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From Experience to Advocacy: A Destination Marketing Strategy for Building Coastal Tourism Loyalty Through Experiential Value and Affective Involvement

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Abstract: This study examines how experiential value iconization and affective involvement shape destination loyalty in coastal tourism contexts. Using structural equation modeling with data from 480 domestic tourists visiting Pangandaran, Karanghawu, and Ujung Genteng in West Java, Indonesia, the research develops and validates an integrated model incorporating destination peripheral attributes and tourism motivation as antecedents. Results confirm that destination peripheral attributes ($\beta = 0.623$, $p < 0.001$) and tourism motivation ($\beta = 0.654$, $p < 0.001$) significantly influence experiential value iconization. Experiential value iconization ($\beta = 0.258$, $p < 0.001$) and affective involvement ($\beta = 0.478$, $p < 0.001$) also have significant direct effects on destination loyalty. Because destination peripheral attributes and tourism motivation have no hypothesized direct path to destination loyalty, mediation analysis confirms that experiential value iconization and affective involvement fully mediate the relationships between these antecedent variables and loyalty outcomes. The final structural model explains 91.1% of the variance in destination loyalty, reflecting substantial explanatory power. These findings suggest that emotional attachment and experiential value creation are more critical than peripheral destination attributes in fostering tourist loyalty. The study contributes to destination marketing theory by identifying affective involvement as a comparatively stronger predictor of loyalty formation within this model, offering practical implications for coastal destination management.

Keywords: *experiential value, affective involvement, destination loyalty, coastal tourism, structural equation modeling*

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INTRODUCTION

Coastal tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the global tourism industry (Marasco et al., 2018) and contributes significantly to economic development in coastal regions worldwide (Birdir et al., 2018). In Indonesia, a vast archipelagic nation with over 17,000 islands, coastal destinations account for approximately 65% of total tourist arrivals, generating substantial revenue and employment opportunities (Suhartanto, Brien, et al., 2020). Southern West Java, encompassing destinations such as Pangandaran, Karanghawu, and Ujung Genteng, has emerged as a prominent coastal tourism corridor, attracting millions of domestic tourists annually. However, despite impressive visitor numbers, these destinations face a critical challenge (Reinhold et al., 2023): converting

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first-time visitors into loyal advocates who return and share positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Sorokina et al., 2022).

Understanding destination loyalty formation has become increasingly urgent as competition intensifies among coastal tourism destinations (Camilleri, 2018). While existing literature has extensively examined the cognitive determinants of loyalty such as service quality (Séraphin & Gowreesunkar, 2017), destination image (Lukiyanto et al., 2021), and perceived value (Séraphin & Gowreesunkar, 2017), the role of affective and experiential dimensions remains underexplored, particularly in the context of emerging tourism markets (Lukiyanto et al., 2021). This gap is particularly pronounced regarding the concept of experiential value iconization (Zhang et al., 2018), which refers to the process by which tourists transform memorable experiences into symbolic representations that hold personal significance and social currency (W. Yang et al., 2022) (Huwae et al., 2020). Moreover, while affective involvement the emotional connection and personal identification tourists develop with destinations has been theoretically acknowledged as important (Ahn et al., 2017), empirical evidence regarding its relative importance compared to cognitive factors remains limited (Ribeiro et al., 2018).

The theoretical landscape of destination loyalty research reveals several contradictions and gaps that warrant investigation (Camilleri, 2018). First, although studies consistently demonstrate positive relationships between destination attributes and loyalty (Séraphin & Gowreesunkar, 2017; Zhou, 2024), the mechanisms through which peripheral attributes translate into behavioral loyalty remain unclear (Pike, 2012). Specifically, the mediating roles of experiential value and emotional attachment in this process have received insufficient attention (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2021). Second, while experiential marketing literature emphasizes the importance of memorable experiences (Şahin & Güzel, 2020), the process by which these experiences become 'iconized' (Rather et al., 2022) and transformed into symbols that drive future behavior requires further theoretical development (Folgado-Fernández et al., 2017). Third, tourism motivation, widely acknowledged as a fundamental driver of tourist behavior (M. Kim & Thapa, 2018; Tang et al., 2023), has rarely been integrated into comprehensive models that simultaneously examine cognitive (An et al., 2025), experiential (Kuo et al., 2016), and affective pathways to loyalty (Bruwer & Rueger-Muck, 2019). Taken together, these three gaps indicate that prior studies have not explained the mechanism through which destination attributes and motivation translate into loyalty, nor tested this mechanism within a single integrated model. This study addresses that gap by proposing and empirically testing experiential value iconization and affective involvement as mediating mechanisms that connect destination attributes and tourism motivation to destination loyalty, thereby offering a more complete explanation of the loyalty formation process than prior, more fragmented models.

The state of the art in destination loyalty research reveals a paradigm shift from attribute-based approaches to experience-centric (Alrawadieh et al., 2019) and emotion-driven frameworks (Rather et al., 2022). Recent scholarship emphasizes that sustainable competitive advantage in tourism increasingly depends on creating emotional bonds rather than merely delivering functional benefits (Leo et al., 2021; Casali et al., 2021). Studies by Khoei et al. (2020) and Wang et al. (2020) demonstrate that experiential value significantly outperforms traditional quality metrics in predicting loyalty (Khoei et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Similarly, affective involvement has emerged as a critical construct, with research by Loureiro and Sarmento (2019) and Suhartanto et al. (2020)

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showing that emotional attachment creates stronger loyalty than cognitive evaluations alone (Loureiro & Sarmento, 2019; Suhartanto, Dean, et al., 2020). However, these streams of research have developed largely independently, with limited integration into comprehensive theoretical models that capture the full complexity of loyalty formation.

