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SERVICE RECOVERY PATHWAYS TO TOURIST TRUST IN IN- DONESIAN COASTAL DESTINANION SYSTEMS

Abstract: Coastal destination systems involve multiple actors and interconnected service processes, making tourist trust dependent on how destinations respond to service disruptions rather than on service performance alone. This study examines the pathways through which service failure, customer complaint behavior, service recovery, and tourist satisfaction shape tourist trust within integrated coastal destination systems in Indonesia. A quantitative survey was conducted with 280 tourists visiting Kendari Bay and Toronipa Beach, and the data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS). The results reveal that service failure does not directly influence tourist complaint behavior, satisfaction, or trust, but significantly stimulates service recovery. Customer complaint behavior strengthens service recovery, which subsequently enhances tourist satisfaction and trust, while tourist satisfaction emerges as the strongest predictor of trust. The findings further demonstrate that service recovery constitutes the principal pathway linking service failure to tourist trust through sequential mediation involving complaint behavior and satisfaction. These results suggest that tourist trust is shaped less by service failures themselves than by the capacity of coastal destination systems to coordinate recovery actions and restore visitor experiences. This study contributes to tourism geography by conceptualizing coastal destinations as integrated spatial service systems in which service recovery functions as a key spatial governance mechanism for sustaining tourist trust.

Keywords: destination governance, visitor satisfaction, complaint handling, experience quality, structural equation modelling, coastal recreation

Introduction

Tourist destinations increasingly compete not only through natural attractions, accessibility, or branding, but also through their ability to deliver reliable service experiences and

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respond effectively to service failures. In the contemporary tourism market, the tourist experience is heavily influenced by operational elements such as cleanliness, security, responsiveness, crowd management, information availability, transportation coordination, and staff behavior. When these elements fail to function properly, tourists can experience service failures, potentially reducing satisfaction, weakening the destination's image, and eroding trust in the destination system. As global tourism competition intensifies, the ability to recover from service disruptions becomes a strategic determinant of destination resilience, revisit intentions, and long-term competitiveness. Recent tourism studies also indicate that tourist evaluations are increasingly relational and experience-based, making trust and satisfaction key outcomes in destination performance (Stylidis, 2022; Rahman & Boley, 2025).

The concepts of service failure and service recovery have been widely discussed in the hospitality and service management literature, particularly in the context of hotels, airlines, restaurants, and digital travel platforms. Numerous studies have shown that effective recovery responses—such as apologies, compensation, empathy, prompt responses, and procedural justice—can restore customer satisfaction and reduce negative behavioral reactions. In the tourism context, service interactions have also been shown to influence destination image, place attachment, and behavioral responses among tourists (Prayag et al., 2018; Iordanova & Stylidis, 2019). Recent evidence from Indonesia further indicates that effective service management contributes to improved service quality and guest satisfaction, underscoring the importance of delivering consistent tourism experiences across different service settings (Toar et al., 2026). However, many public tourism destinations, particularly in developing countries, differ significantly from service environments controlled by a single company. Numerous, fragmented actors, such as local merchants, transport operators, informal workers, host communities, and government agencies, often generate tourist experiences. As a result, service responsibilities are dispersed, recovery mechanisms are unclear, and tourist dissatisfaction often goes unreported through formal complaint systems. This creates significant challenges: destinations rely heavily on tourist trust, yet many operate without integrated service governance.

The issue has become increasingly relevant in coastal destinations and open tourism spaces, where growth in visitor numbers often exceeds managerial capacity. Beach and bay tourism areas frequently face recurring problems such as visitor overcrowding, sanitation issues, disorganized parking, security concerns, inconsistent pricing, limited tourist information, and weak coordination among service points. Studies on crowding and destination performance indicate that unmanaged visitor pressure can significantly affect tourist experiences and local sustainability (Neuts, 2016; Oklevik et al., 2020; Ruiz et al., 2021). Nevertheless, many tourists continue to visit because natural attractions, social value, scenic beauty, and symbolic prestige often compensate for operational shortcomings (Boley et al., 2025). This suggests that service failure does not always directly damage trust or satisfaction. Instead, tourist responses are likely determined by whether complaints are expressed, whether recovery actions are undertaken, and how the overall experience is subsequently re-evaluated (Aguilar-Rojas et al., 2015; Naeem et al., 2024).

Although the literature has developed rapidly, existing evidence remains theoretically fragmented (Kim & So, 2023; Nowak et al., 2023). Most previous studies have treated service failure, service recovery, satisfaction, and trust as separate direct relationships or par-

tial mediations, such as service failure → satisfaction, service recovery → loyalty, or satisfaction → trust (del Río-Lanza et al., 2009; Chrisdwiandra, 2024). Such approaches limit understanding of how tourist evaluations are actually formed sequentially within multi-actor destinations. In addition, complaint behavior is still often treated merely as a negative outcome rather than as a feedback mechanism that can trigger recovery and learning within the service system (Tax et al., 1998; Wei et al., 2013). Service recovery is also generally positioned as a reactive managerial response, whereas in the context of public destinations it can function as a governance mechanism that connects multiple actors and restores tourist confidence (Kau & Loh, 2006; Zhi & Ha, 2024). On the other hand, dominant empirical contexts still focus on hotels, airlines, restaurants, and digital platforms, while evidence from public coastal destinations in developing regions remains relatively limited (Kim & So, 2023; Wei et al., 2024).

This gap is crucial to address because tourism destinations differ from single-enterprise service systems. Destination experiences are co-created through spaces, institutions, and various service touchpoints. In such environments, trust does not necessarily emerge from a single interaction, but from a cumulative assessment of how the destination system responds to disruptions. Based on this logic, this study employs service recovery theory and a process-based destination systems logic perspective. From this perspective, the influence of service failure on trust likely operates indirectly through complaint behavior, service recovery, and satisfaction. Thus, tourism outcomes are better understood as the result of sequential transformations rather than a direct causal relationship.

