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The cultural heritage tourism of Banten: Potentials, commercialization, and the challenges of sustainability

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Abstract

Cultural heritage tourism plays a strategic role in strengthening local identity while enhancing destination attractiveness through authentic tourist experiences. This study aims to analyze the effects of commercialization, object-based authenticity, existential authenticity, and convenience on tourist satisfaction and loyalty in cultural heritage destinations across Banten Province. A quantitative research approach was employed using primary data collected from 1,540 tourist respondents through structured questionnaires. The questionnaire served as the research instrument, and the data were analyzed using the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) technique with the SmartPLS application. The results show that commercialization positively affects object authenticity ($O = 0.062$; $p = 0.007$), although the effect size is small. Object authenticity has a strong effect on existential authenticity ($O = 0.825$; $p = 0.000$). Furthermore, existential authenticity significantly influences tourist satisfaction ($O = 0.688$; $p = 0.000$) and loyalty ($O = 0.790$; $p = 0.000$). In contrast, commercialization has a negative effect on satisfaction ($O = -0.045$; $p = 0.023$) and loyalty ($O = -0.051$; $p = 0.004$). Additionally, ease strengthens the relationship between commercialization and object authenticity ($O = 0.092$; $p = 0.000$). Overall, all hypotheses are supported ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the model is statistically robust in explaining tourist satisfaction and loyalty. The study provides both theoretical and practical contributions for destination managers in designing sustainable cultural heritage tourism strategies that are not solely profit-oriented but also focused on preserving cultural values and enhancing the overall quality of tourist experiences.

Keywords: Authenticity; accessibility; loyalty; satisfaction; tourism

INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage tourism is considered significant in this study because it represents a rapidly growing segment of the global tourism industry and plays a crucial role in shaping tourists' experiences, satisfaction, and loyalty. According to the Heritage Tourism Market Report, the global market value of cultural heritage tourism reached USD 587.1 billion in 2023, reflecting the increasing demand for authentic, unique, and locally grounded cultural experiences. This growing importance highlights the need to examine the key

factors influencing tourist behavior within cultural heritage destinations, particularly in balancing commercialization and authenticity to ensure sustainable tourism development (Bitusikova, 2021).

This phenomenon indicates that cultural heritage tourism is not merely a recreational activity but also serves as a strategic instrument for preserving historical values, traditions, and community identity. As stated by Dela and Tiatco (2019), “cultural heritage tourism provides a deeper connection to the cultural roots of a community while offering a unique and meaningful experience for visitors”.

Conceptually, cultural heritage tourism encompasses two main dimensions. The first dimension is tangible cultural heritage, which includes historical sites, ancient buildings, monuments, artifacts, and cultural landscapes (Vaz et al., 2023). The second dimension is intangible cultural heritage, such as traditions, arts, languages, rituals, and customs that are passed down from generation to generation (Reshma et al., 2023).

These two dimensions complement each other in shaping the unique appeal of a destination, not only providing tourists with an authentic experience but also strengthening local cultural identity and pride. Novita et al. (2024) emphasize that “cultural heritage tourism plays a crucial role in reinforcing cultural identity and fostering a sense of pride in local culture”.

In the context of sustainable tourism development, cultural heritage tourism also contributes to the preservation of cultural diversity, the strengthening of historical values, and the improvement of community well-being. Recent bibliometric studies have found that “cultural heritage tourism within the context of sustainability has become a popular field and has attracted considerable attention from researchers in recent years”.

In addition, immersive technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR) are increasingly being utilized to enhance destination attractiveness without compromising sustainability principles. As highlighted in *Tourism Management Perspectives* (2023), “immersive technologies can enhance the sustainability and resilience of tourist attractions”.

Banten Province is one of the regions in Indonesia endowed with a rich cultural heritage and great potential to be developed into a leading tourism destination. The area is renowned for the historical legacy of the Banten Sultanate, the Great Banten Mosque, and various archaeological sites that reflect the grandeur of its past civilization. In addition, Banten is home to a diverse range of local traditions and performing arts, such as Debus, Rampak Bedug, and various traditional ceremonies that continue to be preserved to this day (Pakhudin et al., 2022).

This cultural richness positions Banten not only as a destination for religious and historical tourism but also as a space for learning and authentic experiences for visitors. Annida and Baihaqi (2024), in their study on the Nyalawean tradition, noted that “the Nyalawean tradition has the potential to be developed as a cultural tourism product, provided that preservation aspects and community participation remain the main priorities”.

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However, tourism development in Banten also presents serious challenges, particularly concerning the phenomenon of commercialization. Commercialization in cultural tourism refers to the process of packaging, modifying, and adapting cultural heritage to meet the demands of the tourism market (Pennington et al., 2023). This process may involve the simplification of rituals, the transformation of traditions into tourist performances, the production of souvenirs based on cultural symbols, or the conversion of historical sites into commercially oriented tourist attractions (Kusumah et al., 2021).

