

Analysis of the Destination Image as Mediation in Identifying the Factors of Tourist Revisit Intention to Sabang, Indonesia

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine, using the medium of destination image, how Islamic qualities and service quality affect visitors' desire to return to Sabang's natural tourist sites. The researchers in this study used a quantitative strategy based on survey data. The data was gathered by sending out surveys to 150 visitors who had been to Sabang's natural attractions. The data was analyzed using SmartPLS 4 software in conjunction with Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). Findings indicate that destinations' perceptions are positively and significantly impacted by Islamic features and service quality. Tourists' enthusiasm in returning to a destination is unaffected by Islamic features and service quality. Also, visitors' desire to return is positively and significantly impacted by the destination's image. There was a mediating effect of destination image over the effects of Islamic features and service quality on visitors' desire to return, according to the mediation test. These results show that the way visitors see Sabang's natural tourist spots influences their desire to return.

Keywords: Islamic attributes, service quality, destination image, revisit intention, nature tourism

Abstract

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menguji, dengan menggunakan media citra destinasi, bagaimana kualitas Islami dan kualitas layanan memengaruhi keinginan pengunjung untuk kembali ke tempat wisata alam Sabang. Peneliti dalam studi ini menggunakan strategi kuantitatif berdasarkan data survei. Data dikumpulkan dengan mengirimkan survei kepada 150 pengunjung yang pernah mengunjungi objek wisata alam Sabang. Data dianalisis menggunakan perangkat lunak SmartPLS 4 bersamaan dengan Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa persepsi destinasi dipengaruhi secara positif dan signifikan oleh fitur Islami dan kualitas layanan. Antusiasme wisatawan untuk kembali ke suatu destinasi tidak dipengaruhi oleh fitur Islami dan kualitas layanan. Selain itu, keinginan pengunjung untuk kembali

dipengaruhi secara positif dan signifikan oleh citra destinasi. Terdapat efek mediasi citra destinasi terhadap efek fitur Islami dan kualitas layanan pada keinginan pengunjung untuk kembali, menurut uji mediasi. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa cara pengunjung melihat tempat wisata alam Sabang memengaruhi keinginan mereka untuk kembali.

Kata Kunci: Atribut Islami, Kualitas Layanan, Citra Destinasi, Minat untuk Berkunjung Kembali, Pariwisata Alam

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the strategic sectors that contributes to economic growth, improving people's welfare, job creation, and sustainable development in various countries. In addition to having a significant economic impact, the tourism sector is also considered a relatively environmentally friendly industry because it produces lower levels of pollution compared to other industrial sectors (Manyangara et al., 2023).

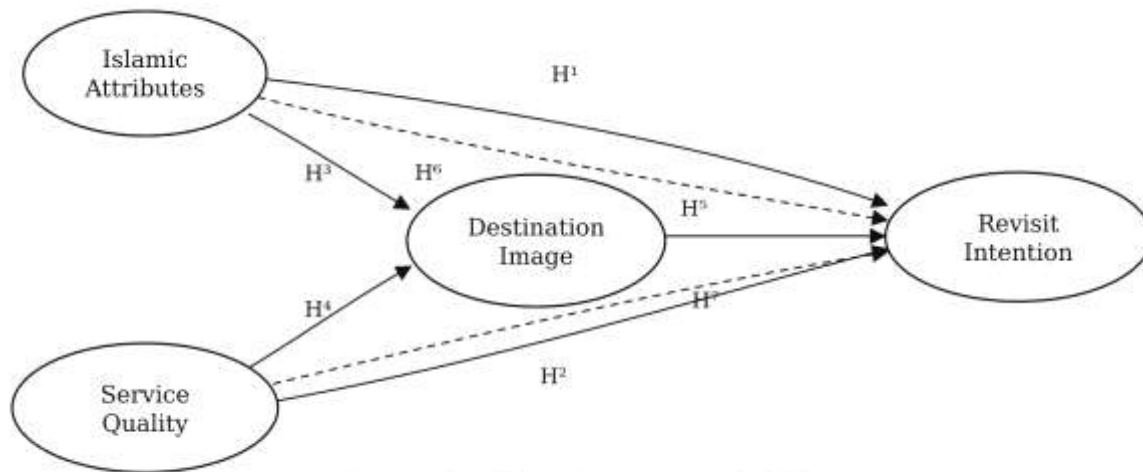
From an Islamic economic perspective, tourism development not only focuses on economic growth, but must also comply with halal principles, community welfare, and sustainability in order to provide benefits for tourists and local communities. As a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia has great potential for the development of halal tourism. Indonesia's success in ranking as the top halal tourism destination according to the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), as well as the designation of ten priority halal tourism destinations by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, demonstrates the government's commitment to strengthen the competitiveness of these destinations by providing services and facilities in accordance with sharia principles, including increasing halal certification through collaboration with LPPOM MUI (Arta). & Fikriyah, 2021).

