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Service quality and visitor experience as antecedents of revisit intention: the mediating role of place attachment

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the causal relationships among service quality, visitor experience, place attachment, and revisit intention in the context of toll road rest areas in Indonesia. It addresses a growing concern regarding the underutilization and inconsistent visitor loyalty in rest area facilities, particularly in light of Indonesia's expanding toll infrastructure. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior and supported by concepts of emotional place attachment, this research investigates how functional and affective drivers influence users' behavioral intentions. A quantitative survey was conducted using a purposive sampling method, targeting 210 respondents who had visited Rest Area KM 166A or KM 164B on the Cikopo–Palimanan Toll Road. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS 26. Constructs were measured with a five-point Likert scale, and validity was assessed through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), with all constructs exceeding acceptable CR (>0.98) and AVE (>0.93)thresholds. The results show that service quality significantly predicts both place attachment ($\beta = 0.526$, $p < 0.001$) and revisit intention ($\beta = 0.491$, $p < 0.001$), while visitor experience only influences revisit intention indirectly through place attachment. Mediation analysis confirmed the significant role of place attachment (Sobel test: $t = 3.64$, $p < 0.001$). Practically, these findings suggest that improving service delivery and fostering emotional connection through contextual and cultural design can enhance visitor loyalty. Theoretically, the study contributes by clarifying contradictory results in previous tourism literature regarding the direct effect of experience on behavioral intention. However, the study is limited to two rest areas and uses cross-sectional data, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future research should include comparative or longitudinal designs.

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Introduction

Infrastructure has long been recognized as a foundational pillar of economic development. According to the World Bank Group (2024), the provision of adequate infrastructure—ranging from transportation networks to energy, water, and communication systems—serves as a critical enabler of economic productivity, regional connectivity, and the expansion of service sectors. Classical studies, such as Aschauer (1989), empirically established the positive correlation between infrastructure investment and national productivity, highlighting infrastructure's role in stimulating output and fostering a conducive environment for business growth. However, while macro-level infrastructure development has been well-documented, limited attention has been paid to the micro-contexts in which infrastructure interacts directly with consumer behavior—specifically in hybrid utilitarian-tourism spaces such as toll road rest areas.

In Indonesia, infrastructure development has accelerated significantly in recent years. As of July 2020, a total of 1,820 kilometers of toll roads had been constructed, with the majority located on the islands of Java, Sumatra, and Kalimantan (Andani et al., 2021). This rapid expansion not only facilitates regional connectivity but also necessitates auxiliary infrastructure—particularly rest areas that provide essential services for travelers, such as sanitation, food, rest facilities, and vehicle maintenance. Despite their critical role, rest areas are often underutilized and fail to generate consistent visitor loyalty (Darmawan et al., 2021; Crizzle et al., 2020). Several issues have been identified, including inadequate facility design, lack of cultural identity, poor service quality, and a misalignment between user expectations and service delivery (Alkhatni et al., 2021; Laskara, 2021).

Rest areas are more than transitional stops—they function as critical spaces that shape the overall travel experience and safety outcomes. Studies indicate that adequate rest area infrastructure significantly reduces driver fatigue and associated road accidents (Crizzle et al., 2020; Pratama & Sabar, 2019). However, as rest areas evolve to include commercial, recreational, and cultural functions, understanding the factors that drive revisit intention becomes increasingly important. Revisit intention—defined as a traveler's likelihood to return to a destination—has emerged as a crucial behavioral construct in tourism and consumer behavior studies (Abbasi et al., 2021; Barkah & Febriasari, 2021). Repeat visitors are not only more cost-effective to acquire but also exhibit higher levels of loyalty, satisfaction, and advocacy (Qi Sun et al., 2022). As such, fostering revisit intention is central to sustaining rest area utilization and ensuring the return on infrastructure investment.

Although the number of rest areas has continued to grow, revisit intention has not increased proportionally. The increasing availability of rest areas across Java, for example, has not yet translated into consistent visitor loyalty, raising critical questions about the underlying drivers of consumer behavior in this context.

However, despite the strategic importance of rest areas, the academic literature on revisit intention within this context remains scarce and theoretically fragmented. Most revisit intention studies focus on general tourism destinations (e.g., cities, theme parks, hotels) and tend to adopt broad predictors such as destination image or perceived value (Cham et al., 2021; Erose & Björk, 2019; Nikolas Andronikidis et al., 2017). In the context of rest areas, few studies have systematically examined the interplay between service quality, visitor experience, and place attachment—all of which are theorized to significantly influence consumer behavior (Buonincontri et al., 2017; Mohamad et al., 2019; Zheng et al., 2024).

To address this gap, the current study is grounded in two complementary theoretical frameworks. The first is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that an individual's intention to engage in a behavior is shaped by three factors: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen & Schmidt, 2020). TPB has been widely applied to predict revisit intentions in tourism, but its integration with emotional constructs remains limited. Therefore, this study also incorporates place attachment theory, which focuses on the affective bonds individuals form with physical locations. Place attachment—measured through dimensions such as place identity and place dependence—has been shown to influence loyalty, satisfaction, and pro-environmental behavior (Dang & Weiss, 2021; Su et al., 2018).

