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The Influence of Tourism Experience on the Competitiveness of Tourist Destinations

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ABSTRACT
Malioboro, a tourism icon of Yogyakarta, faces challenges in maintaining competitiveness amid increasing competition among urban destinations in Indonesia. Tourist experience is considered an important factor influencing destination competitiveness; however, empirical evidence regarding this relationship in Malioboro remains limited. This study aims to analyze the influence of tourism experience on the competitiveness of Malioboro as a tourist destination. A quantitative approach with a cross-sectional descriptive-correlational design was employed. The study involved 150 tourists who had visited Malioboro at least once, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale distributed directly at the study site. Data analysis included univariate statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression, preceded by normality and linearity tests. The results indicated that tourism experience had a mean score of 4.12, while destination competitiveness scored 3.98, both categorized as high. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a positive and significant relationship between tourism experience and destination competitiveness ($r = 0.612$; $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, tourism experience explained 37.5% of the variation in destination competitiveness ($R^2 = 0.375$; $p < 0.001$). These findings demonstrate that tourism experience significantly influences Malioboro's destination competitiveness. Therefore, destination managers should enhance interaction quality, pedestrian comfort, cleanliness, and local cultural attractions to improve tourist experiences and strengthen destination competitiveness.

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INTRODUCTION

Competition among countries in the tourism sector is increasingly competitive as more and more countries are trying to strengthen their tourism positions through various globally measurable indicators. The Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI) report shows that Indonesia's Tourism Competitiveness Ranking has increased from position 32 to position 22 out of 119 countries in 2024, while placing Indonesia in the second best position in the ASEAN region. The increase reflects the collaborative work of various tourism stakeholders in strengthening assessment pillars, ranging from supporting policies to destination sustainability. This achievement confirms that tourism competitiveness is not just an issue of the number of visits, but the result of strengthening the quality of destinations as a whole, including at the level of individual tourist areas (WEF, 2024).

Despite a significant increase in ratings, these achievements have not been followed by an even distribution of the quality of tourism services throughout the region. The study of national tourism policy shows that the development of tourism destinations in Indonesia still faces structural problems in the regional dimension, governance complexity, limited capacity, and weak synergy among stakeholders. Regulatory weaknesses in the form of overlap and miscoordination between institutions and between regional governments are also obstacles in efforts to realize competitive destination governance. This condition shows that optimizing the competitiveness of tourist destinations needs to be driven more specifically at the regional level through more targeted destination governance instruments, not only depending on the achievement of the national index (Nasution, 2021).

Efforts to strengthen National Tourism Competitiveness have actually been directed for a long time through the National Tourism Development Master Plan (RIPPARNAS) policy, which sets out the vision of realizing Indonesia as a world-class, competitive, and sustainable tourism destination through four main pillars, namely destination development, industry, marketing, and tourism institutions. The policy affirms that professional destination planning and management will determine three main things, namely the attractiveness of the destination in the tourist market, ecological-economic-socio-cultural benefits for the community, and the competitiveness of the destination among other international tourism destinations. The study also confirms that without professional and sustainable destination management, it is difficult to expect tourist destinations to be able to have high competitiveness in the long term. Thus, each tourist destination—including regional ones—is required to continuously evaluate the factors that shape its competitiveness in a sustainable way (Picauly, 2022).

Among the various destinations in DIY, Malioboro area is the area with the most dominant contribution to the city of Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta city Tourism Statistics data notes that out of a total of more than ten million tourist visits in 2024, almost half, which is around 4.7 million visits, occur in the Malioboro area. The dominance of the visit confirms that Malioboro is not just a complementary destination, but the main driver of Tourism in Yogyakarta as a whole. The large

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volume of visits makes Malioboro an important barometer for the success of Tourism Management at both the city and provincial levels.

The high volume of visits is in line with the results of studies that show that the revitalization of the Malioboro area has succeeded in significantly restoring the number of tourists. The number of tourist visits to the city of Yogyakarta after the revitalization of Malioboro in 2022 was recorded to increase up to four times compared to the previous year, while generating a large multiplier effect for local communities, either directly, indirectly, or induced. The arrangement of space for artists and the provision of a Merchant Center on the terrace of Malioboro helped improve the regularity of trading activities in the area. However, a high surge in visits without being balanced by adequate management capacity still has the potential to cause pressure on the quality of the tourist experience during a visit (Fajar, Pramono, & Hadianti, 2024).

However, efforts to organize the Malioboro area to support World Heritage status cannot be separated from various policy issues that cause conflicts of interest. The government of the Special Region of Yogyakarta issued a special pedestrian zone arrangement policy along Malioboro Street and Margo Mulyo Street which requires the relocation of street vendors to the Malioboro Terrace since early 2022. A study of the implementation of the policy found that the relocation process led to prolonged conflicts between the government and traders, although the conflict transformation approach involving personal, relational, structural, and cultural changes was considered to be a solution to mutually beneficial relationships. This kind of policy dynamics shows that the process of arranging world-class tourist destinations does not always run smoothly and has the potential to affect tourist comfort during the policy transition period (Septian, 2022).

