



Exploring how local cultural influences affect tourist conduct

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Article Info

Article History

Received : 2023-04-16

Revised : 2023-06-06

Accepted : 2023-12-25

Published : 2023-12-25

Keywords:

Recommendation intention, local culture, memorable tourism experiences, destination image.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.20885/AJIM.vol5.iss2.art5>

JEL Classification:

M30, M31, Z32

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Paper type:

Research paper



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Abstract

Purpose – The primary aim of this study is to investigate the influence of local culture on the behavioral intentions of Muslim tourists who have visited Kebondalem Kidul Cultural Tourism Village through the mediation of memorable tourism experiences and destination image.

Methodology – In this study, a quantitative analysis approach and descriptive analysis were employed, utilizing a 5-point Likert scale: the sample collection non-probability sampling method, specifically convenience sampling. The sample comprised 190 respondents who had experienced the Kebondalem Kidul Cultural Tourism Village as a tourist destination. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) SmartPLS 3.2.9 was used as the analytical tool for analysis.

Findings – The study reveals that local culture directly impacts Muslim tourists' recommendation intention, memorable tourism experience, and destination image when they visit Kebondalem Kidul Cultural Tourism Village.

Implications – This research aims to aid Tourism Village managers in crafting effective marketing strategies and provides valuable insights for Kebondalem Kidul Cultural Tourism Village managers in addressing Muslim tourist needs.

Originality – This study contributes substantially to the existing body of knowledge regarding Local Culture in multiple aspects. Initially, it investigated the Local Culture variable, specifically in the context of heritage tourism, with a primary emphasis on tourists who were patrons of the Kebondalem Kidul Cultural Tourism Village.

Cite this article:

Hidayat, I. I. N., Wisnalmawati, & Sugandini, D. (2023), Exploring how local cultural influences affect tourist conduct, *Asian Journal of Islamic Management*, 5(2), 141-154. <https://doi.org/10.20885/AJIM.vol5.iss2.art5>.

Introduction

The tourism sector has experienced a renewed shift following the Covid-19 pandemic. Contemporary tourism places significant importance on tailoring experiences, incorporating local elements, and providing intimate, small-scale adventures. Focusing on historical and heritage-based tourism aligns perfectly with these characteristics, delivering more meaningful and sustainable experiences (Satyagraha, 2022).

The tourism sector is poised for significant growth in response to the changing market dynamics. Indonesia currently holds the Chair for the ASEAN Tourism Forum, hosting the event in Yogyakarta from February 2nd to 5th, 2023, under the theme ASEAN, A Journey to Wonderful Destinations. The primary objective is to discuss the promotion of sustainable tourism across ASEAN countries. This presents a valuable opportunity for Indonesia to attract both domestic and international tourists. One innovative approach involves the development of tourist villages in Indonesia, capitalizing on local culture, and aligning with current tourism trends.

P ISSN 2746-0037 | E ISSN 2722-2330

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Tourism that focuses on a destination's historical and cultural aspects and interactions with residents is pivotal in preserving a region's heritage. By exploring historical sites, travelers gain a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the traditions and history of the area, actively contributing to their conservation efforts (Anismar et al., 2018).

Kebondalem Kidul, located in Central Java, Indonesia, is a cultural tourism village renowned for its rich cultural heritage that includes traditional dances, music, handicrafts, and culinary delights. Every year, numerous visitors flock to Kebondalem Kidul to immerse themselves in its unique local culture (Kemenparekraf, 2023).

As highlighted by Artal-Tur et al. (2018), this type of tourism promotes diversification in both the demand and supply of tourist destinations, while respecting and celebrating local culture. Scholars have also argued that deepening our understanding of cultural tourism can enhance the sustainability of destinations (Artal-Tur et al., 2018; Wibawa et al., 2023). However, the village has faced recent challenges owing to shifts in tourist preferences. Many tourists now prefer modern and global experiences to local and traditional experiences. This shift in tourist behavior has led to a decline in visitors to Kebondalem Kidul, negatively impacting the local economy and culture. The Kebondalem Kidul Cultural Tourism Village Manager attempted to rejuvenate local cultural tourism through attractive packaging to address these changing preferences. Nevertheless, the number of tourist visits remains relatively low (see Table 1).

