



Experiential Marketing: Managing Tourist Satisfaction and Revisit Intention with Moderating Effects of Gender

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Abstract:

This research aims to explore the correlation among experiential marketing, customer satisfaction, and the likelihood of customers returning in Indonesia. Additionally, the study also examines whether gender acts as a significant moderator in the relationship between these variables. The Surabaya municipal council aims to reopen the popular tourist location as a place to enjoy dining and shopping. The landmark has long been regarded as a symbol of the city. However, the historical significance of Tunjungan Romansa has been challenged by declining visitor numbers. A better understanding of this issue can aid local businesses and municipal government in enhancing Surabaya's tourism and culinary industries, particularly those in the place. Questionnaires were distributed through online surveys, resulting in 154 valid responses for analysis. The findings indicate that experiential marketing has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction, and that customer satisfaction positively influences revisit intention. Moreover, gender significantly moderates the relationship between customer satisfaction and revisit intention, while it does not significantly moderate the relationship between experiential marketing and customer satisfaction.

Keywords: Culinary, Experiential Marketing, Gender, Tourist Satisfaction, Revisit Intention.

Introduction

Jalan Tunjungan, also known as Tujungan Street, is Surabaya's main street and has become an icon of the city for decades. However, it appears that Jalan Tunjungan's image as a culinary and shopping tourism destination is fading with time. Jalan Tunjungan is being resurrected as a tourist attraction in Surabaya. As a result, the Surabaya City Government renamed Jalan Tunjungan as Tunjungan Romansa in November 2021. This tourist destination is based on the popular concept of *Al Fresco* dining in European culinary tourism. This concept calls for a restaurant that allows for large groups to dine outside, preferably in the open air. So that business owners can set up tables outside their venues and allow customers to eat while enjoying the evening atmosphere (Koloway, 2021). Visitors can spend the night enjoying culinary delights while snapping photos and casually chatting at a number of heritage sites along Jalan Tunjungan. Moreover, several performances by traditional art groups, acoustics, comedy, and community meetings will provide visitors with a unique experience. Rather (2020) suggests that the experience felt when consuming a service will last a long time in the minds of customers and will influence their behavior. Hence, in order to thrive and achieve a competitive edge in this sector, destination managers need to excel in crafting positive customer experiences (Addis & Holbrook, 2001; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000; Shahijan et al., 2018).

Consumers' experiences with a service, whether favorable or unfavorable, will leave them with unforgettable memories (Chen et al., 2022). These encounters are not only cognitive and rational, but they frequently involve emotions and feelings as well. The sensations can be classified as feel, sense, think, act, and relate, which are collectively referred to as strategic experiential modules (SEMs) (Schmitt, 1999). In marketing literature, experiential marketing is regarded as a way for businesses to design memorable encounters that strengthen emotional connections, enhance satisfaction, and encourage revisit intention (Gilmore & Pine, 2002). Nevertheless, existing research remains limited in addressing how experiential marketing and customer satisfaction jointly influence revisit intention within the context of domestic tourism destinations, particularly in Southeast Asia. While some studies confirm the positive effect of experiential marketing and satisfaction on revisit intention (Christianingrum et al., 2023), others highlight the need to further explore the role of service quality and contextual factors, suggesting that experiential marketing alone may not sufficiently explain revisit behavior (Malanur et al., 2020; Ratnamiasih et al., 2024). This gap highlights the importance of examining these relationships in Indonesian tourism settings to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

The importance of satisfaction in the tourist experience cannot be overstated (Chiu et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2018). In the realm of tourism, satisfaction denotes the overall emotion and level of enjoyment that individuals feel after visiting a tourist site (Cole & Scott, 2004; Quintal & Polczynski, 2010). Assessing tourist satisfaction can involve evaluating the emotional response arising from the cognitive evaluation of the service experience, or by comparing the disparity between pre-trip expectations and the actual post-trip experience. To put it simply, tourists feel satisfied when their post-trip experiences exceed their expectations, leading to a positive emotional response, while dissatisfaction arises when their experiences fall short of expectations, resulting in a negative emotional response (Chen & Chen, 2010; Le & Dong, 2017). While prior research extensively supports the correlation between experiential marketing and customer satisfaction (Arief et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2010; Malanur et al., 2020), Alkilani et al. (2013) noted that not all dimensions of experiential marketing exhibit a statistically significant relationship. In their study, it was found that only the aspects of 'sense' and 'feel' had a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction.