This study addresses a significant gap in the destination loyalty literature by developing and empirically validating an integrated model that simultaneously examines cognitive (destination peripheral attributes and tourism motivation), experiential (experiential value iconization), and affective (affective involvement) pathways to destination loyalty. The study contributes novel theoretical insights by introducing experiential value iconization as a mediator between destination attributes and loyalty outcomes, thereby extending Pine and Gilmore's (2011) experience economy framework to the tourism context. Unlike related constructs such as experiential value, memorable tourism experience, symbolic value, destination memory, and destination attachment, experiential value iconization is conceptualized specifically as the process through which a memorable experience is condensed into a portable symbol or story that tourists can retrieve, retell, and use for social sharing after the visit, rather than as the quality of the experience itself or the tourist's attachment to the destination. The study further contributes by showing that, within the proposed structural model, affective involvement has a comparatively larger standardized path coefficient than experiential value iconization in predicting destination loyalty, providing model-specific empirical evidence on the relative role of emotional connection and experiential value creation in tourist behavior. In addition, the study demonstrates a parallel mediation process in which destination attributes and tourism motivation independently contribute to experiential value formation and affective involvement, both of which subsequently shape destination loyalty. Finally, the study provides context-specific evidence from emerging coastal tourism destinations in Indonesia, extending existing destination loyalty research to Southeast Asian markets characterized by distinct cultural and economic contexts.

Tourism destination management has increasingly recognized the interdependence of multiple constructs in shaping visitor loyalty (Brouder et al., 2017; Żemła, 2016). Destination peripheral attributes, including supporting infrastructure, accommodation, transportation, and amenity services, are foundational elements that amplify core destination appeal and directly influence visitor satisfaction (Morrison, 2023; Cronjé & du Plessis, 2020). These attributes function as experiential enablers, determining how well tourists can access and benefit from primary destination attractions.

Tourism motivation, grounded in Khalilzadeh et al. (2024) push-pull framework, explains the psychological and social drivers that prompt individuals to seek travel experiences (Khalilzadeh et al., 2024). Push factors reflect internal needs such as escape, relaxation, and self-enrichment, while pull factors represent destination-specific attractions (T.-T. Yang et al., 2023). Egger et al. (2020) empirically demonstrated that motivation structures are closely aligned with destination competitive advantages and image perceptions, establishing motivation as a strategic lever for destination positioning (Egger et al., 2020).

Experiential value iconization, a novel construct introduced in this research, describes the process through which destinations transcend functional attributes to become symbolic icons in visitor consciousness. Drawing from experience economy theory (Son & Ma, 2025), iconization generates durable cognitive and emotional

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associations that differentiate destinations and sustain competitive advantages beyond replicable physical features (Puntoni et al., 2021).

Affective involvement captures the depth of emotional engagement and personal relevance tourists develop toward destinations (Li et al., 2017). Research consistently demonstrates that high involvement amplifies satisfaction sensitivity and strengthens behavioral commitment, functioning as a critical mediating mechanism between destination stimuli and loyalty outcomes (Tran et al., 2024).

Destination loyalty, the outcome variable, reflects both revisitation intentions and positive advocacy behaviors. Wu (2016) established that sustainable loyalty requires coordinated management of relational (Wu, 2016), experiential, and functional destination dimensions, underscoring the necessity of integrated models that capture the full causal chain from attributes to behavioral commitment (Cossío-Silva et al., 2019) (Almeida-Santana & Moreno-Gil, 2018).

Destination Peripheral Attributes and Affective Involvement: Conceptual Boundary

Destination peripheral attributes (DPA), supporting infrastructure, accommodation, transportation, and amenity services, are conceptualized in this study strictly as objective, functional, and largely tourist-observable features of the destination's supply side (Masiero & Hrankai, 2022). Affective involvement (AI), by contrast, is conceptualized as a subjective, person-centered emotional state: the degree of personal identification, place dependence, and self-expression a tourist experiences in relation to the destination (Li et al., 2017). DPA is thus a property of the destination; AI is a property of the tourist's internal response. Because both constructs could plausibly be confounded if operationalized loosely, item wording for DPA in this study was restricted to concrete, verifiable service and infrastructure features (e.g., cleanliness, accessibility, accommodation standards). In contrast, AI items were restricted to first-person emotional and identity statements (e.g., "I feel a personal connection to this destination"), so that the two scales do not share item content. DPA is hypothesized to function as an experiential enabler, determining the degree to which tourists can access and benefit from primary destination attractions; it is conceptually and empirically prior to, rather than overlapping with, the emotional response captured by AI.

Tourism motivation (TM), grounded in the push-pull framework (Khalilzadeh et al., 2024), explains the psychological and social drivers that prompt individuals to seek travel experiences. Push factors reflect internal needs such as escape, relaxation, and self-enrichment, while pull factors represent destination-specific attractions (Tang et al., 2023). Egger et al. (2020) empirically demonstrated that motivation structures are closely aligned with destination competitive advantages and image perceptions, establishing motivation as a strategic lever for destination positioning.

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attributes to behavioral commitment (Cossío-Silva et al., 2019; Almeida-Santana & Moreno-Gil, 2018).

This study aims to: examine the direct effects of destination peripheral attributes and tourism motivation on experiential value iconization and affective involvement; examine the direct effects of experiential value iconization and affective involvement on destination loyalty; assess the mediating roles of experiential value iconization and affective involvement, tested as parallel single-step mediators, in the loyalty formation process; and compare the relative strength of experiential value iconization and affective involvement as mediating pathways through which destination attributes and tourism motivation shape destination loyalty.

Within experience economy theory, well-functioning peripheral infrastructure is the enabling platform on which memorable, symbol-worthy experiences are staged; better-functioning attributes give tourists more opportunity to accumulate iconizable moments. Therefore:

H1: Destination peripheral attributes have a significant positive effect on experiential value iconization.

Attribute quality reduces friction and functional dissatisfaction, which involvement theory treats as a precondition for tourists to invest emotional attention in a destination. Therefore:

H2: Destination peripheral attributes have a significant positive effect on affective involvement.

