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# ENHANCING VISITOR SATISFACTION THROUGH SERVICE QUALITY: A STUDY OF THE TRADITIONAL TOURISM VILLAGE OF LEWOKLUOK

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## Abstract.

East Nusa Tenggara, particularly the East Flores Regency, presents a diverse range of tourist attractions, with the Traditional Tourism Village of Lewokluok emerging as a notable destination. Renowned for its authentic village atmosphere, cultural heritage, and unique Koke Bale traditional houses, Lewokluok has gained national recognition and attracted nearly 30,000 visitors from July 2021 to December 2023. Despite its appeal, the village faces challenges in service quality, which is crucial for enhancing visitor satisfaction. This research aims to exploring how service quality dimensions, aligned with sustainable tourism principles, affect visitor satisfaction in settings prioritizing environmental and cultural preservation. This study investigates the relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction, utilizing a quantitative approach with a survey of 100 tourists. Findings reveal that high service quality significantly influences visitor satisfaction, Key service dimensions, including reliability and responsiveness, play a critical role in shaping the tourist experience. Recommendations for improving service quality and promoting the village's unique cultural offerings are proposed to enhance visitor satisfaction and ensure sustainable tourism development in Lewokluok.

**Keywords:** Service Quality; Tourist Satisfaction; Tourism Village

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia's tourism industry can effectively leverage local cultural heritage by embracing and promoting its cultural richness, fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation, and enhancing the overall tourism experience (Risfandini, 2024). East Nusa Tenggara boasts a diverse array of tourist attractions, encompassing natural, cultural, and artificial tourism. Among its regions, East Flores Regency stands out for its significant tourism potential, driven by its rich natural resources, cultural authenticity, and historical heritage. This area supports various types of tourism, including historical, culinary, religious, nature-based, and artificial tourism. A notable destination within this region is the Traditional Tourism Village of Lewokluok. To qualify as a tourism village, certain criteria must be met: there should be attractions that highlight the area's natural and cultural tourism potential, a strong sense of community acceptance and commitment, and access to a local workforce (Risfandini et al., 2024)

Located in the Demon Pagong District of East Flores Regency, Lewokluok is celebrated for its authentic village atmosphere, making it a popular tourist site. Situated approximately 25 km from Larantuka City and covering 28.68 km<sup>2</sup> (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018),



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Lewokluok serves as the center of the Demon Pagong tribe. The village gained national recognition by securing first place in the traditional village category at the 2021 Pesona Indonesia (API) event. Its main attractions include the unique Koke Bale (traditional houses), local cultural arts, traditional dances, handicrafts, ikat weaving, and ceremonies. Additionally, the area boasts scenic beaches, abundant water sources, artificial reservoirs, and pristine forests with well-preserved ecosystems. Designated as one of the 30 tourism villages under the Floratama theme by the Labuan Bajo Flores Authority Executing Agency (BPOLBF), Lewokluok aims to offer a comprehensive village tourism experience.

According to the East Flores Regency Tourism and Culture Office, the Lewokluok Traditional Tourism Village welcomed 29,588 tourists between July 2021 and December 2023. Visitor numbers increased from 8,770 in 2021 to 11,114 in 2022, although local tourist visits slightly declined to 9,704 in 2023. Despite its cultural significance, Lewokluok has seen limited development, necessitating improvements in administrative processes and service quality. The local community lacks adequate training, impacting essential areas such as effective communication, innovative information delivery, and foreign language proficiency, which in turn affects the overall visitor experience.

Service quality is a complex and widely researched concept across various sectors, influencing customer perceptions and satisfaction. In tourism management, visitor satisfaction is crucial, as it affects not only immediate experiences but also the likelihood of repeat visits and recommendations. Research indicates that visitor satisfaction is multidimensional, comprising factors like place attachment, perceived quality, and overall experience at the destination. Place attachment, which refers to the emotional bond visitors form with specific locations, plays a particularly significant role. Ramkissoon et al. (2013) demonstrate that satisfaction increases with a strong emotional connection to a place, suggesting that deeper attachment enhances overall satisfaction. Supporting this, Toko et al. (2021) found that visitors' experiential values, including environmental perceptions, strongly correlate with satisfaction levels. In ecotourism contexts, the quality of natural resources—such as coral reefs—directly impacts satisfaction, highlighting the importance of preserving these resources to promote sustainable tourism.

Service quality—especially when tailored to the unique attributes of a destination—significantly influences visitor satisfaction by meeting or exceeding expectations. This is particularly relevant in sustainable tourism villages, where high-quality service fosters a deeper connection to the location, enhances visitor experiences, and encourages positive perceptions of authenticity and sustainability. Consequently, this research hypothesizes that: service quality significantly influences visitor satisfaction in sustainable tourism villages. This research aims to exploring how service quality dimensions, aligned with sustainable tourism principles, affect visitor satisfaction in settings prioritizing environmental and cultural preservation.

