

Tourist Loyalty Model in Bukit Lawang: Hedonism, Susceptibility, and Brand Love

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Abstract

This study aims to examine a tourist behavior model by investigating the effects of hedonism, perceived susceptibility, and brand love on tourist loyalty at the Bukit Lawang tourism destination. A quantitative approach was employed, utilizing a survey method with a total of 387 respondent. The collected data were analyzed using path analysis. The findings reveal that hedonism has a significant direct effect on both brand love and tourist loyalty. Perceived susceptibility significantly influences brand love but has no direct effect on loyalty. Brand love is shown to have a direct positive impact on loyalty. Furthermore, hedonism indirectly influences tourist loyalty through the mediating role of brand love. In contrast, perceived susceptibility does not exhibit a significant indirect effect on loyalty via brand love. These findings highlight the mediating role of emotional attachment (brand love) in translating hedonic experiences into tourist loyalty, particularly in nature-based tourism settings like Bukit Lawang.

Keywords: Hedonism, Perceived Susceptibility, Brand Love, Loyalty

Model Loyalitas Wisatawan di Bukit Lawang: Hedonisme, Kerentanan, dan Kecintaan terhadap Merek

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji model perilaku wisatawan dengan menyelidiki pengaruh hedonisme, kerentanan yang dirasakan, dan kecintaan terhadap merek terhadap loyalitas wisatawan di destinasi wisata Bukit Lawang. Pendekatan kuantitatif digunakan, memanfaatkan metode survei dengan total 387 responden. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis menggunakan analisis jalur. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa hedonisme memiliki efek langsung yang signifikan terhadap kecintaan terhadap merek dan loyalitas wisatawan. Kerentanan yang dirasakan secara signifikan memengaruhi kecintaan terhadap merek tetapi tidak memiliki efek langsung terhadap loyalitas. Kecintaan terhadap merek terbukti memiliki dampak positif langsung terhadap loyalitas. Lebih jauh, hedonisme secara tidak langsung memengaruhi loyalitas wisatawan melalui peran mediasi kecintaan terhadap merek. Sebaliknya, kerentanan yang dirasakan tidak menunjukkan efek tidak langsung yang signifikan terhadap loyalitas melalui kecintaan terhadap merek. Temuan ini menyoroti peran mediasi keterikatan emosional (kecintaan terhadap merek) dalam menerjemahkan pengalaman hedonis menjadi loyalitas wisatawan, khususnya dalam lingkungan pariwisata berbasis alam seperti Bukit Lawang.

Kata Kunci: Hedonisme, Kerentanan yang Dirasakan, Kecintaan terhadap Merek, Loyalitas

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an economic sector in the world including Indonesia. The tourism industry is a sector of the economy with high activity in the world, resulting in the highest productivity

and economic growth rate in the world. In 2017 the tourism sector contributed 10.4% of global GDP and USD \$313 million of jobs, or 9.9% of total workers (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2017). The value of 9.9% of the world's total employment shows that tourism is the most productive sector in terms of providing employment.

This shows that the contribution of the tourism sector is vital and supports the growth of the world economy (Soldat et al., 2024). One of the popular destinations in North Sumatra province is Bukit Lawang Natural Tourism Area, Langkat Regency, Bukit Lawang is one of the tourist destinations prioritized in tourism development in Indonesia. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2017 noted that Bukit Lawang became the center of tourism industry research. Tourism in the Bukit Lawang Langkat Natural Tourism Area is experiencing conditions where fluctuations in the number of tourist visits cause the District government to review the appropriate strategies used in the development of tourism in the area. Tourism conditions in Langkat Regency such as in 2023 have increased. Since Covid hit in 2021 there have been several decreases in visitors. It becomes a vital thing for the economy in the Bukit Lawang Tourism Area when the tourism situation fluctuates, because one of the main sources of income in Samosir Regency is the tourism sector itself.

Tourist loyalty is an important element in the tourism sector that is influenced by several factors, such as hedonism, perception of vulnerability, and brand love. Hedonism describes the desire of tourists to have a pleasant experience and provide emotional satisfaction so that it can strengthen their attachment to a destination or service. On the other hand, the perception of vulnerability, such as risk or uncertainty when traveling, can influence tourists' decisions in maintaining their loyalty to a particular destination or brand. In addition, brand love plays an important role in creating a deep emotional connection between tourists and destinations or service providers, which ultimately supports their loyalty in the long term. These three factors together form a dynamic that influences the level of tourist loyalty.

