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EXPLORING KEY DRIVERS OF TOURIST SATISFACTION IN SAWAH LUKIS AGRITOURISM USING SEM-PLS APPROACH



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ABSTRACT

Agritourism is becoming increasingly popular in Indonesia as it utilizes natural resources and agricultural potentials, such as natural landscape and rural culture, as its main attractions. North Sumatra Province has iconic tourist attractions, such as Lake Toba, Sipiso Piso waterfall, and Agritourism, such as Sidamanik Tea plantation, Berastagi Botanical Garden and Sawah Lukis agritourism in Binjai. Sawah Lukis Agritourism has experienced a significant increase in tourist visits. Due to the high competition in Agritourism, the management should accommodate tourist expectations to achieve tourist satisfaction. Tourists' satisfaction is influenced by tourism attraction and service quality. This research explores and investigates the key drivers of tourist satisfaction in Sawah Lukis Agritourism. Accidental sampling was employed to select 102 visitors of Sawah Lukis Agritourism. Data was gathered from October to December 2024. Variables measured were tourist attractions and service quality as the exogenous variables and tourist satisfaction as the endogenous variable. The exogenous variables had 29 measurement indicators, and the endogenous variable had six measurement indicators. Data analysis was performed using SEM-PLS (Structural Equation Model - Partial Least Square) assisted by WarpPLS 7.0 software. The result showed that the constructed model was fit and fulfilled the outer and inner model criteria. The findings of this study indicate that all the key variables, which were tourism attraction and service quality, were key-driven and had a positive significant influence on the tourist satisfaction of Sawah Lukis Agritourism. The enhancement of tourist satisfaction can be accomplished by adding a cultural touch to tourist attractions, improving the local cultural heritage performance, and improving infrastructure and accommodation to facilitate tourist access. Policy recommendations and suggestions are required to improve Agritourism.

Keywords: agritourism; service quality; tourist attractions; tourist satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is rich in natural landscape and cultural diversity. As a result, Indonesia boasts a vast number of tourist attractions. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (2024a), foreign tourists reached 1.14 million, while domestic tourists totaled 60.3 million. This achievement resulted in foreign exchange earnings from the tourism sector, recorded at US\$10.46 billion as of September 2023, with the tourism sector's contribution to Indonesia's gross domestic product (GDP) estimated to reach 3.8%. Thus, the tourism sector plays a significant role in Indonesia's GDP.

The Central Bureau of Statistics (2020) recorded 2,552 tourist attractions in Indonesia. Natural resource-based tourism ranks second among the most common tourism categories, with 651 tourist attractions. One of the most popular natural-based tourism is Agritourism. Hrymak et al. (2019) stated that agritourism is a growing entrepreneurial activity attracting significant attention. Agritourism encompasses various elements, including the agricultural landscape, diverse cultivation and processing technologies, and the rural farming culture (Dominik et al., 2017). Agritourism is an



alternative to farm diversification since rural ambiance is an offered attraction to tourists (Fleischer et al., 2018). Moreover, agritourism should be commercialized in the future to generate income(Streifeneder et al., 2023). Thus, agritourism's impact is improving the quality of life for farmers (Chase, 2019).

North Sumatra Province has seen a significant increase in annual tourist visits. The province has seen a substantial increase in foreign tourist arrivals, rising by over 150% from the previous year to 197,015 visits (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2024b). The reason is that North Sumatra has various tourist attractions. The iconic tourist attractions of North Sumatra include Lake Toba and Agritourism, such as Sidamanik tea plantation, Strawberry Berastagi botanical garden, and Sawah Lukis in Binjai.

Due to the high competition, the tourism site management must consider utilizing existing resources and opportunities. Indeed, every tourist visiting Agritourism has expectations and perceptions in mind. This is directly related to tourists' satisfaction. Satisfaction is the personal assessment of a product or service based on comparing expected and actual performance. Satisfaction is a function of the difference between perceived and expected performance (Intan et al., 2021). Agritourism management must ensure that the provided services fulfill tourists' expectations.

