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Analysis of the Impact of Stopping Study Tour, Digitalization of Learning, and Alternative Educational Tourism on Student Tourist Interest in West Java

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the impact of study tour cancellations, the digitalization of learning, and alternative educational tourism on student interest in tourism in West Java. A total of 210 students participated in the study, and data were collected using a Likert scale (1-5). The research employs Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS 3) for data analysis to assess the relationships between the constructs. The results indicate that alternative educational tourism has the strongest positive influence on student tourist interest, followed by the digitalization of learning. While the cancellation of study tours also positively affects student interest, its impact is less pronounced compared to the other two factors. The model demonstrates strong explanatory power with an R^2 value of 0.777 and predictive relevance with a Q^2 value of 0.771. These findings suggest that alternative tourism experiences and digital learning platforms play a critical role in shaping student interest in tourism, emphasizing the importance of adapting tourism education to current trends in the digital era.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted both the tourism and education sectors, with study tours—an essential component of experiential learning—being particularly affected due to global travel restrictions and lockdowns. These cancellations not only halted hands-on educational opportunities but also posed major challenges in sustaining student interest in tourism, a sector that thrives on engagement and real-world exposure. The tourism industry itself saw a sharp decline, with 96% of global destinations enforcing travel restrictions, heavily impacting tourism-dependent economies and reducing employment opportunities, especially for women and youth [1]. Tourism education also faced setbacks, as traditional learning methods like study tours were disrupted, prompting a shift to hybrid and virtual

formats that lacked the immersive experiences vital for student engagement [2], [3]. In response, institutions, such as those in Hong Kong, reevaluated and adapted their curricula to foster more flexible and resilient models [4]. Moreover, the pandemic caused a notable decline in student employment in tourism-related sectors, as observed in Maine, USA, emphasizing the urgent need for academic flexibility and industry collaboration to support students through these evolving challenges [3].

Amid the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the accelerated digitalization of learning has emerged as a crucial solution to bridge the educational gap left by the suspension of physical study tours, especially in tourism education. Digital tools, virtual platforms, and online learning modules have become essential in maintaining educational continuity, enabling students to engage with tourism-related content in innovative and accessible ways [5]. Institutions have adopted technology-driven approaches such as virtual reality, augmented reality, 3D imagery, and gamification to enhance engagement and motivation in remote settings [6]. Additionally, alternative educational tourism models like virtual tours and localized tourism experiences have gained prominence, allowing students to explore destinations and local cultures digitally while maintaining health and safety standards [7], [8]. These adaptations not only preserve the experiential aspect of tourism learning but also reflect a broader pedagogical shift, where educators are redesigning materials and embracing interdisciplinary and industry collaborations to prepare students for a rapidly evolving tourism landscape [5].

West Java, one of Indonesia's most populous provinces, offers a compelling case study in the evolving landscape of educational tourism, particularly as the region transitions from traditional study tours to alternative, more sustainable and engaging approaches. Known for its rich cultural and natural heritage, West Java continues to attract student interest through innovative educational models that integrate local values and experiential learning. Personal selling strategies, as seen at Jendela Alam in Bandung, play a significant role in influencing school visit decisions by building relationships and fostering loyalty [9]. The interdisciplinary nature of educational tourism in the region—spanning subjects like ecology, sociology, and anthropology—enhances personal development while promoting sustainability [8]. Ecotourism destinations such as Situ Gede in Tasikmalaya further support geographic learning by combining cultural and natural elements in immersive ways [10]. Creative initiatives, like traditional game-based dance programs, help preserve cultural heritage while stimulating children's creativity and intelligence, appealing strongly to educational tourists [11]. Additionally, conservation-based programs, such as the Javanese eagle protection project in Kamojang, Garut, offer unique opportunities for students to engage in meaningful learning about biodiversity and environmental stewardship [12]. Together, these diverse efforts reflect how West Java is adapting to post-pandemic challenges by reimagining educational tourism in ways that continue to inspire and educate. This study seeks to investigate the interrelationships between study tour cancellations, digitalization of learning, and alternative educational tourism methods, focusing on their collective impact on student interest in tourism.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Study Tour Cancellations and Their Impact

