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## THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL IMAGE ON MEMORABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCE AND TOURIST SATISFACTION: A STUDY IN BERAU REGENCY

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of Cultural Image on Memorable Tourism Experience and Tourist Satisfaction in Berau Regency. The research methodology involved a quantitative approach using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to analyze data collected from 135 tourists who visited the Labuan Cermin in 2022 and 2023. The study focused on 15 indicators related to Cultural Image, Memorable Tourism Experience, and Tourist Satisfaction. The findings revealed a significant positive impact of Cultural Image on Memorable Tourism Experience. However, the analysis did not find a significant relationship between Cultural Image and Tourist Satisfaction. These results suggest that while Cultural Image contributes to creating memorable tourism experiences, it may not directly influence overall tourist satisfaction. The study underscores the complexity of factors influencing tourist perceptions and experiences, highlighting the need for further research to explore additional variables that contribute to tourist satisfaction in destination management strategies.

**KEYWORDS:** Cultural Image, Memorable Tourism Experience, Tourist Satisfaction.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural image is a crucial factor that significantly impacts the creation of a memorable tourism experience, especially when considering the tourism attractions in Berau Regency, East Kalimantan, Indonesia. Berau boasts a rich cultural heritage that includes the traditions of the Dayak ethnic group, captivating art forms, and stunning natural wonders such as the Derawan

Islands. These tourism assets serve as the focal points for showcasing Berau's unique cultural identity and contribute significantly to shaping tourists' perceptions and expectations.

Tourism objects like the Derawan Islands, with their pristine beaches, diverse marine life, and vibrant coral reefs, embody Berau's cultural image by offering tourists immersive experiences in a natural setting. Activities such as snorkeling, diving, and exploring traditional villages provide visitors with opportunities to engage with the local culture and lifestyle, further enhancing their overall tourism experience. Additionally, cultural events and festivals in Berau, such as the Dayak cultural performances and traditional ceremonies, play a vital role in highlighting the region's cultural richness. These events not only attract tourists seeking authentic experiences but also foster a sense of pride and preservation of cultural heritage among the local communities. Therefore, by leveraging its tourism assets and cultural image through various attractions and activities, Berau Regency creates a distinctive appeal that resonates with travelers, leaving a lasting impression and contributing to the growth and sustainability of the tourism industry in the region.

Berau Regency, located in East Kalimantan, Indonesia, is renowned for its cultural heritage, natural beauty, and diverse tourism offerings. The period from 2017 to 2020 witnessed a significant surge in tourist arrivals, showcasing a robust growth trajectory for the region's tourism industry. This surge was characterized by impressive growth rates, with increases of 165.98 percent in 2017, 170.10 percent in 2018, and 171.2 percent in 2019, encompassing both domestic and foreign visitors. In 2017 alone, Berau Regency welcomed a total of 207,780 tourists, including 4,376 foreign visitors and 203,404 domestic tourists, highlighting the region's appeal as a vibrant tourism destination.

However, the momentum of this growth was abruptly interrupted by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. The pandemic brought about unprecedented challenges for the global tourism industry, and Berau Regency was no exception. The tourism sector experienced a sharp decline as travel restrictions, border closures, and safety concerns led to a significant reduction in tourist numbers. Throughout 2020 and 2021, the industry remained stagnant, with tourism activities grinding to a halt due to widespread public apprehension regarding COVID-19 and the prioritization of safety measures over travel.

The impact of the pandemic was felt across all segments of the tourism sector in Berau Regency. Accommodation providers, tour operators, restaurants, and cultural attractions faced immense challenges as they navigated through the uncertainties brought about by the crisis. Many businesses were forced to close temporarily or adapt their operations to comply with health and safety protocols, leading to job losses and economic hardships for the local communities dependent on tourism.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, there were signs of resilience and adaptability within the tourism industry in Berau Regency. Stakeholders, including government agencies, tourism boards, and local businesses, collaborated to implement strategies aimed at mitigating the impact of the crisis and facilitating the recovery process. Initiatives such as promoting domestic tourism, developing health and safety guidelines, and enhancing digital marketing efforts were launched to rebuild confidence among travelers and revitalize the tourism sector.

