



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND TOURISTS' TRAVEL DECISIONS IN MALANG CITY, EAST JAVA

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is a rapidly growing sector whose development is closely shaped by consumer behavior. In this study, consumer behavior refers to the way tourists search for information, form destination preferences, and evaluate perceived value, whereas a travel decision refers to a tourist's actual choice to undertake a tourist trip to a particular destination. This study aims to analyze the relationship between consumer behavior and tourists' travel decisions in Malang City, East Java. A quantitative survey was conducted on 100 respondents selected through accidental sampling, since the population size was unknown. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed with SPSS through validity, reliability, and normality tests, followed by simple linear regression. The results show that consumer behavior has a significant relationship with travel decisions, with a significance value of 0.001 and a coefficient of determination of 37.4 percent. These findings indicate that consumer behavior plays an important role in shaping tourists' decisions to travel, so that understanding it is essential for developing marketing strategies and managing tourist destinations. This study contributes to consumer behavior research in the tourism sector and serves as a reference for destination managers in understanding tourist behavior.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors and has an important contribution to the regional and national economy. The development of the tourism industry is not only influenced by the availability of tourist destinations, but also by consumer behavior in determining travel choices. In the context of tourism marketing, consumer behavior is a very important aspect because a person's decision to travel is influenced by various factors such as motivation, destination preferences, perception of prices, and the influence of information received (Rasyid & Lestari, 2023). Changes in the lifestyle of modern society have also encouraged the increase in tourist travel activities as part of the need for recreation, relaxation, and new experiences (Setyasari & Subarkah, 2024). Therefore, understanding consumer behavior is important in understanding how a person makes a decision to travel (Islam et al., 2023).

In the current development of the tourism industry, the ease of access to information through digital technology also affects the way consumers plan and travel tourism. Consumers no longer only rely on conventional information, but also utilize social media, digital platforms, and tourist reviews to determine destinations to visit (Khairunnisa et al., 2025). This condition shows that consumer behavior in the context of tourism is becoming increasingly complex because it is influenced by psychological, social, and situational factors. In addition, tourist preferences also tend to change along with the development of tourism trends that emphasize the experience, uniqueness of the destination, and the value felt during the trip (Sukardi & Afidah, 2024).). Malang City is one of the leading tourist destinations in East Java and possesses diverse natural, cultural, and artificial tourism potentials, ranging from highland and mountain landscapes such as the Bromo Tengger Semeru area, agro-tourism and flower villages, to urban themed parks, culinary tourism, and colonial heritage sites. This wide range of attractions draws tourists with different motivations and preferences, which makes consumer behavior a particularly relevant factor to examine: the abundance of options means that each tourist's decision to visit Malang depends heavily on how they search for

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information, weigh destination characteristics, and assess the value they expect to gain. Understanding this behavior is therefore important both for explaining current visitation patterns and for guiding destination management in a competitive tourism market. The diversity of tourist attractions makes Malang one of the interesting areas to study in understanding the relationship between consumer behavior and tourist trips carried out by tourists (Nurdiansyah et al., 2023).

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between consumer behavior and travel decisions. Asbar (2022) found that consumer psychological factors have a significant influence on travel decision-making through the use of travel applications on smartphones. Pomantow (2022) shows that tourist behavior is an important factor in determining the choice of tourist attractions to visit in Manado City. In addition, Naimah (2025) concluded that social media has a significant influence on tourist travel decisions because it is the main source of information in determining tourist destinations.

Although various studies have discussed consumer behavior and travel decisions, most of them have examined only specific dimensions, such as psychological factors, the role of digital media, or destination preferences, and many were conducted in other regions. Studies that comprehensively examine the relationship between overall consumer behavior and tourists' travel decisions remain limited, particularly in the context of Malang City, East Java, whose diverse tourism potential has rarely been linked directly to consumer behavior in empirical research. This gap is important to address because Malang continues to experience growing tourist visits, yet destination managers still lack locally grounded evidence on how consumer behavior drives travel decisions. The novelty of this study lies in positioning consumer behavior as a single integrated construct and testing its relationship with tourists' travel decisions in this specific destination, while its urgency stems from the practical need for evidence-based marketing and destination-management strategies. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the relationship between consumer behavior and tourists' travel decisions in Malang City. The results are expected to contribute to consumer behavior research in the tourism sector and to serve as a reference for destination managers in understanding tourist behavior.

2. METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational research design that aims to determine the relationship between consumer behavior and tourist travel. The research was conducted in Malang City, East Java, with respondents who were tourists who had or were traveling in the region. Respondents were selected according to specific criteria, namely individuals aged at least 17 years who had taken at least one tourist trip to Malang City, so that they had direct experience on which to base their answers. The consumer behavior variable (X) was measured through indicators of travel motivation, destination preferences, information search behavior, and price and value perception, while the travel decision variable (Y) was measured through indicators of destination choice, trip frequency, intention to visit, and post-visit evaluation. Each indicator was translated into several statement items. The exact number of the population in this study is unknown, so the sample was determined using the Lemeshow formula. Based on the calculation of the formula with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 10%, a minimum sample number of 96 respondents was obtained, so in this study the number of samples was rounded to 100 respondents. The sampling technique uses a non-probability sampling approach with the accidental sampling method, namely respondents who are met by chance and willing to fill out a research questionnaire. In practice, questionnaires were distributed directly to tourists encountered at several tourist attractions and public areas in Malang City until the target of 100 respondents who met the criteria was reached. Accidental sampling was chosen because the population of tourists is large, highly mobile, and does not have a complete sampling frame, which makes probability sampling difficult to apply; this technique allows efficient data collection from tourists who are actually present at the destination. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged as a limitation, since respondents are not selected randomly, so the findings should be interpreted with caution and are not fully generalizable to the entire tourist population. The research instrument is in the form of a questionnaire with a five-level Likert scale that is used to measure variables of consumer behavior and tourist travel.

Before data analysis is carried out, the research instrument is first tested through validity tests and reliability tests. The results of the validity test show that all statement items have a correlation value greater

than the r-value of the table ($r \text{ count} > 0.195$) so that all items are declared valid. Meanwhile, the results of the reliability test showed that the Cronbach's Alpha value for the consumer behavior variable was 0.83 and the tourist travel variable was 0.81, so both variables were declared reliable because they had a value greater than 0.70. Before the regression analysis is carried out, a normality test is first carried out to find out whether the research data is normally distributed. The hypothesis test in this study was carried out using simple linear regression analysis with the help of the SPSS program. The regression model used in this study is expressed as $Y = a + bX + e$, where Y represents tourists' travel decisions, X represents consumer behavior, a is the constant, b is the regression coefficient that indicates the magnitude and direction of the relationship between the two variables, and e is the error term. The hypothesis testing criteria is carried out by looking at significance values, where the hypothesis is accepted if the significance value is less than 0.05 ($\text{sig} < 0.05$) which indicates that there is a significant relationship between consumer behavior and tourist travel. On the other hand, if the significance value is greater than 0.05 ($\text{sig} > 0.05$), then the research hypothesis is declared insignificant.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

Before conducting further data analysis, an overview of the respondents was first presented to provide information about the characteristics of the respondents involved in this study.

Table 1. Respondent Overview

Category	Sub Category	Quantity	Percentage
Gender	Male	46	46%
	Women	54	54%
Age	17-25 years old	38	38%
	26-35 years old	34	34%
	36-45 years old	18	18%
	>45 years old	10	10%
Frequency of Tourist Trips to Malang	1 time	29	29%
	2-3 times	41	41%
	>3 times	30	30%

Based on the overview table of respondents, it is known that most of the respondents in this study are female as many as 54 people (54%), while male respondents are 46 people (46%). Based on age group, the majority of respondents were in the age range of 17-25 years as many as 38 people (38%), followed by 26-35 years old as many as 34 people (34%), 36-45 years old as many as 18 people (18%), and over 45 years old as many as 10 people (10%). Meanwhile, based on the frequency of tourist trips to Malang City, most of the respondents have taken tourist trips 2-3 times, namely 41 people (41%), followed by respondents who visited more than three times as many as 30 people (30%), and respondents who have only taken one tourist trip once (29%). This data shows that most respondents have experience traveling to Malang City more than once.

Table 2. Normality Test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov)

Variable	N	Statistics Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Say.
Consumer Behaviour	100	0.086	0.200
Travel Tours	100	0.079	0.200

Based on the results of the normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method, it is known that the significance value for the consumer behavior variable is 0.200 and the tourist travel variable is 0.200. The value is greater than 0.05 so it can be concluded that the data on both variables are normally distributed. Thus, the research data has met the assumption of normality so that the next analysis can be continued using parametric statistical analysis, namely simple linear regression to test the relationship between consumer behavior and tourist travel.

Table 3. Significance Test

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable	Sig.	Remarks
Consumer Behavior	Travel Tours	0.001	Significance

Based on the results of the significance test conducted using simple linear regression analysis, a significance value of 0.001 was obtained. The value is less than 0.05 (Sig. < 0.05) so it can be concluded that consumer behavior has a significant relationship with tourist travel. These results show that the better consumer behavior is in considering various factors such as preferences, information, and perceptions of tourist destinations, the tendency to travel will also increase. Thus, the research hypothesis that there is a relationship between consumer behavior and travel is acceptable.

Table 4. Coefficient Determination Test

Model	R	R Square	Percentage
X against Y	0.612	0.374	37.4%

Based on the results of the determination coefficient test, an R value of 0.612 was obtained which shows that the relationship between consumer behavior and tourism travel is in the category of quite strong. Meanwhile, the R Square value of 0.374 shows that the consumer behavior variable is able to explain 37.4% of the variation that occurs in tourist trips. The remaining 62.6% was influenced by other factors that were not studied in this study, such as social, economic, promotional factors of tourist destinations, and tourist experience factors. These results show that consumer behavior has a fairly important contribution in influencing tourist trips made by tourists.

