The Role of Place Attachment as a Mediator Between Destination Image and Revisit Intention

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Abstract:

Tourism has become one of the sectors contributing to Indonesia's economic growth. The tourism sector needs to increase the number of tourist visits by enhancing its image to attract visitors to return. Factors influencing tourists' intention to revisit include destination image and place attachment. This study aims to examine the relationship between destination image and place attachment, the impact of destination image on revisit intention, and to investigate the relationship between destination image and revisit intention mediated by place attachment. This research uses WarPls analysis with a total of 100 respondents who visited various tourist attractions in Semarang Regency. The results indicate that destination image significantly affects place attachment, destination image significantly influences revisit intention, and place attachment mediates the relationship between destination image and revisit intention. Destination managers should enhance the attractiveness of tourist sites and provide engaging experiences for visitors, so they feel attached to the destination and are interested in returning.

Background

The tourism sector is one of the industries that has revived after the Covid-19 pandemic. The impact of Covid-19 caused changes in the number of both domestic and international tourists. According to BPS 2019, the total number of tourists in Indonesia before COVID-19 was 722,158,733 people, which decreased by approximately 203,569,771 to 518,588,962 (Rully R. Ramli, 2024). Tourism contributes to economic growth in Indonesia and increasingly opens up job opportunities for the Indonesian people. On the other hand, there is a diverse tourism potential with various types such as nature, history, culture, culinary, beaches, and many more. Visitors who enjoy tourism will certainly not miss the opportunity to visit interesting destinations. Thus, as the variety of destinations in Indonesia increases, visitors will increasingly choose destinations that provide enjoyable and memorable experiences, leading them to have the intention to revisit. Indonesia ranks 8th in the Travel Tourism Competitiveness Index in 2021 at the Asia-Pacific level.

BPS data shows that international tourist visits to Indonesia reached 350,000 visits, representing a 2000 percent increase compared to June 2022. This number continued to rise until November 2023 compared to the year 2022. This increase is dominated by Java Island, which contributes 75.57 percent of domestic tourist trips (BPS, 2024). The total number of domestic tourist trips in the first semester of 2023 was 74.33% (Rully R. Ramli, 2024).

The increase in the number of tourists will not be the same each year, leading to continuous fluctuations. With a variety of destination choices, tourism managers compete to create a positive destination image for visitors. Tourists who visit a tourist destination are likely to return if they are encouraged by their positive experiences at that destination. According to Mengyi Lin (2024), factors influencing revisit intention include space atmosphere, place attachment, perceived interest, experiential marketing, recreation perception, and environmental image perception. According to Eny Endah Pujiastuti (2024), factors influencing revisit intention are tourist motivation, destination image, and novelty seeking.

Tourism in Central Java, while significantly contributing to the increase in the number of tourists, can have an impact on the sustainability of tourism in Indonesia through the frequency of return visits by tourists. Enjoyable experiences and place attachment can influence tourists' intention to revisit. The number of domestic tourist visits is illustrated in Graph 1, which shows the fluctuation of domestic tourist visits in Central Java. Although there was an increase in 2023, if visitors feel disinterested in tourism, it will affect their intention to return, ultimately leading to a decline in tourist visits.
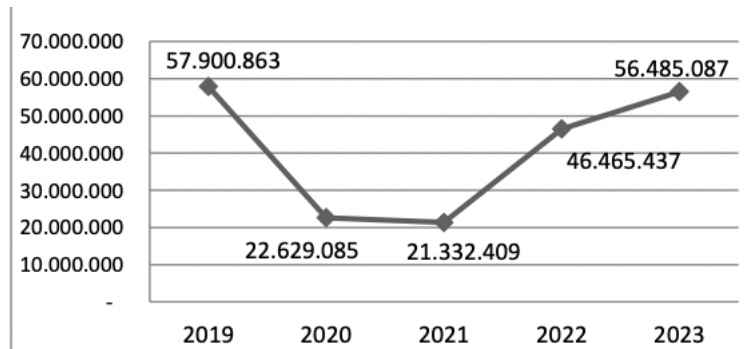
Figure 1: Number of Domestic Tourist Visits in Central Java

Thus, revisit intention can be influenced by destination image and place attachment. Place attachment refers to the relationship between individuals and their environment. It emphasizes the emotional aspects associated with a particular place (Maria Lewicka, 2011; Haywantee Ramkissoon, 2013; Ramkissoon, 2013; Giuliani, 2003). Destination image is a complex system that emphasizes cognitive and emotional reactions to both general attributes and unique destinations. Destination image is a combination of beliefs, thoughts, feelings, expectations, and impressions from tourists (Chon, 1990).