One of the critical milestones in the recovery journey was the gradual easing of travel restrictions and the decline in COVID-19 cases observed from August 2022 onwards. As vaccination efforts progressed and health protocols were effectively implemented, travelers started to regain confidence in traveling, leading to a cautious resurgence in tourism activities in Berau Regency.

Domestic tourists, in particular, played a significant role in driving the initial stages of recovery, as they sought safe and accessible travel options within Indonesia.

The resurgence in tourism was accompanied by renewed efforts to promote Berau Regency as a preferred tourism destination. Marketing campaigns highlighting the region's cultural heritage, natural attractions such as the Derawan Islands, and unique experiences such as traditional Dayak cultural performances were launched to attract tourists and reposition Berau as a must-visit destination.

This research aims to investigate and analyze the impact of Cultural Image on memorable tourism experiences at tourist attractions in Berau Regency, as well as to examine the influence of Cultural Image on tourist satisfaction. By focusing on the relationship between Cultural Image and memorable experiences as well as tourist satisfaction, this study seeks to understand how the values, traditions, arts, and other cultural aspects of the destination contribute to creating a lasting impression on visitors. Through a comprehensive analytical approach, this research will also explore how a positive perception of Cultural Image can affect tourist satisfaction levels, build strong emotional bonds, and generate positive recommendations that contribute to the sustainability of the tourism industry in Berau Regency.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. The Impact of Cultural Image on Memorable Tourism Experiences**

The research contributes significantly to the theory of Cultural Image, drawing insights from renowned scholars such as Kotler et al., (2016); Kotler & Keller (2017); Chen et al., (2014); Lee & Xue (2020); Konget al., (2015); Spuhler, et al., (1989); Perez-Calderonet al., (2020); Kozak & Rimming ton, (2000); McFadden (2006); Vadaet al., (2022); Wang & Lin (2021); Wesleyet al., (2006); Yooet al., (2018); Zhanget al., (2015), among others. Cultural Image, as explored in the literature, plays a crucial role in shaping tourists' tendencies towards the culture of a tourist destination. It encompasses perceptions of literary characteristics, ethics, clothing, language, architecture, cuisine, arts, and music, creating impressions and experiences in individuals' minds Khan (2017); Kim (2018); Cole & Browne (2015); Cornelisse (2018); Gajić, et al., (2018). For instance, food contributes significantly to the reinforced image that prompts tourists' desire for repeated visits to experience the unique culinary culture within a destination (Ling et al., 2010). Moreover, Cultural Image serves as a vital element in tourism destination management, effectively creating value for the tourism brand and influencing tourists' behaviors and experiences, as identified by Tunget al., (2011).

The cultural aspect within the context of cultural tourism research is often utilized to measure tourists' inclinations towards a destination's culture. Cultural Image reflects a direct, long-term exchange between community members with differing identities, impacting specific tourist behaviors at cultural tourism sites (Linget al., 2010; Chiet al., 2008; Rajaratnamet al., 2015). This includes influencing the level of desire for authentic experiences, the degree of tourist engagement in the tourism process, and the formation of cultural memories of the destination. Understanding the destination's cultural heritage and actively participating in local life can make the tourist experience more authentic and memorable, fostering a stronger emotional attachment to the place (Kimet al., 2020; Alshiha, 2022; Abundabar&Pongpong, 2022). Furthermore, Cultural Image encompasses various cultural dimensions specific to each heritage tourism site, catering to tourists' varying levels of multicultural tendencies. However, current research exploring multicultural tendencies remains limited and requires further classification (Hasemi et al., 2019). These cultural dimensions focus on human-environment interactions, the protection of local community cultural resources and destination sustainability, highlighting cultural interactions and necessary activities for their

development in the tourism sector. This also includes job creation, resident satisfaction, and the preservation of local culture and heritage, contributing significantly to the overall tourism experience.