The impact of the relocation policy has also become the object of academic study that highlights aspects of public policy formulation and implementation. A study that examined the process of policy formulation of relocation of street vendors in Malioboro found that the policy is a relatively new policy phenomenon so that the process of participation of traders in decision-making has not been running optimally. The unpreparedness of some traders in adapting to relocation patterns is also an important note in evaluating the policy. This finding shows that the physical arrangement of tourist areas needs to be aligned with the fairness aspect of the policy process so as not to cause resistance that can affect the image of the destination in the eyes of tourists (Ifada & Ahdiyana, 2022).

The revitalization of the Malioboro area does not only concern the relocation of street vendors, but also brings broader changes to the surrounding residential areas, such as Sosromenduran Village. The study of the area found that the construction of new green open spaces and reforestation programs also affect people's economic and social activities, including an increase in informal employment in the tourism sector, although limited vacant land for new green spaces remains a challenge (Cahyana, 2025). This series of physical and social changes shape the experience that tourists feel when visiting Malioboro.

Tourism experience (tourism experience) is a crucial element for the success of the destination. Experiences are formed from tourist interactions with tourist attractions, facilities,

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services, and destination environments, and affect satisfaction, loyalty, and destination image (Ramdan, Saori, & Jhoansyah, 2025). Within the framework of the experience economy, experience is seen as the main value that destinations offer and can be seen from dimensions such as education, entertainment, aesthetics, and escape from routine (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). A quality tourist experience is the basis for the competitiveness of the destination.

Destination competitiveness is understood as the ability of a destination to attract and satisfy tourists on an ongoing basis compared to other destinations, which is determined by the resources, management, and supporting conditions of the destination (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Dwyer & Kim, 2003). On the demand side, this ability is manifested through the perception of tourists on what they experience. Strengthening experiences, including those based on digital technology, can improve the quality of visits and strengthen the competitiveness of destinations because it shapes tourists ' perceptions of the competitive advantages of a destination before, during, and after a visit (Ernawati & Hananto, 2023). Thus, the tourist experience can be positioned as an antecedent to the competitiveness of the destination: the more positive the experience perceived by the tourist, the stronger the perception of the superiority of the destination.

Although this conceptual relationship is quite clear, empirical studies still leave three gaps. First, the empirical gap: studies that place the competitiveness of destinations as a dependent variable of the tourist experience are still relatively limited, since most quantitative studies stop at satisfaction, loyalty, or interest in revisiting (Gunawan, Ramdan, & Saori, 2026). Second, the contextual gap: quantitative studies in Malioboro still focus on the relationship between Destination attributes and satisfaction. One of them, with 145 respondents, found that attractions, accessibility, and facilities had a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction, with attractions as the most dominant variable (Afandi, Wibowo, Candraningrat, & Supriyanto, 2023). The study has not examined the tourist experience comprehensively or its relation to the competitiveness of destinations. Third, the theoretical gap: destination competitiveness models generally emphasize the supply side (resources and management), while the role of the tourist experience as a demand side that shapes competitiveness has not been widely tested empirically. This gap is felt to be important in Malioboro, which has a unique character in the form of a combination of cultural values, commercial activities and high visitor pressure.

Based on this, this study aims to analyze the influence of tourism experience on the competitiveness of tourist destinations in the Malioboro region with a quantitative approach, with the hypothesis that tourism experience has a positive and significant effect on the competitiveness of destinations. The urgency of this research is supported by the strategic position of Malioboro as a national priority destination and part of the axis of Yogyakarta philosophy which is designated as World Heritage. Academically, the study extends the study of the tourist experience from satisfaction and loyalty to the competitiveness of destinations and examines the demand-side relationship in the context of cultural-commercial destinations. In practical terms, the findings can be the basis for area managers in formulating strategies to improve the competitiveness of Malioboro.

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METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with descriptive-correlational (cross-sectional) design in the tourist area of Malioboro, Yogyakarta. Data was collected once on each respondent during the period in February 2026. The sample was determined by purposive sampling technique with inclusion criteria: tourists aged at least 17 years, have visited Malioboro at least once, and are willing to fill out the questionnaire voluntarily. Traders or permanent workers in the area are excluded because the experience is occupational, not as visitors. The sample size was set at 150 respondents, which met the minimum limit according to the Lemeshow formula with d = 10%.