Research conducted by Suyeon Nam (2022) shows that destination image and place attachment have a positive and significant effect on revisit intention. Another study by Jiahua Wei (2024) indicates that destination image positively influences local attachment, and local attachment positively affects revisit intention. Research by Bang Nguyen Viet (2020) found that the intention to revisit is influenced by attractions and accommodation services, which are dimensions of destination image. In contrast, a study by Pribanus Wantara (2021) found that destination image has an insignificant effect on revisit intention at Sharia destinations in Madura. Research on place attachment and revisit intention by Mohammed (2014) showed that place attachment does not have a significant direct influence on revisit intention in restaurants. Based on this research gap, this study aims to examine the effect of destination image on revisit intention through place attachment.

Literature Review

Destination Image

Destination image is the subjective interpretation of a destination in the minds of tourists that influences behavior (Agapito, 2013). According to Galí Espelt (2005), destination image plays an important role in tourist behavior, shaping tourists' experiences in making decisions about choosing a destination. Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993) define the concept of destination image as a collection of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that an individual associates with a destination.

Destination image can be divided into three aspects: cognitive, affective, and global. The cognitive aspect is formed through information obtained from media such as brochures, newspapers, websites, and marketing strategies, or from previous destination experiences (Castaño, 2006). Agapito (2013) states that the tourist image consists of cognitive, affective, and conative components, where cognitive refers to an individual's knowledge and thoughts about an object, affective refers to the feelings or emotions that arise from tourist attractions, and conative refers to how an individual takes action.

Place Attachment

Place attachment is a multidimensional construct that provides a better understanding of its relationship with other constructs compared to testing using a unidimensional construct (Haywantee Ramkissoon, 2013). Place identity is a cognitive identity affiliated with a place and is referred to as a symbolic place (Williams, 2003). This indicates the alignment between an individual's self-concept and the place (Haywantee Ramkissoon, 2013). Destinations rich in culture provide individuals with the opportunity to identify themselves with a distinctive environment (Haywantee Ramkissoon, 2013).

Jorgensen and Stedman (Jorgensen, 2001) state that place identity includes cognitive components (for example, a location/destination that can become part of a tourist's self-image). Place dependence includes conative components (dependence expressed through behaviors performed there), while place attachment involves the affective component of attitudes (emotions felt or associated with the destination). Place attachment is an emotional reaction to physical and social settings, while destination image describes the cognitive and affective components related to an object or destination image, serving as a precursor to place attachment. Based on this relationship, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: Destination image positively influences place attachment.

Revisit Intention

Ryu (2010) states that a positive image from each service provider enhances customers' willingness to revisit. Revisit intention is also influenced by previous evaluations from visitors' experiences when visiting a particular destination, new attractions, and promotional activities (Aziz, 2012). According to Chen (2001), customers' decisions to visit a particular destination depend on their experiences and satisfaction levels.

Revisit intention, according to L. Scannell (2010), explains that place attachment is the result of emotional bonds or communities that can form in specific places. Williams (2003) combines previous research stating that there are two concepts of place attachment: place dependence and place identity. The stronger an individual's attachment to a place, the higher their intention to revisit. Certain places

fulfill individual goals and needs, so the more someone depends on that place, the higher their intention to return. Based on this relationship, the hypothesis in this study is:

H2: Place attachment positively influences revisit intention.