The influence of tourist loyalty on consumer behavior research, especially in the tourism industry, is noteworthy (Chen et al., 2024). Frequent travelers generally return to the same destination as a result of a positive experience, which encourages them to explore other places (Armutcu et al., 2023). This experience comprises several elements, such as breathtaking beauty, the warm reception from the residents, exceptional service, and unforgettable recollections of the visitors' past journeys (Choi et al., 2024). A strong sense of contentment with the location cultivates a profound emotional bond, eliciting a feeling of familiarity and ease akin to returning home (Bursa & Mailer, 2024).

Devoted travelers typically exhibit a greater degree of tolerance towards small issues or inconveniences that may occur during a vacation (Vu et al., 2024). Travelers possess a heightened comprehension that not all journeys may transpire flawlessly and that unfavorable occurrences are occasionally inevitable (Hussain et al., 2024). Prior favorable experiences enhance the traveler's general outlook, enabling them to perceive small challenges as mere aspects of the journey rather than indicators of the quality of the destination (Cooper et al., 2024).

This dedication also involves a strong emotional connection to the area, which leads to a stronger desire to return to it even when faced with small challenges (J. Liu et al., 2024). Travelers typically possess a more extensive comprehension of the limitations encountered by destination administrators and exhibit higher levels of compassion and empathy (Cheng et al., 2023). Tourists are inclined to explore answers or provide constructive criticism instead than hastily making harsh judgments (Nieto-García et al., 2024).

Brand love among travelers is a noteworthy element that garners considerable attention, especially for destination managers of tourist attractions (Ghorbanzadeh, 2024). Brand love cultivates a robust emotional connection between tourists and destinations (Morando & Platania, 2022). When visitors acquire an affection for a destination brand, they view it not just as a place to visit but also as a significant aspect of their identity and life path (Hajiabadi et al., 2021). A location may evoke a sense of love through enjoyable experiences, cherished memories, and deep emotional connections with many characteristics of the area, such as its natural beauty, local culture, friendly service, and unique atmosphere (Yadav et al., 2023).

Nurturing an affection for the destination brand enhances the probability that passengers will sustain loyalty and return to the location on future occasions (Hamdy et al., 2024). Travelers encounter a unique connection that is difficult for other places to imitate (Huang & Liu, 2021). This commitment arises not alone from rational contentment, but also from a profound emotional bond (Shafiee et al., 2021). Individuals who have a deep emotional connection with a company while traveling are more inclined to become dedicated champions who willingly promote the destination to others (Polat & Çetinsöz, 2021). Travelers achieve this by disseminating favorable vacation experiences through narratives, photographs, and evaluations on social media platforms (Gupta et al., 2022).

Furthermore, brand love does not have a substantial effect on consumer loyalty (Le, 2020)(Bae & Kim, 2023). Then brand love is not considered a major driver for increasing client loyalty (Khalid et al., 2024). However, this condition is in contrast to other research findings that show that brand love has a substantial impact on visitor loyalty (Drouet et al., 2023). Brand affinity is also seen as a factor that motivates visitors to be willing to promote it to others (Seyyedamiri et al., 2022). In addition, the presence of brand loyalty reduces the possibility of tourists receiving negative information about tourist attractions (Suwannarong et al., 2023).

Moreover, hedonism has a significant role in influencing consumer behavior, namely in the selection of tourism attractions (Apaolaza, Paredes, et al., 2023). Hedonism can also inspire travelers to deliberately pursue novel and diverse encounters that can elicit sensations and pleasures that they have not before encountered (Macinnes et al., 2022). Destinations or businesses that provide these kind of experiences are more inclined to maintain the allegiance of pleasure-seeking visitors (S. Wang et al., 2023). Hedonic travelers view vacations as a chance to indulge in self-gratification or celebrate specific accomplishments (Apaolaza, P, et al., 2023). Destinations or services that can fulfill this requirement by providing gratifying and pleasurable experiences have the ability to cultivate loyalty as passengers directly feel the advantages (Tiwari et al., 2022).

Hedonism can influence the way visitors perceive their holiday experiences, contributing to their personal development (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022). Travelers perceive gratifying and delightful experiences as a valuable investment in their personal well-being and happiness, leading to increased long-term loyalty towards the destination or organization offering such experiences. Tourists' holiday plans may also be influenced by hedonism (Bagheri et al., 2023). Travelers are more likely to select longer holiday durations or destinations that offer a variety of sensory and emotional experiences, which might impact their future loyalty decisions (Saraç et al., 2023).