In this context, a comparison with Langzhong City, China, is considered relevant, as both destinations represent cultural heritage tourism sites facing similar challenges in balancing commercialization and authenticity. The comparison is based on key parameters, including the level of tourism commercialization, the preservation of cultural authenticity, and their impacts on tourist satisfaction. Previous studies in Langzhong City have shown that tourism commercialization can positively influence tourists' perceptions of authenticity and satisfaction; however, negative effects emerge when excessive commercialization leads to the loss of distinctive cultural characteristics (Zhang et al., 2023) .

Commercialization has two opposing sides. On one hand, it can stimulate economic growth, expand tourist access, and improve the well-being of local communities (Ivanny, 2023). On the other hand, excessive commercialization can threaten cultural authenticity, which is often the primary attraction for tourists. Sun et al. (2019) emphasize that "when cultural heritage is excessively commodified, its intrinsic cultural values are at risk of erosion."

In the context of Banten, cultural degradation may occur when tourism focuses mainly on economic gains without proper preservation efforts. This can lead to a loss of cultural values and local identity. Over-commercialization may reduce the authenticity of cultural elements. As a result, the quality of the tourist experience can decline. Therefore, balancing economic and cultural aspects is important.

Moreover, cultural sustainability, as an integral part of cultural heritage tourism, also faces various external challenges, such as high visitor pressure, changes in spatial planning policies, and limited participation of local communities. Recent bibliometric studies have identified that issues such as stakeholder participation, cultural heritage preservation, and the balance between economic benefits and cultural conservation have become primary focal points, particularly in developing countries.

A study published in the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights* (2023) emphasizes that "existential authenticity has a significant effect on tourist satisfaction, with aesthetic experience acting as a moderating variable in this relationship," indicating that the authenticity of experiences is a crucial factor in maintaining tourists' satisfaction levels.

Based on this context, the present study aims to address the following main research question: How does commercialization affect tourists' experiences and their perceptions of cultural authenticity at cultural heritage tourism destinations in Banten Province? In addition, this study seeks to

examine how these perceptions influence tourist satisfaction and loyalty as key outcomes of the tourism experience.

This study is important for developing a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between cultural potential, commercialization dynamics, tourist perceptions, and sustainability challenges. The findings are expected to provide theoretical contributions by addressing gaps in the literature on local cultural heritage tourism, while also offering practical implications for stakeholders in Banten in formulating sustainable, inclusive, and culturally preservation-oriented tourism management strategies.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A state-of-the-art review indicates that cultural heritage tourism has been extensively discussed by both academics and practitioners. Cultural tourism encompasses learning activities, discovery, experiential engagement, and the consumption of a destination's heritage, including tangible elements such as historical sites and buildings, as well as intangible elements such as traditions, arts, and cultural values.

These activities play a crucial role in shaping local, national, and ethnic identities for tourists. They also provide meaningful cultural experiences that deepen tourists' understanding and appreciation of heritage values. Through these experiences, tourists can develop a stronger emotional connection with the destination and its cultural uniqueness.

In its development, the commercialization of cultural tourism has emerged as a central issue. On one hand, commercialization is considered capable of enhancing accessibility and tourist appeal; on the other hand, it has the potential to diminish cultural authenticity due to adaptations made to meet market demands.

Previous studies have shown that although commercialization provides economic benefits, the process often alters the original cultural meanings presented. Nevertheless, research specifically examining the impact of commercialization on tourists' perceptions of cultural authenticity remains limited, particularly in the context of Banten Province.

Based on the literature review, several research gaps remain. First, in-depth studies on tourists' perceptions of cultural authenticity at cultural heritage destinations in Banten are still limited, particularly amidst the increasing phenomenon of commercialization. Previous studies have given limited attention to how commercialization influences authenticity and tourists' experiences.

A critical question arises regarding the extent to which tourists perceive the presented culture as still authentic or, conversely, altered due to market and economic orientations. As emphasized by Eck, Zhang, and An (2023), "Visitors' perceived authenticity significantly enhances a more conscious and meaningful tourist experience."

Second, although some studies have highlighted the economic aspects of cultural tourism, comprehensive research assessing the impact of

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commercialization on tourists' experiences—including emotional, aesthetic, and cultural dimensions—remains very limited. This suggests the need for a more comprehensive understanding of its impact.

For example, a case study in Chengkan Traditional Village, China demonstrated that tourists' authentic experiences are shaped through direct interactions with local communities and interpretations of carefully preserved traditions. These interactions allow tourists to gain deeper cultural understanding and a more meaningful travel experience (Yuan, Kong, & Chen, 2024).

Third, contextual and locally grounded sustainability strategies have rarely been the focus of research. Yet, community involvement, local government regulations, and cultural preservation mechanisms are crucial factors in balancing economic benefits with cultural authenticity. These elements are essential to ensure the long-term sustainability of cultural heritage tourism destinations.