The cancellation of study tours during the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted tourism education, which heavily depends on experiential learning to sustain student engagement and motivation. These cancellations disrupted practical learning opportunities, leading to a notable decline in students' intrinsic interest and

career aspirations in tourism, as they missed out on real-world immersion that reinforces classroom teaching [2]. Study tours are essential in tourism education, offering immersive experiences that foster language skills, cultural awareness, and practical competencies critical for understanding the tourism industry [13], [14]. The pandemic's disruption thus affected not only educational delivery but also the professional trajectories of students in tourism-related fields. In response, institutions have adopted innovative teaching methods, combining online and offline modalities to maintain resilience and versatility in learning [5]. This includes integrating digitalization, sustainability, and global perspectives into curricula, with educators adapting to new technologies and interdisciplinary approaches to address the evolving demands of tourism education [5].

2.2 *Digitalization of Learning*

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly accelerated the digitalization of tourism education, prompting the widespread adoption of virtual tools and platforms to ensure educational continuity. This shift has brought forth innovative teaching practices such as virtual field trips, interactive simulations, and online lectures that attempt to replicate the experiential aspects of physical study tours. These methods have improved accessibility, adaptability, and engagement, particularly when they incorporate interactive and participatory elements [5], [6], [15]. The use of virtual and augmented reality, along with gamification, has further enhanced motivation by creating immersive experiences. However, the effectiveness of digitalization in fostering sustained interest in tourism careers remains contested. While some studies emphasize its ability to maintain engagement and promote resilience in learning [5], others highlight challenges such as the lack of physical interaction, which limits practical skill development [16], and the digital divide, which restricts equitable access to technology and internet connectivity for all students [15].

2.3 *Alternative Educational Tourism*

Alternative educational tourism, including virtual tours, localized experiences, and hybrid models, has emerged as a key response to travel restrictions, offering sustainable and accessible learning opportunities while mitigating the impact of study tour cancellations. Virtual tourism, in particular, leverages digital platforms to deliver immersive, inclusive, and environmentally friendly experiences that appeal especially to digitally native Generation Z students [17]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indonesian government promoted virtual tours to maintain educational engagement, allowing students to explore destinations remotely despite physical limitations [7]. Innovations like the virtual tour of the UM Learning Museum in Indonesia exemplify how these platforms can provide interactive and autonomous

learning experiences, enriching educational tourism in disruptive times [18]. In parallel, localized tourism emphasizes nearby cultural and natural resources, encouraging students to engage with their immediate environments in sustainable ways [19]. Hybrid models that combine virtual and localized elements offer a more holistic educational experience, integrating global insights with local engagement and contributing to broader goals such as global peace and mutual understanding [19]. However, further research is needed to assess the extent to which these alternatives replicate the motivational and experiential richness of traditional study tours.

2.4 Student Interest in Tourism

Experiential learning is a cornerstone of tourism education, playing a vital role in shaping student interest and influencing career aspirations by providing practical, immersive experiences that deepen understanding and enthusiasm for the field [13], [20]. Programs such as field trips, simulations, and internships offer firsthand insights into the tourism industry, helping students develop essential skills and clarify their professional paths. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of integrating digital and experiential methods, prompting a shift toward blended learning models that sustain engagement and ensure continuity [5]. Digital platforms now serve as key tools in delivering industry-relevant knowledge and equipping students with the competencies required in an evolving tourism landscape [5]. In addition, alternative approaches like educational tourism, or edutourism, provide interdisciplinary experiences that promote personal growth and global cultural awareness [8]. Despite concerns over limited salary prospects and career advancement, students remain motivated by the affordability of programs and opportunities for international exposure [21], affirming the enduring appeal and value of tourism education when enriched through experiential and adaptive learning strategies.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The study is guided by a conceptual framework that integrates the impact of study tour cancellations, the digitalization of learning, and alternative educational tourism on student interest in tourism. Drawing on experiential learning theory, motivation theories, and recent empirical findings, the framework posits that while study tour cancellations negatively affect student interest, digitalization and alternative educational tourism methods may act as mitigating factors.

