

DESTINATION IMAGE AS A MEDIATOR OF THE INFLUENCE OF SERVICE QUALITY ON THE DECISION TO PURCHASE DOLPHIN TOURISM SERVICES

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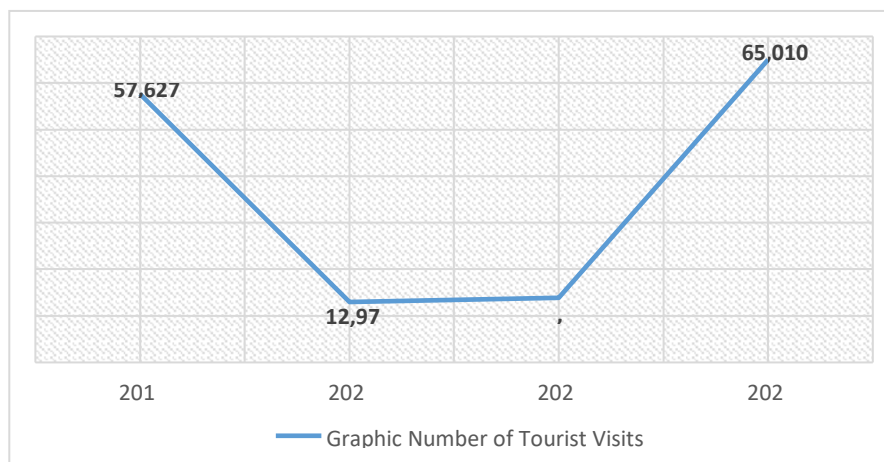
Abstract:

This study examines the role of destination image in mediating the impact of service quality on tourists' purchasing decisions for Dolphin tour packages at Lovina Beach, North Bali. Fluctuations in tourist visits from 2019 to 2022 have affected the Dolphin Tour business, with poor service quality discouraging potential customers. This research employs a quantitative approach using purposive sampling, with 150 respondents who purchased Dolphin tour packages. Data collection was conducted through direct questionnaires, and analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with Partial Least Squares (PLS) via Smart PLS 3.0. The results indicate a significant direct and indirect effect of service quality on purchasing decisions through destination image. This suggests that improving service quality enhances the destination image, ultimately increasing tourist interest in purchasing Dolphin tour packages. The findings highlight the need for Dolphin tourism service providers to enhance service quality to attract more visitors and sustain the industry.

Keywords: Service Quality, Destination Image, Purchasing Decisions, Dolphin Tourism

INTRODUCTION

The Lovina tourist area is famous for its beautiful beach at sunset. According to Purwita and Suryawan (2019), the resources needed to support ecotourism at Lovina Beach include natural resources, namely dolphin attractions and an underwater park. Based on data from the Buleleng Regency Tourism Office in Figure 1, it is known that the number of tourists visiting Lovina Beach fluctuated from 2019 to 2022 (Dinas Pariwisata Kabupaten Buleleng, 2023).



Source: Data from the Buleleng Regency Tourism Office 2023

Figure 1. Number of Tourist Visits to Lovina Beach



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The fluctuation in the number of tourists that occurred at Lovina Beach has an impact on the existing Dolphin Tour business. From the results of observations regarding the image of the Lovina destination, it is known to have beautiful underwater scenery where tourists can dive or snorkel to enjoy the coral reefs. Kotler and Keller (2016) state that image is the impression that someone feels about an object or item or organization as a whole, which will then be stored in the consumer's memory. Image is a reflection of the identity of a place or location. A good destination image will provide a positive image to tourists so that a place/location is worth visiting. According to Andreassen et al. (1997) states that the factors that form an image are advertising, public relations, physical image, and experience. The image of the Lovina destination cannot be separated from the Quality of service provided by tourism actors. According to Yudanto and Wediawati (2023), Service quality is a very important factor for every company. Service quality reflects the company's ability to meet and control customer desires. Improving the Quality of service and destination image will certainly create consumer purchasing decisions. Destination image greatly influences tourists' decisions to buy tour packages because when tourists want to enjoy a dolphin tour, the first thing they do is find out the image of the dolphin tour.