Research undertaken by (Heri et al., 2021) has found that hedonism has a direct and substantial impact on visitor loyalty. Nevertheless, research (Tarka et al., 2022) indicates that hedonism does not play a role in influencing visitor loyalty when it comes to choosing future tourist destinations. Hedonism prioritizes immediate gratification and enjoyable encounters over establishing enduring connections with companies (Evelina, 2022).

The significance of perceived susceptibility in fostering traveler loyalty is also acknowledged (Chi et al., 2020). Perceived susceptibility, or the perception in being susceptible to a disease or risk, is influenced by several psychological characteristics at the individual level (Papadopoulou et al., 2023). An individual's degree of anxiety is a crucial factor. Individuals with a proclivity for anxiety around certain health concerns or hazards may be more prone to experiencing heightened degrees of sensitivity (Patwardhan et al., 2020). Anxiety can heighten an individual's susceptibility to health risks and raise the consciousness of travelers regarding their potential vulnerability to disease or damage (Liat et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the notion of having agency over danger is as significant. Individuals who believe they have little control over factors that affect the health risks of traveling, such as the environment or genetics, are more likely to feel highly vulnerable (Paulose & Shakeel, 2022). Perceiving a lack of control may lead to an increased predisposition to believe that the traveler is vulnerable to specific illnesses or diseases (Sharma & Klein, 2020). According to research conducted by (Suttikun & Meeprom, 2021), perceived susceptibility has a direct impact on tourist loyalty. However, this study is not in line with the results of (Hasan et al., 2020), who emphasized that perceived susceptibility is not the main key factor in increasing tourist loyalty.

Adding three main factors hedonism, perceived susceptibility, and brand affection this study adds something new to the field of studying tourist behavior. It looks at how loyal tourists are to the Bukit Lawang tourist destination Langkat. Previous studies have only focused on perceived susceptibility to travel risks such as security and safety in urban tourist destinations (Johnson, M., & Brown, 2019). However, this study has not explored how perceived risk or vulnerability affects tourist loyalty in the context of ecotourism, which has different characteristics, such as challenging natural terrain or limited infrastructure. Then other studies also focus on the influence of hedonism in creating tourist loyalty without considering the role of other emotional factors, such as brand affection. This study ignores the simultaneous relationship between these factors, leaving a gap in understanding how the combination of hedonism and brand affection simultaneously affects loyalty (Smith, R.,

Nguyen & Johnson, 2020). Finally, further research also focuses on international tourist destinations or popular tourist areas in developed countries (Lee, S., Park, J., & Kim, 2021).

This study is the only study that examines ecotourism destinations in developing countries, especially in Indonesia. Destinations such as Bukit Lawang, which have unique attractions in the form of nature conservation and orangutans, have not been widely studied, thus providing an opportunity to fill the gap in this research. Thus, most previous studies tend to focus on the influence of hedonism or brand love individually on tourist loyalty, without exploring how these three factors interact and influence tourist decisions simultaneously. In addition, research on perceived vulnerability is still limited to the context of travel risk or security, without considering its emotional influence on tourist loyalty in ecotourism destinations.

Theoretical Review

Tourist Loyalty

Tourist loyalty is known as the tendency or habit of tourists to regularly choose or revisit a particular tourism place or service (L. Liu et al., 2023). It shows the level of loyalty that tourists have towards a particular brand, place, or service provider (Gorji et al., 2023). Tourist loyalty can be influenced by several factors such as pleasant past experiences, service quality, alignment with personal needs and preferences, and the value or benefits gained from the travel experience (Zhu et al., 2024). Tourism organisations and locations often aim to increase visitor loyalty, as it can result in lasting benefits such as repeat trips, referrals, and sales of additional offers (Siegel et al., 2023).

Organizations or destinations can get feedback from tourists by administering surveys and questionnaires to evaluate the degree of traveler contentment, probability of repeat visits, and recommendations to other travelers (Thao et al., 2024). Retention analysis is the methodical monitoring and assessment of repeating patterns in the frequency of passenger visits over a certain time period (Zarezadeh et al., 2023). Companies can evaluate the frequency and intensity of visitors' involvement with a traveler's brand or place by monitoring the online actions of travelers, such as website usage, social media participation, and other online activities (Cerdá-Mansilla et al., 2024).