Previous research has suggested that revisiting behavior is influenced by prior experience and emotional experiences. This created experience may heighten the desire to return. As a result, providing a pleasant experience will encourage tourists to return. It is also an important factor in the tourism industry's competitiveness (Islam et al., 2019; Khoo, 2022). Meanwhile, experts have attempted to identify the main factors that influence visitor satisfaction and behavioral interest. Among many other factors, service quality researchers have discovered that high quality service has a significant impact on customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction, in turn, influences purchasing decisions. Although experts agree that there is a positive relationship between service quality and

consumption behavior, recent research indicates that more systematic research into service quality is required in order to propose highly customized marketing strategies that can be effectively applied to different consumer markets with unique needs in the tourism industry. Managers can provide services to visitors not only to attract their attention, but also to increase their satisfaction, which affects their intent to return (Ho Kim et al., 2013).

Several studies have revealed that men and women response to and express risk differently. According to social role theory, gender differences in social behavior are caused by shared expectations about what is appropriate behavior for men and women. Gender differences in risk expression are primarily due to isomorphic gender identity. Men tend to have a masculine agnatic identity, whereas women tend to have a feminine communal identity. Risk perception, on the other hand, refers to how people of the same gender assess risk and weigh information before making a decision. Several studies have found that women have a higher risk perception and/or risk aversion than men. Men react differently to their experiences than women do. The fact that women are said to be more sensitive to their experiences than men is an issue that should be investigated further (Kim et al., 2020).

The reopening of the Tunjungan Romansa tourist destination is expected to spur economic growth, particularly in the Surabaya tourism industry. As a result, an in-depth examination of tourists' experiences, satisfaction, and intent to visit the Tunjungan Romansa is required. Based on the theoretical model and proposed hypotheses, this study aims to contribute theoretically by extending the application of experiential marketing and customer behavior theories to the context of urban heritage-based tourism in Indonesia. From a practical perspective, the findings are expected to provide valuable insights for local government and businesses in designing strategies that enhance visitor satisfaction and encourage revisit intention, thereby strengthening Surabaya's tourism and culinary industries. Methodologically, the study also offers novelty by examining the moderating role of gender in the relationship between experiential marketing and satisfaction, which has received limited attention in prior research. Consequently, this research seeks to determine the effect of experiential marketing on visitor satisfaction and revisit intention at Tunjungan Romansa, while considering the influence of visitor demographics.

Literature Review

Experiential Marketing

Experiential marketing refers to the design of memorable and engaging encounters for customers (Gilmore & Pine, 2002). The essence of this approach is to provide positive experiences when customers use a product or service, as such experiences increase the likelihood of purchase and foster stronger customer relationships. More recent perspectives have expanded this view. For example, Skandalis et al. (2019) emphasize how experiential marketing practices adapt to postmodern consumer culture and highlight the role of extraordinary experiences in shaping consumer engagement. Similarly, Becker and Jaakkola (2020) conceptualize customer experience as a multidimensional construct spanning cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects across the customer journey, thereby providing a stronger theoretical foundation for experiential marketing research.

Customer experience involves not only cognitive and rational aspects but also emotions and feelings, which can be categorized into five Strategic Experiential Modules (SEMs): sense, feel, think, act, and relate (Schmitt, 1999; Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013). Sense experience emerges from customers' perceptions through sight, smell, taste, sound, and touch, enabling them to form value judgments that differentiate products and services while adding value and motivating purchase decisions (McCole, 2004; Schmitt, 1999; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Feel experience refers to the emotions, moods, and affective responses generated when interacting with products or services; by employing appropriate stimuli, businesses can enhance these emotional connections and strengthen customer-seller relationships (Mattila, 2001; Schmitt, 1999; Yang & He, 2011). Think experience stimulates creativity and problem-solving by introducing new ideas or innovative perspectives, allowing customers to develop