Tourist attractions are the strongest element of a tourism system. They encompass all activities and sites designed for the tourists' enjoyment (Malisti et al., 2019). Unlike other components of tourism products, tourist attraction significantly influences tourists' decisions regarding destination selection (Suryadana & Octavia, 2015). According to Indonesia's Law No. 10 of 2009, a tourist attraction is a business that manages natural, cultural, and artificial tourism sites. Furthermore, Suhartanto et al. (2020) mentioned that tourist attractions would lead to loyalty.

In the context of agritourism development, it is important to consider the existence of tourist attractions and the quality of service provided to tourists. Service quality refers to tourists' assessment of various service components, including products, personnel, processes, and the environment (Dewi et al., 2024). Service quality is associated with the expectations of service users and the ability of the company (or organization) to fulfill these expectations (Idrus, 2019). Politeness, responsiveness, and insurance are components of service quality in tourism (Al-Laymoun et al., 2020). This study examines how tourist attraction attributes and service quality influence tourists' satisfaction.

The previous studies showed that the research regarding key factors of tourist satisfaction was separated between tourist attraction and service quality. Kirom et al. (2018) verified that tourist attractions positively influence tourist satisfaction in Malang. However, this study used multiple linear regression. Meanwhile, Azhar et al. (2019) researched tourist satisfaction in Samosiusing two variables: service quality and marketing mix. The other research found that tourist satisfaction in Bali was affected by service quality. However, the research applied the multiple linear regression (Hayati & Novitasari, 2017). Even though a similar research topic has been carried out to obtain accurate findings, the data analysis employed was a Structural Equation Model with a parameter of covariance (SEM-CB) (Lee et al., 2011; Nastabiq & Soesanto, 2021). Substantively, similar research has also been conducted in Bali with SEM-partial least squares (PLS). However, only five indicators measured service quality, and tourist satisfaction was assessed using three indicators (Surahman et al., 2020). Therefore, the novelty of this study is that the SEM-PLS model had an exhaustive measurement of two exogenous variables using 29 indicators and six indicators for the endogenous variable.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is located in Sawah Lukis Agritourism. It is a rice farming-based agritourism established in Cengkeh Turi Village, North Binjai District, Binjai City. Data were collected for 3 months, starting in October to December 2024. The data utilized in this study was primary data collected through questionnaires and secondary data obtained from various sources, including articles from reputable journals, study reports, books, and institutions or agencies relevant to the research.

The population of this study was the visitors or tourists visiting Sawah Lukis agritourism. Due to the total population being uninformed and dynamic, the sampling technique employed in this study was accidental sampling. This method is a technique based on chance encounters. Specifically, any individual tourist or visitor who possibly met the researcher during the fieldwork could be considered as a respondent for this. The total of respondents was 102 respondents involved in this study. Kock (2018) revealed that the minimum sample size for expected R-square 0.75 and two exogenous variables is 26. SEM-PLS has the advantage of analyzing small sample sizes (Goodhue et al., 2012). The sample size of 100 is sufficient for SEM-PLS to obtain a robust model (Hair, 2017). It implied that the sample size was sufficient.

Data analysis was performed using SEM-PLS (Structural Equation Model - Partial Least Square) with the assistance of WarpPLS 7.0. SEM-PLS was used to analyze the causal relationship

and influence the exogenous variables, which were tourist attraction (X1) and service quality (X2), on tourist satisfaction (Y) as the endogenous variable. Each variable in this study was measured through several reflective indicators, as shown in Table 1 below.

