

INCREASING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION THROUGH RURAL TOURISM'S QUALITY SERVICE, EXPERIENCE, AND OFFERED VALUE

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ABSTRACT: Rural-based tourism is one of the potential contributors to the development of the rural economy. Therefore, an enhanced tourism value is critical to create visitor satisfaction during the trips. This study aims to empirically investigate tourist satisfaction by the rural tourism services quality and tourism experience, mediated by the offered value. This research analyzes 123 visitor responses, by constructing a Structural-Equation-Modeling with WarpPLS. The results of the research show that rural tourism service quality influences the customers' value and satisfaction. The tailored experience enhances the offered value. Building a strong value proposal embedded in the tourism brings positive result to tourist' satisfaction as well as mediate the effects of service quality and experience in it. The management should pursue a specified offered values that can be easily realized and accepted from the perspective of visitors.

Keywords: Rural; Tourism; Satisfaction; Service Quality; Experience; Value

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INTRODUCTION

There are potential opportunities for the tourism sector in Indonesia, especially tourism emanated from the village initiatives. The growth of village tourism or rural tourism is significant and tends to propel in recent years. According to BPS (Indonesian Bureau of Statistics), "of the 1,734 tourist villages in Indonesian archipelago, Java and Bali occupies the highest position with 857 tourist villages, followed by Sumatra with 355 villages, Nusa Tenggara 189 villages, Kalimantan 117 villages. In addition, Sulawesi Island also recorded 119 tourist villages, Papua 74 villages, and Maluku 23 villages (Untung, 2018)

This promising growth must certainly be welcomed by rural tourism operators as an opportunity. Furthermore, the needs for recreation, leisure, entertainment and new experiences sometimes come as a priority in their life (Hidayat, 2020). This phenomenon increases the consumption for entertainment and accommodation even comparable to household expenditure. This change can be represented by the increasing growth in public spending on restaurants and hotels (Kusnandar, 2022). Changes in society over consumption, need to be used as an opportunity to manage and market tourist destinations, designing all tourist resources, desires and expectations of visitors. For this reason, a strategy that emphasizes the sustainability of visitor-oriented tourist destinations is needed. This orientation is that the destination must satisfy visitors, provide a good experience, high value as well as quality services while still paying attention to the factors of health, security, and cleanness (Saepuloh et al., 2022).

Visitor satisfaction is an essential factor in the sustainability of rural tourism, so many studies have examined this topic; after all, the success of a tour is one important measure of visitor satisfaction. Many satisfaction-related studies in the last five years have been conducted on rural tourism associated with visitor satisfaction such as Alves et al., (2019); Gajić et al., (2020); X. Chi *et al.*, (2020); Bajrami *et al.*, (2020); Marković and Šebrek, (2020); Al-Laymoun et al., (2020); Nugraha et al., 2021.; Ryglová et al., (2017); S. Y. Chi *et al.*, (2019); Lin et al., (2022); Shen et al., (2020); Bajrami et al., (2020); Tang et al., (2022); Liang, 2021; Jia et al., (2022).

Rural tourism satisfaction is an activity measured the presentation of accommodation; infrastructure; perceived price-quality; service quality; perceived value and experience. It is a comparison of visitors' prior expectations with the experience they receive from the visit (Chin et al., 2022). Therefore, many antecedents are important in influencing rural tourism satisfaction such as rural tourism service quality (Gajić et al., 2020; Chi et al., 2020; Bajrami et al., 2020; Marković and Šebrek, 2020; Al-Laymoun et al., 2020); rural tourism experiences (Nugraha et al., 2021; Ryglová et al., 2017; Chi et al., 2019; Lin et al., 2022), and the value obtained by visitors during visits to rural tourism (Shen et al., 2020; Bajrami et al., 2020; Tang et al., 2022; Liang, 2021; Jia et al., 2022).