While some scholars argue that local culture has a positive influence on tourist behavior, particularly in terms of destination recommendations (Naqvi et al., 2018; Sharma & Nayak, 2019; Sthapit, 2013; Yu et al., 2019), the situation differs in Kebondalem Kidul Cultural Tourism Village. According to Rasoolimanesh et al. (2022), not all aspects of local culture significantly impact tourist behavior.

Table 1. Visitor Domestic and Foreign 2020-2022

Year	Tourist Visits			
	Children	Adult	Foreigner	Total
2022	1793	6529	103	8425
2021	626	2012	0	2638
2020	596	1892	28	2516

Source: Data from the Kebondalem Kidul Cultural Village Government (processed)

Table 1 presents the tourist attendance data for the past three years, covering 2020, 2021, and 2022, categorized into three distinct groups: children, adults, and foreign tourists. The table highlights a significant increase in tourist visits in 2022, particularly among adult tourists, compared to the preceding years. The number of foreign tourists remains relatively consistent each year.

Despite the noticeable upswing in tourist visits, as depicted in Table 1, it is essential to acknowledge that the total number of visitors remains relatively modest and the overall visitation rate is relatively low. Therefore, managers in the tourism sector should be well informed about the factors that attract visitors and have a comprehensive understanding of how tourists can have an enjoyable and culturally enriching experience (Taufiqurrohman and April 2014).

When tourists interact positively with local cultures, such as by participating in traditional activities, savoring local cuisine, or exploring historical sites, they create profound and lasting memories and experiences. This can significantly impact their overall tourist experience, fostering a deeper connection to the destinations they visit and enhancing their appreciation of the local culture.

Many travelers consider immersing themselves in the local culture as a fundamental motivation for their journeys (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017). Several studies have delved into the influence of local culture on tourist behavior, including their willingness to recommend tourist destinations. Research findings by Figueroa et al. (2018) suggest that attracting international tourists relies on optimizing the tourist experience by combining cultural offerings and activities with natural resources. Other studies have indicated that tourists prefer destinations with greater recognition and more significant historical, cultural, and aesthetic values (Su & Wall, 2015), highlighting the considerable impact of local culture on behavioral intentions (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017).

In contrast to the direct impact of local culture on the intention to revisit, which was found to be significant in a separate study by Rasoolimanesh et al. (2022), our results did not demonstrate a significant direct influence of local culture on intention to recommend. The primary objective of this study was to address this gap in the existing research.

This study aimed to develop and validate a theoretical model that establishes connections between local culture, memorable tourism experiences, destination image, and tourists' intentions to recommend cultural tourism villages in Kebondalem Kidul. This study assesses the direct and indirect impacts of local culture on tourist behavior mediated by memorable tourism experiences and destination image. Furthermore, it compares the relative influence of local culture, memorable tourism experiences, and destination image on behavioral intentions. The study also formulated research questions regarding the significance of the relationships between local culture, memorable tourism experiences, destination image, and the inclination to recommend, specifically whether local culture predicts the intention to recommend through memorable tourism experiences and destination image and which of these factors has the most substantial impact on the intention to recommend in the cultural tourism villages of Kebondalem Kidul.

Literature Review and Hypothesis

Recommendation Intention

The issue of visitor loyalty has been highlighted in tourism industry studies, and one aspect often measured is visitors' intention to recommend the destination. Tourists' views on the likelihood of recommending their travel experience to family and close friends are one of the definitions of tourist behavioral intention (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Hasan, 2023). Thus, intention to recommend is one of the main indicators of visitor loyalty in tourism (Litvin et al., 2008).

In tourism, recommendation intention is the evaluation of an individual's willingness to share or tell their experiences to others about the location they have visited (Chen & Tsai, 2007). In the business world, recommendation intention behavior is a positive assessment of a product, brand, or service passed on to consumers through various informal channels, without commercial intent (Chang et al., 2018). Positive consumer recommendations can help companies, such as hotels, increase revenue from new customers and reduce costs (Chen et al., 2020). Customers are willing to provide positive recommendations to companies to maintain their transaction loyalty (Chang et al., 2018). Thus, recommendation intention, as a significant measure of company performance, is essential for forecasting a company's development potential and increasing its competitiveness (Chen et al., 2020).