Variable	Indicators	Empirical Justification
	1. Uniqueness	(Robustin et al., 2018;
	2. Beautiful scenery	Cherapanukorn &
	3. Local wisdom	Sugunnasil, 2022;
	Interesting photo spots	Muliyanto et al., 2022)
	5. Activities offered	
	Availability accommodation	
Tourist	The road is easy to walk on	
Attraction	8. Availability of amenities	
7111401011	9. Large parking lots	
	10. Local food and drink	
	11. Availability communication network	
	12. Souvenirs availability	
	13. Interaction with the natural environment	
	14. Ease of accessibility	
	15. Affordable food prices	
	1. Clean environment	(Naidoo et al., 2011;
	2. Bins are available	Latiff & Imm, 2015;
	3. Personnel are neatly dressed	Silvestri et al., 2017;
	4. Personnel are polite and friendly	Gandhi et al., 2019;
	5. Personnel responsiveness	Thakur & Monga, 2022;
Service	 Personnel provide clear and concise information Personnel solution oriented 	Shyju et al., 2023)
Quality	 8. Easy to book tickets 9. Reasonable ticket price 	
	10. Service visibility	
	11. Sense of security	
	12. Insurance availability	
	13. Complaint handling	
	14. Providing good meals	
	1. Service satisfaction	(Chi & Qu, 2009;
	2. Adequate and appropriate facilities	Malkanthi & Routray,
	3. Cleanliness and convenience	2012; Fanelli &
Satisfaction	4. Price in line with service provided	Romagnoli, 2020;
	5. Convenience and accessibility to the location	Styaningrum et al.,
	6. Overall experience	2024)

Table 1. Variable's indicator

The application of SEM-PLS for this study was driven by the kind of collected data, ordinal scale data. According to Haryono (2017), analyzing the effects on data with categorical measurement scales, such as nominal and ordinal, should employ structural equation modeling with partial least squares (SEM-PLS) analysis. Furthermore, SEM-PLS analysis generates two models. The first is the measurement model (outer model), and the second is the structural model (inner model) (Hair et al., 2012, 2019). The outer model assesses the capacity of the research instrument to represent the latent variable by testing the indicators or variable manifest. The evaluation of the outer model was a validity and reliability test. The conceptual model in this study is as follows.



Figure 1. Path conceptual model

Meanwhile, the inner model describes the relationship among the latent variables. The evaluation of the inner model involved goodness of fit and hypothesis tests (Hair et al., 2019). The hypotheses posited in this study are as follows: H1: The tourist attraction positively affects tourism satisfaction. H2: Service quality has a positive effect on tourism satisfaction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Respondents

Several socioeconomic characteristics, including gender, age, education, and income, were used to characterize the tourists or visitors of Sawah Lukis Agritourism. The following table presents a summary of the socioeconomic characteristics of respondents.

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	57	55,88
Female	45	44,12
Age		
≤ 25 years	76	74,51
25 – 35 years	19	18,63
> 35 years	7	6,86
Education		
High School	48	47,06
Undergraduate	52	50,98
Postgraduate	2	1,96
Income (IDR)		
< 1.500.000	60	58,82
1.500.000 - 2.500.000	18	17,65
2.500.000 - 4.000.000	14	13,73
4.000.000 - 5.000.000	4	3,92
> 5.000.000	6	5,88

Table 2. Socioeconomic characteristics of respondents

Table 1 explains that most visitors of Sawah Lukis Agritourism are male. It could be attributed to well-maintained recreational areas and appealing natural surroundings suitable for physical activity in Sawah Lukis Agritourism, such as cycling. Males tend to prioritize tourism destinations that offer facilities for sports activities, recreational games, natural tourism, or simply a comfortable environment for social interaction with friends (Wangsamihardja et al., 2022).

The visitors of Sawah Lukis Agritourism are dominated by youth groups who are Gen Z and mostly have status as undergraduate students or fresh graduates with an income range under IDR 2,500,000. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Health, there are three categories of population based on age (Amin & Juniati, 2017): the teenage age category (under 25 years), early adulthood (26 - 35 years), and late adulthood (36 - 45 years). Furthermore, Gen Z is more interested in tourist attractions that offer considerably aesthetic and eye-catching landscapes, views, design, and decoration as Gen Z has social behavior to show and share their experiences through photo, video, and visual content on social media (Mayasari, 2021). Agritourism Sawah Lukis offers many visually appealing and intriguing layouts and landscapes. It is in line with the interest of Gen Z to share their experience and moments on social media.

