

The Influence of Service Performance Capabilities, Service Encounter, and Storynomics Tourism on Customer Delight Mediated by Memorable Tourism Experiences

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of service performance capabilities, service encounters, and storynomics tourism on customer delight, with memorable tourism experiences acting as a mediating variable. Grounded in the view that emotionally meaningful tourism experiences extend beyond conventional satisfaction, this explanatory study was conducted in Madiun City, East Java, Indonesia. Data were collected from 250 tourists using structured questionnaires measured on a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The results indicate that service performance capabilities and storynomics tourism do not have a significant direct effect on customer delight, but both significantly enhance memorable tourism experiences. In contrast, service encounters exert a significant direct influence on both memorable tourism experiences and customer delight. Furthermore, memorable tourism experiences have a strong positive effect on customer delight and fully mediate the relationships between service-related variables and customer delight. The findings show that service performance capabilities ($O = 0.032$, $p = 0.586$) and storynomics tourism ($O = 0.076$, $p = 0.197$) do not have a significant direct effect on customer delight, although both significantly enhance memorable tourism experiences ($O = 0.439$ and $O = 0.360$, respectively; $p = 0.000$). Service encounters, however, have a significant positive impact on both memorable tourism experiences ($O = 0.287$, $p = 0.000$) and customer delight ($O = 0.164$, $p = 0.000$). Memorable tourism experiences strongly predict customer delight ($O = 0.446$, $p = 0.000$) and fully mediate the effects of service-related variables. These findings underscore the strategic importance of experience-based value creation and provide empirical support for service-dominant logic within the tourism context.

Keywords: *Service Performance Capabilities, Service Encounter, Storynomics Tourism, Memorable Tourism Experiences, Customer Delight*

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry has become one of the most rapidly expanding sectors worldwide, serving not only as a driver of employment creation and local economic development but also as a medium for social interaction, cultural exchange, and emotional consumption. In Indonesia, tourism plays a strategic role in national economic growth and social well-being, particularly in the post-COVID-19 recovery period. Since 2024, tourism development policies have increasingly emphasized digital innovation, sustainable practices, and experience-based tourism that prioritizes emotional engagement and meaningful visitor experiences (Kemenparekraf/Baparekraf, 2024). In this increasingly competitive environment, tourism destinations can no longer rely solely on tangible attributes such as pricing strategies or physical infrastructure. Instead, they are required to enhance service excellence and design experiential encounters capable of generating customer delight, an affective state characterized by joy, surprise, and emotional resonance that exceeds conventional satisfaction (Asgeirsson *et al.*, 2024; Larasati *et al.*, 2024).

From a social science perspective, customer delight in tourism emerges through the interaction of organizational capabilities, interpersonal encounters, and symbolic meaning. Service performance capabilities reflect an organization's ability to consistently deliver reliable, adaptive, and high-quality services through learning, innovation, and responsiveness to dynamic tourist expectations (Jovanovic *et al.*, 2019; Zheng *et al.*, 2020). These capabilities provide the structural foundation for value creation but do not automatically translate into positive emotional

outcomes. Service encounters, understood as critical moments of interaction between tourists and service providers, play a central role in shaping tourists' perceptions and emotional responses, as the quality of empathy, communication, and responsiveness during these encounters significantly influences satisfaction, trust, and affective evaluations (Siahainenia *et al.*, 2024; Xu *et al.*, 2021; Zhang *et al.*, 2019). Beyond functional interaction, storynomics tourism introduces a cultural and narrative dimension by positioning destinations as spaces of storytelling, where local heritage, identity, and creative narratives are used to emotionally engage tourists and enrich their experiential interpretation of place (Christiani & Ikasari, 2022; Machmury, 2023; Robert McKee, 2018).

The convergence of service performance capabilities, service encounters, and storynomics tourism is theoretically mediated through memorable tourism experiences. Memorable tourism experiences are subjectively constructed experiences characterized by sensory richness, emotional intensity, personal meaning, and long-term memory retention (Pujiastuti *et al.*, 2023; Višković, 2022). Such experiences emerge from hedonic enjoyment, cultural interaction, novelty, knowledge acquisition, and meaningful involvement, and they significantly influence tourists' future attitudes, loyalty, and emotional attachment to destinations (Gonz *et al.*, 2025; Prodan & Dlačić, 2021; Sinaga *et al.*, 2024). Prior studies indicate that memorable tourism experiences are strongly associated with tourist satisfaction and post-visit behavioral intentions; however, empirical findings suggest that the influence of service-related and storynomics tourism factors on customer delight is often indirect and mediated by experiential and emotional processes (Eviana, 2024; Pujiastuti *et al.*, 2023).