One of these priority destinations is Sabang City, which has marine tourism potential through the Marine Nature Park (TWAL) and the East Coast of Weh Island (PTPW), and has been designated as part of the Weh National Tourism Development Area (KPPN) and the Banda Aceh-Weh National Tourism Destination (DPN). The Sabang City Government has also ratified Qanun No. 9 of 2019 concerning the Tourism Development Master Plan 2019–2027 as an effort to increase the contribution of the tourism sector to regional economic growth and community welfare. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant decline in tourist arrivals, and although the number of tourists has begun to increase during the recovery period, this increase has not had an optimal impact on people's incomes. In fact, the target of tourist visits in 2022 has not been achieved, with the actual figure only reaching around 9.96% of the set target (Yusra et al., 2023; Satria R et al., 2025).

These findings show that the success of destination development cannot be measured solely by the increase in the number of tourist visits, but also by the ability of the destination to encourage tourists to return as an indicator of tourism sustainability. However, previous research has been dominated by studies on halal destination development and tourist satisfaction, while research integrating Islamic attributes, service quality, destination image, and interest in revisiting from an Islamic economic perspective is still relatively limited. Therefore, this study makes a new contribution by analyzing the role of destination image as an intermediate variable in the relationship between Islamic attributes and service quality on tourists' intention to revisit natural tourist destinations in Sabang City. The results of this research are expected to enrich the literature on Islamic economics, especially in the field of halal tourism, as well as become a basis for local governments and destination managers to formulate sustainable tourism development strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research has shown that Islamic attributes, service quality, destination image, and interest in repeat visits are closely related in the context of tourism. Hanafiah et al. (2021) found that Muslim-friendly tourism attributes, such as the availability of halal food, worship facilities, and a welcoming environment, have a positive effect on Muslim tourists' intentions to revisit. Rohim et al. (2022) and Permana and Adam (2024) prove that Islamic attributes are able to improve the image of destinations which further encourages interest in repeat visits. Similar findings were also put forward by Aini et al. (2023), Hasan (2024), Rasyid et al. (2024), Alfarizi et al. (2025), and Christiyanto et al. (2025), which showed that the application of halal attributes, positive tourism experiences, service quality, and tourist trust contributed to increased loyalty and revisit intentions. On the other hand, research by Manyangara et al. (2023) and Sitepu and Rismawati (2021) shows that service quality has a positive effect on destination image and interest in repeat visits, both directly and through mediation variables. Overall, these studies indicate that Islamic attributes and service quality are important factors in shaping the image of the destination and increasing tourists' interest in making repeat visits. These findings are the empirical basis for this study which examines the role of destination image as a mediating variable in the relationship between Islamic attributes, service quality, and tourists' interest in revisiting natural tourist destinations in Sabang.



Source: Adapted from Mayanggraeni et al. (2023)

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODS

Sabang City, Aceh Province was the site of the study. We think this spot has great potential to become a hub for halal tourism as it is a top natural tourist attraction. Visitors to Sabang City, both present and past, will serve as the subjects of this research. All visitors now or previously visiting Sabang City are considered part of the study's population. Visitors to Sabang who are at least 17 years old and have been there or are planning to go there were chosen using a purposive sampling method. In this research, 150 participants were surveyed.