Many of these studies show positive and significant stimulants to the satisfaction of visitors to a tourism place, however, a few studies still show inconsistencies in results, for example, the quality of rural tourism services does not affect on tourist visitor satisfaction (Chi et al., 2020), and perceived value

(Jia et al., 2022). Therefore, this research aims to clarify this gap and contribute to the lack of discussion in the context of rural tourism in Indonesia

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Rural Tourism

The World Trade Organization defines rural tourism as a tourism product "that provides visitors with personalized contact, a sense of the rural physical and human environment and as far as possible, allows for participation in the activities, traditions, and lifestyles of local people (Aref and Gill, 2009). Nair et al., (2015) summarized several dimensions of rural tourism which include location characteristics, purpose of visit, attractions or activities, scale of operation and sustainability.

Rural tourism has emerged as one of the potential economic contributors to the country's economic growth. So far, tourism stakeholders are aware of the competitiveness of rural tourism destinations where development must be aligned to achieve competitive advantage, especially nowadays with the support of village funds; as stated by Chin et al., (2017) the community believes that economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts significantly contribute to the development of rural tourism competitive advantage. In addition, community knowledge and support for tourism greatly influence the development of competitive advantage of rural tourism destinations. In fact, rural tourism has been recognized as an important tool for improving local welfare and living standards (Aliman et al., 2016).

Rural Tourism Satisfaction

Creating visitor satisfaction in rural tourism is critical because it potentially becomes the sole source of income for villagers. If visitors are not satisfied with their tourism experience, they will leave, and reduce the economic income of the village. Conversely, if visitors are satisfied with the tourism experience, it can improve the reputation, and attract more visitors to visit the village. It can be interpreted as a comparison between expectations and destination image and experience (Travar et al., 2022). It is imperative for villages to build excellent service quality for better satisfaction in accordance with Uzir et al., (2021). Other study also provide support for the importance of visitor satisfaction such as Damanik and Yusuf (2022) as a reflection of expectations, and the realized services from the perceived value. The effect of perceived value is also supported by Uzir et al., (2021). Other research defines visitor satisfaction as a product or service experience obtained by comparing expected and perceived performance (Paulose and Shakeel, 2022).

Rural Tourism Service Quality

For rural tourism managers, the quality of services provided to visitors is a reflection of the tourism. Good service quality can increase visitor satisfaction. Likewise, good service quality will provide high value, where visitors feel that

the sacrifice to visit the tourist attractions is lower than what is obtained (Marković & Šebrek, 2020). Al-Laymoun et al., (2020) explain service quality as what consumers get from a product along with the amount they are willing to pay for the product. Azhar et al., (2018) propose service quality as an attitude towards the expectations and performance of the services offered.

In the competitive tourism industry, providing good service quality can be an important differentiation factor from their competitors. Previous studies have provided strong support for the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction such as Azhar et al., (2018); X. Chi et al., (2020); Keshavarz and Jamshidi, (2018); Özkan et al., (2020); Uzir et al., (2021). Service quality can also be a stimulation for the value perceived by visitors, that high service quality positively contributes to increasing the value perceived by customers. High service quality can include various aspects, such as speed, order accuracy, service responsiveness, friendliness of service personnel, and service reliability. When customers perceive that the service they receive meets or exceeds their expectations in terms of these aspects, they tend to consider that the service has a higher value, (Keshavarz and Jamshidi, 2018; Özkan et al., 2020; Uzir et al., 2021). This conversation provides the establishment of hypotheses.

H1. Rural tourism quality service has a positive and significant effect on rural tourism value.

H2. Rural tourism quality service has a positive and significant effect on rural tourism satisfaction.

Rural Tourism Experience

A rural tourism experience involves a visit or tourist activity in a rural area that has certain attractions and uniqueness, such as cultural heritage, natural beauty, or traditional activities. It provides visitors with the opportunity to gain a deeper insight into local life and culture, interact with local people, and enjoy a different atmosphere from the urban environment. Nugraha et al., (2021) quote it as an activity that evokes memories while creating memorable new experiences. This is also expressed by Kim et al., (2012) stating experience as a visitor's assessment of a travel event that is remembered and remembered after the event occurs. Prebensen et al., (2013) state customer experience as the result of internal customer assessments and responses due to interactions carried out both directly and indirectly. In the context of tourism, experience is a manifestation of customer involvement at different levels, both emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual.