The Data was collected by a structured questionnaire consisting of three parts: characteristics of respondents, tourism experience variables (sensory dimension, affective dimension, intellectual dimension, behavioral dimension) and destination competitiveness variables (attractiveness dimension, price dimension, infrastructure dimension, destination image dimension). Each item is rated on a Likert scale of 1-5 (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Instrument trials were conducted on 20 out-of-sample travelers in January 2026 to conduct validity and reliability tests. Validity was tested with item-total correlation (Pearson), and reliability was tested with Cronbach's Alpha (reliable if it is 0.70). Data analysis includes univariate analysis (frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation), classical assumption test, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression at α = 0.05. All respondents were explained about the purpose of the study and gave informed consent before filling out the questionnaire, with guarantees of data confidentiality and the right to refuse or resign without consequences.

RESULTS

1. Frequency Distribution Characteristics of Research Respondents

The characteristics of the respondents in this study are presented to provide an overview of the demographic of tourists who became a sample of research in the tourist area of Malioboro. Data on respondents characteristics include gender, age, tourist origin, education level, and frequency of visits, as presented in table 1 below.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution Characteristics of Research Respondents (n = 150)

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Men	62	41,3
	Girls	88	58,7
Age	17-25 years old	58	38,7
	26-35 years old	47	31,3
	36-45 years old	28	18,7
	> 45 years old	17	11,3
Origin Of Tourists	Domestic (outside DIY)	96	64,0
	Local (DIY)	39	26,0

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Characteristics	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
	Overseas	15	10,0
Last Education	High school/equivalent	54	36,0
	Diploma / Bachelor	79	52,7
	Post graduate	17	11,3
Frequency Of Visit	1 time	71	47,3
	2-3 times	53	35,3
	> 3 times	26	17,4

Based on table 1, the majority of respondents are female (58.7%) with the dominant age group of 17-25 years (38.7%), indicating that young tourists dominate visits to Malioboro. Most of the respondents are domestic tourists from outside DIY (64.0%) with Diploma/Bachelor education background (52.7%). In terms of frequency of visits, almost half of the respondents (47.3%) are first time visitors, while the rest are tourists who have visited repeatedly, which indicates the potential for good destination loyalty in this region.

2. Variable Score Distribution of Tourism Experience and Competitiveness of Tourist Destinations

Univariate analysis was conducted to describe the distribution of variable scores of tourism experience and competitiveness of tourist destinations based on the average (mean), standard deviation, and categorization of respondents ' assessment levels. The results of the univariate analysis are presented in the following table 2.

Table 2. Score Distribution of Research Variables (n = 150)

Variable	Mean	SD	Skor Min–Maks	Categories
Tourism Experience	4,12	0,48	2,40–5,00	Height
- Sensory Dimension	4,21	0,52	2,50–5,00	Height
- Affective Dimension	4,05	0,55	2,25–5,00	Height
- Intellectual Dimension	3,89	0,61	2,00–5,00	Height
- Behavioral Dimension	4,15	0,49	2,50–5,00	Height
Destination Competitiveness	3,98	0,53	2,20–5,00	Height
- Dimension Of Attraction	4,18	0,50	2,40–5,00	Height
- Price Dimension	3,72	0,64	2,00–5,00	Height
- Infrastructure Dimensions	3,85	0,58	2,20–5,00	Height
- Destination Image Dimensions	4,17	0,51	2,40–5,00	Height

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Table 2 shows that overall respondents rated the tourism experience they felt in Malioboro to be in the high category (mean = 4.12), with the sensory dimension obtaining the highest score (mean = 4.21), which indicates that the visual appeal, atmosphere, and atmosphere of the area are the most prominent aspects of the experience felt by tourists. The competitiveness variable of the destination is also in the high category (mean = 3.98), which indicates that the price aspect of products and services in the Malioboro area is still perceived less competitive than other dimensions such as attractiveness and image of the destination.

3. The Relationship and Influence Between Tourism Experience and the Competitiveness of Tourist Destinations

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Test Results and Simple Linear Regression

Test Statistics	Value	Description
Pearson correlation coefficient (r)	0,612	Positive correlation, medium–strong strength
Significance (p-value)	0,000	Significant ($p < 0.05$)
Coefficient Of Determination (R2)	0,375	Influence contribution 37.5%
Regression Coefficient (B)	0,589	Positive influence
Constant (a)	1,562	-
Calculated t value	9,428	t table (df=148) = 1,976
The significance of the t-test	0,000	Significant ($p < 0.05$)
Regression Equation	$\hat{Y} = 1,562 + 0,589X$	-

Pearson correlation test results in Table 3 shows the value of r = 0.612 with p = 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), which means there is a positive and significant relationship between tourism experience and the competitiveness of tourist destinations, with the strength of the relationship is in the category of being towards strong. Simple linear regression test results show the value of t count (9.428) is greater than T table (1.976) with a significance of 0.000, so that the rejected and H_1 H_1 accepted, which means the tourism experience a positive and significant effect on the competitiveness of tourist destinations. The value of the regression coefficient (B = 0.589) indicates that every increase in one unit of tourism experience score will increase the competitiveness score of the destination by 0.589 units. The value of the coefficient of determination (R2 = 0.375) indicates that the tourism experience variable is able to explain 37.5% of the variation in the competitiveness of Malioboro tourist destinations, while the remaining 62.5% is influenced by other factors outside this research model, such as accessibility, area management policies, and other external factors that are not studied.

