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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Factors Influencing Tourists' Intentions to Revisit Yunnan's Folk Tourism Destinations

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	In order to promote the sustainable development of folk tourism, we aim to develop a model of service orientation to revisit intention towards folk tourism. The research was conducted within the context of Yunnan folk tourism, and data were collected from 522 visitors to major folk tourism sites in Yunnan, such as Dali, Lijiang and Xishuangbanna. Using structural equation modelling (SEM), the study reveals that service leadership, employee engagement, organizational practices and policies, customer focus, and service systems significantly enhance the perceptual image, experience and tourist satisfaction, which in turn influence revisit intention. However, organizational practices and policies cannot predict satisfaction and perceptual image. Additionally, perceptual image, experience and tourist satisfaction are the significant mediators. However, a perceptual image without mediation affects the path of service systems in revisiting intention. Furthermore, satisfaction without mediation affects the path of organizational practices to revisit intention. These findings emphasize the importance of optimizing service quality, enriching cultural experiences, and promoting a positive destination image to sustain tourism growth in regions like Yunnan. .

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with the acceleration of globalization and economic development, the tourism industry has gradually exhibited a trend of diversification, with folk tourism attracting increasing attention due to its unique cultural experiences (Liu et al., 2022). As a form of cultural tourism, folk tourism aims to enable tourists to deeply engage in local festivals, traditional crafts, and the daily life of ethnic villages, thereby enhancing their understanding and appreciation of local culture (Lei, 2024). By participating in these activities, tourists can not only satisfy their desire to explore diverse cultures but also deepen their sense of cultural identity through immersive experiences.

Folk tourism focuses on the experience of local cultural features, traditional customs, and ways of life, emphasizing authenticity and in-depth interaction with culture (Li et al., 2024). By engaging in traditional festivals, ethnic crafts, and regional culinary experiences, tourists gain access to unique cultural interactions that promote cultural transmission and exchange. China, with its abundant ethnic and cultural resources and diverse folk activities, provides a solid foundation for the development of folk tourism, contributing significantly to local economic growth (Ma & Guo, 2024).

Yunnan Provincewelcomed a total of 1.042 billion tourists, generating a total tourism revenue of 1.44 trillion RMB, representing year-on-year increases of 24% and 52.3%, respectively in 2023 (He et al., 2024). These figures surpassed 2019 levels, reaching 129% and 130% of pre-pandemic benchmarks. This growth not only enhanced the profitability of tourism and related industries but also created a large number of employment opportunities, fostering regional economic development.

Cities like Dali, Lijiang, and Xishuangbanna are trendy due to their unique Bai, Naxi, and Dai cultural heritage. In 2023, the rapid growth of folk tourism in Yunnan not only boosted local economic development but also generated significant economic benefits (Lin et al., 2024). For instance, folk tourism activities in Dali and Lijiang have had a positive impact on the local economy, increasing profitability in related sectors.

Despite these successes, Yunnan's folk tourism industry faces several challenges amidst rapid expansion. The growing number of tourists has exacerbated the issue of over-commercialization, leading to the simplification of some traditional cultural festivals to cater to tourist demands, which, in turn, results in the loss of cultural authenticity. Additionally, inadequate infrastructure, inconsistent service quality, and suboptimal visitor experiences have hindered the further development of the tourism sector (Xiong & Tang, 2023).

To address these challenges, the Yunnan provincial government has implemented a series of measures aimed at enhancing service quality and preserving cultural heritage. First, the government has significantly increased investments in infrastructure to optimize site management and improve visitor experiences (Jin et al., 2024). For example, the Yunnan Provincial Museum has implemented a reservation system with a daily cap of 4,000 visitors to control crowd flow and safeguard public health effectively. Additionally, the government has promoted accessible tourism by ensuring that all hotels and tourist sites are equipped with accessible pathways and facilities, making it easier for elderly and disabled visitors to enjoy tourism activities.

Simultaneously, the Yunnan government is advancing smart tourism and digital management initiatives (Xu et al., 2024). By integrating big data platforms with the "Internet + Regulation" model, the government has enhanced its capacity for monitoring the tourism market and risk forecasting. Notably, efforts have been made to achieve comprehensive 5G coverage across the Western Yunnan tourism loop and major scenic spots, providing tourists with a more advanced digital tourism experience and promoting personalized and intelligent services (Xu et al., 2024). These initiatives not only improve overall visitor satisfaction but also contribute to the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage.

From an academic perspective, folk tourism plays a crucial role in cultural preservation and transmission. Existing research primarily focuses on areas such as cultural identity, tourist engagement experiences, and economic impacts on local communities (Wondirad et al., 2021). However, research on tourist intentions and behaviours in folk tourism remains underexplored, with significant gaps still to be addressed. While qualitative studies on folk towns, folk culture, and folk music have yielded substantial findings, the application of tourism management theories to advance the development of folk tourism is relatively scarce (Wang et al., 2022). Although service quality, satisfaction, and tourism experience are widely acknowledged as critical factors influencing tourism decision-making (Hu & Li, 2023), their roles within the context of folk tourism have yet to be thoroughly validated.

Moreover, the inclusion of service orientation introduces a new dimension to the study of folk tourism, pushing the field into uncharted territory. Service orientation has rarely been treated as an independent variable in studies related to tourist behaviour (Wang et al., 2020). This study seeks to bridge this gap by integrating service orientation with well-established constructs, such as satisfaction, perceived destination image, and tourism experience.

Additionally, this research leverages the theoretical frameworks of the Service-Profit Chain (SPC) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), aims:

1. To evaluate the impact of service orientation on destination image, satisfaction, and tourism experience.
2. To analyze the mediation role of destination image, satisfaction, and tourism experience.

After the introduction, section 2 reviews the literature, outlining the theoretical framework, key variables, and hypotheses. Section 3 details the research methodology, encompassing data collection and analysis procedures. Section 4 presents the findings of the study, while Section 5 discusses the results along with their practical implications. Finally, Section 6 provides the conclusion and proposes directions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Service-Profit Chain (SPC) theory posits that high service quality leads to customer satisfaction, which in turn fosters customer loyalty, thereby enhancing profitability and business growth (Son et al., 2021). In the context of tourism, particularly Yunnan folk tourism, the SPC framework suggests that optimizing service quality not only improves tourists' satisfaction and experience but also encourages repeat visits. By systematically enhancing service dimensions such as tangibles, reliability, and responsiveness, tourism service providers can create a positive feedback loop where satisfied tourists are more likely to revisit and recommend the destination to others. This theory serves as the foundation for examining how service orientation can drive revisit intentions through enhanced satisfaction and loyalty.

On the other hand, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) emphasizes the role of social influence, observational learning, and self-efficacy in shaping individuals' behaviours (Li et al., 2023). In the context of tourism, SCT suggests that tourists' behaviours and revisit intentions are influenced by their social environment, mainly through observational learning from others' experiences (Chen et al., 2023). Tourists form expectations and behaviours based on their previous experiences and the observed experiences of others.

In Yunnan folk tourism, where cultural authenticity and personalized experiences are highly valued, the SCT framework helps explain how positive interactions with service staff and well-maintained facilities can enhance tourists' satisfaction, thereby increasing their intention to revisit. By understanding the cognitive and social processes underlying tourists' decision-making, this study aims to explore the pathways through which service quality affects satisfaction, experience, and loyalty.

The SPC framework emphasizes the direct impact of service quality on satisfaction and loyalty, while SCT highlights the cognitive processes through which perceived service quality and positive experiences shape tourists' behaviour (Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2020; Pestana et al., 2020). Together, these theories provide a robust foundation for examining how service orientation, destination image, and satisfaction interact to influence revisit intentions in the context of Yunnan folk tourism.