Indonesia is a relevant context for examining this issue. Many coastal tourism destinations in Indonesia are experiencing rapid visitor growth, but this is accompanied by uneven management institutionalization, fragmented services, and a mixed formal and informal tourism economy. Recent evidence from Kendari Bay further highlights that strengthening the capacities of local tourism service providers contributes to more resilient and sustainable coastal tourism systems, emphasizing the important role of tourism actors in supporting destination performance (Alwi et al., 2025). The integrated coastal-bay tourism destinations that are the focus of this study exemplify these conditions: attractions are geographically interconnected, visitor flows are dynamic, and service quality depends on the coordination of many actors, not a single operator. This setting represents a rapidly developing coastal destination with dispersed governance and a combination of formal and informal services, making it an appropriate context for examining service recovery processes within an integrated destination system.

Based on this background, this study examines how service failure influences tourist trust through customer complaint behavior, service recovery, and customer satisfaction within integrated coastal destination systems in Indonesia. Focusing on public coastal destinations characterized by multi-actor service systems, this study extends the service failure–recovery literature by demonstrating that tourist trust is formed primarily through indirect recovery pathways rather than through the direct effects of service failure.

Conceptual Framework

This study develops a conceptual framework explaining how service failures at tourist destinations trigger a series of behavioral responses from tourists, service recovery mechanisms, and psychological consequences such as satisfaction and trust. This framework is based on Service Recovery Theory (Bitner et al., 1994; Tax et al., 1998) and Expectancy-

Disconfirmation Theory (Oliver, 2010), which posit that discrepancies between service expectations and actual experiences result in cognitive and behavioral responses that ultimately shape destination evaluations.

In this model, Service Failure (SF) is positioned as an initiating stimulus representing various forms of disruption in tourism services. This condition can trigger Customer Complaint Behavior (CCB), which reflects tourists' expressions of dissatisfaction through various communication channels (Sparks & Fredline, 2007; Wei et al., 2013; Xu & Wu, 2018; Naeem et al., 2024).

However, not all service failures automatically lead to complaint behavior. Tourists' responses to service failures depend on the perceived severity of the problem, the costs associated with the complaint, and the individual's propensity to voice dissatisfaction (complaint propensity). Therefore, complaint behavior should not be considered a universal response, but rather a conditioned behavioral reaction.

Complaints then act as a trigger for destination managers to initiate Service Recovery (SR) as a corrective mechanism in response to service failures (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002; Wu et al., 2018; Kim & So, 2023; Zhi & Ha, 2024). In the context of tourist destinations, complaint behavior serves not only as an expression of dissatisfaction but also as a valuable source of information indicating gaps in perceived service quality. This information allows destination managers to identify specific areas of service failure and respond with more targeted corrective actions. Therefore, complaint behavior serves as a feedback mechanism that accelerates the activation of the service recovery process within the destination service system.

Service recovery can be activated through two main mechanisms. First, from an operational perspective, the service failure itself directly forces the organization to take corrective action (operationally triggered recovery). Second, from an interactional perspective, tourist complaint behavior acts as a direct signal that activates the recovery process (customer-triggered recovery). Therefore, Service Recovery (SR) should not be viewed as a single response, but rather as the result of a combination of internal organizational mechanisms and external signals from tourists.

The effectiveness of the Service Recovery process contributes to the formation of Customer Satisfaction (CS) as an overall evaluation of the tourism experience (Kau & Loh, 2006; del Río-Lanza et al., 2009; Wu et al., 2018; Su & Ha, 2025). Finally, Trust (Driven Behavioral Outcomes / TR) emerges as a long-term psychological consequence reflecting tourists' confidence in the quality, consistency, and integrity of the destination (Chen & Phou, 2013; Prayag et al., 2017; Hosany et al., 2017; Styliadis et al., 2022).

Structurally, this model follows a sequential mediation pattern, where Service Failure not only has a direct effect but also operates through a series of processes involving Customer Complaint Behavior, Service Recovery, and Customer Satisfaction, ultimately leading to Trust. In addition to this sequential pathway, the model also incorporates direct effects between constructs to more realistically capture the relational dynamics within the context of tourism experiences.

Therefore, this conceptual framework emphasizes that service failure does not always result in permanent negative consequences; instead, it can be transformed into satisfaction and trust through tourists' behavioral responses and effective service recovery mechanisms.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design. The aim is to examine the causal relationships between latent constructs: Service Failure (SF), Customer Complaint Behavior (CCB), Service Recovery (SR), Customer Satisfaction (CS), and Trust (TR). This approach is a cross-sectional study, where data collection is conducted once during the same research period to describe the empirical conditions at the time of observation.

Data analysis in this study used Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). This method was chosen because it is capable of analyzing complex structural models, including chain mediation relationships between latent variables. Furthermore, SEM-PLS does not require the assumption of data normality, making it more flexible for use in tourist behavior research. This method is also suitable for analyzing multidimensional latent constructs, such as those in this study.

Research Hypothesis

The hypotheses in this study were formulated to test the direct causal relationships and indirect mechanisms linking Service Failure (SF), Customer Complaint Behavior (CCB), Service Recovery (SR), Customer Satisfaction (CS), and Trust (TR). This framework is based on Service Recovery Theory and Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory, both of which consistently explain that service failure triggers a customer behavioral response, followed by service recovery efforts, which then sequentially shape satisfaction and trust.