Good recommendations from experienced travelers can support tourism managers' efforts to attract more potential visitors and achieve greater profits. Therefore, increasing visitors' intentions to recommend can be a crucial marketing strategy in the tourism industry. This research defines recommendation intention as encouraging tourists to give positive suggestions through various channels after experiencing a local cultural tour at the Kebondalem Kidul Cultural Tourism Village.

Hypothesis Development

Local culture and intention to recommend

Local culture embodies a unique identity that distinguishes the culture of a specific community or geographic region (Ajawaila, 2003). It encompasses a range of elements such as traditions, customs, dialects, culinary practices, craftsmanship, music, and other attributes that are distinctive to a particular area. The significance of the local culture lies in its ability to reflect the essence of a community and its genuine hospitality. The involvement of residents in extending hospitality is crucial to the overall satisfaction of tourists because chance encounters with locals often constitute an integral part of the tourist experience (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015). Cultural districts have a positive influence and are characterized by an evolved local culture. In these areas, one can encounter a rich and unstandardized heritage of art and craftsmanship, each possessing uniqueness (Sugandini et al., 2019). Local culture can profoundly shape the tourist experience by allowing travelers to immerse themselves in it through interactions with locals, sampling local cuisine, and participating in cultural activities.

In tourism studies, researchers have found that destinations where specific tourism practices genuinely represent the local culture can significantly impact tourists' loyalty intentions of tourists (Sharma & Nayak, 2019; Sthapit, 2013). According to Yu et al. (2019), while the perceived influence of local culture may not be overwhelmingly significant and requires integration into the tourist experience, research findings still indicate that local culture positively affects visitors' intentions to provide favorable recommendations. Additionally, research results from Naqvi et al. (2018) demonstrated that local festivals generate positive recommendations. Drawing from the reviewed literature, Kebondalem Kidul Cultural Tourism Village is likely to receive support in the following ways:

H₁: The local culture has a positive impact on the intention to recommend.

Local culture, memorable tourism experiences, and destination image

Studies in tourism economics have suggested that local culture plays a role in influences tourists' experiences (Monika et al., 2021). According to Antón et al. (2019), whose research focused on international tourists trying local cuisine, the results support the idea that authenticity and cultural differences positively impact perceived experiences. The study also emphasizes that promoting local culture is a significant aspect of tourist destinations that can create memorable tourism experiences (Kim, 2014). Moreover, diverse cultures have been shown to have distinct effects on tourists' experiences (Xu et al., 2022). Tourists' perceptions of their cultural backgrounds can influence their destinations (Tian et al., 2021). These findings indicate that a positive dining experience in a traditional restaurant can favorably affect the perception of the destination (Hernández-Rojas & Alcocer, 2021). Researchers have observed that local culture uniquely affects tourists' experiences in cultural tourism and can shape their perception of the destination. Based on the literature mentioned above, Kidul's cultural tourism village has a similar effect.

H₂: The local culture has a positive influence on the memorable tourism experiences.

H₃: The local culture has a positive influence on the destination image.

Memorable tourism experiences and intention to recommend

The global economy has transformed from a product-based to a service-based economy to an experience-based economy (Kim, 2018). Experience, goods, and services are considered supply considerations (Kim, 2018). Pine and James (1998) proposed the concept of an experience-based economy was proposed by (Pine & James, 1998). Once the importance of experience in the economy emerged, businesses were encouraged to provide unique experiences to customers (Voss et al., 2008). Experience is essential in tourism because the core of the tourism business is experience (Kim & Ritchie, 2014). The interaction between the traveler and destination determines the experience while the traveler is at the tourist site (Stamboulis & Skayannis, 2003). On-site experiences are transient and quickly forgotten; however, experiences stored in an individual's memory allow them to reminisce (Sharma & Nayak, 2019). Marketing and tourism studies have identified that consumer and traveler decisions are influenced by past experiences and memories (Kim, 2018). Memorable tourism experiences are positive experiences that are remembered and can be repeated after an event (Kim, 2018). Researchers have identified the need to facilitate memorable tourism experiences (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015). The dimensions supporting memorable tourism experiences (refreshment, meaningfulness, local culture, involvement, and hedonism) affect tourists' behavioral intentions for revisiting and recommendation intentions (Kim & Ritchie, 2014).