Brand Love

The notion of brand love has strong foundations in popular culture (Wu et al., 2023). Studies on brand love explore several frameworks, since the emotional attachment of love corresponds to the social psychology of travelers (Mvondo et al., 2022). Brand love is the intense emotional connection and loyalty that individuals develop for a particular brand over a prolonged period of time (Joshi, 2021). Presently, customers see brand affection as crucial since it impacts their brand allegiance and inclination to endorse the brand to others (Y.-C. Wang et al., 2023). Consumers also take into account brand affinity when making purchase choices for items or services (Lykoudi et al., 2022). Brand love may be defined as a combination of emotions, cognition, and action that leads to the formation of powerful connections (Safeer et al., 2020). Brand love is the collective cognitive activity that arises

when visitors develop a strong affection for a specific brand (Shen et al., 2021). According to the suggestion made by (Liutiantian, 2020), brand love may be measured using three dimensions: emotive, cognitive, and behavioral. Previous study findings demonstrate that brand affection has a direct and substantial impact on the loyalty of tourists (Aljumah et al., 2022),(Yen et al., 2020), and (Lv & Wu, 2021).

H1: Brand love has a significant effect on tourist loyalty

Hedonism

Hedonism is a philosophical concept that places the pursuit of pleasure and personal fulfillment as the main objectives in life (Correia & Kim, 2022). Hedonism refers to the degree to which the tourist experience provides immediate gratification and pleasure to the traveler (Kahraman & Cifci, 2023). Adventurous travelers who fully embrace hedonism constantly seek out unique and fulfilling experiences that cater to their own preferences (Tiwari et al., 2022). For him, holidays encompass not just seeing renowned sites or appreciating stunning landscapes, but also experiencing profound satisfaction (Raja et al., 2023). Tourists systematically plan their vacations, actively searching for destinations or amenities that offer unique or non-traditional experiences (Saraç et al., 2023). This individual places great significance on the quality of the experience and the chance to indulge in premium amenities such as a private spa, gourmet meals, or private tours with a skilled guide (Tarka et al., 2022).

Previous studies have shown that hedonism has a direct and significant effect on tourist loyalty (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022). Travelers tend to be more willing to invest additional funds in activities that offer the highest level of enjoyment and satisfaction (Bagheri et al., 2023). Travelers who actively pursue pleasure and self-indulgence can make a significant impact on society by sharing the tourist experience with others (Cooper et al., 2024). Travelers may actively share their travel experience through social media, online reviews, or direct referrals to friends and family, thereby increasing the reach and impact of the place or service (Correia & Kim, 2022).

H2: Hedonism has a significant effect on brand love.

H3: Hedonism has a significant effect on tourist loyalty.

H4: Hedonism has a significant effect on tourist loyalty through brand love.

Perceived Susceptibility

Perceived susceptibility is the measure of how much persons believe a traveler is at risk of a certain hazard (Putra, 2021). Tourist vulnerability is the degree to which visitors view themselves as susceptible to possible risks, such as those linked to health, safety, or the surrounding environment, when they travel to a certain destination in the tourism industry (Jeong & Kim, 2020). The perception of risk in the tourist industry has a substantial influence on the whole experience of travelers (Abraham et al., 2020). Travelers who see themselves as being more susceptible to dangers at a specific destination may have diminished levels of comfort and contentment during their journey (Kim et al., 2021). This

discomfort might stem from several factors, such as apprehensions over personal security, medical conditions, or ecological equilibrium (Su & Huang, 2022).

Tourist attractions that effectively handle and reduce perceived risks are more likely to establish trust and loyalty among tourists (Hwang et al., 2021). When visitors feel secure and at ease, they are more likely to have a positive experience throughout their vacation, resulting in increased satisfaction and a greater likelihood of returning to the destination (Mao et al., 2022). Implementing strong and effective security measures greatly reduces tourists' perception of being at risk (Hasan et al., 2020). Destinations that offer comprehensive information on health and safety rules and implement rigorous sanitary standards might reduce tourists' worries about potential health risks (Paulose & Shakeel, 2022).

Research findings (Papadopoulou et al., 2023) indicate that perceived susceptibility directly influences passenger loyalty. Brands that are able to mitigate social risk by cultivating a favorable and distinctive image have a tendency to acquire a devoted consumer base (Chi et al., 2020). Utilizing a diverse range of marketing strategies that promote favorable principles, superior product quality, and outstanding client experiences may successfully cultivate a positive brand reputation (Meeprom, 2021).