In the context of tourism, service quality is recognized as a crucial determinant of customer satisfaction, experience, and revisit intentions. Scholars have extensively explored how various dimensions of service quality—such as leadership, employee engagement, organizational practices, customer focus, and integrated service systems—affect tourists' perceptions and behaviours (Rabiul et al., 2022).

Service orientation (SQO) refers to a strategic commitment by tourism service providers to ensure consistent and high-quality service delivery across all operational levels (Fregidou-Malama & Hyder, 2021). It is a multidimensional construct encompassing several critical dimensions: service leadership, employee engagement, organizational practices and policies, customer focus, and service systems (Tardin et al., 2024). Service leadership highlights the role of leaders in establishing a clear vision, setting high standards, and fostering a culture of service excellence, which positively influences tourists' perceptions of a destination's image by ensuring high-quality service delivery (Almodawer et al., 2024). Employee engagement emphasizes the proactive involvement of staff in providing culturally relevant and personalized services, further enhancing tourists' satisfaction and image perceptions (Wang et al., 2020). Organizational practices and policies, such as structured training and cultural safety measures, ensure consistency and reliability in service quality (Noor Arzahan et al., 2022). Customer focus involves tailoring services to meet tourists' specific needs, and service systems provide the technological and operational frameworks necessary for seamless experiences (Papazoglou et al., 2020). Together, these dimensions strengthen the destination's overall image, contributing to tourists' satisfaction and revisiting intentions.

Image perception, a critical factor in tourism decision-making, refers to tourists' overall impression and evaluation of a destination, including cognitive aspects (e.g., infrastructure, cultural richness) and affective dimensions (e.g., emotional attachment and satisfaction) (Zhang et al., 2023). A positive image perception significantly enhances tourist satisfaction, loyalty, and revisit intentions (Li et al., 2021). Studies across various contexts, such as cultural, rural, and folk tourism, consistently

demonstrate the impact of image perception on tourism behaviours. For instance, in folk tourism contexts like Yunnan, tourists' perceptions of cultural authenticity and service quality are crucial drivers of their revisit intentions (Dong et al., 2023). This interplay between service orientation and image perception suggests that effective service practices not only enhance the tourism experience but also strengthen the destination's perceived image, further encouraging repeat visitation and long-term loyalty. Therefore, this study proposes:

H1. Service orientation positively influences image perception.

H1a: Service leadership positively influences image perception.

H1b: Employee engagement positively influences image perception.

H1c: Organizational practices and policies positively influence image perception.

H1d: Customer focus positively influences image perception.

H1e: Service systems positively influence image perception.

Service orientation is a strategic framework that emphasizes the delivery of consistent, high-quality services through comprehensive organizational practices, leadership, and employee engagement (Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2020; Pestana et al., 2020). In the tourism sector, service orientation ensures that service leadership, employee engagement, and customer-focused organizational practices align with tourists' expectations, significantly enhancing their satisfaction with the destination (Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2020). Additionally, social cognitive theory provides a complementary explanation by highlighting the reciprocal influence between individual behaviour and organizational environments, demonstrating how employee attitudes and actions shape tourists' satisfaction and overall experience (Bandura, 1991).

Organizational practices and policies, as critical components of service orientation, have been validated as significant mediating variables in various tourism contexts. For instance, structured employee training and quality management systems have been shown to enhance service consistency and tourist satisfaction in luxury and health tourism (Bhattacharya et al., 2023). Similarly, service systems have been widely acknowledged for their role in optimizing operational efficiency and improving customer experiences (Kushwaha et al., 2021). Folk tourism, unlike conventional tourism, emphasizes cultural authenticity and interactive engagement, posing unique challenges to the applicability of organizational practices and service systems. Existing research highlights the importance of organizational policies in ensuring service consistency, yet their capacity to balance operational efficiency with cultural preservation remains unclear in this context (Wijethilake et al., 2023). Similarly, while service systems optimize service delivery, their effectiveness in supporting culturally immersive activities, such as traditional festivals or craft workshops, has not been thoroughly examined. Hence, we developed:

H2: Service orientation positively influences satisfaction.

H2a: Service leadership positively influences satisfaction.

H2b: Employee engagement positively influences satisfaction.

H2c: Organizational practices and policies positively influence satisfaction.

H2d: Customer focus positively influences satisfaction.

H2e: Service systems positively influence satisfaction.

Service leadership and employee engagement have been shown to play critical roles in traditional tourism contexts, such as hospitality and luxury tourism. Service leadership fosters a service-oriented culture that aligns organizational goals with customer satisfaction, while employee engagement is recognized as a critical driver of personalized and memorable service delivery (Alqhaiwi & Luu, 2024). The unique demands of this context necessitate further investigation into how these dimensions influence tourism experiences(Teoh et al., 2021).

Organizational practices and policies, including employee training, quality assurance protocols, and responsive feedback mechanisms, have proven effective in enhancing service consistency and personalization in urban and health tourism (Chen & Yu, 2024). Yet, in folk tourism, where balancing

operational efficiency with cultural preservation is paramount, their effectiveness remains unclear. Similarly, customer focus, which tailors services to meet diverse tourist expectations, is a well-established concept in traditional tourism (Font et al., 2021). However, its application in culturally immersive contexts—where emotional engagement and authenticity are prioritized—warrants further investigation. Service systems, comprising advanced technology and streamlined operations, have been validated for improving efficiency and accessibility in conventional tourism (Mercan et al., 2021). Accordingly, we proposed:

H3: Service orientation positively influences the tourism experience.

H3a: Service leadership positively influences the tourism experience.

H3b: Employee engagement positively influences the tourism experience.

H3c: Organizational practices and policies positively influence tourism experience.

H3d: Customer focus positively influences the tourism experience.

H3e: Service systems positively influence the tourism experience.

Image perception, defined as tourists' overall impression of a destination, is a critical construct that has been widely studied in various tourism contexts (Stylidis, 2020). It encompasses both cognitive aspects, such as infrastructure quality and cultural richness, and affective dimensions, such as emotional attachment and perceived authenticity (Zhao et al., 2024). A positive destination image influences tourist satisfaction and fosters loyalty. For example, in heritage and cultural tourism, image perception has been shown to mediate the relationship between service quality and revisit intentions, mainly when authenticity and cultural preservation are central to the tourist experience (Zhou et al., 2023). Despite these findings, the specific role of image perception in folk tourism—where cultural immersion and interactive experiences are paramount—remains underexplored (Li et al., 2024). Hence, we proposed:

H4: Image perception positively influences revisit intention towards folk tourism.

Tourist satisfaction refers to the emotional and cognitive evaluation of a tourist's experience, indicating the extent to which their expectations are met or exceeded during their visit (Zhao et al., 2024). It is widely acknowledged as a critical predictor of revisit intention, as positive experiences drive tourists to return to the same destination and recommend it to others (Mittal et al., 2022). Research in various tourism contexts, including cultural, rural, and heritage tourism, consistently demonstrates that satisfaction is a crucial determinant of loyalty and repeat visits (Raja et al., 2024). In the context of folk tourism, tourist satisfaction is closely tied to the authenticity of cultural experiences, the quality of service, and the preservation of local traditions. For destinations like Yunnan, understanding and enhancing satisfaction is essential not only for fostering revisit intentions but also for ensuring sustainable development and maintaining a competitive edge in the increasingly dynamic market of culturally immersive tourism. Tourist satisfaction is widely recognized as a critical predictor of revisit intention. Satisfied tourists are more likely to return to the same destination, driven by their positive experiences. Similarly, a positive tourism experience significantly enhances tourists' desire to revisit. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: Satisfaction positively influences revisit intention towards folk tourism.