Memorable tourism experiences substantially impact the likelihood of tourists recommending attractions, thereby increasing the probability that they will suggest a destination to others. In tourism research, it is well established that studies focusing on these memorable experiences significantly influence tourist behavior, including the likelihood of revisiting and recommending a destination (Sharma & Nayak, 2019; Tsai, 2016). For instance, Sharma and Nayak (2019) delved into how memorable tourism experiences influence the behavior of tourists participating in yoga tours. Further research supports the idea that travel experiences considered unique, adventurous, or exceptionally extraordinary tend to create the most enduring memories for travelers (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015). The findings suggest that certain tourism activities become more memorable because of the social interactions between travel companions, fellow

tourists, or locals (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015). The findings of Quynh et al. (2021) affirm that visitors' perceptions of diverse experiential values in ecotourism destinations influence their behavioral intentions. Building on the supportive literature discussed above, the researcher posits the following in the context of Kebondalem Kidul cultural tourism village:

H₄: The memorable tourism experiences has a positive influence on the intention to recommend.

Memorable tourism experiences, local culture, and recommendation intentions

When an individual recommends a destination or tourist experience, it signifies a favorable perception and effective communication of their positive encounters with others (Lončarić et al., 2021). Previous research has shown a connection between memorable tourism experiences and behavioral intentions. According to Vada et al. (2022), memorable tourism experiences directly influence behavioral intentions. While there have been some discussions about the relationships between local culture, memorable tourism experiences, and the intention to recommend, this topic has seen limited exploration. Therefore, in this study, we posit that memorable tourism experiences involving local culture serve as an internal mechanism for shaping the intention to recommend. The researchers propose the following hypotheses:

H_{4a}: The relationship between local culture and recommendation intentions is mediated by memorable tourism experiences

Destination image, local culture, and recommendation intentions.

In tourism literature, extensive exploration of destination images has been conducted (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Zhang et al., 2014). The destination image has three components: cognitive, affective, and conative (Stylidis et al., 2022). Cognitive image focuses on beliefs or knowledge about a destination regarding visible object attributes (Garay, 2019; Lin et al., 2007). Affective image refers to what tourists feel and focus more on subjective values to determine their destination (Garay, 2019). Conative images are almost the same as visitor behavior in terms of visiting, revisiting, and recommending them to others (Pike & Ryan, 2004).

The consistency between conation behavior and intention must be clarified in destination image research (Ceylan et al., 2021). Therefore, this study focused on the cognitive dimensions of destination images. Cognitive images provide a more accurate picture of a destination and its uniqueness (Chen & Phou, 2013).

Numerous studies within tourism literature have delved into the concept of destination image, with researchers exploring both the direct and indirect effects of destination image on behavioral intentions. The reputation of a tourist destination can significantly impact tourists' decisions before embarking on their trips and their spending behaviors during travel (Wang et al., 2021). However, in line with the findings of Quynh et al. (2021), tourists' emotional experiences at tourist destinations influence their intentions to share word-of-mouth recommendations. In fostering a specialized interest in tourism, creating a favorable perception through exceptional facilities, high-quality services, strong reputation, and pleasurable atmosphere can motivate tourists to recommend destinations to potential visitors (Sugandini et al., 2021).

Based on research conducted by Sharma and Nayak (2019), tourists' visits to a destination and their intentions to recommend it are influenced by the destination's image. Multiple research findings indicate a connection between destination image and the inclination to recommend it. Tourists who positively perceive a destination are more inclined to recommend it. Consequently, the researcher posits the following for Kebondalem Kidul Cultural Tourism Village.

H₅: The destination image has a positive influence on the intention to recommend.

