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Approaches to Building Customer Loyalty in Fishing Tourism Destinations

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Abstract: This article presents a theoretical analysis of approaches to building customer loyalty in the fishing tourism sector amid shifting behavioral patterns, increasing importance of intangible factors, and growing relevance of the sustainability agenda. The study is based on an interdisciplinary framework incorporating territorial marketing, behavioral psychology, and sustainable tourism concepts. The focus is placed on comparing loyalty models grounded in trust, identity, emotional experience, and perceived sustainability. A content analysis of sources covering various types of fishing tourism (experiential, recreational, cultural) was conducted, identifying key factors influencing tourists' behavioral and affective attachment to destinations. It was established that a universal trajectory of loyalty formation involves a sequence: engagement in digital interaction, trust formation, sustainable loyalty, and value co-creation. Three theoretical models—service-dominant logic, place identity, and service quality—were examined and compared in terms of focus, cultural context, and applicability. The study highlights regional differences in loyalty strategies and offers practical recommendations for tourism operators, including digital personalization, community development, and emphasis on sustainable consumption. This article will be of interest to tourism researchers, territorial marketing specialists, and practitioners seeking to increase repeat visits and ensure long-term audience retention.

Keywords: loyalty, fishing tourism, trust, place identity, sustainability, engagement, value experience, service, repeat visit, territorial marketing.

Introduction

Fishing tourism, both in Europe and beyond, is undergoing a transformation driven by a reappraisal of the mechanisms that foster customer loyalty amid evolving behavioural patterns, environmental constraints and heightened competition. The growing prominence of intangible elements—emotional engagement, personalised experiences and alignment with local identity—has become a decisive factor in securing repeat visits, recommendations and sustained consumer interest [4]. In this context, the surge of interest in behavioural-loyalty frameworks and value-perception models underscores the need to move beyond traditional marketing tactics toward more flexible, trust-based strategies.

Particular attention in both scholarly and practical debates centres on loyalty as a multi-layered construct encompassing cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions. A case in point is the design of specialised angling routes that blend service-infrastructure elements with natural authenticity and emotional immersion [1]. Such offerings demand a reconception of loyalty not as the by-product of satisfaction alone but as a conscious model of engagement and value-driven choice. This shift calls for moving away from transactional management toward cultivating enduring ties between destination and tourist, integrating these connections into a broader tapestry of experiences, lifestyles and identities.

Integrating emotional, behavioural and social factors into customer-experience management—especially within environmentally sensitive and culturally oriented tourism segments—requires the development of comprehensive theoretical foundations. These studies are critical for crafting scalable strategies that support the sustainable evolution of fishing-tourism destinations and enhance their competitiveness in an increasingly turbulent market.

The aim of this research is to conduct a theoretical analysis of approaches to cultivating customer loyalty at fishing-tourism sites, to identify the key behavioural and value-based parameters of loyalty, to substantiate their role in sustainable destination development and to outline directions for future scholarly inquiry.

Materials and Methods

The methodological foundation of this research lies at the intersection of territorial marketing, social psychology of tourism and the conceptual theory of sustainable development, reflecting the

interdisciplinary nature of the topic. The primary tool for theoretical analysis was a qualitative content analysis of international scholarly literature encompassing contemporary interpretations of customer loyalty within fishing-tourism destinations.

The study drew on sources spanning a wide array of approaches—from branding and value perception to place identity, motivation and sustainability. Special attention was paid to the work of Al Hazmi, Muhammad [1], which elucidates behavioural mechanisms of loyalty through the lenses of co-creation and trust. Additional studies were included that view loyalty as an expression of the tourist's deep connection to the destination, ranging from perceptions of environmental responsibility [6] to engagement and emotional experience [9].

The content analysis followed this sequence:

- Identification of key theoretical constructs (loyalty, identity, value perception, sustainability, trust);
- Classification of loyalty frameworks (behavioural, emotional, cognitive, normative);
- Mapping of theoretical models onto types of fishing-tourism destinations (conservation areas, cultural sites, lakeside, coastal, etc.);
- Determination of contextual factors influencing theory applicability (geography, tourism type, offering structure, value framework).

This analysis was complemented by a systematisation of central concepts, organising terminology from the literature and linking it to loyalty-formation approaches. In particular, the notion of “embeddedness in lifestyle” proposed by Van den Heuvel et al. [8] was interpreted as the personal significance of fishing tourism to an individual—a factor that explains the enduring desire to return to a familiar destination, which is perceived not as a one-off service but as part of personal identity and way of life. Regalado-Pezúa's work [7] enabled loyalty to be viewed as the outcome of three interrelated components: emotional engagement, service-utility appraisal and sense of social belonging. Alencastro [2] highlights the importance of natural and cultural elements in destination choice, emphasising value-driven motivation and the quest for authentic experience. A similar perspective appears in Ramazanov et al. [6], where sustainability is framed as an ecological category and a marker of tourist responsibility and trust. Chong et al. [3] show that

attitudes towards rules and restrictions can themselves reflect levels of commitment and respect for the destination, thereby influencing loyalty. Dai [4] introduces the concept of place identity as a mediator between motivation and genuine attachment, arguing that tourists return to locales where an emotional match with the environment has been formed. In Yfantidou et al. [9], emotional and symbolic foundations of loyalty are traced through analysis of visitor reviews, which reveal sentiments such as “joy of recognition,” “sense of memorability” and “desire to recommend”—all signaling a profound connection to place.