Tourism experiences refer to the combination of emotional, sensory, and cognitive responses that tourists encounter during their journey, encompassing activities, interactions, and environmental impressions (Alyahya & McLean, 2021). These experiences are multidimensional, including elements such as cultural engagement, service quality, and environmental aesthetics, which collectively shape the overall perception of the destination. Revisit intention represents a tourist's expressed likelihood to return to a destination in the future, driven by prior satisfaction and perceived value of their experiences. In the context of folk tourism, the impact of tourism experiences on revisit intentions manifests in several ways. Authentic cultural interactions, high-quality service delivery, and memorable environmental experiences contribute to positive emotions and a deeper connection to the destination, encouraging repeat visits (Leong et al., 2024). Hence, we posit:

H6: Tourism experience positively influences revisit intention towards folk tourism.

Service orientation plays a pivotal role in shaping revisit intentions through its influence on mediating variables such as image perception, satisfaction, and tourism experience (Tabaeeian et al., 2023). These mediators act as critical pathways through which service leadership, employee engagement, and organizational practices contribute to tourists' loyalty. For instance, effective service leadership fosters a service-oriented culture, which enhances the perceived image of the destination, thereby influencing tourists' likelihood to return (Ande et al., 2024). Similarly, employee engagement ensures personalized and culturally rich service interactions, directly improving satisfaction levels, which are strongly linked to revisit intentions (Satar et al., 2024). Organizational practices, such as consistent service protocols and customer-focused strategies, further amplify these mediating effects by aligning service delivery with tourists' expectations (Yuliansyah et al., 2021). Therefore, the study proposes:

H7: Image perception mediates the relationship between service orientation and revisit intention.

H7a: Image perception mediates the relationship between service leadership and revisiting intention towards folk tourism.

H7b: Image perception mediates the relationship between employee engagement and revisiting intention towards folk tourism.

H7c: Image perception mediates the relationship between organizational practices and policies and revisits intention towards folk tourism.

H7d: Image perception mediates the relationship between customer focus and revisit intention towards folk tourism.

H7e: Image perception mediates the relationship between service systems and revisits intention towards folk tourism.

Tourist satisfaction has been widely validated as a mediating variable in various tourism contexts. In cultural and heritage tourism, satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and tourists' revisit intentions, particularly when authenticity and cultural engagement are emphasized (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022). Similarly, in rural tourism, satisfaction bridges service quality dimensions, such as reliability and responsiveness, with tourists' loyalty and revisit behaviours, highlighting its importance in experiential and immersive environments (Almodawer et al., 2024). These findings underscore the critical role of satisfaction in connecting service quality with behavioural outcomes, though its mediating role within the unique dynamics of folk tourism remains underexplored.

Service leadership, for example, establishes a culture of excellence that ensures high-quality service delivery, directly enhancing satisfaction levels, which subsequently drives revisit intentions (Amoako et al., 2023). Similarly, employee engagement fosters personalized and culturally enriching interactions, significantly contributing to tourists' positive evaluations of their experiences and reinforcing their willingness to return (Chen & Yu, 2024). Organizational practices and policies, such as regular training and adherence to quality standards, ensure consistency in service delivery, thereby aligning with tourists' expectations and fostering satisfaction. Furthermore, customer focus and service systems enhance satisfaction by providing tailored services and seamless operational experiences, which are particularly crucial in culturally immersive contexts like folk tourism (Baker et al., 2023). Therefore, the study proposes:

H8. Satisfaction mediates the relationship between service orientation and revisiting intention towards folk tourism.

H8a: Satisfaction mediates the relationship between service leadership and revisiting intention towards folk tourism.

H8b: Satisfaction mediates the relationship between employee engagement and revisiting intention towards folk tourism.

H8c: Satisfaction mediates the relationship between organizational practices and policies and revisits intention towards folk tourism.

H8d: Satisfaction mediates the relationship between customer focus and revisit intention towards folk tourism.

H8e: Satisfaction mediates the relationship between service systems and revisits intention towards folk tourism.

Tourism experience refers to the emotional, sensory, and cognitive responses tourists derive from their interactions, activities, and the overall environment of a destination, encompassing dimensions such as cultural engagement, service quality, and destination aesthetics (Rather, 2020). Service quality plays a critical role in shaping these experiences, as effective service leadership fosters a culture of excellence, employee engagement ensures personalized and culturally relevant interactions and well-designed organizational practices enhance service consistency and authenticity (Vereb et al., 2024). Positive tourism experiences significantly influence tourist decision-making by creating lasting impressions that reinforce satisfaction and increase revisit intentions (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022). Social cognitive theory supports these relationships, emphasizing how experiences shape cognitive and emotional evaluations, which subsequently drive behaviour (Bandura, 1991). In folk tourism, where cultural authenticity is paramount, service quality dimensions such as customer focus and efficient service systems amplify the richness of tourism experiences, fostering stronger connections and loyalty among visitors (Li et al., 2024). Hence, this study posits:

H9: Tourism experience mediates the relationship between service orientation and revisits intention towards folk tourism.

H9a: Tourism experience mediates the relationship between service leadership and revisiting intention towards folk tourism.

H9b: Tourism experience mediates the relationship between employee engagement and revisits intention towards folk tourism.

H9c: Tourism experience mediates the relationship between organizational practices and policies and revisits intention towards folk tourism.

H9d: Tourism experience mediates the relationship between customer focus and revisits intention towards folk tourism.

H9e: Tourism experience mediates the relationship between service systems and revisits intention towards folk tourism.

The conceptual model integrates the Service-Profit Chain (SPC) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) to examine how service quality dimensions—such as Service Leadership, Employee Engagement, and customer focus—affect tourists' image perception, satisfaction, and tourism experience, which ultimately drive revisit Intentions. The model highlights the mediating role of these intermediate variables, illustrating how optimizing service quality can enhance tourists' loyalty and revisit behaviours in Yunnan folk tourism.
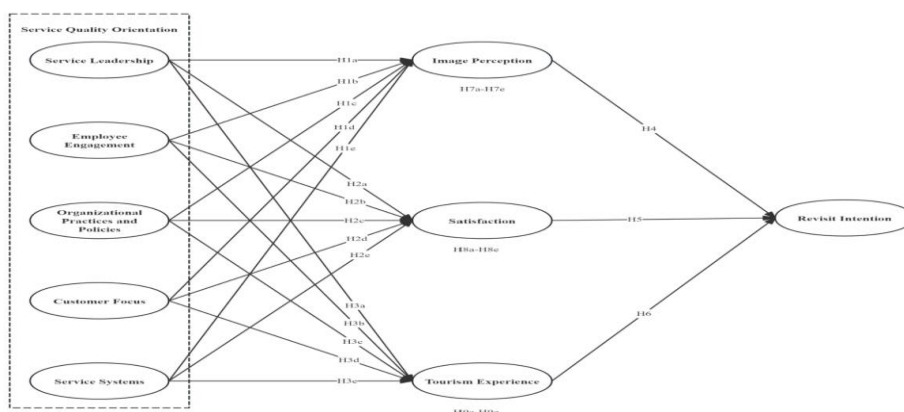
3. RESEARCH METHOD

Figure 1. The empirical framework of the study

This study surveyed tourists who visited folk tourism destinations in Yunnan Province—specifically Dali, Xishuangbanna, and Lijiang—by using an online questionnaire. For one month, a total of 522 valid responses were collected. The sampling process employed a combination of stratified sampling and random sampling. Target sample sizes were determined for Dali, Xishuangbanna, and Lijiang, and 522 valid responses were randomly collected from each location. Detailed sample characteristics are provided in Table 1.

A self-reported questionnaire was used to collect data. In addition to basic demographic information, the survey gathered details including gender, age, annual income, travel experience (e.g., the number of times participants had visited Yunnan), preferred tourism destinations (such as Dali, Lijiang, and Xishuangbanna), and participation in cultural activities (such as the Dai Water Splashing Festival and the Yi Torch Festival). Furthermore, a 5-point Likert scale was designed to measure the relevant constructs, as detailed in Appendix 1.