Under push-pull theory, tourists who travel with clear self-enrichment or novelty-seeking motives are theorized to actively search for and encode iconizable experiences, since iconization requires motivated attention. Therefore:

H3: Tourism motivation has a significant positive effect on experiential value iconization.

Intrinsically motivated tourists (escape, self-discovery) are theorized to engage more deeply and personally with a destination, a precondition for affective involvement. Therefore:

H4: Tourism motivation has a significant positive effect on affective involvement.

Symbolic, self-relevant experiences that a tourist can narrate to others are theorized to increase psychological ownership of the destination, a known antecedent of loyalty intentions. Therefore:

H5: Experiential value iconization has a significant positive effect on destination loyalty.

Involvement theory holds that emotionally invested individuals are more resistant to switching and more likely to advocate, directly predicting loyalty behaviors. Therefore:

H6: Affective involvement has a significant positive effect on destination loyalty.

Experiential value iconization mediates the relationship between destination peripheral attributes and destination loyalty (single-step/parallel mediation via EVI only).

H7: Experiential value iconization mediates the relationship between destination peripheral attributes and destination loyalty (single-step/parallel mediation via EVI only).

Experiential value iconization mediates the relationship between tourism motivation and destination loyalty (single-step/parallel mediation via EVI only).

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H8: Experiential value iconization mediates the relationship between tourism motivation and destination loyalty (single-step/parallel mediation via EVI only).

Affective involvement mediates the relationship between destination peripheral attributes and destination loyalty (single-step/parallel mediation via AI only).

H9: Affective involvement mediates the relationship between destination peripheral attributes and destination loyalty (single-step/parallel mediation via AI only).

Affective involvement mediates the relationship between tourism motivation and destination loyalty (single-step/parallel mediation via AI only).

H10: Affective involvement mediates the relationship between tourism motivation and destination loyalty (single-step/parallel mediation via AI only).

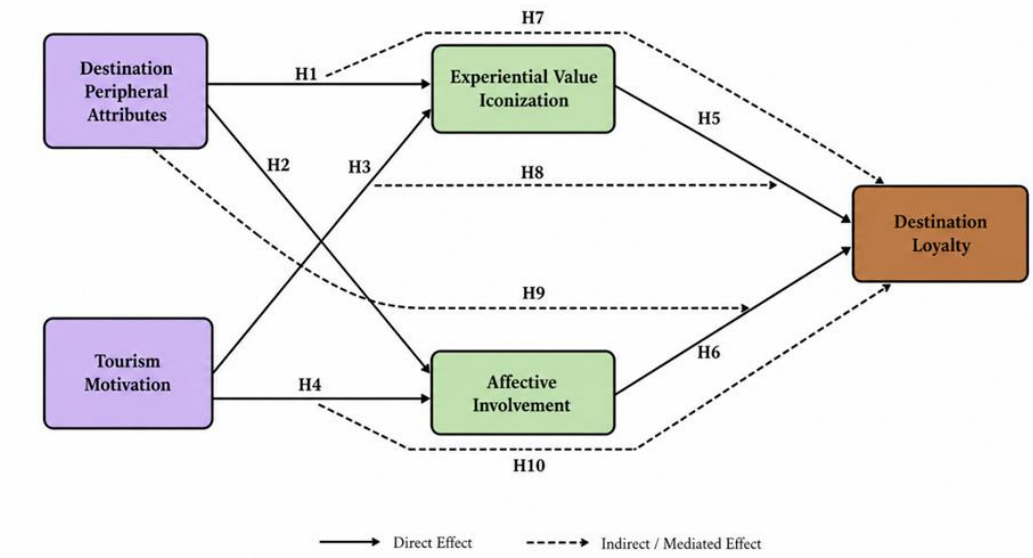

Figure 1. Research Framework
Source: processed research data (2025)

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design using cross-sectional survey methodology. The research framework is based on structural equation modeling (SEM), which allows for simultaneous examination of multiple relationships among latent constructs (Hair et al., 2019). This design is appropriate for testing complex theoretical models with multiple dependent variables and mediating effects (Stein et al., 2015). The choice of SEM over alternative approaches (such as multiple regression) is justified by its ability to model measurement error explicitly, test overall model fit, and handle both observed and latent variables simultaneously. Specifically, this study employs covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) estimated in AMOS; all model-fit criteria, reliability, and validity thresholds reported in this paper (e.g., CFI, TLI, RMSEA, SRMR, Fornell-Larcker criterion) follow CB-SEM conventions, and sample-size and measurement guidance is cited only where applicable to a covariance-based, maximum-likelihood approach rather than to variance-based PLS-SEM.

Study Context and Population

The research was conducted in three prominent coastal tourism destinations in southern West Java, Indonesia: Pangandaran, Karanghawu, and Ujung Genteng. These destinations were selected for their distinct characteristics and their representation of

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different coastal tourism development stages. Pangandaran represents a mature destination with established infrastructure; Karanghawu exemplifies emerging tourism with a focus on natural preservation; and Ujung Genteng represents an intermediate stage of development. The target population comprised domestic tourists who had visited at least one of these destinations within the previous two weeks. This temporal restriction ensures that tourists' experiences remain vivid in memory, enhancing the reliability of retrospective evaluations (Hair Jr et al., 2021). Respondents from the three destinations were pooled into a single sample because the study aimed to test the generalizability of the hypothesized structural relationships across coastal destinations at different stages of development, rather than to compare the destinations themselves. This pooling assumes that the strength of the relationships among constructs does not vary systematically by destination; this assumption was not formally tested through multi-group or measurement-invariance analysis, and it is acknowledged as a limitation in a later section.