Overall, the proposed research model follows a sequential mediation structure, where the impact of service failure does not end with the tourist's initial reaction, but flows through a series of behavioral responses and institutional mechanisms before ultimately shaping the tourist's final evaluation in the form of trust (Kim & So, 2023; Nowak et al., 2023; Wei et al., 2024; Su & Ha, 2025).

While this study examined the direct relationship between service failure and tourism outcomes, contemporary service recovery literature suggests that the influence of service failure on psychological outcomes is more likely to occur indirectly through a chain mediation mechanism. Therefore, an examination of the direct relationships in this model was conducted for empirical confirmation purposes and to determine whether there were any residual direct effects remaining outside the main mediation pathway.

Direct Effects

In the context of direct effects, service failure is predicted to increase customer complaint behavior (H1), as tourists tend to respond to service disruptions through various forms of dissatisfaction (Sparks & Fredline, 2007; Wei et al., 2013). Conversely, service failure is also hypothesized to decrease customer satisfaction (H2), in line with the principle of disconfirmation of expectations, where experiences that fall short of expectations will decrease satisfaction evaluations (Oliver, 2010; Xu & Wu, 2018). Furthermore, service failure is predicted to negatively

influence trust (H3), as service failure can weaken perceptions of destination credibility and consistency (Chen & Phou, 2013; Styliadis, 2020).

Customer Complaint Behavior is further expected to positively influence Service Recovery (H4), as tourist complaints serve as a key input for destination organizations in implementing service improvement measures (Bitner et al., 1994; Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002; Wu et al., 2018).

Furthermore, Service Recovery is expected to increase Customer Satisfaction (H5) and Trust (H6), as an effective recovery response can improve evaluations of the tourist experience while rebuilding confidence in the destination (del Río-Lanza et al., 2009; Su & Ha, 2025; Prayag et al., 2017; Styliadis et al., 2022).

Customer Satisfaction is also hypothesized to positively influence Trust (H7), confirming that satisfaction is a crucial foundation for building long-term trust among tourists (Chen & Phou, 2013; Hosany et al., 2017).

Ultimately, Service Failure is also hypothesized to have a positive effect on Service Recovery (H8), because in the context of service failure, the higher the level of failure perceived by tourists, the greater the pressure and need for destination managers to carry out effective service recovery (Wu & Mattila, 2013; Fu et al., 2015). Thus, Service Recovery is not only triggered by tourist complaint behavior, but is also directly influenced by the level of service failure itself.

Mediation Effects (Indirect Effects / Mechanism Effects)

In addition to direct relationships, this study also examines mediation mechanisms that explain how each construct is linked within the tourist evaluation process. Customer Complaint Behavior is hypothesised to mediate the effect of Service Failure on Service Recovery (H9), indicating that service failures first generate complaints before prompting recovery actions (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002; Wei et al., 2013).

Furthermore, Service Recovery is expected to mediate the effect of Customer Complaint Behavior on Customer Satisfaction (H10), suggesting that satisfaction is formed through the effectiveness of recovery responses to tourists' complaints (Wu et al., 2018; Kim & So, 2023).

In addition, Customer Satisfaction is hypothesised to mediate the effect of Service Recovery on Trust (H11), indicating that tourists' trust is indirectly developed through satisfaction arising from the service recovery process (Prayag et al., 2017; Styliadis et al., 2022).

Sequential Mediation (Chain Mediation – Main Model)

As the principal model of this study, the final hypothesis examines a sequential mediation mechanism that represents the complete process through which tourist experiences are formed. In this mechanism, Service Failure is expected to influence Trust indirectly through the sequential pathway of Customer Complaint Behavior, Service Recovery, and Customer Satisfaction (H12).

This model represents full sequential mediation, whereby the impact of service failure does not stop at a single stage, but flows systematically through tourists' behavioural responses and service recovery mechanisms, ultimately shaping tourists' trust in a comprehensive manner (Kim & So, 2023; Nowak et al., 2023; Wei et al., 2024; Su & Ha, 2025).

Research Location

This study was conducted in 2025 at two distinct tourism destinations in Southeast Sulawesi Province, Indonesia: Kendari Bay and Toronipa Beach. The selection of these two sites was based on their contrasting tourism characteristics, with each representing a different destination typology—namely, a coastal lagoon-based destination and a beach-based destination. The spatial distribution of the research locations is presented in Figure 1.

Kendari Bay is characterised by a daily tourism visitation pattern, with relatively stable visitor numbers throughout the week. In contrast, Toronipa Beach exhibits a seasonal weekend tourism pattern, in which visitor arrivals tend to increase substantially during weekends and public holidays.

The selection of these two destinations was motivated by the consideration that they display different tourist visitation dynamics, specifically between a destination with stable daily demand and one with fluctuating seasonal demand. These contrasting characteristics are expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of variations in tourist experiences within the context of this study.

