

From Memorable Events to Destination Loyalty: A Sequential Mediation Model of Destination Readiness, Image, and Satisfaction

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Abstract: Event tourism has advanced substantially. What was once viewed as a secondary attraction now lies at the core of how destinations plan, brand, and expand. This study examines the psychological pathway that determines whether a visitor becomes a committed destination advocate. Specifically, it investigates how destination readiness (DR) and memorable event experiences (MEE) foster destination loyalty (DL)—not necessarily directly, but often through a multi-step sequence involving destination image (DI) and satisfaction (DS). Put differently, how a location is perceived and how well it fulfills expectations matter greatly, even before loyalty takes shape. The findings provide a detailed account. Memorable event experiences are identified as the most powerful direct driver of loyalty ($\beta = 0.375$, $p < 0.001$). Destination readiness, by contrast, does not directly influence loyalty; instead, it operates entirely through indirect mechanisms, serving less as an explicit motivator and more as a quiet but indispensable foundation. The sequential mediation routes that emerge—DR→DI→DS→DL and MEE→DI→DS→DL—highlight the cognitive and affective chain through which a single event visit becomes a durable relationship with a place. For destination planners and policymakers, the implication is straightforward: Infrastructure development and experiential programming are not competing priorities. They represent two sides of the same endeavor, and aligning both is essential for converting first-time visitors into long-term advocates for the destination.

Keywords: Destination Loyalty (DL); Memorable Event Experiences (MEE); Event Tourism; Destination Readiness (DR); Destination Planners; Indispensable Foundation.

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1. Introduction

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1.1. The Evolution of Destination Planning in the Experience Economy

The paradigm of tourism destination planning and development has transformed profoundly over the past decade. Moving beyond the traditional focus on physical infrastructure, carrying capacity, and basic amenity provision, contemporary destination management is increasingly anchored in the principles of the experience economy and regenerative tourism [21]; [32]. Destinations are no longer merely geographical locations offering static attractions; they are dynamic, co-created ecosystems where value is generated through immersive, emotionally resonant, and highly personalized interactions. Within this evolving landscape, event tourism has emerged as one of the most strategically significant sub-sectors. Destinations worldwide leverage curated event portfolios to support place branding, smooth seasonal demand, extend visitor expenditure, and cultivate repeat visitation [11].

Events act as catalysts for destination development, providing temporal anchors that draw visitors to a location, often extending their stay and dispersing economic benefits across local communities. However, the mere presence of an event is no longer sufficient to guarantee destination competitiveness. The psychological pathways through which event participation translates into enduring destination loyalty remain complex and insufficiently understood within the broader discourse of destination planning. Prior literature has extensively examined memorable tourism experiences [10]; [18] and destination image [12]; [22] as antecedents to loyalty. Yet, a critical gap exists in integrating destination readiness—the holistic physical, digital, and service preparedness of a destination for event hosting—into a comprehensive sequential mediation framework alongside memorability, image, and satisfaction [29].

1.2. The Context of Bali: A Premier Event Destination

Bali, Indonesia, provides an exemplary and highly relevant context for this inquiry. Renowned for its rich cultural heritage, spiritual wellness offerings, and well-developed tourism infrastructure, Bali has successfully positioned itself as a premier global destination for diverse event typologies. From the Bali Democracy Forum and international surf competitions to immersive Balinese arts festivals and high-level corporate retreats, the island's event portfolio attracts millions of international visitors annually. The post-pandemic recovery and the subsequent shift in Indonesian government tourism policies toward "quality over quantity" Chen et al. [6] have necessitated a strategic pivot.

Destination planners in Bali are now tasked with developing smart, resilient, and regenerative event ecosystems that not only attract high-yield visitors but also foster deep, long-term loyalty and advocacy. Despite its success, Bali faces universal destination-management challenges: Infrastructural congestion, the need for digital transformation, and the imperative to balance tourist experiences with local socio-cultural carrying capacities. Understanding how international event tourists perceive the island's readiness, how they internalize the event experience, and how these factors sequentially shape their image of and satisfaction with the destination is critical for future destination planning and development.

1.3. Research Objectives and Contributions

This study addresses the aforementioned gaps by proposing and empirically testing a robust conceptual model in which Destination Readiness (DR) and Memorable Event Experiences (MEE) jointly influence Destination Loyalty (DL) through the sequential chain of Destination Image (DI) and Destination Satisfaction (DS). Drawing on a sample of $n = 202$ international event tourists surveyed across Bali's major event categories, this research makes several vital contributions to the literature on Tourism Destination Planning and Development: Theoretical Advancement: It extends the cognitive-affective-conative models of destination loyalty by empirically validating a sequential mediation framework. It demonstrates that destination readiness does not directly drive loyalty but operates entirely through a staged psychological sequence (cognitive appraisal of image → affective evaluation of satisfaction → conative loyalty).

