepreneurs (18.1%), homemakers (4.8%), and civil servants (4.2%). This profile aligns with Rotterdam Fort's cultural-educational appeal and affordable access, which naturally attracts school and university groups as well as young independent travelers. Visitation patterns indicate a mix of recent and occasional visitors. The most recent visit occurred within 1–6 months for 35.8% of respondents and 6–11 months for 31.9%; fewer had last visited > 3 years ago (19.4%), 2–3 years (9.0%), or 1–2 years (3.9%). Regarding visit frequency, 38.7% reported one lifetime visit, 29.6% had visited twice, and 31.6% had visited more than three times. Taken together, the data suggest a healthy pipeline of first-time and infrequent visitors largely youth and students alongside a meaningful segment of repeat

visitors, providing a sound basis for analyzing how experience and satisfaction relate to revisit intention at this heritage destination.

Measurement Model

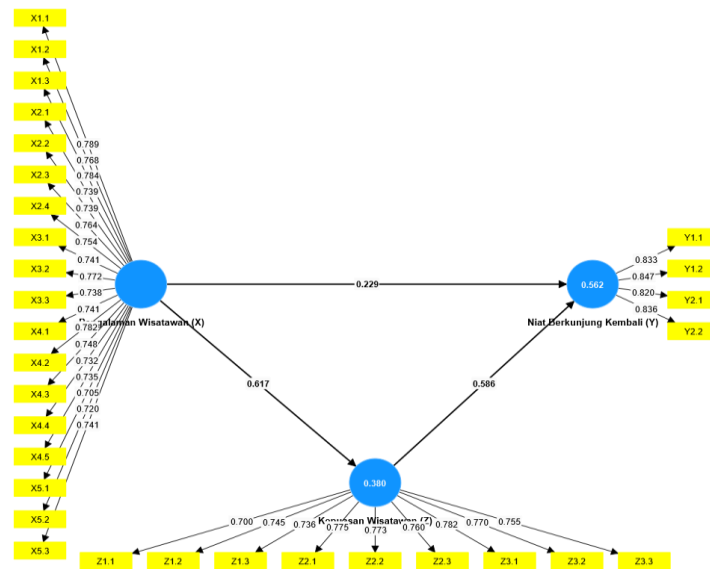


Figure 1 Inner Model

Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)

Based on the structural model (inner model) output shown in the figure, the relationships among variables demonstrate strong and significant effects. The variable Tourist Experience (X) has a positive influence on Tourist Satisfaction (Z) with a path coefficient of 0.617, indicating that better tourist experiences lead to higher satisfaction levels. Furthermore, Tourist Satisfaction (Z) positively and significantly affects Revisit Intention (Y) with a coefficient of 0.586, suggesting that satisfaction plays a crucial role in encouraging tourists to revisit. However, the direct effect of Tourist Experience (X) on Revisit Intention (Y) is relatively weaker, with a coefficient of 0.229, implying that most of the influence of tourist experience on revisit intention is mediated through satisfaction. The R^2 value of 0.380 for satisfaction and 0.562 for revisit intention indicates that the model has a fairly good explanatory power, meaning that tourist experience and satisfaction together explain about 56.2% of the variance in tourists' revisit intention to Rotterdam Fort. These findings emphasize the importance of creating high-quality experiences as a foundation for building tourist satisfaction and loyalty, particularly in the context of cultural tourism.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity assesses how strongly each indicator correlates with its respective latent construct. In reflective measurement models, indicators are considered valid if their outer loading values exceed 0.70, although values between 0.50 and 0.60 are still acceptable in the early stages of scale development (Ghozali, 2018). The results of the convergent validity test for this study are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Outer Loading Results