## 2. Literature Review

Research on service quality reveals that it can be understood through various frameworks, each highlighting unique dimensions contributing to the overall service experience. A well-established model is the SERVQUAL framework, which identifies five core dimensions: reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness. This model has been extensively validated across sectors such as hospitality and healthcare (Anwar, 2017). However, the importance of each service quality dimension often varies by context. Chowdhary



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and Prakash (2007) suggest that consumers prioritize these dimensions differently depending on the type of service, indicating that a universal ranking may not be appropriate for all settings. This need for context-specific approaches is further supported by industry-specific studies in fields like retail and transportation. For instance, Dabholkar's Retail Service Quality Scale highlights unique elements of retail service, reinforcing the necessity for tailored measurement tools (Bhaskar & Subramanyam, 2021). Similarly, Deb and Ahmed (2019) examine both subjective and objective dimensions of service quality in public transportation, demonstrating that comprehensive assessments require qualitative and quantitative approaches.

The diverse and context-sensitive nature of service quality dimensions underscores the importance of ongoing evaluation and improvement across sectors to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. The relationship between service quality and tourism sustainability is well-documented, with evidence suggesting that high service quality significantly mediates tourist satisfaction, which in turn influences sustainable tourism outcomes. For example, Alsiehemy emphasizes that tourist satisfaction serves as a crucial mediator between service quality and tourism sustainability, indicating that improving service quality can lead to enhanced tourist experiences and sustainable practices in tourism settings (Alsiehemy, 2023). Pavić et al. highlight that quality hospitality services on agritourism farms not only enhance tourist experiences but also support sustainable practices by involving local communities and promoting local products (Pavić et al., 2019). This aligns with the broader understanding that sustainable tourism must integrate local culture and community engagement to be effective, as noted by Luo, who discusses the importance of local culture and public welfare in sustainable tourism management (Luo, 2018).

Visitor satisfaction in sustainable tourism villages is a multifaceted concept involving environmental, social, and economic factors. Research indicates that visitor satisfaction is essential for the sustainability and competitiveness of tourism destinations. For instance, Trišić et al. (2023) highlight that various sustainability dimensions significantly contribute to visitor satisfaction, with findings demonstrating a positive reception of sustainable tourism initiatives in protected areas. Similarly, Cheng et al. (2022) assert that high visitor satisfaction fosters increased loyalty and support for sustainable practices in tourism.

Ramkisson et al. (2013) emphasize the significance of place attachment and visitor satisfaction in enhancing overall experiences. They argue that a strong emotional connection to a destination not only improves visitor satisfaction but also encourages pro-environmental behaviors. This emotional connection is crucial in sustainable tourism villages, where the authenticity and uniqueness of local culture and heritage serve as major attractions (Putra, 2023). Furthermore, local community involvement in tourism development is vital. Obradović et al. (2020) highlight that local residents' perceptions and satisfaction are essential for the success of tourism initiatives. The role of environmental factors in shaping visitor satisfaction is supported by studies examining the relationship between natural resource management and tourist experiences. For example, Coghlan's research on the Great Barrier Reef demonstrates that well-managed natural resources lead to higher visitor satisfaction and referral rates, reinforcing the necessity of conservation efforts for sustainable tourism (Coghlan, 2011). Similarly, Zakharia and Agusintadewi (2023) underscore the importance of developing communal spaces and facilities that serve both tourists and local communities, thereby enhancing overall visitor satisfaction.

In the context of tourism villages, it is essential to consider the economic implications of sustainable practices on local communities. Sitorus et al. (2023) discuss how tourism can



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foster sustainable livelihoods by providing employment opportunities and reducing poverty, ultimately enhancing visitor satisfaction by ensuring that local communities benefit from tourism activities. This point is echoed by Putra, who highlights the significance of community engagement in the sustainable development of tourism villages, noting that the authenticity of local culture and heritage is a key attraction for visitors (Putra, 2023).

Research on the influence of service quality on visitor satisfaction is crucial, particularly in sustainable tourism villages. High service quality directly impacts visitor experiences, fostering satisfaction that not only encourages repeat visits but also promotes positive word-of-mouth referrals. This is essential for the long-term sustainability of tourism villages, as satisfied visitors are more likely to support local economies and conservation efforts. Understanding the relationship between service quality and visitor satisfaction can help stakeholders identify areas for improvement, ensuring the preservation and enhancement of the unique cultural and environmental attributes of these destinations. Ultimately, such research contributes to the sustainable development of tourism, balancing visitor needs with the well-being of local communities and the environment.

