
**THE EFFECT OF TOUR GUIDE KNOWLEDGE AND DESTINATION IMAGE ON
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT TRAVEL AGENCY IN MAKASSAR**

*PENGARUH PENGETAHUAN PEMANDU WISATA DAN CITRA DESTINASI TERHADAP KEPUASAN
PELANGGAN PADA BIRO PERJALANAN WISATA DI MAKASSAR*

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Abstract: As competition among tourism destinations increases, providing excellent service quality and building a positive image have become crucial in achieving tourist satisfaction. This study aims to analyze the effect of tour guide knowledge and destination image on customer satisfaction among tourists traveling from a Makassar-based travel agency to North Sulawesi. A quantitative approach was applied using multiple linear regression analysis. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to tourists who joined tour packages from PT. Vifa Holiday Indonesia. The results show that both tour guide knowledge and destination image have a positive and significant influence on customer satisfaction, with destination image having a greater impact. The study concludes that enhancing tour guide competence and strengthening the destination's image are essential strategies for improving tourist satisfaction and encouraging repeat visits.

Keywords: Tour Guide Knowledge, Destination Image, Customer Satisfaction

Abstrak: Seiring dengan meningkatnya persaingan antar destinasi wisata, penyediaan layanan berkualitas serta pembentukan citra destinasi yang positif menjadi faktor penting dalam mencapai kepuasan wisatawan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh pengetahuan pemandu wisata dan citra destinasi terhadap kepuasan pelanggan pada wisatawan yang bepergian dari agen perjalanan berbasis di Makassar ke Sulawesi Utara. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan analisis regresi linier berganda. Data dikumpulkan melalui penyebaran kuesioner kepada wisatawan yang mengikuti paket wisata dari PT. Vifa Holiday Indonesia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengetahuan pemandu wisata dan citra destinasi berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kepuasan pelanggan, dengan citra destinasi memiliki pengaruh yang lebih besar. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa peningkatan kompetensi pemandu wisata serta penguatan citra destinasi merupakan strategi penting untuk meningkatkan kepuasan wisatawan dan mendorong kunjungan ulang.

Kata Kunci: Pengetahuan Pemandu Wisata, Citra Destinasi, Kepuasan Pelanggan

INTRODUCTION

Research Background

Tourism has evolved into one of the world's largest and fastest-growing industries, serving as a major driver of global economic development. From a marketing standpoint, the tourism industry is inherently service-oriented and relies heavily on intangible experiences that visitors consume during their trips. This unique characteristic makes destination image and customer satisfaction essential marketing variables. Destination image encompasses the beliefs, perceptions, and emotions that travelers associate with a particular place—elements shaped by promotional campaigns, digital media, and personal experiences (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). A

positive image not only attracts first-time visitors but also strengthens satisfaction, loyalty, and willingness to recommend the destination to others.

Customer satisfaction, meanwhile, is a central outcome of effective tourism marketing. According to Oliver (1997), satisfaction arises when tourists' expectations are met or exceeded by their actual experiences. Positive experiences foster loyalty, repeat visitation, and favorable word-of-mouth promotion—factors that are vital for sustaining competitive advantage in a saturated tourism market. Conversely, unmet expectations resulting from poor service quality, inadequate facilities, or unprofessional staff can lead to dissatisfaction and negative online reviews that tarnish a destination's reputation (Pizam, Neumann, & Reichel, 1978).

Among the key elements influencing destination image and satisfaction is the role of tour guides. Tour guides serve as intermediaries between tourists and the destination, acting as cultural interpreters and representatives of local identity. Their knowledge, communication skills, and professionalism play a decisive role in shaping tourists' perceptions. A well-informed guide can enrich the visitor experience through storytelling, historical context, and cultural explanations that transform an ordinary trip into a meaningful journey. Their performance therefore holds strategic significance, affecting perceived value and overall attractiveness (Ap & Wong, 2001; Weiler & Ham, 2002).

These service challenges have become increasingly consequential in the digital era, where dissatisfied tourists can instantly share negative experiences through global platforms like TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, and social media. A single unfavorable review can counteract years of promotional investment, highlighting the importance of aligning marketing messages with actual service performance. Destinations that promise high-quality experiences in advertisements but fail to deliver consistent service risk eroding trust and credibility in global markets. Within this national framework, Makassar stands out as a gateway to Eastern Indonesia and a hub for travel agencies organizing tours to attractions in North Sulawesi and beyond, including Bunaken National Park and Mount Mahawu. The ability of these destinations to attract repeat visitors depends not only on their scenic beauty but also on the coherence between their marketed image and the experiences facilitated by tour guides.