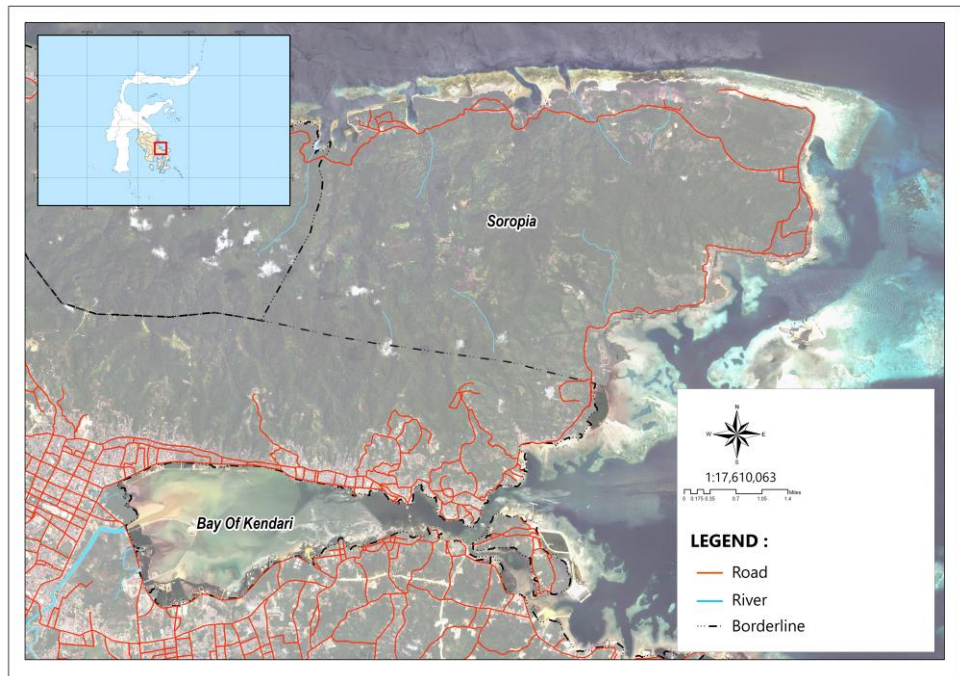


Fig. 1. Spatial distribution of the research locations: Kendari Bay and Toronipa Beach, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia

Population and Sample

The population in this study is the average tourist flow recorded at both destinations during the three-month observation period. Tourism demand literature conceptualizes visitor flow as a dynamic system, rather than a static population, where tourist arrivals are treated as a temporally moving process, not a fixed entity (Song & Li, 2008; Ridderstaat et al., 2014; Neuts, 2016).

Therefore, the population in this study is treated as a finite observed tourist flow, representing empirical conditions during the study period (Song et al., 2009; Chen et al., 2017). Based on operational data from destination managers verified through field observations, an estimated average monthly visitation of 390–420 tourists per destination was obtained, or approximately 1,180–1,250 cumulative visits during the observation period. This approach confirms that the population represents an empirical tourist flow rather than a static population.

Respondents were selected based on the criteria of having directly experienced destination services, in accordance with the experience-based sampling approach in tourism research (Cohen et al., 2014). The sampling technique used was stratified intercept sampling with purposive screening. Stratification was conducted based on the research locations, namely Kendari Bay and Toronipa Beach. Respondents were selected directly at the research locations through an intercept survey approach, with the primary criterion being tourists who had used destination services.

Data were collected using a structured closed-ended questionnaire comprising reflective measurement items assessed on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire was specifically designed to capture tourists' perceptions of the study constructs based on their actual experiences at the two tourism destinations.

To minimize potential bias due to differences in visit times, data collection was conducted on weekdays and weekends, and across various visit periods. This step aimed to increase the representativeness of the tourist experiences studied. Furthermore, the sample proportion was determined proportionally based on visit intensity, which was approximately 60% for Kendari Bay and 40% for Toronipa Beach.

The sample size was determined using the rule-of-thumb commonly recommended in the PLS-SEM literature, whereby the minimum sample should be approximately five to ten times the largest number of measurement indicators included in the research model (Hair Jr. et al., 2021). As the model comprised 25 measurement indicators, the recommended minimum sample size ranged from 125 to 250 respondents. To ensure an adequate sample size and enhance the statistical robustness of the SEM-PLS analysis, this study collected data from 280 respondents, comprising 168 respondents from Kendari Bay and 112 respondents from Toronipa Beach.

Research Variables

The variables in this study are structured in a latent construct-based causal model consisting of Service Failure (SF), Customer Complaint Behavior (CCB), Service Recovery (SR), Customer Satisfaction (CS), and Trust (Driven Behavioral Outcomes /TR). All constructs are measured using reflective indicators adapted from previous research and tailored to the context of tourism experiences at Kendari Bay and Toronipa Beach.

In this study, Trust (TR) is conceptualized as a higher-order construct reflecting tourists' belief in the consistency, quality, and integrity of a destination. In addition to these cognitive dimensions, Trust is also reflected in the tendency toward loyalty behaviors such as revisit intention and word-of-mouth recommendations, which are positioned as consequential manifestations of trust formation. Thus, trust is understood

not only as a cognitive evaluation of a destination but also as an integrated construct linking attitudinal and behavioral aspects in tourism destination evaluation.

Details of the variables, dimensions, indicators, and reference sources used in this study are presented in Table 1, which illustrates the operationalization of the theoretical constructs used in this study.