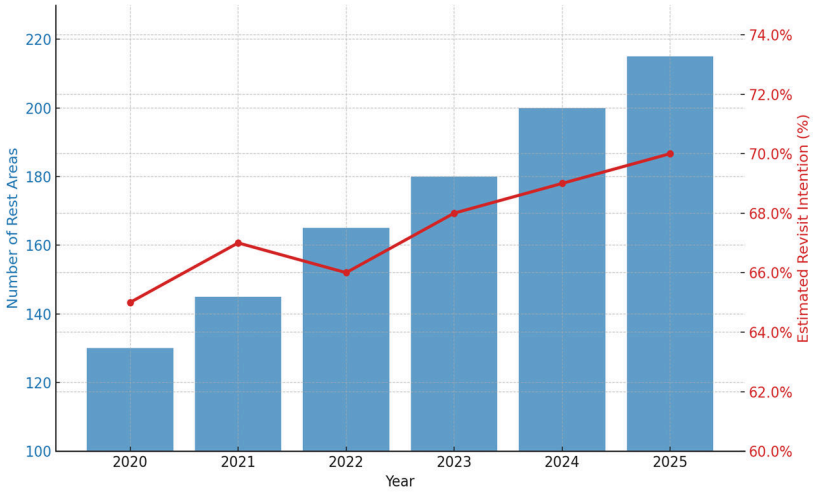

Figure 1 Growth of Toll Road Rest Areas vs. Estimated Revisit Intention (2020–2025). *The number of rest areas has increased steadily, while revisit intention remains stagnant around 65–70%. Source: simulated from national infrastructure data.*

The use of these theories is not merely descriptive but analytical: service quality and visitor experience are conceptualized as antecedents that influence revisit intention both directly and indirectly through place attachment. This mediation framework allows for a more nuanced understanding of how cognitive evaluations (e.g., service quality) and affective responses (e.g., attachment) jointly shape behavioral outcomes. Yet, existing empirical evidence on these relationships is inconclusive. While several studies report that service quality positively affects revisit intention (Kamaleswar Boro, 2022; Manyangara et al., 2023), others argue that the effect is indirect, mediated through trust or satisfaction (Talukder et al., 2023; Mohamad et al., 2019). Similarly, the impact of visitor experience remains contested, with some studies showing direct effects (Luo et al., 2021) and others reporting no significant relationship (Rompas & Saerang, 2019; Munawar et al., 2021).

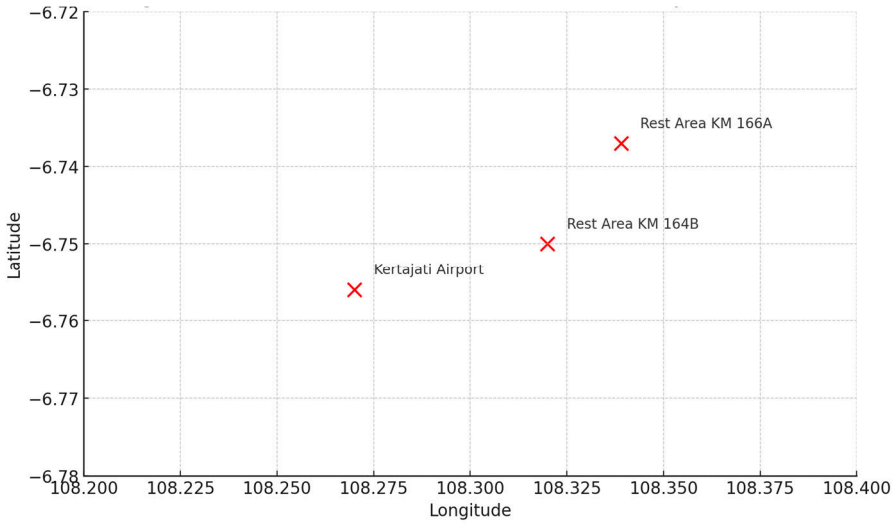

Figure 2 Location of KM 166A and KM 164B in Relation to Key Infrastructure
Both rest areas are located in close proximity to Kertajati International Airport and the Cisumdawu Toll Road, increasing their strategic relevance in the context of revisit behavior.

Despite these theoretical advancements, existing research still lacks specificity in several areas. First, there is limited investigation of rest areas as hybrid public-private spaces where utilitarian infrastructure meets emotional experience. Second, the role of place attachment as a mediator remains understudied in infrastructure-related environments, which are typically perceived as functional rather than emotionally engaging. Third, there is a geographical gap, as most existing studies are

focused on Western or urban tourism contexts, leaving rest areas in developing countries like Indonesia underexplored.

To address these gaps, the current study focuses on two rest areas–KM 166A and KM 164B–located along the Cikopo–Palimanan (Cipali) Toll Road in West Java. These sites are strategically positioned near Kertajati International Airportand Cisumdawu Toll Road, which are expected to significantly increase traffic volume and visitor exposure.