Service leadership included five items, revised by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), to evaluate how tourism leaders prioritize cultural experiences and service quality. The employee engagement section, based on the scale by Shuck et al. (2017), consisted of 3 items assessing employees' dedication to ensuring authentic tourist experiences and service excellence. The section on organizational practices and policies included 5 items, drawing on the work of Amick et al. (2000), focusing on employee involvement in decision-making, open communication, and cultural safety training. For customer focus, 8 items were adapted from Gladson Nwokah and Maclayton (2006) to measure tourism providers' commitment to enhancing cultural experiences and encouraging tourist feedback. Additionally, the service systems section comprised 7 items based on T.K. Luk et al. (2013) to evaluate the use of technology, contingency planning, and internal service standards.

The image perception section contained 5 items adapted from Echtner and Ritchie (1993), measuring tourists' overall impressions of the destination, including cultural heritage and safety. The satisfaction section, derived from Gohary et al. (2020), included 5 items assessing overall satisfaction with service quality and experience. The tourism experience section, based on Jorgenson et al. (2018), featured 5 items focusing on engagement in cultural activities and the uniqueness of experiences. Finally, the section on revisit intention included 5 items, revised by Gohary et al. (2020), to assess tourists' likelihood of revisiting the destination and their willingness to recommend it to others.

Data analysis software was used to ensure reliability. Initially, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to assess the internal consistency of each scale, with all constructs achieving alpha values above 0.7, confirming the reliability of the questionnaire. Subsequently, validity analysis was conducted using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to assess sample adequacy, followed by factor analysis to confirm the structural validity of the scales. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and path analysis were performed to examine the causal relationships between variables, thereby validating the model fit and the proposed hypotheses.

Table 1: Sample information

Information and options		Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	262	50.2
	Female	260	49.8
Family income/year	<100000yuan	88	16.9
	100000yuan-200000yuan	184	35.2
	200000yuan-300000yuan	170	32.6
	>300000yuan	80	15.3
Travel experience for folk tourism in Yunnan province	Once	150	28.7
	Twice	139	26.6

	Three times	154	29.5
	Over three times	79	15.1
Destination of folk tourism (multiple choice)	Dali city	316	60.5
	Lijiang city	239	45.8
	Xishuangbanna	318	60.9
Prefer folk tourism festivals (multiple choice)	Dai Water Splashing Festival	311	59.6
	Yi Torch Festival	308	59.0
	Naxi Dongba Culture Festival	290	55.6
	Bai March Street Festival	297	56.9
Prefer folk tourism culture (multiple choice)	Traditional handicrafts (Bai tie-dyeing, Yi embroidery, Hani terraced farming, and Dai bamboo weaving)	296	56.7
	Traditional architecture and settlement forms (Naxi wooden buildings, Hani mushroom houses, and Dai bamboo houses)	280	53.6

4. RESULTS

In this study, a pre-test was conducted with 50 participants who had prior experience in Yunnan folk tourism to evaluate the clarity, reliability, and validity of the survey items related to service leadership, employee engagement, and revisit intentions. This pre-test phase was crucial for refining the survey instrument and ensuring its alignment with the theoretical frameworks of Service-Profit Chain (SPC) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). The results from this preliminary study confirmed the internal consistency of the constructs, with Cronbach's alpha values for all variables exceeding the accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating high reliability. Additionally, the feedback gathered led to adjustments that improved the comprehensibility of the questionnaire items, thereby establishing a solid foundation for the primary data collection and subsequent analysis.

4.1 Reliability test

As shown in Table 2, the reliability analysis for the study variables indicates internal solid consistency across all constructs, as evidenced by Cronbach's alpha (α) values. Cronbach's alpha is a standard measure of reliability that assesses how well a set of items measures a single latent construct, with a threshold of 0.7 generally considered acceptable (Avinç & Doğan, 2024). In this study, Customer Focus exhibited the highest reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.917, indicating that the items effectively measure the intended construct with a high degree of internal coherence. Similarly, Service Systems and Service Leadership also demonstrated high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.897 and 0.868, respectively. The results confirm that these constructs are consistently measured by their respective items, ensuring reliability in assessing service quality aspects. Other variables, such as Organizational Practices and Policies (α = 0.856), Revisit Intention (α = 0.858), and Satisfaction (α = 0.868), also achieved robust reliability scores, further affirming that these scales are appropriate for rigorous academic research. Employee engagement had a comparatively lower Cronbach's alpha of 0.776, yet it still surpasses the acceptable threshold, indicating adequate internal consistency. Both image perception and tourism experience achieved Cronbach's alpha values of 0.845, suggesting reliable measures suitable for subsequent analysis in this study.

Table 2: Reliability statistics

Study variables	Number of questions	Cronbach's α
Service leadership	5	0.868
Employee engagement	3	0.776
Organizational practices and policies	5	0.856
Customer focus	8	0.917
Service systems	7	0.897
Image Perception	5	0.845
Satisfaction	5	0.868
Tourism Experience	5	0.845
Revisit Intention	5	0.858

4.2 Validity analysis

As depicted in Table 3, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy yielded a value of 0.943, which indicates excellent suitability for factor analysis. The KMO statistic evaluates the proportion of variance among the variables that might be attributable to underlying factors, with a value above 0.9 considered highly suitable. In this context, the obtained KMO value of 0.943 confirms that the sample data is highly appropriate for factor analysis, ensuring reliable factor solutions. Additionally, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was conducted, resulting in an approximate chi-square value of 13152.095 with 1128 degrees of freedom (df) and a significance level (Sig.) of 0.000. This test examines whether the correlation matrix significantly deviates from an identity matrix, which would indicate that the variables are unrelated and not suitable for structure detection. The significant result ($p < 0.05$) confirms that correlations between variables are sufficiently robust to justify factor analysis, supporting the extraction of meaningful factors.

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.943
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	13152.095
	df	1128
	Sig.	.000

4.3 Measurement model

Figure 2 illustrates a measurement model within the confirmatory factor analysis framework.
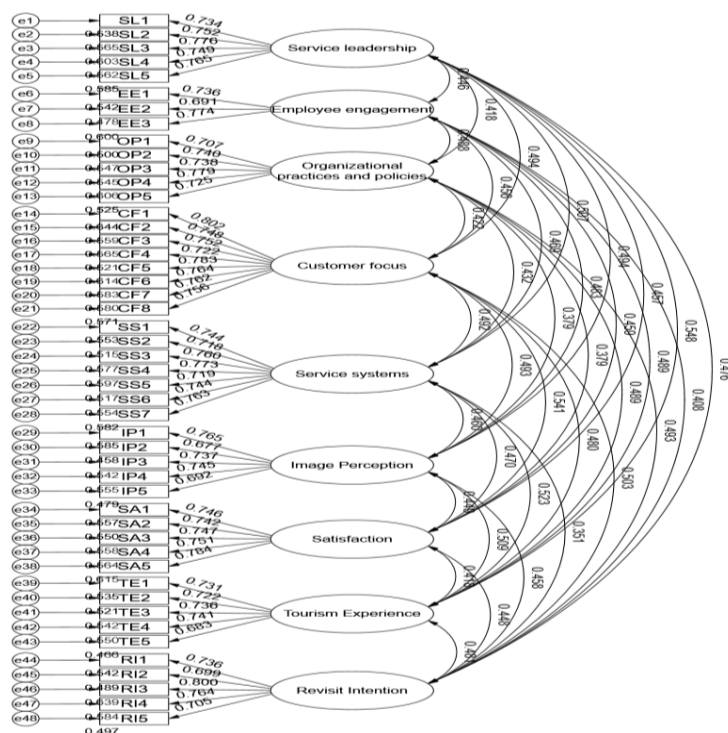