The tourism image of a location plays a significant role in influencing tourist behavior when selecting destinations (Wang et al., 2021). Gunn and Var (2020) introduced the concept of an attraction complex, which is derived from the inherent advantages of the characteristics of tourism resources, including topography, social and cultural resources, significant historical sites, traditional elements, and local events. Additionally, research findings from Ragab et al. (2020) affirm the positive and direct impact of destination image on positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Building on the insights

from these studies, it becomes apparent that tourists' perceptions of local culture can shape the destination's image, thus influencing their intention to recommend the place to others. Therefore, the researcher formulated the following hypothesis for Kebondalem Kidul cultural tourism village:

H_{5a}: The relationship between recommendation intentions and local culture is mediated by destination images.

Research Methods

This study employed a survey method to collect participant data through an online questionnaire. Initially, the questionnaire was presented in Indonesian language. Subsequently, a professional translator translated the questionnaire into English. The Indonesian questionnaire targets domestic Muslim tourists. In terms of sampling approach, this study used a non-probability sampling technique known as convenience sampling. In this method, individuals from the population were chosen as sample respondents without a predetermined probability of selection (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

All variables in this study were assessed using a Likert scale comprising a series of statements or questions organized into five levels. The Likert scale measures respondents' agreement or disagreement with each statement using the five options provided (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Respondents were instructed to mark their answers with checks or crosses next to the corresponding statements or questions. The questionnaire was closed at an interval of one to five.

This study required a sample size ranging from > 30 to less than 500. Specifically, a minimum sample size of 30 was obligatory, and it was highly recommended that the sample size significantly exceed, preferably by ten times or more, the number of variables involved in the research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This study includes four variables, each comprising 19 indicator variables. Therefore, the minimum required sample size was 19 (indicators) × 10 = 190.

The research sample included 190 Muslim tourists who had visited tourist sites within the Kebondalem Kidul cultural tourism village. Data were collected using online questionnaires. The collected data were analyzed using a structural equation model (SEM) using Smart PLS 3.2.9.

Results and Discussion

Result

The findings revealed that the responses obtained from men and women were almost evenly split, with proportions of 55.26% and 44.74%, respectively. Most respondents were aged 26–35 (51.58% of the sample). Regarding educational background, 42.63% of travelers were from tertiary institutions, with a high representation in that category (see Table 2).

Table 2. Sample profile

Variables	Categories	Respondents' Proportion	Respondents (n = 190)
Gender	Male	55.26 %	105
	Female	44.74 %	85
Age (Year)	18 – 25	20 %	38
	26 – 35	51.58 %	98
	36 – 45	22.63 %	43
	> 45	5.79 %	11
Educational Qualification	Elementary/Junior/High School	42.11 %	80
	Diploma 3rd Level	11.05 %	21
	Diploma 4th Level/Undergraduate	42.63 %	81
	Postgraduate and above	4.21 %	8
Visitation status	First-time visit	41.58 %	79
	Repeat visit	58.42 %	111

To develop the measurement scale, a loading factor within the range of 0.50 to 0.60 is considered acceptable for assessing convergent validity, while a correlation value exceeding 0.70 is viewed as favorable (Ghozali, 2021).

The destination image variable displayed loading values that varied from a minimum of 0.801 to a maximum of 0.883. Local culture exhibited loading values ranging from a minimum of 0.723 to a maximum of 0.820. With regard to memorable tourism experience, its loading values ranged from a minimum of 0.840 to a maximum of 0.892. Finally, the variable recommendation intention decreased from the lowest loading value of 0.834 to the highest value of 0.933. These results indicate that no indicators measuring each variable need to be eliminated as they satisfy the requirements for convergent validity (refer to Table 3).

Table 3. Outer Loading and AVE

Variable	Items	Outer Loadings	AVE
Destination Image	DI1	0.815	0.703
	DI2	0.801	
	DI3	0.883	
	DI4	0.862	
	DI5	0.827	
Local Culture	LC1	0.800	0.610
	LC2	0.763	
	LC3	0.723	
	LC4	0.820	
	LC5	0.797	
Memorable Tourism Experiences	MTE1	0.865	0.750
	MTE2	0.892	
	MTE3	0.840	
	MTE4	0.864	
	MTE5	0.868	
Recommendation Intention	RI1	0.873	0.785
	RI2	0.902	
	RI3	0.933	
	RI4	0.834	

The cross-loading values of each indicator within the respective variables exceeded the cross-loading values of the indicators from the different variables. This indicates that the research assessment exhibited robust discriminant validity, making it suitable for further research and analysis (Table 4).

