
Trust, Information Quality, and Reputation: Determinants of Tourist Interest in Lake Toba, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT: Lake Toba has attracted the attention of both local and international tourists. In efforts to enhance tourists' interest in visiting Lake Toba, it is crucial to understand the factors influencing tourists' decisions. This research analyzes the influence of trust, information quality, and reputation on tourists' interest in visiting Lake Toba. Using quantitative methods and Partial Least Squares (PLS) techniques, data were collected from 200 tourists visiting in June 2024. The results indicate that all three variables significantly and positively impact tourists' interest. Trust enhances tourists' confidence in a positive experience, information quality aids decision-making, and a good reputation serves as an indicator of destination quality and safety. Research recommendations include exploring other influencing factors and conducting similar studies in different destinations.

Keywords: Trust, Information Quality, Reputation, Tourist Interest, Lake Toba



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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a major driver of economic growth, especially in areas endowed with natural and cultural resources" (UNWTO, 2017). Lake Toba, located in North Sumatra, Indonesia, is one of the most famous natural tourist destinations in Indonesia. With its stunning natural beauty and rich cultural values, Lake Toba has become a major attraction for both local and international tourists. However, the increasing competition in the tourism industry demands more effective marketing strategies to attract tourists. Given the importance of tourism as a driver of the local economy, understanding the factors that influence tourists' interest in visiting is very important. Effective marketing strategies are essential to differentiate destinations in a highly competitive global tourism market" (Kotler et al., 2018).

Tourist interest is one of the main indicators of the success of a tourist destination. Tourist interest can be interpreted as the willingness and desire of tourists to visit a particular destination" (Chen & Tsai, 2016). In this context, this study focuses on three main factors that are considered to have a significant influence on tourist interest in visiting Lake Toba, namely trust, information quality, and destination reputation. Trust in the context of tourism refers to tourists' belief that the tourist destination is safe, reliable, and provides a satisfying experience. Trust is a crucial factor in tourism, because it influences tourist decisions and behavior" (Schaubroeck et al., 2016). The quality of

information is very important for tourists because it helps reduce uncertainty and improve decision making" (Ho et al., 2016). The quality of information available also plays an important role in tourist decisions, where accurate, relevant, and reliable information can help tourists make better decisions. In addition, destination reputation, which is the general perception of the community towards a destination, also has a major influence in attracting tourists. Destination reputation is built over time through the accumulation of tourist experiences and perceptions" (Chen & Phou, 2019).

This research is important because trust is a key element in a tourist's decision to visit a destination. Trust in tourism can be seen as the tourist's belief that a destination will fulfill its promises" (Matzler et al., 2018). In the tourism industry, this trust includes the belief that the destination will provide a safe and satisfying experience. Schaubroeck et al. (2016) emphasized that trust is an important element in the relationship between service providers and customers, including in the tourism industry. Tourists tend to choose destinations that they believe will provide a positive experience, so building and maintaining trust is very important. The safety and reliability of the destination are key components of trust that significantly influence tourist decisions" (Gössling et al., 2017).

The quality of information obtained by tourists before traveling is also a determining factor in their interest. High-quality information plays an important role in reducing perceived risk and uncertainty among tourists" (Fileri & McLeay, 2018). Accurate, relevant, and reliable information not only helps tourists make informed decisions but also increases their trust in the destination they are going to visit. Ho et al. (2016) found that high-quality information can increase tourists' trust and ultimately increase their interest in visiting the destination. In this digital era, where tourists often search for information through various online platforms, the quality of information is becoming increasingly important. Digital platforms have become the main source of information for tourists, so the quality of online content is becoming increasingly important" (Xiang et al., 2016).

Destination reputation is the general perception that people have of a destination. A strong destination reputation can serve as a powerful marketing tool, influencing first-time and repeat visits" (Echtner & Ritchie, 2017). A good reputation can attract tourists because they tend to be more trusting and interested in visiting a destination that has a positive image. Chen & Phou (2019) showed that destination reputation plays an important role in attracting tourists and influencing their decision to visit. A good reputation reflects the positive experiences of previous tourists, which in turn can attract more new tourists. Reputation is an aggregate measure of the quality and value of a destination as perceived based on collective feedback" (Loureiro & González, 2018).

