

Tourist experiences at Borobudur Temple, Indonesia: Do sociodemographic factors matter?



Lintang Muliawanti^a | Zulfikar Bagus Pambuko^a | Annis Azhar Suryaningtyas^a |
Tiffani Anggi Amelia^a | Rifan Dzaky Widyadhana^a

^aUniversitas Muhammadiyah Magelang, Magelang, Indonesia.

Abstract This study investigates tourist experiences at Borobudur Temple, Indonesia, focusing on social return, memorable tourism experience (MTE), and revisit intention (TRI), while considering various sociodemographic factors. An exit survey was conducted with 230 recent visitors during July and August 2024. Nonparametric tests, including Wilcoxon Signed-Rank and Kruskal–Wallis H, were employed to analyze the collected data regarding gender, nationality region, monthly income, and length of stay. The results indicate that tourists generally reported positive feelings from their social media posts, had favorable impressions of their visit, and expressed a strong intention to return. However, significant differences emerged across sociodemographic groups. Notably, international tourists consistently reported more positive social return, MTE, and TRI compared to domestic Indonesian tourists, who exhibited the lowest scores across all three experience dimensions. While males showed higher social return than females, gender did not significantly influence MTE or TRI. Furthermore, both monthly income and length of stay significantly correlated with tourist experiences, with higher income levels and longer stays associated with more positive outcomes, particularly in social return and revisit intention. Interesting patterns also include North American tourists reporting the highest MTE, but having lower TRI than Oceanian and South American visitors. These findings carry significant practical implications for the sustainable development of Borobudur Temple. The research underscores the importance of intensifying promotional efforts aimed at international visitors, potentially through collaborative tour packages, to enhance both revenue and local economic benefits. Additionally, the observed lower social return among domestic tourists highlights a compelling need for targeted cultural education initiatives to foster deeper engagement with their own heritage. This study contributes to understanding how sociodemographic factors shape diverse tourism experiences.

Keywords: social return, memorable tourism experience, revisit intention, borobudur temple

1. Introduction

The expansion of the tourism industry is widely recognized as a driver of economic growth, a concept supported by the Tourism-Led Growth Hypothesis (TLGH) (Fidian et al., 2024; He & Li, 2021). In Indonesia, the tourism sector contributes 5% of the national GDP and holds 40th place in the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI). The country demonstrates particular strength in two TTCI subindices: enabling an environment for travel and tourism and providing natural and cultural resources (Lesmana & Sugiarto, 2021). Blessed with abundant natural and cultural assets, Indonesian tourism encompasses a wide array of activities, directly boosting local economies through foreign investment and visitor spending in various regions (Muliawanti et al., 2024).

Recognizing this potential, the Indonesian government has adopted a proactive approach to accelerate the growth and sustainability of its tourism industry through the National Tourism Strategic Areas (NTSA) program. This program outlines eight strategic steps designed to enhance national tourism performance. A key initiative within the NTSA is the development of five Super Priority Tourism Destinations (SPTDs), which prioritize improving basic infrastructure and adhering to the principles of the blue, green, and circular economy (BGCE) (Invest Island, 2023). These five SPTDs include Borobudur, Labuan Bajo, Mandalika, Likupang, and Lake Toba (Fatmawati & Olga, 2023). As one of these crucial SPTDs, Borobudur Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage site, stands out as a globally renowned Buddhist monument and a significant cultural and pilgrimage destination that attracts millions of visitors annually (Muhdiyanto et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2022; Yuliani et al., 2025).

In addition to infrastructure, the NTSA program also seeks to foster safe, comfortable, attractive, and accessible tourism destinations that contribute to national, regional, and community economic growth. A significant focus is placed on effective marketing coordination to increase both domestic and international visitor numbers and to boost tourist revisit intention (TRI) by enhancing overall tourist experiences and satisfaction (Damanik & Yusuf, 2022; Harcey & Arjana, 2024).