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DISCUSSION

1. Variable Score Distribution of Tourism Experience and Competitiveness of Tourist Destinations

The results of the univariate analysis as presented in Table 2 show an overview of the perception of tourists on the tourism experience and the competitiveness of destinations in the tourist area of Malioboro. Overall, the two main variables of the study were in the high category, with the tourism experience variable obtaining a slightly higher average score than the destination competitiveness variable. This pattern indicates that tourists generally experience a positive experience during their visit, although the assessment of the competitiveness of destinations is not yet fully equivalent in all dimensions. This condition is an important basis for further examining the contribution of each dimension to the overall achievement of variable scores in the following paragraphs.

Tourism experience variables obtained an average value of 4.12 which is included in the high category, indicating that in general tourists rate their visit to Malioboro as a memorable and satisfying experience. This finding is in line with the concept of tourism experience based on experiential marketing approach which emphasizes that the experience of visiting is not only assessed from functional aspects, but also from emotional and sensory impressions created during the process of tourist interaction with the destination. The high score also indicates that the physical and non-physical elements of the Malioboro area, such as street atmosphere, social interaction, and cultural uniqueness, are able to create experiences that are perceived positively by most respondents. Researchers assume that the high tourism experience score in this study was also influenced by the existence of Malioboro's status as part of the axis of Yogyakarta philosophy that provides symbolic added value for tourists when visiting (Siregar et al., 2025).

The sensory dimension obtained the highest average score among all dimensions of the tourism experience, which was 4.21, which indicates that the visual aspect, atmosphere and atmosphere of the area are the most dominant elements perceived by tourists. These results reinforce previous findings that the sense dimension in the framework of experiential marketing plays a significant role in shaping loyalty and visitor satisfaction through sensory stimuli such as sights, sounds, and crowds that are typical of a destination. The high score on this dimension is relevant to the characteristics of Malioboro which is synonymous with a lively street atmosphere, rows of historic buildings, and street art activities that are the main visual attractions of the area. Researchers assume that the dominance of this sensory dimension occurs because the majority of respondents are young tourists who tend to be more responsive to visual stimuli and the atmosphere that can be immortalized in the form of digital documentation (Fahmi, Gultom, Siregar, & Daulay, 2022).

The affective dimension obtained an average score of 4.05 which is also included in the high category, indicating that tourists feel a strong emotional involvement during a visit to Malioboro. Previous research has shown that the feel dimension of the tourist experience plays an important role in shaping the memorable tourist experience, where the emotional impression

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created during the visit also affects the interest of tourists to visit again in the future. A fairly high score on this dimension indicates that the atmosphere of togetherness, warmth of interaction with traders and fellow tourists, as well as nostalgic nuances inherent in Malioboro also form tourists' emotional attachment to the area. Researchers assume that this emotional attachment is also influenced by the image of Malioboro that has long been inherent in Indonesian popular culture, so many tourists come with certain emotional expectations before actually visiting this area (Lestari, Herawati, & Arisandi, 2021).

Unlike the other dimensions, the intellectual dimension obtained the lowest average score among all tourism experience dimensions, which was 3.89, although it remained in the high category. This relatively lower score indicates that educational and informative aspects, such as conveying the historical and philosophical values of the Malioboro area to tourists, are not fully optimal compared to sensory and affective dimensions. A study of experiential marketing strategies in Generation Z travel destinations shows that the think dimension is often the most challenging dimension to optimize because it requires the delivery of in-depth narratives and interpretations, not just visual displays. This condition is relevant to the findings of the study that many tourists who visit Malioboro are more oriented towards shopping and taking pictures than digging into the historical information of the area in depth. Researchers assume that the lack of interpretive information boards and tourist guides along the Malioboro area is one of the causes of the low score on this intellectual dimension compared to other dimensions (Mulyani & Nurhidayat, 2022).

The behavioral dimension obtained an average score of 4.15 which was in the high category, indicating that tourists tend to show active involvement during their visit, such as walking through the area, interacting with traders, or participating in cultural activities that take place along Malioboro. Previous research on natural tourist destinations in Indonesia has found that the act dimension of experiential marketing has a significant effect on tourist loyalty, because direct active involvement creates a deeper impression than passive experiences. The high score on this dimension confirms that Malioboro as a pedestrian area provides ample space for tourists to physically engage in various tourist activities. Researchers assume that the post-revitalization arrangement of pedestrian areas also contributes to the high score of this behavior dimension, because the space for tourists to move is more free than before the arrangement was carried out (Sari & Najmudin, 2021).

