QUALITY, SATISFACTION, AND LOYALTY: A POWERFUL TRIGGER FOR RURAL TOURISTS REVISIT INTENTION

Aceng Gima Sugiama

Commerce Departement, Politeknik Negeri Bandung, Bandung, Indonesia
Email: *gima.sugiama@polban.ac.id*

ABSTRACT

Although numerous research has been conducted on the quality of rural tourism services, there remains a need to explore the service quality causal relationship with behavioural intentions. The aims of this study investigate how service quality affects satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioural intentions. Employing a quantitative approach, data from 278 respondents were analyzed using SEM-PLS to test the proposed causal model. The findings reveal that tourists perceive higher-quality rural tourism services as leading to increased satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioural intentions toward the respective destinations. Furthermore, heightened satisfaction and loyalty contribute positively to tourists' behavioural intentions at the visited rural tourism sites. These results emphasize the importance for rural tourism managers to provide satisfactory service, foster loyalty, and can be a trigger to generate positive behavioral intentions among tourists towards the destinations visited.

Keywords: service quality, behavioural intention, loyalty, rural tourism, satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Although there have been numerous studies on the quality of rural tourism (RT) services from various perspectives (Nair et al., 2015; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021; Yachin & Ioannides, 2020), research investigating the influence of service quality on satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioural intention based on tourist assessments remains scarce. However, this causality is crucial, particularly for the sustainability of managing the respective RT (Rajaratnam et al., 2014). Furthermore, research findings on RT are crucial as policy alternatives to enhance the economic welfare of rural communities, mitigate urbanization, stimulate entrepreneurship, and conserve the natural and cultural heritage of local communities (An & Alarcón, 2020; Yachin & Ioannides, 2020), as evidenced in Indonesia, which capitalizes on landscapes and ecosystems in many appealing rural areas as tourist destinations (Aly et al., 2020; MTC, 2022).

RT is believed to make a positive contribution to the economy, society, environmental and cultural preservation, and the enhancement of the quality of life in rural communities (Nair et al., 2015; Sugiama, 2014; Yachin & Ioannides, 2020). Therefore, ensuring its sustainability and conducting studies are crucial (Guaita Martínez et al., 2019; Martínez et al., 2019; Sugiama, 2019). Governments in various countries continue to promote the development of tourist villages (Campón-Cerro et al., 2017; Ibanescu et al., 2018), including in Indonesia (Damanik, 2022; Ramli et al., 2016; Sari et al., 2022), resulting in a rapid increase in their numbers, with a total target exceeding 4,000 RT by 2024 (MTC, 2022). On the other hand, several key factors ensure the sustainability of an RT, including maintaining management stability and service quality (Guaita Martínez et al., 2019; Kerdpitak & Heuer, 2016; Osman & Ilham Sentosa, 2013).

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The importance of service quality in the tourism sector is widely acknowledged as a key driver in attracting more visitors and significantly impacting tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Hung et al., 2021; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2013). Previous studies have extensively explored various aspects of service quality, including its relation to tourist satisfaction, sustainable tourism, customer perceptions, and its influence on customer behaviour (Al-Laymoun et al., 2020; Park & Jeong, 2019; Stranjancevic & Iva Bulatovic, 2015). However, despite these extensive studies, the specific causal link between service quality and tourist satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioural intention in rural tourism (RT) remains largely unexplored. Hence, this study investigates to assess the impact of service quality on satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioural intention, as well as investigates the interrelationships between these variables within the context of rural tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

RT services are generally developed through the initiative of residents (urban citizens), involving relatively low costs and investments, and leveraging the management capabilities of the respective communities, including the provision of transportation and accommodation assets (Andrianto & Sugiama, 2016; Fotiadis & Chris Vassiliadis, 2010; Nair et al., 2015; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021; Soldić Frleta, 2012; Wijijayanti et al., 2020).

