

The Effect of Tourism Event Management on Tourist Loyalty with Visitor Satisfaction as Mediating Variable

*The Effect of Tourism
Event Management on
Tourist Loyalty*

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ABSTRACT

Increasing tourism competition requires effective event management strategies. This study aims to analyze the influence of tourism event management on tourist loyalty through the mediation of visitor satisfaction. A quantitative approach was employed, surveying 200 tourists who visited Lake Toba between November and December 2025. Data were collected using a structured five-point Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed through SEM-PLS. The results of the study indicate that tourism event management has a positive and significant effect on visitor satisfaction. Furthermore, visitor satisfaction is proven to have a positive and significant effect on tourist loyalty. In addition, visitor satisfaction acts as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between tourism event management and tourist loyalty. These findings indicate that the quality of professional event planning, organization, implementation, promotion, and evaluation can create memorable tourism experiences, increase satisfaction, and build sustainable tourist loyalty. In addition to practical implications for local governments, destination managers, and event organizers in creating integrated, creative, and experience-oriented tourism event management strategies to boost Lake Toba's competitiveness as a top national and international tourism destination, this study makes theoretical contributions to the development of event management studies and tourist behavior.

Keywords: *Tourist Behavior, Tourism Event Management, Tourist Loyalty, Visitor Satisfaction.*

INTRODUCTION

Management is the process of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling organizational resources to achieve goals effectively and efficiently (Nurhikmah, 2024). In tourism, management plays a strategic role in managing destinations and tourism activities to create quality visitor experiences. Mahendri and Astuti (2025) found that event marketing strategies significantly improve tourist satisfaction and loyalty, with satisfaction acting as a key mediator in shaping loyalty. Tourist loyalty represents the success of sustainable tourism destination management, reflected in tourists' intention to revisit and recommend the destination to others (Lee & Xue, 2020; Kusumah, 2024). Oktavia et al. (2025) demonstrated that visitor satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between tourist attractions and visitor loyalty, confirming that loyalty emerges from a satisfying tourism experience.

Lake Toba is a national super-priority tourism destination with strong potential for cultural and nature-based events to attract domestic and international visitors. However, increasing visitor loyalty is still essential for the growth of sustainable tourism. Butarbutar et al. (2023) found that loyalty is significantly influenced by integrated marketing communication and tourism experience, highlighting the importance of professional event management. Supporting studies by Eviana (2024) and Mahendri and Astuti (2025) also show that service quality and event marketing significantly affect satisfaction and loyalty. However, preliminary observations indicate that issues related to event

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organization, facilities, and promotion still affect visitor satisfaction and revisit intention (Damanik & Yusuf, 2022; Ngian et al., 2025).

Tourism event management at Lake Toba has seen a rise in cultural festivals, sports events, and local wisdom-based attractions to enhance the destination's appeal. However, this growth has not always improved management quality or visitor experience. Many tourists are attracted by events, but visits are often temporary and driven by event momentum rather than long-term destination attachment, highlighting a gap between event intensity and tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Lee et al., 2011). Contributing factors include limited stakeholder coordination, suboptimal planning, uneven facilities, inconsistent service standards, and a lack of professional human resources in event management and hospitality.

Various studies highlight the strategic role of tourism event management in enhancing tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Mahendri and Astuti (2025) found that event marketing positively and significantly affects tourist loyalty, with satisfaction acting as the main mediating variable. Similarly, Eviana (2024) reported that memorable tourism experiences and service quality during events significantly increase visitor satisfaction and loyalty. Oktavia et al. (2025) also demonstrated that event-based destination attractiveness strengthens tourist loyalty through satisfaction, particularly in lake tourism destinations. In addition, Al-Ababneh et al. (2019) and Jeong and Kim (2020) confirmed that event quality, visitor experience, and effective management significantly improve satisfaction and foster long-term tourist loyalty. These findings underline the importance of examining the influence of tourism event management on tourist loyalty through visitor satisfaction at Lake Toba.