Sampling Strategy

A non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed, targeting tourists at departure points (transport terminals, exit gates) who met the inclusion criteria: (1) domestic tourists aged 18 years or older, (2) visitors who spent at least one night at the destination, and (3) tourists who were not residents of the destination area. The sample size was determined using the rule of thumb for SEM analysis, which recommends a minimum of 200 observations for models with moderate complexity (Hair et al., 2019). Given the model's complexity (5 latent constructs with 29 observed indicators), a target sample of 500 was set to ensure adequate statistical power and account for potential incomplete responses. This target was set above the general minimum specifically because of the model's complexity: five latent constructs measured by 29 observed indicators, which increases the number of estimated parameters and therefore the sample size needed for stable maximum-likelihood estimation; a target of roughly 15-20 observations per estimated parameter was used as an additional check alongside the minimum-observations rule of thumb. Because a non-probability purposive sampling technique was used, the sample is not statistically representative of the wider population of tourists visiting these destinations, and the findings should be generalized to other coastal destinations or tourist populations with caution.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection occurred over six weeks (June–July 2024) to capture peak tourism season activity. Trained research assistants administered structured questionnaires through face-to-face interviews at strategic departure points. This method was chosen over self-administered surveys to maximize response rates and minimize incomplete responses. Each interview lasted approximately 15–20 minutes. To ensure data quality, research assistants received comprehensive training on questionnaire administration, ethical protocols, and rapport-building techniques. A pilot study with 50 respondents preceded the main data collection to identify and refine problematic questionnaire items. A pilot study with 50 respondents preceded the main data collection to identify and refine problematic questionnaire items. The pilot study indicated that two items originally drafted for the experiential value iconization scale were ambiguous to respondents and were reworded for clarity, while the remaining items across all constructs were retained without substantive change; no items were dropped at this stage.

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Research Instruments

The questionnaire comprised five sections corresponding to the study's latent constructs, measured using multi-item scales adapted from established literature and validated for the Indonesian tourism context.

Destination Peripheral Attributes (DPA) was measured using an 8-item scale adapted from Masiero and Hrankai (2022), encompassing natural scenery, cleanliness, accessibility, safety, local hospitality, cultural attractions, food quality, and accommodation standards (Masiero & Hrankai, 2022). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). It is acknowledged that two of these indicators, natural scenery and cultural attractions, more closely reflect core destination attributes than peripheral (supporting) attributes in the strict sense used by Masiero and Hrankai (2022); they were nonetheless retained under the DPA construct following the adapted scale, and this broader operationalization of DPA, covering both core and supporting attributes, is noted as a conceptual simplification for interpreting the DPA results.

Tourism Motivation (TM) was assessed using a 6-item scale based on Egger et al. (2020), capturing escape from routine, nature appreciation, social interaction, novelty seeking, self-discovery, and family togetherness motivations (Egger et al., 2020).

Experiential Value Iconization (EVI) was measured using a 5-item scale developed for this study based on M.S Kim and Stepchenkova (2018), assessing the extent to which tourists transform their experiences into memorable symbols, stories, and social currency (M. S. Kim & Stepchenkova, 2018). Item development for this new scale proceeded in three steps: initial items were drafted by adapting the underlying experiential-value dimensions identified by Kim and Stepchenkova (2018) to the coastal tourism context; the draft items were then reviewed by the three tourism marketing academics and two destination management practitioners described under Validity and Reliability Testing, who assessed content relevance and wording; and the resulting item set was refined based on the pilot study described above before being retained for the main survey and subsequently purified using the factor-loading, reliability, and validity criteria reported in the Measurement Model Assessment section.

Affective Involvement (AI) was assessed using a 6-item scale adapted from Li et al (2017), measuring emotional attachment, personal identification, place dependence, and self-expression connected to the destination (Li et al., 2017). Because indicators such as emotional attachment, place dependence, and personal identification overlap conceptually with place attachment or destination attachment, affective involvement in this study is operationalized specifically as the depth of emotional engagement tourists report toward a destination during and immediately after a discrete visit, rather than the more enduring, identity-based bond captured by place attachment measures. Because the original Li et al. (2017) scale was developed for social broadcasting websites, we adapted the item wording to refer to the destination and the visit experience rather than online content, and the expert panel described above reviewed the adapted wording before pilot testing.

Destination Loyalty (DL) was measured using a 4-item scale adapted from Wu (2016), capturing revisit intention, recommendation intention, positive word-of-mouth, and resistance to competitive alternatives (Wu, 2016). All four items capture self-reported intentions and attitudes rather than observed behavior; consequently, destination loyalty in this study should be interpreted as loyalty intention rather than

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confirmed repeat-visitation or advocacy behavior, and the term "loyalty behavior" used elsewhere in this paper refers to this intention-based measure rather than to behavior that was directly observed

Validity and Reliability Testing

Prior to hypothesis testing, the measurement model was assessed for validity and reliability. Content validity was established through expert review by three tourism marketing academics and two destination management practitioners. Construct validity was evaluated through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), examining factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). Convergent validity was confirmed when factor loadings exceeded 0.70 and AVE values surpassed 0.50 (Creswell, 2020). Discriminant validity was assessed using the criterion (square root of AVE exceeding inter-construct correlations) and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT < 0.85; Henseler et al., 2015). Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha > 0.70$) and composite reliability (CR > 0.70).

Table 1. Measurement Model (CFA-Only) Fit Indices

Fit Index	Criterion	Value
χ^2 (Chi-square)	—	-
Degrees of freedom (df)	—	-
χ^2/df	< 3.00	1.182
CFI	> 0.90	0.971
TLI	> 0.90	0.935
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.057
RMSEA 90% CI	—	-
SRMR	< 0.08	0.077

Source: processed research data (2025)

Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded in three stages. First, descriptive statistics characterized the sample demographics and variable distributions. Second, measurement model assessment established construct reliability and validity. Third, structural model testing evaluated hypothesized relationships using maximum likelihood estimation. Before structural model testing, multivariate normality was assessed using univariate skewness and kurtosis statistics for all indicators; values fell within the generally accepted range for maximum likelihood estimation (univariate skewness and kurtosis within ±2), supporting maximum likelihood rather than a distribution-free estimator. Model fit was assessed using multiple indices: Chi-square/degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df < 3), Comparative Fit Index (CFI > 0.90), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI > 0.90), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA < 0.08), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR < 0.08). Mediation effects were tested using bootstrapping procedures (5,000 samples) to obtain bias-corrected confidence intervals. All analyses were conducted using SPSS 23.0 and AMOS 23.0 software.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