Despite the growing body of research on experiential tourism, empirical studies that simultaneously examine service performance capabilities, service encounters, and storynomics tourism in relation to customer delight through memorable tourism experiences remain limited, particularly in emerging urban tourism destinations. Prior studies have predominantly investigated these constructs in isolation, emphasizing either service quality and customer satisfaction or experiential dimensions without integrating operational, interactional, and narrative perspectives (Berto *et al.*, 2023; Jovanovic *et al.*, 2019; Xu *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, research on memorable tourism experiences has largely focused on their direct effects on behavioral intentions and satisfaction, with limited attention to their mediating role in generating customer delight (Agung *et al.*, 2025; Muttaqien, 2025; Prodan & Dlačić, Jasmina, 2021).

This gap is evident in the context of Madiun City, East Java, where tourism development has expanded through the revitalization of public spaces such as Pahlawan Street Center and surrounding destinations. These spaces integrate recreational, educational, and aesthetic elements and are supported by local government and community-based service providers, creating potential conditions for emotionally meaningful tourism experiences. Nevertheless, systematic empirical evidence explaining how service capabilities, interaction quality, and narrative strategies translate into customer delight through memorable experiences in this context is still lacking.

Based on this gap, the present study aims to analyze the influence of service performance capabilities, service encounters, and storynomics tourism on customer delight, with memorable tourism experiences positioned as a mediating variable. By integrating these constructs within a single explanatory framework, this research offers empirical novelty by simultaneously examining how operational capabilities, interaction quality, and storynomics tourism strategies are transformed into customer delight through memorable tourism experiences. Focusing on an emerging urban tourism destination in Indonesia, this study extends prior tourism and service research that has predominantly emphasized direct effects by elucidating the indirect experiential mechanism through which service-related and storytelling dimensions create emotional value for tourists.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design using a cross-sectional approach, which is appropriate for examining causal relationships among variables (Dinilhaq et al., 2025). The population comprised tourists visiting destinations in Madiun City, East Java, Indonesia, with 250 respondents selected through purposive sampling, a technique suitable for targeting specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Pering, 2021). Data were collected using structured questionnaires measured on a five-point Likert scale, which is widely used to capture respondents’ perceptions and attitudes. Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modelling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS software, as this method is well-suited for complex models, prediction-oriented research, and does not require strict normality assumptions (Fernanda et al., 2022)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Picture 1. Bootstrapping

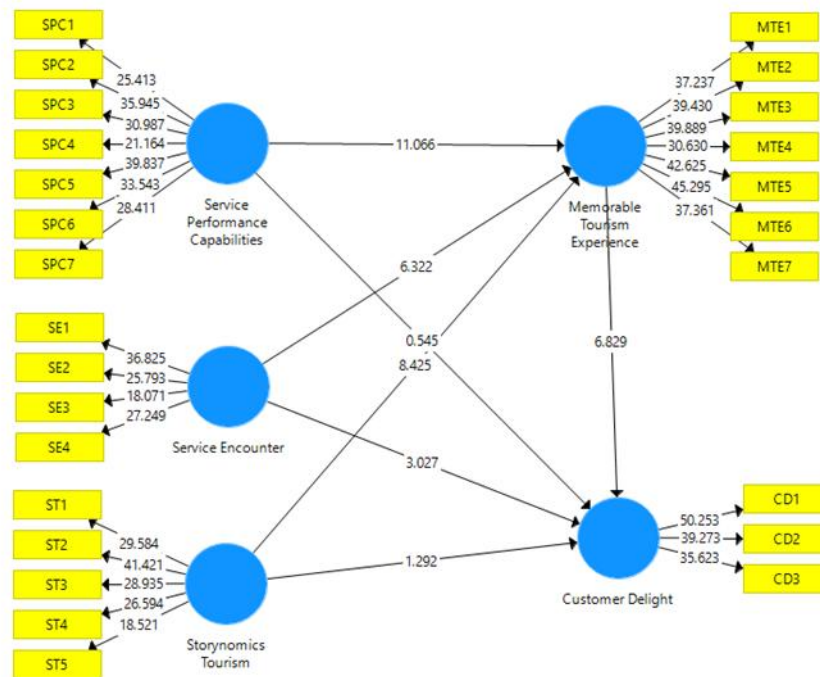


Table 1. Direct Influence

	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistic	P Values
Service performance capabilities on customer delight	0,032	0,059	0,545	0,586
Service encounter on customer delight	0,164	0,054	3,027	0,000
Storynomics tourism on customer delight	0,076	0,059	1,292	0,197

Memorable tourism experiences on customer delight	0,446	0,065	6,829	0,000
Service performance capabilities on memorable tourism experiences	0,439	0,040	11,066	0,000
Service encounter on memorable tourism experiences	0,287	0,045	6,322	0,000
Storynomics tourism on memorable tourism experiences	0,360	0,043	8,425	0,000

Table 1 presents the results of the direct effects among the variables. Service performance capabilities ($O = 0.032$, $p = 0.586$) and storynomics tourism ($O = 0.076$, $p = 0.197$) do not have a statistically significant direct effect on customer delight. In contrast, service encounter shows a significant positive effect on customer delight ($O = 0.164$, $p = 0.000$). Memorable tourism experiences demonstrate the strongest direct influence on customer delight ($O = 0.446$, $p = 0.000$).