## **2.2. The Influence of Cultural Image on Tourist Satisfaction**

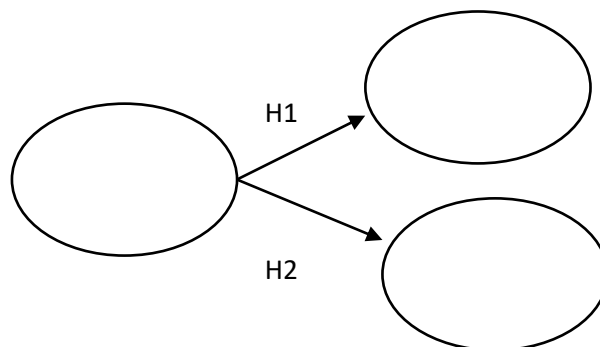
The influence of Cultural Image on tourist satisfaction is a crucial aspect explored in this research, drawing from various scholarly perspectives such as Iordanova (2017), Kaniet al., (2017), Songet al., (2013), Sharma & Nayak (2019), Orams, M. B. (1995), among others. Cultural Image, as defined in the literature, refers to the perceptions and experiences in individuals' minds to interpret the cultural characteristics of a destination (Abdulla et al., 2019; Allan et al., 2023; Bayih& Singh, 2020; Tang et al., 2022; ). Positive perceptions of Cultural Image have been found to positively impact tourists' satisfaction levels and intentions to revisit among tourists (Hasemi et al., 2019).

Tourist satisfaction, in the context of Cultural Image, is influenced by various cultural assets such as cultural and historical attractions, festivals, arts, and traditions. These cultural assets serve as substantial determinants of the destination brand image. While tourism activities can have positive impacts on destination culture, such as the preservation of cultural and historical sites, they can also have negative consequences, such as the loss of community character. Therefore, preserving the Cultural Image of a destination is crucial for maintaining its identity and values while attracting and retaining tourists.

Moreover, Cultural Image encompasses various dimensions that contribute to tourists' overall satisfaction levels (Breiby& Slåtten, 2018; Chiaet al., 2021; Kamenidou&Stavrianea, 2022; Morganet al., 2009; Seyfiet al., 2020; Umet al., 2006; Unhasutaet al., 2021). For instance, the cultural essence of a destination, including its culinary culture, historical sites, and unique traditions, can significantly enhance tourists' satisfaction levels and their intentions to revisit (Tosunet al., (2015). Destination heritage imagery, functioning as positive tourist perceptions, has been found to positively influence satisfaction levels and intentions to revisit among tourists. Thus, the Cultural Image of a destination plays a vital role in shaping tourists' satisfaction levels, perceptions, and intentions to revisit, making it a crucial element in destination management and marketing strategies. Preserving and promoting a positive Cultural Image can contribute significantly to enhancing tourists' experiences and fostering long-term loyalty towards the destination.

## **2.3. Model and hypotheses.**

Based on a comprehensive theoretical and research overview, this article integrates two independent variables into the model, which are Cultural Image and Memorable Tourism Experiences, alongside the dependent variable Tourist Satisfaction. These variables are central to understanding the dynamics of tourist behavior, perception, and experience within the tourism context. Cultural Image represents the cultural identity and appeal of a destination, influencing tourists' perceptions and decisions, while Memorable Tourism Experiences encapsulate the emotional impact, uniqueness, and engagement tourists seek during their visits. Tourist Satisfaction, as the dependent variable, serves as a crucial measure of the overall success and quality of tourists' experiences, encompassing their assessments, value perceptions, and intentions to recommend and revisit destinations. By incorporating these variables into the model, this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the factors shaping tourists' experiences and satisfaction levels, contributing to the advancement of tourism research and practice:



**Figure 1:** Proposed research model

Research hypothesis:

H1: *Cultural image has a positive significant influence on memorable tourism experiences.*

H2: *Cultural image has a positive significant influence on tourist satisfaction.*

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Research Population and Sample

The population used in this study comprises Tourism in Labuan Cermin in 2022 and 2023, with unknown or infinite population size. The sampling method employed is simple random sampling from customers who have visited these cafes. Based on calculations derived from the indicators used in the variables, which include 15 indicators in this study, a sample size of 150 participants is determined, calculated as  $15 \times 10 = 150$ . However, only 135 respondents were collected (Yudaruddin, 2021)..