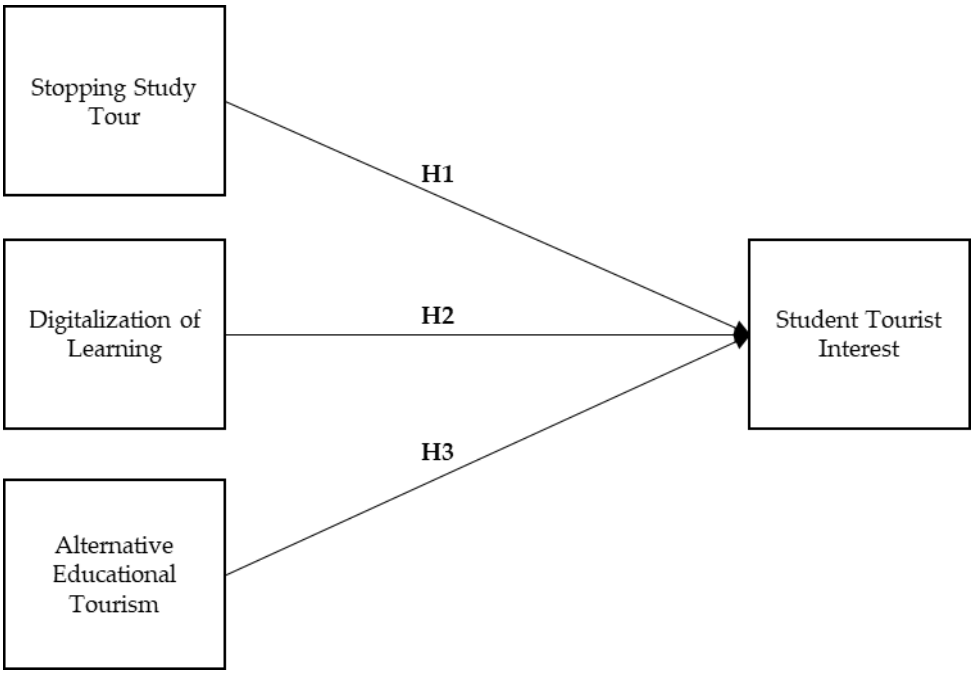

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. METHODS

The study adopted a quantitative research design, utilizing a survey methodology to systematically and objectively investigate the relationships among study tour cancellations, digitalization, alternative educational tourism, and student interest in tourism. A structured questionnaire was developed to gather measurable data, allowing for statistical analysis to derive conclusions. The target population consisted of students enrolled in tourism and related programs at universities and colleges in West Java. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select a representative sample of 210 students, ensuring diversity in demographics, academic level, and exposure to educational tourism. This method minimized sampling bias and enhanced the generalizability of the findings.

Data were collected through a self-administered online questionnaire, which was divided into four sections: study tour cancellations, digitalization of learning, alternative educational tourism, and student interest in tourism. Each item was measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The questionnaire was developed based on prior research and theoretical frameworks, and pre-tested on a small group of students to ensure clarity, validity, and reliability. Adjustments were made based on feedback before the final version was distributed. Each construct was operationalized with relevant items—for example, study tour cancellations were assessed by evaluating their impact on motivation, while digitalization of learning and alternative tourism were measured by students' engagement with virtual tools and localized tourism experiences. Interest in tourism was assessed by questions related to motivation and career aspirations in the tourism field.

Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) via SmartPLS software. SEM-PLS was chosen for its ability to handle complex models involving multiple constructs and their interrelationships. The analysis proceeded in three stages: testing the measurement model to evaluate construct reliability and validity, testing the structural model to examine hypothesized relationships using path coefficients, and assessing overall model fit through indices such as the Goodness-of-Fit (GoF). This approach

provided a comprehensive understanding of how various factors influence student interest in tourism in the context of changing educational landscapes.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographic Sample