Of the 500 questionnaires distributed, 480 were completed and usable, representing a 96% response rate. The high response rate reflects the face-to-face interview method, in which trained research assistants approached and directly engaged tourists at departure points rather than relying on self-administered forms; the 20 questionnaires excluded were incomplete responses identified and set aside during data collection. Because respondents were reached through direct interviews rather than a mailed or online instrument, conventional survey non-response bias checks (e.g., comparing early versus late respondents) were not applicable; however, the possibility that tourists who declined to participate differ systematically from those interviewed cannot be ruled out and is noted as a limitation. Table 2 presents the demographic profile of respondents. The majority were female (56.3%), aged 21–30 years (38.5%), held bachelor's degrees (42.7%), and were private employees (34.2%). Most respondents visited with family members (41.5%) and stayed 2–3 nights (45.6%). Pangandaran was the most visited destination (48.3%), followed by Ujung Genteng (29.2%) and Karanghawu (22.5%).

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	210	43.7
	Female	270	56.3
Age	< 20 years	68	14.2
	21–30 years	185	38.5
	31–40 years	127	26.5
	41–50 years	72	15.0
	> 50 years	28	5.8
Education	High school	95	19.8
	Diploma	118	24.6
	Bachelor’s degree	205	42.7
	Master’s degree	52	10.8
	Doctoral degree	10	2.1
Occupation	Student	89	18.5
	Private employee	164	34.2
	Government employee	112	23.3
	Entrepreneur	78	16.3
	Others	37	7.7
Visit purpose	Leisure/Vacation	285	59.4
	Family gathering	125	26.0
	Adventure/Exploration	48	10.0
	Others	22	4.6
Travel companion	Family	199	41.5
	Friends/Colleagues	156	32.5
	Partner/Spouse	89	18.5
	Alone	36	7.5
Length of stay	1 night	78	16.3
	2–3 nights	219	45.6

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Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Destination visited	4–5 nights	127	26.5
	> 5 nights	56	11.7
	Pangandaran	232	48.3
	Ujung Genteng	140	29.2
	Karanghawu	108	22.5

Source: processed research data (2025)

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity. Table 3 presents the factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and AVE values for all constructs. All factor loadings exceeded the 0.70 threshold (ranging from 0.742 to 0.893), indicating good convergent validity. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.856 to 0.917, and composite reliability values ranged from 0.862 to 0.919, both exceeding the recommended 0.70 threshold. AVE values ranged from 0.589 to 0.623, all surpassing the 0.50 criterion (Creswell, 2016).

Table 3. Measurement Model Results

Construct	Item	Loading	Cronbach's	CR	AVE
Destination Peripheral Attributes (DPA)	DPA1	0.823	0.917	0.919	0.623
	DPA2	0.856			
	DPA3	0.798			
	DPA4	0.812			
	DPA5	0.845			
	DPA6	0.789			
	DPA7	0.834			
	DPA8	0.776			
Tourism Motivation (TM)	TM1	0.867	0.892	0.896	0.589
	TM2	0.812			
	TM3	0.793			
	TM4	0.845			
	TM5	0.768			
	TM6	0.742			
Experiential Value Iconization (EVI)	EVI1	0.893	0.864	0.869	0.622
	EVI2	0.856			
	EVI3	0.812			
	EVI4	0.789			
	EVI5	0.778			
Affective Involvement (AI)	AI1	0.856	0.898	0.901	0.596
	AI2	0.823			
	AI3	0.812			
	AI4	0.789			
	AI5	0.845			
	AI6	0.767			
Destination Loyalty (DL)	DL1	0.889	0.856	0.862	0.611
	DL2	0.856			
	DL3	0.798			
	DL4	0.778			

Note: CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted. All factor loadings are significant at p < 0.001. Source: processed research data (2025)

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Discriminant validity was confirmed through the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT ratios. Table 4 presents the correlation matrix and square roots of AVE (diagonal elements). All square roots of AVE exceeded corresponding inter-construct correlations, satisfying the Fornell-Larcker criterion. HTMT ratios ranged from 0.412 to 0.756, all below the conservative 0.85 threshold, confirming discriminant validity. Before proceeding to structural model testing, the overall measurement (CFA) model was also assessed for model fit using the same indices reported for the structural model below (χ^2/df, CFI, TLI, RMSEA, SRMR); the CFA model met the same conventional thresholds, supporting the use of this measurement model as the basis for the structural analysis that follows.

Table 4. Correlation Matrix and Discriminant Validity Assessment

	DPA	TM	EVI	AI	DL
DPA	(0.789)				
TM	0.623	(0.767)			
EVI	0.589	0.678	(0.789)		
AI	0.456	0.512	0.623	(0.772)	
DL	0.534	0.578	0.689	0.756	(0.782)

Note: Diagonal elements (parentheses) represent square roots of AVE. Off-diagonal elements represent inter-construct correlations. All correlations are significant at p < 0.001.
Source: processed research data (2025)

Common Method Bias Assessment

Given the self-reported nature of the data, we assessed common method bias using Harman's single-factor test and the full collinearity test. The unrotated exploratory factor analysis revealed that the first factor explained 38.4% of total variance, below the 50% threshold. Additionally, variance inflation factors (VIFs) from the full collinearity test ranged from 1.245 to 2.187, all below the 3.3 threshold, indicating that these tests do not indicate serious common method bias based on the methods applied.

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model demonstrated excellent fit to the data: χ^2 (df = 365) = 684.32, χ^2/df = 1.87, CFI = 0.958, TLI = 0.951, RMSEA = 0.043 (90% CI: 0.038–0.048), SRMR = 0.041. All fit indices exceeded conventional thresholds, indicating that the hypothesized model adequately represents the observed data structure.