their own evaluations of products and companies (Schmitt, 1999). Act experience arises from social interactions that influence customers' behaviors, lifestyles, and physical expressions, providing opportunities for companies to deepen engagement through strategies that enrich behavioral and social patterns (Schmitt, 1999). Finally, relate experience integrates all previous dimensions by connecting consumers with broader social contexts such as family, friends, communities, and cultural values, thereby linking personal experiences to collective identities and brand meanings.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is the overall attitude of customers based on the experience of purchasing a product or using a service, and it often includes post-purchase evaluations (Boonlertvanich, 2019; Fornell, 1992; Gallarza et al., 2011). Meanwhile, Kotler and Keller (2016) define satisfaction as a comparative feeling caused by the difference between expectations and actual experience. Long-term satisfaction with the product or service consumed is created through repeated satisfaction. Previous experiences, personal needs, and reviews from others about the products or services consumed can all obscure this satisfaction (Kim et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2014).

Revisit Intention

The concept of revisit intention derives from behavioral intention. When it relates to recreation, behavioral intention is the desire of visitors to return in the future (Shahijan et al., 2018). Satisfaction is one of the most important factors influencing intent to return. Bigné et al. (2001) and Wu et al. (2014) found that customer satisfaction influences customer expectations and intentions to return to the recreation area.

Hypothesis Development

Experiential marketing is a marketer's effort to create positive sensations and experiences that consumers will remember. Consumer satisfaction can be increased if they have a positive experience when using a service. Previous research has shown a positive relationship between experiential marketing and customer satisfaction. Arief et al. (2022) studied the relationship between experiential marketing and customer satisfaction in a meta-analysis. According to the findings of this study, the 42 articles examined show that experiential marketing is a predictor of customer satisfaction. Based on the preceding explanation, we propose hypothesis 1 as follows:

H₁ : experiential marketing has a positive influence on customer satisfaction

Satisfaction is an evaluation of pre-trip expectations and post-trip experiences (Chen & Chen, 2010; Oliver, 2010). In other words, satisfaction will be formed if the experience after using a product or service meets or exceeds expectations. Previous research has shown that consumers who are satisfied with the services provided will tend to return to using these services. When visitors derive pleasant feelings from a tourism destination, they are more likely to be satisfied with that location, leading to an increased intention to return. Several studies in the literature confirm the positive impact of tourist satisfaction on revisit intention (Assaker & Hallak, 2013; Khasawneh & Alfandi, 2019; Khoo, 2022). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₂ : customer satisfaction has a positive influence on revisit intention

Gender is a critical basis of market segmentation since consumers of different genders differ in their product experience and evaluation. Males, for instance, specifically shop to fulfill their needs and interpret information based on certain cues from readily available information, whereas females interpret information based on comprehensive information and searchable cues, therefore their shopping decisions are based on the information that interests them (Jin et al., 2013; Pei et al., 2020; Yoon & Lee, 2019). Females also value the emotional aspects of consumption and more likely to respond to visual and romantic factors than males (Holbrook, 1986; Wood, 1998). Additionally, satisfied female customers were more likely to return to the same restaurant than dissatisfied male customers, indicating that gender may influence how different product experiences are (Han & Ryu, 2007; Jin et al., 2013). The previous studies suggest that male and female groups may assess experiential attributes differently

and, as a result, may exhibit different patterns of relationships within their product consumption experience and how they evaluate this experience. Based on these notions, we propose the following hypotheses:

H₃ : Customers' gender significantly moderates the relationship between experiential marketing and customer satisfaction

H₄: Customers' gender significantly moderates the relationship between customer satisfaction and revisit intention