Table 1. Research variables and measurement items

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Construct Type</i>	<i>Indicator/Code</i>	<i>Indicator Description</i>	<i>Source / Reference</i>
Service Failure (SF)	Exogenous (Reflective)	Service Delivery	Delays in service delivery (tickets, parking, and facilities) in tourist areas	Bitner et al. (1994), Tax et al. (1998), Sparks and Fredline (2007), Wong and McKercher (2011), Neuts et al. (2012), Wu and Mattila (2013), Zerva et al. (2016), Styliadis (2016) and Styliadis (2020)
		Delay Failure [SF1]		
		Facility Condition Failure [SF2]	Damage or unavailability of tourism facilities (toilets, roads, seating, lighting)	
		Information Clarity Failure [SF3]	Lack of clear tourism information and integration between Teluk Kendari and Pantai Tononipa	
		Safety and Security Failure [SF4]	Insufficient safety conditions in tourism areas (parking, sea area, culinary zones)	
		Staff Responsiveness Failure [SF5]	Low responsiveness or unhelpful service from tourism staff	
Customer Complaint Behavior (CCB)	Mediasi (Reflective)	Cleanliness Failure [SF6]	Poor cleanliness in tourist areas (beaches, culinary areas, public spaces)	Tax et al. (1998), Maxham and Netemeyer (2002), Sparks and Fredline (2007), Wei et al. (2013), Chen and Phou (2013), Huang et al. (2014), Xu and Wu (2018)
		Direct Complaint (Voice) [CCB1]	Tourists directly express complaints to destination management	
		Digital Complaint [CCB2]	Complaints submitted through digital platforms or social media	
		Public Complaint [CCB3]	Complaints submitted to third parties such as tourism authorities or media	
		Negative Word of Mouth [CCB4]	Sharing negative information about the destination to others	
		Service Avoidance Intention (Behavioral Response) [CCB5]	Behavioral intention to avoid revisiting the destination	
Service Recovery (SR)	Mediasi (Reflective)	Responsiveness [SR1]	Speed of staff response to tourist complaints	Bitner et al. (1994), Tax et al. (1998), Maxham and Netemeyer (2002), Kau and Loh (2006), del Río-Lanza et al. (2009), Wu and Mattila (2013), Fu et al. (2015) and Wu et al. (2018)
		Apology and Empathy [SR2]	Expression of apology and empathetic response toward tourists	
		Problem Resolution [SR3]	Direct on-site resolution of service problems	
		Compensation [SR4]	Provision of compensation such as discounts or additional services	
		Interaction Quality [SR5]	Quality of interpersonal interaction during complaint handling	
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	Endogenous (Reflective)	Expectation Fulfillment [CS1]	Experience matches tourist expectations	Oliver (2010), Prayag and Ryan (2012); Andereck et al. (2012), Chen and Phou (2013), Prayag et al. (2013), Cong et al. (2014), Prayag et al. (2017), Styliadis
		Overall Satisfaction [CS2]	Overall evaluation of the integrated destination experience	
		Experience Enjoyment [CS3]	Level of enjoyment during tourism activities (culinary and beach experiences)	
		Service Evaluation [CS4]	Positive evaluation of services across both destinations	

Trust-Driven Behavioral Outcomes (TR)	Endogenous (Reflective)	Reliability Trust [TR1]	Belief that destination management is consistent and dependable	et al. (2017) and Ruiz et al. (2021) Prayag and Ryan (2012), Chen and Phou (2013), Aguilar-Rojas et al. (2015), Wu et al. (2016), Hosany et al. (2017), Prayag et al. (2017), Boley et al. (2018), Styliadis (2020), Styliadis et al. (2022), Boley et al. (2024)
		Quality Trust [TR2]	Confidence in the overall quality of tourism services	
		Integrity Trust [TR3]	Perception that management is honest and professionally responsible	
		TR4 Behavioral Intention (Revisit-based Trust Expression) [TR4]	Intention to revisit the destination as an expression of long-term trust	
		TR5 Behavioral Intention (Recommendation-based Trust Expression) [TR5]	Willingness to recommend the destination to others as a form of trust reinforcement	

Data Analysis

The measurement model (outer model) was assessed to ensure construct validity and reliability using the following criteria: outer loadings (> 0.70), Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.50), Cronbach's Alpha (> 0.70), Composite Reliability (> 0.70), and discriminant validity evaluated through the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT).

The structural model (inner model) was evaluated to test the strength and predictive relevance of the relationships among constructs using the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and overall model fit assessed through the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR < 0.08).

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. Statistical significance was determined based on t-values > 1.96 and p-values < 0.05 at the 5% significance level. Mediation analysis was performed using specific indirect effects to examine indirect relationships among variables. In addition, sequential mediation analysis was employed to identify the chained mechanisms linking Service Failure, Customer Complaint Behavior, Service Recovery, Customer Satisfaction, and Trust.

Results

The initial stage of the analysis began with an evaluation of the measurement model, which included testing convergent validity outer loading values, followed by testing reliability and construct validity. This approach ensure that all indicators accurately represented the constructs being measured before proceeding to the structural model analysis. The evaluation of convergent validity is demonstrated through the outer loading values, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Outer loading (convergent validity)

Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading	Remark
Service Failure (SF)	SF1	0.781	Valid
	SF2	0.804	
	SF3	0.792	
	SF4	0.776	
	SF5	0.813	
	SF6	0.798	
Customer Complaint Behavior (CCB)	CCB1	0.842	Valid
	CCB2	0.861	
	CCB3	0.835	
	CCB4	0.879	

Service Recovery (SR)	CCB5	0.854	Valid
	SR1	0.866	
	SR2	0.889	
	SR3	0.874	
	SR4	0.858	
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	SR5	0.871	Valid
	CS1	0.891	
	CS2	0.904	
	CS3	0.887	
Trust-Driven Behavioral Outcomes (TR)	CS4	0.896	Valid
	TR1	0.902	
	TR2	0.915	
	TR3	0.907	
	TR4	0.894	
	TR5	0.889	

All indicators across each construct exhibit outer loading values above 0.70, thereby satisfying the criterion for convergent validity. For the Service Failure (SF) construct, outer loading values range from 0.776 to 0.813, indicating that all indicators provide an adequate representation of the construct.

For Customer Complaint Behavior (CCB), outer loading values range from 0.835 to 0.879, suggesting that the indicators make a strong contribution to explaining the construct. Furthermore, the Service Recovery (SR) construct shows outer loading values between 0.858 and 0.889, while Customer Satisfaction (CS) ranges from 0.887 to 0.904. The Trust-Driven Behavioral Outcomes (TR) construct demonstrates outer loading values ranging from 0.889 to 0.915, reflecting indicators with a very high level of representational strength.