Studies on rural tourism are not a new phenomenon (Andrianto & Sugiama, 2016; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021; Sugiama, 2019), but research on the relationship between service quality and satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioural intention of RT tourists remains an interesting topic to explore. Several studies indicate that tourist satisfaction, customer perception of tourism service quality, tourism service quality assessment, and customer behaviour are still highly popular research focuses (An & Alarcón, 2020; Fotiadis & Chris Vassiliadis, 2010; Osman & Ilham Sentosa, 2013; Perić et al., 2020; Rajaratnam et al., 2014). Service quality in the tourism industry, encompassing attributes such as safety and infrastructure, comfort facilities, cultural and shopping facilities, tourist attractions and ambiance, also variety and accessibility, influences tourist loyalty. It can be firmly stated that without service quality, satisfaction and customer loyalty will not be achieved (Andrianto & Sugiama, 2016; Angestiwi & Sugiama, 2021; El-Said & Aziz, 2022; Rajaratnam et al., 2014; Sugiama, 2019; Sugiama et al., 2022). This condition can also be presumed to occur in RT services. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: service quality has a significant positive impact on the satisfaction

H2: service quality has a significant positive impact on loyalty

The degree of customer loyalty is reflected by customers' willingness to make repeat purchases, their motivation, and the perceived value they receive from the provider (Chenini & Touaiti, 2018), as well as their willingness to recommend to others (Nguyen et al., 2020; Sugiama et al., 2023; Suhartanto et al., 2024). Therefore, companies need to strive to maintain customer loyalty to prevent them from switching to competitors and to retain their loyalty, thus enhancing their competitiveness (Hung et al., 2021; Leo et al., 2021; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2013; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021).

Studies in rural tourism (RT) have shown that both the quality of accessibility and accommodation services have a significant positive relationship with tourist satisfaction, and tourist satisfaction correlates positively with revisit intention (Choi et al., 2018; Fotiadis & Chris Vassiliadis, 2010; Jiang et al., 2021; Li et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2013). It is also interesting to note that the attitude of the local community can enhance the correlation between the quality of accommodation and transportation services with tourist satisfaction, indicating that a community's concern for the quality of accommodation and transportation services can enhance the satisfaction of tourists visiting the respective RT. Revisit intention can be defined as tourists repeatedly visiting and expressing their desire to do so to others, making it a cost-effective marketing tool (Abou-Shouk et al., 2018; Chatzigeorgiou & Ioanna Simeli, 2017; Mahdzar et al., 2015; Nguyen Viet et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2018). Studies in agrotourism destinations in Sarawak, Malaysia, have shown that the quality of accommodation has a significant positive influence on tourist satisfaction, and tourist satisfaction has a significant positive

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influence on future revisit behaviour (Chin et al., 2018; Sugiama et al., 2023, 2024). It has also been proven that the tourism experience affects loyalty and mediates the influence of destination image and satisfaction (Kim, 2018). Furthermore, other studies have shown that behaviour intention is influenced by service quality, including accessibility quality, transportation infrastructure, management services, and accommodation services (Al-Laymoun et al., 2020; Choi et al., 2018; Doh et al., 2017; Fotiadis & Chris Vassiliadis, 2010; Stranjancevic & Iva Bulatovic, 2015), and is also influenced by loyalty (Kim, 2018; Tverijonaite et al., 2018). These studies have not yet focused on RT services, yet it would be interesting to uncover the causality of tourist satisfaction on loyalty. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3: satisfaction has a significant positive impact on loyalty