Although previous studies confirm that event management, event quality, and tourism experiences influence tourist satisfaction and loyalty, several research gaps remain. Most studies focus on urban destinations or large-scale festivals, while empirical research in destinations such as Lake Toba is still limited. In addition, prior studies often treat event management as a direct determinant of loyalty without deeply examining the mediating role of visitor satisfaction, which acts as a key psychological link between service perceptions and long-term loyalty (Hussain et al., 2023). Therefore, this study develops a conceptual model integrating tourism event management, visitor satisfaction, and tourist loyalty in the context of Lake Toba.

The novelty of this research lies in developing an empirical model that examines the effect of tourism event management on tourist loyalty through visitor satisfaction at the super-priority destination of Lake Toba. Unlike previous studies that mainly focused on urban festivals or large-scale national events, this study specifically analyzes nature- and culture-based local tourism events within a global geopark destination context. It also integrates event management dimensions comprehensively, including planning, organization, implementation, promotion, and evaluation, to better explain the formation of tourist satisfaction and loyalty. The findings are expected to provide strategic recommendations for destination managers and policymakers to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of tourism at Lake Toba as a world-class destination. Thus, this research is important to analyze the influence of tourism event management on tourist loyalty through the mediation of visitor satisfaction at Lake Toba, North Sumatra, as an effort to support the development of sustainable and competitive tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The Effect of Tourism Event Management on Visitor Satisfaction

Tourism event management is a strategic process that encompasses the planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation of tourism activities, all aimed at creating meaningful and valuable experiences for visitors (Getz & Page, 2019; Evans, 2024). Professionally managed events enhance perceived service quality and contribute significantly to overall visitor satisfaction. Effective event management goes beyond operational coordination, as it requires attention to visitor expectations, engagement, and the quality of interactions throughout the experience (Bowdin et al., 2023). By carefully

designing and executing events, destinations can provide experiences that are not only enjoyable but also memorable, fostering positive perceptions and emotional connections with visitors (Mair & Smith, 2021).

The impact of well-executed event management extends to long-term visitor satisfaction and loyalty. Research has demonstrated that when events are strategically planned and professionally managed, they can sustainably elevate visitor satisfaction, encourage repeat visits, and promote positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Prayag et al., 2017; Özkan & Yıldız, 2024). This underscores the importance of experience-oriented and integrated event management, as it strengthens the emotional and cognitive engagement of tourists, ensuring that the destination is perceived as both high-quality and visitor-focused. In addition to increasing immediate satisfaction, investing in such expert event management promotes sustained tourism development and strengthens the destination's competitive edge in both domestic and foreign travel markets.

H1: Tourism event management has a positive and significant effect on visitor satisfaction.

The Effect of Visitor Satisfaction on Tourist Loyalty

Visitor satisfaction can be understood as an individual's emotional evaluation of the overall tourism experience acquired during a visit, reflecting how well their expectations and desires are met (Bagheri et al., 2024; Suban, 2025; Yu et al., 2025). When tourists perceive a high level of satisfaction, they are more likely to develop intentions to revisit the destination and share positive recommendations with others, creating a ripple effect that benefits the destination's reputation and future visitor engagement. Satisfaction thus functions as an essential psychological and experiential construct that links the quality of services and experiences provided to the behavioral outcomes of tourists (Haji et al., 2022). Several studies emphasize the pivotal role of satisfaction in shaping loyalty, highlighting that it goes beyond immediate enjoyment to influence long-term attitudes and behaviors toward the destination (Chen & Phou, 2013; Han et al., 2021).

Empirical evidence further supports the strong relationship between satisfaction and loyalty across various tourism contexts. Assaker et al. (2011) and Sugiyama et al. (2024) found that satisfaction has a direct and significant impact on loyalty, particularly in cultural and nature-based destinations where experiences are immersive and emotionally engaging. Additionally, Andriani et al. (2025) demonstrated that the quality of services throughout the tourism supply chain significantly enhances both tourist satisfaction and loyalty, indicating that well-coordinated and professional service delivery plays a crucial role in fostering repeat visitation. These findings highlight that ensuring high levels of visitor satisfaction is not only a matter of meeting expectations but also a strategic approach to cultivating enduring loyalty and positive advocacy, which are vital for sustainable tourism development.