A recurring issue in Makassar and North Sulawesi concerns the discrepancy between promotional imagery and on-site experiences. Tourists frequently arrive with expectations shaped by marketing campaigns promising pristine nature and well-organized tours. Yet, due to inadequate geographic knowledge among some guides—such as poor timing in scheduling visits to weather-sensitive sites like Mount Mahawu—visitors may encounter unsatisfactory experiences, including overcrowding or time mismanagement. These deficiencies weaken satisfaction levels and, ultimately, the perceived reliability of the destination brand. Understanding the interplay between tour guide knowledge, destination image, and customer satisfaction is therefore both operationally and strategically significant. This study seeks to examine the relationship between tour guide knowledge, destination image, and customer satisfaction among travel agencies in Makassar.

Research Objectives

The study's goals are as follows, which are determined by the research problems:

1. To examine the combined influence of tour guide knowledge and destination image on customer satisfaction at travel agency in Makassar
2. To find out how tour guide knowledge influence customer satisfaction at travel agency in Makassar
3. To find out how destination image influence customer satisfaction at travel agency in Makassar

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing

Marketing provides the foundation for understanding how organizations create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In the tourism industry, marketing is not limited to promoting destinations but also encompasses the entire process of shaping visitor perceptions, delivering experiences, and ensuring customer satisfaction. Tourism marketing emphasizes intangible services where the customer's experience is the core product.

Tour Guide

A tour guide is a person who has a certificate of passing the professional examination from an official tourism institution or agency and has a badge, thus entitled to guide individual or group travelers in one or more languages to provide explanations about various objects, including culture, natural wealth, and the life of the nation's society

(Suyitno, 2005:1). According to Ap & Wong (2001), tour guides act as a liaison between the tourism system and tourists in carrying out daily operations, bridging informations, time, and visitor expectation.

Destination Image

According to Echtner & Ritchie (1991), destination image is a complex and multi-dimensional construct that consists of both cognitive and affective components. Cognitive includes beliefs and knowledge about a destination and affective includes feelings and emotions associated with a destination. Baloglu & McCleary (1999) broke down destination image into two main components which are cognitive and affective. The cognitive image refers to the perception, beliefs, and knowledge that individuals hold about the attribute of a destination while the affective image involves the emotional responses or feelings that a person associates with the destination. These emotions can be excitement, boredom, or relaxation.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction serves as one of the most important indicators of whether service delivery is being executed effectively. Kotler & Keller (2016) describe satisfaction as a customer's emotional reaction when the actual performance of a product or service meets or even surpasses what was expected. Zeithaml, Bitneir, & Greimleir (2003) also emphasize that customer satisfaction depends on how well a service meets the specific expectations and needs of the individual.

Previous Studies

Huete-Alcocer & Lopez (2019) focused on a heritage destination of an archaeological nature, and aims to analyse the destination image formation as well as the influence of this image on tourist satisfaction. The data were collected by means of a closed-ended questionnaire administered to tourists aged 18 and over, and were analysed using P.L.S.-S.E.M. methodology. The results show that the affective component is more relevant than the cognitive in the image of this destination formed by the tourist.

Gesimba, Nyaga, & Kithinji (2023) assessed the influence of tour guides' communication skills on international tourists' satisfaction at the Nairobi tourist circuit, Kenya. The job characteristics theory supported the study. The study adopted a descriptive research design and used the Cochran formula to obtain the study's sample size of 278 respondents from the target population of 2851 international tourists visiting the Nairobi circuit. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data. The findings illustrated that tour guide communication skills had a strong statistically significant relation with international tourist satisfaction at the Nairobi tourist circuit.

Khuong & Phuong (2017) examined the effects of destination image, perceived value and perceived service quality, which were believed to have direct relationships with individuals' perception, on tourist destination satisfaction and WOM behaviour, in order to further suggest recommendations for tourism industry. Quantitative approach was mainly applied, using a questionnaire which was directly delivered to 1,673 foreign tourists in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), Vietnam. The results showed that destination image, perceived value, and perceived service quality were significantly correlated and had both directly and indirectly effects on WOM through the mediation of destination satisfaction.