Figure 2: Measurement model

Table 4 presents the fit indices for the measurement model applied to assess the structural relationships among service quality, satisfaction, and revisit intentions within the context of Yunnan folk tourism. The chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) is reported as 1.247, which is well below the commonly accepted threshold of 3, indicating an excellent fit between the hypothesized model and the observed data. A lower χ^2/df ratio suggests that the model is well-specified and accurately represents the covariance structure of the data. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) for this model is 0.022, which is significantly below the threshold of 0.08, suggesting minimal error in the approximation of the population model. The low RMSEA value indicates that the model fits closely to the observed data, with minimal residual variance. Additional fit indices further validate the robustness of the model. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and Normed Fit Index (NFI) values are 0.909 and 0.904, respectively, exceeding the benchmark of 0.9, which confirms the adequacy of the model in representing the empirical data. The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) values are exceptionally high at 0.978 and 0.979, respectively. These indices measure the relative improvement of the hypothesized model over a baseline model, with values close to 1 indicating a superior fit.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.**: Measure model fit index**

Fit index	χ2/df	RMSEA	GFI	NFI	TLI	CFI
Reference standards	<3	<0.08	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9
Result	1.247	0.022	0.909	0.904	0.978	0.979

Table 5 presents the results of the confirmatory factor analysis used to evaluate the convergent validity of the measurement model. Convergent validity is assessed by examining the factor loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each latent variable. These metrics are crucial in ensuring that the constructs are accurately measured by their respective indicators. The factor loadings for all observed variables in this study exceeded the threshold of 0.7, indicating strong correlations between the observed variables and their respective latent constructs. This result supports the robustness of the indicators in capturing the intended constructs. The CR values for all constructs ranged from 0.778 to 0.917, surpassing the recommended minimum benchmark of 0.7. These high CR values confirm that the constructs exhibit internal solid consistency, meaning that the measurement items reliably capture the underlying theoretical constructs. Furthermore, the AVE values across all constructs were above the threshold of 0.50, with the lowest AVE at 0.522 for Tourism Experience and the highest at 0.580 for Customer Focus. An AVE above 0.50 indicates that more than half of the variance in the observed variables is accounted for by the latent constructs rather than measurement error, thereby affirming the convergent validity of the measurement model.

Table 5: Convergence validity

Latent variables	Observation variables	Factor loading	CR	AVE
Service leadership	SL1	0.734	0.869	0.571
	SL2	0.752		
	SL3	0.776		
	SL4	0.749		
	SL5	0.765		
Employee engagement	EE1	0.736	0.778	0.539
	EE2	0.691		
	EE3	0.774		
Organizational practices and policies	OP1	0.707	0.857	0.545
	OP2	0.740		
	OP3	0.738		
	OP4	0.779		
	OP5	0.725		

Customer focus	CF1	0.802	0.917	0.580
	CF2	0.748		
	CF3	0.752		
	CF4	0.722		
	CF5	0.783		
	CF6	0.764		
	CF7	0.762		
	CF8	0.756		
Service systems	SS1	0.744	0.898	0.557
	SS2	0.718		
	SS3	0.760		
	SS4	0.773		
	SS5	0.719		
	SS6	0.744		
	SS7	0.763		
Image Perception	IP1	0.765	0.846	0.524
	IP2	0.677		
	IP3	0.737		
	IP4	0.745		
	IP5	0.692		
Satisfaction	SA1	0.746	0.868	0.569
	SA2	0.742		
	SA3	0.747		
	SA4	0.751		
	SA5	0.784		
Tourism Experience	TE1	0.731	0.845	0.522
	TE2	0.722		
	TE3	0.736		
	TE4	0.741		
	TE5	0.683		
Revisit Intention	RI1	0.736	0.859	0.550
	RI2	0.699		
	RI3	0.800		
	RI4	0.764		
	RI5	0.705		

Table 6 illustrates the results of the discriminant validity test for the latent variables, evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The square roots of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are presented on the diagonal, while the off-diagonal elements represent the inter-construct correlations. For discriminant validity to be established, the square root of each construct's AVE must be greater than its correlations with any other constructs. In this analysis, the square roots of the AVE for all constructs are consistently higher than the corresponding inter-construct correlations, thereby confirming that each construct is distinct from the others. For instance, the square root of the AVE for Service Leadership is 0.756, which is higher than its correlations with other constructs, such as 0.548 with Tourism Experience and 0.507 with Service Systems. This confirms that Service Leadership is a unique construct within the model. Similarly, constructs like Image Perception (AVE square root of 0.724) and Revisit Intention (AVE square root of 0.742) maintain discriminant validity, as the square roots of their AVEs exceed the highest inter-construct correlations. For example, the correlation between Revisit Intention and Customer Focus is 0.503, which is lower than the AVE square root of 0.742, ensuring that the measurement model effectively captures distinct dimensions.

Table 6: Discriminant validity test

Latent variables	SL	EE	OP	CF	SS	IP	SA	TE	RI
Service leadership	0.756	0.446	0.418	0.494	0.507	0.494	0.457	0.548	0.476
Employee engagement	0.446	0.734	0.488	0.456	0.469	0.483	0.459	0.489	0.408
Organizational practices and policies	0.418	0.488	0.738	0.422	0.432	0.379	0.379	0.489	0.493
Customer focus	0.494	0.456	0.422	0.762	0.492	0.493	0.541	0.480	0.503
Service systems	0.507	0.469	0.432	0.492	0.746	0.460	0.470	0.523	0.351
Image Perception	0.494	0.483	0.379	0.493	0.460	0.724	0.449	0.509	0.458
Satisfaction	0.457	0.459	0.379	0.541	0.470	0.449	0.754	0.418	0.448
Tourism Experience	0.548	0.489	0.489	0.480	0.523	0.509	0.418	0.722	0.481
Revisit Intention	0.476	0.408	0.493	0.503	0.351	0.458	0.448	0.481	0.742

Note: The diagonal is the square root of the corresponding dimension AVE.

SL: Service leadership; EE: Employee engagement; OP: Organizational practices and policies; CF: Customer focus; SS: Service systems; IP: Image Perception; SA: Satisfaction; TE: Tourism Experience; RI: Revisit Intention.

4.4 Structural equation model

Table 4.8 presents the model fit indices for the structural equation model used in this study, demonstrating that the model adheres to acceptable fit standards. The chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) is 1.289, which is well below the threshold of 3, indicating an excellent fit and minimal discrepancy between the observed data and the estimated model. This low χ^2/df ratio confirms that the model is appropriately specified without unnecessary complexity. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.024, which is significantly below the acceptable upper limit of 0.08, further supporting the close fit of the model to the sample data. The low RMSEA value suggests that the model has only minor approximation errors, indicating a high level of accuracy in capturing the relationships among the constructs. Additional fit indices, such as the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI), all surpass their respective benchmarks of 0.9. Precisely, the GFI value of 0.906 reflects a satisfactory alignment between the model and the empirical data. The NFI, TLI, and CFI values are reported at 0.900, 0.974, and 0.976, respectively, indicating comparative solid and incremental fit. These indices measure the improvement of the hypothesized model over a null model with no assumed relationships, with values close to 1 indicating an excellent fit.