Research conducted by H. Song (2017) indicates that place attachment plays a role in connecting destination image to revisit intention. Another study by Çevik (2020) found that attachment to parks enhances the mediating role between satisfaction and revisit intention. Based on this explanation, the hypothesis for this research is:

H3 Destination image positively influences revisit intention

H4: Destination image positively influences revisit intention through place attachment

H. Song (2017) found that place attachment plays a mediating role in the relationship between destination image and revisit intention. Similar results showing the mediating role of place attachment were also obtained by Hui Tao (2022). Michele Romolini (2019) reported that the level of place attachment is positively related to the frequency of use. Additionally, Çevik (2020) revealed that attachment to parks plays a mediating role between satisfaction and revisit intention. Previous studies have concluded that place attachment has a mediating role between satisfaction and the intention to return to a destination.
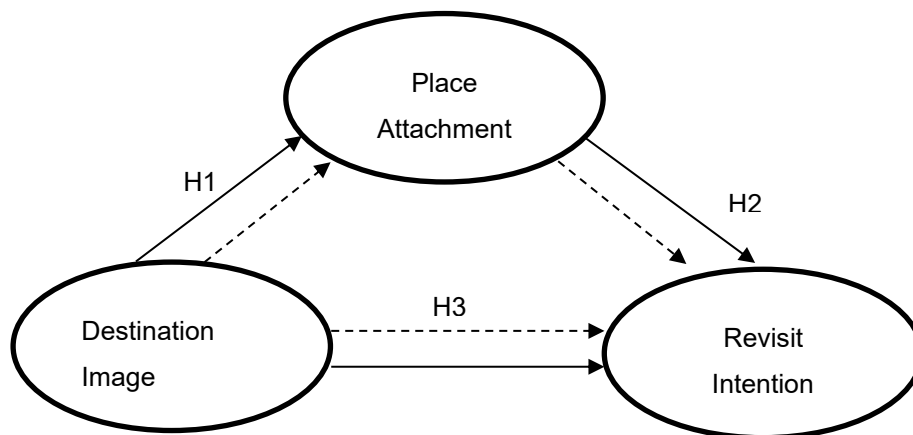
Research Methods

This research was conducted in several diverse tourist destinations in Semarang City. The sample for this study consisted of 100 respondents who visited both natural and man-made tourist destinations at various points in Semarang City, such as Kopeng tourism. This study used a non-probability sampling technique. The research employed purposive sampling, where the criteria for respondents included those who had visited the Kopeng tourist destination in Semarang Regency at least once in the last six months and were willing to be interviewed.

This study utilized a Likert measurement scale based on measurements used in previous research. The analysis tool used was WarPLS, which applied validity and reliability tests with convergent validity and composite reliability based on data collected from respondents.

The study consists of three variables: Destination Image, Place Attachment, and Revisit Intention, with a total of 32 items to measure the endogenous and exogenous variables. The Destination Image variable consists of 23 items, Place Attachment consists of 16 items, and Revisit Intention consists of 3 items. The study used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The demographic data collected included age, gender, education level, and income level.

Analysis Result

This research consists of three variables: destination image, place attachment, and revisit intention. The total number of items to measure the exogenous and endogenous variables is 23 items. WarpLS 5.0 is used to analyze the research data to test the influence of destination image and place attachment on revisit intention. According to Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2011), PLS is based on predicting endogenous latent variables. PLS provides acceptable results for the measurement model.

Indicator	Destination image	Place attachment	Revisit intention
DI1	0.753		
DI2	0.791		
DI3	0.662		
DI4	0.768		
DI5	0.636		
DI6	0.744		
DI7	0.860		

Indicator	Destination image	Place attachment	Revisit intention
DI8	0.733		
DI9	0.786		
DI10	0.772		
DI11	0.675		
DI12	0.746		
DI13	0.744		
DI14	0.661		
DI15	0.754		
DI16	0.699		
DI17	0.860		
DI18	0.733		
DI19	0.682		
DI20	0.683		
DI21	0.746		
DI22	0.918		
DI23	0.956		
PA1		0.965	
PA2		0.923	
PA3		0.823	
PA4		0.623	
PA5		0.971	
PA6		0.759	
PA7		0.968	
PA8		0.951	