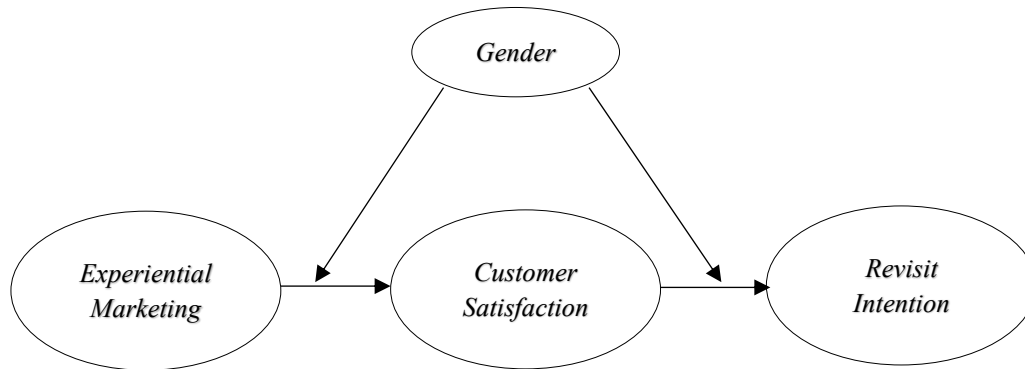


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Method

This research was conducted for six months, from March to September 2024, with Tunjungan Romansa Surabaya as our research object. Questionnaires were distributed online using Google Forms (<http://bit.ly/kuesionertunjunganromansa>). The research instrument was first evaluated through construct validity and reliability testing using the main dataset. Convergent validity was assessed by examining factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR), while discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha and CR values, all of which exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70. These results indicate that the measurement instrument possesses satisfactory psychometric properties. Hypothesis testing was then conducted to investigate the relationships between latent variables in the research model, with the results identifiable in the estimated path coefficients and their level of significance (p-value). Out of the 160 questionnaires collected, 154 valid responses were retained for analysis.

Findings and discussion

Outer Model Test

The quality of research instruments must be standardized, and they must meet the criteria of validity and reliability testing techniques. To ensure that the question items used in this study could be understood by the respondents, the validity test was used to test the validity of the questionnaire. The outer loading score is used to determine the validity of an indicator when testing it with data analysis techniques such as partial least squares (PLS). The outer model or measurement model, is used to test indicators on latent variables, or to determine how well the indicators explain the latent variables. There are several things that must be done when testing the validity of a research instrument using data analysis techniques based on partial least squares (PLS), including measuring convergent validity, value, and average variance extracted (AVE).

Based on the data processing results, it is evident that all indicators met the convergent validity requirements of a loading factor greater than 0.50 and that all indicators are significant with a p-value less than 0.05. As a result, all indicators used to measure all research variables are valid and can be used for further analysis. Furthermore, to fulfill a research indicator validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value must be greater than 0.50. The AVE value table is shown below.

Table 1
Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

SENSE	FEEL	THINK	ACT	RELATE	EXPMAR	CUSTSAT	REVISIT	GENDER	GENDER*	GENDER*
0.555	0.735	0.860	0.872	0.854	0.540	0.719	0.816	1.000	1.000	1.000

The AVE values of all constructs exceed the 0.5 threshold, with the highest reaching 0.872 (see Table 1). This indicates that each construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators, thereby confirming convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019). For example, THINK and ACT demonstrate strong coherence among their indicators, with AVE values of 0.860 and 0.872, respectively. Meanwhile, constructs such as SENSE (0.555) and EXPMAR (0.540) are slightly above the minimum threshold but remain acceptable for validity. Overall, these results show that the indicators reliably represent their respective latent constructs, providing a sound basis for hypothesis testing. Reliability was then assessed to examine the internal consistency of the research instruments, using composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha (Sholihin & Ratmono, 2013). An instrument is considered reliable if its composite reliability exceeds 0.70 and Cronbach's alpha exceeds 0.60 (Abdillah & Hartono, 2015; Wiyono, 2011). The corresponding values are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Composite Reliability dan Cronbach's Alpha

	SENSE	FEEL	THINK	ACT	RELATE	EXPMAR	CUSTSAT	REVISI	GENDER
Composite reliability	0.861	0.892	0.925	0.931	0.921	0.942	0.911	0.930	
Cronbach's alpha	0.797	0.819	0.838	0.853	0.829	0.933	0.868	0.887	
Avg. Var. extract	0.555	0.735	0.860	0.872	0.854	0.540	0.719	0.816	
Full collin VIF	510.656	329.634	134.707	181.711	178.868	4612.596	3.887	7.884	1.241
Q-squared						0.699	0.642		

Based on Table 2, the four constructs have a composite reliability value with the lowest value being 0.861. Furthermore, the table above shows that the Cronbach's alpha for the four constructs measured in this study is greater than 0.6. As a result, all construct indicators in this study can be considered reliable.