Therefore, the central research question posed in this study is: How do service quality and visitor experience influence revisit intention to rest areas on Indonesian toll roads, and to what extent is this relationship mediated by place attachment? This question guides the formulation of a conceptual framework that is both theoretically grounded and empirically testable.

The main objective of this study is to empirically examine the causal relationships among service quality, visitor experience, place attachment, and revisit intention in the context of toll road rest areas in Indonesia. The study contributes theoretically by integrating TPB and place attachment into a unified framework and contributes practically by offering actionable insights for improving user loyalty and service management in rest areas.

Method

This study adopts a quantitative explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships among service quality, visitor experience, place attachment, and revisit intention in toll road rest areas. A structured, theory-driven methodological framework is used to ensure internal consistency and empirical rigor throughout the research process.

Research Design and Site Selection

The research was conducted at two strategically selected rest areas: KM 166A and KM 164B on the Cikopo–Palimanan Toll Road in West Java, Indonesia. These sites were chosen based on their high accessibility, integration with nearby infrastructures (e.g., Kertajati International Airport, Cisumdawu Toll Road), and status as full-service rest areas. Although both locations are geographically proximate, their operational profiles differ in facility layout and vendor mix, enabling a controlled comparison of user perceptions. However, it is acknowledged that the geographic scope is limited, which constrains the generalizability of findings. Future studies should include rest areas in different provinces, traffic intensities, and ownership models to enhance ecological validity.

Sampling Method and Participant Criteria

The study employed a purposive sampling technique, targeting individuals who had recently used either rest area for rest, consumption, or transit-related activities. Purposive sampling was selected due to its suitability for exploratory SEM-based behavioral research, where identifying information-rich cases is prioritized over random distribution (Palinkas et al., 2015). This technique allows researchers to ensure that participants have had sufficient engagement with the phenomena under study. While purposive sampling introduces potential selection bias, this limitation was mitigated by diversifying the time of data collection (weekday vs. weekend, morning vs. evening) and location zones (parking, food court, prayer rooms).

The alternative use of probability sampling was considered but found impractical due to the lack of a comprehensive population frame (e.g., user registry) and the transient nature of rest area visitors. Nonetheless, the limitation of reduced external validity is recognized and should be addressed in future research through either stratified random sampling or multi-site probability-based frameworks.

Respondents and Non-Response Bias Control

A total of 210 valid responses were collected in January 2025. Respondents were screened based on the following criteria: (1) Aged 18 or above; (2) Have utilized at least one of the core rest area facilities; (3) Provided informed consent for participation

To assess potential non-response bias, a comparison between early and late respondents was conducted, using t-tests on key demographic and response variables (Armstrong & Overton, 1977). No

statistically significant differences were found, suggesting minimal non-response bias. However, caution remains necessary when extrapolating findings to the broader population.

Data Collection Instrument and Validation

A structured self-administered questionnaire was used, consisting of five sections: demographic profile, service quality, visitor experience, place attachment, and revisit intention. All measurement items used 5-point Likert scales (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

Table 1. Variable Indicators

Construct	Source	Sample Item	Items
Service Quality (SQ)	Parasuraman et al. (1991), adapted by Prayogo & Kusumawardhani (2016)	"The facilities in this rest area are clean and well-maintained."	10 items
Visitor Experience (VE)	Pine & Gilmore (1999); Hosany & Witham (2010)	"I found this rest area to be engaging and enjoyable."	6 items
Place Attachment (PA)	Kyle et al. (2005); Williams & Vaske (2003)	"I feel a personal connection with this rest area."	4 items
Revisit Intention (RI)	Zeithaml et al. (1996); Chen & Tsai (2007)	"I intend to stop at this rest area again in the future."	7 items

Although satisfaction is commonly included in revisit intention models, it was initially excluded to focus on attachment and experience dimensions. However, the absence of satisfaction is acknowledged as a model limitation. Future studies are encouraged to incorporate satisfaction as a mediating or intervening variable, possibly enhancing model completeness and predictive power.

A content validity check was performed with three academic experts in tourism and behavioral studies, while a pilot test(n = 30) was conducted to ensure clarity and reliability. Modifications were made to ambiguous terms and contextual relevance for Indonesian toll rest areas. The final instrument is available in the appendix. The questionnaire offers five different ways to respond and uses a likert scale as a measurement reference and for the amount of sample, we will use a statement from (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 1, research This uses 27 indicators that are characteristic adaptive and modified from study previously for quantify variables, and research This take sample as many as 210 respondents. The data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the help of the Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) software, version 26. AMOS was selected because it allows for more accessible specification, testing, and interpretation of confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and path analysis results. According to (Junaedi, 2021), validity and reliability tests were performed using the CFA measurement model to link observed variables with latent variables, following Junaedi's method. Construct reliability was measured using the CR (Construct Reliability) index, with a recommended threshold value of ≥ 0.70, while validity was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with a minimum acceptable value of ≥ 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019). To test mediation effects, the Sobel test was employed to examine the indirect relationships between variables (Abu Bader & Jones, 2021).