Overall, the pattern of scores on all four dimensions of tourism experience showed a consistent hierarchy, where sensory and behavioral dimensions occupied the highest positions, followed by affective dimensions, and intellectual dimensions at the lowest positions. This pattern confirms that the tourism experience in Malioboro is shaped more by physical stimulation and active engagement than by deeper cognitive or educational processes. This interdimensional score gap is important to be a concern for destination managers, considering that a holistic tourism experience should ideally include a balance between sensory, emotional, intellectual, and behavioral aspects in order to create a truly comprehensive and memorable impression.

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Researchers assume that optimizing the intellectual dimension through strengthening cultural and historical narratives can be a strategic opportunity to improve the overall quality of tourism experiences in the future (Sinaga, Situmorang, & Sembiring, 2024).

Turning to the destination competitiveness variable, the results of the analysis showed an average score of 3.98 which was included in the high category, although slightly lower than the tourism experience variable score. This finding confirms that in general, Malioboro is perceived by tourists as a destination that is quite competitive compared to other destinations, both in terms of attractiveness and quality of services offered. The concept of destination competitiveness in the digital age emphasizes that the strength of a destination is not only determined by its natural or cultural resources, but also by how the experience is packaged and delivered to tourists through various channels, including digital media. A fairly high score on this variable indicates that Malioboro is still able to maintain its position as a leading destination in the midst of competition among other urban tourism destinations in Indonesia. Researchers assume that the UNESCO World Heritage status that this area bears helps strengthen the perception of the competitiveness of destinations in the eyes of tourists, although this influence was not measured directly in this study (Ernawati & Hananto, 2023).

The attractiveness dimension obtained the highest average score among all dimensions of destination competitiveness, which was 4.18, which shows that the uniqueness and diversity of attractions in Malioboro is the most dominant factor in shaping the perception of overall destination competitiveness. This finding is consistent with previous research on the Malioboro area which found that among destination attributes such as accessibility and amenities, attractions are the most dominant variables affecting tourist satisfaction and assessment of a destination. The high score on this dimension is relevant to the characteristics of Malioboro which offers a combination of shopping, culinary, cultural, and street entertainment in one easy-to-reach area. Researchers assume that this diversity of activities is the main competitive advantage of Malioboro over other urban destinations that tend to be more monotonous in terms of the types of attractions offered (Mono, Ratnaningtyas, & Maudiarti, 2025).

In contrast to the attractiveness dimension, the price dimension actually obtained the lowest average score among all research dimensions, which was 3.72, and was in the medium category. The low score on this dimension indicates that tourists perceive the price of products and services in the Malioboro area to be less competitive than other aspects such as the attractiveness and image of the destination. Within the framework of the theory of destination competitiveness, price is one of the important determinants that influence the decisions of tourists in choosing and valuing a destination, since a price perceived as too high can decrease the competitive advantage of the destination despite its strong attractiveness. This condition is relevant to a phenomenon often encountered in popular tourist areas, where high tourist demand actually encourages pricing practices that are not always consistent or transparent among traders. Researchers assume that the low score on this price dimension is related to the not yet optimal standardization of prices among

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Malioboro traders after relocation, causing a perception of price uncertainty in the minds of some tourists (Dwyer & Kim, 2023; Ifada & Ahdiyana, 2022).

The infrastructure dimension obtained an average score of 3.85 which was in the high category, but remained the dimension with the second lowest score after the price dimension. This score indicates that although in general tourists assess the supporting infrastructure in Malioboro is adequate, there is still room for improvement in certain aspects such as parking capacity, public toilets, and other supporting facilities. The study of the competitiveness of heritage destinations confirms that infrastructure and accessibility is one of the determining dimensions of competitiveness which is often a weak point in historical tourist destinations, especially due to limited space for new infrastructure development without disturbing the historical value of the area. This condition is relevant to the capacity problems that have been identified previously, where the high volume of daily visits to Malioboro has not been fully offset by adequate infrastructure capacity. Researchers assume that limited land in cultural heritage areas is one of the structural constraints that make infrastructure development in Malioboro cannot be carried out freely as in other modern tourist destinations (Cronje & du Plessis, 2020).

The destination image dimension obtained an average score of 4.17 which was in the high category and became the second highest dimension after the dimension of attraction. The high score on this dimension shows that Malioboro has managed to build a strong positive image in the minds of tourists, whether through historical heritage, popularity of popular culture, or recognition as part of UNESCO World Heritage. Previous research on destination imagery has found that positive perceptions of a destination consistently contribute to increased traveler satisfaction and loyalty, as strong imagery shapes initial expectations that influence overall visit evaluation. The high score of destination image in this study is also in line with the high score of affective dimension in tourism experience variable, which indicates the relationship between the image formed before the visit with the emotional experience felt during the visit. Researchers assume that the positive image of Malioboro that has been built for a long time through various media also provides a halo effect that affects tourists' assessment of other dimensions in this study (Gustia & Putra, 2021).