The visitor experience at a tourist destination is the visitor's experience after visiting a particular tourist destination. This experience is highly dependent on consumer needs, including functional needs that are met by purchasing products and services, as well as emotional needs that are met from tourist destinations. Varshneya et al., (2017) provide a conclusion in customer experience research, that experience is usually related to a value. The value in the experience includes product value, and service. Konecnik and Gartner, (2007) state that the problem in identifying the experience of a tourist destination is to look at the mix between image attributes and quality attributes. Boo et al., (2009) combine destination

brand image and destination brand quality as a shaper of the destination brand experience with several indicators including; matching tourist destinations with visitors' personalities, appreciation for visits to tourist destinations by visitors' friends, destination images that match visitors' self-image, tourist destinations can provide quality experiences and tourist destinations can perform better than other similar tourist destinations. This relationship proposition is supported by Bora et al., (2018);Haji et al., (2021); Ghorbanzadeh et al., (2021)

The experience of traveling in rural tourism is also important for visitors because it provides a different and valuable experience, which they cannot experience in their daily lives. These experiences provide satisfaction and happiness, increase understanding and knowledge, and finally broaden the tourists' perspectives and connections with different cultures. Previous studies support the nexus, e.g., Aşan et al., (2020); Haji et al., (2021); Keshavarz and Jamshidi, (2018); Özkan et al., (2020), providing the hypothesis formulation.

H3. Rural tourism experience has a positive and significant effect on rural tourism value.

H4. Rural tourism experience has a positive and significant effect on rural tourism satisfaction.

Rural Tourism Value

Visitors' perceived value in rural tourism refers to individuals' perceptions of the benefits, satisfaction or significance they derive from their rural tourism experience. It can be subjective and vary between individuals, depending on their preferences, expectations and purposes for travel.

Value is important to visitors in the context of rural tourism because visitors have different needs and expectations when traveling. Zeithaml, (1988) conducted an exploratory study related to the definition of perceived value, as 1) the low price, 2) desire in a product offerings, (3) the quality/price, and (4) value/sacrifices. Williams and Soutar (2009) divide it from the economic value, social value, novelty (epistemic) value, and emotional value. Williams et al. (2017) posits it as the functional value, price value for money, emotional value, social value, and novelty value. Yang et al. (2016) identified five measures of a value, namely quality value, emotional value, social value, price value, and experiential value.

In the context of the mediating role, the variable value perceived by rural tourism value can serve as a link between the quality of rural tourism services. Good rural tourism service quality can create perceived value for visitors, such as positive experiences, authenticity of local culture, natural beauty, opportunities to interact with local people, or affordable prices to visit rural tourism. This argument for the mediating role is supported by studies such as Aşan et al., (2020); Haji et al., (2021); Keshavarz and Jamshidi, (2018); Özkan et al., (2020)

The rural tourism value by visitors acts as a link between perceived experience and rural tourism satisfaction. When visitors have positive experiences resulting from perceived values, they tend to feel more satisfied with their visit to rural tourism. These visitor-perceived values can play an important role in explaining the relationship between perceived experience and rural tourism visitor satisfaction. The direct effect of perceived experience on rural

tourism satisfaction may diminish or even disappear when the variable of perceived value by visitors is included in the analysis model (see Figure 1). This argument is supported by Sukaris et al., (2020); Ali et al., (2018); Ghorbanzadeh et al., (2021); Haji et al., (2021); Mukerjee, (2018) for the hypothesis proposals.