Methodological Rigor: By employing advanced PLS-SEM techniques, including out-of-sample predictive relevance (PLSpredict) and the Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT), the study provides a methodologically rigorous assessment of the model's predictive power, moving beyond explanatory variance alone. Managerial and Planning Implications: The findings offer actionable insights for Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), urban planners, and event organizers [33]. It highlights the need to treat destination readiness (infrastructure, digital systems, service quality) not as a direct marketing tool but as a foundational enabler that amplifies event memorability and shapes positive destination imagery.

1.4. Theoretical Background and Conceptual Framework

To contextualize the empirical model within the broader scope of Tourism Destination Planning and Development, it is essential to explore the theoretical underpinnings of the constructs involved [26]. The framework is rooted in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) paradigm, adapted for modern tourism ecosystems, and the Experience Economy theory [7].

1.4.1. Destination Readiness (DR): The Foundation of the Smart Destination

In destination planning, Destination Readiness (DR) encompasses the physical infrastructure, service quality, safety protocols, and digital support systems that enable visitors to engage seamlessly with a destination during an event [19]; [31]. Historically, destination planning focused heavily on the "hardware" of tourism—airports, roads, and hotels. However, the advent of the smart destination paradigm has expanded this definition to include the "software" and "orgware" of destination management. DR represents the destination's capacity to absorb event-induced shocks and provide a frictionless environment.

A well-prepared destination reduces cognitive and physical friction for the tourist, signaling professionalism, safety, and hospitality. In the S-O-R framework, DR acts as the primary Stimulus—the environmental cue that sets the stage for the tourist's psychological and emotional processing. Without adequate readiness, even the most brilliantly curated event can fail to produce positive outcomes because of logistical failures, digital disconnection, or perceived safety risks.

1.4.2. Memorable Event Experiences (MEE): The Core of the Experience Economy

Grounded in Pine and Gilmore [28] experience economy and operationalized in tourism [5]. Memorable Event Experiences (MEE) transcend basic satisfaction. They are characterized by novelty, emotional engagement, immersion, local cultural integration, and transformative potential. In event tourism, MEE represents the Organism phase of the S-O-R model—the event's internal, psychological processing. Recent advancements in neuro-tourism and emotional geography suggest that memorable experiences create lasting cognitive imprints and affective attachments [10]; [18]. When an event is perceived as unique, immersive, and emotionally resonant, it triggers a profound psychological response that elevates tourists' perceptions of the host destination. MEE is not merely about the event itself; it is about how the event is contextualized within the destination's cultural and physical landscape.

1.4.3. Destination Image (DI) and Destination Satisfaction (DS): The Cognitive-Affective Continuum

Destination Image (DI) is defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions a visitor holds about a place [12]; [22]. It is primarily a cognitive evaluation, formed through interpreting environmental stimuli (DR) and experiential encounters (MEE). In destination planning, DI is a critical asset; it is the mental representation that competes in the global marketplace. Destination Satisfaction (DS), conversely, is an affective and evaluative judgment that reflects the match between pre-visit expectations and perceived experienced performance [1]; [27]. While DI represents what the tourist thinks about the destination, DS represents how the tourist feels about their overall experience. The tourism literature has well established the sequential relationship between DI and DS: Positive cognitive images facilitate higher levels of affective satisfaction [9]; [17]. Together, DI and DS form the evaluative bridge between the initial stimuli (DR, MEE) and the final behavioral response (DL).

1.4.4. Destination Loyalty (DL): The Ultimate Goal of Destination Development

Destination Loyalty (DL) encompasses revisit intentions, willingness to recommend, and positive word-of-mouth advocacy [20]; [24]. In the modern era of digital connectivity, DL extends to digital advocacy—sharing experiences on social media, creating user-generated content, and acting as a brand ambassador. For destination planners, DL is the ultimate metric of success, indicating that the destination has achieved a sustainable competitive advantage and resilience against market fluctuations.

1.4.5. The Sequential Mediation Mechanism

This study's novelty lies in conceptualizing a sequential mediation pathway. Traditional models often test parallel mediators or simple single-step mediation. However, human psychological processing is sequential and cascading. The proposed model posits that environmental and experiential inputs (DR, MEE) first shape cognitive perceptions (DI), which subsequently inform affective evaluations (DS), ultimately culminating in conative behavioral intentions (DL). This cascade (e.g., DR → DI → DS → DL) provides a granular understanding of how destination planning interventions (e.g., improving readiness) ultimately translate into market success (loyalty) through the tourist's psychological journey.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Destination Readiness and Its Evaluative Outcomes

Destination readiness signals a host community's competence and hospitality. When tourists perceive that a destination's infrastructure, digital ecosystems, and service personnel are well prepared, travel anxiety decreases and the destination's perceived quality increases.