H4: service quality has a significant positive impact on behaviour intention

H5: satisfaction has a significant positive impact on behaviour intention

H6: loyalty has a significant positive impact on behaviour intention

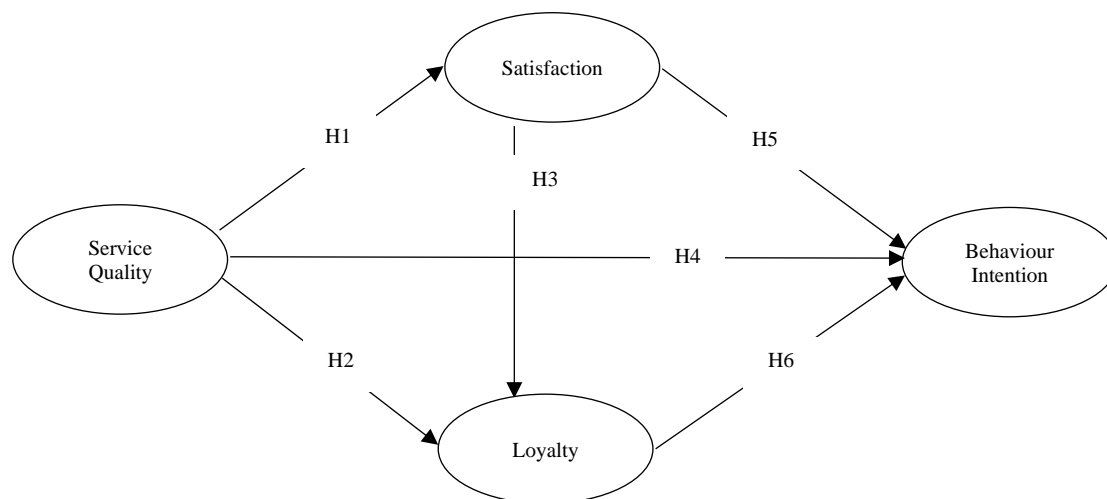All of the hypotheses (H1, ... H6) above can be depicted as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Proposed Model

RESEARCH METHOD

This study investigated the relationship between service quality, satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioural intention in Bandung Regency and West Bandung Regency in West Java Province, Indonesia, which share similar service quality characteristics. The research adopted a quantitative approach with descriptive methods. A measuring questionnaire instrument with a Likert scale was utilized, where items for each construct were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from '1' for 'strongly disagree' to '5' for 'strongly agree'. The questionnaire comprised 33 questions adapted from previous research, including eight questions on service quality, seven on satisfaction, five on loyalty, and seven on behavioural intention. The questionnaires were shared with rural tourism visitors using Google Forms in November and December 2023. The respondents were residents of Bandung Raya, covering Bandung City, Bandung Regency, Cimahi City, and West Bandung Regency, all located in West Java Province. The sample size for this study was 305 respondents, but 27 questionnaires were eliminated due to defects, resulting in 278 responses for further analysis.

The analysis consisted of (1) sample profile, (2) CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis), and (3) SEM. Structural analysis operations were carried out using SEM with the SmartPLS application (Ringle et al.,

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2015), as also employed by previous researchers (Leo et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2017; Sugiama et al., 2023, 2024; Suhartanto et al., 2024).

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Sample Profile

The initial stage of respondent profile analysis (refer to Table 1) reveals that Rancabali is the most frequented rural tourism (RT) destination, attracting 52.31% of the 278 respondents, surpassing other tourist villages. Following Rancabali, Gambung village ranks as the second most visited destination (21.76%), with Sutenjaya village securing the third spot in visitor numbers (11.11%). Other RT destinations receive fewer visitors (<15%). Tourists often opt for Rancabali and Gambung due to their proximity to other tourist attractions. Consequently, besides visiting these two RT destinations (74.07%), tourists also explore nearby attractions near Rancabali and Gambung.

Most RT visitors hail from the Bandung Raya region, encompassing Bandung City (31.94%) and Bandung Regency (28.24%). Additionally, 15.28% originate from Cimahi City and 9.72% from West Bandung Regency, while the remaining 14.81% come from outside the Bandung Raya area. This suggests that the surveyed RT visitors primarily consist of regional residents, amounting to 85.19%. The remaining 14.81% originate from Jakarta, Bekasi, Bogor, Tangerang, Garut, and others.