Variable		Indicator Range	Highest Loading	Lowest Loading	Status
Tourist Experience (X)	Experience	0.705 – 0.789	X1.1 = 0.789	X5.1 = 0.705	Valid
Tourist Satisfaction (Z)	Satisfaction	0.700 – 0.782	Z3.1 = 0.782	Z1.1 = 0.700	Valid
Revisit Intention (Y)		0.820 – 0.847	Y1.2 = 0.847	Y2.1 = 0.820	Valid

Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)

Based on Table 1, all indicators show outer loading values greater than 0.70, confirming that they have met the criteria for convergent validity. For the Tourist Experience (X) variable, the indicator X1.1 records the highest loading value of 0.789, signifying that this item most strongly represents the construct. The lowest value, 0.705, still satisfies the minimum requirement, indicating adequate indicator reliability. Similarly, the Tourist Satisfaction (Z) and Revisit Intention (Y) constructs demonstrate outer loading values within the valid range, with the highest loading (0.847) observed in Y1.2. These results indicate that each measurement item contributes significantly to explaining its respective construct. Thus, all constructs in the model Tourist Experience, Tourist Satisfaction, and Revisit Intention have fulfilled the convergent validity requirement, ensuring that the indicators consistently measure what they are intended to represent.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) method. A model demonstrates good discriminant validity when the square root of each construct's AVE is greater than its correlations with other constructs (Ghozali, 2018). The results of the analysis are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variable	AVE
Tourist Experience (X)	0.562
Tourist Satisfaction (Z)	0.571
Revisit Intention (Y)	0.695

Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)

All constructs show AVE values greater than the minimum threshold of 0.50, indicating that each variable explains more than half of the variance of its indicators. The highest AVE value is recorded by Revisit Intention (0.695), followed by Tourist Satisfaction (0.571), while Tourist Experience (0.562) also meets the required level. These findings confirm that all constructs in the model have achieved acceptable discriminant validity.

Composite Reliability

Composite reliability testing was conducted to evaluate the accuracy, internal consistency, and reliability of each construct in measuring its respective indicators. According to Ghozali (2018), a construct is considered reliable if the Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha (CA) values exceed 0.70, indicating that the measurement items are consistent and dependable. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Composite Reliability Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Status
Tourist Experience (X)	0.954	0.959	Reliable
Tourist Satisfaction (Z)	0.906	0.923	Reliable
Revisit Intention (Y)	0.854	0.901	Reliable

Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)

As shown in Table 3, all constructs achieved both Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above the 0.70 threshold, confirming that the measurement indicators are internally consistent and reliable. The Tourist Experience variable records the highest reliability (CR = 0.959), reflecting strong indicator cohesion. Meanwhile, Tourist Satisfaction (CR = 0.923) and Revisit Intention (CR = 0.901) also exhibit high reliability. These results indicate that the

overall measurement model demonstrates excellent reliability, ensuring that each construct consistently captures the intended theoretical concept and can be used confidently for further structural model analysis.

Structural Model (Inner Model)

R-Square (R^2)

R-square (R^2) represents the proportion of variance in the endogenous construct explained by its exogenous variables. Higher R^2 values indicate stronger predictive accuracy. The R^2 results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. R-Square Results

Variable	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted	Category
Tourist Satisfaction (Z)	0.380	0.378	Weak
Revisit Intention (Y)	0.562	0.559	Moderate

Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)

As shown in Table 4, Tourist Experience (X) explains 38% of the variance in Tourist Satisfaction (Z), while Tourist Experience (X) and Tourist Satisfaction (Z) jointly explain 56.2% of the variance in Revisit Intention (Y). According to Ghazali (2018), an R^2 value of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 indicates strong, moderate, and weak models respectively. Thus, the findings classify Tourist Satisfaction as weak and Revisit Intention as moderate. These results imply that while other factors beyond the model also influence these constructs, the existing relationships remain substantively meaningful and statistically relevant.

Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

The predictive relevance (Q^2) test measures the model's capability to predict endogenous constructs. According to Ghazali (2018) Q^2 value greater than 0 indicates predictive relevance, with thresholds of 0.02 (weak), 0.15 (moderate), and 0.35 (strong). Based on the calculation using the R^2 values of the endogenous variables (Tourist Satisfaction = 0.380 and Revisit Intention = 0.562), the overall Q^2 score obtained is 0.728 (72.8%). This result confirms that the model has strong predictive relevance, indicating that approximately 72.8% of the variance in the endogenous constructs can be explained by the exogenous variables. Hence, the structural model demonstrates substantial explanatory and predictive power in describing the relationships among tourist experience, satisfaction, and revisit intention.

Mediation Effect Test

The mediation effect test aims to determine the extent to which Tourist Satisfaction (Z) mediates the relationship between Tourist Experience (X) and Revisit Intention (Y). The analysis was conducted using the Upsilon (υ) approach and path coefficient estimation within the PLS framework. The results are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Path Coefficients

Relationship	Path Coefficient	Description
X $\rightarrow$ Z	0.617	Significant
Z $\rightarrow$ Y	0.586	Significant
X $\rightarrow$ Y	0.229	Significant

Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)

The results indicate that Tourist Experience significantly affects both Tourist Satisfaction (0.617) and Revisit Intention (0.229), while Tourist Satisfaction also exerts a strong and significant influence on Revisit Intention (0.586). These findings imply that satisfaction plays a crucial role in linking the effect of experience to revisit intention, acting as an intermediary variable that

enhances the strength of the overall relationship. To further confirm the mediating role, the Upsilon (υ) value for the indirect pathway $X \rightarrow Z \rightarrow Y$ was calculated. The resulting $\upsilon = 0.1306$ indicates a moderate mediation effect, based on the criteria proposed by Ogbeibu et al., (2021) where $0.01 = \text{low}$, $0.075 = \text{moderate}$, and $0.175 = \text{high}$. This suggests that while Tourist Experience directly influences revisit intention, a substantial portion of its impact is transmitted indirectly through Tourist Satisfaction. In practical terms, enhancing tourists' emotional, cognitive, and experiential engagement can elevate satisfaction levels, which in turn increases their likelihood of revisiting Rotterdam Fort.

Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping method in SmartPLS 3.0, to examine both direct and indirect effects among the variables. A hypothesis is accepted if the t-statistic > 1.96 (for $\alpha = 0.05$) or p-value < 0.05 (Hair et al., 2021). The summary of hypothesis testing results is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing Results (Direct and Indirect Effects)

Code	Type	Path Coefficient	t-Statistic	p-Value	Result
H1	Direct	0,159028	3.734	0.000	Supported
H2	Direct	0,428472	11.632	0.000	Supported
H3	Direct	0,406944	9.615	0.000	Supported
H4	Indirect (Mediated)	0,250694	7.719	0.000	Supported

Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)

The results in Table 6 show that all hypotheses are supported, as indicated by the positive path coefficients and significant t-statistic and p-value scores. The strongest direct relationship is found between Tourist Experience and Tourist Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.617$), confirming that positive and memorable experiences significantly increase tourist satisfaction. Additionally, Tourist Satisfaction exerts a robust influence on Revisit Intention ($\beta = 0.586$), highlighting its role as a key determinant of tourist loyalty. The mediation test (H4) further confirms that Tourist Satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between Tourist Experience and Revisit Intention, with an indirect effect of 0.361 ($p < 0.001$). This indicates that tourists' satisfaction enhances the positive impact of their experiences, leading to a stronger intention to revisit Rotterdam Fort.