H5: Perceived susceptibility significantly influences brand love.

H6: Perceived susceptibility has a significant effect on tourist loyalty.

H7: Perceived susceptibility significantly influences tourist loyalty through brand love

METHOD

This study uses quantitative methodology, using surveys as quantitative instruments to collect research data. We conducted this study in the Bukit Lawan tourism area, located in Langkat Regency. The study focused on the target audience of visitors to the Bukit Lawang tourist attraction in 2023, totaling 1288 tourists. Additionally, the study employed accidental sampling, selecting 387 tourists as research samples. The reason the researcher chose 387 was based on tourists who had experience visiting Bukit Lawang at least three times. We chose this criterion based on the extent of experience and love for Bukit Lawang's beauty. This study uses primary data that participants directly fill out, compiled based on indicators of each variable. The details of the questionnaire used in this study are listed in Table 1.

Finally, we conducted data analysis in this study using the SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) method. This method was chosen because it can test the complicated relationship between latent variables (variables that can't be measured directly) and variables that can be measured. SEM allows researchers to integrate factor analysis and regression analysis in one analytical framework, thus providing more comprehensive results. This study employed SEM to examine the correlation between hedonism, perceived vulnerability, brand love, and tourist loyalty. With this approach, the study is expected to provide valid and reliable results in understanding the factors that influence tourist loyalty at the Bukit Lawang tourist destination, Langkat.

Table 1. *Variable Measurement Scale*

Variable	Code	Question
Hedonism (X1)	X1.1	I really enjoyed my travel experience in Bukit Lawang.
	X1.2	Traveling in Bukit Lawang gave me immense happiness and satisfaction.
	X1.3	Tourist activities in Bukit Lawang made me feel relaxed and entertained.
	X1.4	I enjoyed spending time in Bukit Lawang because of its natural atmosphere.
	X1.5	Traveling in Bukit Lawang gave me a pleasant and memorable experience.
	X1.6	I feel that visiting Bukit Lawang is a beneficial way to refresh my mind.
	X1.7	I always feel enthusiastic when planning a visit to Bukit Lawang.
Perceived of susceptibility (X2)	X2.1	I am concerned about safety risks while traveling to Bukit Lawang.
	X2.2	I am concerned that the supporting facilities in Bukit Lawang are inadequate.
	X2.3	I am unsure whether my trip to Bukit Lawang will go smoothly.
	X2.4	I am concerned about potential environmental damage around Bukit Lawang.
	X2.5	I feel that there are health risks that may arise while traveling to Bukit Lawang.
	X2.6	I am unsure about the safety of transportation to Bukit Lawang.
	X2.7	I am concerned about the possible lack of information or assistance in the event of an emergency in Bukit Lawang.
Brand Love (Y1)	Y1.1	I feel a strong emotional connection with Bukit Lawang as a tourist destination.
	Y1.2	Bukit Lawang is a very meaningful tourist destination for me.
	Y1.3	I feel connected to the conservation values offered by Bukit Lawang.
	Y1.4	I always feel positive when I remember my experiences in Bukit Lawang.
	Y1.5	I feel proud to visit Bukit Lawang and support the conservation there.
	Y1.6	Bukit Lawang is a tourist destination that I will never forget.
	Y1.7	I feel that Bukit Lawang reflects values that are important to me.
	Y1.8	I believe Bukit Lawang is a unique tourist destination that no other destination can match.
Tourist Loyalty (Y2)	Y2.1	I plan to visit Bukit Lawang again in the future.
	Y2.2	I would recommend Bukit Lawang to family and friends.
	Y2.3	I was satisfied with my travel experience in Bukit Lawang.
	Y2.4	I tend to choose Bukit Lawang over other, similar tourist destinations.
	Y2.5	I will share my positive experiences about Bukit Lawang on social media or other platforms.
	Y2.6	I believe that Bukit Lawang is a tourist destination worth visiting again.
	Y2.7	I feel inspired to support nature conservation more after visiting Bukit Lawang.
	Y2.8	I found the experience in Bukit Lawang intriguing enough to be my favorite destination.
	Y2.9	I would still recommend Bukit Lawang despite certain challenges during the trip.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Description