Indicator	Destination image	Place attachment	Revisit intention
PA9		0.874	
PA10		0.997	
PA11		0.911	
PA12		0.869	
PA13		0.750	
PA14		0.986	
PA15		0.975	
PA16		0.964	
RI1			0.687
RI2			0.999
RI3			0.711

Table 1: Factor Loadings

Note:

DI = destination image

DI1 = Pleasant experience during the visit

DI2 = Tranquility during the visit

DI3 = Escape from routine

DI4 = Enjoyment and happiness during the visit

DI5 = Excitement of attractions for visitors

DI6 = Confidence in reducing stress

DI7 = The destination has beautiful scenery

DI8 = The destination offers interesting natural attractions

DI9 = Interesting cultural attractions

DI10 = The destination is easily accessible

DI11 = Ticket prices match the attractions

DI12 = The destination has complete facilities

DI13 = Has beautiful spots

DI14 = The destination provides a place for souvenirs

DI15 = The destination has a variety of dining options

DI16 = The destination offers diverse accommodation options

DI17 = Quality of service

DI18 = Availability of varied rides

DI19 = Friendliness of the locals

DI20 = Satisfaction with the destination

DI21 = Reputation of the destination

DI22 = Return visits

DI23 = Recommendations to friends and family

Place Attachment (PA)

PA1 = Enjoyment of visiting the destination

PA2 = An irreplaceable destination

PA3 = This destination is the best place

PA4 = Willingness to spend a long time

PA5 = A great place

PA6 = Satisfaction with the visit

PA7 = Many activities at this destination

PA8 = The destination is more important than other places

PA9 = Beautiful memories at the destination

PA10 = Special relationship between the destination and the community

PA11 = This destination tells a story

PA12 = Inviting family to visit this destination

PA13 = Happiness in visiting this destination

PA14 = Excitement in visiting this destination

PA15 = Enjoyment in visiting this destination

Revisit Intention (RI)

RI1 = Desire to visit the destination again

RI2 = Plans for a return visit

RI3 = Future visits to this destination

Table 1 shows the loading factors of this research, indicating the results of the convergent validity testing of the measurements. According to Hair (2013), the results of the convergent validity testing of the measurement instruments are essential. Hair (2013) states that there are two criteria for assessing whether the outer model meets the requirements for convergent validity and discriminant validity for reflective constructs, which is a loading factor > 0.7. According to Solimun (2017), a loading factor should be greater than or equal to 0.5 to 0.6 to be considered sufficient as a criterion for meeting convergent validity.

Table 1 presents the results of the validity and reliability testing of the research instruments. The results indicate that all indicators can be declared valid (>0.3). The reliability test results also show that the instruments used are reliable (>0.6). Therefore, the research questionnaire is deemed suitable for use as a data collection instrument.

Variabel	α coefficient	CR	AVE
Destination image	0.909	0.922	0.620
Place attachment	0.852	0.878	0.567
Revisit Intention	0.969	0.980	0.689

Table 2: Cronbach Alpha, CR dan AVE

Notes: α= Cronbach Alpha's, CR = composite reliability, AVE = Average Variace Extracted

Table 2 shows the values of all indicators used to measure the variables of Destination Image, Place Attachment, and Revisit Intention, indicating a Cronbach's alpha > 0.6. According to Ghozali (2005), a questionnaire can be considered reliable if it has a Cronbach's alpha > 0.6. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for the three variables range from 0.567 to 0.689, significantly exceeding the minimum acceptable value of 0.5 (Fornell, 1981), thus confirming that all three variables are reliable.