- H5. Rural tourism value has a positive and significant effect on rural tourism satisfaction
- H6. Rural tourism value can mediate the effect of rural tourism quality service on rural tourism satisfaction
- H7. Rural tourism value can mediate the effect of rural tourism experience on rural tourism satisfaction

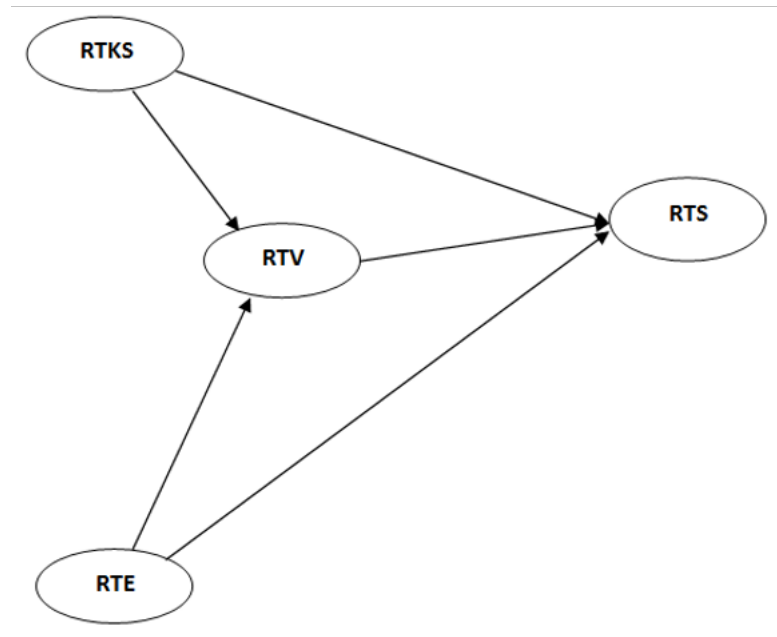


Figure 1. Research Model

Note: RTKS: rural tourism quality service, RTE: rural tourism experience, RTV: rural tourism value, RTS: rural tourism satisfaction

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a quantitative approach, carried out to build and test hypotheses empirically. This research seeks explanations in the form of causal relationships between several concepts or several variables. This study takes place in Gresik, East Java, Indonesia. The researchers used an accidental sample approach, for a better response collection. We visit several travel tours, and request them to help in the survey distribution. The tours ask the visitors to fill the questionnaires. The research instrument in this study uses a measuring instrument in the form of a questionnaire as a primary data collection.

This study employs the validity and reliability test. The analysis technique executes the partial-least-square structural-equation modelling (PLS-SEM) by using the WarpPLS software. The result follows the presentation of outer model, i.e., convergent validity, discriminant validity, and collinearity. The inner model will construct the path analysis for hypothesis investigation. In this study, hypothesis testing examines the *p*-value in predicting direct and indirect effects. The decision-making criteria involved comparing the *t*-value with a critical value of 1.96 and a significance probability (*p*) under 0.05.

RESULTS

Characteristics of Respondents

The research conducted with respondents filling the questionnaires as much as 123. The respondents consist of 40 male with a percentage of 32.5%, and the female as much as 83 people of 67.5%. The age spans from the 19-23 as many as 117 or 95 percent, with the least age is 24-50 years by 5%. The family constructs from 57 respondents or 46.3%. While the smallest percentage is traveling with coworkers which is only 4.1 percent. They mostly visit beach tourism in rural areas by 72.4 percent, followed by rural education tourism as much as 12.2 percent.

Validity and Reliability Testing

Test the accuracy of the measurement scale or the validity of the data is done on the question items on RTKS: rural tourism quality service, RTE: rural tourism experience, RTV: rural tourism value, RTS: rural tourism satisfaction. The measurement scale accuracy test carried out in this study includes validity and reliability tests as in Table 1.