Studies on intangible cultural heritage in China emphasize that “the dimension of alienation from the original culture significantly influences perceptions of authenticity and community support for cultural tourism” (Zhang et al., 2023). This perspective is highly relevant to Banten Province, where commercialization pressures have the potential to diminish community support for cultural preservation efforts if not properly managed.

Previous studies have examined various aspects of cultural heritage tourism, yet their findings remain fragmented. Cultural heritage has been widely recognized as a key driver of tourism development and identity formation (Bitusikova, 2021; Lee et al., 2020), while cultural values also influence social interactions and tourism-related activities (Ahern et al., 2015). In addition, several studies emphasize that authenticity plays a crucial role in shaping tourists' behavioral intentions, satisfaction, and loyalty in heritage tourism contexts (Bassiony & Chahine, 2025; Kim & Thapa, 2023; Wang et al., 2022). Meanwhile, research on commercialization presents mixed findings. Some studies suggest that commercialization can enhance tourism experiences and improve accessibility and presentation of cultural products (Cao et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2024), whereas other studies indicate that excessive commercialization may reduce perceived authenticity and negatively affect tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Chen et al., 2023; Su et al., 2016).

However, despite these contributions, previous studies tend to examine cultural potential, commercialization, authenticity, and tourist experience separately or within limited models, without integrating these variables into a comprehensive framework. Moreover, most studies focus on general or international contexts, with limited empirical attention to specific local settings such as Banten Province. As a result, there remains a lack of research that simultaneously integrates cultural potential, commercialization practices, perceptions of authenticity, tourist experiences, and sustainability challenges within a unified and context-specific framework.

This gap highlights the need for a more holistic approach and provides a strong rationale for conducting the present study. In line with these research gaps, this study aims to: (1) describe the cultural heritage potential of Banten,

encompassing both tangible and intangible heritage; (2) analyze how commercialization influences the presentation of culture, including ritual modifications, performances, and artifact interpretations; (3) examine tourists' perceptions of cultural authenticity and how commercialization shapes these perceptions; and (4) assess the sustainability challenges of cultural tourism in Banten from social, economic, environmental, and cultural perspectives.

Previous studies have explored various aspects of cultural heritage tourism, including cultural potential, authenticity, commercialization, tourist experiences, and sustainability. For example, Bitusikova (2021) highlighted the role of cultural heritage in driving tourism development and shaping community identity, while Lee et al. (2020) emphasized that cultural values influence social interactions and tourism-related activities. Authenticity has been shown to play a central role in tourist satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioral intentions (Bassiony & Chahine, 2025; Kim & Thapa, 2023; Wang et al., 2022).

Research on commercialization, however, provides mixed insights. Cao et al. (2025) and Liu et al. (2024) found that commercialization can enhance tourism experiences, improve accessibility, and facilitate the presentation of cultural products. Conversely, Chen et al (2023) and Su et al, 2016) reported that excessive commercialization may reduce perceived authenticity, leading to lower tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Similarly, studies in international contexts such as Chengkan Traditional Village, China (Zhang et al., 2023), and the Graeco-Roman Museum (Bassiony & Chahine, 2025) indicate that cultural commercialization requires careful balance to maintain authenticity and tourist engagement.

Although these studies contribute valuable insights, their findings are fragmented and often focus on single aspects—either commercialization, authenticity, or tourist experiences—without integrating them into a comprehensive framework. Furthermore, most research has been conducted in general or international settings, leaving limited empirical attention to local contexts such as Banten Province. This indicates a clear research gap: no previous study has simultaneously integrated cultural potential, commercialization practices, tourist perceptions of authenticity, experiences, and sustainability challenges within a context-specific, unified frameworks.

The contributions of this study encompass three main aspects;

First, from a theoretical perspective, it fills gaps in the literature by providing new empirical evidence on the complex relationships between commercialization, tourist experiences, cultural authenticity, and sustainability. This contribution enriches existing frameworks by offering a more integrated understanding of these interrelated constructs.

Second, from a practical perspective, the study offers concrete recommendations for local governments, destination managers, and community stakeholders in managing cultural destinations to remain competitive without compromising their authentic values. These recommendations can support the development of more effective and sustainable tourism management practices.

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Third, from a policy perspective, the research provides relevant insights for developing regulations on cultural heritage protection, site management mechanisms, and community participation models, ensuring that cultural tourism in Banten remains sustainable, authentic, and competitive at both national and global levels.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of commercialization on tourists' perceptions of cultural authenticity at cultural heritage tourism destinations in Banten Province. This approach enabled the integration of statistical analysis with deeper contextual insights from the field.

The quantitative approach was used to statistically measure the relationship between the level of commercialization and tourists' perceptions of cultural authenticity. Data were collected through structured questionnaires using a 5-point Likert scale. Data analysis was conducted using linear regression techniques to examine the effect of the independent variable (commercialization) on the dependent variable (perceptions of cultural authenticity).