Regarding gender, most RT visitors are female (62.04%), with males comprising the remainder (37.96%). This aligns with the population data of Bandung Raya City, which indicates a higher number of females than males (SBC, 2023). Concerning age, visitors predominantly fall within the 17 to 25 age bracket (71.76%), with most being students (54.63%). Their monthly expenditure is less than USD 330, which is understandable given that the surveyed visitors are predominantly young students.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Characteristics	Total (N)	%
Visited rural tourism		
Rancabali	146	52.31
Gambung	60	21.76
Sutenjaya	30	11.11
Cinunuk	15	5.56
Cihanjuang Rahayu	11	3.70
Others	16	5.56
Origin		
Bandung City	89	32.01
Bandung Regency	79	28.41
Cimahi City	41	14.75
West Bandung Regency	26	9.35
Others	43	15.47
Gender		
Female	172	62.04
Male	106	38.13
Age		
17 – 25	199	71.76
26 – 45	37	13.43
> 45	42	14.81
Educational status		
Student	181	65.11
Non-student	97	34.89
Monthly expenditure		
Less than USD 330	231	83.09
More than USD 330	47	16.91

Source: research data, 2024

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Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The second stage involved analysis using CFA, which examined four variables: service quality (SQU), satisfaction (SAT), loyalty (LOY), and behaviour intention (BIN). Table 2 and Figure 2 are the results of the loading factors and the variables' linkages. CFA is suitable for testing the reliability and validity of instruments used in previous studies (Hair et al., 2021; Sugiama et al., 2024). The results of the CFA analysis in this study (Henseler et al., 2015) showed an SRMR value of 0.078, indicating that the model fits because 0.078 < 1.00 (Hair et al., 2017). All items in SQU (SQU1, SQU2, SQU3, SQU4, SQU5) ranged from 0.705 to 0.798, which is >0.6. Then, in the Construct Reliability and Validity table, SQU had a value of 0.69 > 0.05, with Cronbach's Alpha (CA) = 0.812 and Composite Reliability (CR) = 0.721, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.569, indicating that all items are valid and reliable.

The examination of items in satisfaction (SAT1, SAT2, SAT3, SAT4, SAT5, SAT6) showed values ranging from 0.639 to 0.892 (>0.6), with CA = 848, CR = 0.888, and AVE = 0.572, indicating that all items are valid and reliable. The examination of items in the loyalty variable (LOY) showed that all items are valid and reliable (LOY1, LOY2, LOY3) with loading factor values >0.6, ranging from 0.708 to 0.883, with CA = 0.743, CR = 0.851, and AVE = 0.857. Lastly, the validity and reliability test for items in BIN (BIN1, BIN2, BIN3, BIN4, BIN5) showed that all items are valid and reliable. This is reflected in the loading factor results ranging from 0.672 to 0.831 (>0.6), with CA = 0.835, CR = 0.884, and AVE = 0.606. All items used showed loading factors reaching 0.7, with p-values <0.05, indicating that all observed variables can effectively measure their latent variables.

Table 2. CFA Results

	Indicators	Factor loading	CA	CR	AVE
	Service Quality (overall-SQU):		0.812	0.868	0.569
SQU1	Natural tourist attractions in tourist villages	.786			
SQU2	Local community culture	.718			
SQU3	Man-made rural tourism attraction	.769			
SQU4	Transportation infrastructure quality	.798			
SQU5	Accommodation service	.705			
	Satisfaction (SAT):		0.848	0.888	0.572
SAT1	Satisfied with the meaningful experience	.885			
SAT2	Satisfied with the uniqueness of the tourism experience	.892			
SAT3	The useful of rural tourism experience	.886			
SAT4	Satisfied with the memorable travel	.797			
SAT5	Satisfied with the attitude of the local community	.730			
SAT6	Satisfied with the benefit of recreation	.639			
	Loyalty (LOY):		0.743	0.851	0.857
LOY1	Intend to revisit the rural destination	.831			
LOY2	Intend to advocate visiting rural tourism	.708			
LOY3	Intend to review favourably the rural tourism destination	.883			
	Behaviour intention (BIN):		0.835	0.884	0.606
BIN1	The hope to revisit in the future	.831			
BIN2	Rural tourism destination as a first choice	.830			
BIN3	Rural tourism as a favourite destination	.794			
BIN4	Willing to pay higher in the future	.753			
BIN5	Hopuly to revisit this rural tourism with others	.672			