H2: Visitor satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on tourist loyalty.

Visitor Satisfaction as a Mediating Variable

Effective tourism event management plays a crucial role in strengthening tourist loyalty, both directly and indirectly through visitor satisfaction (Jeong & Kim, 2020; Wantara & Prasetyo, 2024). Well-planned events that integrate attractive programs, professional organization, and quality service delivery can create memorable experiences that enhance tourists' overall perceptions of a destination. Visitors are more likely to be pleased with their experience when they believe that an event is well-managed through transparent scheduling, interesting activities, and helpful amenities. Their desire to return and suggest the location to others is further heightened by this delight. Empirical evidence supports this relationship, as research by Molina-Gómez et al. (2021) demonstrated that event quality significantly influences tourist loyalty through the mediating role of satisfaction. Their findings indicate that tourists who perceive higher event quality tend

to experience greater emotional engagement and enjoyment, which ultimately strengthens their loyalty toward the destination (Wu et al., 2018).

Additionally, pleasure serves as a crucial psychological mechanism that connects long-term behavioral consequences with perceptions of event quality. Travelers who are happy with their event experiences are more inclined to suggest the location or return in the future. Studies by Wang and Li (2023) emphasize that satisfaction bridges event quality and tourist loyalty, highlighting the importance of delivering consistent service quality and engaging experiences in tourism event management.

H3: Visitor satisfaction mediates the positive and significant influence of tourism event management on tourist loyalty.

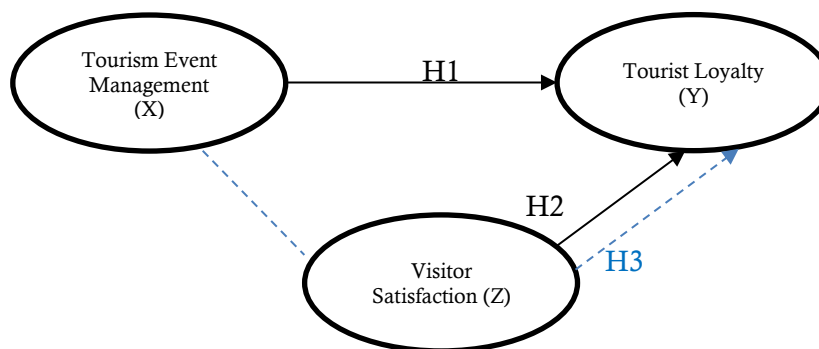


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study, which is depicted in Figure 1, is predicated on the idea that successful tourism event management, encompassing planning, organization, implementation, promotion, and assessment, can produce exceptional and unforgettable travel experiences that raise visitor satisfaction. Visitor satisfaction represents an evaluative response to the tourism experience and becomes a key factor in shaping tourist loyalty, reflected in revisit intentions and willingness to recommend the destination. Thus, tourism event management is expected to influence tourist loyalty both directly and indirectly through visitor satisfaction as a mediating variable. This relationship suggests that improving the quality of tourism event management in Lake Toba, North Sumatra, can enhance visitor satisfaction, strengthen tourist loyalty, and ultimately support the competitiveness and sustainability of the destination.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a quantitative methodology to investigate the causal relationship between visitor satisfaction, tourist loyalty, and tourism event management at Lake Toba, North Sumatra. A quantitative approach was chosen because it provides an objective picture through numerical measurements and inferential statistical analysis, allowing for empirical, systematic, and measurable hypothesis testing to obtain valid and generalizable conclusions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Hair et al., 2021). This study uses a survey design and is explanatory in nature. By evaluating previously developed hypotheses, explanatory research seeks to explain causal links between variables. Primary data was gathered directly from respondents using a survey methodology and a structured questionnaire. This approach is considered effective in identifying tourist perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors toward tourism event management, satisfaction, and loyalty (Sekaran & Bougie, 2022).