The sample size was determined using Lemeshow's formula (1997) with a 95% confidence level ($Z = 1.96$), a population proportion of 0.5, and a margin of error of 0.05. Based on this calculation, the minimum required sample size was 385 respondents for each research site. Accordingly, the total number of respondents in this study consisted of tourists visiting four main destinations—Banten Sultanate, Great Banten Mosque, Baduy Traditional Village, and Benteng Heritage Museum—amounting to 1,540 respondents in total.

The qualitative approach was employed to gain a deeper understanding of tourists' experiences and perceptions, as well as destination managers' views on the impacts of commercialization. Qualitative data were collected through: (1) In-depth interviews with tourists and destination managers; (2) Direct observations of tourism activities and cultural presentations at the research sites; and (3) Document analysis, including promotional materials, archives, and tourism management policies.

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns, themes, and key categories related to commercialization and perceptions of cultural authenticity. This method allows for a deeper interpretation of participants' experiences and perspectives within the research context. It also helps uncover underlying meanings that may not be captured through quantitative analysis.

The results from both quantitative and qualitative analyses were integrated using triangulation techniques to enhance the validity of the findings. This approach allows for a comparison between statistical data and empirical narratives, providing a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the impact of commercialization on tourists' perceptions of cultural authenticity in Banten Province.

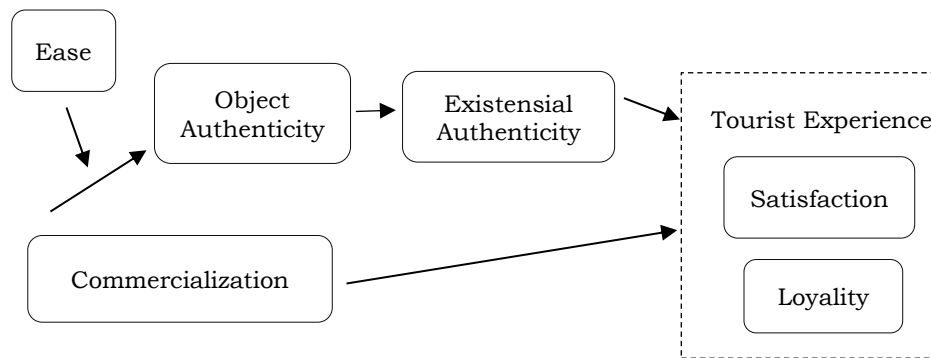


Figure 1, Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of this study.

It illustrates the conceptual framework of this study highlighting on the relationships among key variables such as ease, commercialization, object authenticity, existential authenticity, and tourist experience, which is manifested through satisfaction and loyalty. The framework explains how these variables interact in influencing tourists' perceptions and behavioral outcomes within cultural heritage tourism.

Ease is considered a factor influencing the initial relationship between commercialization and object authenticity. Subsequently, object-based authenticity contributes to the formation of existential authenticity, which in turn affects the tourist experience. This experience is measured through two main dimensions: satisfaction and loyalty. In addition, commercialization also has a direct effect on the tourist experience.

This framework serves as a foundation for understanding how these elements interact, particularly in the context of tourists' perceptions when visiting cultural and heritage-based tourism destinations. It also helps explain how these interactions shape tourists' experiences and influence their behavioral responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The demographic profile of respondents provides an overview of the characteristics of tourists who participated in this study, encompassing key variables such as gender, age, education level, and frequency of visits to cultural and heritage tourism destinations. This information is crucial for contextualizing the research findings, as it illustrates the diversity and representativeness of the sample used.

Understanding tourists' demographic profiles helps explain how different backgrounds may influence their perceptions and experiences regarding the levels of commercialization and cultural authenticity. Accordingly, this profile

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plays an important role in supporting a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the study results.

Table 1. Respondent Demographic Profile

Description	Criteria	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	819	53.18%
	Female	721	46.82%
Age	15-24	378	24.55%
	25-34	472	30.65%
	35-44	401	26.04%
	> 45	289	18.76%
Education	High School	612	39.74%
	University	521	33.83%
	Post Graduate	238	15.45%
	Others	169	10.98%
Visit	First Time	752	48.83%
	2-3 Times	468	30.39%
	Regular Visitor	320	20.78%

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of respondents, including gender, age, education level, and frequency of visits to cultural tourism destinations in Banten Province. The distribution by gender shows that the majority of respondents were male (53.18%), while female respondents accounted for 46.82%. This proportion indicates a relatively balanced representation between the two genders, suggesting that the data obtained can be considered to comprehensively reflect the characteristics of tourists within the context of this study.

In terms of age, the majority of respondents belonged to the productive age group, with the largest proportion aged 25–34 years (30.65%), followed by those aged 35–44 years (26.04%) and 15–24 years (24.55%). Meanwhile, respondents over 45 years old accounted for 18.76%. This composition reflects participation from various age groups, although the proportion of older tourists is relatively smaller.