Table 2. *Respondent Demographics*

Variable	Scale	N	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	175	45%
	Female	212	55%
Age	20 – 25 Year	87	23%
	26 – 30 Year	116	30%
	31- 35 Year	98	25%
	36 – 40 Year	86	22%
Education	SMA	177	46
	D3	45	12
	S1	144	37
	S2	21	5
Total Respondents		387	100%

This study involved 387 respondents with diverse demographic characteristics, including gender, age, and education level. Based on gender, the majority of respondents were female, 212 people (55%), while male respondents were 175 people (45%), indicating that female participation was slightly higher than male participation in this study. In terms of age, most respondents were in the productive age group. The 26-30 age group was the largest, with 116 people (30%), followed by the 31-35 age group with 98 people (25%) and the 20-25 age group with 87 people (23%). Meanwhile, the 36-40 age group was recorded as the smallest, with 86 people (22%). These data show that the majority of respondents are young to early adult individuals who have a high potential interest in tourism activities in Bukit Lawang. Furthermore, in terms of education, most respondents have a secondary to higher education background. Respondents with high school education dominate with 177 people (46%), followed by respondents with a bachelor's degree of 144 people (37%). In addition, there are 45 people (12%) with a D3 education, and the group with a Master's degree is the smallest with 21 people (5%). This indicates that most respondents have an adequate level of education to provide an assessment of their tourism experience. Overall, the demographic description reveals that young women in the productive age group, with secondary to higher education levels, dominate the study. This description provides an important basis for understanding tourist behavior in Bukit Lawang and helps formulate effective strategies in increasing tourist loyalty to the destination.

Data Processing Results

This study presents statistical tests for the establishment of path analysis constructs. These outer model measurements feature some well-known criteria for statistical analysis in PLS-SEM. Validity and reliability tests should ensure the data has sufficient factor loading, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extractor (AVE). Table 3

summarizes the convergent validity tests based on factor loadings and AVE values. These tests will pave the way for statistical analysis in subsequent presentations.

Table 3. *Convergen Validity*

Variable	Code	Outer Loading	Cronbarch' alpha	Composite reliability	Ave
Hedonism (X1)	X1.1	0,754	0,788	0,843	0,550
	X1.2	0,744			
	X1.3	0,723			
	X1.4	0,817			
	X1.5	0,760			
	X1.6	0,744			
	X1.7	0,800			
Perceived of susceptibility (X2)	X2.1	0,820	0,857	0,890	0,538
	X2.2	0,754			
	X2.3	0,803			
	X2.4	0,770			
	X2.5	0,750			
	X2.6	0,775			
	X2.7	0,739			
Brand Love (Y1)	Y1.1	0,857	0,930	0,943	0,674
	Y1.2	0,869			
	Y1.3	0,881			
	Y1.4	0,867			
	Y1.5	0,817			
	Y1.6	0,794			
	Y1.7	0,802			
	Y1.8	0,763			
Tourist Loyalty (Y2)	Y2.1	0,836	0,932	0,943	0,649
	Y2.2	0,868			
	Y2.3	0,845			
	Y2.4	0,795			
	Y2.5	0,803			
	Y2.6	0,799			
	Y2.7	0,798			
	Y2.8	0,752			
	Y2.9	0,746			

Based on the table above, it can be seen that all indicators meet the values above, which means that the indicators in this study have been met. The composite reliability value of all the variables above is said to be reliable because the composite reliability is greater than 0.7, meaning that the questionnaire can produce stable or constant measurement results. In addition, all of the above variables are said to be reliable because Cronbach's alpha is above 0.6, so the questionnaire can produce stable or constant measurement results. The final stage of research testing is hypothesis testing using the constant bootstrapping method with chi- square ($n = 377$). The data collection method uses a questionnaire distributed to all research samples (see Table 2 for the scale used).