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

	Destination Image	Local Culture	Memorable Tourism Experiences	Recommendation Intention
DI1	0.815	0.625	0.759	0.684
DI2	0.801	0.548	0.716	0.601
DI3	0.883	0.697	0.708	0.632
DI4	0.862	0.640	0.659	0.646
DI5	0.827	0.625	0.676	0.658
LC1	0.586	0.800	0.650	0.608
LC2	0.554	0.763	0.584	0.511
LC3	0.519	0.723	0.613	0.535
LC4	0.663	0.820	0.669	0.628
LC5	0.599	0.797	0.707	0.622
MTE1	0.716	0.661	0.865	0.627
MTE2	0.746	0.710	0.892	0.722
MTE3	0.698	0.729	0.840	0.674
MTE4	0.740	0.708	0.864	0.731
MTE5	0.730	0.767	0.868	0.692
RI1	0.674	0.670	0.680	0.873
RI2	0.649	0.631	0.686	0.902
RI3	0.728	0.664	0.737	0.933
RI4	0.671	0.678	0.721	0.834

According to the guidelines by Sekaran and Bougie (2016), a reliability score below 0.60 is classified as poor, a score of 0.70 is considered satisfactory, and a score above 0.80 is deemed excellent. As illustrated in Table 5, each variable displays composite reliability that surpasses 0.70. This signifies that each variable can be considered reliable and suitable for subsequent analysis.

Table 5. Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha

	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Destination Image	0.922	0.894
Local Culture	0.887	0.840
Memorable Tourism Experiences	0.937	0.917
Recommendation Intention	0.936	0.908

The data in Table 6 show that the R-squared value for the Destination Image variable was 56.3%. This value indicates that the Local Culture variable can account for 56.3% of the variability in Destination Image. The remaining 43.7% were influenced by other variables or factors that were not investigated in this study. For the Memorable Tourism Experience variable, approximately 68.4% of its variance could be explained by the Local Culture variable, leaving the remaining 31.6% attributed to external variables or factors that were not considered in this research.

Similarly, the Recommendation Intention variable demonstrated a level of explanation of 68.5% through the Local Culture variable. This means that the Local Culture variable accounted for 68.5% of the variability in recommendation intentions. The remaining 31.5% were subject to the influence of other variables or factors beyond the scope of this study.

Table 6. R-Square test

	R Square	R Square Adjusted	Model
Destination Image	0.563	0.561	Moderate
Memorable Tourism Experience	0.684	0.683	High
Recommendation Intention	0.685	0.680	High

A standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) value lower than 0.10 or 0.08 is acceptable for the PLS path model (Ghozali, 2021). The current study recorded an SRMR value of 0.086, indicating that the model was well-fitted (Table 7).

Table 7. Model fit

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0,061	0,086
d_ ULS	0,698	1,407
d_G	0,492	0,581
Chi-Square	536,175	574,115
NFI	0,827	0,815

Table 8. Summary structural model

Path	Original Sample	T Stat	P Values
Local Culture → Recommendation Intention	0.221	2.352	0.019
Local Culture → Memorable Tourism Experiences	0.827	30.317	0.000
Local Culture → Destination Image	0.750	21.470	0.000
Memorable Tourism Experiences → Recommendation Intention	0.367	3.435	0.001
Destination Image → Recommendation Intention	0.296	3.164	0.002

Table 8 and Figure 1 indicate that local culture positively influences recommendation intention, memorable tourism experiences, and destination image. Memorable tourism experiences and destination images positively influence recommendation intention. Table 9, on the other hand,

shows that an increase in the local culture variable affects the memorable tourism experience variable, ultimately leading to an increase in the recommendation intention variable. On the flip side, through the destination image, local culture influences the intention to recommend.