This study specifically examines tourist experiences, with a particular emphasis on the tourist revisit intention (TRI). Revisit intention is defined as an individual's readiness or willingness to make repeat visits to the same destination (Heslinga et al., 2024). This concept is crucial for ensuring sustainable tourism development, as repeat visitors can increase a destination's cost-effectiveness and profitability by up to five times compared with first-time visitors (Damanik & Yusuf, 2022; Muliawanti et al., 2024; Sanjaya & Aruan, 2021; Sudirman & Nugraha, 2024; Untoro et al., 2021; Yulia et al., 2024). Factors such as prior information and satisfaction are known to play significant roles in attracting repeat visits (Al-Azzam et al., 2022; Z. Hu et al., 2024; Viet et al., 2020).

In the evolving landscape of tourism communication, the rapid expansion of information and communication technologies has had a profound impact. Digital technologies have revolutionized tourism strategies and operations, emerging as a major source of competition within the industry (Peng et al., 2023). Digital tourism information significantly influences revisit intentions. Moreover, these technologies not only enhance tourists' understanding of local cultures but also attract more visitors and shape their overall perceptions of the tourism experience.

Furthermore, psychological factors, such as a memorable tourism experience (MTE), also play a crucial role in shaping revisit intentions (Osiako et al., 2022; Tiwari et al., 2024). The present study aims to analyze tourist experiences in terms of social returns, memorable tourism experiences, and revisit intentions. Differences across various demographic characteristics, including gender, nationality region, monthly income, and length of stay, will be explored.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Study Sampling

This survey-based study was conducted at the iconic Borobudur Temple in Central Java, Indonesia, to examine tourist experiences in terms of social returns, memorable tourism experiences, and revisit intentions. We targeted tourists who had recently visited the temple and collected data through an exit survey administered between July and August 2024. Of the 336 tourists approached, 264 completed the survey. After data cleaning, 34 responses were excluded, resulting in a final sample size of 230 for analysis.

2.2. Instruments

We used existing, validated measurement scales for the constructs of social return, memorable tourism experience, and revisit intention. These scales were adapted from previous research: social return from Boley et al. (2018); memorable tourism experience from Lu et al. (2022) and Hu & Xu (2021); and revisit intentions from Bi et al. (2020) and Yamagishi et al. (2023). Our decision to use these established measures was based on their demonstrated reliability and validity, which helps ensure the accuracy of the collected data.

Data collection involved a structured questionnaire with 21 questions across four sections. The first section provided a brief overview of the study's purpose and assured participants of confidentiality. The second section screened participants to confirm that they had visited Borobudur Temple. Eligible participants then proceeded to the third section, which collected demographic and travel behavior data. The fourth section assessed participants' perceptions of social return (six items), memorable tourism experience (six items), and revisit intentions (four items) via a 5-point Likert scale.

To evaluate the questionnaire's clarity and readability, we conducted a pilot study with 50 respondents over four days. The results, presented in Table 1, indicated no significant issues with the questionnaire's items. All the measurement items demonstrated satisfactory validity, with scores exceeding the threshold of 0.279, and all three constructs exhibited good internal consistency, as evidenced by Cronbach's alpha values above 0.6.

2.3. Data analysis

Data analysis began with a normality test. The observed variables had a significance level (p value) of less than 0.05, indicating a nonnormal distribution. Consequently, we employed nonparametric tests. Given the varying categorical nature of tourist characteristics, two different analytical approaches have been adopted. For dichotomous variables such as sex, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was utilized. Conversely, for polytomous variables, including nationality region, monthly income, and length of stay, we applied the Kruskal–Wallis H test. All the data analyses were performed via IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Tourist profiles and experiences

The sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 2. The sample was fairly evenly distributed by gender, with females (52.61%) slightly outnumbering males. The majority of tourists were domestic visitors from Indonesia (44.78%), followed by international tourists from Asia (excluding Indonesia) (24.35%) and Europe (12.61%).