Common Method Bias (CMB) Test

The Common Method Bias (CMB) test was conducted to identify potential measurement errors caused by common variance among indicators collected from the same respondents. The analysis applied the Full Collinearity Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) approach as suggested by Kock et al., (2021) A model is considered free from multicollinearity and bias if all VIF values are below 3.3

Table 7. Inner VIF Results

Relationship	VIF Value	Status
Tourist Experience (X) $\rightarrow$ Tourist Satisfaction (Z)	1.000	No Collinearity
Tourist Experience (X) $\rightarrow$ Revisit Intention (Y)	1.613	No Collinearity
Tourist Satisfaction (Z) $\rightarrow$ Revisit Intention (Y)	1.613	No Collinearity

Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)

As shown in Table 7, all VIF values range between 1.000 and 1.613, far below the critical threshold of 3.3, indicating that no serious multicollinearity or common method bias exists among the variables. This confirms that the relationships between constructs are statistically

independent and that the data are not affected by common measurement errors. Accordingly, the measurement model can be considered free from common method bias, thereby ensuring the reliability and robustness of the statistical results obtained from the PLS-SEM analysis.

DISCUSSION

The Effect of Tourist Experience on Revisit Intention

The first hypothesis states that Tourist Experience (X) has a positive and significant effect on Revisit Intention (Y) at Rotterdam Fort, Makassar. The PLS bootstrapping results confirm this hypothesis, showing a path coefficient of 0.229, a t-statistic of 3.734 (> 1.65), and a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). This indicates that the more positive and memorable the experience perceived by tourists, the stronger their behavioral intention to revisit the destination. These findings emphasize that experiential quality is a crucial determinant of tourist loyalty, particularly within heritage tourism contexts.

This result supports previous studies by Atmari & Putri (2021) and Sulistyanda et al., (2022), who found that a memorable tourism experience significantly shapes tourists' decision to return. In cultural heritage sites, experiences are not only cognitive but also emotional and sensory formed through atmosphere, historical narratives, and interaction with the environment. In the case of Rotterdam Fort, tourists' experiences are primarily built around the "escape" dimension, where visitors feel detached from daily routines and immersed in the colonial-era ambiance. As the community-based tourism group (Pokdarwis) explained:

"We provide space for tourists to escape from their routines and feel the distinctive atmosphere of the colonial era... We strengthen this feeling by maintaining the historical environment and creating an immersive atmosphere that reflects the past." " (In-1, Pokdarwis, May 2, 2025)

These narratives highlight how emotional immersion in Rotterdam Fort's historical and cultural setting offers psychological relief and novelty, making the visit more meaningful. The escape experience enables visitors to experience temporal dislocation walking through preserved Dutch corridors, viewing centuries-old bastions, and hearing stories from local guides thus producing a strong affective attachment. This is consistent with Sharma et al., (2022) in the Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) framework, which identifies "escape" as a core element that fosters satisfaction and revisit intention. However, the effectiveness of the escape dimension depends on the quality of supporting facilities that ensure peace and comfort.

Similarly, the Makassar Tourism Office recognized this gap between tourist expectations and actual site conditions:

"Last year, many visitors requested improvements to public toilets and better direction signs. Therefore, this year's budget has been allocated for signage upgrades and the revitalization of public facilities." (In-3, Tourism Office, 2025)

These insights reveal that tourists' revisit motivation is shaped by both emotional satisfaction (escape and nostalgia) and functional satisfaction (comfort and cleanliness). If these supporting aspects are neglected, even a strong historical atmosphere might fail to translate into loyalty. This aligns with the Expectation Confirmation Theory Yusuf et al., (2023) which asserts that satisfaction and consequently revisit intention emerges when perceived experience meets or exceeds expectations.

To enhance revisit potential, Rotterdam Fort's management has emphasized strategies that strengthen the emotional dimensions of the tourist experience. Conservation of colonial architecture, storytelling-based tours, and cultural performances help create memorable and authentic experiences. At the same time, facility upgrades such as rest areas, multilingual

information boards, and cleanliness maintenance are prioritized to meet basic expectations of comfort and convenience.