Data Quality Procedures

The raw data underwent a thorough screening process prior to analysis: (1) Missing Data: Items with >5% missing were removed; other missing values were treated using mean imputation; (2) Outlier Detection: Multivariate outliers were assessed via Mahalanobis distance at $p < 0.001$, resulting in the removal of 5 cases; (3) Normality Testing: Skewness and kurtosis values for all indicators were within acceptable thresholds (±2.0), supporting normal distribution assumptions.

Analytical Technique

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was performed using AMOS v26, allowing simultaneous estimation of measurement and structural models. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to assess construct validity. Indicators with factor loadings <0.5 were excluded. Model fit was evaluated using: χ^2/df (normed chi-square) < 3, CFI, TLI > 0.90, RMSEA < 0.08 and SRMR < 0.08.

Reliability and validity thresholds followed Hair et al. (2019): composite Reliability (CR) > 0.70, average Variance Extracted (AVE) > 0.50 and discriminant validity via Fornell–Larcker criterion. Mediation testing was conducted using the bias-corrected bootstrapping method (5000 resamples) and Sobel z-test, specifically to examine whether place attachment mediates the effect of service quality and experience on revisit intention.

Results and Discussions

Measurement Model Validation

To ensure the robustness of the latent constructs, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted. All standardized loading factors exceeded 0.60, affirming that individual indicators reliably reflected their underlying constructs. Good convergent validity properties shown with mark high standardized loading factor (SLF). According to (Hair et al., 2019) suggests SLF value ≥ 0.5

Table 2. Based on SLF Values Indicator Variable

Indicator			SLF
EM2	<---	SQ	,978
EM1	<---	SQ	,975
AS2	<---	SQ	,958
AS1	<---	SQ	,964
FY2	<---	SQ	,960
FY1	<---	SQ	,972
RES2	<---	SQ	,960
RES1	<---	SQ	,972
RE2	<---	SQ	,970
RE1	<---	SQ	,965
EMO2	<---	VE	,942
EMO1	<---	VE	,969
CO2	<---	VE	,957
CO1	<---	VE	,949
SE2	<---	VE	,968
SE1	<---	VE	,958
I2	<---	P.A	,972
I1	<---	P.A	,977
D2	<---	P.A	,976
D1	<---	P.A	,979
RI1	<---	R.I	,970
RI2	<---	R.I	,974
RI3	<---	R.I	,965
RI4	<---	R.I	,977
RIC1	<---	R.I	,969
RIC2	<---	R.I	,963
RIC3	<---	R.I	,971

Source:Authors' work (2024)

Table 2, overall, shows that all indicators have very high SLF, which indicates that latent constructs such as service quality (SQ), visitor experience (VE), place attachment (PA), and revisit intention (RI) are measured very validly by the indicators used in this model. This gives confidence that the model is used in the study. This has strong validity in measuring hypothesized concepts. Based on the results, The SLF value of each indicator is ≥ 0.5, which shows that characteristic validity good convergence has been achieved in terms of SLF size.

Conclusion table 3 shows the results of the analysis reliability and validity construct show that all indicators For the variables Service Quality (SQ), Visitor Experience (VE), Place Attachment (PA), and Revisit Intention (RI) have a Standardized Loading Factor (SLF) above 0.90, indicating extreme power in measure each construct. The Variance Extracted (AVE) value for all variables is also above 0.50,

indicating validity good converge, where more than 50% of the variance construct is explained by the indicators.

Table 3. Average Variance Extracted (Ave) Calculation Results And Construct Reliability (Cr)

Variables		Sq			Ve			P.A			R.I	
Indicator	Slf	Slf2	Error	Slf	Slf2	Error	Slf	Slf2	Error	Slf	Slf2	Error
EM2	0.978	0.956	0.028									
EM1	0.975	0.951	0.032									
AS2	0.958	0.918	0.050									
AS1	0.964	0.929	0.045									
FY2	0.96	0.922	0.051									
FY1	0.972	0.945	0.035									
RES2	0.96	0.922	0.045									
RES1	0.972	0.945	0.035									
RE2	0.97	0.941	0.041									
RE1	0.965	0.931	0.044									
EMO2				0.942	0.887	0.081						
EMO1				0.969	0.939	0.046						
CO2				0.957	0.916	0.057						
CO1				0.949	0.901	0.085						
SE2				0.968	0.937	0.048						
SE1				0.958	0.918	0.059						
I2							0.972	0.945	0.059			
I1							0.977	0.955	0.046			
D2							0.976	0.953	0.045			
D1							0.979	0.958	0.041			
RI1										0.97	0.941	0.042
RI2										0.974	0.949	0.04
RI3										0.965	0.931	0.053
RI4										0.977	0.955	0.034
RIC1										0.969	0.939	0.048
RIC2										0.963	0.927	0.043
RIC3										0.971	0.943	0.044
sum of std loading	9,674			5,743			3,904			6,789		
sum of std loading2		9,359			5,498			3,810			6,585	
error			0.406			0.376			0.191			0.304
Variance extract		0.958			0.936			0.952			0.956	
construct reliability		0.996			0.989			0.988			0.993	

Source:Authors' work (2024)

Besides that, very high Construct Reliability (CR) values, close to 1.00, show excellent internal consistency among indicators. Overall, the results confirm that the measurement model for all variables in the study has excellent validity and reliability and meets the conditions for use in the analysis.