Approximately 53.91% of the respondents reported a monthly income less than USD 500. Furthermore, the majority of respondents spent two days at Borobudur Temple and its surrounding areas (34.78%).

Table 1 Instrument quality measurements.

Variable	Item	Loadings	Cronbach Alpha
Social Return	SR1	.634	.771
	SR2	.509	
	SR3	.528	
	SR4	.428	
	SR5	.595	
	SR6	.405	
Memorable Tourism Experience	MTE1	.499	.826
	MTE2	.570	
	MTE3	.530	
	MTE4	.651	
	MTE5	.690	
	MTE6	.627	
Revisit Intention	RI1	.642	.861
	RI2	.694	
	RI3	.725	
	RI4	.784	

Table 2 Tourist profile.

Profile	n	%
Gender		
Male	109	47.39
Female	121	52.61
Nationality Region		
Indonesia	103	44.78
Asia, excluding Indonesia	56	24.35
Europe	29	12.61
Africa	11	4.78
North America	10	4.35
South America	7	3.04
Oceania	14	6.09
Monthly Income		
\$ 500 and below	124	53.91
\$ 501 - 1,000	56	24.35
\$ 1,001 - 2,000	31	13.48
\$ 2,001 - 3,000	17	7.39
\$ 3,001 and above	2	0.87
Length of Stay		
No overnight stay	77	33.48
1 day	33	14.35
2 days	80	34.78
3 days	31	13.48
4 days or more	9	3.91
Total	230	100.00

Table 3 presents the tourist experience in terms of social returns, memorable tourism experiences, and revisit intentions. Overall, Borobudur Temple, as one of Indonesia's suprapriority destinations, has a positive image among tourists. The mean score of 3.96 (SD = 0.46) for the social return aspect indicates that tourists felt cooler, more popular, and more self-confident as a result of their social media posts after visiting. This finding supports Araujo-Battle et al. (2023). Notably, only two respondents reported a negative social return after visiting Borobudur Temple. Our findings align with previous research linking tourism and narcissism, particularly in the age of social media (Ghouse et al., 2022). Tourists often share their travel experiences on social media as a means of expressing positive emotions and connecting with others (Rollero et al., 2019).

On the basis of their memorable experience, the majority of respondents stated that they had good (52.17%) or very good (41.30%) experience. In other words, cultural and pilgrimage tourism at Borobudur Temple left a strong impression on tourists. This positive perception is further supported by extensive capacity-building programs for destination managers, aimed at enhancing service quality and visitor satisfaction (Dwihantoro et al., 2023; Muliawanti et al., 2023). This is further supported by revisit intentions, as only six respondents (2.61%) indicated no interest in visiting Borobudur Temple again.

Table 3 Tourist experience after visiting.

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max
Social Return		3.96	0.46	2.17	5.00
Very bad	0				
Bad	2				
Neutral	31				
Good	126				
Very good	71				
Memorable Tourism Experience		4.11	0.42	2.50	5.00
Very bad	0				
Bad	1				
Neutral	14				
Good	120				
Very good	95				
Revisit Intention		3.92	0.63	1.67	5.00
Strongly disagree	1				
Disagree	5				
Neutral	45				
Agree	108				
Strongly agree	71				

3.2. Analysis of experience and sociodemographic characteristics

Wilcoxon signed-rank and Kruskal–Wallis H tests were conducted to examine whether there were significant differences in tourist experiences based on specific sociodemographic variables, such as gender, nationality, monthly income, and length of stay. With respect to gender, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test revealed a significant difference in social return, with males exhibiting higher levels than females (Table 4). This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that men tend to use social media for communicating and expressing opinions (Herring & Kapidzic, 2015; Li & Zhuo, 2023). However, this finding contradicts other studies that have shown that women are more emotionally expressive in their use of social media and more frequent users (Wibowo & Hariadi, 2024). Observations from Instagram posts using the hashtag #borobudurtemple corroborated these findings in our context: male users posted less frequently, paid less attention to aesthetics, and primarily used the platform for communicating and expressing opinions. In contrast, no significant differences were found in memorable tourism experiences or revisit intentions based on gender (Table 4), suggesting that gender did not significantly influence these variables.