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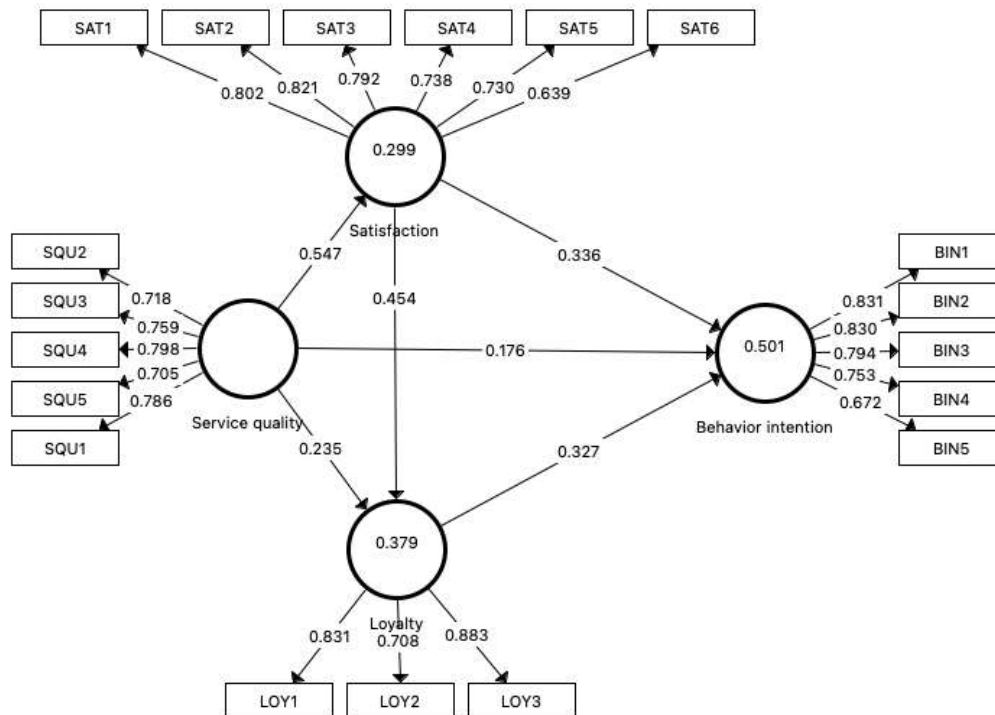E-ISSN: 2830-0637

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Figure 2. Factor Loading and The Linkage of Variables

Structural Equation Model (SEM)

In the third stage, PLS-SEM analysis was conducted to measure path coefficients, representing the outcomes of testing service quality's direct and indirect effects on satisfaction, loyalty, and behaviour intention (see Table 3). The model fit test results showed an SRMR value of 0.078 < 0.1000, with an NFI value of 0.756, indicating a good model fit (Hair et al., 2021). The bootstrapping analysis results showed that the path coefficients for all direct effects had P values < 0.001, indicating their significance. Service quality significantly affected satisfaction (ß=0.547; T value=14.019; P value=0.000), thus supporting H1. Furthermore, the test results for H2 were also supported, reflected by the value of ß=0.235 with a T value=4.325 and P value=0.000, indicating a significant positive effect of service quality on loyalty. Similarly, the test results for H3 (supported) showed that satisfaction significantly positively affected loyalty (ß=0.454; T value=7.100; P value=0.000). The test results for H4 showed that service quality had a significant positive effect on behaviour intention, reflected by the value of ß=0.176; T value=3.084; P value=0.000. Furthermore, satisfaction significantly affected behaviour intention (H5-supported), with a value of ß=0.337; T value=5.137; P value=0.000. Finally, the test results for H6 showed ß=0.3276; T value=5.154; P value=0.000, indicating that loyalty had a significant positive effect on behaviour intention.