Table 4 presents the evaluation of a structural equation model (SEM) using various goodness-of-fit indices. The degrees of freedom (DF) are positive, which confirms that the model is identified and can be properly evaluated. The Chi-Square value is 249.988, which is lower than the critical value of 341.395, indicating that the model fits the data well. The significance probability is 0.970, which is greater than 0.05, suggesting that the model's fit is not significantly different from the observed data, further supporting a good fit. Additionally, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.000, well below the cut-off value of 0.08, indicating an excellent fit. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) is 0.924, and the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) is 0.902, both exceeding the threshold of 0.90, showing that the model explains a substantial portion of the variance in the data. The Chi-Square Minimum Discrepancy per Degree of Freedom (CMIN/DF) is 0.850, which is below 2.00, suggesting a reasonable fit. Furthermore, the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) both

exceed the recommended value of 0.95, with scores of 1.004 and 1.000, respectively, indicating an excellent model fit. Lastly, the Parsimonious Normed Fit Index (PNFI) is 0.821, which falls within the acceptable range of 0.60 to 0.90, confirming that the model is both parsimonious and well-fitted. Overall, all indices confirm that the model is a good fit for the data, demonstrating its validity and reliability in representing the underlying structure.

Table 4. Goodness Results of Fit Index

Goodness of Fit Index	Cut Off Value	Results	Model Evaluation
Degress of Freedom	Positive (+)	294	Good Fit
X2-Chi square	calculated Chi-Square value (284.261) is more small from Chi-Square table value (341.395).	249,988	Good Fit
Significance Probability	≥0.05	0.970	Good Fit
RMSEA	≤0.08	0,000	Good Fit
GFI	≥0.90	0.924	Good Fit
AGFI	≥0.90	0.902	Good Fit
CMIN/DF	≤2.00	0.850	Good Fit
TLI	≥0.95	1,004	Good Fit
CFI	≥0.95	1,000	Good Fit
PNFI	0.60-0.90	0.821	Good Fit

Source:Authors' work (2024)