The Effect of Tourist Experience on Tourist Satisfaction

The second hypothesis posits that Tourist Experience (X) positively and significantly affects Tourist Satisfaction (Z) at Rotterdam Fort. The PLS bootstrapping results support this hypothesis, yielding a path coefficient of 0.617, a t-statistic of 11.632 (> 1.65), and a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). These statistics indicate a strong effect size and confirm that richer, more engaging experiences translate directly into higher satisfaction levels. The finding aligns with prior research showing that memorable experiences comprising affective immersion, functional comfort, and interpretive quality shape satisfaction in heritage settings (Martalia et al., 2022). Qualitative evidence clarifies *which* experiential dimensions matter most. Community stakeholders emphasized the escape and atmospheric immersion the fort provides:

"We provide space for tourists to escape routine and feel the distinctive colonial ambience." (In-1, Pokdarwis, May 2, 2025)

"We strengthen this feeling by maintaining historical settings and immersive storytelling that reflects the past." (In-2, Pokdarwis, May 2, 2025)

These accounts illustrate how curated ambience and narrative depth generate emotional resonance an MTE (Memorable Tourism Experience) mechanism that elevates satisfaction beyond mere sightseeing. Satisfaction, however, is also contingent on peace of mind the comfort, hygiene, and ease that enable visitors to fully enjoy the experience (Maharaniputri et al., 2021). Informants were concern about existing gaps and remedial actions:

"The escape aspect is visible, but peace of mind remains limited due to hygiene issues, limited toilets, and few rest areas." (In-4, Academic, 2025)

"Many visitors requested better toilets and clearer wayfinding; we've allocated this year's budget for facility upgrades and multilingual signage." (In-3, Tourism Office, 2025)

Beyond ambience and comfort, uniqueness and staff interaction emerged as powerful satisfaction drivers. Stakeholders consistently framed Rotterdam Fort's VOC-era architecture and museum assets as a distinctive value proposition:

"Uniqueness is our strength; the VOC architecture and the fort's turtle-shaped layout are unlike anywhere else." (In-1, Pokdarwis, May 2, 2025)

"Staff are the destination's face; we train them to be welcoming, informative, and educational." (In-2, Pokdarwis, May 2, 2025)

"We're strengthening tourism human resources so encounters feel professional and hospitable." (In-3, Tourism Office, 2025)

Finally, the learning dimension cognitive enrichment through museums and guided interpretation adds meaning that boosts satisfaction, especially for youth and educational groups:

"We design learning through exhibitions and history tours so the visit is not only entertaining but educational." (In-1, Pokdarwis, May 2, 2025)

"The learning value is evident, but formats should be more interactive to engage young visitors." (In-4, Academic, 2025)

Taken together, these narratives explain the strong quantitative effect ($\beta = 0.617$): escape + ambience generate emotional engagement; comfort and wayfinding secure peace of mind; uniqueness and staff interaction humanize the experience; and learning adds cognitive value. In Expectation Confirmation terms, when these facets meet or exceed expectations, satisfaction rises sharply. Managerially, the pathway suggests a two-pronged strategy: (1) elevate the emotive

core (story-driven tours, theme nights, living-history moments), and (2) lock in functional ease (clean, adequate facilities; clear multilingual signage; trained interpreters). Doing both consistently will sustain high satisfaction across segments, setting the stage for stronger loyalty behaviors discussed in the next subsection.

The Effect of Tourist Satisfaction on Revisit Intention

The third hypothesis proposes that Tourist Satisfaction (Z) exerts a positive and significant influence on Revisit Intention (Y) among visitors to Rotterdam Fort. The PLS bootstrapping results affirm this relationship, yielding a path coefficient of 0.586, a t -statistic of 9.615 (>1.65), and a p -value of 0.000 (<0.05). These findings imply that as tourists' satisfaction levels increase, their intention to revisit the destination intensifies proportionally. This outcome corroborates prior studies Khairunnisa et al., (2023), which underscore satisfaction as a crucial antecedent of loyalty behaviors in tourism contexts.