The relationship between trust, information quality, and reputation in tourism decisions has been well documented in the literature" (Lee et al., 2017). • "Trust, information quality, and reputation are interrelated factors that collectively influence tourists' perceptions and decisions" (Wang & Li, 2018). The formulation of the problem in this study is whether trust in Lake Toba has a significant effect on tourists' interest in visiting, how the quality of information available about Lake Toba affects tourists' interest, to what extent the reputation of Lake Toba as a tourist destination affects tourists' decisions to visit. Previous studies have examined various factors that influence tourist interest. Lee et al. (2017) examined the effect of trust on tourist decisions in the context of tourist

destinations and found that trust plays an important role in increasing tourist interest. Likewise, Wang & Li's (2018) research emphasized the importance of information quality in the tourist decision-making process. In addition, Liu & Pratt's (2019) research found that destination reputation has a significant influence on tourist decisions, especially in the context of new or lesser-known destinations. For lesser-known destinations, building a strong reputation is critical in attracting new visitors" (Liu & Pratt, 2019)..

This study adds a new dimension with a special focus on Lake Toba as a tourist destination and combines the three factors (trust, information quality, and reputation) in one analysis model.

Trust in Tourism

Koutsoukou-Argyaki & Zouni (2020) stated that tourist trust in a destination is greatly influenced by their perception of the safety and comfort offered by the destination. The higher the trust of tourists, the more likely they are to return to the destination. Trust in the context of tourism refers to tourists' belief that a tourist destination is safe, reliable, and provides a satisfying experience. Schaubroeck et al. (2016) investigated the role of trust in the relationship between service providers and customers. Vlachos & Vrechopoulos (2021) found that trust is a key element in building long-term relationships between tourists and destinations. This study showed that high trust in a destination encourages tourists to share their positive experiences online, which in turn improves the reputation of the destination.

Previous studies have found that trust plays an important role in building strong and sustainable relationships. In the context of tourism, trust can increase tourists' confidence that they will have a positive and safe experience when visiting a particular destination. Yang et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of building trust through consistent and quality tourism experiences. This study found that tourists' trust is heavily influenced by their interactions with local residents and their first-hand experiences at the destination.

Information Quality in Tourism

Gretzel et al. (2017) showed that the quality of information provided by the official website of a destination has a significant impact on tourist decisions. Clear, accurate, and relevant information can increase tourist confidence in choosing a destination. Information quality is the extent to which information provided to tourists is accurate, relevant, and reliable. High-quality information can help tourists make better decisions about which tourist destinations to visit. Ho et al. (2016) examined the quality of information in the tourism industry and found that accurate, relevant, and reliable information can increase tourist confidence. Good quality information helps tourists make better decisions about tourist destinations, which in turn can increase their interest in visiting.

Xiang & Fesenmaier (2020) found that the quality of information found on digital platforms, such as tourist reviews and social media, greatly influences tourists' perceptions and decisions. Good information helps reduce uncertainty and increase trust in a destination. Lee et al. (2023) stated that the provision of quality information, especially that which is relevant to the specific needs of tourists, plays an important role in improving the overall tourist experience. This study also found that information that is updated regularly is more trusted by tourists.

Destination Reputation

Jeong & Kim (2020) showed that positive destination reputation increases tourist loyalty, especially through the influence of social media and online reviews. This study also emphasized that a good reputation not only attracts new tourists but also retains old tourists. The reputation of a tourist destination is the general perception that the public has of the destination. A good reputation can increase tourist interest because Chen & Phou (2019) examined the effect of destination reputation on tourist interest.

Saraniemi & Komppula (2019) found that destination reputation is influenced by various factors, including service quality, safety, and sustainability. Tourists are more likely to choose destinations that have a good reputation in these aspects. Tasci et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of reputation as a strategic asset for destinations. This study shows that a well-managed reputation can be a strong competitive differentiation in the tourism industry. The study found that a good reputation can increase tourist interest in visiting because they tend to trust destinations that have a positive reputation more. A good reputation can also be an indicator of the quality and safety of a destination.

Tourist Interest

According to Crompton (1997) in Yoo et al (2018), tourist interest in visiting a destination is influenced by various factors, including trust, quality of information, and reputation. Park et al. (2019) stated that tourist interest is influenced by various factors, including ease of access to information and social interaction at the destination. This study shows that tourist interest increases when they feel involved and get relevant information. Kim & Lee (2023) emphasize that tourist interest can be strengthened through effective promotion and positive testimonials from other tourists. This study also found that destinations that are able to offer different experiences from other destinations tend to be more attractive to tourists.