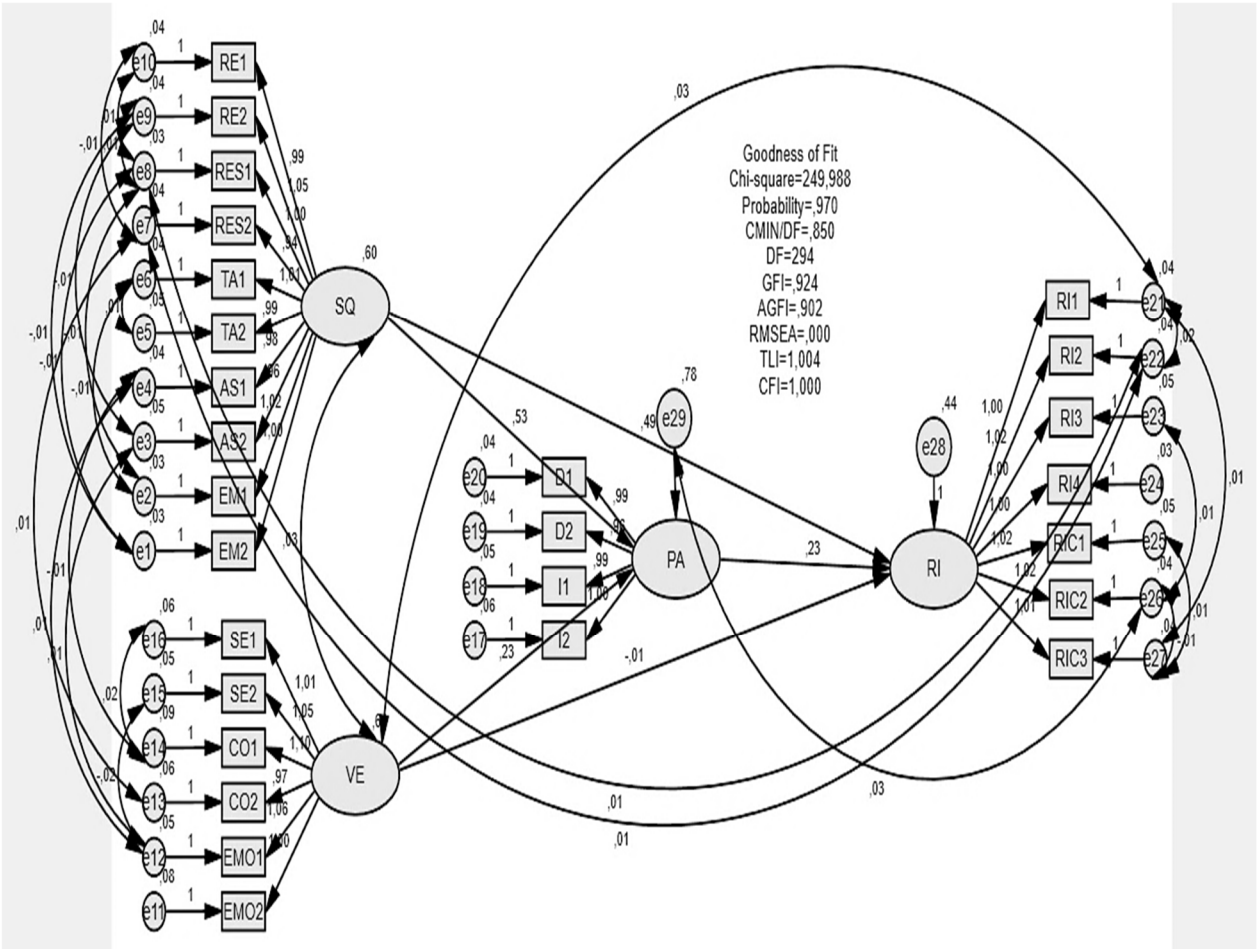

Figure 1 Goodness of Fit. Source: Authors' work (2024)

Conducting modified indices would make a model fit better. The following summary of criteria and analysis results.

Table 5. Influence Analysis Hypothesis Direct

Hypothesis	Track	B	S.E	Cr	P	Conclusion
HI	SQ →PA	,526	,080	6,591	0,000	Supported
H2	VE →PA	,228	,076	2,981	0.003	Supported
H3	SQ →RI	,491	,067	7,335	0,000	Supported
H4	VE →RI	-,008	,059	-,130	0.896	Not supported
H5	PA →RI	,232	,053	4,362	0,000	Supported

Source: Authors' work (2024)

The table 5 analyzes the direct effects of various factors on Place Attachment (PA) and Revisit Intention (RI) based on hypothesis testing. The results indicate that service quality (SQ) has a strong and significant positive impact on both place attachment (PA) and revisit intention (RI), with path coefficients of 0.526 and 0.491, respectively, and p-values of 0.000 for both relationships. This suggests that higher service quality leads to a stronger attachment to the place and a greater intention to revisit. Similarly, visitor experience (VE) significantly and positively affects place attachment (PA) with a path coefficient of 0.228 and a p-value of 0.003, indicating that a better visitor experience enhances attachment to the place. However, VE does not significantly impact revisit intention (RI), as indicated by a path coefficient of -0.008 and a p-value of 0.896, suggesting that the direct effect of visitor experience on the intention to revisit is negligible. Lastly, place attachment (PA) significantly influences revisit intention (RI) with a path coefficient of 0.232 and a p-value of 0.000, highlighting that a stronger attachment to the place increases the likelihood of revisiting. Overall, the analysis underscores the importance of service quality and place attachment in driving revisit intentions, while visitor experience primarily affects place attachment rather than directly influencing revisit intentions

Sobel's test in this research shows that the mediating variable has a significant influence on the independent variable and the dependent variable. The Sobel statistical value obtained is above the specified critical limit, with a significance level of $p < 0.05$, indicating that the mediation effect is real and does not occur by chance.

Table 6. Indirect Influence Analysis Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Track	Sobel Test		Conclusion
		T-Stat	P-Value	
H6	SQ →PA →RI	3,643	0.00026	Significant, effect mediation found
H7	VE →PA →RI	2,474	0.01333	Significant, effect mediation found

Source: Authors' work (2024)

Based on the results of the Sobel Test (Figure 3) in Table 6, it was found that the mediation path between Service Quality (SQ) and Revisit Intention (RI) via Place Attachment (PA) is significant, with a very small p-value ($p < 0.05$) and a t- statistic value of 3.363 (greater than 1.96), indicating that Place Attachment significantly mediates the relationship between Service Quality and Revisit Intention. Apart from that, there is a mediation route between Visitors' Experience (VE) and Revisit Intention (RI) through Place Attachment (PA) is also significant, with a p-value of 0.01333 and a t-statistic value of 2.474 (greater than 1.96), although the effect is weaker than the first path. In general, both hypotheses suggest that place Attachment has a significant mediating effect in the relationship between Service Quality and Revisit Intention and between Visitors' Experience and Revisit Intention. Service quality has a stronger mediating influence through place attachment than visitor experience, making place attachment an important mediating variable in the relationship between service quality, visitor experience, and intention to return.

Descriptive Statistics

This study analyzed responses from 210 toll road users across two major rest areas in West Java. A demographic breakdown reveals that 65.7% of respondents were male, while 34.3% were female. Most were aged 26–35 years (38.1%), with the next largest segment in the 36–45 age range (25.2%). Educational attainment was relatively high, with 62.4% holding undergraduate degrees, suggesting an informed user base. Furthermore, the majority of respondents (79.5%) traveled using private vehicles, consistent with the profile of typical toll road users.

Construct-level mean scores reflected overall favorable perceptions: (1) Service Quality (M = 4.23) was rated highly, likely due to the availability of clean facilities, organized parking, and security; (2) Visitor Experience (M = 4.15) was also positive, indicating users found the environment enjoyable andengaging; (3) Place Attachment (M = 4.10) demonstrated a moderate degree of emotional connection to the rest areas; (4) Revisit Intention (M = 4.25) had the highest score, implying strong behavioral intent to return.