Data for this research comes from both primary and secondary sources. Distributing online surveys with Google Forms provides the primary data, while scholarly publications, books, and articles provide the secondary data. The researchers used a survey using a five-point Likert scale to gather data. An instrument test was conducted to guarantee the reliability and validity of the instrument before the main questionnaire was distributed. Based on its ability to assess the link between research models containing mediation factors and latent variables, the Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) approach was used to analyze the gathered data with the aid of SmartPLS 4 (Hair et al., 2022).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the characteristics of the respondents, this study involved 150 tourists who are currently visiting or have visited Sabang City. Respondents were dominated by women (91 people), aged 17-26 years (113 people), high school education or equivalent (79 people), and students (72 people). Most of the respondents have visited Sabang 1-2 times in the last two years (114 people), with the main purpose being tourism (124 people). This characteristic shows that the majority of respondents are young tourists who visit Sabang for recreational purposes.

Based on the results of the descriptive analysis, all research variables received an assessment in the very good category. The Islamic attribute variable obtained an average score of 4.31, which shows that tourists have a positive perception of the availability of halal facilities, places of worship, tourist environments that are in line with Islamic values, and services that prioritize politeness in Sabang tourist destinations. The service quality variable obtained an average score of 4.16, which indicates that tourists rated the services provided by the manager as quite satisfactory, especially in terms of hospitality, staff professionalism, information delivery, and ability to meet the needs of visitors.

In addition, the destination image variable obtained an average score of 4.40, which shows that tourists have a very positive perception of tourist destinations in Sabang, especially related to natural beauty, tourist attractions, security, and supporting facilities. Meanwhile, the variable of interest to visit again obtained an average score of 4.14, which indicates that tourists want to revisit tourist destinations in Sabang in the future. Overall, the results of the descriptive analysis showed that tourists gave a positive assessment of Islamic attributes, service quality, destination image, and interest in revisiting natural tourist destinations in Sabang.

Convergent validity is used to determine the extent to which an indicator is able to represent the latent construct or variable being measured. The validity of the convergence was tested in this study by analyzing the value of outer loading and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). An indicator is considered to meet convergent validity if it has an outer loading value greater than 0.70, while the recommended AVE value is greater than 0.50 (Meiryani, 2021).

Table 1. Convergent Validity Test Results

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading
Islamic attributes	X1.1	0.807
	X1.2	0.730
	X1.3	0.832

	X1.4	0.721
	X1.5	0.773
Quality of Service	X2.1	0.858
	X2.2	0.887
	X2.3	0.893
	X2.4	0.855
Revisit Intention	Y.1	0.786
	Y.2	0.705
	Y.3	0.847
	Y.4	0.807
Destination Image	Z.1	0.717
	Z.2	0.720
	Z.3	0.796
	Z.4	0.818
	Z.5	0.797

Source: SEM-PLS Results (2026)

Based on the results of the outer loading test, all indicators for the variables of Islamic attributes, service quality, destination image, and interest in returning visits have an outer loading value above 0.70. The highest outer loading value was found in the X2.3 service quality indicator of 0.893, while the lowest value was found in the Y2 interest indicator of interest in revisiting Y2 of 0.705. Despite having the lowest value, this indicator still meets the minimum threshold set, so all indicators are considered valid. In addition to the outer loading value, the convergent validity can also be seen based on the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value.

Table 2. AVE Measurement Results

No	Variable	AVE
1	Islamic Attributes	0.598
2	Quality of Service	0.594
3	Destination Image	0.763
4	Revisiting Intention	0.621

Source: SEM-PLS Results (2026)

Based on Table 2 above, all research variables have an AVE value above 0.50. The highest AVE value was found in the destination image variable, which was 0.763, while the lowest value was found in the service quality variable, which was 0.594. Thus, all research constructs have met the criteria of convergent validity.