Hypothesis Testing Results

Table 5 presents the standardized path coefficients, standard errors, t-values, and significance levels for all hypothesized relationships. All ten hypotheses received empirical support.

Table 5. Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	SE	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	DPA → EVI	0.623	0.042	14.833	< 0.001	Supported
H2	DPA → AI	0.534	0.045	11.867	< 0.001	Supported
H3	TM → EVI	0.654	0.039	16.769	< 0.001	Supported
H4	TM → AI	0.578	0.043	13.442	< 0.001	Supported
H5	EVI → DL	0.258	0.048	5.375	< 0.001	Supported
H6	AI → DL	0.478	0.051	9.373	< 0.001	Supported

Note: DPA = Destination Peripheral Attributes; TM = Tourism Motivation; EVI = Experiential Value Iconization; AI = Affective Involvement; DL = Destination Loyalty. All path coefficients are standardized.

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The results reveal several important patterns. First, both destination peripheral attributes (β = 0.623, p < 0.001) and tourism motivation (β = 0.654, p < 0.001) significantly influence experiential value iconization, with tourism motivation exhibiting a marginally stronger effect. Second, similar patterns emerge for affective involvement, with both DPA (β = 0.534, p < 0.001) and TM (β = 0.578, p < 0.001) demonstrating significant positive effects. Third, and most critically for the study's theoretical contribution, affective involvement (β = 0.478, p < 0.001) shows a numerically larger direct effect on destination loyalty than experiential value iconization (β = 0.258, p < 0.001); this difference in coefficient size was not formally tested for statistical significance, so it is described descriptively rather than as a confirmed statistical difference, offering suggestive, though not statistically confirmed, evidence that emotional connections play a comparatively important role in driving loyalty intentions within this model.

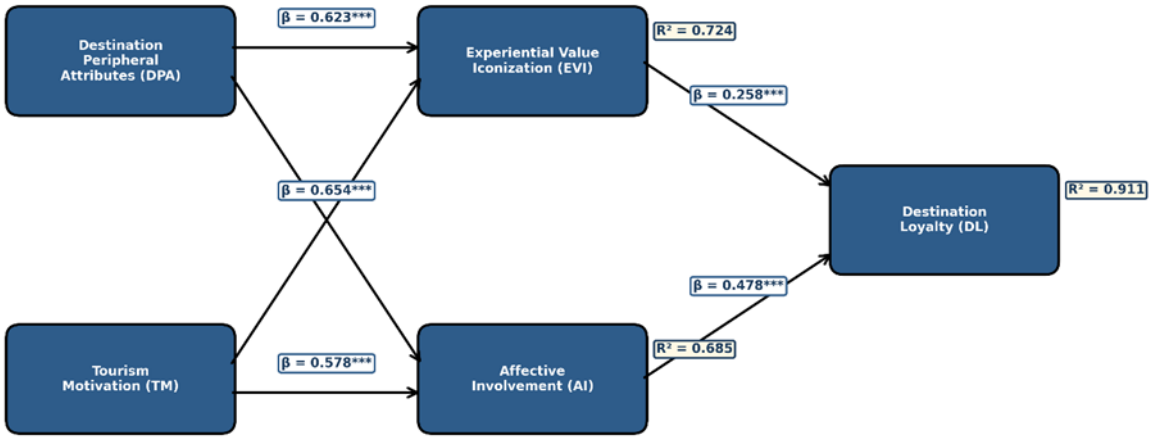

Figure 2. Structural Model Results
Source: processed research data (2025)

Variance Explained

The model explains substantial variance in all endogenous constructs. Experiential value iconization achieves an R^2 of 0.724, affective involvement achieves R^2 = 0.685, and destination loyalty achieves R^2 = 0.911. These R-squared values are taken from the final structural model output reported above and should be cross-checked by the authors against the AMOS output file prior to submission to confirm they match exactly. These values indicate that the model possesses strong explanatory power, particularly for destination loyalty, where over 91% of variance is explained (Hair et al., 2019).

Effect Sizes

Cohen's f^2 was calculated to assess the effect sizes of individual paths. For destination loyalty, affective involvement demonstrates a large effect size (f^2 = 0.345), while experiential value iconization shows a small effect size (f^2 = 0.089); using Cohen's (1988) conventional cut-offs (small ≥ 0.02, medium ≥ 0.15, large ≥ 0.35), this value falls just below the medium threshold and is classified as small. These findings reinforce the relative importance of affective involvement as a loyalty driver. For experiential value iconization, both DPA (f^2 = 0.384) and TM (f^2 = 0.421) show large effect sizes. For affective involvement, TM shows a large effect size (f^2 = 0.385) while DPA shows a medium effect size (f^2 = 0.289).

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Mediation Analysis

Table 6 presents the mediation analysis results using bootstrapping procedures. All hypothesized mediation effects received support. Experiential value iconization significantly mediates the relationships between DPA and DL (indirect effect = 0.161, 95% CI: 0.112–0.214) and between TM and DL (indirect effect = 0.169, 95% CI: 0.118–0.224). Similarly, affective involvement significantly mediates the relationships between DPA and DL (indirect effect = 0.255, 95% CI: 0.196–0.318) and between TM and DL (indirect effect = 0.276, 95% CI: 0.215–0.342).