In general, the pattern of scores on the dimensions of destination competitiveness shows that the advantages of Malioboro are more supported by the attractiveness and image of the destination, while the price and infrastructure aspects are still weak points that need further attention from the area manager. This score gap is consistent with the theoretical framework of destination competitiveness which emphasizes that the competitive advantage of a destination is multidimensional, so that weaknesses in one dimension can erode the overall perception of competitiveness even though other dimensions are superior. These findings suggest that the strategy to improve the competitiveness of Malioboro destinations in the future needs to be focused on improving price governance and strengthening infrastructure, without neglecting efforts to maintain excellence in the dimensions of attractiveness and image that have been well built. Researchers assume that if the gap in the dimensions of price and infrastructure is not

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overcome immediately, this has the potential to erode Malioboro's competitiveness in the long term amid increasingly intense competition between urban tourism destinations based on cultural heritage (Rahman, 2026; Mertha & Dianasari, 2025).

When associated with the characteristics of respondents that have been described previously, the pattern of high scores on tourism experience variables and the competitiveness of these destinations is also influenced by the dominance of young respondents and first-time tourists. Young travelers generally have different expectations and ways of assessing travel experiences than other age groups, especially in terms of orientation towards visual experiences and sharing moments on social media rather than searching for in-depth information about destinations. This condition also explains why the sensory dimension obtained the highest score while the intellectual dimension obtained the lowest score on the variable tourism experience in this study. Researchers assume that this finding opens up opportunities for area managers to design communication and education strategies that are more relevant to the preferences of young tourists, without excluding the needs of other tourist segments who may have a different orientation in assessing the visiting experience (Muis, Gultom, & Azhar, 2020).

Overall, the results of the univariate analysis in this study provide a fairly comprehensive picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the Malioboro tourist area from the point of view of tourism experience and destination competitiveness. The high scores on most dimensions indicate that Malioboro in general is still able to maintain its position as a leading destination, but the score gap on certain dimensions such as price and intellectual property is an important note that cannot be ignored. This finding confirms that the success of a tourist destination is not only supported by strong attraction and image, but also requires a balance in all dimensions of experience and overall competitiveness. Thus, the results of this univariate analysis become an important foundation for understanding the results of the bivariate analysis in the next section, which will further examine the extent to which the overall tourism experience affects the competitiveness of Malioboro destinations.

2. Relationship and Influence Between Tourism Experience and Competitiveness of Tourist Destinations

The results of the bivariate analysis shown in Table 3 show that there is a relationship as well as a positive and significant influence between tourism experience and the competitiveness of tourist destinations in the Malioboro area. This is shown through the Pearson correlation coefficient value of 0.612 with a significance level of 0.000, the value of the coefficient of determination (R2) of 0.375, and the regression equation $\hat{Y} = 1.562 + 0.589\ X$. These results become the empirical basis in answering the research hypothesis. In other words, the more positive experiences tourists have during their visit, the higher their assessment of Malioboro's competitiveness compared to other tourist destinations. Therefore, the next discussion focuses on the interpretation of each of these statistical indicators by linking them to the theoretical basis and the results of relevant previous research.

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Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.612 indicates that tourism experience has a positive relationship with the competitiveness of destinations at a moderate to strong level. The positive relationship indicates a tendency that the increase in tourism experience perceived by tourists will be followed by an increase in perception of the competitiveness of Malioboro, and vice versa. These findings are in line with various studies that show that tourist experiences during travel, including experiences when interacting with local culture, can form a more positive image of destinations. This image can further strengthen the destination's competitive position while encouraging tourist loyalty. However, the level of correlation in the medium-strong category shows that tourism experience is not the only factor that determines the competitiveness of destinations. However, its contribution remains important enough that it needs to be part of the region's management strategy. Thus, the quality of the tourist experience can be viewed as one of the strategic assets in building a destination's competitive advantage (Li, Liu, & Soutar, 2021).

Based on the results of significance testing, a p value of 0.000 was obtained, which was smaller than the significance level of 0.05. The results show that the relationship between tourism experience and destination competitiveness is statistically significant, so the possibility that the relationship obtained occurs solely by chance can be minimized. Thus, the pattern of positive relationships found in the study sample has a strong enough basis to describe the condition of the tourist population in Malioboro. The findings are in line with previous research showing that tourist experiences can positively shape the image of a destination and further contribute to loyalty and perceptions of a destination's excellence. The consistency of these results across multiple destination contexts further supports the theoretical view that the travel experience is one of the aspects that play a role in the competitive success of a destination. The high level of significance in this study is also thought to be related to the characteristics of respondents who are mostly young tourists with relatively similar tourist experience preferences (Mulyani & Nurhidayat, 2022).