Discussion

The results of the study show that consumer behavior has a significant relationship with tourist travel. These findings show that a person's decision to travel is influenced by various considerations derived from consumer behavior, such as destination preferences, information searches, and perceptions of the travel experience to be obtained. In the context of modern tourism, consumer behavior is not only related to recreational needs, but also related to the evaluation process of various available tourist destinations. The results of this study are in line with Pomantow's (2022) research which found that tourist behavior has an important role in determining the choice of tourist attractions to visit. In addition, research by Asbar et al. (2022) also shows that consumer psychological factors affect travel decision-making, especially when tourists use travel applications on smartphones. These findings reinforce that consumer behavior is an important factor in understanding how travelers make travel decisions.

A closer look at the measured indicators suggests that not all aspects of consumer behavior contribute equally to travel decisions. Information search behavior and destination preferences appear to be the most influential, as tourists tend to gather and compare information about attractions before committing to a trip, while perception of price and value plays a supporting role in confirming the final choice. This pattern is consistent with Pomantow (2022) and Asbar et al. (2022), who emphasized the dominance of preference and psychological factors, but this study extends their findings by showing that, when consumer behavior is treated as an integrated construct, the information-seeking and preference dimensions are the main drivers of decisions in the Malang context. These findings can be explained through established tourism marketing theory. The stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) framework and the consumer decision-making process (need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation) indicate that travel decisions emerge from a sequential process in which information search and the evaluation of alternatives are pivotal stages. Viewed through the marketing-mix and customer-value perspective, the significant relationship found in this study implies that destination managers can influence travel decisions most effectively by improving the quality and accessibility of destination information and by strengthening the perceived value of the experience offered. Thus, the contribution of consumer behavior of 37.4 percent is not only statistically meaningful but also theoretically interpretable as the combined effect of these decision-making stages.

Furthermore, the results of this study also show that the development of digital technology also strengthens the role of consumer behavior in determining tourist trips. Travelers today tend to utilize social media and various digital platforms as the main source of information before deciding to go on a tourist trip. This is in line with research by Naimah and Haryanto (2025) which found that social media has a significant influence on tourist travel decisions because it is the main means of obtaining information on tourist destinations. Research by Natalia et al. (2025) also shows that digital influence through social media is able to shape tourist preferences in determining tourist travel choices, both in the form of open trips and solo trips. In addition, research by Wijana et al. (2025) found that millennial tourists actively use social media to find information about tourist attractions before deciding on the destination to visit. Thus, the results of this study reinforce that consumer behavior in the digital era is increasingly influenced by wide access to information through technology and social media.

The findings of this study can also be explained through a theoretical approach to consumer behavior in tourism which emphasizes that travel decisions are the result of various psychological, social, and economic factors. Research by Nazarudin and Sayd (2023) using the Theory of Planned Behavior approach shows that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions of behavior control can affect a person's intention to visit a tourist destination. In addition, research by Djabbar et al. (2024) shows that consumer behavior at travel agencies is influenced by the level of tourists' need for travel services that suit their preferences. Research by Huda et al. (2024) also shows that consumer preferences for tourist attractions can affect the dynamics of tourist visits and have an impact on the development of the tourism economy in a region. In addition, changes in tourist behavior also occurred after the Covid-19 pandemic, where tourists became more selective in choosing tourist destinations that are safe and provide meaningful experiences, as explained in the research of Kurniasari et al. (2023). The results of this study are also supported by Alamsyah's (2026) research which shows that consumer behavior and tourist preferences have an influence on interest in revisiting tourist destinations, so that consumer behavior is an important factor in determining the sustainability of tourist visits.

Although this study provides an overview of the relationship between consumer behavior and tourist travel, this study still has some limitations. First, this study only uses one independent variable, namely consumer behavior, so it has not been able to comprehensively explain various other factors that can affect tourist travel, such as economic factors, destination promotion, and the quality of tourist facilities. Second, the number of samples in this study is limited to 100 respondents with a research location in Malang City, so the results of this study cannot necessarily be generalized to other regions or tourist destinations. In addition, this study uses a questionnaire-based quantitative approach that relies on respondents' perceptions, so there may be a subjectivity bias in filling in the answers. Therefore, further research is recommended to add other relevant variables and expand the scope of the research area in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior in tourism travel.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that consumer behavior has a significant relationship with tourists' travel decisions in Malang City, with information search behavior and destination preferences emerging as the most influential aspects. Rather than simply confirming that the two variables are related, the findings position consumer behavior as a practical entry point for shaping tourist decisions. Practically, destination managers and tourism stakeholders in Malang can use these results to design more targeted marketing strategies, for example by strengthening the quality and accessibility of destination information across digital and social media channels, curating experiences that match identified tourist preferences, and communicating clear price-value propositions to support tourists during their decision-making process. In terms of limitations, this study employed only a single independent variable, relied on 100 respondents drawn through accidental sampling in one city, and used a perception-based questionnaire that may carry subjectivity bias, so the findings cannot be fully generalized to other destinations. Accordingly, future research is encouraged to incorporate additional variables such as economic conditions, destination promotion, service quality, and tourist facilities, to adopt probability-based sampling where feasible, and to broaden the study area or use comparative and longitudinal designs in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence tourists' travel decisions.

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