#### 3.2. Types and Data Sources

This research utilizes quantitative data gathered through primary sources, specifically through questionnaires distributed to Tourism in Labuan Cermin in 2022 and 2023. The questionnaire consists of several questions adopted from Chieng 2019; McFadden 2006.

#### 3.3. Data Collection Method

The data collection method involves distributing questionnaires to Tourism who have visited Labuan Cermin. The questionnaire contains questions derived from Chieng (2019), McFadden (2006), Li Xu (2022), Moliner-Tena & Monferrer (2021), Chieng (2019), and Kotler et al. (2016)

#### 3.4. Research Instrument

Validity and reliability tests are conducted in this study. Validity refers to the accuracy of an instrument in measurement (, and significance testing is used to determine the suitability of items by examining if the calculated  $r$  is greater than the tabled  $r$ . Reliability testing ensures consistent instrument results using Cronbach's Alpha method.

#### 3.5. Analysis Tools

The analysis tool employed is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using the SmartPLS program. SEM will be used to assess the validity and reliability of the research findings: Structural Model (Inner Model)The inner model illustrates the relationship between latent variables based on theoretical substance. The inner model equation for SEM PLS is  $\eta_j = \sum \beta_{ji} \eta_i + \sum \gamma_{jb} \xi_b + \zeta_j$ , where  $i, b$  denotes the range index throughout  $i$  and  $b, j$  represents the number of endogenous latent variables,  $\beta_{ji}$  signifies the path coefficients linking endogenous latent variables ( $\eta$ ),  $\gamma_{jb}$  represents the path coefficients linking endogenous latent variables ( $\eta$ ) with exogenous ( $\xi$ ), and  $\zeta$  indicates the measurement error rate (inner residual variable).



Measurement Model (Outer Model) The outer model illustrates the relationship between latent variables and their indicator variables. There are two types of models in the outer model: reflective indicator model and formative indicator model. The equation for the reflective indicator model in SEM PLS is  $x = \lambda_x \xi + \epsilon_x$  and  $y = \lambda_y \eta + \epsilon_y$ , where X represents the indicator for exogenous latent variables ( $\xi$ ), Y represents the indicator for endogenous latent variables ( $\eta$ ),  $\lambda_x$  and  $\lambda_y$  signify the loading matrix depicting coefficients similar to simple regression coefficients linking latent variables with their indicators. The equation for the formative indicator model is  $\xi = \Pi_x \xi X_i + \delta \xi$  and  $\eta = \Pi_y \eta Y_i + \epsilon \eta$ , where  $\Pi_x$  and  $\Pi_y$  represent multiple regression coefficients from latent variables to indicators, and  $\Pi_x$  and  $\epsilon \eta$  indicate measurement error rates (residual error).

### 3.6. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is conducted using SEM analysis with SmartPLS software, confirming the relationships between dependent and independent variables (Yudaruddin, 2021). If the significance value (t) is less than 5%, H0 is rejected, and Ha is accepted. Conversely, if the significance value (t) is greater than 5%, H0 is accepted, and Ha is rejected.

## 4. Result and Discussion

### 4.1. Cultural image and memorable tourism experiences

Hypothesis 1 (H1) in this study proposes that Cultural Image (X1) has a positive influence on Memorable Tourism Experience (Y1). The results of structural analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in Table 2 indicate strong support for H1. The path coefficient of 0.125 suggests that each increase in cultural perception among tourists significantly contributes to enhancing unforgettable tourism experiences. The t-statistic value exceeding the significance threshold at 1.989, with a P-value of 0.047, confirms that this relationship is unlikely to occur by chance and has high statistical significance. These findings are in line with previous research by Li Xu (2022), which also shows that a strong cultural image has a positive impact on memorable tourism experiences.