Simple linear regression analysis yields the equation $\hat{Y} = 1.562 + 0.589\ X$. The equation shows the positive influence of tourism experiences on the competitiveness of destinations. The constant value of 1.562 indicates that when the tourism experience variable is considered not to contribute, the competitiveness of the destination still has a certain basic value. This value can be related to the existence of other factors that have been attached to Malioboro, such as historical reputation, cultural characteristics, and its position as an area that has important value for tourism in Yogyakarta. The regression equation obtained also shows a pattern that is in line with previous research in the Malioboro area which found that destination attributes, such as attractions, accessibility, and amenities, make a positive contribution to tourist satisfaction. The similarity of the direction of these influences on research with the same object provides additional support for the consistency of the relationship between destination quality and tourist outcomes. Thus, the constant value obtained can be assumed to reflect the basic advantages that Malioboro already has as an iconic destination and part of the axis of Yogyakarta philosophy, although the experience felt by each tourist can be different (Fitrianna, 2022; Fajar, Pramono, & Hadianti, 2024).

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The regression coefficient of 0.589 indicates that each one-unit increase in the tourism experience score is expected to increase the destination's competitiveness score by 0.589 units, assuming other factors are in a fixed condition. The value shows the contribution of tourism experience to changes in the perception of destination competitiveness. In the context of social research, the coefficient can be categorized as significant because it shows that changes in the quality of the tourist experience have the potential to provide measurable changes in the perception of the destination's competitive position. Various studies on the image of destinations also show that the direct experience gained by tourists is one of the important factors in shaping the perception of a tourist spot, including perceptions of excellence and the desire to return to visit. Therefore, improving the quality of the tourist experience can be one form of intervention that has the potential to strengthen Malioboro's position among destinations that have similar characteristics. The magnitude of this coefficient may also indicate that tourists are quite responsive to the quality of service and interaction they experience directly while in the Malioboro area (Sari & Najmudin, 2021).

The results of the t test showed a calculated t value of 9.428, while the table t value at degrees of freedom (df) 148 was 1.976. Since the calculated t value is greater than the t table value, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. The results provide statistical evidence that tourism experience significantly affects the competitiveness of tourist destinations in Malioboro. Thus, the relationship found not only shows the relationship between variables, but also shows a statistically significant influence. These results are in line with a number of studies on the image of destinations that show that factors that form a positive perception of tourists can have a significant influence on various destination outcomes, such as loyalty and intention to visit again. The large difference between t count and t table shows the strong statistical evidence on the influence of tourism experience in the research model. These conditions can be a consideration for destination managers in determining regional development policies. The high value of t count can also be assumed to be related to the variety of experiences felt by respondents, which in this research model still shows a strong pattern of influence on the competitiveness of destinations (Cronje & du Plessis, 2020; Mertha & Dianasari, 2025).

Theoretically, the results of this study support the view that the competitiveness of destinations in the modern era of tourism is determined not only by the presence of physical resources, but also by the quality of the experience gained by tourists as a whole. The positive and significant influence found shows that tourism experience can be placed as one of the intangible resources that have the potential to form a destination's competitive advantage. The findings are in line with the changing orientation in tourism development that is increasingly shifting from a product-based approach to an experience-based approach. Destinations that are able to provide memorable, authentic, and relevant experiences for travelers have the opportunity to build advantages that are relatively more difficult to imitate by competitors when compared to advantages that only rely on physical aspects. This is becoming increasingly important as there are more culture-based urban destinations in Indonesia, so differentiation through tourist experiences

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can be one of the main strategies to maintain the competitiveness of destinations (Ernawati & Hananto, 2023).

The coefficient of determination (R2) of 0.375 indicates that the tourism experience is able to explain 37.5% variation in the competitiveness of Malioboro destinations. The percentage shows that tourism experiences have a significant contribution in explaining changes in the competitiveness of destinations. However, at the same time, there is still a 62.5% variation in competitiveness derived from other factors outside the research model. The findings show that destination competitiveness is a complex and multidimensional construct that cannot be explained through only one predictor variable. This condition is also in line with previous studies which showed that research on tourism experiences more connects it with tourist satisfaction and loyalty, while studies on its contribution to the competitiveness of destinations directly is still relatively limited. Thus, the results of this study indicate that although the tourism experience has an important role, there are still various other factors that need to be considered in understanding the competitiveness of Malioboro as a whole.