Bootstrapping's output

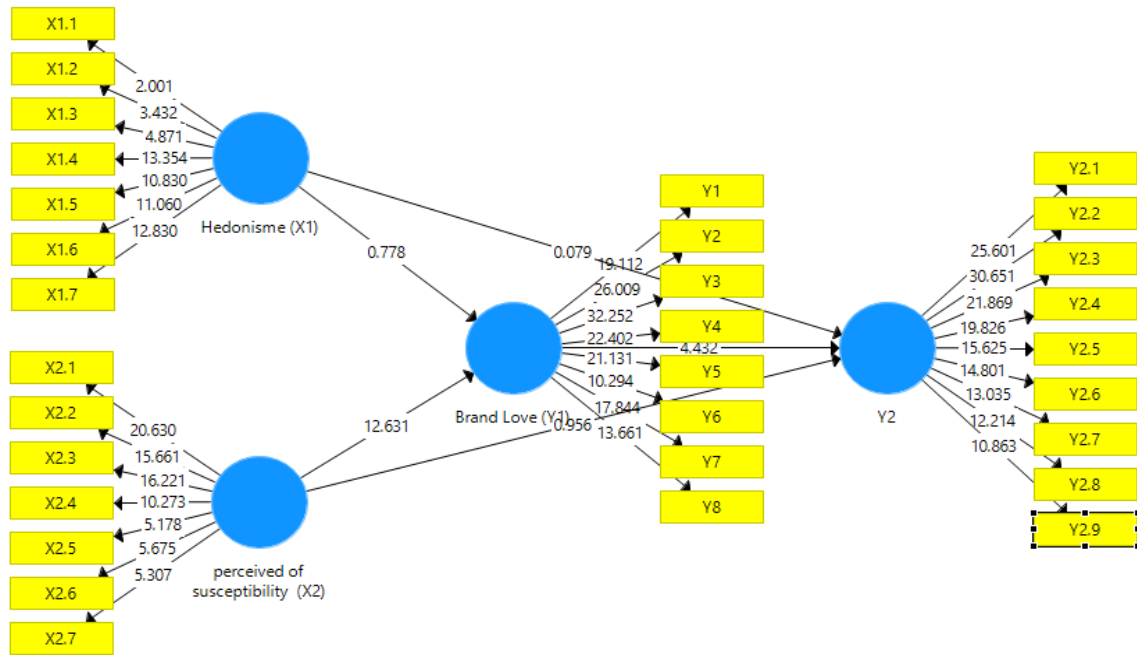


Figure 1. Bootstrapping's output

Table 4. *Hypothesis Test*

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Hedonisme (X1) -> brand love (y1)	0,362	0,376	0,380	3,778	0,007
Hedonisme (X1) -> loyalty (y2)	0,107	0115	0,191	2,379	0,037
Perceived of susceptibility (X2)-> Brand Love (Y1)	0,844	0,843	0,067	12,631	0,000
Perceived of susceptibility (X2)-> Loyalty (y2)	0,185	0,194	0,194	0,956	0,340
Brand Love (y1) -> Loyalty (Y2)	0,680	0,674	0,153	4,432	0,000
Hedonisme (X1) -> brand love (y1) > Loyalty (Y2)	0,574	0,568	0,138	4,168	0,000
Perceived of susceptibility 0(X2) -> Brand love (Y1) > loyalty (y2)	0,042	0,052	0,058	0,723	0,470

This study found that hedonism has a direct effect on brand love in Bukit Lawang Langkat tourism. This supports the hypothesis that traditionally tourist actions are believed to be rational actions based on hedonism in carrying out tourism activities in an

area when a person's hedonism can be realized when traveling, the tourist will have a higher liking for the tour. This conclusion is in line with previous studies that show a positive and meaningful relationship between hedonism and brand love (Nasib et al., 2023). Then the tourism sector has a large enough share and potential to continue to be developed as one of the drivers of the national economy; therefore, the tourism sector must improve the brand so that tourists are interested in visiting the tourist spot (Happ et al., 2023).

This study found that hedonism directly affects loyalty to Bukit Lawang Langkat tourism. This supports the hypothesis that when a person's hedonism is high enough, the person's level of loyalty also increases, including in carrying out tourism activities. The activity of visiting tourist areas with relatively expensive prices is a reflection of the hedonistic lifestyle in today's society. People visit tourist areas not only to fulfill their vacation needs, but also to satisfy their needs for refreshing, prestige, and socializing. There is a link between hedonic experiences and consumer behavior (Tiwari et al., 2022), and (Apaolaza, P, et al., 2023). This shows that emotions, imagination, and sensory factors play a major role in purchasing decisions and how involved a consumer is in a product or service. Hedonic motives are consumer behaviors related to sensory experiences, fantasies, and emotional aspects that arise during the use of a product or service (Soldat et al., 2024). This motif emphasizes how the five human senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste interact with the consumer's imagination and emotions to create a personally satisfying experience (Intason, 2024). This emphasis on the emotional dimension of consumption highlights the importance of subjective aspects in shaping consumer perceptions and satisfaction (Luo et al., 2024).