In this context, the significant influence of Cultural Image on Memorable Tourism Experience reinforces the importance of building a strong cultural image in the tourism industry. Authentic, unique, and appealing cultural perceptions not only increase tourists' interest in visiting specific destinations but also contribute to creating unforgettable experiences during their journeys. The support from the findings of this research indicates that tourist destinations that effectively highlight their cultural identity tend to be more successful in attracting tourists and providing memorable experiences. For instance, Kotler & Keller (2017) and Li Xu (2022) have highlighted the importance of cultural image in shaping positive perceptions of tourists towards destinations. In this context, Chieng (2019) also suggests that authentic and appealing cultural perceptions can enhance tourists' interest in engaging with local cultural aspects. Furthermore, the results of this analysis align with studies conducted by Moliner-Tena & Monferrer (2021) and Kotler et al. (2016), indicating that memorable tourism experiences are often closely related to a destination's cultural identity. These findings reinforce the conclusion that a strong cultural image can positively influence tourists' experiences during their travels. In addition to the aforementioned references, the findings of this research also resonate with other studies. For example, Ling et al. (2010) and Tung and Ritchie (2011) state that memorable tourism experiences are often linked to cultural aspects such as traditions, arts, and local cuisines. Hasemi et al. (2019) also indicate that authentic and memorable experiences for tourists are often closely related to their understanding of the local culture they visit. Thus, the findings from the analysis of H1 contribute further to our understanding of how Cultural Image contributes to memorable tourism experiences.

**Table 1.** Summary of Path Coefficient

Hypothesis	Path coefficient	T Statistic	P-Value	Result
H1: Cultural Image (X1) -> Memorable Tourism Experience (Y1)	0.135	2.086	0.000	Supported
H2: Cultural Image (X1) -> Tourists Satisfaction (Y2)	0.004	0.4452	0.321	Rejected

#### 4.2. Cultural image and tourist satisfaction

Hypothesis 2 (H2) in this study examines the relationship between Cultural Image (X1) and Tourist Satisfaction (Y2). However, the analysis did not find significant support for H2, as indicated by a P-value exceeding 0.050 and a path coefficient of 0.035, alongside a t-statistic of 0.551. These results suggest that there is no statistically significant impact of Cultural Image on Tourist Satisfaction based on the data analyzed.

The lack of significant findings regarding H2 may be interpreted in several ways. Firstly, it could indicate that while Cultural Image may influence tourists' perceptions and experiences, it may not directly translate into overall satisfaction with their trip. Tourist Satisfaction is a complex construct influenced by various factors beyond cultural perceptions, such as service quality, amenities, and overall trip experience.

Additionally, the non-significant relationship between Cultural Image and Tourist Satisfaction may also highlight the importance of other variables in determining satisfaction levels. For instance, previous studies by Rajaratman et al. (2015) and Kim et al. (2012) have emphasized the role of service quality, destination amenities, and value for money in shaping tourists' satisfaction levels. These factors may overshadow the impact of Cultural Image when it comes to overall tourist satisfaction.

It is essential for future research to delve deeper into the nuances of Tourist Satisfaction and explore the intricate interplay between various factors that contribute to tourists' overall satisfaction levels. While Cultural Image may not directly impact satisfaction in this study, understanding how it interacts with other elements in shaping tourists' perceptions and experiences can provide valuable insights for destination management and marketing strategies.

#### 5. Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Cultural Image has a significant impact on creating memorable tourism experiences. This supports previous theories that emphasize the importance of building a strong cultural image in the tourism industry. However, the non-significant relationship between Cultural Image and Tourist Satisfaction indicates the complexity of factors influencing tourist satisfaction. These results provide a deeper understanding of how cultural aspects can influence tourists' experiences but may not always directly lead to overall satisfaction.

In terms of policy implications and recommendations for future research, several considerations can be made. Firstly, it is crucial to recognize that tourist satisfaction is influenced by many factors beyond Cultural Image, such as service quality, destination facilities, and the value perceived by tourists. Therefore, future research can focus on identifying other factors contributing to tourist satisfaction and how the interaction between these factors can be effectively managed by

destination managers. Additionally, practical recommendations can be developed for tourism destination managers, such as the development of promotional programs that integrate cultural aspects with unique and appealing tourist experiences. Thus, future research is expected to make a greater contribution to understanding the dynamics of the relationship between Cultural Image, Memorable Tourism Experience, and Tourist Satisfaction in the context of the tourism industry.

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