Model Evaluation

1. Outer Model Evaluation (Validity and Reliability test)

The validity test is a method to evaluate the precision of the indicator t of the latent variable. In order to be considered valid, an indicator must demonstrate a correlation with other indicators (Intan et al., 2021). The convergent validity test was employed to assess the validity of measurable indicators. The loading factor indicates the convergent validity value. The indicators are considered valid if the loading factor value is >0.7 and the P-value is <0.05. However, if the model is newly developed, a value of 0.5 is permissible (Wati, 2018). The result indicated that all measurable indicators were valid and met the criteria. This means the initial model could be used as the final constructed model. The loading factor of all indicators is presented in Table 3.

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Variable	Item	Loading Factor	P-Value	Result
	X1.1	0,705	<0,001	Valid
	X1.2	0,654	<0,001	Valid
	X1.3	0,520	<0,001	Valid
	X1.4	0,715	<0,001	Valid
	X1.5	0,473	<0,001	Valid
	X1.6	0,455	<0,001	Valid
	X1.7	0,452	<0,001	Valid
Tourist Attractions (X ₁)	X1.8	0,597	<0,001	Valid
	X1.9	0,687	<0,001	Valid
	X1.10	0,680	<0,001	Valid
	X1.11	0,659	<0,001	Valid
	X1.12	0,666	<0,001	Valid
	X1.13	0,668	<0,001	Valid
	X1.14	0,749	<0,001	Valid
	X1.15	0,688	<0,001	Valid
	X2.1	0,365	<0,001	Valid
	X2.2	0,693	<0,001	Valid
	X2.3	0,770	<0,001	Valid
	X2.4	0,841	<0,001	Valid
	X2.5	0,811	<0,001	Valid
	X2.6	0,753	<0,001	Valid
Convine Overline (X)	X2.7	0,791	<0,001	Valid
Service Quality (X ₂)	X2.8	0,591	<0,001	Valid
	X2.9	0,658	<0,001	Valid
	X2.10	0,776	<0,001	Valid
	X2.11	0,826	<0,001	Valid
	X2.12	0,615	<0,001	Valid
	X2.13	0,203	0,016	Valid
	X2.14	0,619	<0,001	Valid
	Y1.1	0,832	<0,001	Valid
	Y1.2	0,834	<0,001	Valid
	Y1.3	0,872	<0,001	Valid
Tourist Satisfaction (Y)	Y1.4	0,817	<0,001	Valid
	Y1.5	0,749	<0,001	Valid
	Y1.6	0,724	<0,001	Valid

Furthermore, the reliability test is a method employed to assess the reliability of the measurable indicators. The Cronbach's alpha determines the reliability. It should exceed 0.60 for the indicator to be considered reliable (Rachbini et al., 2021). Based on the result, all measurable indicators were reliable to the model. Table 4 provides the result of the reliability test.

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Result
Tourist Attractions (X ₁)	0,881	Reliable
Service Quality (X ₂)	0,905	Reliable
Tourist Satisfaction (Y)	0,891	Reliable

2. Inner Model Evaluation (Goodness of Fit and Hypothesis Test)

The goodness-of-fit test is a statistical procedure employed to assess the quality of the structural model. The evaluation of the structural or inner involves R-Square and Q-Square. The R-Square represents how exogenous variables can explain the variability in the endogenous variables. A good model should possess R-Square \geq 0.67 since it can explain a significant portion of the endogenous variable (Musyaffi et al., 2022). Then, the evaluation of the structural or inner model also requires Q-Square. Q squares the extent to which the model and the parameter estimates generate the observed values. Q-Square values are classified as follows: small at 0.02, medium at 0.15, and large at 0.35 (Ghozali, 2011).