Conceptual Framework

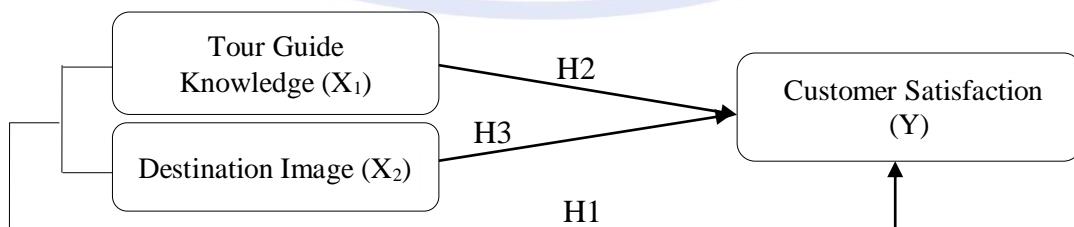


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: Literature Review

Research Hypothesis

H1: Tour Guide Knowledge and Destination Image influence Customer Satisfaction at Travel Agency in Makassar

H2: Tour Guide Knowledge influence Customer Satisfaction at Travel Agency in Makassar

H3: Destination Image influence Customer Satisfaction at Travel Agency in Makassar

Research Approach

This research is a quantitative research method. It involves collecting data through structured surveys, experiments, or observations and analyzing the data using statistical techniques (Creswell, 2012).

Population, Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The population in this research consists of tourists traveling from travel agents in Makassar to North Sulawesi. The sample in this study aims to collect responses from 100 participants who will complete the questionnaire. The ideal respondents for this research are tourists who travel to North Sulawesi through travel agents based in Makassar. The sample size was determined using the Cochran Formula with the minimum required sample is 97 respondents, however, 100 respondents is the final sample. The sampling technique used in this research is purposive sampling, based on specific criteria—namely, tourists who visited North Sulawesi through travel agents in Makassar.

Type of Data and Data Source

This study utilizes both primary and secondary data as its main sources. The primary data were gathered using questionnaires, which served as research instruments consisting of a series of questions designed to collect relevant information. Secondary data were collected from journals, books, and previous research, providing relevant information or evidence in the form of documented records, reports, or archival materials, whether published or unpublished.

Data Collection Method

This study employed quantitative data collected from questionnaires which were distributed via Google Forms. These questionnaires were distributed to the sample population that met the specified criteria.

Operational Definition and Indicator of Research Variable

Table 1. Operational Definition and Indicator of Research Variable

Variable	Definition	Indicator
Tour Guide Knowledge (X1)	A tour guide is responsible for leading visitors, providing information, ensuring safety, and enhancing the overall travel experience.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Content Knowledge Communication Skills Interpersonal Skills Geographical Knowledge Attitude Problem-Solving Ability <p>(Ap & Wong, 2001)</p>
Destination Image (X2)	Destination image is a complex and multidimensional construct that consists of both cognitive and affective components. The cognitive component includes beliefs and knowledge about a destination, while the affective component involves feelings and emotions associated with the destination.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cognitive Destination Image Affective Destination Image Cultural Destination Image <p>(Baloglu & McCleary, 1999)</p>
Customer Satisfaction (Y)	Customer satisfaction is the result of a comparison between expectations and actual experiences. Tourists feel satisfied when their experiences meet or exceed their expectations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Experience Quality Emotional Response Convenience Object Quality <p>(Tjiptono, 2005)</p>

Testing of Research Instruments

Validity and Reliability Tests

The purpose of the validity test is to determine the extent to which the data collection instrument (questionnaire) can be considered accurate and appropriate (Sugiyono, 2019:122). The validity test employed the item-total correlation technique, with the following decision criteria: if the calculated r value (r_{count}) is greater than

the table r value (r_{table}), the questionnaire is considered valid; conversely, if $r_{count} < r_{table}$, the questionnaire is considered invalid

Reliability testing is used to evaluate the consistency, accuracy, and dependability of the questionnaire indicators (Sugiyono, 2019:121). A research instrument must be both valid and reliable. The reliability test in this study used Cronbach's Alpha coefficient method, with the following decision criteria: if the Cronbach's Alpha value (α) ≥ 0.60 , the questionnaire instrument is considered reliable; if $\alpha \leq 0.60$, the instrument is considered unreliable.

Data Analysis Method

Test of Classical Assumptions

Normality Test

The normality test aims to determine whether the data distribution follows a normal distribution pattern (Ghozali, 2019:151). This test ensures that the residuals or data variables are approximately normally distributed, which is a prerequisite for regression analysis.