This study found a clear correlation between perceived vulnerability and tourist loyalty in Bukit Lawang Langkat. The results of this study are in line with previous studies that stated that perceived vulnerability and level of affection have a significant effect on tourist loyalty (Nazir, 2021)(Le, 2020). Then it was stated that customer loyalty is formed through a gradual process involving initial satisfaction, emotional involvement, and belief in the value of the product or service (Laksana & Kuswati, 2024). Furthermore, emotional affection for a destination is one of the main predictors of tourist loyalty, especially in destinations that offer unique and emotional experiences, such as nature tourism (Hwang et al., 2021). Finally, risk perception, when managed effectively through mitigation and communication strategies, can increase tourist trust, which ultimately strengthens loyalty to the destination (Eletxigerra et al., 2023). The results of the study indicate that Bukit Lawang Langkat managers need to address people's feelings of vulnerability by being open about risks such as environmental issues and informing the public about ongoing conservation efforts. Creating emotional experiences, such as educational tours about orangutans and forest conservation programs, can strengthen tourists' affection. Additionally, improving basic amenities, such as access to transportation and eco-friendly accommodation, is important to reduce barriers to visiting. Community-based loyalty strategies, such as online forums or social media campaigns, are also effective in creating long-term emotional attachment.

This study found that brand love directly affects loyalty to Bukit Lawang Langkat tourism. This supports the hypothesis that when the passionate emotional bond satisfied consumers to have a particular brand is higher, loyalty to the product is also high. Brand love comes from the topic of customer-brand relationships. The brand relationship paradigm is a valuable explanation for brand loyalty, which explains the long-term relationship between customers and brands (Robertson et al., 2022). Tourist areas are places where tourists interact cognitively and emotionally in the process of searching, choosing, buying, and evaluating post-purchase experiences. This area encompasses various aspects, including transportation, culinary, accommodation, and other supporting facilities. Products provided in tourist areas generally have a high level of involvement, thus building a close relationship between consumers and the brands available (Nailis et al., 2021).

The study shows that hedonism indirectly affects loyalty to Bukit Lawang Langkat tourism through brand love. Travelers expect tourism products that have a unique, satisfying, and memorable experience on their tour. Hedonism is important in the tourism sector. Hedonism is a form of pleasure or self-satisfaction for the consumption of tourism products that have been obtained by tourists (Raja et al., 2023). Purchasing tourism products is a component that affects the improvement of self-experience so that the purpose of purchasing tourism products is to get an unforgettable hedonic memory. The results of the study (Saraç et al., 2023) showed the importance of emotions and hedonics in influencing, motivating, and strengthening consumers' ethical choices, which offer important insights into tourist behavior and its implications for tourism management and marketing.

CONCLUSION

The results and discussion indicate that hedonism significantly influences both brand love and tourist loyalty. In addition, the perception of vulnerability also has a direct influence on brand love but does not directly affect tourist loyalty. Brand love has demonstrated its significant role as a mediator, influencing loyalty through hedonism. Conversely, the perception of vulnerability does not have an indirect influence on loyalty through brand love. This underlines the central role of brand love in building tourist loyalty in Bukit Lawang, while the perception of vulnerability is less significant in influencing devotion, either directly or indirectly.

The study's results support the idea that brand love plays a mediating role in the connection between hedonism and tourist loyalty. This makes a significant contribution to the body of research on tourist behavior. We suggest further studies that incorporate variables like tourism experience or perceived value to enhance our understanding of loyalty-influencing factors. To test the consistency of these findings across cultural and geographical contexts, we need research on different destinations, both domestic and international. A qualitative approach is also recommended to dig deeper into the reasons why tourists love a particular destination and its impact on loyalty, providing deeper strategic insights.

Finally, the suggestion for Bukit Lawang management is to improve tourism elements that support hedonistic experiences, such as enjoyable activities, a comfortable atmosphere, and satisfying services to strengthen tourist loyalty. Marketing strategies also need to be focused on increasing brand love by highlighting unique values such as nature conservation and authentic experiences in promotions in order to build emotional connections with tourists. In addition, aspects of security and comfort must be considered in order to increase trust, especially for new tourists. The development of quality infrastructure and supporting services is also important to reduce risk perception and promote a better tourism experience.

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