2.1.1. DR and Destination Image (H1)

Tangible and intangible infrastructure strongly influences cognitive evaluations of a destination. A well-prepared destination projects an image of reliability, modernity, and care. Thus, researchers hypothesize:

- **H1:** Destination Readiness has a significant positive effect on Destination Image.

2.1.2. DR and Destination Satisfaction (H2)

The confirmation of expectations drives satisfaction. High destination readiness ensures that logistical and service expectations are met or exceeded, directly contributing to overall satisfaction:

- **H2:** Destination Readiness has a significant positive effect on Destination Satisfaction.

2.1.3. DR and Destination Loyalty (H3)

While readiness is essential, it is often viewed as a "hygiene factor" [2]. Its absence causes dissatisfaction, but its presence alone may not drive long-term loyalty. Loyalty is more likely driven by the experience's emotional resonance. Thus, researchers hypothesize that DR's effect on loyalty is indirect:

- **H3:** Destination Readiness has no significant direct effect on Destination Loyalty (but operates via mediators).

2.2. Memorable Event Experiences as the Core Catalyst

Events are designed to break the routine and provide extraordinary experiences.

2.2.1. MEE and Destination Image (H4)

Events serve as lenses through which the destination is viewed. A highly memorable event casts a halo effect over the destination, enhancing its perceived attractiveness and cultural authenticity:

- **H4:** Memorable Event Experiences have a significant positive effect on Destination Image.

2.2.2. MEE and Destination Satisfaction (H5)

The emotional engagement and transformative nature of MEE directly elevate tourists' affective states, leading to profound satisfaction with the trip:

- **H5:** Memorable Event Experiences have a significant positive effect on Destination Satisfaction.

2.2.3. MEE and Destination Loyalty (H6)

Memorable experiences create deep psychological attachments and emotional bonds with the host location, directly motivating revisit and recommendation intentions:

- **H6:** Memorable Event Experiences have a significant positive effect on Destination Loyalty.

2.3. The Cognitive-Affective-Loyalty Chain

2.3.1. DI and DS (H7)

Positive cognitive beliefs about a destination facilitate positive affective evaluations:

- **H7:** Destination Image has a significant positive effect on Destination Satisfaction.

2.3.2. DI and DL (H8)

A strong, positive destination image reduces perceived risk and fosters a preference for the destination, driving loyalty:

- **H8:** Destination Image has a significant positive effect on Destination Loyalty.

2.3.3. DS and DL (H9)

Satisfaction is the most proximal predictor of loyalty; satisfied tourists are highly likely to return and advocate:

- **H9:** Destination Satisfaction has a significant positive effect on Destination Loyalty.

2.4. Sequential Mediation Pathways

The true complexity of destination loyalty formation lies in the indirect pathways.

2.4.1. H10-H13 (Single and Double Mediations)

Researchers hypothesize that DI and DS mediate the relationships between antecedents (DR, MEE) and DL. Furthermore, researchers propose a sequential chain in which DR and MEE influence DI, which, in turn, influences DS, ultimately leading to DL:

- **H14-H18:** These hypotheses map the specific indirect effects, testing the full cascade of cognitive and evaluative processes through which antecedent conditions generate loyalty.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Context

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. The context is Bali, Indonesia, specifically focusing on international tourists attending events across seven major categories: exhibition events, arts and cultural performances, entertainment and shows, educational/workshops, wellness and retreats, sport events, and food and culinary festivals. Data collection occurred between March and June 2026, coinciding with the peak of Bali's cultural and MICE event calendar.

3.2. Population and Sampling

The target population comprised international tourists who had attended at least one ticketed or organized event in Bali within the past 30 days. Because no comprehensive sampling frame existed for all event attendees, the study used purposive sampling. Survey intercepts were conducted at major event venues and destinations (Nusa Dua, Ubud, Sanur, Uluwatu, Denpasar and various wellness retreat centers in Canggu and Seminyak), as well as via post-event digital platforms linked to event organizers and tourists. The final sample yielded $n = 202$ valid responses, which is adequate for PLS-SEM analysis, given the model's complexity and the "10-times rule" or recent Monte Carlo simulations recommending a minimum of 100-200 cases for complex models [13].