Multicollinearity Test

The presence of multicollinearity indicates a linear relationship among independent variables. According to Ghozali (2019:71), the purpose of this test is to determine whether there is a significant correlation among the independent variables in the regression model. A good regression model should be free from multicollinearity.

Heteroscedasticity Test

According to Ghozali (2019:134), the purpose of the heteroscedasticity test is to identify the existence of unequal variance in the residuals of a regression model. If the variance of the residuals remains constant, the condition is known as homoscedasticity. Conversely, if the residual variance varies, it indicates heteroscedasticity.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

As explained by Sugiyono (2019:66), multiple linear regression analysis can be used to predict how two or more independent variables influence a single dependent variable. The purpose of this research is to determine whether two independent variables and one dependent variable are correlated. The following equation was used in this analysis:

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + e$$

Where:

- Y = Customer Satisfaction
- X₁ = Tour Guide Knowledge
- X₂ = Destination Image
- a = Constant
- b₁, b₂ = Regression Coefficients
- e = Error Term

Coefficient of Determination (R²)

According to Sugiyono (2019), One way to measure how much variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables is by using the coefficient of determination (R²). The value of R ranges from 0 to 1, where a value closer to 1 signifies that the independent variables have a strong ability to predict changes in the dependent variable.

Hypothesis Testing

T-Test (Partially) and F-Test (Simultaneously)

The t-test is used to evaluate whether each independent variable—tour guide knowledge and destination image—has a significant effect on the dependent variable, customer satisfaction.

The F-test is conducted to assess whether the combination of independent variables collectively influences the dependent variable. In this study, the F-test is used to determine whether tour guide knowledge and destination image, as independent variables, have a simultaneous and significant effect on customer satisfaction, the dependent variable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION**Research Result****Validity and Reliability Tests****Table 2. Validity Test Result**

Variable	Indicator	Validity			Result
		r-count	r-table	Sig	
Tour Guide Knowledge (X ₁)	X1.1.1	0,692	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	X1.1.2	0,646	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	X1.1.3	0,723	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	X1.2.1	0,667	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	X1.2.2	0,704	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	X1.2.3	0,772	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	X1.3.1	0,687	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	X1.3.2	0,771	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	X1.3.3	0,698	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	X1.4.1	0,675	0,1946	0,000	Valid
Destination Image (X ₂)	X1.4.2	0,651	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	X1.4.3	0,667	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	X2.1.1	0,769	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	X2.1.2	0,775	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	X2.1.3	0,784	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	X2.2.1	0,712	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	X2.2.2	0,789	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	X2.2.3	0,787	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	Y.1.1	0,802	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	Y.1.2	0,74	0,1946	0,000	Valid
Customer Satisfaction (Y)	Y.1.3	0,64	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	Y.2.1	0,801	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	Y.2.2	0,77	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	Y.2.3	0,818	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	Y.3.1	0,721	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	Y.3.2	0,703	0,1946	0,000	Valid
	Y.3.3	0,716	0,1946	0,000	Valid

Source: Data Processed by SPSS, 2025

Based on the data processing results, all indicators of the three research variables met the validity requirements. Each item had an r-count value higher than 0.1946 and a significance value of 0.000, below the 0.05 threshold. This confirms that all questionnaire items are valid, well-designed, and clearly understood by respondents.

Table 3. Reliability Test Result

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Results
Tour Guide Knowledge (X ₁)	0,923	Reliable
Destination Image (X ₂)	0,912	Reliable
Customer Satisfaction (Y)	0,921	Reliable

Source: Data Processed by SPSS, 2025

Based on the data processing results, all three research variables achieved Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70 Tour Guide Knowledge (X₁) at 0.923, Destination Image (X₂) at 0.912, and Customer Satisfaction (Y) at 0.921 indicating high reliability. This shows that the instruments consistently measured the intended constructs and that respondents interpreted the questionnaire items consistently.

Test of Classical Assumptions**Normality Test**

Table 4. Normality Test Result

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		
		Unstandardized Residual
N		100
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	4.999184
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.139
	Positive	.085
	Negative	-.139
Test Statistic		.138
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.181 ^c

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

d. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

Source: Data Processed by SPSS, 2025

Based on the processed data, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test produced a significance value of 0.181, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates that the residuals are normally distributed, fulfilling the normality assumption of the regression model.