Discriminant validity aims to ensure that each construct in the study has a clear conceptual difference and is better able to explain its respective indicators than other constructs. The validity of the discriminator was tested using cross-loading values, which involved comparing the loading values of an indicator for a constructed measured with its loading values for another construct (Meiryani, 2021).

Table 3. Results of Cross Loading Discriminant Validity Test

Indicator	Islamic Attributes	Destination Image	Quality of Service	Revisit Intention
X1.1	0.807	0.449	0.538	0.245
X1.2	0.730	0.302	0.403	0.322
X1.3	0.832	0.479	0.459	0.306
X1.4	0.721	0.340	0.397	0.266
X1.5	0.773	0.383	0.532	0.263
Z1	0.437	0.717	0.450	0.382
Z2	0.358	0.720	0.411	0.455
Z3	0.393	0.796	0.361	0.385
Z4	0.414	0.818	0.419	0.469
Z5	0.364	0.797	0.459	0.388
X2.1	0.520	0.471	0.858	0.321
X2.2	0.548	0.498	0.887	0.280
X2.3	0.496	0.462	0.893	0.213
X2.4	0.540	0.477	0.855	0.325
Y1	0.313	0.374	0.305	0.786
Y2	0.145	0.450	0.169	0.705
Y3	0.418	0.448	0.342	0.847
	0.248	0.431	0.215	0.807

Source: SEM-PLS Results (2026)

Based on Table 3, all indicators have the highest loading value on the construct they measure compared to other constructs. The Islamic attribute indicator has the highest loading value for the Islamic attribute construct; the service quality indicator has the highest loading value for the service quality construct; the destination image indicator has the highest loading value for the destination image construct; and the revisit intent indicator has the highest loading value for the revisit intent construct. Thus, all indicators are considered to meet the criteria of discriminant validity.

The construct reliability test was carried out to determine the level of internal consistency of the indicators in measuring each research variable. In SEM-PLS-based research, the reliability of

the construct can be seen through the Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values. Constructs are declared reliable if they have a Composite Reliability value greater than 0.70 and Cronbach's Alpha value greater than 0.60 (Meiryani, 2021; Sugiyono, 2018).

Table 4. Composite Reliability & Cronbach Alpha Measurement Results

No	Variable	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Islamic Attributes	0,881	0,831
2	Quality of Service	0,928	0,896
3	Destination Image	0,879	0,828
4	Revisit Intention	0,867	0,794

Source: SEM-PLS Results (2026)

All research variables had a Composite Reliability value above 0.70 and Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.60. The service quality variable obtained the highest reliability value with a Composite Reliability value of 0.928 and Cronbach's Alpha of 0.896. Meanwhile, the variable of interest in revisits had the lowest reliability value with a Composite Reliability of 0.867 and Cronbach's Alpha of 0.794. Even though it has the lowest value, it still meets the criteria that have been set. Therefore, all constructs in this study are declared reliable and have good internal consistency.

Based on the results of the external model testing which included convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability, all indicators and research constructs met the required criteria. Thus, the measurement model is declared valid and can be proceeded to the testing stage of the structural model (inner model). The R-squared value (R^2) was evaluated to determine the ability of independent variables to explain variations in dependent variables in the research model. The higher the R^2 value, the better the model's ability to explain the endogenous construct. According to Meiryani (2021), the R^2 value is categorized into three levels: low (<0.33), medium ($0.33-0.67$), and high (>0.67).

Table 5. R Square Test Results

No	Variable	R Square	Classification
1	Destination Image	0.351	Moderate
2	Revisit Intention	0.304	Weak

Source: SEM-PLS Results (2026)

Islamic features and service quality accounted for 35.1% of the variance in the destination image variable, according to the R-Square value of 0.351 for this variable. The remaining variation

was impacted by factors that were not part of the study model. There is a 30.4% explanation for the variance in return visit interest by Islamic qualities, service quality, and destination image, as shown by the R-Square value of 0.304 for revisit interest.