Table 9. Mediating Effect

Path	Original Sample	T Stat	P Values
Local Culture → Memorable Tourism Experiences → Recommendation Intention	0.303	3.352	0.001
Local Culture → Destination Image → Recommendation Intention	0.222	3.041	0.002

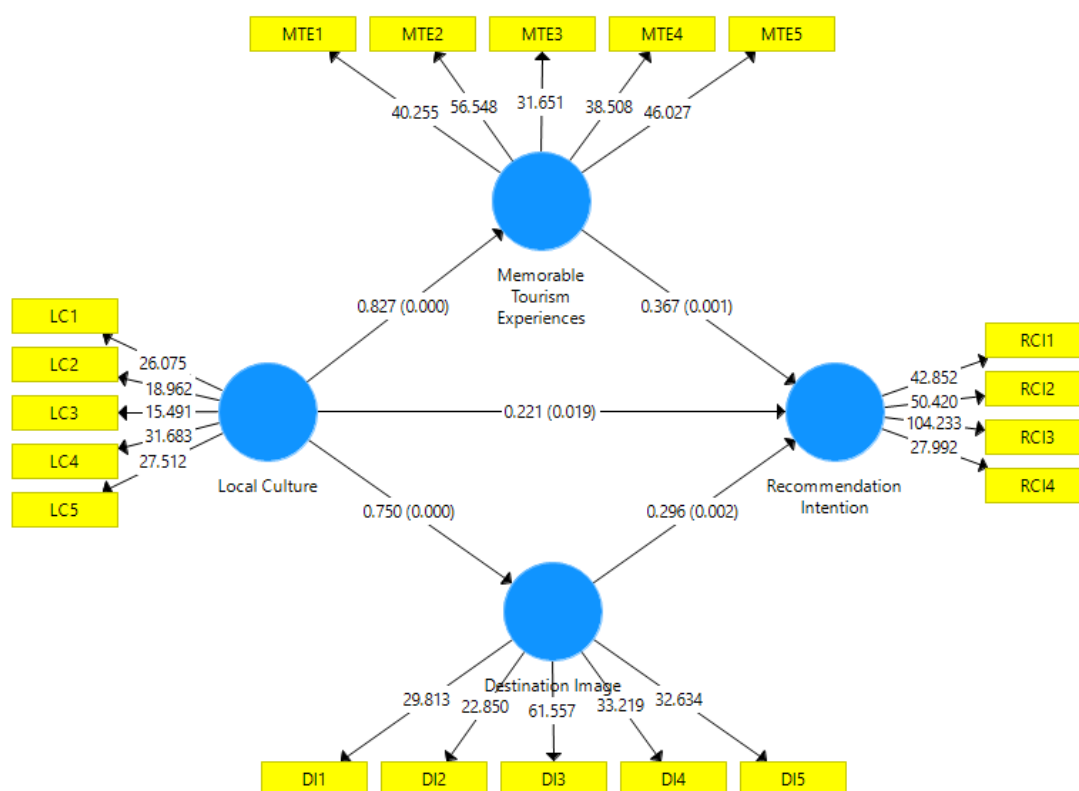


Figure 1. Full Analysis SEM Model

Discussion

Local culture significantly influences Muslim tourists' intentions to recommend visiting the Cultural Tourism Village of Kebondalem Kidul. The research findings align with those of previous studies conducted by Sharma and Nayak (2019), Sthapit (2013), and Yu et al. (2019), indicating a direct effect of local culture on intention to recommend. Furthermore, local culture affects tourists' desire to share their experiences with others (Sthapit 2013). Properly maintaining and integrating local cultural factors into the tourism experience (Yu et al., 2019) and the destination's image can positively influence tourists' intentions to recommend the Cultural Tourism Village of Kebondalem Kidul in the future. Preserving and developing a local culture is a crucial aspect of the tourism industry to enhance growth. The strong influence of authentic local experiences on local culture indicates that Cultural Tourism in Kebondalem Kidul should showcase attractions offering authentic local experiences, thereby shaping tourists' intentions to recommend these experiences.

Local culture influences the creation of unforgettable tourism experiences. The more prosperous and prominent the perceived local culture of Muslim tourists, the higher the likelihood that they will cherish memories of their travel experiences. Evidence indicates that local culture plays a crucial role in enhancing tourism quality in Kebondalem Kidul. The research findings

support those of previous studies by Sthapit (2013), showing the positive influence of local culture on unforgettable tourism experiences. Kim (2014) also found that participating in destination-based programs to learn about local culture, lifestyle, and history significantly affects the formation of unforgettable tourism experiences. Therefore, local culture is more significant in shaping unforgettable tourism experience.