The Goodness of Fit Model

This test is used to assess the goodness of the research model (model fit). Table 3 presents the results of model fit and quality indices, which are essential for assessing the adequacy of the structural model. The Average Path Coefficient (APC) and Average R-squared (ARS) indicate the overall explanatory power of the model and are considered acceptable when their p-values are below 0.05. The Average Adjusted R-squared (AARS) provides a more conservative measure of explained variance and also meets the threshold of significance. Multicollinearity is assessed using the Average Block VIF (AVIF) and Average Full Collinearity VIF (AFVIF), both of which should be below 5, indicating that multicollinearity is not a concern. Tenenhaus Goodness of Fit (GoF) serves as an overall model fit index, with values above 0.36 categorized as high. Additional indices such as Sympton's Paradox Ratio (SPR), R-squared Contribution Ratio (RSCR), Statistical Suppression Ratio (SSR), and Nonlinear Bivariate Causality Direction Ratio (NLBCDR) evaluate the robustness and consistency of the model, with acceptable thresholds set at 0.7, 0.9, 0.7, and 0.7, respectively. The results in Table 3 demonstrate that all indices fall within their acceptable ranges, confirming that the model is both valid and reliable for hypothesis testing.

Table 3
Model Fit and Quality Indices Results

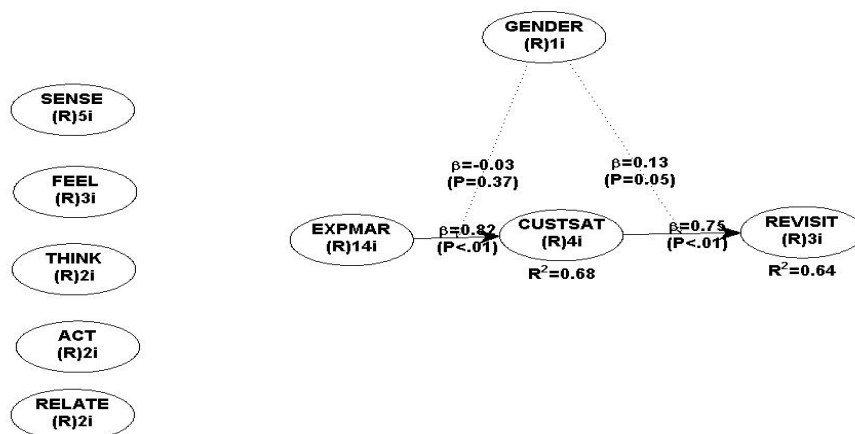
Measurement	Value	Criteria
Average path coefficient (APC)	(APC)=0.432, P<0.001	Accept if p value <0.05
Average R squared (ARS)	(ARS)=0.662, P<0.001	Accept if p value <0.05

Average adjusted R squared (AARS)	(AARS)=0.657, P<0.001	Accept if <0.05
Average bolck VIF (AVIF)	(AVIF)=1.187	Accept if p value <5
Average full colinearity VIF	(AFVIF)=542.559,	Accept if <5
Tenenhaus GOF	(GoF)=0.734	Low>0.1, med>0,25, high>0.36
Symson's paradox ratio (SPR)	(SPR)=0.750,	Accept if>0,7
R squared contribution ratio (RSSR)	(RSCR)=0.993	Accept if>0,9
Statistical supresion ratio (SSR)	(SSR)=1.000,	Accept if >0.7
Non linier bivariat causality direction ratio	(NLBCDR)=1.000	Accept if>=0.7

Hypotheses Testing

The hypothesis testing in this study aims to examine the relationship between latent variables in the research model, with the results evident in the estimated path coefficients and their level of significance (p-value). The image output of the estimation results is shown below to reveal the relationship between latent variables.