Multicollinearity Test

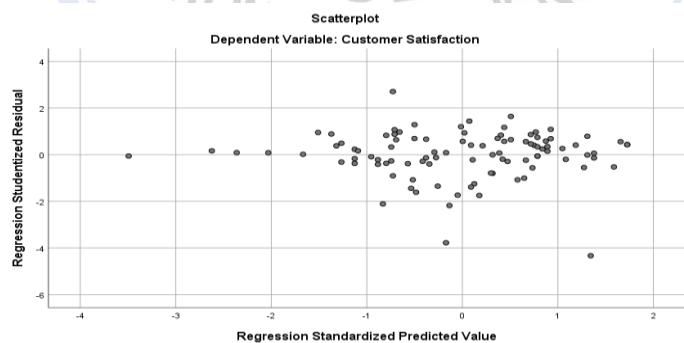
Table 5. Multicollinearity Test Result

Model	Collinearity Statistics		Status
	Tolerance	VIF	
Tour Guide Knowledge (X ₁)	0.381	2.627	No Multicollinearity
Destination Image (X ₂)	0.381	2.627	No Multicollinearity

Source: Data Processed by SPSS, 2025

Based on the results in Table 5, the Tolerance values for Tour Guide Knowledge (X₁) and Destination Image (X₂) are both 0.381, above the 0.10 threshold, while their VIF values are 2.627, below 10. This indicates no multicollinearity, meaning both variables are distinct and contribute uniquely to predicting customer satisfaction, making the regression results stable and reliable.

Heteroscedasticity Test

**Figure 2. Heteroscedasticity Test Result**

Source: Data Processed by SPSS, 2025

Based on the scatterplot in Figure 2, the data points are randomly distributed and show no specific pattern. The points are spread both above and below the zero axis, indicating that the regression model does not exhibit heteroscedasticity.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis**Table 6. Multiple Linear Regression Result**

Model	Coefficients ^a				
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	0.898	2.790		0.322	0.748
Tour Guide Knowledge	0.317	0.069	0.363	4.588	0.000
Destination Image	0.794	0.112	0.562	7.109	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

Source: Data Processed by SPSS, 2025

The regression results yield the equation:

$$Y = -0.898 + 0.317X_1 + 0.749X_2 + e$$

The interpretation of the regression equation is as follows:

1. Constant Value (-0.898) indicates that if Tour Guide Knowledge (X_1) and Destination Image (X_2) are assumed to be zero, the baseline level of Customer Satisfaction (Y) would be -0.898.
2. Tour Guide Knowledge (X_1) = 0.317 with a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05) shows that a one-unit increase in Tour Guide Knowledge increases Customer Satisfaction by 0.317 units.
3. Destination Image (X_2) = 0.749 and significant at 0.000 (< 0.05) indicate that a one-unit increase in Destination Image raises Customer Satisfaction by 0.749 units.

Correlation Coefficient (R) and Coefficient Of Determination (R^2)**Table 7. R and R2 Result**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.877 ^a	0.769	0.764	5.05046

Source: Data Processed by SPSS, 2025

Based on the results presented in Table 7, the correlation coefficient (R) is 0.877, indicating a strong relationship between Tour Guide Knowledge and Destination Image with Customer Satisfaction. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.769, meaning that 76.9% of the variation in customer satisfaction can be explained by tour guide knowledge and destination image. Meanwhile, the remaining 23.1% is influenced by other factors not included in this study, such as service quality, price perception, cultural familiarity, and personal preferences of tourists.

Hypothesis Testing**F-Test****Table 8. F-Test Result**

ANOVA ^a						
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	2	4117.559	161.428	.000 ^b	
	Residual	97	25.507			
	Total	99				

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Tour Guide Knowledge, Destination Image

Source: Data Processed by SPSS, 2025

Based on the ANOVA test results in Table 8, the calculated F-value is 161.428 with a significance level of 0.000, well below 0.05, indicating that the regression model is statistically significant. This means Tour Guide Knowledge and Destination Image jointly have a significant effect on Customer Satisfaction. The finding highlights that both factors play vital roles in shaping tourist satisfaction.

T-Test

Based on the results presented in Table 6, the following interpretations can be made:

1. The coefficient for Tour Guide Knowledge is 0.317, with a t-value of 4.588 and a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05). This result indicates that Tour Guide Knowledge has a positive and significant effect on Customer Satisfaction. This implies that the more knowledgeable a tour guide is about destinations, culture, and services, the higher the level of satisfaction experienced by tourists.
2. The coefficient for Destination Image is 0.794, with a t-value of 7.109 and a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05). This result shows that Destination Image also has a positive and significant effect on Customer Satisfaction. This means that the better the image and perception of the destination in the minds of tourists, the higher their level of satisfaction.