Table 1. Validity Testing Results

Items	RTKS	RTE	RTV	RTS	SE	P value
X1.1	0,488	0.074	-0.523	0,299	0.099	<0.001
X1.2	0,471	-0.082	0.091	-0.034	0.089	<0.001
X1.3	0,541	0,132	-0.269	0,189	0.088	<0.001
X1.4	0,541	-0.107	-0.123	0,108	0.096	<0.001
X1.5	0,564	0.009	0,143	-0.316	0.071	<0.001
X1.6	0,565	-0.073	0,185	-0.154	0.072	<0.001
X1.7	0,513	-0.059	0.090	-0.144	0.098	<0.001
X1.8	0,517	0.046	0,149	-0.168	0.079	<0.001
X2.1	0,220	0,525	0,106	-0.206	0,096	<0.001
X2.2	-0.035	0,601	-0.138	0,219	0,074	<0.001
X2.3	-0.131	0,599	-0.094	0,138	0,073	<0.001
X2.4	-0.139	0,484	0,085	-0.414	0,085	<0.001
Z1.1	-0.129	0.084	0,592	0,096	0,086	<0.001
Z1.2	-0.113	-0.040	0,617	-0.000	0,073	<0.001
Z1.3	0,169	-0.148	0,587	-0.081	0,070	<0.001
Z1.4	0.021	-0.221	0,610	0,100	0,083	<0.001
Z1.5	-0.018	0,249	0,549	-0.222	0,078	<0.001
Y1.1	0,219	-0.126	-0.469	0,571	0,070	<0.001
Y1.2	0,293	-0.084	-0.266	0,529	0,096	<0.001
Y1.3	-0.239	0,132	-0.068	0,592	0,068	<0.001
Y1.4	-0.375	0.074	0,351	0,563	0,071	<0.001
Y1.5	-0.085	-0.063	0,191	0,597	0,092	<0.001

The results of the first stage of validity testing show that all indicators have values above 0.5, but there are two items with values below 0.5, namely X2.4, and they are removed from the measure. For the other items or indicators used to measure each latent variable, they can measure what they intend to measure or have satisfied convergent validity. Similarly, the results of the

comparison between loading and cross-loading show that the loading values of all factors or indicators are higher than their cross-loading values, indicating that discriminant validity is met. This result is consistent with the opinion of (Hair et al., 2014). Measurement accuracy is a requirement that must be met for further testing to be conducted. Accuracy of the scale indicates that each formulated indicator has the same underlying factor. The questionnaire items can measure the constructs being measured, with item values having correlations above 0.50.

After the validity assessment, the next examination focuses on reliability. The composite reliability test is used to evaluate the reliability of indicators that measure variables. The results show that all indicators exceed the threshold of 0.7, thus meeting the requirements to receive the composite reliability test. In addition, internal consistency reliability, as measured by the Cronbach's alpha coefficient criterion, exceeds the benchmark of 0.60. Therefore, it can be concluded that the internal consistency reliability of all factors is in line with the standards outlined by Gliem and Gliem (2003). All of the results are presented in the following Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability Testing

Criteria	RTKS	RTE	RTV	RTS
R ²	0.712	0.718		
Composite reliability	0.915	0.875	0.929	0.912
Cronbach's alpha	0.893	0.807	0.905	0.879
Average variances extracted	0.573	0.638	0.725	0.676
VIF	2.962	3.020	4.310	3.417
Q ²	0.713	0.721		

Source: Adapted WarpPLS

Model Fit Testing Indices

The results of the model fit testing for the constructed model in this study are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Model Fit and Quality Indices

No	Model Fit Indices	Criteria Fit	Results Analysis	Description
1	Average path coefficient	p < 0.05	P<0.001	Good
2	Average R-squared	p < 0.05	P=0.001	Good
3	Average block VIF	<3	2.917	Ideal

In the model fit test, the results meets the rule of thumb criteria for all good and ideal indices, leading to the fit model.

Model Estimation Testing and Path Analysis

This analysis is used to determine the influence of rural tourism quality service and rural tourism experience on rural tourism satisfaction through rural tourism value. The data obtained were analyzed using warpPLS 5.0, with the displayed path construction in Figure 2.