Thus, the sources reviewed reveal recurring categories—engagement, significance, identity, trust and perceived value—which, in varying combinations, elucidate the mechanisms by which sustainable customer loyalty to fishing-tourism destinations is cultivated.

Results

The systematisation of scholarly approaches to customer loyalty in fishing tourism revealed a clear typology of factors influencing tourists’ behavioural and affective attachment to destinations. This study sought

to classify the principal loyalty determinants according to fishing-tourism subtype, taking into account the dominant motivational and emotional drivers.

Literature analysis shows that different fishing-tourism formats activate distinct psychological mechanisms. Experiential tourism relies primarily on emotions, engagement and the perceived significance of the event—aligning with a value-based model of participation and emotional immersion. For example, Alencastro et al. [2] and Yfantidou et al. [9] emphasise emotional richness and involvement as foundations for lasting attachment.

In contrast, recreational tourism is more focused on satisfying needs for rest, predictability and safety, where cognitive elements prevail—trust, expectation fulfilment and overall satisfaction [3].

Cultural fishing tourism, particularly the so-called “red tourism” format, centres on place identity as the key loyalty predictor. Dai et al. [4] demonstrate that a sense of connection with a destination’s historical and cultural context determines both the desire to return and to recommend the site. Table 1 compares the distribution of loyalty factors across fishing-tourism types.

Table 1 – Comparison of Loyalty Factors by Types of Fishing Tourism (Compiled by the author based on sources: [2], [4], [5])

Type of Tourism	Key Factors	Impact on Loyalty
Experiential	Emotional value, involvement	High
Recreational	Satisfaction, trust	Moderate
Cultural (red tourism)	Place identity	High

As Table 1 shows, high levels of engagement and emotional resonance characterise both experiential and cultural formats. Recreational tourism—geared toward functional needs—yields comparatively lower behavioural loyalty, despite delivering satisfaction.

This gradation indicates that loyalty’s nature is not universal: its structure varies with the depth of the tourist experience, degree of symbolic identification and mode of interaction with the destination. Accordingly, strategies to encourage repeat visits must be tailored to the specifics of the fishing-tourism product—from heritage-focused excursions to richly emotional,

individualised experiences.

At the stage of theoretical analysis, a clear shift emerged from purely emotional and motivational determinants of loyalty toward more complex constructs involving the cognitive appraisal of destination sustainability and service quality. These dimensions play a crucial role in driving repeat visits, as they establish the foundation for long-term trust in a destination as a socially responsible and predictable system.

Ramazanov et al. [6] and Regalado-Pezúa et al. [7] demonstrate that environmental and social sustainability are perceived by tourists as integral

attributes of a destination, capable of deepening emotional attachment and encouraging return visits. Anglers show a preference for locations characterised by responsible resource management, stable employment opportunities and cultural authenticity. In this context, sustainability functions as a “value anchor,” uniting moral fulfilment with reputational trust.

Concurrently, the classic metric of service quality remains highly relevant. Although it often ranks below sustainability in priority, service quality continues to be

a key driver of satisfaction—and thus an indirect enhancer of loyalty. Research by Lankia et al. [5] and Van den Heuvel et al. [8] indicates that perceptions of staff accuracy, courtesy, safety and professionalism influence overall satisfaction, which many models identify as a mediator between service quality and loyalty. Table 2 offers a comparative evaluation of the relative importance of destination sustainability and service quality in shaping repeat-visit behaviour within fishing-tourism regions.

Table 2 – The Impact of Sustainability Perception on Tourist Loyalty (Compiled by the author based on sources: [7], [9])

Factor	Importance Rating	Relationship to Loyalty
Destination sustainability	High	Direct
Service quality	Medium	Through satisfaction

Table 2 summarises these two principal factors affecting sustainable loyalty. The direct correlation between perceived sustainability and repeat-visit intention supports the hypothesis that value-oriented variables are increasingly influential in consumer decision-making. Meanwhile, service quality continues to regulate short-term satisfaction, particularly in recreational and mass-tourism contexts.

Thus, in the contemporary fishing-tourism sector, enduring loyalty cannot be accounted for by emotional engagement or single-visit experiences alone. It embodies complex cognitive-normative evaluations—specifically, judgments about a destination’s sustainability, social responsibility and reliability of service.