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Table 5. Inner model evaluation

Value
0,673
0,675

According to the inner model evaluation, the R-squared value was 0.673. It indicated that the tourist attraction and service quality could explain 67.3% of the variance in tourist satisfaction. Moreover, The Q-Square was 0.675. It signifies that tourist attraction and service quality possess substantial predictive capability concerning visitor satisfaction.

3. Hypothesis Test

The structural or inner model analysis, alternatively referred to as hypothesis testing, was illustrated in Figure 2. Figure 2 demonstrates the extent to which the exogenous variables contribute to the effect on the endogenous variable and the causality of the relationship in the model. This finding revealed that the tourist attraction (X₁) and the service quality (X₂) had a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction (Y). It was indicated by the path coefficient, which has a positive value with a P value of <0.05. The coefficient value further demonstrates that the effect of tourist attraction surpasses that of service quality in influencing tourist satisfaction. The subsequent sections will provide a detailed explanation of the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable.



Figure 2. Path coefficient

Table 6. Hypothesis testing		
Variable	Coefficient	P-Value
Tourism Attraction	0,68	<0,01
Service Quality	0,21	0,01

Tourist Satisfaction in Sawah Lukis Agritourism

1. The Influence of Tourist Attractions on Tourist Satisfaction

This study figured out that tourist attractions have a positive and significant effect on visitor satisfaction. This implies that hypothesis (H_1) is accepted. The finding aligns with Ester et al. (2020) and Leo et al. (2020) that tourists attract positively and significantly affect the satisfaction of Citra Niaga's visitors in Samarinda and six agrotourism in Bandung. Conversely, Sulistiyadi et al. (2019) denoted that tourist attractions insignificantly influenced tourist satisfaction. The research differed

from this study finding, but tourist attractions can be defined as the key factors that motivate tourists to visit specific destinations. Hereinafter, Hermawan (2021) also clarified that tourism attraction is one of the important factors when a visitor chooses a tourism destination, as the factor significantly influences tourist satisfaction. Consequently, to achieve sustainable tourism management, it is essential to prioritize factors such as attractiveness, convenience, facilities, and tourist services (Isdarmanto, 2017; Siregar et al., 2016).

Sawah Lukis Agritourism is a tourism destination that integrates recreational activities, sports, and nature tourism into one location. The place also offers visitors a comprehensive experience. The tour provides a panoramic view of a two-hectare rice farming with a designed layout and landscape that enhances the rural ambiance. Gao et al. (2014) mentioned that the agricultural landscape has implications such as experience and perception improvement in agritourism development. Then, the huts are strategically positioned in the middle of the rice farming. It simulates the experience of being a farmer enjoying a lunch meal in the countryside. Since agricultural activities are key to attracting tourists to Agritourism (Trung & Mohanty, 2023). The experience is further enriched by the existence of authentic and traditional culinary delights such as fried catfish with spicy condiment (*lele sambal pecak*), spicy duck with torch ginger (*bebek sambal kecombrang*), and traditional curry chicken (*ayam gulai kampung*), which contribute to the establishment of a genuine rural atmosphere.

Sawah Lukis is notable for its scenic rice fields. This venue is designed for sports enthusiasts, particularly those interested in cycling. The site offers a cycling track, allowing the visitors to engage in physical activity while enjoying the views of the rice fields and the surrounding environment. Furthermore, Sawah Lukis Agritourism is also designed with aesthetic appeal. This place provides photogenic spots. Staff should acknowledge and recognize the role of social media as a promotion platform for the place through visitors' experiences shared and uploaded on social media. Inviting many people to visit Sawah Lukis Agritourism is the best way. According to Heriana et al. (2024), the aesthetically pleasing and "Instagrammable" photo spots are not only to enhance the attractiveness of a destination for tourists but also to promote the tourism industry. Since tourist attractions substantially influence satisfaction more than service quality, it is necessary to focus on developing and diversifying more unique and attractive tourist attractions. Chen and Wu (2021) emphasize the importance of innovation in developing tourist attractions by designing more interactive activities. events, shows, and theme-related equipment that allow tourists to create an eniovable tourist experience. In addition, Managers can focus on visual appeal by combining the beauty of the landscape and harmoniously integrating natural and artificial elements to create an impressive visual experience for visitors (Carvache-Franco et al., 2020).