### 3. Method

This research employs a quantitative method to investigate the experiences of tourists visiting the Traditional Tourism Village of Lewokluok. Data collection was conducted through a survey questionnaire administered to a sample of 100 respondents. The research population includes a total of 9,704 tourists who visited the village during the study period. The Slovin formula was applied to determine the appropriate sample size, resulting in a sample of 100 respondents, which provides a statistically significant representation of the larger population. The researcher distributed questionnaires to visitors who had experienced the offerings of the Traditional Tourism Village. Data collection occurred over a 10-day period, allowing for a diverse range of responses from tourists. Once the data was gathered, it was analyzed using SPSS 26, a statistical software package. This analysis included conducting validity and reliability tests to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the questionnaire results. Subsequently, a t-test was performed to evaluate the research hypothesis, allowing for a deeper understanding of the factors influencing tourist satisfaction in the village.

### 4. Results and Discussion

The validity test results indicate that the calculated r-value for each statement item in every variable exceeds the r-table value. In this study, the r-table value is 0.195, determined based on the responses from 100 participants who completed the questionnaire at a significance level of 0.05. Since the calculated r-values for all statement items are greater than 0.195, it confirms the validity of all items used in this study. Additionally, the Cronbach's Alpha values for the variables of Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction are both above 0.60, indicating the reliability of the statements in the questionnaire. The p-value for the service quality variable is 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. This result indicates that the hypothesis related to the service quality variable is accepted, demonstrating that the level of satisfaction experienced by visitors is significantly influenced by the quality of service provided. The service quality coefficient value is 0.322, suggesting that a 1% increase in service quality leads to a 32.2% increase in tourist satisfaction. The positive regression coefficient



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indicates that service quality positively affects visitor satisfaction. Therefore, it can be concluded that visitor satisfaction is strongly influenced by the quality of service offered.

The study's results highlight the significant impact of service quality on tourist satisfaction. This research underscores the relationship between tourists' preferences and the level of originality at tourist locations, indicating that destinations with higher uniqueness are generally more preferred by tourists, which enhances their satisfaction. According to Alsiehem (2023), a strong correlation exists between service quality and tourist satisfaction; higher satisfaction levels are achieved when services meet or exceed tourists' expectations. Key components of high-quality service include reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy, and tangible evidence. The Traditional Tourism Village of Lewokluok exemplifies exceptional service characterized by these attributes. A well-maintained rural environment and the presence of friendly, knowledgeable staff further enrich the optimal tourism experience. By emphasizing these aspects of service quality, the Traditional Tourism Village of Lewokluok can enhance visitor satisfaction and elevate the overall experience, establishing itself as a highly desirable and exceptional tourist destination. Consequently, providing outstanding service will positively influence visitor satisfaction, fostering greater loyalty to the destination.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that service quality significantly impacts tourist satisfaction, particularly in the context of the Traditional Tourism Village of Lewokluok. The findings reveal a strong relationship between tourists' preferences for originality at destinations and their overall satisfaction. Higher levels of uniqueness in tourist locations tend to attract more visitors and enhance their experiences. Additionally, the research indicates that when service quality meets or exceeds tourists' expectations, their satisfaction increases, as supported by Alsiehem (2023).

Key components of high-quality service—including reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy, and tangible evidence—are effectively demonstrated in Lewokluok, contributing to a positive tourist experience. Therefore, by prioritizing these aspects of service quality, the village can solidify its position as a preferred tourist destination.

### Recommendations

1. **Enhance Service Quality:** Focus on training staff to improve reliability, responsiveness, and empathy in service delivery. Conduct regular workshops to ensure all employees understand and implement high-quality service standards.
2. **Promote Uniqueness:** Continue developing and promoting unique experiences and activities that highlight the cultural and historical significance of the Traditional Tourism Village. This can include local crafts, traditional performances, or culinary experiences that distinguish the destination.
3. **Maintain the Rural Environment:** Invest in the upkeep of the village's natural surroundings to ensure a pleasant and authentic atmosphere for visitors. Regular maintenance and beautification projects can enhance the overall tourist experience.
4. **Gather Visitor Feedback:** Implement a system for regularly collecting and analyzing visitor feedback. This will help identify areas for improvement and allow the village to adapt to tourists' changing preferences and expectations.
5. **Marketing and Promotion:** Strengthen marketing efforts to highlight the unique qualities of the Traditional Tourism Village of Lewokluok. Utilize social media and tourism



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platforms to showcase testimonials and experiences of satisfied visitors to attract more tourists.

By adopting these recommendations, the Traditional Tourism Village of Lewokluok can improve visitor satisfaction and build stronger loyalty among tourists, solidifying its position as a premier destination in the region.

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