Table 4 Wilcoxon signed-rank test results for experience and gender.

Variable	Mean Scores of Gender		Z	Sig.
	Male	Female		
Social Return	4.06	3.87	-3.250	.001*
Memorable Tourism Experience	4.12	4.11	-0.255	.799
Revisit Intention	3.94	3.90	-0.274	.784

Note: *Significant at the .05 level.

Kruskal–Wallis H tests were conducted to examine the impacts of nationality region, monthly income, and length of stay on tourists’ experiences. Significant differences were observed across all three variables (social return, memorable tourism experiences, and revisit intentions) for each demographic characteristic (see Tables 5-7). These findings indicate that tourists’ perceptions vary significantly on the basis of their demographic profiles.

As shown in Table 5, significant differences were found across all three variables across nationalities. Notably, international tourists from South America reported the highest mean scores for social returns (4.36), memorable tourism experiences (4.26), and revisit intentions (4.43). In contrast, domestic tourists from Indonesia had the lowest scores across all three variables. These findings underscore the government’s commitment to developing Borobudur Temple as a superpriority destination, particularly in attracting international tourists to explore other destinations in Indonesia beyond Bali. This also highlights the focus on providing memorable experiences and ensuring the sustainability of tourism, with efforts aligned with broader goals of economic recovery post-COVID-19 (Sudirman & Nugraha, 2024).

The post hoc tests presented in Figure 1(a) revealed a significant difference in social return only between Indonesian tourists and tourists from all other regions (Asia, excluding Indonesia, Europe, Africa, North America, South America, and Oceania). Indonesian tourists consistently reported lower social returns. As shown in Figure 1(b), significant differences in memorable tourism experiences were found only between Indonesian tourists and those from North America and Oceania. Finally, Figure 1(c) reveals significant differences in revisit intentions between Indonesian tourists and those from Oceania, as



well as between Oceania and the rest of Asia. Tourists from Oceania expressed greater revisit intentions than Asian tourists did.

Table 5 Kruskal–Wallis H test for the experience and Nationality regions.

Variable	Mean Scores of Nationality Region							H	Sig.
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)		
Social Return	3.75	4.06	4.13	4.23	4.27	4.36	4.31	54.252	.000*
Memorable Tourism Experience	4.03	4.08	4.20	4.18	4.47	4.26	4.36	24.837	.000*
Revisit Intention	3.80	3.88	3.82	4.21	4.23	4.43	4.43	33.767	.000*

Note: (1) Indonesia, (2) Asia, excluding Indonesia, (3) Europe, (4) Africa, (5) North America, (6) South America, (7) Oceania, *Significant at the .05 level.