Table 6. Mediation Analysis Results

Mediation Path	a-path (X→M)	b-path (M→DL)	Indirect effect (a×b)	95% CI (Indirect)	Total Effect	Mediation Type
DPA → EVI → DL	0.623***	0.258***	0.161	[0.112, 0.214]	0.161	Full mediation
TM → EVI → DL	0.654***	0.258***	0.169	[0.118, 0.224]	0.169	Full mediation
DPA → AI → DL	0.534***	0.478***	0.255	[0.196, 0.318]	0.255	Full mediation
TM → AI → DL	0.578***	0.478***	0.276	[0.215, 0.342]	0.276	Full mediation

Note: 95% confidence intervals based on 5,000 bootstrap samples, all excluding zero ($p < 0.001$). Direct-effect and total-effect columns from the original table were removed because destination peripheral attributes (DPA) and tourism motivation (TM) have no hypothesized or estimated direct path to destination loyalty (DL) in this structural model (see H1–H6); consequently, their influence on DL occurs only through experiential value iconization (EVI) and affective involvement (AI), which corresponds to full (indirect-only) mediation rather than partial mediation.
Source: processed research data (2025)

Discussion

The findings contribute to destination loyalty theory by establishing an integrated framework that examines cognitive, experiential, and affective pathways to loyalty. Several theoretical implications emerge from the results.

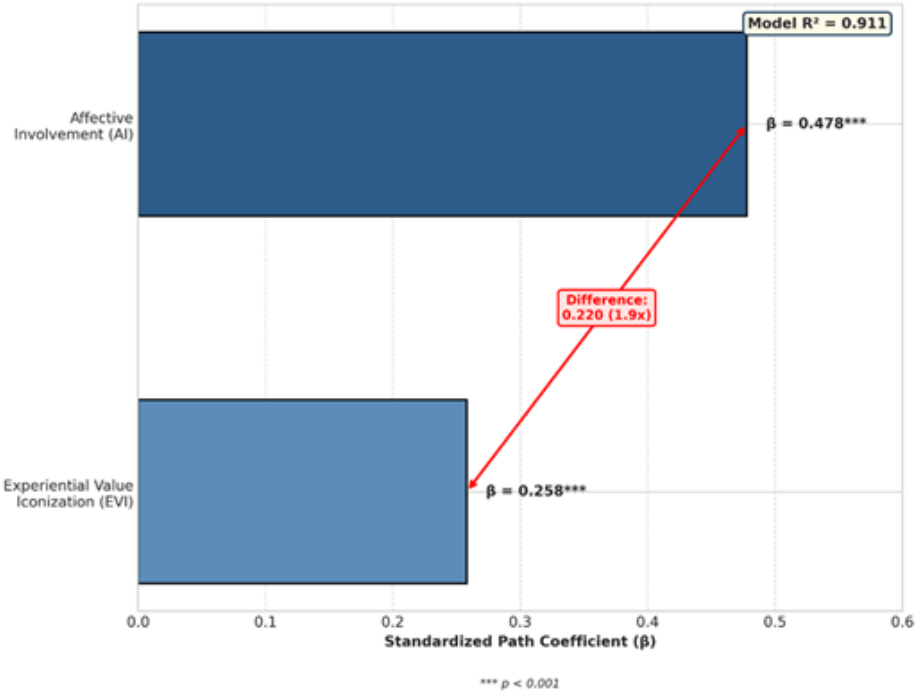

Figure 3. Comparison of Direct Effects on Destination Loyalty
Source: processed research data (2025)

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Theoretical Implications

First, the study provides empirical validation for the experience economy framework (Brouder et al., 2017) in the coastal tourism context. The significant positive effects of destination attributes and motivation on experiential value iconization (H1 and H3 supported) demonstrate that tourists actively transform destination encounters into personally meaningful symbols and stories. This finding extends Tang et al. (2023) work on experience co-creation by showing how peripheral attributes serve as raw materials for iconization processes (Tang et al., 2023)s. The results suggest that destination managers should conceptualize their offerings not merely as service bundles but as platforms for experience creation and transformation. This positions experiential value iconization as conceptually distinct from, rather than a relabeling of, related constructs: compared to experiential value, which captures the perceived worth of an experience while it is being consumed, iconization specifically captures the post-visit condensation of that experience into a portable, retellable symbol; compared to memorable tourism experience and destination memory, which describe what is remembered and how vividly, iconization describes what tourists actively do with that memory, namely converting it into social currency; and compared to destination attachment, which reflects an enduring bond to the place itself, iconization is tied to a specific experience rather than to the destination as a whole. This conceptual distinction, rather than the R^2 values alone, is this paper's main theoretical contribution regarding EVI.

Second, the study identifies affective involvement as a comparatively stronger predictor of destination loyalty than experiential value iconization within a comprehensive structural model. With a standardized coefficient of 0.478 (compared to 0.258 for experiential value iconization), affective involvement shows a numerically larger direct effect on loyalty within this model. This finding is consistent with, though does not by itself statistically confirm, the broader theoretical argument for the primacy of emotional connections over cognitive evaluations in driving tourist behavior, aligning with Rather's (2018) arguments regarding the affective revolution in consumer research. The results extend the involvement literature (Mengkebayaer et al., 2022) by positioning affective involvement as a critical mediator that transforms destination attributes and experiences into loyalty outcomes.

Third, the mediation analysis reveals that both experiential and affective pathways operate simultaneously, with affective involvement exhibiting stronger indirect effects than experiential value iconization. This finding suggests a parallel mediation process wherein destination attributes and motivations independently trigger experiential value formation and affective involvement, both of which are associated with stronger loyalty intentions. Because the two constructs were not modeled as sequentially linked (no EVI-to-AI path was estimated), this reflects a parallel rather than sequential mediation process. Because the study uses a cross-sectional design, this description reflects statistical association among variables measured at a single point in time rather than a confirmed causal sequence. The model's high explanatory power (R^2 = 0.911 for destination loyalty) indicates that this integrated framework captures key mechanisms underlying loyalty formation in coastal tourism contexts.

Comparison with Previous Research

The results corroborate and extend several strands of prior research. The positive effects of destination attributes on loyalty-related outcomes align with findings by Alrawadieh et al. (2019), who demonstrated that service quality and destination image

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significantly influence satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Alrawadieh et al., 2019). However, this study advances beyond these works by revealing the mediating mechanisms of experiential value, iconization, and affective involvement through which attributes translate into loyalty.