2. The Influence of Service Quality on Tourist Satisfaction

Figure 2 proves that service quality positively and significantly influences tourist satisfaction. Therefore, the hypothesis (H2) is accepted. The finding is in line with the previous studies conducted in various tourism destinations, which also demonstrated a significant and positive relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction (Ananditya & Hidayat, 2017; Diarta & Sarjana, 2020; Intan et al., 2021; Tungga et al., 2022) Meanwhile, some studies found contradictory result that tourist satisfaction is not influenced by service quality (Zaibaf et al., 2013; Perić et al., 2020). Notwithstanding, service quality is demonstrated in various aspects that could be perceived by tourists or visitors, including both tangible and intangible services. The services provided to the tourists include clean tourism areas and garbage disposal sites, directions for various tourist facilities, clean restrooms, large parking lots, kids' playgrounds, and others. Indrayanti et al. (2020) found that cleanliness is a priority contributing to agritourism development. Therefore, Sawah Lukis should have a cleanliness standard and keep cleanliness in all areas.

The services provided at Sawah Lukis come from the places and facilities and the hospitality of staff and management. The quality of service the staff delivers is indicated by the staff's politeness, friendliness, ability to communicate effectively, and mastery of information regarding the places and facilities owned by tourist destinations. Moreover, the staff's responsiveness to tourists' problems or complaints is crucial in maintaining positive relations and ensuring a positive visitor experience. Ibrahim et al. (2015) claimed that responsiveness is one indicator of service quality affecting tourist satisfaction in the tourism industry.

The quality of services experienced by tourists has been identified as a critical factor related to tourist satisfaction (Ashoer et al., 2021). This suggests that the staff should prioritize the staff's training and coaching to ensure the delivery of effective and satisfactory services to tourists. Fatihudin and Firmansyah (2019) mentioned that staff, in this context, refers to the people managing tourism sites. These individuals serve as representatives of the company. The staff should be responsible for

fostering customer satisfaction. The staff's performance is evaluated based on the ability to make a good and pleasant experience for tourists or visitors.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

The findings of this study confirm that tourism attraction and service quality positively and significantly influence tourist satisfaction in Sawah Lukis. Moreover, the constructed model offered two key drivers that improved tourist satisfaction in Sawah Lukis agritourism. The model implies that Sawah Lukis agritourism should enhance the quantity of tourist attractiveness to expect increased satisfaction from visitors, such as adding a cultural heritage touch to traditional performance attractions that represent the uniqueness of local culture to show the originality of the tourism destination. Enhancing attractiveness can also be conducted through improving infrastructure and accommodation, thereby facilitating tourist access to tourist attractions. Similarly, the quality of service provided by Sawah Lukis agritourism directly impacts the tourist's satisfaction and evaluation of the staff's performance, providing coaching and training. This research suggests conducting further research with other comprehensive variables that are possibly significant and adding sample size in different agritourism locations. Some future recommended research can be carried out, such as the study of the development strategy of agritourism in North Sumatra toward sustainable tourism and the impact of social and economics of agritourism on rural communities. Furthermore, the Sawah Lukis Agritourism management should continuously improve and innovate to achieve tourist satisfaction. Some actions can be conducted, such as exposing the feedback and review on the online travel agency, government, stakeholder and private sector collaboration, halal tourism certification, sustainable tourism orientation, etc.

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