The research was conducted in the Lake Toba tourist destination area in North Sumatra, a national super-priority destination. This location was selected based on the high frequency of cultural and nature-based tourism events. The research period was planned for November-December 2025, considering the high number of tourist visits and

numerous tourism events during that period, allowing for representative and relevant data collection.

The study’s population consisted of all visitors to Lake Toba during the study period. Since the precise population size is unknown, non-probability sampling with the method of purposeful sampling, that is, visitors who have taken part in or seen tourism events at Lake Toba, was the sampling strategy employed. A minimum of 150–200 respondents was required for strong and reliable testability, according to the minimal criterion for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis, which is 5–10 times the number of indicators (Hair et al., 2021; Sarstedt et al., 2022).

A five-point Likert scale, spanning from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), was used in a closed-ended questionnaire to collect data. The research tool was created using indices of tourism event management, visitor pleasure, and tourist loyalty that have undergone validity and reliability tests in earlier studies. The use of the questionnaire allows for objective, consistent, and efficient measurement of respondents’ attitudes and perceptions (Sekaran & Bougie, 2022).

Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) data analysis was carried out using SmartPLS software. This approach was selected because it can evaluate direct and indirect effects, analyze intricate structural linkages, and be used to study using mediation models and moderate sample sizes. Convergent, discriminant, and reliability validity tests are used to assess the measurement model (outer model) during the analysis phases. Additionally, the structural model (inner model) is evaluated to determine the path coefficients and significance of the hypothesis.

RESULTS

The study’s results section provides empirical conclusions derived from the analysis of questionnaire data collected from visitors to Lake Toba during November and December of 2025. Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) was used in the analysis to examine validity, reliability, and connections between variables. Respondent characteristics, instrument validity and reliability tests, structural model testing, and research hypothesis testing are the sections that present the findings.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	92	46%
	Female	108	54%
Age	< 25 years	48	24%
	25–35 years	72	36%
	36–45 years	52	26%
	> 45 years	28	14%
Work	Students	45	22.5%
	Officer	78	39%
	Businessman	52	26%
	Other	25	12.5%

According to the information shown in Table 1, females made up 54% of the total respondents. The most prominent age group was 25–35 years, representing 36% of participants, which reflects a segment of active tourists with a strong interest in engaging with various tourism activities and events. Regarding occupation, employees comprised the largest group at 39%, followed by entrepreneurs at 26%, and students at 22.5%. This demographic composition suggests that Lake Toba attracts productive tourists who not only possess significant purchasing power but also exhibit a potential for loyalty, provided that their satisfaction with the tourism experience is consistently maintained. These findings underscore the importance of destination management strategies that are attentive to the needs and preferences of this critical tourist segment, aiming to deliver experiences that are not only immediately satisfying but also capable of fostering long-term engagement and repeated visitation.

Table 2. Construct Validity Test

Variables	Indicator	Loading Factor
Tourism Event Management	TEM1	0.782
	TEM2	0.804
	TEM3	0.816
	TEM4	0.799
Visitor Satisfaction	VS1	0.831
	VS2	0.846
	VS3	0.858
Tourist Loyalty	TL1	0.812
	TL2	0.834
	TL3	0.827

As shown in Table 2, all indicators exhibit factor loading values exceeding 0.70, thereby meeting the established criteria for convergent validity. This demonstrates that each indicator effectively reflects the latent construct it is intended to measure. Notably, the indicator for visitor satisfaction displays the highest loading value, suggesting that the emotional and evaluative dimensions of the tourism experience are particularly prominent for respondents. As a result, the research tool used in this study may be regarded as legitimate and suitable for use in evaluating the suggested research hypotheses and testing the structural model. This validation enhances the stability of later analytical conclusions and reaffirms the measurement tools' dependability.