Respondents' education levels also showed considerable variation. Approximately 39.74% had completed senior secondary education, followed by 33.83% holding a bachelor's degree, 15.45% with postgraduate qualifications, and 10.98% categorized as "others." This variation indicates that tourists with diverse educational backgrounds participated in cultural tourism activities in Banten.

Regarding visit frequency, nearly half of the respondents (48.83%) were first-time visitors to the research sites, 30.39% had visited 2–3 times, and 20.78% were repeat visitors. This composition indicates that cultural tourism in Banten is capable of attracting new tourists while retaining a portion of returning visitors. These findings are important for understanding the relationship between tourists' familiarity with a destination and their perceptions of commercialization and cultural authenticity.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistic

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Min	Max	Count
Convenience	15.842	2.317	5.368	9	20	1540

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Min	Max	Count
Commercialization	14.772	2.115	4.474	4	20	1540
Object-Based Authenticity	16.914	2.642	6.980	11	20	1540
Existential Authenticity	17.436	2.583	6.676	12	20	1540
Tourist Satisfaction	15.983	2.248	5.053	12	20	1540
Tourist Loyalty	16.227	2.331	5.433	13	20	1540

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for various tourism dimensions, highlighting measures of central tendency and data variability. The Existential Authenticity dimension recorded the highest mean value of 17.436 with a standard deviation of 2.583, indicating that this aspect is considered highly important by respondents despite some variation in responses. Additionally, the Object Authenticity and Tourist Loyalty dimensions also showed relatively high mean values, at 16.914 and 16.227, respectively, reflecting respondents' strong attention to the authenticity of tourist objects and their loyalty to the destinations visited.

The Tourist Satisfaction and Ease dimensions showed moderate mean values of 15.983 and 15.842, respectively, with relatively low standard deviations. This indicates a fairly consistent perception among respondents regarding accessibility and the level of satisfaction with their tourism experiences.

Meanwhile, the Commercialization dimension recorded the lowest mean value of 14.772, suggesting that although commercialization is recognized by respondents, its perceived importance is relatively lower compared to the other dimensions. This indicates that respondents may prioritize experiential and authenticity-related aspects over commercial elements in their tourism experience.

Overall, the data indicate differences in perceived importance and response consistency across the various tourism dimensions. The most prominent aspects are existential authenticity and object authenticity, whereas commercialization is considered less dominant. This suggests that respondents tend to prioritize authentic and satisfying tourism experiences over the commercial aspects of the destinations.

The initial stage of SEM-PLS testing involves the evaluation of the outer model to assess the validity and reliability of the indicators forming the latent variables. This evaluation includes a convergent validity test, which aims to measure the extent to which indicators represent the same construct, with the criteria being factor loadings greater than 0.7 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) above 0.5.

Additionally, a reliability test is conducted to assess the internal consistency among indicators using Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha (CA), both of which should exceed 0.7 to be considered reliable. This stage is crucial to ensure that the indicators accurately and consistently measure the latent variables before proceeding to the next stage of analysis. The results of this evaluation are presented in Table 3

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Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct / Indicator	Loading Factor	CA	CR	AVE
Convenience		0.925	0.933	0.468
Accessibility to the tourism site (transportation, routes, and supporting facilities)	0.714			
Ease of obtaining information about the tourist attraction	0.749			
Availability of supporting facilities (toilets, rest areas, parking lots, etc.)	0.775			
Ease of purchasing tickets or cultural products	0.752			
Commercialization		0.902	0.928	0.763
Transformation of cultural functions into tourist attractions	0.859			
Packaging of culture for promotional or marketing purposes	0.834			
Sale of cultural products as souvenirs	0.934			
Influence of tourism management on the economic value of culture	0.865			
Object-Based Authenticity		0.888	0.923	0.749
Physical authenticity of tourist objects (buildings, historical sites, artifacts)	0.838			
Authenticity of cultural presentations (rituals, dances, traditional ceremonies)	0.856			
Continuity of traditions across generations	0.878			
Degree of cultural change or adaptation for tourism purposes	0.887			
Existential Authenticity		0.887	0.924	0.753
Personal authentic experiences when visiting the destination	0.920			
Emotional connectedness with the culture visited	0.908			
Satisfaction in deeply exploring cultural values	0.895			
Perception of the spiritual value or cultural meaning presented	0.736			
Tourist Satisfaction		0.861	0.905	0.705
Satisfaction with the facilities provided	0.771			
Satisfaction with the cultural experiences obtained	0.870			
Alignment between expectations and actual experiences	0.863			
Overall level of satisfaction with the visit	0.851			
Tourist Loyalty		0.868	0.911	0.721
Intention to revisit the destination	0.735			
Willingness to recommend the destination to others	0.792			
Loyalty to authentic cultural experiences	0.915			
Commitment to products or services offered by the destination	0.937			

Table 3 presents the results of the construct reliability and validity analysis for the various dimensions of cultural heritage tourism. All dimensions demonstrated good to excellent levels of reliability and validity, indicating that the measurement items consistently capture the intended constructs. The results also confirm that the constructs are both internally consistent and accurately represent the theoretical dimensions, providing a solid foundation for subsequent hypothesis testing and structural model analysis.