The sample for this study consisted of 210 students from various educational institutions across West Java, selected to assess how demographic factors might influence perceptions of study tour cancellations, digitalization, and alternative educational tourism. Most participants were young adults, with 60% aged 18–22, 30% aged 23–27, 8% aged 28–32, and 2% over 32, reflecting the typical undergraduate age group and suggesting a population more receptive to digital learning innovations. Gender distribution was relatively balanced, with 55% male and 45% female participants, offering insights into the general composition of tourism-related fields. In terms of education, the majority (80%) were undergraduate students, followed by 10% from high school, 8% from graduate programs, and 2% from postgraduate levels, aligning with the study's focus on higher education learners. Regarding fields of study, 40% of students came from Tourism and Hospitality Management, 25% from Business Administration, 15% from Education, and smaller proportions from Engineering, Social Sciences, and other fields—showing broad relevance of the study's themes beyond tourism majors. Geographically, 75% of respondents were from urban areas like Bandung, Depok, and Bekasi, while 25% came from rural areas such as Garut, Ciamis, and Cianjur, reflecting the urban-rural divide in educational access and opportunities for engagement in digital and tourism-based learning experiences.

4.2 Measurement Model Analysis

In Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the measurement model evaluates the relationships between observed variables (indicators) and latent variables (constructs). In this study, four latent constructs were considered: Stopping Study Tour (SST),

Digitalization of Learning (DOL), Alternative Educational Tourism (AET), and Student Tourist Interest (STI). Each of these constructs is represented by a set of observed indicators. The following section discusses the key measurement model properties, including loading factors, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE).

Table 1. Measurement Model Assessment

Variable	Code	Loading Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variant Extracted
Stopping Study Tour	SST.1	0.803	0.905	0.926	0.678
	SST.2	0.908			
	SST.3	0.832			
	SST.4	0.841			
	SST.5	0.804			
	SST.6	0.743			
Digitalization of Learning	DOL.1	0.866	0.901	0.927	0.719
	DOL.2	0.911			
	DOL.3	0.859			
	DOL.4	0.844			
	DOL.5	0.752			
Alternative Educational Tourism	AET.1	0.810	0.866	0.903	0.650
	AET.2	0.782			
	AET.3	0.813			
	AET.4	0.847			
	AET.5	0.776			

Student Tourist Interest	STI.1	0.879	0.918	0.939	0.754
	STI.2	0.854			
	STI.3	0.859			
	STI.4	0.875			
	STI.5	0.872			

Source: Data Processing Results (2025)

The measurement model assessment demonstrated that all constructs in the study exhibited strong reliability and validity. The Stopping Study Tour (SST) construct, measured by six items (SST.1 to SST.6), had loading factors ranging from 0.743 to 0.908, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.905, composite reliability (CR) of 0.926, and average variance extracted (AVE) of 0.678—indicating excellent internal consistency and convergent validity. Similarly, the Digitalization of Learning (DOL) construct, assessed with five items (DOL.1 to DOL.5), showed loading factors between 0.752 and 0.911, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.901, CR of 0.927, and AVE of 0.719, confirming the construct's strong reliability and explanatory power. The Alternative Educational Tourism (AET) construct, measured by five items (AET.1 to AET.5), had loading factors ranging from 0.776 to 0.847, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.866, CR of 0.903, and AVE of 0.650, all meeting or exceeding the recommended thresholds for construct validity. Finally, the Student Tourist Interest (STI) construct, with five items (STI.1 to STI.5), showed high loadings between 0.854 and 0.879, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.918, CR of 0.939, and AVE of 0.754, indicating excellent internal consistency and a strong ability to capture the variance of the underlying construct.

Discriminant validity refers to the degree to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs in the model. A key measure used to assess discriminant validity is the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), which evaluates the extent to which two constructs are related to each other. An HTMT value above a certain threshold (typically 0.85 or 0.90) suggests that the constructs are too closely related and may lack discriminant validity. On the other hand, values below these thresholds indicate that the constructs are distinct and measure different aspects of the phenomenon being studied.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity

	AET	DOL	SST	STI
Alternative Educational Tourism				
Digitalization of Learning	0.815			
Stopping Study Tour	0.381	0.395		
Student Tourist Interest	0.761	0.839	0.366	

Source: Data Processing Results (2025)