These results provide a descriptive foundation for understanding the user base but do not yet account for segment-specific variations. It is plausible, for instance, that older users or frequent travelers form stronger place attachments, while younger or leisure-focused users may be more influenced by novelty and experience. The lack of subgroup analysis constitutes a limitation, and future research should apply multi-group SEM or segmentation-based clustering to explore these differences.

The educational background showed that the majority of respondents were high school graduates (42.86%), followed by bachelor's degree holders (33.33%), diploma holders (14.29%), and postgraduate **degree** holders (9.52%). In terms of monthly income, most respondents earned IDR 3,000,000–IDR 5,000,000 (38.10%), while others earned less than IDR 3,000,000 (28.57%), IDR 5,000,000–IDR 7,000,000 (19.05%), and above IDR 7,000,000 (14.29%).

The frequency of visits to the rest areas also varied. Most respondents rarely visited the rest areas (1–2 times per year), accounting for 61.90%, followed by those who visited moderately (3–5 times per year) at 28.57%, and frequent visitors (> 5 times per year) at 9.52%. These results provide an overview of the demographic and behavioral characteristics of the respondents, offering valuable insights into the user base of the Cikopo and Palimanan Rest Area.

Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to theory in several ways: (1) Integration of affective and cognitive pathways: Unlike prior TPB applications that rely heavily on perceived behavioral control and attitude, this study introduces place attachment as a mediator, demonstrating that even transient locations can evoke meaningful emotional bonds; (2) Contextual extension: The rest area setting—a space often perceived as transitory—is shown to support attachment-based loyalty, suggesting the universality of place-based behavioral models beyond tourism or residential environments; (3) Revisiting the role of service quality: The modest direct effect of service quality on revisit intention challenges prior assumptions and reinforces the need for integrated models where emotional dimensions moderate or mediate cognitive evaluations.

Comparison with Previous Studies

Fndings align with Buonincontri et al. (2017) and Hosany & Witham (2010), who emphasize the central role of experience and emotional engagement in shaping loyalty. In contrast, they diverge from Rompas & Saerang (2019), who found no significant role for experience in shaping revisit behavior.

These differences likely reflect contextual disparities, such as: (1) Geographic location: The current study focuses on high-traffic toll corridors in Java, while prior studies may be based in less dynamic regions; (2) Cultural expectations: User expectations in Indonesia—where rest areas may serve as prayer spaces, dining hubs, and community stops—may differ from Western contexts; (3) Sampling frames: Differences in demographic composition and sampling methods could affect the perceived relevance of experience vs. utility. Without acknowledging these nuances, generalizing across studies becomes misleading. This highlights the need for context-sensitive theorization, particularly in behavioral modeling.

Practical and Policy Implications

Findings have actionable implications for both public and private rest area operators: (1) Visitor Experience emerged as the strongest indirect predictor of revisit intention. Design strategies should prioritize ambiance, sensory stimulation (e.g., music, visuals), and cultural themes to create memorable impressions; (2) Place Attachment should be developed through symbolic branding, loyalty programs, or local engagement (e.g., art exhibitions, local crafts); (3) Service Quality improvements should move beyond hygiene and safety to include responsive service, real-time information, and user-centric spatial layouts.

Importantly, each recommendation must be tied to validated indicators. For instance, the item "The atmosphere of this rest area makes me feel relaxed" (under experience) can guide spatial design; while "I feel a personal connection to this rest area" (under attachment) suggests the need for emotional resonance in branding.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has several methodological and contextual limitations: (1) Geographic scope: Limited to two full-service rest areas in West Java, reducing ecological generalizability; (2) Cross-sectional design: Fails to account for behavioral evolution over time or in response to policy changes; (3) Lack of control variables: External influences like traffic conditions, day of week, or weather were not controlled; (4) on-random sampling: Though purposive sampling ensured relevance, it may introduce bias; (5) No satisfaction variable: Its exclusion from the model limits interpretive richness; (6) Lack of demographic segmentation: No sub-group analysis was conducted to uncover heterogeneity in responses.

Future research should address these gaps through: (1) Longitudinal and experimental designs; (2) Inclusion of satisfaction and loyalty constructs; (3) Multi-site probabilistic sampling; (4) Structural invariance testing across user type. Such extensions will provide richer understanding of rest area behavior and inform policy designs that balance infrastructure investment with behavioral outcomes.

Discussion

This study found that service quality positively affects place attachment and revisit intention at Rest Area KM 166A and KM 164B. Good service quality increases visitor satisfaction and strengthens their emotional bond with the place, ultimately driving their intention to return. This result is consistent with the research of Cheng et al. (2021), which shows that service quality is a significant factor in creating customer loyalty and encouraging them to return to the same destination.

Furthermore, place attachment has been proven to be a significant mediator in the relationship between service quality and revisit intention, as well as between visitor experience and revisit intention. These findings emphasize the importance of visitors' emotional attachment to a place, strengthening the influence of service quality and visitor experience on their intention to return. This result is consistent with the studies by Zheng et al (2024) and Nursyamsiah & Setiawan (2023),who found that place attachment plays a crucial role in enhancing customer loyalty to tourist destinations.