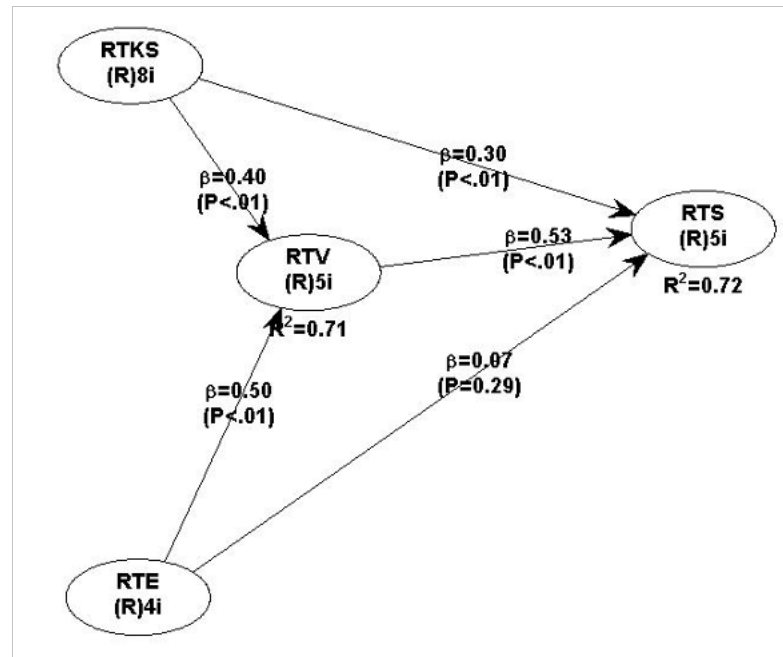


Figure 2. Estimation Value Testing

Based on the above analysis, the equation model can be formulated as rural tourism value (RTV) = 0.40 RTKS + 0.50 RTE; rural tourism satisfaction (RTS) = 0.30 RTKS + 0.07 RTE + 0.53 RTV + 0.21 RTQS * RTV + 0.27 RTV * RTE

Hypothesis Testing

Multivariate analysis with structural equation modeling (SEM) is used to investigate the formulated hypotheses, using the WarpPLS program. The results are summarized in the Table 4.

Table 4. Hypothesis Summary

Item		β / Path	p	Description
H1	Rural tourism quality service → rural tourism value	0.401	<0.001	Supporting
H2	Rural tourism quality service → rural tourism satisfaction	0.296	0.006	Supporting
H3	Rural tourism experience → rural tourism value	0.500	<0.001	Supporting
H4	Rural tourism experience → rural tourism satisfaction	0.006	0.287	Not Supporting
H5	Rural tourism value → rural tourism satisfaction	0.534	<0.001	Supporting
H6	Rural tourism quality service → rural tourism value → rural tourism satisfaction	0.214	0.001	Supporting
H7	Rural tourism experience → rural tourism value → rural tourism satisfaction	0.264	<0.001	Supporting

Source: Adapted WarpPLS 5 Output

DISCUSSION

The test results show that there is a direct influence on the rural tourism service quality on the rural tourism value in a positive. This result provides information that better rural tourism quality service, such as: a) rural tourism facilities visited have good accessibility, b) clean bathrooms and toilets in the visited rural tourism sites, c) visited rural tourism sites are enjoyable, simple, comfortable, and in harmony with the rural environment, d) rural tourism staff at the visited sites provide services as promised, e) the rural tourism staff visited are always ready to help, f) the rural tourism staff are knowledgeable and meet the needs of visitors professionally, g) all rural tourism areas are well marked with helpful signs, h) the rural tourism staff treat visitors with honesty, can contribute to a better rural tourism value. This is supported by previous researches of Özkan et al., (2020), and Jia et al., (2022).

The variable of rural tourism quality service influences the rural tourism satisfaction in a positive direction. This result provides information that better rural tourism quality service, such as: a) the rural tourism facilities visited having good accessibility, b) clean bathrooms and toilets in the visited rural tourism sites, c) the visited rural tourism sites being enjoyable, simple, comfortable, and in harmony with the rural environment, d) the rural tourism staff at the visited sites providing services as promised, e) the visited rural tourism staff always being ready to help, f) the visited rural tourism staff being knowledgeable and meeting the needs of visitors professionally, g) all rural tourism areas being well marked with helpful signs, h) the visited rural tourism staff treating visitors with honesty, can contribute to higher satisfaction of rural tourism visitors. This research result supports previous studies conducted by Alves et al. (2019); Pérez et al. (2017); Ryglová et al. (2017); and Travar et al. (2022).