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Table 3. Hypotheses test results

Relationship	Direct effect		Indirect effect		Total effect		Hypothesis
	ß	T-value	ß	T-value	ß	T-Value	
Direct effect:							
Service quality -> Satisfaction (H1)	0.547	14.019*	-	-	0.547	14.019*	Supported
Service quality -> Loyalty (H2)	0.235	4.325*	0.249	6.132*	0.484	11.579*	Supported
Satisfaction -> Loyalty (H3)	0.454	7.100*	--	-	0.454	7.100*	Supported
Service quality -> Behavior intention (H4)	0.176	3.084*	0.342	9.108*	0.519	10.857*	Supported
Satisfaction -> Behavior intention (H5)	0.336	5.137*	0.149	3.927*	0.485	9.170*	Supported
Loyalty -> Behavior intention (H6)	0.327	5.154*	-	-	0.327	5.154*	Supported

*Notes: *Sig. at p < 0.05; **Sig. at p < 0.01*

Discussion

Firstly, it is evident that the largest percentage of visitors are to Rancabali and Gambung RTs (74.07%). This study has revealed that these RTs are located near other tourist attractions. Meanwhile, other RTs (14 rural tourism destinations) are in remote locations, far from other tourist spots. Furthermore, most RT visitors are domestic tourists originating from the regional areas where the RTs are located. Based on gender, females outnumber males, which aligns with the population percentage in the tourists' hometowns, where females constitute the majority (SBC, 2023). Although students and young people still have limited spending, they dominate compared to other visitor categories to tourist villages. The potential of domestic tourists and young age groups forms an attractive market niche in Indonesia, including in the Bandung Raya area (BPS, 2023; SBC, 2023), which is consistent with previous research (Buffa, 2015; Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 2009; Martins & Costa, 2023).

Secondly, this study investigates the effect of service quality on satisfaction, loyalty, and behaviour intention. The test results of the proposed model show that the model has a good fit, signifying that service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty are drivers of behaviour intention variables, and the model of this research is suitable for further rural tourism research. Theoretically, the research results support previous studies (Osman & Ilham Sentosa, 2013; Perić et al., 2020) with the same perspective and context regarding RT. This contribution is crucial for understanding the management of RTs service quality concerning tourist satisfaction, loyalty, and tourist behaviour intention.

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In conclusion, tourists visit RTs near other tourist destinations because they travel to RTs and other attractions around them. Tourists perceive higher service quality in RTs can increase satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioural intention towards the respective RTs. Moreover, increasing satisfaction and loyalty can enhance behavioural intention towards the visited RTs. Since tourists predominantly visit RTs located among other tourist spots to attract more visitors, RTs with potential for development are those near other tourist attractions. RT managers can develop quality services to enhance tourist satisfaction and loyalty, ultimately stimulating tourists' behavioural intention towards the respective rural tourism destinations.

The results of this research emphasize that it is important for rural tourism managers to provide satisfactory services for tourists which can increase tourist loyalty, because these two efforts can be triggered to generate positive behavioral intentions of tourists towards the destinations visited. This study is limited to elaborating on overall service quality and overall satisfaction. In the future, more specific aspects of RT service quality can be explored using dimensions and specific criteria, such as based on categories of primary and supporting facilities (Sugiama et al., 2024; Vengesayi et al., 2009), infrastructure provision (Majid & Khoshkhoo, 2022; Mandić et al., 2018; Sugiama & Nufi, 2021), and its relationship with other variables such as memorable tourism experiences (Zhou et al., 2023). Similarly, studies with a more specific perspective could focus solely on populations of young tourists or specific genders, as seen in previous research for different cases (Buffa, 2015; Figueroa-Domecq & Segovia-Perez, 2020; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021).

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The author is Assoc. Prof., currently appointed as the senior lecturer of the Assets Management Study Program, and Applied Masters Program Infrastructure Engineering Study Program at the Politeknik Negeri Bandung, Indonesia. The research areas include rural tourism, tourism assets management, recreational open green and city park management, and tourism marketing.

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