However, an interesting finding from this study is that visitor experience does not directly influence revisit intention, which contrasts with some previous research, such as Rahma Yulistira et al., (2024), who found that visitor experience has a direct impact. Additionally, Munawar et al., (2021) noted that the tourist experience variable does not have a positive or significant effect on revisit intention. In this research, visitor experience only affects revisit intention through place attachment, suggesting that the experience must be translated into emotional attachment before it can influence the intention to return. This finding aligns with Buonincontri et al., (2017), who emphasized the importance of emotional factors in shaping visitor behavior.

Moreover, this study enriches the existing literature by showing that place attachment is a critical variable in toll road rest areas. These results support Zheng et al. (2024), who stated that place attachment can significantly influence revisit intention. When visitors feel emotionally attached to a rest area, they are more likely to revisit the location.

Overall, this study strengthens the understanding that service quality and emotional attachment are the main factors that influence revisit intention to rest areas. Rest area managers are advised to focus on improving service quality and strengthening visitors' emotional attachment to the place, ultimately increasing the rate of revisits.

Conclusions

This study aimed to examine the determinants of revisit intention among toll road users at rest areas in Indonesia, focusing on the direct and indirect effects of service quality and visitor experience, with place attachment as a mediating construct. The findings provide empirical evidence that revisit

intention is not solely a function of functional evaluations (e.g., cleanliness, accessibility), but is significantly influenced by users′ emotional bonds with the rest area.

All tested hypotheses were supported. Visitor experience and service quality significantly influenced place attachment, and in turn, place attachment demonstrated a strong effect on revisit intention. Mediation analysis confirmed that place attachment acts as a key psychological mechanism bridging cognitive perceptions and behavioral outcomes. These findings contribute to the refinement of theoretical frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Place Attachment Theory, particularly in non-residential and transient settings like transportation facilities.

Despite its contributions, the study is not without limitations. The geographic scope was limited to two rest areas within the same region, potentially affecting the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of the study does not allow for observations of behavioral changes over time. External variables such as traffic volume, time of day, or weather conditions were not controlled, and there was no demographic segmentation in the analysis.

To improve the utility and transferability of findings, future research should adopt a longitudinal design, incorporate more diverse locations, include satisfaction and loyalty constructs, and explore demographic subgroup analysis using multi-group structural modeling.

Practical Implications and Recommendations

While the original discussion presented general suggestions, this conclusion offers data-driven, analytically grounded, and operationally focused recommendations based on statistically significant results.

Enhance Visitor Experience Through Immersive Design: (1) *Justification*: Visitor experience had the strongest total effect (direct and indirect) on revisit intention; (2) *Action*: Invest in environmental aesthetics, thematic architecture, rest-inducing zones (e.g., gardens, music corners), and digital navigation aids; (3) *Responsibility*: Infrastructure development teams under the toll road operator (e.g., PT Jasa Marga or equivalent).

Strengthen Emotional Engagement via Local Identity Integration: (1) *Justification*: Place attachment emerged as the most influential predictor of revisit behavior; (2) *Action*: Introduce local cultural elements (e.g., batik displays, local cuisine stalls, community events) to personalize and humanize rest area spaces; (3) *Responsibility*: Branding and marketing departments in collaboration with regional cultural offices.

Reframe Service Quality to Prioritize Personalization; (1) *Justification*: Though significant, the direct effect of service quality was modest–suggesting quality alone does not drive loyalty; (2) *Action*: Move beyond basic cleanliness; introduce staff responsiveness training, dynamic customer feedback systems, and real-time updates on facilities; (3) *Responsibility*: Rest area operations manager and human resource development units.

Develop Loyalty Programs Tied to Place Attachment Indicators: (1) *Justification*: Indicators such as "I feel personally connected to this rest area" had high factor loadings; (2) *Action*: Launch user loyalty cards, stamp programs, or mobile app-based incentives targeting repeat visitors; (3) *Responsibility*: Customer relationship management (CRM) division or external service vendors.

Prioritize Facility Improvements Based on Key Experience Indicators: (1) *Justification*: Experience items like relaxation, atmosphere, and spatial comfort scored high in user ratings; (2) *Action*: Redesign seating zones, optimize lighting, ensure thermal comfort, and provide clean family facilities; (3) *Responsibility*: Design consultants and operations teams under the regulatory body overseeing rest areas (e.g., BPJT).

By tying each recommendation directly to validated constructs and high-loading indicators, the study offers actionable guidance for practitioners seeking to improve user satisfaction, emotional engagement, and behavioral loyalty in toll road rest areas. This integrated approach bridges the gap between empirical research and infrastructure policy, thereby maximizing the societal relevance of behavioral models in public service environments.

Author Contribution

Indri Ferdiani Suarna: Conceptualisation, Methodology, Validation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing. Vanessa Gaffar, Lili Adi Wibowo, Puspo Dewi Dirgantara: Writing – Review & Editing. Ahmad Azam Sulaiman: Validation, Review, and Feedback. All Authors have read the final version of the paper.

Declaration of interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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