3.3. Instrument Development and Operationalization

The measurement instrument was developed from established scales in the literature and adapted to the event tourism context. All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree), shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Construct operationalization

Construct (Source)	Code	Indicator
Destination Readiness (DR) [19]; [31]	DR1	The destination's infrastructure was well prepared for visitors.
	DR2	The event facilities were adequate and well organized.
	DR3	Staff and service personnel were professional and ready to assist visitors.
	DR4	Digital systems (ticketing, online information, event updates) effectively supported the event.
	DR5	The destination felt safe and well-managed during the event.
Memorable Event Experiences (MEE) [4]; [5]; [17]	MEE1	The event was unforgettable for me.
	MEE2	I felt emotionally engaged during the event.
	MEE3	The experience was unique compared to other events I have attended.
	MEE4	I felt fully immersed in the event atmosphere and activities.

	MEE5	The event created lasting memories for me.
	MEE6	The event experience was transformative for me.
Destination Image (DI) [12]; [22]	DI1	The destination has a positive image.
	DI2	The destination is attractive to visit.
	DI3	The destination feels authentic and distinctive.
	DI4	The destination is appealing for tourism and events.
Destination Satisfaction (DS) [1]; [27]	DS1	I am satisfied with my overall experience at this destination.
	DS2	My experience at the destination met my expectations.
	DS3	Visiting this destination was a good decision.
	DS4	I felt joy, awe, nostalgia, and shared excitement during the event.
Destination Loyalty (DL) [8]; [20]; [24]; [23]	DL1	I intend to revisit this destination in the future.
	DL2	I will recommend this destination to others.
	DL3	I will speak positively about this destination to other people.
<i>Note: Seven-point Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree. Source: Own elaboration, adapted from cited sources.</i>		

3.4. Analytical Strategy

Data analysis used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4.0. PLS-SEM was chosen for its suitability for complex predictive models, sequential mediation analysis, and robustness to non-normal data distributions typical in tourism research [14]; [30]. The analytical procedure followed a two-stage approach [3]. Measurement Model Assessment: Evaluating outer loadings, internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability), convergent validity (AVE), and discriminant validity (HTMT). Structural Model Assessment: Evaluating collinearity (VIF), path coefficients (β), significance (bootstrapping with 10,000 subsamples), effect sizes (f^2), and explanatory power (R^2). Mediation Analysis: Assessing specific indirect effects and sequential mediation pathways using confidence intervals. Predictive Relevance: Employing PLSpredict (10-fold cross-validation) and the Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT) to compare the PLS-SEM model against a naive linear model (LM) benchmark [25].

4. Findings

4.1. Respondent Demographic Profile

Table 2 shows the demographic profile of the 202 respondents: a slightly male-skewed sample (54.5%) concentrated among adults aged 21–40 years (56.9%), aligning with the literature on experiential event tourists [11]. The sample is highly educated, with nearly two-thirds holding postgraduate qualifications (Master's, PhD), reflecting the profile of discretionary cultural and MICE travellers.

Table 2: Respondent demographic profile (n = 202)

Demographic Category	n	%
Gender		
Male	110	54.5
Female	90	44.6
Prefer not to say	2	1.0
Age		
< 20 years	26	12.9
21–30 years	60	29.7
31–40 years	55	27.2
41–50 years	36	17.8
> 50 years	22	10.9
Educational Level		
High School	18	8.9
Diploma	28	13.9
Bachelor's Degree	66	32.7
Master's Degree	65	32.2
PhD / Doctorate	22	10.9
Occupation		
Student	58	28.7
Academic / Researcher	38	18.8

Business Owner	60	29.7
Self-employed	26	12.9
Employee (private/public)	11	5.4
Freelancer / Other	7	3.5
Region of Origin		
Asia Pacific	99	49.0
Europe	56	27.7
Americas	32	15.8
Africa / Middle East and Other	13	6.4
Type of Event Attended		
Exhibition Event	37	18.3
Arts and Cultural Performance	35	17.3
Entertainment and Show	29	14.4
Educational / Workshop	27	13.4
Wellness and Retreat	25	12.4
Sport Event	24	11.9
Food and Culinary	22	10.9
Visit Frequency to Destination		
First visit	67	33.2
2–3 times	54	26.7
4–5 times	40	19.8
6–10 times	22	10.9
> 10 times	14	6.9
Length of Stay		
1 day	30	14.9
2–3 days	73	36.1
4–6 days	60	29.7
1 week	25	12.4
> 1 week	12	5.9
Total	202	100.0
Source: Respondent Profile in 2026		

Geographically, the sample is internationally diverse, with 49.0% from the Asia Pacific, 27.7% from Europe, and 15.8% from the Americas. Event attendance was broadly distributed, with Exhibition Events (18.3%) and Arts and Cultural Performances (17.3%) being the most prominent. One-third were first-time visitors to Bali, while the majority stayed for 2-6 days. This diversity supports the findings' cross-cultural applicability.