Tourist satisfaction represents an emotional and cognitive assessment derived from how well the actual experience aligns with or exceeds expectations. In heritage tourism, satisfaction is shaped by the perceived authenticity, comfort, and interpretive value of the destination. At Rotterdam Fort, satisfaction stems from multiple intertwined factors historical ambience, facility quality, staff professionalism, and educational content. As one tourism manager highlighted:

"Our main strategy is to keep improving the visitor experience by adding temporary exhibitions and traditional performances, and by maintaining cleanliness and comfort. These directly influence the willingness of visitors to return." (In-1, Pokdarnvis, May 2, 2025)

Another community representative emphasized the same aspect of variety and maintenance:

"We aim to make every visit unique through rotating exhibitions at La Galigo Museum and strict management of cleanliness. Many tourists say they would not return if basic comfort is ignored." (In-2, Pokdarnvis, May 2, 2025)

From the government's institutional perspective, events and facility renewal are central to sustaining satisfaction:

"We organize annual cultural and culinary festivals in the fort area so that each year tourists have something new to see. It is part of our effort to make Rotterdam Fort a dynamic heritage site rather than a static monument." (In-3, Tourism Office, 2025)

Academic experts contextualized these managerial efforts by noting that satisfaction serves as a mediating emotional state linking experience and behavioral intention:

"Positive experience alone does not guarantee repeat visits; it must generate satisfaction first. If cleanliness or service quality disappoints, the desire to revisit will fade." (In-4, Academic, 2025)

These statements collectively suggest that satisfaction functions as both an outcome of memorable experience and a driver of loyalty. When visitors feel emotionally rewarded through historical immersion, staff friendliness, and learning opportunities they develop affective bonds that motivate revisits. Conversely, dissatisfaction with hygiene, signage, or facilities disrupts this emotional continuity.

Consistent with the Expectation–Confirmation Theory, the findings demonstrate that when tourists' expectations are met or exceeded through diverse attractions, cleanliness, and service excellence, satisfaction rises and triggers stronger intentions to return (Yusuf et al., 2023). Managerially, this insight implies that maintaining satisfaction requires a balance between *novelty* (fresh programs, dynamic exhibitions) and *consistency* (reliable service, well-kept facilities).

Overall, Rotterdam Fort's management has gradually aligned operations to this

satisfaction loyalty dynamic by integrating event revitalization, capacity building for tourism staff, and experience diversification. When implemented sustainably, these actions reinforce emotional fulfillment and cognitive appreciation ensuring that tourists not only enjoy their visit but also envision Rotterdam Fort as a destination worth revisiting and recommending to others.

The Mediating Role of Tourist Satisfaction between Tourist Experience and Revisit Intention

The fourth hypothesis examines whether Tourist Satisfaction (Z) mediates the relationship between Tourist Experience (X) and Revisit Intention (Y). Results from PLS bootstrapping confirm the mediation effect, showing a path coefficient of 0.361, a t-statistic of 7.719 (> 1.65), and a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). This implies that tourist satisfaction significantly transmits the positive influence of experience on revisit intention. In other words, while a memorable experience directly enhances tourists' willingness to revisit, its effect becomes substantially stronger when it also generates a sense of satisfaction.

Theoretically, this finding reinforces the Expectation–Confirmation Theory Yusuf et al., (2023) , which posits that when tourists' expectations are met or exceeded, confirmation leads to satisfaction, which in turn triggers loyalty behaviors such as repeat visits and positive word of mouth. Similarly, Atmari and Sitepu & Rismawati (2021) and Krisnamurti et al., (2022) highlight that satisfaction transforms experiential stimuli such as escape, learning, and uniqueness into long-term commitment toward the destination.