Service quality can give a good impression and be in accordance with expectations if the service received by customers is in line with their expectations, which will later lead to purchasing decisions. In making purchasing decisions various factors influence consumers. Black Box Theory, created by Philip Kotler, is the basis of purchasing decision theory. Black box theory, or Black Box Theory, is the basis of many other customer behavior models. Black Box Theory consists of three components: stimuli, consumers, and responses. According to Tugiso (2016) Purchasing Decision is an action in which customers choose between the various options they have. Purchasing Decision is the stage where consumers actually buy the product being sold. According to Nurhayati (2017) Consumers make purchasing decisions when they decide to buy a particular product. However, before making a purchase, they must do several things, such as identifying their needs and wants, searching for information, assessing available alternatives, making decisions about purchases, and acting after purchase. This is in line with research by Susnita (2020) that there is a positive and significant influence between service quality and purchasing decisions. In addition, research by Sania (2022) also states that service quality partially has a positive influence on purchasing decisions. However, this is different from research by Nazir (2014), which states that service quality has a negative influence on purchasing decisions.

Based on the results of observations of conditions in the field, it can be seen that the fluctuation of tourist visits to Lovina to see dolphin attractions is thought to occur due to the image of the destination, which is determined by the Quality of service of the dolphin tour package tourism actors, so it is necessary to conduct this research.

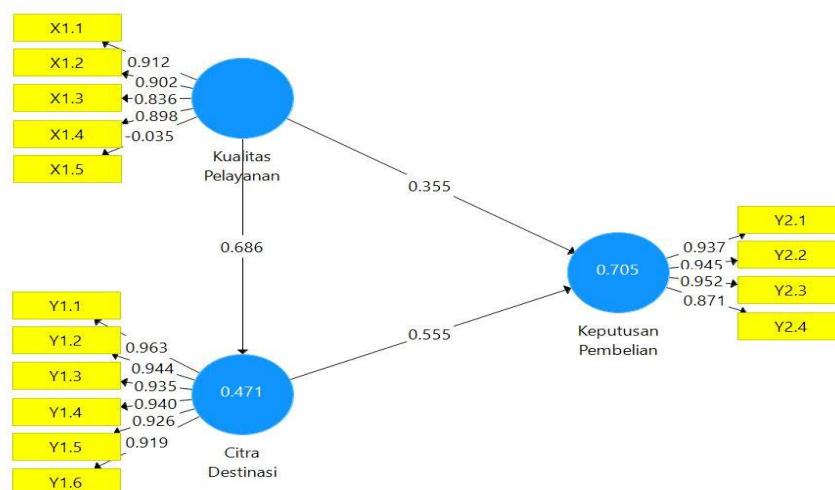
METHODS

The research location was Lovina Beach, Kalibukbuk Village, Buleleng District, Buleleng Regency, Bali. The research time was carried out from April 2024 to October 2024. This study was intended to determine the role of destination image in mediating the influence of service quality on tourists' decisions to buy Dolphin tour packages in Lovina. The subjects of this study were tourists who had purchased dolphin tour packages in Lovina. The objects of this study were service quality (X1), destination image (Y1) and purchasing decisions (Y2). In this study, the population was consumers who had taken a dolphin tour at Lovina Beach. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling with a sample size of 150 people. In this study, data collection from respondents

used a questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale. The collected data will be analyzed using structural equation analysis (SEM) with the Partial Least Square PLS alternative (component-based SEM).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The SEM model based on variance or PLS-Path Modeling model consists of an Outer model (measurement model). Based on the test results, it is known that the Cronbach alpha and composite reliability values are all above 0.7, so it can be said that the research model is reliable. The validity of the model has also been met; this can be seen from the AVE values all above 0.5, and the discriminant validity value shows a higher indicator value for each construct compared to the indicators in other constructs. Therefore, in terms of the outer model, this study is valid and reliable. After conducting the outer model test, the inner model test will be carried out. The inner model is a structural model used to predict causal relationships (cause and effect relationships) between latent variables or variables that cannot be measured directly. Based on the results of the inner model analysis, it is known that the R Square value in this study is two, namely model one (destination image) 0.471 and model two (Purchase Decision) 0.705. This indicates that the R Square value of the study is moderate and high, which means that the variables used are appropriate. In addition to the R Square value, the search for F and Q Square values was also carried out. For the F Square value, it already has a value of 0.551, which is greater than 0.35, so it can be seen that the model in this study is good. While the Q Square value is 0.531, which means the value is > 0.459. This shows that the exogenous latent variable is good (appropriate) as an explanatory variable that is able to predict its endogenous variable. Therefore, the R square, F square and Q square values are above the provisions, so the inner model of this research is valid and reliable. The description of the research model after the PLS SEM analysis process is carried out, as shown in Figure 2 below.



Source: Processed by Researchers, 2024
Figure 2. SEM Results Research Model

The results of the direct influence of variable X1 to Y1, variable X1 to Y2 and variable Y1 to Y2 as shown in Table 1 below.