4.2. Common Method Bias and Measurement Model Assessment

Researchers assessed Common Method Bias (CMB) using the marker variable technique. VIF values ranged from 1.453 to 1.915, well below the 3.3 threshold, indicating CMB is not a significant threat. The measurement model demonstrated excellent psychometric properties (Table 3). All indicator loadings ranged from 0.862 to 0.964 (threshold > 0.708).

Table 3: Construct reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Items	Loadings	CA	CR	AVE
Destination Image (DI)	DI1	0.920	0.958	0.969	0.888
	DI2	0.935			
	DI3	0.959			
	DI4	0.955			
Destination Loyalty (DL)	DL1	0.948	0.952	0.969	0.912
	DL2	0.962			
	DL3	0.955			
Destination Readiness (DR)	DR1	0.934	0.954	0.965	0.845
	DR2	0.926			
	DR3	0.938			
	DR4	0.862			

Destination Satisfaction (DS)	DR5	0.935			
	DS1	0.964	0.965	0.975	0.905
	DS2	0.937			
	DS3	0.947			
	DS4	0.958			
Memorable Event Experience (MEE)	MEE1	0.930	0.973	0.978	0.880
	MEE2	0.948			
	MEE3	0.926			
	MEE4	0.944			
	MEE5	0.942			
	MEE6	0.938			
Note: CA = Cronbach's alpha; CR = Composite reliability (ρ_c); AVE = Average variance extracted.					

Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeded 0.90 for all constructs, indicating outstanding internal consistency. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.845 to 0.912 (threshold > 0.50), confirming strong convergent validity [15] (Table 4).

Table 4: Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

Constructs	DI	DL	DR	DS	MEE
Destination Image (DI)	-				
Destination Loyalty (DL)	0.532	-			
Destination Readiness (DR)	0.536	0.377	-		
Destination Satisfaction (DS)	0.538	0.610	0.476	-	
Memorable Event Experience (MEE)	0.518	0.650	0.351	0.607	-
Note: All values are below the conservative HTMT threshold of 0.85.					

Discriminant validity was confirmed via the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio; all values ranged from 0.351 to 0.650, well below the conservative 0.85 threshold.

4.3. Model Fit Assessment

The estimated model yielded an SRMR of 0.032, satisfying the stringent 0.05 criterion [16]. Supporting indices ($d_{ULS} = 0.257$, $d_G = 0.299$, $NFI = 0.939$) confirm an acceptable approximate model fit, providing a sound foundation for structural assessment.

4.4. Structural Model Assessment with Direct Effects

Researchers tested the hypotheses using bootstrapping (10,000 subsamples, one-tailed, 95% CI):

- **DR Effects:** DR significantly predicted DI (H1: $\beta = 0.391$, $f^2 = 0.221$, medium effect) and DS (H2: $\beta = 0.215$, $f^2 = 0.060$, small effect). However, the direct path from DR to DL was not supported (H3: $\beta = 0.027$, $p = 0.325$). This confirms that readiness is an enabling condition, not a direct motivator of loyalty.
- **MEE Effects:** MEE was the most influential predictor, significantly affecting DI (H4: $\beta = 0.369$, $f^2 = 0.197$), DS (H5: $\beta = 0.417$, $f^2 = 0.231$), and DL (H6: $\beta = 0.375$, $f^2 = 0.164$). The strong effect on DS highlights the power of emotional engagement in elevating overall trip appraisal.
- **Mediating Chain:** DI positively influenced DS (H7: $\beta = 0.196$) and DL (H8: $\beta = 0.171$). DS significantly predicted DL (H9: $\beta = 0.263$).
- **Variance Explained:** The model explained substantial variance in the endogenous constructs: R^2 DI = 0.387, R^2 DS = 0.445, and R^2 DL = 0.485. Eight of the nine direct hypotheses were supported (Table 5).