Overall, all indicators meet the required standard for convergent validity. To further ensure internal consistency reliability and construct robustness, reliability and convergent validity were subsequently assessed, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Reliability and convergent validity

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>Composite Reliability</i>	<i>AVE</i>
Service Failure (SF)	0.812	0.884	0.789
Customer Complaint Behavior (CCB)	0.868	0.915	0.825
Service Recovery (SR)	0.879	0.926	0.844
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	0.905	0.938	0.857
Trust-Driven Behavioral Outcomes (TR)	0.918	0.946	0.872

The results of the measurement model evaluation confirmed that all constructs had adequate levels of reliability and convergent validity. Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.812 to 0.918, exceeding the 0.70 threshold and indicating good internal consistency.

Similarly, Composite Reliability values ranged from 0.884 to 0.946, indicating very high construct reliability. Regarding convergent validity, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.789 to 0.872, all exceeding the 0.50 threshold. Thus, each construct explained more than 50% of the variance in its indicators.

Collectively, these results confirmed that the measurement model had sufficient empirical quality to proceed with structural analysis. Next, discriminant validity was tested using the Fornell-Larcker criteria, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion)

<i>Construct</i>	<i>SF</i>	<i>CCB</i>	<i>SR</i>	<i>CS</i>	<i>TR</i>
Service Failure (SF)	0.789				
Customer Complaint Behavior (CCB)	0.411	0.825			

Service Recovery (SR)	0.368	0.512	0.844		
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	0.354	0.478	0.612	0.857	
Trust-Driven Behavioral Outcomes (TR)	0.329	0.503	0.589	0.734	0.872

The test results show that the square root of the AVE value on the diagonal is higher than the correlation between constructs. This indicates that each construct has good discriminant validity.

Overall, each construct has distinct empirical characteristics, so there is no overlap between constructs. This finding is consistent with the previous convergent validity results, strengthening the adequacy of the measurement model. To strengthen these results, discriminant validity was also tested using HTMT, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. HTMT (Heterotrait-monotrait ratio)

Construct	SF	CCB	SR	CS	TR
Service Failure (SF)	-				
Customer Complaint Behavior (CCB)	0.621	-			
Service Recovery (SR)	0.553	0.741	-		
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	0.501	0.694	0.801	-	
Trust-Driven Behavioral Outcomes (TR)	0.477	0.720	0.772	0.892	-

All HTMT values were below the threshold of 0.90, indicating that discriminant validity was met. Thus, each construct was shown to be conceptually and empirically distinct, in line with the Fornell-Larcker results.

After the measurement model was declared valid and reliable, the analysis proceeded to the structural model. The initial stage of structural model evaluation was conducted using the R-Square value, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. R-square

Endogenous Variable	R ²	Category
Customer Complaint Behavior (CCB)	0.243	Weak-Moderate
Service Recovery (SR)	0.418	Moderate
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	0.612	Strong
Trust-Driven Behavioral Outcomes (TR)	0.721	Strong

The R-square value is used to evaluate the ability of the independent variables to explain the endogenous constructs. The results indicate that Customer Complaint Behavior (CCB) has an R² value of 0.243, Service Recovery (SR) 0.418, Customer Satisfaction (CS) 0.612, and Trust (TR) 0.721. These findings demonstrate that the proposed model possesses moderate to strong explanatory power, particularly for Customer Satisfaction and Trust. Next, the contribution of each structural relationship is evaluated using the effect size (f²) in Table 7.

Table 7. Effect size (f²)

Path	f ²	Interpretation
SF → CCB	0.043	Small
SF → CS	0.031	Small
SF → TR	0.009	Negligible
CCB → SR	0.184	Medium
SR → CS	0.468	Large
SR → TR	0.132	Small

CS → TR	0.691	Large
SF → SR	0.118	Small

Note: Effect size (f^2) was interpreted using the guidelines proposed by Hair Jr. et al. (2022), where $f^2 < 0.02$ = negligible, $0.02-0.15$ = small, $0.15-0.35$ = medium, and > 0.35 = large.

Table 7 shows that $SR \rightarrow CS$ ($f^2 = 0.468$) and $CS \rightarrow TR$ ($f^2 = 0.691$) had large effect sizes, $CCB \rightarrow SR$ ($f^2 = 0.184$) had a medium effect, while the remaining paths showed small to negligible effects. Overall, the structural relationships from Service Recovery to Customer Satisfaction and from Customer Satisfaction to Trust contributed most substantially to the explanatory power of the structural model.

To further assess the model's predictive capability beyond its explanatory power and effect sizes, predictive relevance was evaluated using the Stone-Geisser Q^2 criterion, as presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Q -square (predictive relevance)

Construct	Q^2
Customer Complaint Behavior (CCB)	0.191
Service Recovery (SR)	0.276
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	0.441
Trust-Driven Behavioral Outcomes (TR)	0.519

All endogenous constructs exhibited Q^2 values greater than zero, confirming that the proposed model possesses predictive relevance. Predictive relevance was strongest for Trust ($Q^2 = 0.519$), followed by Customer Satisfaction ($Q^2 = 0.441$), Service Recovery ($Q^2 = 0.276$), and Customer Complaint Behaviour ($Q^2 = 0.191$). Collectively, these findings indicate that the model demonstrates satisfactory predictive capability across all endogenous constructs. The analysis then proceeded to test the direct relationship hypothesis, as presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Direct effects (final empirical model)

Hypothesis	Path	β	T-stat	P-value	Decision
H1	SF → CCB	-0.201	1.842	0.066	Rejected (not significant)
H2	SF → CS	-0.178	1.921	0.055	Rejected / marginal
H3	SF → TR	-0.089	1.210	0.227	Rejected
H4	CCB → SR	0.429	6.050	0.000	Supported
H5	SR → CS	0.673	12.168	0.000	Supported
H6	SR → TR	0.391	5.112	0.000	Supported
H7	CS → TR	0.862	29.615	0.000	Supported
H8	SF → SR	0.318	4.276	0.000	Supported

The test results indicate that Service Failure (SF) does not have a significant direct effect on CCB, CS, or TR. The only significant direct relationship is $SF \rightarrow SR$.