Qualitative insights from the field further illuminate this mechanism. Stakeholders consistently linked satisfaction as an emotional bridge between the fort's historical experience and tourists' behavioral responses:

“A positive experience alone doesn't ensure tourists will come back. It must first make them feel satisfied comfortable, inspired, and respected. Only then will they return.” (In-4, Academic, 2025)

“Visitors often say they are satisfied when the tour feels immersive, the guides are friendly, and the facilities are clean. That satisfaction is what makes them want to come again.” (In-2, Pokdarwis, May 2, 2025)

Government representatives also emphasized satisfaction as the basis for repeat visitation:

“Our aim is to ensure visitors leave satisfied through good facilities, cleanliness, and engaging cultural programs. Satisfaction is the reason people recommend Rotterdam Fort to others.” (In-3, Tourism Office, 2025)

This dual-layered satisfaction (emotional and cognitive) explains why tourists who experience joy, relaxation, and learning are more likely to develop attachment and loyalty to heritage sites. Rotterdam Fort's environment provides such multidimensional stimuli its colonial architecture delivers sensory nostalgia, while the La Galigo Museum and guided storytelling satisfy intellectual curiosity. When these dimensions merge, satisfaction becomes a reinforcing mechanism that amplifies revisit intention.

Empirically, the mediation model suggests that while tourist experience directly influences revisit intention ($\beta = 0.229$), its indirect effect via satisfaction ($\beta = 0.361$) is even stronger. This confirms that satisfaction not only complements but also enhances the effect of experience. Practically, this underscores that managing heritage destinations requires not just creating memorable experiences but ensuring that those experiences yield satisfaction through comfort, engagement, and emotional connection.

For Rotterdam Fort's management, this means continuously integrating narrative authenticity, facility quality, and participatory experiences that encourage visitors to “feel history”

rather than merely observe it. When satisfaction becomes the emotional outcome of those experiences, tourists are far more likely to revisit and share their positive impressions turning satisfaction into a long-term behavioral commitment.

In conclusion, the mediation analysis validates that tourist satisfaction serves as the psychological and behavioral bridge linking experience to loyalty. Without satisfaction, experiences remain fleeting; with satisfaction, they evolve into attachment, advocacy, and sustained visitation ensuring Rotterdam Fort's endurance as a leading heritage tourism destination in Makassar.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that tourist experience and satisfaction play essential roles in shaping revisit intentions to Rotterdam Fort, Makassar. The results confirm that tourist experience exerts a direct and significant positive influence on both satisfaction and revisit intention, while satisfaction also emerges as a strong predictor of tourist loyalty. Moreover, satisfaction functions as a partial mediator between experience and revisit intention, demonstrating that emotional engagement and cognitive evaluation jointly reinforce visitors' behavioral intentions. The obtained R^2 and Q^2 values further indicate that the model possesses moderate to strong predictive power, confirming its robustness in explaining tourists' revisit behavior toward heritage destinations.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Revisit intention at Rotterdam Fort is shaped by the synergy between tourist experience, satisfaction, and heritage authenticity. Strengthening the cognitive and affective dimensions of experience requires continuous improvement of both physical and emotional aspects. On the cognitive side, enhancements in facilities, cleanliness, signage, and accessibility are crucial to improve visitor comfort and safety. On the affective side, the destination must preserve the unique colonial ambience, cultural storytelling, and sense of nostalgia that make the fort emotionally engaging for visitors. These affective bonds derived from authenticity and meaningful interaction often outweigh physical shortcomings and thus serve as the emotional core of revisit intention.

Satisfaction must be managed as a strategic outcome not just as a byproduct of destination management. Maintaining a balance between historical authenticity, visitor comfort, and educational value will ensure that tourists leave Rotterdam Fort with both emotional fulfillment and cognitive enrichment. This integrated approach is key to sustaining visitor loyalty, increasing positive word-of-mouth promotion, and positioning Rotterdam Fort as a resilient and sustainable heritage tourism destination that bridges the past and present in a meaningful, memorable way.

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