Table 5: Results of direct effects hypotheses

H	Relationship	β	STDEV	t	p	f^2	CI [5%, 95%]	Support
H1	DR → DI	0.391	0.060	6.496	0.000	0.221	[0.112, 0.376]	Yes
H2	DR → DS	0.215	0.060	3.578	0.000	0.060	[0.017, 0.132]	Yes
H3	DR → DL	0.027	0.060	0.454	0.325	0.001	[0.000, 0.022]	No
H4	MEE → DI	0.369	0.053	7.014	0.000	0.197	[0.112, 0.317]	Yes

H5	MEE → DS	0.417	0.062	6.690	0.000	0.231	[0.123, 0.387]	Yes
H6	MEE → DL	0.375	0.060	6.220	0.000	0.164	[0.080, 0.283]	Yes
H7	DI → DS	0.196	0.068	2.886	0.002	0.043	[0.008, 0.107]	Yes
H8	DI → DL	0.171	0.073	2.346	0.009	0.033	[0.003, 0.099]	Yes
H9	DS → DL	0.263	0.077	3.393	0.000	0.074	[0.018, 0.174]	Yes

Note. Bootstrapping: 10,000 subsamples, one-tailed, 95% CI. DR = Destination Readiness; DI = Destination Image; DS = Destination Satisfaction; DL = Destination Loyalty; MEE = Memorable Event Experience.

4.5. Structural Model Assessment: Mediating Effects

The sequential mediation analysis revealed a rich, multi-layered architecture:

- **Single Mediations:** DS mediated MEE→DL (H10: $\beta = 0.109$), DR→DL (H18: $\beta = 0.057$), and DI→DL (H17: $\beta = 0.052$). DI mediated DR→DL (H11: $\beta = 0.067$) and MEE→DL (H14: $\beta = 0.063$).
- **Sequential Mediations:** The pathways DR→DI→DS (H13: $\beta = 0.077$) and MEE→DI→DS (H16: $\beta = 0.073$) were supported, proving that image formation acts as a cognitive precursor to satisfaction.
- **Full Sequential Chain:** Crucially, the full sequential pathways DR→DI→DS→DL (H12: $\beta = 0.020$) and MEE→DI→DS→DL (H15: $\beta = 0.019$) were statistically significant (CIs excluded zero). This confirms that loyalty formation is a staged psychological sequence: environmental/experiential inputs → cognitive image → affective satisfaction → conative loyalty (Figure 1).

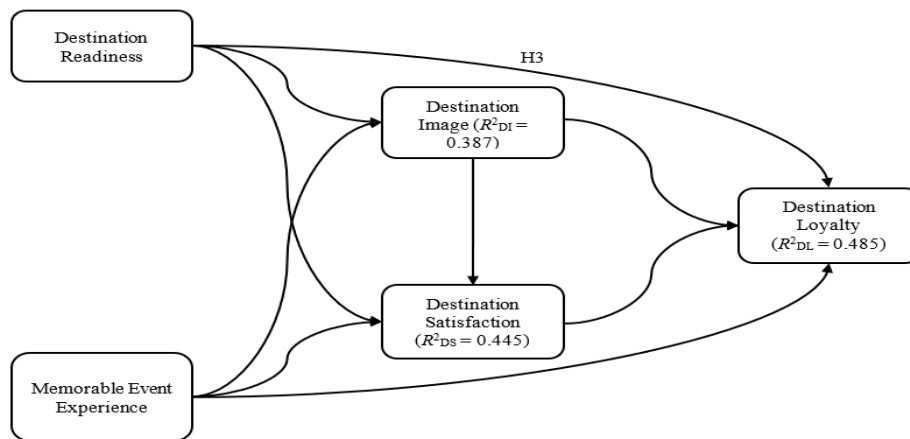


Figure 1: Results of structural model assessment

As shown in Table 6, all indirect effect hypotheses (H10–H18) are statistically significant and supported, with p-values ranging from 0.002 to 0.027.

Table 6: Results of indirect effects hypotheses

H	Relationship	β	STDEV	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI [5%, 95%]	Support
H10	MEE → DS → DL	0.109	0.038	2.900	0.002	[0.051, 0.174]	Yes
H11	DR → DI → DL	0.067	0.032	2.097	0.018	[0.018, 0.124]	Yes
H12	DR → DI → DS → DL	0.020	0.010	1.935	0.027	[0.006, 0.040]	Yes
H13	DR → DI → DS	0.077	0.032	2.433	0.007	[0.030, 0.134]	Yes
H14	MEE → DI → DL	0.063	0.028	2.262	0.012	[0.019, 0.111]	Yes
H15	MEE → DI → DS → DL	0.019	0.009	2.063	0.020	[0.006, 0.036]	Yes
H16	MEE → DI → DS	0.073	0.027	2.736	0.003	[0.030, 0.118]	Yes
H17	DI → DS → DL	0.052	0.024	2.151	0.016	[0.016, 0.094]	Yes
H18	DR → DS → DL	0.057	0.023	2.482	0.007	[0.022, 0.096]	Yes

Note: All confidence intervals exclude zero, confirming significance. DR = Destination Readiness; DI = Destination Image; DS = Destination Satisfaction; DL = Destination Loyalty; MEE = Memorable Event Experience.