The Commercialization dimension showed CA = 0.902, CR = 0.928, and AVE = 0.763, with indicator loadings above 0.800. The Object Authenticity dimension had CA = 0.888, CR = 0.923, and AVE = 0.749, with indicator loadings above 0.800. The Existential Authenticity dimension recorded CA = 0.887, CR = 0.924, and AVE = 0.753, with indicator loadings above 0.700.

The Tourist Satisfaction dimension showed CA = 0.861, CR = 0.905, and AVE = 0.705, with indicator loadings above 0.700. The Tourist Loyalty dimension demonstrated CA = 0.868, CR = 0.911, and AVE = 0.721, with indicator loadings above 0.700. These results confirm that all constructs are both reliable and valid, providing a solid basis for further SEM-PLS analysis.

The Ease dimension recorded a Cronbach's Alpha (CA) of 0.925, Composite Reliability (CR) of 0.933, and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.46. The high CA and CR values indicate excellent internal consistency, suggesting that the indicators forming the Ease variable reliably represent the construct.

Meanwhile, the AVE value, slightly below the ideal threshold of 0.50, indicates that the construct's ability to explain the variance of its indicators is not fully optimal. However, since Ease functions as a moderating variable in the model, this slightly lower AVE value is still considered acceptable.

This is due to the nature of moderating constructs, which are generally formed from interactions between latent variables, resulting in greater indicator variance and weaker correlations among indicators. Therefore, as long as the construct reliability remains high and the moderating effect is statistically significant, the Ease variable is still considered valid and suitable to be used as a moderator in the research model (Hair et al., 2021).

Following the completion of the outer model evaluation, the next step is the assessment of the structural model (inner model). This stage includes evaluating the relationships among latent variables, testing the model's predictive capability using the coefficient of determination (R-squared, R²), and assessing model fit. In addition, the significance of the relationships among latent variables is analyzed through path coefficients and T-statistics.

This testing aims to determine whether the research hypotheses can be accepted or rejected, while also measuring the strength of the relationships among latent variables within the model. Consequently, this stage provides the basis for understanding the extent to which the constructs developed in the study have significant relationships and support the proposed theoretical model.

Table 4. R-Squared

Latent Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Object Authenticity	0.352	0.351
Existential Authenticity	0.680	0.680
Tourist Satisfaction	0.476	0.475
Tourist Loyalty	0.627	0.626

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Table 4 presents the R-Squared and Adjusted R-Squared values for each construct in the research model. These values indicate the proportion of variance in each dependent variable explained by the independent variables. The results suggest that the model has adequate explanatory power, supporting the validity of the proposed SEM-PLS framework.

The Object Authenticity dimension recorded an R-Squared value of 0.352, meaning that 35.2% of the variance in object authenticity is explained by the independent variables in the model. This value falls within the moderate category, suggesting that factors such as commercialization and ease have a considerable influence on tourists' perceptions of object authenticity at cultural tourism destinations.

Furthermore, the Existential Authenticity construct shows an R-Squared value of 0.680, indicating that 68.0% of the variance in existential authenticity is explained by the preceding variables. This value falls within the strong category, suggesting that factors such as object authenticity, commercialization, and ease make a substantial contribution to tourists' personal and emotional experiences of authenticity.

For the Tourist Satisfaction construct, the R-Squared value is 0.476, signifying that the model explains 47.6% of the variance in tourist satisfaction. This value is categorized as moderate, implying that authenticity and ease play a relatively important role in shaping tourist satisfaction, although external factors outside the model may also influence the overall level of satisfaction.

Meanwhile, the Tourist Loyalty construct records an R-Squared value of 0.627, indicating that 62.7% of the variance in tourist loyalty is explained by variables such as authenticity and tourist satisfaction. This value falls within the strong category, demonstrating that the perceptions of authenticity and the satisfaction experienced during the visit play a dominant role in fostering tourists' loyalty toward the destination.

Overall, the R-Squared values in this model range from 0.352 to 0.680, suggesting that the research model possesses moderate to strong explanatory power. Accordingly, the relationships among constructs are able to explain a substantial proportion of variance in the dependent variables, indicating that the structural model exhibits adequate predictive validity.

After assessing the model's predictive capability through the R-Squared values across various dimensions of cultural heritage tourism, the next step involves evaluating the relationships among constructs through hypothesis testing. This analysis aims to determine the significance and strength of the proposed paths, providing insights into how commercialization, authenticity, and other factors influence tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

Table 5 presents the results of this analysis, highlighting the significance of the effects of independent variables on dependent variables. This enables an assessment of both the theoretical validity and the strength of relationships among the dimensions within the proposed model. This stage serves to determine the extent to which the hypothesized relationships between

constructs are empirically supported, while also examining the consistency of the findings with the conceptual framework previously develop.