To find out how the study model's exogenous variables affected its endogenous variables, researchers used direct impact testing. The bootstrapping technique using SmartPLS 4 was used to examine the original sample values, t-statistic, and p-value in order to carry out this test. At a significance level of 5%, a connection was considered to have a significant impact when the t-statistical value was more than 1.982 and the p-value was less than 0.05. Table X displays the results of the direct impact test between the study's variables.

Table 6. Path Coefficient Mean Results, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
A Return to the Drawing > Interest	0.117	0.116	0.129	0.908	0.182
Quality of Service - > Interest in Repeat Visits	-0.008	-0.003	0.106	0.076	0.47
Islamic Attributes -> Destination Image	0.285	0.295	0.103	2.771	0.003
Quality of Service - > Destination Image	0.375	0.381	0.112	3.345	0
A Return to the Drawing Board - > A Return to the Drawing Board	0.487	0.489	0.123	3.962	0

Source: SEM-PLS Results (2026)

Not all associations between variables in the study model were determined to have a significant impact based on the findings of the direct effects test. Both the quality of service and the presence of Islamic characteristics influence the destination's image in a good and substantial way. The favorable and substantial impression of the location also affects the desire to return. Having said that, there was no discernible correlation between desire in returning and Islamic characteristics or service quality. These findings demonstrate that destination image might mediate the relationship between Islamic features, service quality, and desire in returning, rather than acting directly.

Tabel 7. Specific Indirect Effect Results

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T Statistic s (O/STD EV)	P values
Islamic Attributes -> Destination Image -> Interest in Revisiting	0.139	0.146	0.067	2.070	0.019
Quality of Service -> Destination Image -> Interest in Returning	0.183	0.181	0.061	2.987	0.001

Source: SEM-PLS Results (2026)

With an indirect effect value of 0.139, a t value of 2.070, and a p value of 0.019, the findings of the indirect effect test showed that destination image works as an intermediary variable in the association between Islamic traits and return intents. Based on these findings, it is clear that the construction of a destination picture is the mechanism by which Islamic qualities impact the desire to return. Also, with a p-value of 0.001, a t-value of 2.987, and an indirect effect value of 0.183, destination imagery was found to mediate the association between service quality and return intent. Tourists are more likely to return to Sabang's natural tourist spots if they have a favorable impression of the place based on the quality of the services offered and the Islamic characteristics that are there.

Table 8. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

No	Hypothesis	Results of the t-test and P-Value	Conclusion
1	Islamic Attributes Have a Positive Effect on Interest in Revisits	<i>t-count</i> 0.908 < <i>t-table</i> 1,982 and <i>p-value</i> 0.182 > 0,05	Rejected
2	Service Quality Has a Positive Effect on Interest in Repeat Visits	<i>t-count</i> 0.076 < <i>t-table</i> 1,982 and <i>p-value</i> 0.470 > 0,05	Rejected
3	Islamic attributes have a positive effect on the image of the destination	<i>t-count</i> 2,771 > <i>t-table</i> 1,982 and <i>p-value</i> 0.003 < 0,05	Accepted

4	Service Quality has a positive effect on the image of the destination	$t\text{-count } 3,345 >$ $t\text{-table } 1,982$ and $p\text{-value } 0.000 <$ $0,05$	Accepted
5	Destination Image Has a Positive Effect on Repeat Visit Interest	$t\text{-count } 3,962 >$ $t\text{-table } 1,982$ and $p\text{-value } 0.000 <$ $0,05$	Accepted
6	Islamic attributes have a positive effect on the Interest in Revisiting with the Image of Destination as Mediation	$t\text{-count } 2,070 >$ $t\text{-table } 1,982$ and $p\text{-value } 0.019 <$ $0,05$	Accepted
7	Service Quality has a positive effect on Interest in Revisits with the image of the destination as a mediator	$t\text{-count } 2,987 >$ $t\text{-table } 1,982$ and $p\text{-value } 0.001 <$ $0,05$	Accepted

Source: SEM-PLS Results (2026)

No significant influence of Islamic features on repeat interest was observed ($\beta=0.117$; $t=0.908$; $p=0.182$), leading to the rejection of Ha2. This indicates that visitors still do not consider Islamic traits to be a significant consideration when deciding whether or not to return, despite their importance. The tourist experience, the destination's attractions, and accessibility are additional common considerations for travelers. Nuraeni et al. (2025) found similar outcomes.