Table 3. Construct Reliability Test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Information
Tourist Event Management	0.846	0.892	Reliable
Visitor Satisfaction	0.874	0.911	Reliable
Tourist Loyalty	0.862	0.903	Reliable

All of the study's constructs have Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above the 0.70 threshold, as Table 3 illustrates, suggesting a high level of internal consistency. This indicates that each construct's underlying dimensions are reliably captured by the measurement items, guaranteeing that the results gathered are steady, consistent, and representative of the phenomenon under study. High reliability not only minimizes potential measurement errors but also enhances the credibility of the research instrument, allowing researchers to confidently interpret the relationships between variables.

Such reliable measurements provide a solid foundation for analyzing the structural model, as they ensure that observed patterns among constructs are meaningful and not due to inconsistencies in the data. Consequently, the study can produce accurate and dependable insights into factors such as visitor satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty. By establishing both reliability and stability, the research instrument strengthens the validity of subsequent analyses and supports the generation of evidence-based conclusions that are academically sound and practically relevant for tourism management and strategic decision-making.

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination (R²)

Endogenous Variables	R ²
Visitor Satisfaction	0.521
Tourist Loyalty	0.604

Table 4 indicates that tourism event management accounts for 52.1% of the variance in visitor satisfaction, while the combined influence of tourist event management and visitor satisfaction explains 60.4% of the variance in tourist loyalty. These R² values fall within the moderate to strong range, suggesting that the research model possesses substantial predictive capability. This demonstrates that the variables included in the

study are not only relevant but also significant in capturing the dynamics of tourist behavior at Lake Toba.

The findings imply that effective management of tourism events plays a crucial role in shaping visitors' experiences, which in turn influences their loyalty and likelihood of returning. By highlighting the measurable impact of these factors, the study provides empirical evidence that can guide destination management strategies, ensuring that tourism initiatives are designed to enhance satisfaction and foster long-term engagement. In this way, the model contributes both theoretically and practically to understanding how tourism event management can drive positive behavioral outcomes among tourists.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing

Path of Influence	Coefficient	t-statistic	p-value	Results
Tourist Event Management → Visitor Satisfaction	0.721	11.384	0.000	H ₁ Accepted
Visitor Satisfaction → Tourist Loyalty	0.654	9.872	0.000	H ₂ Accepted
Tourist Event Management → Visitor Satisfaction → Tourist Loyalty	0.471	7.294	0.000	H ₃ Accepted

Table 5 demonstrates that all research hypotheses were supported, with p-values below 0.05. Tourism event management was found to have a significant positive effect on visitor satisfaction ($\beta = 0.721$), while visitor satisfaction, in turn, significantly influenced tourist loyalty ($\beta = 0.654$). Moreover, visitor satisfaction was shown to significantly mediate the relationship between event management and tourist loyalty ($\beta = 0.471$). These results indicate that enhancing the quality and effectiveness of tourism event management contributes both directly and indirectly to fostering tourist loyalty at Lake Toba.

The findings suggest that tourism event management holds a strategic role in increasing both visitor satisfaction and loyalty. Visitor satisfaction serves as a critical mediating factor that amplifies the impact of well-managed events on loyalty outcomes. This implies that professional, well-integrated, and experience-focused event management can generate positive perceptions, strengthen emotional connections, and cultivate long-term loyalty among tourists. Therefore, optimizing the planning, organization, and execution of tourism events is essential for improving Lake Toba's competitiveness and reputation as a premier destination for both domestic and international travelers. By prioritizing high-quality event experiences, destination managers can create lasting value for visitors while supporting sustainable tourism growth.

DISCUSSION

This discussion interprets the research findings on the influence of tourism event management on tourist loyalty through visitor satisfaction at Lake Toba, North Sumatra. It analyzes the causal relationships among variables based on hypothesis testing results and relates them to previous studies to strengthen the validity of the findings and provide theoretical and practical insights for sustainable tourism development. The research results show that tourism event management has a positive and significant impact on visitor satisfaction. This finding by Xiangyu et al. (2022) indicates that better planning, organization, implementation, promotion, and evaluation of events lead to higher levels of tourist satisfaction. Professionally managed events can create enjoyable experiences, enhance visitor comfort, and foster emotional engagement with the destination. This finding is consistent with Getz and Page (2019), who emphasized that high-quality event management plays a key role in creating meaningful tourism experiences and increasing visitor satisfaction.