Local culture influences destination image in the Cultural Tourism Village of Kebondalem Kidul. Creating various tourist destinations and attractions rooted in local traditions and implementing supporting facilities such as traditional accommodations and homestays can provide a valuable platform for tourism managers to incorporate and maximize local culture as a crucial aspect in shaping positive perceptions of the destination. The findings of this study support the research by Hernández-Rojas and Alcocer (2021), who concluded that traditional local restaurants positively impact the destination's image, and Chen et al. (2016), who stated that engagement with symbolic representations in heritage tourism destinations positively affects attachment to the destination.

This study reveals a positive influence between unforgettable tourism experiences and the intention to recommend. This suggests that the more enjoyable, memorable, or unique tourists' experiences are, the more likely they are to share them. Positive experiences can benefit a destination's reputation and the number of tourist visits, and promote sustainable tourism growth. This research reinforces the findings of Quynh et al. (2021), who stated that visitors' behavioral intentions are significantly influenced by their perceptions of the experiential value of various ecotourism destinations. Additionally, tourism scholars have found that researching tourism experiences influences tourist behavior, such as the likelihood of returning to and promoting the destination. These findings support previous studies that recommend a destination or tourism experience to indicate a positive perception of the destination and to effectively communicate their positive experiences to others. This study contributes to the understanding that creating unforgettable tourism experiences with positive and lasting impressions from tourists is crucial for encouraging them to share these beneficial experiences with others.

These findings support the importance of destination image in shaping tourist preferences and actions, leading to sustainable growth of tourist visits through positive recommendations. This study confirms the significance of destination image, as reflected in previous studies. Based on Quynh et al. (2021), tourists' emotional experiences when traveling to various destinations play a crucial role in their tendency to share recommendations through word-of-mouth. Sharma and Nayak (2019) found that destination image significantly influences tourist visits and intention to recommend the same destination to others. In the field of tourism, many studies have explored destination image, revealing both its direct and indirect effects of destination image on desired tourist behavior (Wang et al., 2021). The image of a location has a significant impact on tourists' choice of destination (Wang et al., 2021). Gunn and Var (2020) proposed a complex concept of attraction stemming from the excellence of tourism resources such as topography, social and cultural resources, historical sites, traditions, and local events. Ragab et al. (2020) found evidence of a direct and positive relationship between destination image and favorable word-of-mouth recommendations. Moreover, according to the research findings of Hernández-Rojas and Alcocer (2021), traditional local restaurants serving regional cuisine positively influence a destination's image and visitors' intention to recommend. Chen et al. (2016) found that attachment to a destination mediates symbolic consumption and loyalty in heritage tourism destinations.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion in the preceding chapters, the following conclusions can be drawn: Local culture positively influences Muslim tourists' intention to recommend unforgettable tourism experiences, along with a destination image that is also positively influenced by local culture. An unforgettable tourism experience is positively related to intention to recommend. Furthermore, the influence of local culture on the intention to recommend is reflected in unforgettable tourism experience. Finally, the impact of local culture on the intention to recommend through destination image is evident in Kebondalem's Kidul Cultural Tourism Village.

This research has significant implications for stakeholders, tourism managers, and businesses seeking to promote the local culture. The findings suggest that local culture can influence tourists' intention to recommend their travel experiences when presented through unforgettable tourism experiences and favorable destination images. Tourism managers should prioritize enhancing destination image and highlighting memorable aspects of local culture through tourists' travel experiences to capitalize on this. Implementing feedback systems among tourists can be valuable in assessing and improving perceptions of tourism experiences and destination images in cultural tourism. Additionally, facilitating coordination and collaboration among various stakeholders in the tourism sector becomes crucial to creating culturally enriching tourism experiences that leave a positive impression on tourists, encouraging them to share their experiences through word of mouth and social media.

This study has limitations in terms of the number of variables, respondents, and scope. Therefore, researchers recommend that future studies should expand the scope of this study to produce more comprehensive results.

Acknowledgments

The study's sample consisted exclusively of Indonesian citizens, and future research incorporating foreign tourists could provide a more comprehensive perspective.

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