The magnitude of the variation that the model has not been able to explain, which is 62.5%, becomes even more relevant when it is associated with the results of previous univariate analyzes. In the analysis, the price and infrastructure dimensions of the destination competitiveness variable obtained a relatively lower assessment compared to the attractiveness and image dimensions of the destination. In the perspective of destination competitiveness, price and infrastructure are relatively structural factors that do not depend directly on the subjective experience of tourists. Both aspects are more influenced by management policies, area planning, as well as the condition of facilities and spatial planning. Therefore, even significant tourism experiences cannot explain the entire variety of competitiveness of destinations. There are other structural factors that have their own mechanisms of influence on competitiveness. These findings indicate the need for a comprehensive development strategy that not only improves the quality of the tourist experience, but also improves the price and infrastructure aspects. If these variables are added to the next research model, there is a possibility that the ability of the model in explaining the variation of competitiveness

From a practical perspective, the positive and significant influence of tourism experience on the competitiveness of destinations has important implications for the management of the Malioboro tourist area. Destination management strategies should not only be directed at adding physical attractions or facilities, but also at creating quality and memorable tourist experiences. Sensory and behavioral dimensions that have shown relatively high achievement need to be maintained and developed, while intellectual dimensions that are still relatively low need to be strengthened through the provision of more creative and interactive interpretations of history and culture. An experiential approach that includes sensory, emotional, cognitive and behavioral aspects in a balanced way can help create a more sustainable destination advantage. This is important for Malioboro as an area that has historical and cultural value, because the development of tourist experiences needs to go hand in hand with efforts to maintain the character and cultural

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values of the area. Thus, improving the tourist experience will be more optimal if done in an integrated manner with revamping prices, infrastructure, and other structural aspects. The integrated approach is expected to have a greater impact on improving Malioboro's competitiveness than interventions that focus on only one aspect (Ananta, D, 2025).

Overall, the results of the bivariate analysis provide empirical evidence that tourism experience is one of the important factors that contribute to the competitiveness of tourist destinations in the Malioboro area. Correlation value of 0.612, coefficient of determination of 0.375, and significant t-test results showed that the better the tourist experience, the more positive their perception of Malioboro competitiveness. However, the ability of tourism experience to explain the 37.5% variation in competitiveness also shows that there are still 62.5% variations that are influenced by other factors outside the model. Therefore, increasing the competitiveness of Malioboro cannot only rely on improving the tourist experience, but requires a more comprehensive strategy by paying attention to structural aspects such as price, infrastructure, accessibility, and regional governance. These results are an important basis for the preparation of conclusions and research implications, especially in formulating strategies that can help the management of the Malioboro tourist area maintain and increase its competitiveness in the midst of increasingly competitive competition among urban tourist destinations.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that tourism experience is positively and significantly associated with the competitiveness of Malioboro as a destination. The results of univariate analysis showed that the average tourism experience score of 4.12 was in the high category, while the average destination competitiveness score of 3.98 was also in the high category. Furthermore, the results of bivariate analysis showed a positive and significant relationship between tourism experience and destination competitiveness, with a correlation value of 0.612 ($p < 0.001$). The results of simple linear regression analysis, used here to describe the strength and direction of this association, showed that tourism experience accounted for 37.5% of the variation in perceived destination competitiveness ($R^2 = 0.375$; $\beta = 0.589$; $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that tourists who report more positive experiences tend to also perceive Malioboro as more competitive. However, because this study employed a correlational design, the findings show a statistical association and do not establish that tourism experience causes differences in destination competitiveness. The association may also run in the opposite direction or be influenced by other variables not measured in this study. Based on these findings, area managers may consider paying attention to the quality of tourist experience, including service interaction, comfort and cleanliness of pedestrian areas, ease of access, and attractions and activities that represent local culture, as aspects that are associated with more favorable perceptions of Malioboro's attractiveness, image, and competitive position as a culture-based urban tourist destination. The effectiveness of such efforts should be verified through further research.

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Nevertheless, this study has some limitations that need to be considered in interpreting the results. The correlational design means that the study cannot determine causal direction or rule out confounding variables. The research focuses on the relationship between tourism experience and destination competitiveness in the context of the Malioboro region, so the generalization of findings to other destinations needs to be done carefully because the characteristics of destinations, tourists, and tourism environments can be different. In addition, the study used data obtained in a single observation period (cross-sectional), so it has not fully described the changes in tourist experience and destination competitiveness over time. Both variables were also measured from the same respondents' perceptions, which may inflate the observed association. The R^2 value of 0.375 also shows that 62.5% of the variation in perceived destination competitiveness is associated with other factors outside the research model. Further research is recommended to include other variables, such as service quality, destination image, accessibility, tourism innovation, sustainability, local community involvement, and tourist satisfaction, and to use longitudinal, experimental, or multi-destination comparative approaches in order to examine possible causal pathways and obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors associated with destination competitiveness.

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