Huang et al. (2021) found that tourist interest in visiting a destination is greatly influenced by the uniqueness and appeal of local culture. This study also shows that tourists are attracted to destinations that offer authentic and unique experiences. This study aims to analyze the influence of these three variables on tourist interest in visiting Lake Toba. By understanding these factors, tourist destination managers can develop more effective strategies to attract tourists and increase the attractiveness of Lake Toba as a leading tourist destination.

METHOD

This research uses quantitative methods with an association approach to analyze the relationship between independent variables (trust, information quality, and reputation) and the dependent variable (tourist interest). This approach allows measuring the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable and testing hypotheses.

The population of this study is tourists visiting Lake Toba in June 2024. Based on the method of Hair et al. (2010), the sample size is determined by considering the number of variable indicators

used in the research. There are 4 research variables with 5 indicators each, so the total indicators are 20. According to Hair et al., the recommended sample size is a minimum of 5-10 times the number of indicators. Therefore, the sample for this study is 20 indicators x 10 = 200 respondents. Sampling was carried out using a purposive sampling technique, namely selecting respondents who met certain criteria, namely tourists who had visited Lake Toba in June 2024.

The questionnaire used in this research consists of operational variables used in this research such as Trust which measures tourists' trust in Lake Toba with 5 indicators. Information Quality (Information Quality) which measures the quality of information received by tourists about Lake Toba with 5 indicators. Reputation Section (Reputation) which measures the reputation of Lake Toba as a tourist destination with 5 indicators and Tourist Interest (Tourist Interest) which measures tourists' interest in visiting the Lake. Toba with 5 indicators.

Data was collected through a survey using a questionnaire prepared based on indicators for each research variable. This questionnaire was distributed to tourists visiting Lake Toba in June 2024. Each indicator was measured using a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating "strongly disagree" and 5 indicating "strongly agree".

Data analysis was carried out using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method with SmartPLS software. PLS analysis is carried out in two stages, namely Testing the Measurement Model and Testing the Structural Model. Structural Model testing involves testing the relationship between independent variables (trust, information quality, and reputation) and the dependent variable (tourist interest) using path coefficients and t-statistics values from bootstrapping results to test the significance of the relationship between variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Presentation of Research Results

Data analysis was conducted using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method with the help of SmartPLS software. This analysis consists of two main stages, namely testing the measurement model and testing the structural model.

Stage 1: Testing the Measurement Model

Testing the measurement model includes testing convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability.

a. Based on the results of the analysis, all indicators have an outer loading value above 0.7, which means that each indicator is able to measure its construct well. The AVE (Average Variance Extracted) value of each construct is also above 0.5, indicating that most of the variability of the indicator can be explained by the construct being measured.

b. Discriminant validity is tested by comparing the AVE value of each construct with the correlation between constructs. The results show that the AVE value of each construct is higher

than the correlation between constructs, which means that these constructs have good discriminant validity.

c. Reliability was tested using Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha. All Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values were above 0.7, indicating good internal consistency. Table 1 below presents a summary of the reliability and validity test results.

Table 1: Validity and Reliability Test Results

Konstruk	Outer Loading	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Trust	> 0.7	> 0.5	> 0.7	> 0.7
Information Quality	> 0.7	> 0.5	> 0.7	> 0.7
Reputation	> 0.7	> 0.5	> 0.7	> 0.7
Traveler Interest	> 0.7	> 0.5	> 0.7	> 0.7

Stage 2: Structural Model Testing

Structural model testing aims to test the relationship between independent variables (trust, information quality, and reputation) and dependent variables (tourist interest). The results of the analysis show that all independent variables have a significant relationship with the dependent variable. Table 2 below shows the path coefficients and t-statistic values from the bootstrapping results.