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) analysis confirms the discriminant validity among the constructs in this study, as all HTMT values fall below the accepted threshold of 0.85. The HTMT value between Alternative Educational Tourism (AET) and Digitalization of Learning (DOL) is 0.815, indicating a meaningful but distinct relationship between the two constructs. AET and Stopping Study Tour (SST) show a low HTMT value of 0.381, reflecting minimal overlap and confirming that these constructs measure different aspects of educational tourism. Similarly, the HTMT value between AET and Student Tourist Interest (STI) is 0.761, suggesting a significant but distinct relationship, where AET addresses alternative tourism formats and STI captures students' personal interest in tourism careers. The relationship between DOL and SST is also low (HTMT = 0.395), affirming their conceptual independence, with DOL representing digital learning methods and SST referring to study tour disruptions. Meanwhile, DOL and STI

have a relatively higher HTMT value of 0.839, indicating a close but still distinct relationship, where digitalization may influence student interest without being synonymous with it. Lastly, SST and STI yield an HTMT value of 0.366, clearly supporting their status as separate constructs—one focused on tour cancellations and the other on student interest in tourism—thus confirming strong discriminant validity across all constructs.

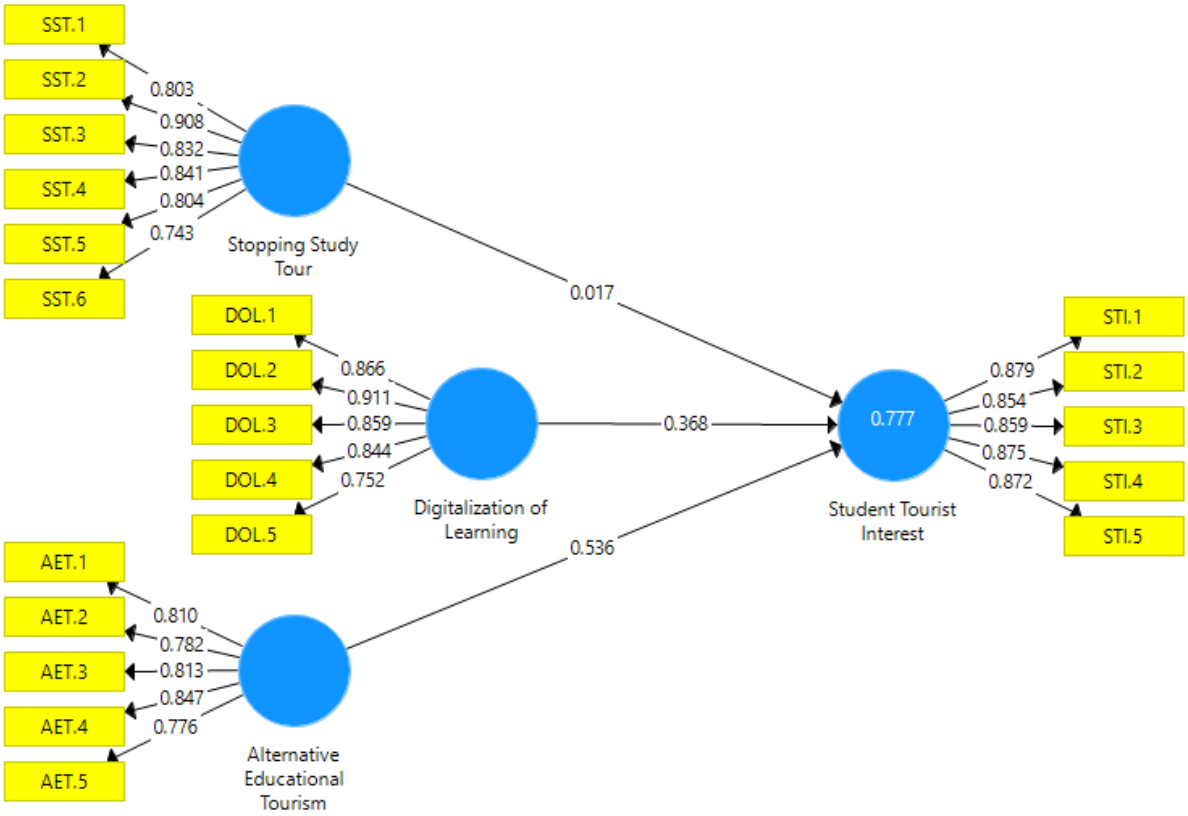

Figure 2. Model Results
Source: Data Processed by Researchers, 2025

4.3 Model Fit

Model fit is a critical aspect of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) as it determines how well the proposed model fits the data. A good model fit ensures that the model accurately represents the relationships between the constructs and the observed data. In this study, various model fit indices were used to evaluate the adequacy of the estimated model. These indices include SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual), d_ULS (Unweighted Least Squares Distance), d_G (Geodesic Distance), Chi-Square, and NFI (Normed Fit Index).