Table 1. Direct Influence of Exogenous Variables on Endogenous Variables

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Destination Image -> Purchase Decision	0.555	0.558	0.078	7.103	0.000
Service Quality -> Destination Image	0.686	0.690	0.047	14.544	0.000
Service Quality -> Purchase Decision	0.355	0.352	0.077	4.611	0.000

Source: Processed by Researchers, 2024

Based on Table 1 above, it can be seen that variable X1 (Service Quality) has a positive and significant influence on variable Y1 (Destination Image), with a T-statistics value greater than the critical value ($14.544 > 1.96$), and p-values smaller than α ($0.000 < 0.050$). A positive coefficient indicates that an increase in variable X1 (service quality) can significantly increase variable Y1 (purchase decision). Variable X1 (service quality) has a positive and significant influence on variable Y1 (destination image), with a T-statistics value greater than the critical value ($4.611 > 1.96$) and p-values smaller than α ($0.000 < 0.050$). A positive coefficient indicates that an increase in variable X1 (service quality) can significantly increase variable Y1 (destination image). Variable Y1 (destination image) has a positive and significant influence on variable Y2 (purchase decision), with a T-statistics value greater than the critical value ($7.103 > 1.96$) and p-values smaller than α ($0.000 < 0.050$). A positive coefficient indicates that an increase in variable Y1 (destination image) can significantly increase variable Y2 (purchase decision).

The results of the indirect influence from variable X1 to Y2, through variable Y1 as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Direct Influence of Exogenous Variables on Endogenous Variables

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Service Quality -> Destination Image -> Purchase Decision	0.381	0.385	0.056	6.798	0.000

Source: Processed by Researchers, 2024

Reviewed from Table 2, it is known that the indirect effect between variable X1 (Service Quality) on variable Y2 (Purchase Decision) through variable Y1 (Destination Image) is significant, with T-statistics value greater than critical value ($6.798 > 1.96$), and p-values smaller than α ($0.000 < 0.05$). Based on these results, it can be stated that the destination image variable can mediate the effect of service quality on purchasing decisions (including partial mediation because the direct effect of X1 on Y2 is significant).

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, the results obtained state that service quality (X1) has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions (X2), with the majority of respondents' answers agreeing that the Quality of service provided is good. The results of the study show that the better the Quality of service provided, the more tourists' decisions to buy dolphin tour packages increase. Therefore, service quality is one of the important factors that determine consumer purchasing decisions in the service business sector. Service quality is the ability of a service business to provide maximum service to consumers. From the results of the study, it can be seen that the services provided by ship captains, such as the speed of the captain's response in maneuvering and communicating with tourists, the accuracy of administrative officers in providing



information on social media, the punctuality of ship departures, cleanliness and completeness of supporting equipment on board, guarantees of the security of goods carried by tourists and the attention given to tourist consumers have been carried out quite well by ship captains. The results of this study are in line with the statement put forward by Kotler & Keller (2019) that good service quality to consumers will stimulate consumers to make purchasing decisions. The statement is also in line with research conducted by Patmala and Fatihah (2021), which states that service quality has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions. The same research was also conducted by Sania (2022), which states that service quality has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions. The results of the study indicate that service quality provides a positive and significant influence on tourist purchasing decisions on dolphin tour packages at Lovina Beach. Dolphin tour business actors need to continue to maintain and improve their service quality based on consumer feedback. By improving service quality, dolphin tour business actors can continue to improve tourist purchasing decisions.

Based on the results of the study, it is known that service quality (X1) has a direct positive effect on destination image (Y1), with the majority of respondents assessing the destination image of Lovina Beach as Good. This indicates that the better the Quality of service provided by dolphin tour business actors, the more it will directly improve the destination image of Lovina Beach as an iconic place to see dolphin attractions. Indicators of service quality such as physical evidence, assurance, empathy, responsiveness and also attention given by dolphin tour service actors will certainly affect the destination image of Lovina Beach. Physical evidence owned by Dolphin Tours service actors such as the cleanliness of the ship, comfort of passenger seats, completeness of supporting equipment such as life jackets and protective tarpaulins so that consumers do not get hot and wet, and the prime condition of the ship's engine will give a good impression to tourists. This condition certainly causes tourists, in general, to give good and positive values to the accommodation facilities available on Lovina Beach and specifically to assess all the facilities owned by dolphin tour actors positively. The good assessment from tourists regarding the existing facilities certainly helps to improve the destination image of Lovina Beach as a place to see dolphin attractions.