Conversely, all other relationships in the model show significant effects. CCB influences SR, SR influences CS and TR, and CS has the strongest effect on TR. Overall, SF does not show a significant direct effect on most endogenous variables, except for SR, which plays a key role in the structural model.

These findings indicate that most of the influence in the model occurs through indirect mechanisms, so the analysis proceeds to test for mediation, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Mediation effects

Hypothesis	Path	Indirect Effect	T-stat	P-value	Mediation
H9	SF → CCB → SR	-0.086	2.912	0.004	Partial
H10	SF → SR → CS	0.214	3.881	0.000	Full
H11	CCB → SR → CS	0.289	4.887	0.000	Full

The mediation analysis demonstrates that indirect effects play a significant role in explaining the relationships among the study constructs. As shown in Table 10, H9 supports partial mediation, whereas H10 and H11 support full mediation, confirming that Service Recovery (SR) functions as the principal mediating mechanism in the proposed structural model. Overall, these findings indicate that the influence of Service Failure is transmitted predominantly through indirect pathways involving Service Recovery. Based on these findings, the analysis proceeded to test sequential mediation, as shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Sequential mediation

Hypothesis	Path	Indirect Effect	T-stat	P-value	Decision
H12	SF → CCB → SR → CS → TR	-0.050	2.203	0.028	Supported

The results of the sequential mediation analysis indicate that the influence of Service Failure (SF) on Trust (TR) is transmitted through a sequential mediation chain consisting of Customer Complaint Behaviour (CCB), Service Recovery (SR), and Customer Satisfaction (CS). This indirect effect is significant, indicating that the relationship between SF and TR is not direct, but rather occurs through a chain causal mechanism.

In SEM-PLS, the validity of sequential mediation is determined by the significance of the total indirect effect in the mediation chain, and therefore does not depend on the significance of each individual path in the structural model. Therefore, H12 is accepted, confirming the presence of a sequential mediation mechanism in the research model.

Discussion

This study examines how Service Failure and Service Recovery within coastal tourism destinations influence tourists' satisfaction and trust through the mediating role of Customer Complaint Behavior, within the context of an integrated beach-bay geographical system in Indonesia. Conceptually, the findings affirm that tourist experience cannot be reduced to a linear causal relationship among behavioral and psychological variables; rather, it should be understood as a spatially distributed process embedded within a destination system. From the perspectives of tourism geography, human geography, and the tradition of spatial systems geography, destinations can no longer be conceptualized as static locational units, but instead as spatially embedded service landscapes characterized by relational dynamics, in which space, actors, and institutions are mutually constituted through ongoing interactions (Stylidis, 2018). Accordingly, tourist experience emerges as the outcome of systemic, multilayered, and spatially mediated relations, rather than merely an individual response to isolated service events.

In this study, the notion of the spatial is not treated as a descriptive label, but as an analytical framework integrating three interrelated dimensions. First, the relational dimension refers to the interconnectedness between actors and space. Second, the operational

dimension explains how the service system functions within a particular spatial configuration. Third, the governance dimension captures how destinations manage, coordinate, and respond to disruptions within the service system. Together, these three dimensions form a unified conceptual structure, emphasising that spatiality in this study is not a metaphor, but a structural mechanism linking tourist experience to the operating logic of the destination system as an adaptive geographical entity.

Within this framework, empirical results indicate that service failure does not have a significant direct effect on customer complaint behavior, customer satisfaction, or trust. This finding indicates that service failure does not operate as a linear stimulus, but rather as a spatial disturbance event internalized through the spatial experience structure within the tourism destination system. The insignificant relationship between service failure and customer complaint behavior also indicates that tourists do not always respond to service failure with complaints, aligning with literature confirming that complaint behavior is contextual, selective, and dependent on socio-psychological conditions and situational perceptions (Aguilar-Rojas et al., 2015; Naeem et al., 2024). Thus, complaint behavior cannot be understood as an automatic reaction, but as a spatially conditioned behavioral expression formed through a complex interaction between individual experience, service structure, and the spatial configuration of the destination.

Furthermore, the insignificant direct effect of service failure on all key outcomes also indicates that service failure does not function as a direct emotional trigger, but rather as input into the service system mediated by the destination's operational mechanisms. This reinforces the view that, in the context of tourist destinations, tourist response is determined more by how the destination system manages and responds to disruptions, rather than by the disruption itself (Su & Ha, 2025). Thus, service failure is more appropriately understood as a node in a spatial process system, rather than as a stand-alone individual event.

Conversely, Service Failure was shown to have a significant influence on Service Recovery, which in turn strongly influenced Customer Satisfaction and Trust. These findings suggest that Service Recovery functions not only as a managerial response but also as a spatial reconfiguration mechanism within the destination service landscape. Consistent with the literature that positions service recovery as a key element in restoring satisfaction and trust (Kim & So, 2023), and with recent evidence showing that organizational capabilities and frontline service practices constitute important drivers of tourism performance (Saranani, 2026), this study expands on this by demonstrating that recovery functions as a destination system reorganization process. Service Recovery operates as a dual-based system encompassing both system-driven mechanisms through internal operational destination detection and customer-driven mechanisms through tourist feedback. Thus, recovery is not merely reactive but also proactive through institutional capacity to detect and continuously address disruptions.