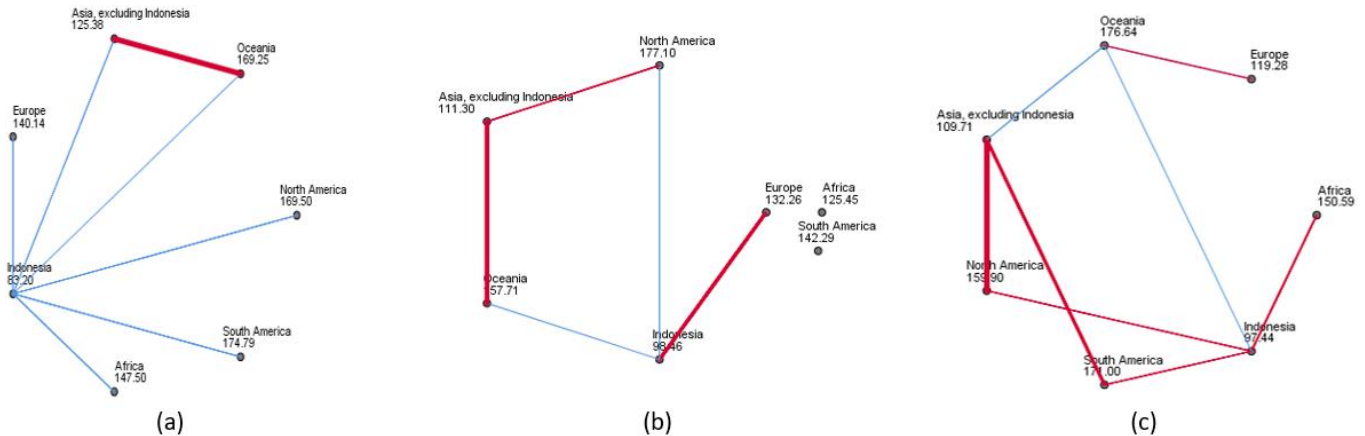


Figure 1 Pairwise comparisons of nationality regions: (a) social return, (b) memorable tourism experience, and (c) revisit intention.

Table 6 shows that income level significantly influenced all three variables. The respondents with a monthly income between \$2,001 and \$3,000 reported the highest social return (4.28) and revisit intention (4.24). Those with an income of \$3,001 or above reported the most memorable tourism experience (4.25). These findings suggest that higher income levels are associated with more positive tourism experiences, which aligns with reports from Taiwan (Phan et al., 2024, 2025) and Australia (Sharma & Dyer, 2009).

While Table 6 indicates a generally positive correlation between income level and overall tourism experience, the post hoc tests in Figure 2 reveal more nuanced findings. Significant differences were primarily observed among respondents with the lowest income (\$500 and below). Specifically, those with the lowest income reported significantly lower social returns and revisit intentions than did those with \$2,001--\$3,000 and \$501--\$1,000 brackets (Figure 2a and Figure 2c, respectively). Additionally, respondents with an income of \$500 and below had significantly fewer memorable tourism experiences than did those in the \$1,001--\$2,000 bracket (Figure 2b). This suggests that limited budget allocation often constrains tourists' access to certain attractions or experiences (Khazaei-Pool et al., 2024).

Table 6 Kruskal–Wallis H test for experience and monthly income.

Variable	Mean Scores of Monthly Income					H	Sig.
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)		
Social Return	3.83	4.14	4.08	4.28	3.67	32.779	.000*
Memorable Tourism Experience	4.04	4.18	4.24	4.23	4.25	15.171	.004*
Revisit Intention	3.80	4.11	3.95	4.24	3.00	23.345	.000*

Note: (1) \$ 500 and below, (2) \$ 501 - 1,000, (3) \$ 1,001 - 2,000, (4) \$ 2,001 - 3,000, (5) \$ 3,001 and above, *Significant at the .05 level.