Table 7: Model fit index

Fit index	χ2/df	RMSEA	GFI	NFI	TLI	CFI
Reference standards	<3	<0.08	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9
Result	1.289	0.024	0.906	0.900	0.974	0.976

Table 8 presents the results of the path analysis for direct effects within the structural model, focusing on the relationships among critical constructs related to service leadership, employee engagement, organizational practices, customer focus, service systems, and their impact on image perception, satisfaction, tourism experience, and revisit intention. Each hypothesized path is evaluated using standardized estimates (β), standard errors (S.E.), critical ratios (C.R.), and p-values to assess the statistical significance of the proposed relationships. The analysis reveals that several paths, such as Service Leadership (SL) to Image Perception (IP) (H1a, β = 0.220, C.R. = 3.850, p < 0.001) and Customer Focus (CF) to Satisfaction (SA) (H2d, β = 0.308, C.R. = 5.607, p < 0.001), are statistically significant, indicating strong positive effects on their respective dependent variables. This suggests that higher levels of service leadership and customer focus substantially enhance tourists' perceptions of the destination and overall satisfaction, supporting the associated hypotheses.

Conversely, some paths did not show statistical significance. For example, the path from Organizational Practices (OP) to Image Perception (IP) (H1c, β = 0.051, C.R. = 0.938, p = 0.348) and from Organizational Practices (OP) to Satisfaction (SA) (H2c, β = 0.054, C.R. = 1.004, p = 0.315) was not supported, indicating that organizational practices alone may not significantly influence tourists' perceptions or satisfaction levels in the context of Yunnan folk tourism. Significant paths included Tourism Experience (TE) to Revisit Intention (RI) (H6, β = 0.228, C.R. = 4.275, p < 0.001), confirming

that positive tourism experiences directly influence tourists' intentions to revisit. Similarly, Satisfaction (SA) showed a strong positive effect on Revisit Intention (RI) (H5, β = 0.292, C.R. = 5.303, p < 0.001), underscoring the critical role of satisfaction in fostering repeat visits.

Table 8: Direct path effects

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate	β	S.E.	C.R.	P	Results
H1a	SL→IP	0.252	0.220	0.065	3.850	***	Supported
H1b	EE→IP	0.253	0.217	0.071	3.545	***	Supported
H1c	OP→IP	0.057	0.051	0.061	0.938	0.348	Rejected
H1d	CF→IP	0.221	0.213	0.057	3.898	***	Supported
H1e	SS→IP	0.128	0.122	0.058	2.188	0.029	Supported
H2a	SL→SA	0.140	0.141	0.055	2.546	0.011	Supported
H2b	EE→SA	0.169	0.168	0.060	2.821	0.005	Supported
H2c	OP→SA	0.052	0.054	0.052	1.004	0.315	Rejected
H2d	CF→SA	0.277	0.308	0.049	5.607	***	Supported
H2e	SS→SA	0.132	0.145	0.050	2.640	0.008	Supported
H3a	SL→TE	0.267	0.259	0.057	4.654	***	Supported
H3b	EE→TE	0.158	0.150	0.061	2.591	0.010	Supported
H3c	OP→TE	0.191	0.190	0.054	3.569	***	Supported
H3d	CF→TE	0.118	0.127	0.049	2.439	0.015	Supported
H3e	SS→TE	0.168	0.178	0.051	3.286	0.001	Supported
H4	IP→RI	0.238	0.243	0.052	4.618	***	Supported
H5	SA→RI	0.276	0.292	0.052	5.303	***	Supported
H6	TE→RI	0.193	0.228	0.045	4.275	***	Supported
Note: SL: Service leadership; EE: Employee engagement; OP: Organizational practices and policies; CF: Customer focus; SS: Service systems; IP: Image Perception; SA: Satisfaction; TE: Tourism Experience; RI: Revisit Intention. ***: p<0.001							

Table 9 summarizes the results of the mediation effect analysis conducted using a bootstrap test to evaluate the indirect effects of service leadership, employee engagement, organizational practices, customer focus, and service systems on revisit intention through mediators such as image perception, satisfaction, and tourism experience. The Effect Size column reflects the strength of each mediation path, while the standard error (SE) provides a measure of the reliability of these estimates. The bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (CI) are critical for assessing the statistical significance of the mediation effects, with significance confirmed when the CI does not include zero. The analysis reveals significant mediation effects for several paths. For example, the path from Service Leadership (SL) to Revisit Intention (RI) mediated by Image Perception (IP) (H7a) yielded an effect size of 0.049, with a bias-corrected CI ranging from 0.009 to 0.118, supporting the hypothesis. A similar effect was observed for the mediation path from Employee Engagement (EE) to RI through IP (H7b), also showing significant results (effect size 0.049, CI 0.009 to 0.123). Conversely, some paths did not show statistical significance, such as Organizational Practices (OP) to RI via IP (H7c) and Service Systems (SS) to RI through IP (H7e), where the CIs included zero, leading to the rejection of these hypotheses. However, Customer Focus (CF) to RI mediated by Satisfaction (SA) (H8d) exhibited a substantial effect size of 0.066, with a CI of 0.024 to 0.133, indicating the significant role of satisfaction in enhancing revisit intention.

The results further confirm the critical role of Tourism Experience (TE) as a mediator. Paths such as SL to RI through TE (H9a) showed a notable effect size of 0.074, with a CI of 0.023 to 0.149, emphasizing the importance of enhancing the tourism experience to boost revisit intentions. Other significant mediation effects were found for EE, OP, CF, and SS through TE, supporting their respective hypotheses and underscoring the value of optimizing tourism experiences in influencing visitor behaviour.

Table 9: Mediation effect bootstrap test

Hypothesis	Mediation path	Effect size	SE	Bias-Corrected		Results
				95%CI		
H7a	SL→IP→RI	0.049	0.026	0.009	0.118	Supported
H7b	EE→IP→RI	0.049	0.027	0.009	0.123	Supported
H7c	OP→IP→RI	0.011	0.019	-0.018	0.060	Rejected
H7d	CF→IP→RI	0.043	0.023	0.009	0.111	Supported
H7e	SS→IP→RI	0.025	0.018	-0.002	0.072	Rejected
H8a	SL→SA→RI	0.033	0.022	0.001	0.085	Supported
H8b	EE→SA→RI	0.040	0.024	0.002	0.102	Supported
H8c	OP→SA→RI	0.012	0.021	-0.022	0.067	Rejected
H8d	CF→SA→RI	0.066	0.027	0.024	0.133	Supported
H8e	SS→SA→RI	0.031	0.019	0.001	0.081	Supported
H9a	SL→TE→RI	0.074	0.031	0.023	0.149	Supported
H9b	EE→TE→RI	0.043	0.024	0.005	0.098	Supported
H9c	OP→TE→RI	0.053	0.031	0.006	0.136	Supported
H9d	CF→TE→RI	0.033	0.021	0.000	0.083	Supported
H9e	SS→TE→RI	0.046	0.021	0.013	0.097	Supported
Note: SL: Service leadership; EE: Employee engagement; OP: Organizational practices and policies; CF: Customer focus; SS: Service systems; IP: Image Perception; SA: Satisfaction; TE: Tourism Experience; RI: Revisit Intention.						

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Theoretical implications

This study offers significant theoretical contributions by examining how various service quality dimensions—namely, service leadership, employee engagement, organizational practices, customer focus, and service systems—impact image perception, satisfaction, and tourism experience and revisit intention in the context of Yunnan folk tourism. The research findings not only confirm existing theories in service quality literature but also reveal unexpected results that challenge prevailing assumptions, mainly where hypotheses were not supported.

Service leadership exhibited strong positive effects on Image Perception and Satisfaction (H1a, H2a), confirming existing literature that emphasizes the role of leadership in shaping tourists' perceptions and enhancing their satisfaction levels (Shi & Zhou, 2023). The significant direct effect of Service Leadership on Tourism Experience (H3a) also aligns with previous studies, suggesting that leadership practices that emphasize high service standards and cultural authenticity can enhance tourist experiences. However, the indirect mediation through Image Perception on Revisit Intention (H7a) was not as robust, suggesting that while leadership enhances perception, it may not always translate into repeat visits. This finding suggests that other factors, such as experiential depth or emotional connections, may play a more vital role in driving revisitation.