Rejecting Ha5, we find that the interest in repeat visits was unaffected by service quality ($\beta=-0.008$; $t=0.076$; $p=0.470$). This demonstrates that excellent service alone will not guarantee repeat business from visitors, but does help shape their impression of the location. The acceptance of Ha1 is supported by the fact that Islamic qualities significantly and positively impact the perception of the destination ($\beta=0.285$; $t=2.771$; $p=0.003$). The more effectively Islamic characteristics are used, the more favorable the perception of the location will be. What Mashlil et al. (2023) found is corroborated by these data.

The quality of service had a positive and significant effect on the image of the destination ($\beta=0.375$; $t=3.345$; $p=0.000$), so that Ha4 was accepted. Reliable, responsive, and professional service is able to increase tourists' positive perception of the destination. Destination imagery had a positive and significant effect on repeat interest ($\beta=0.487$; $t=3.962$; $p=0.000$), so that Ha3 was accepted. A positive image of the destination through attraction, facilities, safety, and tourist experience can increase the desire of tourists to return.

Destination imagery was proven to mediate the influence of Islamic attributes on repeat interest ($\beta=0.139$; $t=2.070$; $p=0.019$), so Ha6 was accepted. This shows that Islamic attributes

increase interest in repeat visits through the formation of a positive image of the destination. Destination image also mediated the influence of service quality on repeat visit interest ($\beta=0.183$; $t=2.987$; $p=0.001$), so that Ha7 was accepted. This means that the quality of service contributes to increasing interest in repeat visits through the image of the destination that is formed.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of destination image as a mediating variable in explaining the factors influencing tourist revisit intention to Sabang, Indonesia, with a particular focus on Islamic attributes and service quality. The findings reveal a nuanced pattern in which the direct effects of these two predictors on revisit intention differ markedly from their indirect effects through destination image. With regard to the direct relationships, the results indicate that Islamic attributes do not have a positive and statistically significant effect on revisit intention. This suggests that the mere presence or enhancement of Islamic elements within tourist destinations does not automatically translate into a stronger desire among visitors to return. Similarly, service quality was found to have no positive and significant direct effect on revisit intention, indicating that improvements in service delivery alone are not sufficient to guarantee that visitors will choose to revisit the destination. These two findings collectively suggest that revisit intention is not shaped in a straightforward manner by these attributes when considered independently of the overall impression a destination creates.

In contrast, both Islamic attributes and service quality were found to have a positive and significant influence on destination image. The incorporation of authentic Islamic elements into tourist sites was shown to enhance the favorable impression visitors form of the destination, while higher quality of service was likewise associated with a more positive perception of the location. These results confirm that both factors play an important role in shaping how tourists perceive Sabang as a destination, even though their influence does not extend directly to revisit intention. Furthermore, destination image itself was found to have a strong positive and significant effect on revisit intention. This indicates that the more favorable a visitor's perception of Sabang, the greater their inclination to return. This finding underscores the central importance of destination image as a key determinant of tourist loyalty and repeat visitation.

Building on these relationships, the study confirms that destination image serves as a significant mediating variable linking both Islamic attributes and service quality to revisit intention. Although Islamic attributes and service quality do not significantly influence revisit intention directly, they do so indirectly by first shaping a positive destination image, which in turn stimulates

visitors' interest in returning. In other words, the effect of Islamic attributes and service quality on revisit intention is fully realized through the mediating pathway of destination image, rather than through a direct relationship. Taken together, these findings highlight those enhancing Islamic attributes and service quality alone is insufficient to drive tourist revisit intention to Sabang. Instead, destination managers and policymakers should prioritize strategies that translate these attributes into a strong and favorable destination image, as it is this perceived image that ultimately drives visitors' intention to return.

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