The results of this study are in line with the statement put forward by Kotler & Keller (2019) that good service quality to consumers will create a good impression in the minds of consumers; this will certainly create a good image of a place. This statement is in line with research conducted by Setijadi (2020), which states that service quality has a positive and significant influence on destination image. The same research was also conducted by Dewa (2019) which stated that service quality has a positive and significant influence on destination image. The results of the study show that if the Quality of service provided by service providers is good, it will have a positive and significant influence on the image of tourist destinations on dolphin tour packages at Lovina Beach. Dolphin tour business actors need to continue to maintain and improve the Quality of their services based on consumer feedback. By improving the Quality of service, the image of the Lovina Beach tourist destination will also increase.

Based on the research results, it is known that destination image (Y1) has a positive effect on purchasing decisions (Y2). Most of the respondents who are tourists gave a good assessment of the destination image, so they decided to buy a dolphin tour package. The good image of the Lovina beach destination as one of the icons of places to see dolphin attractions certainly attracts tourists to buy a dolphin tour package. The excitement obtained during the trip to hunt for places where schools of dolphins perform their attractions will always be remembered by tourists. This will certainly be an interesting experience for tourists, so that later they will be able to tell this excitement

to other people who will eventually come back with more people to buy dolphin tour packages in the future.

The results of this study are in line with the statement put forward by Kotler & Keller (2019) that an image that is considered good and positive by consumers will create stability in consumers to buy the product; this certainly increases purchases of dolphin tour tourism service products. This statement is in line with research conducted by Timotius and Nainggolan (2023), which states that destination image has a positive and significant influence on the Decision to purchase a tour package at Ecopark Ancol. The same research was also conducted by Nafis (2020), who stated that destination image has a positive and significant influence on the Decision to visit Eling Bening tourism. The results of the study show that if the destination image of a tourist spot is good, it will have a positive and significant influence on consumer decisions to buy a product. Dolphin tour business actors need to continue to maintain and improve the image of Lovina Beach. By improving the image of Lovina Beach, the purchase of dolphin tour packages by tourists will also increase.

Based on the research results, it is known that service quality (X1) directly influences purchasing decisions (Y2), as well as destination image (Y1) influences purchasing decisions (Y2). Likewise, the significant results of the indirect influence of service quality (X1) on purchasing decisions (Y2) through destination image (Y1). This condition indicates that destination image partially mediates the influence of service quality on purchasing decisions. The Quality of service of the Java dolphin tour, which is good and satisfying, will certainly create a positive impression of Lovina Beach so that the image of Lovina Beach will be good. The good image of this destination will directly increase the purchasing Decision of tourists towards dolphin tour tourism services on Lovina beach.

The results of this study are in line with the research conducted by Mohaidin et al. (2017), which found that destination image is able to mediate the emergence of a decision to visit Penang Malaysia. The same study was also conducted by Suandari et al (2023) which stated that destination image is able to mediate the influence of service quality on the Decision to visit a tourist village in Buleleng Regency. The results of the study indicate that the destination image is able to mediate the influence of service quality on purchasing decisions. Good service quality will certainly increase the positive image of a tourist spot, thus providing a positive and significant influence on consumer decisions to buy a product. Dolphin tour business actors need to continue to maintain and improve the Quality of their services so that the image of Lovina Beach also increases. This is very important because by improving the image of Lovina Beach, the purchase of dolphin tour packages by tourists will also increase.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, discussion and interpretation that have been described in the previous chapter with reference to several theories and previous research results, the following conclusions can be drawn. 1). Service quality has a positive and significant effect on the Decision to purchase a dolphin tour package. This means that the better the Quality of service provided, the more tourists' decisions to purchase a dolphin tour package will increase. 2). Service quality has a positive and significant effect on destination image. This means that the better the service provided by dolphin tour service providers to tourists, the better the image of the Lovina Beach destination as an icon for seeing dolphins. 3). Destination image has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. This means that the better and better the image of the Lovina Beach destination as an icon for seeing dolphins, the more tourists' decisions to purchase a dolphin tour package will increase. 4). Destination image can partially mediate the influence of service quality on



purchasing decisions. This means that whether or not there is a good image of the Lovina Beach destination, with good service quality will be able to influence tourists' decisions to purchase a dolphin tour package at Lovina Beach.

The advice that can be given to the dolphin tour service providers in Bali Lovina is that they must maintain the excellent service provided to tourists, especially regarding the comfort facilities on board and the friendliness of the ship's crew. In addition, tourism operators must also be able to provide additional options besides dolphin-watching and snorkeling attractions, such as finding fishing spots. This is very important to increase the diversity of attractions provided so that tourists do not get bored easily and will return to buy dolphin tour packages when they return to North Bali.

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