Gender	Male	48%
	Female	52**%**
Age	> 30 year	52**%**
	17-20 year	16**%**
	21-24 year	17**%**
	25-29 year	15**%**
Income	≤ Rp2.000.000	30**%**
	> Rp2.000.000 – Rp4.000.000	33**%**
	> Rp4.000.000 – Rp6.000.000	20**%**
	> Rp6.000.000	17**%**
Education	Primary School	2%
	Junior High School	10**%**
	Senior High School	35**%**
	Diploma	8**%**
	Bachelor	41**%**
	Postgraduate	4**%**

Table 3: Respondent Profile

Table 3 shows that the respondents are predominantly female, comprising 52%, which is higher than the male respondents at 48%. The majority of respondents who frequently visit attractions in Semarang Regency are aged over 30 years, accounting for 52%, while the least represented group is visitors aged between 25-29 years, making up only 16%. The largest income range is between Rp. 2,000,000 and Rp. 4,000,000, with a percentage of 33%, while the smallest group of respondents has an income greater than Rp. 6,000,000, accounting for 17%.

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient	P value	Hypothesis Decision
1	Destination image → place attachment	0.682	0.000	Accepted
2	Place attachment → revisit intention	0.359	0.000	Accepted
3	Destination image → revisit intention	0.540	0.000	Accepted
4	Detination image → revisit intention melalui place attachment	0.245	0.000	Accepted

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing

Table 4 shows the results of hypothesis testing that examines the relationships between the variables studied. Based on the data processing results, it indicates that Destination Image has a positive and significant effect on Place Attachment (p-value < 0.05); therefore, Hypothesis 1 is accepted. Hypothesis 2, which states that Place Attachment affects Revisit Intention, also shows a positive and significant effect (p-value < 0.05); thus, Hypothesis 2 is accepted. Hypothesis 3, which posits that Destination Image influences Revisit Intention, demonstrates a positive and significant effect (p-value < 0.05); therefore, Hypothesis 3 is accepted. Moreover, the effect of Destination Image on Revisit Intention through Place Attachment is also accepted, indicating a positive and significant effect (p-value < 0.05).
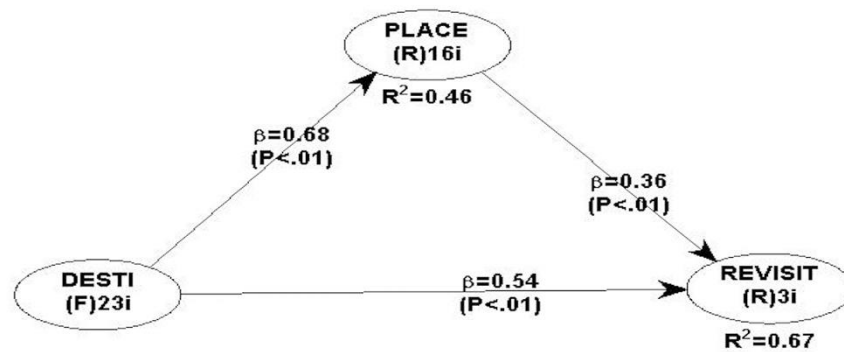
Figure 2: Hypothesis Testing Model

Discussion

This study produced four significant findings. First, destination image has a significant influence on place attachment. This finding is supported by (Crompton, 1979), who argued that destination image encompasses impressions, beliefs, thoughts, perceptions, and feelings individuals have about a particular destination. This aligns with (Baloglu, 1999), who suggested that destination image should be interpreted through cognitive evaluations and affective assessments. (Bricker, 2000) stated that place attachment has emotional attributes representing an individual's feelings of functional dependence on a specific place.

Tourists understand that when they visit a place, they feel attached to it depending on their emotions or feelings. If visitors have a positive image of a destination, they are likely to feel attached to it. Several tourist destinations in Kopeng, Semarang Regency, offer diverse attractions, both natural and artificial, allowing visitors to enjoy unique experiences. Visitors are not limited to just one destination but can choose other destinations within the Kopeng area. The image of Kopeng's tourist destinations will attract visitors cognitively (place identity), emotionally (place dependence), and conatively, enhancing their place attachment.

Second, place attachment significantly influences revisit intention to tourist destinations in Semarang Regency. This finding aligns with (L. Scannell, 2010), who stated that there is a relationship between place attachment and revisit intention. Place attachment involves emotions, beliefs, and actions (M. Carmen Hidalgo, 2001). Positive emotions, beliefs, and actions toward a tourist destination will result in positive intentions, such as the intention to revisit. Kopeng offers various unique experiences for each visitor. Several attractions in Kopeng, such as outbound tourism, mountain trekking, glamping, culinary

tourism, and camping grounds, provide memorable experiences for visitors. As a result, visitors' emotions, beliefs, and actions toward Kopeng tourism tend to be positive.