Tabel 5. Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Path Description	Original Sample (O)	P Values	Decision
H1	Commercialization → Object-Based Authenticity	0.050	0.035	Supported
H2	Object-Based Authenticity → Existential Authenticity	0.302	0.000	Supported
H3a	Existential Authenticity → Tourist Satisfaction	0.120	0.000	Supported
H3b	Existential Authenticity → Tourist Loyalty	0.189	0.000	Supported
H4a	Commercialization → Tourist Satisfaction	0.047	0.000	Supported
H4b	Commercialization → Tourist Loyalty	0.895	0.000	Supported
H5a	Moderating Effect of Convenience on Commercialization → Object-Based Authenticity	0.047	0.002	Supported

Table 5 presents the results of the hypothesis testing, illustrating the relationships among various constructs within the context of cultural heritage tourism in relation to tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Overall, the analysis indicates that all proposed hypotheses are significantly supported ($p < 0.05$). These findings confirm that the research model demonstrates a high level of robustness and validity in explaining the interrelationships among the dimensions that influence tourist behavior.

H1 indicates that commercialization has a positive effect on object authenticity ($O = 0.062$; $p = 0.007$). This result suggests that commercialization practices within the context of cultural tourism can enhance tourists' perceptions of object authenticity, although the magnitude of the effect is relatively small. In other words, the packaging and promotion of cultural attractions do not necessarily diminish their authenticity; instead, they can strengthen the authentic image when carried out proportionally and with respect for cultural values.

Furthermore, H2 shows that object authenticity strongly influences existential authenticity ($O = 0.825$; $p = 0.000$). This finding highlights that perceptions of object authenticity serve as a crucial foundation for the development of existential authenticity, where tourists not only assess the physical or historical aspects of cultural objects but also experience emotional engagement and personal meaning throughout their visit.

H3a and H3b indicate that existential authenticity has a positive effect on tourist satisfaction ($O = 0.688$; $p = 0.000$) and tourist loyalty ($O = 0.790$; $p = 0.000$). These results confirm that the authentic experiences perceived by tourists play a crucial role in enhancing satisfaction and fostering loyalty, motivating visitors to return or recommend the destination to others. Thus, the dimension of existential authenticity functions as a bridge between authenticity perception and post-visit behavioral outcomes.

Furthermore, H4a and H4b reveal that commercialization has a negative effect on tourist satisfaction ($O = -0.045$; $p = 0.023$) and tourist loyalty ($O = -0.051$; $p = 0.004$). Although the relationships are statistically significant, the

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negative direction suggests that excessive commercialization can reduce both satisfaction and loyalty. This finding underscores the importance of maintaining a balance between economic value and cultural preservation in the management strategies of cultural heritage destinations.

Finally, H5 examines the moderating effect of ease on the relationship between commercialization and object authenticity. The results indicate that ease strengthens the relationship between commercialization and object authenticity ($O = 0.092$; $p = 0.000$). This implies that the greater the accessibility, comfort, and available facilities for tourists, the more positive the impact of commercialization on the perception of object authenticity. The aspect of ease thus plays a crucial role in enhancing an authentic and enjoyable tourism experience.

Overall, the findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing tourist satisfaction and loyalty in cultural heritage tourism. They highlight that commercialization and ease are critical elements that significantly shape tourists' experiences, reinforcing the importance of balancing economic development with cultural authenticity in sustainable destination management.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that commercialization exerts a positive influence on the authenticity of cultural objects ($O = 0.062$; $p = 0.007$), although the magnitude of this effect is relatively small. This suggests that commercial practices implemented in a proportional and culture-preserving manner can enhance tourists' perceptions of the authenticity of cultural heritage objects. This result aligns with the notion that commercialization does not necessarily diminish authenticity values, but rather can enrich tourists' experiences by presenting cultural elements in a more engaging and accessible way (Cao et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the results of the H2 test indicate that object-based authenticity has a very strong influence on existential authenticity ($O = 0.825$; $p = 0.000$). This finding underscores that the authenticity of physical objects, artifacts, and genuine cultural representations serves as the primary foundation for the development of tourists' existential authenticity. When tourists perceive a cultural object or tradition as truly authentic, they are more likely to experience deeper emotional engagement and self-reflection during their visit (Bassiony & Chahine, 2025).

Moreover, the results of H3a and H3b reveal that existential authenticity positively influences both tourist satisfaction ($O = 0.688$; $p = 0.000$) and tourist loyalty ($O = 0.790$; $p = 0.000$). These findings emphasize that personally felt authentic experiences not only enhance tourists' satisfaction with the destination but also foster long-term loyalty. This supports the view that when tourists find meaning and authenticity in their experiences, they are more likely to recommend the destination and revisit it in the future (Xiao, 2025).