Employee engagement was found to significantly influence both Image Perception and Satisfaction (H1b, H2b), which aligns with previous findings that emphasize the role of engaged employees in delivering high-quality service (Chathoth et al., 2020). However, the pathway from Employee Engagement to Tourism Experience (H3b) was less significant than expected. The findings suggest that while engaged employees contribute to customer satisfaction, their impact on the overall tourism experience may depend on the support of other service elements. Notably, the significant mediation effect through image perception (H7b) indicates that engaged employees enhance the destination's image, which subsequently influences revisit intentions."Contrary to expectations, organizational practices and policies did not significantly impact image perception and satisfaction (H1c, H2c), leading to the rejection of these hypotheses. This outcome represents a critical finding that challenges the conventional belief that structured practices and policies consistently enhance tourist perceptions and satisfaction. The non-significant results for H7c and H8c indicate that rigid organizational practices may not be sufficient to influence tourist behaviour in culturally rich

destinations like Yunnan, where visitors value flexibility and authenticity. This finding suggests that tourism management should prioritize adaptive and culturally responsive practices over standardized procedures, thereby contributing a novel perspective to service quality theory.

The customer focus dimension demonstrated significant positive effects on satisfaction and tourism experience (H2d, H3d), as well as a strong mediation effect through satisfaction on revisit intention (H8d). These findings align with previous studies that emphasize the importance of tailoring services to customer needs to foster satisfaction and loyalty. However, although customer focus positively influenced image perception (H1d), its mediation effect through image perception on revisit intention (H7d) was weaker than expected. This outcome suggests that customer-centric strategies may be more effective in directly enhancing satisfaction rather than relying on perception-based channels. Consequently, while customer focus remains a critical component, its influence on revisitation may require a more holistic integration with emotional engagement strategies.

Service systems were shown to significantly impact image perception, satisfaction, and tourism experience (H1e, H2e, H3e). However, the rejection of H7e, which posited that Service Systems indirectly impact revisit intention through image perception, indicates that while efficient systems enhance immediate customer satisfaction and experiences, they may not necessarily translate into long-term loyalty or revisit intentions.

The study confirms that satisfaction, tourism experience, and image perception serve as significant mediators between service quality dimensions and revisit intention. Notably, satisfaction (H8a, H8b, H8d, H8e) and tourism experience (H9a, H9b, H9d, H9e) demonstrated strong mediation effects, reaffirming their critical roles in the tourist decision-making process. However, the rejection of specific hypotheses, such as H7c and H7e, emphasizes that service quality improvements must be tailored to the specific cultural and experiential expectations of tourists rather than relying solely on operational enhancements.

This study contributes to service quality theory by highlighting the varying degrees to which different service dimensions influence tourist behaviour. Specifically, it challenges the assumption that organizational policies and service systems uniformly enhance tourist satisfaction and loyalty. The findings suggest that more adaptive, customer-focused approaches are required in culturally rich tourism settings.

Moreover, the research expands the application of loyalty theory by demonstrating that fostering loyalty in niche tourism markets like Yunnan folk tourism requires more than just efficient service delivery. Emotional engagement, customer-centric strategies, and leadership-driven service cultures are critical for driving long-term loyalty and repeat visitation. The results underline that while tangible service quality factors are essential, intangible elements like empathy and personalized interactions hold more significant sway in driving loyalty and revisiting intentions.

In summary, the theoretical implications of this study extend beyond confirming existing theories to challenge and refine the understanding of how service quality dimensions impact tourist behaviour in culturally immersive contexts. By examining both direct and mediated pathways, the study provides a more nuanced perspective on the interplay between service quality, satisfaction, experience, and revisit intention, thereby offering valuable insights for both academia and practitioners in the tourism sector.

5.2 Practical implications

The findings provide important practical implications for enhancing the service quality and sustainability of Yunnan's folk tourism industry. The insights derived from the structural equation model emphasize the need for tourism operators, policymakers, and stakeholders to strategically optimize both tangible and intangible service elements to foster tourist satisfaction, enhance their experiences, and drive revisit intentions. For critical destinations such as Lijiang and Dali, investments in infrastructure improvements, preserving cultural authenticity, and ensuring high standards of facility maintenance are crucial. These measures can substantially enhance tourists' perceptions and satisfaction. Moreover, expanding accessibility, such as implementing barrier-free facilities, can create a more inclusive tourism environment, appealing to a broader range of visitors and enhancing their overall experience.

Ensuring service reliability by establishing clear standards and training frontline staff is essential to meet tourists' expectations for dependable experiences. In Yunnan's folk tourism context, where tourists often depend on local guides to immerse themselves in cultural heritage, enhancing service reliability through standardized training programs can build trust, thereby fostering higher satisfaction and loyalty.

Training programs should focus on enhancing staff responsiveness, equipping them with the skills to address tourist inquiries confidently, especially during peak travel seasons or cultural festivals. Establishing on-site visitor information centres or deploying mobile service units can promptly address tourists' concerns, ensuring a seamless and satisfying experience, particularly in culturally rich destinations where personalized service is highly valued.

Furthermore, by cultivating an empathetic service culture where staff members are trained to understand and anticipate tourists' needs, tourism operators can significantly improve the perceived value of the experience. For instance, offering personalized services that cater to individual preferences, such as customized cultural tours, can foster deeper emotional connections with tourists, increasing their likelihood of revisiting.

By focusing on these mediators, tourism providers can more effectively leverage positive service interactions into long-term tourist loyalty. Implementing strategies such as loyalty programs, curated cultural experiences, and continuous feedback mechanisms can refine service offerings and foster a stronger connection with tourists. In the context of Yunnan's diverse cultural settings, leveraging localized and personalized experiences is crucial in transforming satisfied visitors into loyal advocates who are likely to recommend the destination to others.

Additionally, deploying innovative tourism tools, such as 5G networks and big data analytics in key regions like Xishuangbanna and Dali, can support personalized, data-driven service enhancements. This digital transformation can enable real-time visitor support, optimize resource allocation, and provide tailored services that align with tourists' preferences, significantly improving satisfaction and loyalty. By embracing digital innovation, Yunnan's folk tourism can strengthen its competitive edge and ensure sustainable growth.

Finally, the rejected hypotheses (H1c, H2c, H7c) reveal areas where current practices may fall short of tourists' expectations, particularly concerning the impact of organizational practices and policies on image perception and satisfaction. The findings highlight the need for tourism operators to assess and realign their internal policies toward customer-centric strategies critically. Additionally, the lack of significant mediation effects in specific paths suggests that promotional strategies aimed at enhancing image perception should adopt a more nuanced approach to emphasize Yunnan's unique cultural and scenic offerings effectively. This indicates the need for tourism operators to assess and realign their internal policies toward customer-centric strategies critically. Moreover, the lack of significant mediation effects in specific paths suggests that promotional strategies focusing on enhancing image perception may require a more nuanced approach to highlight Yunnan's unique cultural and scenic offerings effectively.

Overall, the practical implications of this study emphasize a balanced approach that integrates improvements in both physical infrastructure and service quality dimensions. By enhancing tangible facilities, fostering empathetic and reliable service interactions, and leveraging intelligent tourism technologies, stakeholders in Yunnan's folk tourism can attract and retain loyal tourists, thereby contributing to the sustainable development of the industry.

In summary, these practical implications underscore the need for a comprehensive approach to enhancing Yunnan's folk tourism by improving both tangible and service aspects. By systematically enhancing service quality and infrastructure, tourism stakeholders can substantially boost tourist satisfaction and loyalty, thereby contributing to the sustainable development of Yunnan's folk tourism industry.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on a comprehensive analysis, this study provides a deeper understanding of how service quality dimensions—such as service leadership, employee engagement, customer focus, and service systems—impact tourists' satisfaction, experience, and revisit intentions in Yunnan folk tourism. By

employing structural equation modelling and validating hypotheses through empirical data, this research confirms that factors like service leadership and customer focus play a significant role in shaping positive tourist perceptions and satisfaction levels, thereby encouraging revisitation.