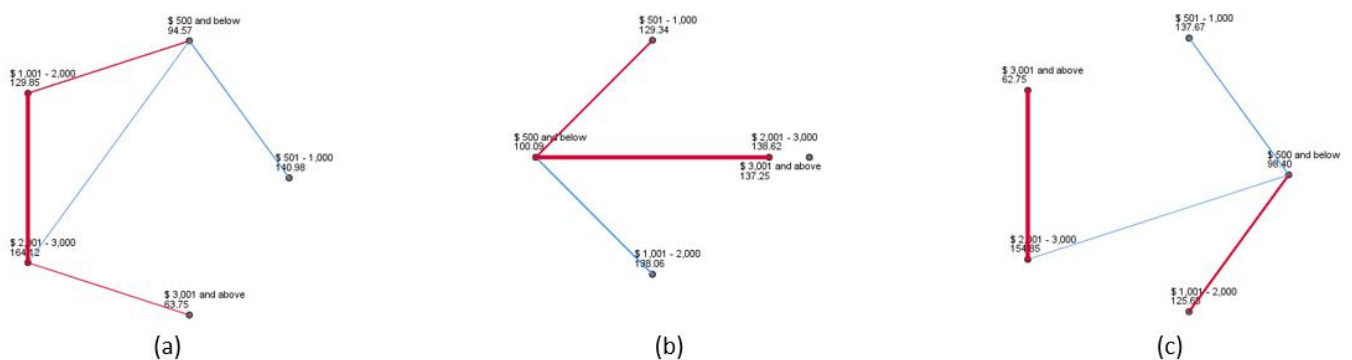


Figure 2 Pairwise comparisons of monthly income (a) social return, (b) memorable tourism experience, and (c) revisit intention



While Table 6 indicates a generally positive correlation between income level and overall tourism experience, the post hoc tests in Figure 2 reveal more nuanced findings. Significant differences were primarily observed among respondents with the lowest income bracket (\$500 and below). Specifically, those in the lowest income bracket reported significantly lower social returns and revisit intentions than those in the \$2,001--\$3,000 and \$501--\$1,000 brackets did (Figure 2a and Figure 2c, respectively). Additionally, respondents with an income of \$500 and below had significantly fewer memorable tourism experiences than did those in the \$1,001--\$2,000 bracket. Limited budget allocation to tourists often constrains their access to tourist attractions.

Table 7 presents findings related to dwell time or length of stay. Tourists who stayed for three days reported the highest scores for social return (4.29), memorable tourism experience (4.24), and revisit intention (4.29). These results suggest that longer stays are associated with more positive social returns, more memorable experiences, and a greater likelihood of revisiting. This finding aligns with those of previous studies indicating that length of stay significantly influences tourist satisfaction and revisit intentions (Huang et al., 2014; Kim & Brown, 2012; Pérez-Cabañero et al., 2017).

The post hoc tests in Figure 3 further support these findings, although only a few pairwise comparisons were statistically significant. In terms of social return, respondents with no overnight stay reported significantly lower scores than those who stayed for 1, 2, or 3 days. Similarly, respondents with no overnight stay reported significantly lower scores for memorable tourism experiences than did those who stayed for 3 days. Additionally, tourists who stayed for 3 days expressed a significantly greater intention to revisit than those who stayed for 1 or 2 days or had no overnight stay.

Table 7 Kruskal–Wallis H test for experience and length of stay.

Variable	Mean Scores of Length of Stay					H	Sig.
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)		
Social Return	3.70	4.03	4.08	4.29	3.96	45.104	.000*
Memorable Tourism Experience	4.03	4.11	4.16	4.24	4.11	11.433	.022*
Revisit Intention	3.81	3.84	3.93	4.29	3.74	20.724	.000*

Note: (1) No overnight stay, (2) 1 day, (3) 2 days, (4) 3 days, (5) 4 days or more, *Significant at the .05 level