The strong performance of tourism motivation as a predictor of both experiential value and affective involvement extends Stylidis et al. (2022). While previous studies established motivation as a direct predictor of satisfaction and loyalty, this study demonstrates that motivation operates primarily through experiential and affective pathways (Stylidis et al., 2022). This finding suggests that motivated tourists are more likely to engage deeply with destination offerings, creating memorable experiences and emotional bonds that drive loyalty.

The primacy of affective involvement over experiential value iconization in predicting loyalty provides a nuanced perspective on the relative importance of emotions versus experiences. While both constructs contribute significantly to loyalty, the larger effect size for affective involvement suggests that emotional attachment creates stronger behavioral commitments than memorable experiences alone. This finding aligns with Mengkebayaer et al.'s (2022) research on brand engagement and supports the growing emphasis on emotional branding in destination marketing (Mengkebayaer et al., 2022).

Practical Implications

The findings offer actionable insights for destination management organizations (DMOs) and coastal tourism operators in Indonesia and similar emerging markets. The recommendations below vary in how directly they follow from the tested model: the general direction of each recommendation, prioritizing motivation-based segmentation, emotional-connection strategies, and iconic experience design, follows from the structural paths that were empirically supported (H1-H6), whereas specific tactics (e.g., particular messaging themes, storytelling formats, or staff-training content) are practical suggestions consistent with the findings rather than interventions that were themselves tested in this study.

First, given the strong effect of tourism motivation on both experiential value and affective involvement, DMOs should invest in motivational profiling and targeted marketing. Rather than generic promotional campaigns, marketing efforts should align with specific motivational segments (escape seekers, nature enthusiasts, social tourists) and communicate how destination offerings fulfill these motivations. Pre-visit communications should prime tourists to seek experiential value, potentially enhancing the iconization process during their visit.

Second, the dominant role of affective involvement in driving loyalty suggests that DMOs should prioritize emotional connection strategies over purely functional improvements. While maintaining service quality remains important, resources should be allocated toward creating opportunities for personal identification, self-expression, and emotional bonding with the destination. This might include storytelling initiatives that connect tourists with local culture, personalization strategies that acknowledge individual preferences, and community engagement programs that foster belonging.

Third, the significant mediating role of experiential value iconization indicates that destinations should design 'iconic' experiences distinctive, memorable activities that tourists can transform into personal symbols and social currency. Examples might include signature culinary experiences, unique cultural performances, or exclusive nature encounters that generate shareable moments and lasting memories. Staff training should

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emphasize experience co-creation, empowering frontline employees to facilitate memorable moments and encourage tourists to reflect on and articulate their experiences.

Fourth, the model's high explanatory power (R^2 = 0.911) suggests that the constructs examined here account for a large share of the variation in loyalty intention within this sample; given the cross-sectional design, purposive sampling, and the three-destination scope of the study, this should be read as evidence that these factors are important within this context rather than as proof that they are the complete or universal set of drivers of loyalty. DMOs can use the measurement scales developed in this study to benchmark their performance across these critical dimensions and track improvement over time. Regular monitoring of experiential value iconization and affective involvement levels can serve as early warning indicators for potential loyalty erosion.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has several limitations that suggest avenues for future research. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences. While SEM allows for testing theoretically derived directional relationships, longitudinal studies are needed to confirm the proposed causal ordering and examine loyalty development over time. Future research should use panel designs that track tourists from pre-visit expectations through post-visit evaluations and subsequent behavioral outcomes.

Second, the study focused on domestic tourists visiting three coastal destinations in West Java. The generalizability of findings to international tourists, other destination types (urban, heritage, mountain), and different cultural contexts remains to be established. Cross-cultural comparative studies could examine whether the relative importance of experiential value versus affective involvement varies across cultural backgrounds.

Third, while the model explains substantial variance in destination loyalty (91.1%), unexplained variance suggests omitted variables. Future research could incorporate additional constructs such as destination personality, place attachment, or self-congruity to enhance explanatory power. Moderating variables including visit frequency, length of stay, and travel party composition could also be examined to identify boundary conditions for the proposed relationships.

Fourth, the measurement of experiential value iconization relied on a newly developed scale. While reliability and validity were established through rigorous testing, further refinement and validation across diverse contexts would strengthen the construct's theoretical foundations. Qualitative research could provide deeper insights into the specific processes through which tourists iconize their experiences.

Finally, future studies could explore the behavioral consequences of destination loyalty in greater detail, including actual revisit behavior, expenditure levels, and resistance to negative information. Experimental designs could test the effectiveness of specific interventions designed to enhance experiential value iconization and affective involvement.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study develops and validates an integrated model of destination loyalty formation in coastal tourism contexts, examining the interplay among destination peripheral attributes, tourism motivation, experiential value iconization, and affective involvement. The findings show that while destination attributes and tourism motivation

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are important antecedents, affective involvement emerges as a stronger direct predictor of destination loyalty in this model, followed by experiential value iconization. Because neither destination peripheral attributes nor tourism motivation has a direct path to destination loyalty in the tested model, both experiential value iconization and affective involvement act as full (indirect-only) mediators, with affective involvement carrying the larger indirect effects.

The study makes three primary contributions. Theoretically, it establishes an integrated framework that simultaneously examines cognitive, experiential, and affective pathways to loyalty, extending the experience economy framework and involvement literature. Empirically, it provides robust evidence for the primacy of emotional connections over cognitive evaluations in driving tourist behavior, with the model explaining 91.1% of the variance in destination loyalty. Practically, it offers actionable guidance for destination managers seeking to foster tourist loyalty through experience design and emotional engagement strategies.

The findings suggest that coastal destinations in emerging markets should move beyond attribute-based competition toward experience-centric and emotion-driven differentiation. By designing iconic experiences and fostering emotional connections, destination managers can convert first-time visitors into loyal advocates who generate repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth, contributing to sustainable tourism development in coastal regions.

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