None of the 95% confidence intervals contain zero, indicating substantial mediating effects of Memorable Event Experience on Destination Readiness, Destination Image, Destination Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty.

4.6. Total Effects and Predictive Relevance

The total effects analysis in Table 7 highlights the compounding amplification of indirect pathways. MEE exerted the largest total effect on DL ($\beta = 0.567$), confirming its systemic centrality. Most instructively, DR's total effect on DL ($\beta = 0.171$, $p = 0.001$) was highly significant despite its non-significant direct effect, proving that infrastructural readiness is vital for loyalty, but its impact is entirely mediated.

Table 7: PLS prediction results

Items	Q^2_{predict}	PLS-SEM		LM		PLS – LM	
		RMSE	MAE	RMSE	MAE	RMSE	MAE
DI1	0.270	1.178	0.966	1.201	0.988	-0.022	-0.022
DI2	0.323	1.121	0.919	1.123	0.911	-0.002	0.008
DI3	0.375	1.100	0.902	1.116	0.910	-0.016	-0.007
DI4	0.352	1.095	0.891	1.108	0.881	-0.013	0.010
DL1	0.360	1.103	0.925	1.130	0.947	-0.027	-0.022
DL2	0.375	1.054	0.844	1.085	0.865	-0.031	-0.021
DL3	0.368	1.088	0.871	1.115	0.900	-0.027	-0.029
DS1	0.378	1.073	0.877	1.104	0.897	-0.031	-0.020
DS2	0.334	1.081	0.860	1.110	0.884	-0.028	-0.025
DS3	0.365	1.075	0.878	1.106	0.905	-0.031	-0.026
DS4	0.390	1.056	0.844	1.082	0.859	-0.026	-0.015

Note: 10 folds, 10 repetitions, one-tailed. RMSE = root mean square error; MAE = mean absolute error. Negative PLS–LM values indicate that the PLS-SEM model has predictive superiority.

Predictive assessment via PLSpredict and CVPAT demonstrated that the PLS-SEM model possesses medium predictive power (Q^2_{predict} range: 0.270–0.390) and consistently outperforms the linear model benchmark (negative PLS-LM differences). The overall model-level CVPAT was statistically significant ($p = 0.023$), confirming the model's superior predictive capability for anticipating future loyalty behaviors (Table 8).

Table 8: Cross-validated predictive ability test (CVPAT): PLS-SEM vs Linear model

Construct	PLS Loss	LM Loss	Avg. Loss Diff.	t-Value	p-Value	Superior?
Destination Image (DI)	1.264	1.294	-0.030	0.729	0.467	No
Destination Loyalty (DL)	1.170	1.232	-0.062	1.718	0.087	No
Destination Satisfaction (DS)	1.148	1.211	-0.063	1.928	0.055	No
Overall	1.196	1.247	-0.051	2.298	0.023	Yes

Note: One-tailed test, 10 folds, 10 repetitions. A negative average loss difference indicates the PLS-SEM model outperforms the LM. Statistical significance at $p < 0.05$.

4.7. Implications

The findings of this study provide profound insights for the field of Tourism Destination Planning and Development. Validating the sequential mediation model ($DR \rightarrow DI \rightarrow DS \rightarrow DL$) challenges traditional, linear approaches to destination marketing and infrastructure planning. It necessitates a paradigm shift towards integrated, experience-centric destination management.

4.7.1. The Role of Destination Readiness as a Foundational Enabler

One of the most theoretically and practically instructive findings is the non-significant direct effect of Destination Readiness (DR) on Destination Loyalty (DL), coupled with its highly significant total effect. In destination planning, a common misconception is that building world-class infrastructure (airports, convention centers, smart city grids) will directly yield tourist loyalty and economic returns. This study empirically debunks that notion. DR acts as a "hygiene factor" and a foundational enabler. It creates the frictionless environment necessary for the experience to unfold, but it does not, on its own, create emotional attachment. For destination planners and DMOs, this means that infrastructural investments must be explicitly linked to experiential outcomes. A smart destination grid or a well-organized MICE facility only generates loyalty if it successfully enhances the Destination Image (cognitive appraisal) and ultimately the Memorable Event Experience (emotional engagement). Urban planners must therefore collaborate with event curators to ensure that the "hardware" of the destination is seamlessly integrated with the "software" of the event narrative.

4.7.2. Memorable Event Experiences: The Core of Regenerative Destination Strategy

MEE emerged as the dominant driver of loyalty, both directly and through the sequential cascade. This aligns with the global shift towards regenerative tourism, which posits that destinations must leave visitors and host communities better off than before the visit. Events are the perfect vehicles for regenerative tourism because they can be designed to be transformative, educational, and deeply connected to local culture. Destination planners must move beyond viewing events merely as economic multipliers. They must be designed as psychological interventions. The high effect size of MEE on DS ($f^2 = 0.231$) indicates that emotionally engaging, immersive events are the primary catalysts for destination satisfaction. Planners should prioritize funding and supporting events that offer novelty, local cultural authenticity, and opportunities for co-creation, rather than standardized, mass-market spectacles.