With respect to the determinants of memorable tourism experiences, all antecedent variables exhibit significant positive relationships. Service performance capabilities ($O = 0.439$, $p = 0.000$), service encounter ($O = 0.287$, $p = 0.000$), and storynomics tourism ($O = 0.360$, $p = 0.000$) significantly contribute to the formation of memorable tourism experiences.

Table 2. Indirect Influence

	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistik	P Values
Service performance capabilities for customer delight through memorable tourism experiences	0,196	0,035	5,638	0,000
Service encounter for customer delight through memorable tourism experiences	0,128	0,027	4,680	0,000
Storynomics tourism for customer delight through memorable tourism experiences	0,161	0,032	5,087	0,000

Table 2 summarizes the indirect effects. The results indicate that service performance capabilities ($O = 0.196$, $p = 0.000$), service encounter ($O = 0.128$, $p = 0.000$), and storynomics tourism ($O = 0.161$, $p = 0.001$) significantly influence customer delight through memorable tourism experiences.

To enhance interpretability, the relationships among key variables are visualized in Figure 1 and Figure 2. Figure 1 illustrates the positive relationship between memorable tourism

experiences and customer delight, while Figure 2 depicts the mediating role of memorable tourism experiences in linking service-related variables to customer delight.

The findings reveal that service performance capabilities do not directly translate into customer delight, despite showing a positive directional relationship. This suggests that operational reliability and efficiency alone are insufficient to evoke strong emotional responses among tourists. In line with experiential consumption theory, functional service attributes primarily act as enabling conditions rather than direct emotional drivers. Previous studies similarly indicate that service quality contributes more to the formation of experiences than to delight when assessed independently (Eviana, 2024; Jovanovic et al., 2019)

In contrast, service encounters emerge as a significant determinant of both memorable tourism experiences and customer delight. This highlights the critical role of interpersonal interactions in tourism contexts, where emotional value is co-created through direct engagement between tourists and service providers. Elements such as empathy, responsiveness, and personalized attention appear to be central in shaping positive emotional outcomes. This finding supports prior research emphasizing service encounters as key touchpoints influencing tourists' affective evaluations (Agatha et al., 2025; Siahainenia et al., 2024; Xu et al., 2021).

The results further indicate that storynomics tourism does not exert a significant direct effect on customer delight. This implies that storytelling strategies alone may not be sufficient to generate emotional responses unless they are embedded within immersive and engaging experiences. Existing literature suggests that storytelling primarily influences destination image, meaning-making, and expectation formation rather than immediate emotional reactions (Agustina et al., 2024; Berto et al., 2023; Kartika & Riana, 2020).

A key finding of this study is the dominant role of memorable tourism experiences in shaping customer delight. As shown in both the statistical results and Figure 1, memorable experiences have the strongest effect on customer delight, indicating that emotionally meaningful and personally engaging experiences are central to generating delight. This aligns with previous research highlighting that memorable experiences have a lasting impact on tourists' emotional evaluations and behavioral intentions (Prodan & Dlačić, Jasmina, 2021; Pujiastuti et al., 2023; Ramdhani et al., 2025).

Moreover, the mediation analysis demonstrates that memorable tourism experiences function as a critical mechanism linking service performance capabilities, service encounters, and storynomics tourism to customer delight. As illustrated in Figure 2, the indirect effects of all antecedent variables are significant and stronger when channeled through experiential memory. This finding supports the notion that customer delight is not directly derived from service attributes, but rather from how these attributes are experienced and remembered.

Overall, the results suggest that customer delight in tourism is fundamentally an experiential and memory-based outcome. Rather than being driven solely by operational performance or narrative strategies, delight emerges from the integration of functional, interactional, and experiential elements that collectively shape meaningful tourism experiences. This underscores the importance of holistic experience design in tourism development, particularly for emerging destinations seeking to enhance emotional engagement and competitive advantage.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that customer delight in tourism is primarily shaped through memorable tourism experiences, which function as a central mediating mechanism connecting service performance capabilities, service encounters, and storynomics tourism with emotional outcomes. The findings demonstrate that operational capabilities and storynomics tourism

strategies do not automatically generate customer delight when applied in isolation; instead, their value emerges when they are transformed into emotionally meaningful and memorable experiences. Service performance capabilities contribute by enabling destinations to deliver consistent and adaptive services that support experiential quality, while service encounters play a critical role in eliciting emotional responses through empathy, responsiveness, and interpersonal engagement. Storynomics tourism enhances delight indirectly by enriching experiential meaning and strengthening tourists' emotional and cultural connections with destinations. Collectively, these results affirm that delight is not a product of functional excellence alone, but an outcome of socially constructed, experience-based value creation, thereby reinforcing the Service-Dominant Logic perspective. From a public policy standpoint, these findings suggest that tourism development policies should prioritize experiential innovation, human-centered service design, and culturally grounded storytelling rather than focusing solely on physical infrastructure expansion.

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