Table 2: Structural Model Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	t-Statistic	p-Value	Results
Trust → Tourist Interest	0.35	4.21	< 0.01	Signifikan
Information Quality → Tourist Interest	0.32	3.98	< 0.01	Signifikan
Reputation → Tourist Interest	0.41	5.47	< 0.01	Signifikan

2. Interpretation and Discussion of Research Results

a. The results of the study indicate that trust has a positive and significant influence on tourist interest in visiting Lake Toba. This confirms the findings of Schaubroeck et al. (2016) which states that trust plays an important role in building strong and sustainable relationships between service providers and customers. In the context of tourism, trust provides tourists with the assurance that they will have a safe and satisfying experience during their visit. This shows that tourist destinations that are able to build trust will be more able to attract tourists.

b. Information quality has also been shown to have a positive and significant influence on tourist interest. This finding supports the research of Ho et al. (2016) which emphasizes the importance of accurate, relevant, and reliable information in increasing tourist trust. Good quality information not only helps tourists make better decisions but also increases their confidence in the destination they will visit, which ultimately increases their interest in visiting.

c. Destination reputation turns out to have the most significant influence on tourist interest. This

result is consistent with the research of Chen & Phou (2019) which shows that a good reputation can increase tourist interest because they tend to trust and be more interested in destinations that have a positive reputation. A good reputation is an indicator of the quality and safety of a destination, which is an important factor in tourists' decisions to visit.

The results of this study provide important implications both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study strengthens the understanding of the importance of trust, information quality, and reputation in the context of tourism. Practically, these findings can be used by tourism destination managers to develop more effective marketing strategies, with a focus on increasing tourist trust, providing quality information, and building a good reputation.

3. Comparison with Previous Research

This study is in line with several previous studies that emphasize the importance of trust, information quality, and reputation factors in influencing tourist decisions. For example, Lee et al. (2017) found that trust is an important factor in increasing tourist interest. Wang & Li (2018) also emphasized that information quality has a significant impact on tourist intentions to visit a destination. In addition, Liu & Pratt (2019) revealed that destination reputation has a major influence on tourist decisions, especially in the context of new or lesser-known destinations.

However, this study adds a new contribution with a specific focus on Lake Toba as a tourist destination in Indonesia. This study also combines the three factors in one analysis model, which provides a more comprehensive insight into how these factors work together to influence tourist interest.

4. Research Constraints

Some of the constraints faced in this study include

- a. Data collection was carried out in a limited time, so the number of respondents may not reflect the overall tourist population. This can affect the generalization of research findings.
- b. This study only focuses on three main variables, namely trust, information quality, and reputation. However, it is possible that other factors, such as price or accessibility, also play a role in influencing tourist interest that are not accommodated in this study.
- c. The results of this study may have limitations in their application to other tourist destinations, because this study focuses on Lake Toba as a specific destination.

These constraints provide room for further research that can expand the scope of variables and research contexts to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence tourist interest.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the influence of trust, information quality, and reputation on tourists' interest in visiting Lake Toba. The results of the study indicate that the three factors have a positive and significant influence on tourists' interest. Trust plays an important role in building tourists' confidence that they will have a positive and safe experience during their visit. Accurate, relevant, and reliable information quality also contributes to increasing tourists' trust and their interest in visiting the destination. In addition, a good destination reputation strengthens tourists' interest because it reflects the quality and safety they expect.

1. Suggestions for Tourism Destination Managers

- a. Destination managers in Lake Toba need to focus on increasing tourists' trust by ensuring that tourists' experiences at this destination are always safe and satisfying. Concrete steps such as strengthening security, quality services, and managing tourist complaints effectively can increase this trust.
- b. Providing accurate, clear, and easily accessible information to potential tourists is key. This can be achieved through user-friendly digital platforms, informative brochures, and transparent communication through social media.
- c. A good reputation must be maintained by consistently providing positive experiences to tourists, as well as managing feedback proactively. Promotions that emphasize the uniqueness and excellence of Lake Toba can also help maintain and improve the destination's reputation.

2. Suggestions for Further Research

- a. Future research can explore other factors that influence tourist satisfaction, such as service quality, staff friendliness, and security. This will provide a more comprehensive picture of what makes a tourist destination a top choice for tourists.
- b. The use of mixed-methods research, which combines quantitative and qualitative analysis, can provide a deeper understanding of tourist experiences. For example, in-depth interviews or focus group discussions (FGDs) can complement quantitative data and reveal emotional or psychological factors that influence tourist interest.
- c. Similar research can be conducted in other tourist destinations in Indonesia to compare the results with Lake Toba. Research in different destinations, such as natural, cultural, or coastal tourist areas, can expand the application of these findings and ensure the validity of the results across contexts. In addition, taking into account moderating variables such as culture or tourist preferences can also provide deeper insights into the factors that influence tourist interest and satisfaction.

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