Discussion

The Influence of Tour Guide Knowledge and Destination Image on Customer Satisfaction at Travel Agency in Makassar

The combined influence of tour guide knowledge and destination image on customer satisfaction shows that these two factors work together to enhance the overall tourist experience. A professional tour guide ensures high service quality, while a strong destination image creates emotional appeal, together they reinforce satisfaction and encourage loyalty. The reason why tour guide knowledge and destination image together lead to customer satisfaction is that they complement one another: destination image builds positive expectations, and the tour guide's knowledge fulfills them through high-quality, meaningful service. This alignment between perception and experience results in satisfied tourists who are more likely to revisit and recommend the destination to others.

The Influence of Tour Guide Knowledge On Customer Satisfaction

Tour guide knowledge contributes to emotional satisfaction, as tourists tend to feel more valued and respected when the guide demonstrates expertise and professionalism. According to Weiler and Ham (2002), effective guides can manage group dynamics, time, and environmental factors, ensuring that the entire journey runs smoothly. Thus, the more knowledgeable and skilled the guide is, the greater the likelihood that tourists will perceive their trip as rewarding and fulfilling. The results aligns with Gesimba et al. (2023) that tour guides' communication abilities significantly improve international tourists' satisfaction, and Chan et al. (2013) that tour guiding service as the most influential factor affecting overall satisfaction in package tours. Therefore, the reason why tour guide knowledge leads to customer satisfaction is because it directly influences the quality, credibility, and enjoyment of the travel experience, fulfilling both the cognitive and affective expectations of tourists.

The Influence of Destination Image On Customer Satisfaction

Tourists' perceptions and expectations prior to visiting a destination significantly influence how they evaluate their experiences afterward. A positive image encompassing perceptions of beauty, safety, friendliness, and accessibility creates favorable expectations. When the actual experience meets or exceeds these expectations, tourists experience satisfaction. Moreover, when tourists hold positive beliefs (for example, perceiving a destination as beautiful and welcoming) and experience positive emotions during their visit, they form an overall favorable impression that enhances satisfaction. Empirical evidence supports this relationship such as Chi & Qu (2008) that found a favorable destination image not only increases satisfaction but also strengthens tourists' intentions to revisit and recommend the destination to others. A strong destination image serves as a psychological assurance that the travel experience will meet or exceed expectations, thereby elevating satisfaction levels. Therefore, destination image influences customer satisfaction because it shapes tourists' expectations and emotional responses. When marketing strategies, online representations, and personal experiences collectively portray a destination in a positive light, tourists are psychologically primed to perceive their trip as enjoyable and rewarding—ultimately leading to higher levels of satisfaction during and after their visit.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

Based on the results of the data analysis and discussion presented in the previous chapter, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Tour Guide Knowledge and Destination Image simultaneously have a significant effect on Customer Satisfaction. This finding shows that both variables, when combined, contribute substantially to shaping tourists' satisfaction with travel agencies in Makassar.

2. Tour Guide Knowledge has a positive and significant effect on Customer Satisfaction. This implies that well-informed and competent tour guides can enhance the overall tourist experience, leading to higher levels of satisfaction.
3. Destination Image has the strongest positive effect on Customer Satisfaction compared to Tour Guide Knowledge. A favorable perception of North Sulawesi and its surrounding destinations significantly enhances tourist satisfaction.

Recommendation

1. Travel agencies should strengthen both the competence of tour guides and the branding of destinations. Training programs focusing on communication, cultural interpretation, and hospitality should be prioritized. Simultaneously, collaboration with local tourism authorities is necessary to promote North Sulawesi as a safe, attractive, and culturally rich destination.
2. Tour guides are encouraged to continuously enhance their knowledge of local culture, tourist attractions, and service delivery. This ongoing development enables them to offer meaningful and memorable experiences for tourists, thereby increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty.
3. Tourism Stakeholders such as local governments, tourism boards, and local communities should collaborate to maintain and strengthen the positive image of North Sulawesi. These efforts may include improving infrastructure, preserving cultural assets, ensuring tourist safety, and implementing sustainable tourism practices.
4. Future studies should consider incorporating additional variables such as service quality, price perception, or cultural authenticity to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of customer satisfaction, conduct comparative studies across different regions or countries to examine whether the influence of tour guide knowledge and destination image remains consistent in various tourism contexts and/or use qualitative methods such as interviews or focus group discussions could complement quantitative results by offering deeper insights into the emotional and experiential dimensions of customer satisfaction.

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