This result is also supported by Mair and Smith (2021), who argued that effective event management improves satisfaction through quality services, attractive programs, and proper facility management. In addition, Prayag et al. (2017) highlighted that emotional engagement and positive experiences during events are important determinants of tourist satisfaction. In the context of Lake Toba, these findings suggest that structured cultural

and nature-based event management can enhance destination quality perceptions and strengthen sustainable tourist satisfaction.

The test results indicate that visitor satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on tourist loyalty. This means that tourists who feel satisfied with their experience at Lake Toba are more likely to revisit and recommend the destination to others. Satisfaction, therefore, becomes a key factor in strengthening long-term relationships between tourists and destinations (Kurian, 2023). This finding is consistent with Chen and Phou (2013), who emphasized that satisfaction significantly influences destination loyalty through tourists' attitudes and perceived value toward the tourism experience.

This result is also supported by Rasoolimanesh et al. (2022), who found that satisfaction directly enhances loyalty by building trust and emotional attachment to a destination. Likewise, Suhartanto et al. (2020) demonstrated that satisfaction in cultural and nature-based tourism destinations significantly increases revisit intention and positive word-of-mouth promotion. In the context of Lake Toba, higher visitor satisfaction with event experiences, services, and supporting facilities contributes to stronger and more sustainable tourist loyalty.

The findings show that visitor satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between tourism event management and tourist loyalty. This indicates that effective event management indirectly strengthens loyalty through increased satisfaction. Well-organized events create memorable experiences, generate positive emotions, and enhance perceived value, which simultaneously fosters satisfaction and encourages tourists to revisit and recommend the destination. These results are consistent with Lee and Xue (2020), who found that satisfaction mediates the relationship between event quality and tourist loyalty in tourism festivals. This finding is also supported by Hussain et al. (2023), who emphasized that satisfaction plays a strategic role in linking event quality to destination loyalty. Similarly, Stylidis et al. (2022) highlighted that emotional experiences and satisfaction significantly contribute to tourists' attachment and loyalty toward a destination. In the context of Lake Toba, satisfaction functions as a key psychological mechanism connecting the quality of event management with the formation of long-term tourist loyalty.

The results of this research and discussion indicate that tourism event management, visitor satisfaction, and tourist loyalty are closely interrelated constructs. Professional, innovative, and experience-oriented event management will increase visitor satisfaction, which in turn strengthens loyalty. These findings have practical implications for local governments, destination managers, and event organizers in designing integrated, adaptive, and sustainable tourism event strategies. Thus, Lake Toba can continue to enhance its competitiveness as a leading national and international destination by strengthening event management and enhancing the quality of the tourist experience.

CONCLUSION

The results indicate that tourism event management positively and significantly affects visitor satisfaction. High-quality planning, organization, implementation, promotion, and evaluation of events create enjoyable and memorable experiences, thereby increasing tourist satisfaction at Lake Toba. Visitor satisfaction also has a significant positive effect on tourist loyalty, reflected in intentions to revisit and recommend the destination. The study further shows that satisfaction mediates the relationship between event management and loyalty, highlighting its role as a key mechanism linking quality event management to long-term tourist commitment.

These findings contribute theoretically by enhancing understanding of event management and tourist behavior in nature- and culture-based destinations. They suggest that local governments, destination managers, and event organizers should implement integrated, innovative, and experience-oriented event strategies to improve satisfaction and loyalty, thereby strengthening Lake Toba's competitiveness as a sustainable national and international tourism destination.

This study has several limitations. First, it focuses only on tourists visiting Lake Toba, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other destinations. Second, the model only examines tourism event management, visitor satisfaction, and tourist loyalty, without including other potential factors such as destination image, perceived value, or service quality. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the model by incorporating additional variables and testing it in different tourism destinations or event contexts to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of tourist loyalty formation.

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