4.7.3. The Cognitive-Affective Cascade: Managing the Tourist Journey

The sequential mediation pathways (e.g., MEE → DI → DS → DL) reveal that loyalty is not an instantaneous reaction but a cumulative psychological process:

- **Cognitive Phase (DI):** The event and the destination's readiness first shape the tourist's beliefs and impressions.
- **Affective Phase (DS):** These cognitive impressions, combined with the event's emotional resonance, crystallize into overall satisfaction.
- **Conative Phase (DL):** Only after this cognitive-affective alignment does the tourist develop the intention to return and advocate.

For destination marketing organizations (DMOs), this means marketing efforts cannot focus solely on the final call to action (e.g., "Visit Again"). They must manage the entire cognitive-affective cascade. Pre-event communication must set accurate expectations that align with the destination's readiness. On-site, the focus must be on ensuring the event experience positively impacts the cognitive image of the broader destination (e.g., ensuring a cultural festival also highlights the destination's cleanliness, safety, and hospitality). Post-event, DMOs must leverage the satisfaction generated to trigger digital advocacy.

4.7.4. Smart Destination Ecosystems and Digital Integration

The inclusion of digital systems in the DR construct (e.g., ticketing, online information, event updates) and their significant impact on DI highlight the critical role of smart destination frameworks in event tourism. In 2026, modern event tourists expect a seamless digital continuum. Destination planners must develop integrated digital ecosystems in which event-specific applications seamlessly communicate with broader destination services (public transport, local guides, emergency services). A destination's digital readiness significantly shapes its modern, efficient image, which, in turn, drives satisfaction.

4.7.5. Stakeholder Collaboration and Public-Private Partnerships

The sequential model demonstrates that loyalty results from a complex interplay among infrastructure (often public sector), event curation (private/community sectors), and service delivery (hospitality sector). Destination planning cannot occur in silos. The findings advocate for robust Public-Private-Community Partnerships (PPCPs). Event organizers must be involved in destination readiness planning, ensuring that their events do not overwhelm local infrastructure but rather leverage it to enhance visitors' cognitive image of the destination's competence and care.

5. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive, empirically validated model of how destination readiness and memorable event experiences translate into destination loyalty through the sequential mediation of destination image and destination satisfaction. Contextualized within Bali's vibrant event tourism landscape, the research shows that while physical and digital readiness is crucial, its impact on loyalty is entirely indirect, operating by shaping positive destination imagery and facilitating satisfaction. Conversely, memorable event experiences act as the primary catalyst, driving loyalty both directly through emotional attachment and indirectly through the cognitive-affective cascade.

For Tourism Destination Planning and Development, these findings offer a clear mandate: Destination competitiveness in the experience economy relies on seamlessly integrating robust, smart infrastructure with transformative, culturally authentic event programming. Destination managers must orchestrate the tourist's entire psychological journey, ensuring every touchpoint—from digital ticketing to the event's emotional climax—contributes to a positive cognitive image and deep affective satisfaction. Only through this holistic, sequential alignment can destinations cultivate the enduring loyalty required for sustainable, regenerative tourism growth.

5.1. Limitations

While this study offers significant theoretical and managerial contributions, it has limitations. First, the cross-sectional design captures a snapshot in time; it cannot definitively establish long-term behavioral loyalty (actual revisit behavior) and instead relies on behavioral intentions. Second, the sample, while internationally diverse, skews toward highly educated, younger demographics, which may limit generalizability to mass-market or older tourist segments. Third, the study focuses on a single destination (Bali), which possesses unique cultural and geographical characteristics; thus, caution is advised when generalizing the findings to urban MICE destinations or vastly different cultural contexts without further validation.

5.2. Future Research Directions

Future research should employ longitudinal designs to track actual revisit and advocacy behaviors over time, bridging the gap between intention and action. Additionally, qualitative and neuro-tourism methodologies (e.g., EEG, biometric tracking) could explore immediate cognitive-affective responses to destination readiness and event stimuli in greater depth. Comparative studies across different destination typologies (e.g., heritage cities vs. resort islands vs. mega-city MICE hubs) would further refine the sequential mediation model. Finally, future studies should examine the moderating role of cultural distance and digital literacy in the relationship between destination readiness and memorable experiences, providing more granular insights for global destination planning.

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