Discussion

The overarching logic of customer-loyalty formation in the fishing-tourism sector can be mapped along the axis of experience → trust → loyalty, with the potential integration of value co-creation mechanisms. This framework is most comprehensively demonstrated by the model proposed by Al Hazmi, Muhammad and Pangestuti [1], in which trust serves as the central mediator and the ultimate outcome is sustainable consumer behaviour expressed through loyalty and co-creation of value. At the same time, comparing theoretical approaches across diverse cultural and geographical contexts reveals three principal models, all of which are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3 – Comparison of Three Models of Loyalty Formation (Compiled by the author based on sources [1], [4], [5], [8])

Model	Underlying Theory	Focus	Characteristics
SMM → Trust → Loyalty → Co-creation	Service-Dominant Logic	Engagement	Applied in fishing supply chains
Motivation → Identity → Loyalty	Place Identity	Identity	Relevant for thematic tourism

Service → Satisfaction → Loyalty	Service Quality	Quality	Common in Northern European tourism contexts
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As Table 3 illustrates, each model rests on distinct theoretical premises and highlights unique mediating variables. The Al Hazmi et al. model [1] emphasises digital engagement and cooperative practices as the end goals of loyalty, reflecting features of the Indonesian business environment. In contrast, the place-identity model [4] links loyalty to the symbolic perception of a destination, which is particularly pertinent for cultural and thematic tourism. The third model—based on perceptions of service quality [6]—is predominantly applied in the European context, where satisfaction is driven by stability, transparency and service standards.

The differences among these models underscore the necessity of culturally and geographically adapting theoretical frameworks. The Indonesian model prioritises trust and interactivity, whereas the European model follows a service-perception → satisfaction sequence. Meanwhile, the identity model highlights the importance of symbolic and motivational dimensions of experience, a factor critical to promoting non-standard tourism formats.

Analysis of the theoretical models of loyalty formation highlights several key avenues for practical application, especially for operators in the fishing-and-coastal tourism segment. It is advisable to focus on three complementary strategies: personalization of digital communications, social engineering through communities, and an emphasis on local identity as a marker of sustainability.

Findings derived from the Service-Dominant Logic framework [1] demonstrate that digital engagement—via social media, interactive content and user-generated reviews—creates a resilient trust loop that subsequently translates into loyalty. Communication personalization is the linchpin of emotional resonance, particularly among experiential tourists [2]. In practice, this entails deploying adaptive-content algorithms, retargeting and trigger-based marketing that draws on memories of past trips, behavioural patterns and responses to content. Equally important is the systematic collection and interpretation of user feedback as a means of cultivating loyal communities. Tourists who participate in feedback cycles are more likely to return to destinations where they feel a sense of belonging. Maintaining a digital

community—through forums, personal-story pages and the resharing of user content—builds an informal social infrastructure around the destination brand. Hybrid loyalty programmes that combine discounts with symbolic recognition (badges, ranks, priority access to excursions) prove especially effective.

Another critical focus is developing a narrative that underscores cultural identity and sustainable consumption. Research by Dai et al. [4] and Ramazanov et al. [6] shows that highly conscious travellers respond positively to content that highlights environmental stewardship, local-community involvement, traditional fishing methods and gastronomic practices. In this way, the destination does more than sell a service: it communicates values, amplifying its role as a lifestyle choice.

Implementing these strategies requires a systematic overhaul—from configuring digital-analytics tools and moderating online communities to reworking the semantic structure of marketing messages. Yet, the resulting uplift in repeat visits, audience expansion and strengthened trust justifies the necessary long-term investment.

Conclusion

The analysis provided a systematic understanding of loyalty as a multi-component construct in fishing-tourism destinations, formed at the intersection of emotional experience, symbolic identity, perceived sustainability and trust. The study confirmed that enduring consumer behaviour in this domain cannot be explained solely by satisfaction or repeat visitation: it rests on a deep affective bond with the place, its values and its social atmosphere.

A typology of loyalty determinants emerged, varying by fishing-tourism segment. For experiential tourism, engagement and event significance proved critical; for recreational tourism, predictability and trust took precedence; and for cultural tourism, destination identity was paramount. These findings underscore the need to tailor promotional strategies to the nature of the tourism product and the audience's behavioural patterns. Additionally, sustainability's role as both a moral and cognitive category was shown to grant

destinations ecological and reputational capital. Perceptions of environmental and social responsibility strengthen emotional attachment and encourage return visits, particularly among conscientious travellers. Nevertheless, service quality remains essential for short-term satisfaction, especially in mass and recreational contexts.

Comparisons of loyalty-formation models revealed culturally conditioned differences in engagement logic: from digital co-engineering in Southeast Asia to the service-quality → satisfaction → loyalty sequence in Northern Europe, and identity-based attachment in thematic tourism. This highlights the necessity of context-sensitive adaptation of approaches that reflect local characteristics, target audiences and tourists' value orientations.

Accordingly, sustainable loyalty management in the fishing-tourism sector requires integrating three strategic pillars: emotional engagement through personalized digital communication; identity building via culturally enriched product offerings; and trust consolidation through demonstrations of sustainability and responsibility. Only a holistic application of these strategies will enable operators to cultivate long-term loyalty that transcends transactional relationships and supports a destination's resilient growth amid intensifying competition.

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