Third, destination image significantly influences revisit intention to tourist destinations in Semarang Regency. A destination image is an interactive system of thoughts, feelings, opinions, intentions, and visualizations about a specific place. It not only recognizes the diversity of elements in the destination cognitively, affectively, and conatively but also influences decision-making (Girish Prayag, 2012). (Akmal Rosli, 2023) argued that tourists' perceptions of a destination are crucial for providers or managers of tourist destinations, as these perceptions inevitably affect visitors' intentions and actions. When tourists have enjoyable experiences at a destination during their visit, their intention to revisit increases. Tourists visiting Kopeng respond positively to the destination due to the variety of attractions offered. For visitors who enjoy cool weather, Kopeng becomes an ideal choice. Situated in Semarang Regency, Kopeng serves as an alternative tourist destination for visitors from both within and outside Semarang city or regency. If visitors have a positive image of Kopeng, most of them are likely to return because the memories created by Kopeng's management leave a lasting impression on them.

Fourth, destination image significantly influences revisit intention through place attachment. This supports (Girish Prayag, 2012), who stated that place attachment serves as a determinant of revisit intention. Destination image acts as a mediator connecting revisit intention. Since Kopeng tourism is visited not only by local residents but also by visitors from outside Semarang Regency, Kopeng can be recommended to these external visitors if they have a positive destination image and place attachment to Kopeng tourism. Visitors' place attachment to Kopeng tourism is strongly influenced by how much they feel connected to a specific place, which could stem from the friendliness of local residents or the contributions of tourism managers to enhancing the destination image for visitors.

Even if visitors come from outside the regency, if they feel attached, they are likely to revisit in the future. If not, they may still recommend the destination to others. The findings of this study regarding the direct and indirect relationships show that whether mediated by place attachment or not, destination image still influences revisit intention. However, the direct relationship has a higher coefficient value than the indirect relationship. This indicates that destination image is a critical factor that tourism managers must focus on improving, enhancing, and maintaining to create a positive image in visitors' minds, ultimately increasing their intention to revisit.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, the following conclusions can be drawn: destination image has a positive and significant influence on place attachment, place attachment has a positive and significant influence on revisit intention, destination image has a positive and significant influence on revisit intention, destination image has a positive and significant influence on revisit intention through place attachment.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of tourism managers paying attention to attributes that can enhance destination image, place attachment, and revisit intention. Managing visitors' memories of tourism attributes is crucial as it supports repeat visits. Revisit intention is influenced by destination image. Therefore, destination image plays an important role in increasing place attachment and revisit intention among visitors. Although this study indicates that place attachment is not a full mediator, it can still be enhanced to strengthen dependency on the place, thereby increasing revisit intention.

The implications of the results of this research are : Tourism managers must carry out destination development: focus on destination image, tourism managers need to develop and promote attributes that enhance the destination image. This can include improving infrastructure, cultural experiences, and attractive natural attractions. Building place attachment like implementing loyalty programs or incentives for returning visitors can strengthen their attachment to the place and personalized experiences like offering personalized experiences can help visitors feel more connected to the destination. Effective marketing like utilizing marketing campaigns that emphasize positive emotional experiences can enhance the destination image and place attachment. Visitor testimonials using testimonials from satisfied visitors to attract the attention of potential tourists. Visitor memory management by positive experiences like creating enjoyable and memorable experiences during visits to build positive memories that encourage repeat visits and community involvement by engaging the local community in the tourism experience can enhance the image and place attachment. Evaluation and adjustment by surveys and feedback like conducting surveys to gather visitor feedback on valued attributes and their experiences to make necessary adjustments. Data Analysis like using data to analyze trends and visitor preferences to improve marketing strategies and product development.

Future studies could use moderation variables to explore factors that strengthen the relationship between destination image and revisit intention.

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