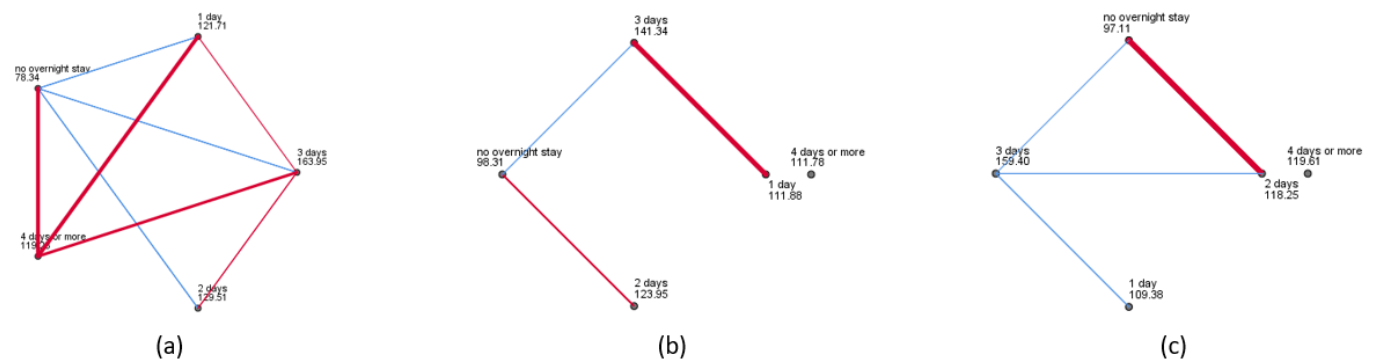


Figure 3 Pairwise comparisons of length of stay (a) social return, (b) memorable tourism experience, and (c) revisit intention.

4. Conclusions

This study analyzed social returns, memorable tourism experiences, and revisit intentions among tourists visiting Borobudur Temple, with a focus on how these experiences vary across sociodemographic characteristics. Overall, the tourists at Borobudur Temple reported positive social returns from their online sharing, expressed favorable impressions of their visit, and indicated a strong intention to revisit.

The analysis of sociodemographic characteristics revealed significant variations in tourist experiences. Specifically, differences in social return were observed across all demographic variables; females, Indonesian domestic tourists, individuals with a monthly income below \$500, and those with no overnight stays consistently reported the lowest social return scores. While memorable tourism experiences and revisit intentions also vary significantly by nationality, income, and length of stay, specific patterns emerge. For example, North American tourists reported the most memorable tourism experience, yet their revisit intention was lower than that of Oceanian and South American tourists. Furthermore, lower income levels were associated with fewer memorable experiences and lower revisit intentions, mirroring findings for length of stay, where shorter visits were correlated with fewer positive experiences and reduced intent to return.

5. Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer significant practical implications for the management of the government and Borobudur temple. Given that international tourists generally report more positive experiences than domestic tourists do, promotional efforts should be intensified to attract more international visitors. Strategies such as collaborating with travel agencies to



create integrated Bali-Borobudur tour packages could be particularly effective. This approach would not only boost ticket revenue but also generate broader economic and social benefits, including empowering local tour guides and stimulating local businesses. Additionally, focusing promotional efforts on international tourists could help address the prevalent issue of short lengths of stay.

A notable finding is the lower social return exhibited by domestic tourists than by international visitors. This suggests a need for enhanced cultural education initiatives specifically targeting domestic tourists to foster a deeper appreciation for their own heritage. This is further supported by the negative correlation between social return and both lower monthly income and shorter stays among domestic visitors, indicating a potential gap in their understanding of and engagement with the destination's cultural offerings.

6. Limitations and Future Research Direction

However, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, data collection was restricted to an exit survey conducted immediately after visiting the temple, which may not fully capture experiences in the increasingly popular surrounding areas. Second, the study explored only a limited number of demographic characteristics, and the distribution of international respondents was uneven, potentially limiting generalizability. Third, while revisit intentions were assessed, the underlying factors influencing revisit intentions were not analyzed in depth.

Future research could address these limitations by delving more deeply into the perceptions of tourists visiting Borobudur and its surrounding areas and exploring a broader range of demographic characteristics, such as education level, occupation, travel purpose, and social media usage. Additionally, subsequent studies should examine the influence of demographic factors and other variables on revisit intentions in greater detail. A comparative analysis between Borobudur and other superpriority tourist destinations in Indonesia could also provide valuable insights. By addressing these avenues, Borobudur Temple can further enhance its appeal as a cultural and pilgrimage destination, thereby contributing to local economic development and fostering cultural understanding.

Ethical considerations

This study was conducted in strict accordance with ethical guidelines to ensure the rights, dignity, and welfare of all participants involved in the research.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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