Figure 2
Estimated Output Results



The p-value can be used to determine whether the hypothesis test is accepted or rejected. If the p-value is less than 0.05, H0, which states that exogenous variables have no effect on endogenous variables, is rejected, and Ha, which states that exogenous variables have an effect on endogenous variables, is accepted. The estimated path coefficient results to test the strength of influence between variables and explain the relationship between variables are shown in the table below:

Table 1
path coefficients

Hypothesis	Path coefficients	p-value	Result
Experience marketing → customer satisfaction	0.825	<0.01	Significant
Customer satissfaction → revisit intension	0.75	<0.01	Significant

<i>Gender moderating experience marketing and customer satisfaction</i>	0.03	0.37	Not Significant
<i>Gender moderating customer satisfaction and revisit intension</i>	0.13	0.05	Significant

The effect of experience marketing on customer satisfaction

According to the findings of the study, the p value of experience marketing on customer satisfaction has a significant value of 0.01 or less than 0.05. Based on these findings, it is possible to conclude that experience marketing has a significant impact on customer satisfaction because the Path coefficient is 0.825 and positive, implying that the first hypothesis, that experience marketing has a positive impact on customer satisfaction, is accepted. These findings explain why, as the consumer's experience at Tunjungan Romansa increases, so does the consumer's satisfaction.

The effect of customer satisfaction on revisit intention

According to the findings of the study, the p value of customer satisfaction on revisit intention has a significant value of 0.01 or less than 0.05. Based on these findings, it is possible to conclude that customer satisfaction has a considerable impact on revisit intent at the Tunjungan Romansa tourist site. The path coefficient is 0.75. (positive). As a result, the second hypothesis, explaining why customer satisfaction has a positive effect on revisit intention, is accepted. These findings indicate that the higher Tunjungan Romansa's customer satisfaction, the greater the tourist destination's intention to return.

Gender moderates experience marketing and customer satisfaction

In accordance with the results of the study, the p value for the moderation effect of gender in the association between experience marketing and customer satisfaction is 0.37, which is greater than 0.05. Our findings suggest that gender has no influence on the relationship between consumers' experiences at Tunjungan Romansa and their satisfaction. Because the path coefficient value is 0.03 (positive), the third hypothesis that gender moderates the effect of experience marketing on customer satisfaction is rejected. These findings demonstrate that gender has no effect on the relationship between consumer experience and satisfaction.

Gender moderates customer satisfaction and revisit intension

Our findings indicate that the p value for the influence of gender moderation on customer satisfaction and revisit intention has a significant value of 0.05. Based on these findings, we can conclude that gender influences consumer satisfaction and intention to revisit. Because the path coefficient is 0.13 (positive), the fourth hypothesis is accepted. These findings suggest that gender influences the relationship between consumer satisfaction and intention to return.

Conclusion and recommendation

The results indicate that experiential marketing exerts a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction, while customer satisfaction itself positively influences revisit intention. However, gender does not significantly moderate the relationship between experiential marketing and customer satisfaction. Interestingly, the findings further reveal that gender moderates the relationship between customer satisfaction and revisit intention, suggesting that male and female visitors may differ in how their satisfaction translates into loyalty behaviors. These insights underscore the pivotal role of customer experiences in fostering revisit intention and provide practical implications for tourism managers in designing more engaging and memorable attractions. In particular, the Surabaya city government and related stakeholders can utilize these findings by enhancing experiential elements in Tunjungan Romansa to encourage repeat visits, thereby improving tourism performance and supporting local economic development.



Thus, the reopening of Tunjungan Romansa is expected not only to stimulate economic growth in Surabaya but is also reinforced by empirical evidence showing that well-executed experiential marketing strategies effectively drive satisfaction and revisit intention. Moreover, policymakers should consider not only the direct revenue potential, such as from parking and other tourism services, but also the broader social impacts on surrounding communities to ensure that the revitalization of Tunjungan Romansa generates sustainable and inclusive benefits.

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