Furthermore, the findings reveal that commercialization has a negative effect on tourist satisfaction ($O = -0.045$; $p = 0.023$) and tourist loyalty ($O = -$

0.051; $p = 0.004$). Although the effects are statistically significant, the negative direction indicates that excessive commercialization may diminish tourists' satisfaction and loyalty. This occurs when economic motives overshadow cultural preservation, thereby reducing perceptions of authenticity and the meaningfulness of the tourism experience. These results highlight the importance of maintaining a balance between economic objectives and cultural values in the management of cultural heritage destinations (Cao et al., 2025).

In addition, the results of H5 testing demonstrate that ease acts as a moderating variable that strengthens the effect of commercialization on object-based authenticity ($O = 0.092$; $p = 0.000$). This means that when a destination offers high accessibility, adequate facilities, and a comfortable visiting experience, the positive impact of commercialization on perceived authenticity becomes more pronounced. The ease factor thus serves as a crucial supportive element that can transform commercialization from a purely economic activity into an authentic and fulfilling cultural experience for tourists (Zuo, 2024).

Overall, the findings of this study emphasize that commercialization, authenticity, and ease are closely interrelated in shaping a satisfying tourist experience and enhancing tourist loyalty. Authenticity—both object-based and existential—serves as the core of cultural tourism experiences, while commercialization and ease function as complementary factors that must be carefully balanced. When managed appropriately, these elements do not diminish authenticity, but rather enhance the attractiveness and sustainability of cultural heritage destinations.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the key factors influencing tourist satisfaction and loyalty within the context of cultural heritage tourism. The results reveal that commercialization has a positive effect on object-based authenticity ($O = 0.062$; $p = 0.007$), although the magnitude of the effect is relatively small. This finding suggests that appropriately and proportionally implemented commercialization practices can enhance tourists' perceptions of cultural object authenticity, particularly when cultural packaging is conducted without compromising the original values and meanings.

Furthermore, the study finds that object-based authenticity has a very strong influence on existential authenticity ($O = 0.825$; $p = 0.000$). This indicates that the physical and historical authenticity of cultural objects serves as a critical foundation for shaping authentic tourist experiences, which in turn foster emotional engagement and personal meaning during visits. Existential authenticity is found to have a significant positive effect on both tourist satisfaction ($O = 0.688$; $p = 0.000$) and loyalty ($O = 0.790$; $p = 0.000$), suggesting that the perception of an authentic and meaningful experience lies at the core of satisfaction and the development of long-term loyalty toward cultural heritage destinations.

Another key finding indicates that commercialization has a negative effect on both tourist satisfaction ($O = -0.045$; $p = 0.023$) and tourist loyalty ($O = -$

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0.051; $p = 0.004$). Although the relationships are statistically significant, the negative direction suggests that excessive commercialization may reduce tourists' levels of satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, it is crucial for destination managers to implement a balanced commercialization strategy that harmonizes economic objectives with cultural preservation, ensuring that authenticity—the core attraction of heritage tourism—is not compromised.

In addition, the study reveals that ease (accessibility and convenience) strengthens the relationship between commercialization and object-based authenticity ($O = 0.092$; $p = 0.000$). This finding underscores that adequate accessibility, comfort, and supporting facilities play an essential role in enhancing the positive impact of commercialization on perceived authenticity. The ease factor not only improves the overall tourist experience but also contributes to higher satisfaction and loyalty toward cultural heritage destinations.

However, this study has several limitations. The research focus, which is confined to cultural heritage tourism within a specific regional context, may limit the generalizability of the findings to other geographic areas or types of tourism. Additionally, the use of cross-sectional data restricts the ability to capture long-term causal relationships, while reliance on self-reported measures may introduce subjective bias in the responses.

For future research, it is recommended to expand the scope of investigation across different geographic settings and types of tourism destinations, as well as to employ longitudinal approaches that can track the dynamics of tourist satisfaction and loyalty over time. Moreover, exploring additional moderating factors such as cultural values, emotional involvement, or the digitalization of tourist experiences could provide deeper insights into the mechanisms shaping authentic tourist experiences. Such approaches would not only enrich the body of literature on cultural heritage tourism but also serve as a critical foundation for formulating sustainable and authenticity-oriented destination management strategies.

AUTHOR STATEMENTS

Enji azizi conceptualized and designed the study, developed the methodology, supervised the overall research process, and took the lead in writing the original draft of the manuscript. **Enji azizi** also reviewed and approved the final version of the article. **Mira nurhikmat** and **Peni astuti** collected and curated the data, conducted formal data analysis, performed data visualization and validation, contributed to the interpretation and presentation of the findings, and co-wrote the manuscript through critical review and editing to ensure clarity, coherence, and accuracy.

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