From this perspective, tourist destinations can be understood as geographically adaptive systems that continuously balance disruptions through institutional and spatial mechanisms. This emphasizes that destination entities are not passive, but rather adaptive governance systems that actively operate within the space to maintain the stability of the tourist experience.

Within this system, Customer Complaint Behavior plays a crucial role as a link between tourist experiences and the destination's institutional responses. The results of this study indicate that complaint behavior has a significant influence on service recovery and is a key element in the sequential mediation structure. From a geographic service perspective, complaint behavior is not only an expression of dissatisfaction but also a spatial feedback signal that connects individual experiences with the destination management system. It functions as a communication mechanism within the service space and a node in a spatial interaction network that activates institutional responses. Thus, complaint behavior can be understood as part of the destination's spatial regulatory system, enabling dynamic and structured service adjustments (Wei et al., 2013).

This layered interaction is more clearly reflected in the sequential mediation results, which show that the effect of Service Failure on Trust is fully mediated through the chain process of Customer Complaint Behavior, Service Recovery, and Customer Satisfaction. The dominance of this indirect effect confirms that tourism destinations operate as process-driven spatial systems, in which tourist experiences are not formed through direct relationships among variables, but through layered transformations across space and time. This finding reinforces the literature suggesting that trust is formed through the cumulative evaluation of experiences (Chen & Phou, 2013; Nowak et al., 2023); however, in the present study, such accumulation is interpreted as a systemic spatio-temporal process, rather than merely a psychological one. Accordingly, destinations should be understood as systems of sequential spatial transformation linking service failure, system response, evaluation, and ultimately trust formation.

The strength of this structure is also evident in the effect size analysis, which indicates that the paths Service Recovery → Customer Satisfaction and Customer Satisfaction → Trust are the most dominant relationships in the model. This suggests that Service Recovery functions not only as a corrective mechanism, but also as a spatial transformation mechanism that converts service disruptions into positive place-based evaluations. From a tourism geography perspective, destination quality is determined not solely by the physical attributes of space, but by the capacity of the destination system to transform negative experiences into spatially meaningful ones (Hosany et al., 2017; Styliadis et al., 2022; Saranani, 2026). Thus, destination space functions not only as a site of tourism consumption, but also as an arena for the continual reproduction of geographical meaning.

At the final stage, Trust emerges as the strongest outcome influenced by Customer Satisfaction. From a geographical perspective, trust is not merely a psychological construct, but also a place-based accumulation of experience, the result of repeated evaluations of the service system within space, and a reflection of the stability of tourist–destination relations across spatio-temporal dimensions. Therefore, trust may be understood as a spatially embedded relational construct reflecting the consistency, stability, and sustainability of the destination system throughout recurring cycles of tourist experience (Chen & Phou, 2013; Prayag et al., 2017; Su & Ha, 2025).

From a geographical perspective, trust is not merely a psychological construct, but also a place-based accumulation of experience, resulting from repeated evaluations of the destination service system across space and time (Chen & Phou, 2013; Prayag et al., 2017; Su & Ha, 2025). Taken together, these findings suggest that tourists' trust develops through

adaptive service interactions embedded within the spatial organisation of coastal destinations, reinforcing the view that trust is the outcome of sequential service recovery processes rather than isolated service encounters.

Conclusion

This study concludes that tourists' trust in coastal destinations is determined more by the destination's capacity to respond effectively to service disruptions than by the occurrence of service failure itself. Findings from Kendari Bay and Toronipa Beach indicate that Service Failure has no significant direct effect on Customer Complaint Behavior, Customer Satisfaction, or Trust, but significantly influences Service Recovery, demonstrating that tourists evaluate destinations holistically through the quality of recovery processes rather than isolated service failures.

The results further confirm that Service Recovery is the principal mechanism driving Customer Satisfaction and Trust, while Customer Complaint Behavior functions as a critical feedback mechanism that activates recovery efforts. The dominant pathway from Service Recovery to Customer Satisfaction and subsequently to Trust highlights the importance of strengthening complaint-handling systems, rapid on-site responses, inter-organizational coordination, and continuous destination quality management to enhance tourists' trust in coastal destinations.

Theoretically, this study contributes to tourism geography by conceptualizing coastal destinations as adaptive spatial service systems in which institutionally coordinated service recovery processes transform service disruptions into tourists' trust through sequential spatial interactions rather than direct responses to service failure. It also extends Service Recovery Theory by reframing recovery from a reactive managerial response to an adaptive spatial governance mechanism, demonstrating that Customer Complaint Behavior, Service Recovery, and Customer Satisfaction operate as sequential mediating processes through which trust is formed within an integrated coastal destination system.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design captures conditions at only one point in time and therefore does not reflect dynamic changes in tourists' trust over time. Second, the research locations were limited to two coastal destinations, and thus the generalisation of the findings to other regions should be undertaken with caution. Third, the use of perception-based questionnaires may generate subjective bias and common method bias. Fourth, the model focuses solely on five principal constructs and does not incorporate other relevant factors such as destination image, environmental quality, loyalty, or tourists' digital engagement.

Future research is recommended to employ longitudinal or panel designs in order to examine changes in trust over time. The scope of the study should also be extended to various coastal destinations, small islands, and other marine tourism areas in Indonesia as well as across countries. A mixed-methods approach combining surveys, interviews, and field observations would be valuable in enriching contextual understanding. In addition, the conceptual model may be further developed by incorporating variables such as destination image, perceived value, environmental quality, revisit intention, digital engagement, and governance quality as new mediating or moderating factors.

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