While this study reinforces existing theories, such as the Service-Profit Chain and social cognitive theory, by demonstrating the positive influence of well-managed service practices on satisfaction and revisit intentions, it also highlights certain complexities within the Yunnan folk tourism context. Notably, while constructs like employee engagement and customer focus significantly enhance satisfaction and revisit intentions, organizational practices did not show a direct impact on satisfaction, suggesting that rigid policies may not align well with the experiential nature of cultural tourism.

The mediating roles of satisfaction and tourism experience were found to be crucial in translating service quality into repeat visits, supporting the idea that enhancing the overall tourist experience is critical to building long-term loyalty. However, the rejection of some hypotheses indicates that standardized service practices alone may not fully capture the unique expectations of tourists seeking cultural and folk experiences.

This study has several limitations. The research is primarily focused on Yunnan folk tourism, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other types of tourism contexts. Future research could expand to other regions or forms of cultural tourism to verify whether these findings hold across different settings. Additionally, the study's cross-sectional design captures tourist perceptions at a single point in time, which may not reflect long-term changes in satisfaction or loyalty. Longitudinal studies could provide more robust insights into how service quality influences revisit behaviour over time.

Future research could also explore qualitative approaches to capture deeper, context-specific insights into tourists' motivations and experiences, enriching the quantitative findings of this study. Finally, incorporating factors such as policy interventions, economic influences, and environmental considerations could provide a more holistic view of the dynamics affecting tourists' revisit intentions in folk tourism contexts.

In summary, this study highlights the importance of service quality in promoting sustainable tourism development in Yunnan folk tourism, mainly through fostering satisfaction and enhancing the overall tourist experience. By focusing on both tangible service attributes and personalized interactions, tourism operators can create meaningful and memorable experiences that encourage repeat visits, ultimately contributing to the sustainable growth of the cultural tourism sector.

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Appendix 1: Measurement

Construct	Revised Items
Service leadership	This tourism service leader prioritizes tourists' immersion in Yunnan's unique cultural heritage while ensuring cost-effective services.
	This tourism service leader ensures that tourists feel valued and satisfied by delivering high-quality experiences that showcase Yunnan's folk traditions.
	This tourism service leader stays alert to tourists' needs, responding promptly to enhance their cultural experiences in Yunnan folk tourism.
	This tourism service leader inspires the team to provide exceptional service, fostering greater satisfaction and increasing the likelihood of tourists revisiting Yunnan.
	This tourism service leader ensures that tourism activities promote sustainable development, preserving Yunnan's folk culture and benefiting the local community.
Employee engagement	When I was on Yunnan folk tourism, the employees paid great attention to ensuring that I had an authentic and enriching Yunnan folk travel experience.
	When I was on Yunnan folk tourism, I felt that the employees cared deeply about the future of Yunnan folk tourism and were dedicated to enhancing my cultural and experiential journey.
	When I was on the Yunnan Folk Tourism, the staff were willing to put in extra effort to ensure that tourists' experiences were memorable and encourage tourists to revisit.
Organizational practices and policies	Tourism service providers involve staff in decision-making to enhance the quality of services specific to Yunnan folk tourism.
	Open communication is encouraged among staff to effectively address tourists' concerns and ensure a seamless Yunnan folk tourism experience.
	Employees actively engage in resolving service-related challenges to improve tourist satisfaction with Yunnan's cultural and folk tourism offerings.
	Staff are regularly trained on cultural safety and service standards specific to Yunnan folk tourism.
	Immediate action is taken when service protocols that impact the tourist experience in Yunnan folk tourism are not adhered to.
Customer focus	Tourism service providers encourage tourist feedback and complaints to improve the authenticity and richness of Yunnan folk cultural experiences.
	Tourism managers are committed to delivering genuine and immersive Yunnan folk cultural experiences.
	Tourism operators continuously seek innovative ways to enhance the value of tourists' experiences in Yunnan folk tourism.
	Yunnan tourism organizations regularly measure tourist satisfaction to ensure the quality of Yunnan folk tourism services.
	Follow-up strategies are essential for tourism providers to maintain tourists' satisfaction and encourage repeat visits to Yunnan folk destinations.
	Tourism providers define service quality based on how satisfied tourists are with their experiences of Yunnan's folk culture and the overall value offered.
	Yunnan tourism services would be more effective if staff focused more on efficiently enhancing the folk cultural experiences of tourists.
	In Yunnan folk tourism, tourist satisfaction is assessed every three months to maintain high service quality.
Service systems	Technology is utilized to enhance tourists' cultural experiences by showcasing the unique aspects of Yunnan folk traditions, such as the Naxi Dongba script in virtual reality displays, interactive digital guides

	explaining the Water-Splashing Festival of the Dai ethnic group, and augmented reality (AR) exhibits bringing the Bai people's tie-dye process to life.
	Use advanced technology to assist staff in delivering efficient and authentic cultural services in Yunnan folk tourism.
	Implement contingency plans that address common challenges associated with providing seamless Yunnan folk tourism experiences.
	Performance metrics focused on preserving the authenticity of Yunnan's folk culture are clearly communicated to employees.
	Provide culturally sensitive follow-up services to enrich tourists' experiences and ensure their satisfaction with Yunnan folk tourism.
	Use internal standards to identify inefficiencies in Yunnan folk cultural service delivery, addressing potential issues before tourists voice complaints.
	Explain tourist feedback on cultural services to frontline employees to enhance the quality of Yunnan folk tourism services and ensure continuous improvement.
Image Perception	Dali, Lijiang, and Xishuangbanna boast rich cultural heritage, including the Bai people's tie-dye art, the Naxi Dongba culture, and the Dai Water-Splashing Festival.
	Dali, Lijiang, and Xishuangbanna offer beautiful natural scenery, such as the serene Erhai Lake in Dali, the majestic Jade Dragon Snow Mountain in Lijiang, and the lush tropical rainforests in Xishuangbanna.
	Dali, Lijiang, and Xishuangbanna have friendly and welcoming locals.
	Dali, Lijiang, and Xishuangbanna provide a safe environment through well-maintained tourist areas, visible security presence, and organized cultural events that ensure a worry-free experience for visitors.
	Dali, Lijiang and Xishuangbanna are famous for their folk tourism, such as experiencing the Bai people's tie-dye art and the traditional Three-Course Tea ceremony in Dali, exploring the Naxi Dongba culture and the UNESCO-listed Old Town in Lijiang, and participating in the Dai Water-Splashing Festival and visiting tropical villages in Xishuangbanna.
Satisfaction	I am satisfied with my overall experience at the Yunnan folk tourism destination.
	The Yunnan folk tourism destination met my expectations.
	I am pleased with the quality of services provided at the Yunnan folk tourism destination.
	I feel that my visit to the Yunnan folk tourism destination was worthwhile.
	I would recommend the Yunnan folk tourism destination to my friends and family.
Tourism Experience	The cultural activities at the Yunnan folk tourism destination were very engaging.
	Visiting cultural heritage sites at the Yunnan folk tourism destination was enriching.
	I had a memorable experience at the Yunnan folk tourism destination.
	The Yunnan folk tourism destination provided a variety of exciting activities.
	The overall atmosphere of the Yunnan folk tourism destination was pleasant.
Revisit Intention	I intend to revisit the Yunnan folk tourism destination.
	I will choose this destination for my next trip.
	I am likely to return to this destination in the future.
	I will recommend the Yunnan folk tourism destination to others.
	I will speak positively about Yunnan folk tourism destination.