The variable of rural tourism experience influences the rural tourism value in a positive path. This result provides information that better rural tourism experiences, such as: a) stimulating the curiosity of visitors to learn new things in rural tourism, b) visitors having a pleasant experience in rural tourism destinations, c) visitors greatly enjoying observing what others do in rural tourism, d) visitors completely forgetting about their daily routines while in rural tourism, can contribute to a higher perceived value of visiting rural tourism. This research result supports previous studies conducted by Dumitras et al., (2021); Nugraha et al., (2021); Remoaldo et al., (2020) which found similar results that rural tourism experience influences the rural tourism value.

The variable of rural tourism experience influences the rural tourism satisfaction. This result provides information that better rural tourism experiences, such as: a) stimulating the curiosity of visitors to learn new things in rural tourism, b) visitors having a pleasant experience in rural tourism destinations, c) visitors greatly enjoying observing what others do in rural tourism, d) visitors completely forgetting about their daily routines while in rural tourism, can contribute to higher satisfaction of rural tourism visitors, but it does not have a significant influence. This indicates that there is no influence of rural tourism experience on rural tourism satisfaction. This research result is not supported by previous studies conducted by Ryglová et al., (2017); Suhartadi &

Nugraha, (2021) which stated that rural tourism experience influences rural tourism satisfaction.

The finding reveals rural tourism value influences the rural tourism satisfaction. This result provides information that better perceived value by rural tourism visitors, such as: a) visitors feeling that they gain new knowledge by visiting rural tourism, b) visitors obtaining valuable experiences that they can share with others after visiting rural tourism, c) visitors perceiving that they receive benefits from visiting rural tourism that are worth the price they paid, d) rural tourism leaving a positive impression on visitors, e) visitors witnessing the uniqueness of rural tourism that cannot be found in other types of tourism, can contribute to higher satisfaction of rural tourism visitors. This result supports previous studies conducted by Chi et al., (2019); Matolo et al., (2021); X. Chi et al., (2020).

The variable of rural tourism value can act as a mediating variable in the influence between rural tourism service quality and rural tourism satisfaction. This means that the variable of rural tourism value can serve as a mediator in the influence of rural tourism service quality on rural tourism satisfaction, such as: a) visitors feeling that they gain new knowledge by visiting rural tourism, b) visitors obtaining valuable experiences that they can share with others after visiting rural tourism, c) visitors perceiving that they receive benefits from visiting rural tourism that are worth the price they paid, d) rural tourism leaving a positive impression on visitors, e) visitors witnessing the uniqueness of rural tourism that cannot be found in other types of tourism. This result is consistent with Jia et al., (2022); Liang, (2021); X. Chi et al., (2020); Özkan et al., (2020); S. Y. Chi et al., (2019).

Rural tourism value can act as a mediating variable in the relationship between rural tourism experience and rural tourism satisfaction. This means that the variable of rural tourism value can serve as a mediator in the influence of rural tourism experience on rural tourism satisfaction, such as: a) visitors feeling that they gain new knowledge by visiting rural tourism, b) visitors obtaining valuable experiences that they can share with others after visiting rural tourism, c) visitors perceiving that they receive benefits from visiting rural tourism that are worth the price they paid, d) rural tourism leaving a positive impression on visitors, e) visitors witnessing the uniqueness of rural tourism that cannot be found in other types of tourism. This is consistent with previous studies of Aşan et al., (2020); and Ghorbanzadeh et al., (2021), which found that the rural tourism value can mediate the influence of rural tourism experience on rural tourism satisfaction.

FURTHER STUDY

Our study reveals that high-quality services and a strong perception of value are key drivers of satisfaction in rural tourism. This means visitors prioritize destinations offering experiences that are not only enjoyable but also deliver benefits exceeding their costs. While the experience itself might not directly impact satisfaction, the value derived from it plays a critical mediating role. This highlights the importance of value creation as a central strategy to

enhance satisfaction within the rural tourism sector. Future research could explore the indirect influence of the tourism experience on satisfaction through the lens of perceived value, while also investigating the specific service quality aspects that most significantly impact visitor perception. A cross-cultural experience may also serve as the potential predictors of the investigated constructs. The underlying demographics may play role upon selecting a tourism area.

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