Table 3. Model Fit Results Test

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.073	0.073
d_ULS	1.220	1.220
d_G	0.859	0.859
Chi-Square	517.412	517.412
NFI	0.773	0.773

Source: Process Data Analysis (2025)

The model fit was evaluated using several indices, all of which suggest that the structural model has an acceptable fit. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) for both the saturated and estimated models is 0.073, which is below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.08, indicating a good model fit and a close alignment between the observed and predicted correlations. Similarly, the d_ULS (Unweighted Least Squares Distance) value for both models is 1.220, suggesting a reasonable fit, as lower values indicate better alignment between observed and estimated data. The d_G (Geodesic Distance) value is 0.859 for both models, reflecting a satisfactory fit, with smaller values generally denoting a more accurate model. The Chi-Square statistic for both models is 517.412; although this measure is sensitive to sample size and often yields significant values in large samples, it still offers insight when interpreted alongside other indices. Lastly, the Normed Fit Index (NFI) for both models is 0.773, which, while slightly below the ideal threshold of 0.9, still indicates a fairly acceptable fit.

Table 4. Coefficient Model

	R Square	Q2
Student Tourist Interest	0.777	0.771

Source: Data Processing Results (2025)

The model demonstrates strong explanatory and predictive power for the Student Tourist Interest (STI) variable, as indicated by the R-Square (R^2) and Q-Square (Q^2) values. The R^2 value for STI is 0.777, meaning that 77.7% of the variance in student interest in tourism is explained by the independent variables—Stopping Study Tour (SST), Digitalization of Learning (DOL), and Alternative Educational Tourism (AET). This high R^2 reflects a strong fit and significant explanatory power within the context of social science research. Additionally, the Q^2 value for STI is 0.771, indicating strong predictive relevance and confirming that the model is highly capable of forecasting future outcomes related to student interest. A Q^2 above zero affirms the model's ability to predict effectively, and a value as high as 0.771 suggests excellent predictive performance, supporting the model's overall robustness in explaining and anticipating student behavior in tourism education.

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

The structural model represents the relationships between the latent constructs in the study, specifically focusing on how the independent variables (Alternative Educational Tourism, Digitalization of Learning, and Stopping Study Tour) influence the dependent variable (Student Tourist Interest). The structural model provides insights into the strength and significance of these relationships, which are key to understanding the factors that drive student interest in tourism in West Java.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values
Alternative Educational Tourism -> Student Tourist Interest	0.536	0.531	0.076	7.087	0.000
Digitalization of Learning -> Student Tourist Interest	0.368	0.374	0.077	4.793	0.000
Stopping Study Tour -> Student Tourist Interest	0.317	0.321	0.046	2.376	0.004

Source: Process Data Analysis (2025)

The structural model analysis reveals that all three independent variables—Alternative Educational Tourism (AET), Digitalization of Learning (DOL), and Stopping Study Tour (SST)—have statistically significant positive effects on Student Tourist Interest (STI). The path coefficient from AET to STI is 0.536, with a T-statistic of 7.087 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a strong and highly significant relationship, suggesting that alternative educational tourism experiences play a crucial role in enhancing students' interest in tourism. Similarly, DOL shows a path coefficient of 0.368, a T-statistic of 4.793, and a p-value of 0.000, confirming that digital learning significantly contributes to student engagement in tourism-related content by increasing accessibility and interactivity. Meanwhile, SST has a path coefficient of 0.317, a T-statistic of 2.376, and a p-value of 0.004, indicating a statistically significant but comparatively weaker positive effect. This implies that while the reduction or cessation of traditional study tours also influences tourism interest, its impact is less substantial than that of digitalization and alternative tourism models, highlighting the evolving dynamics of student engagement in the post-pandemic educational landscape.

Discussion

1) Impact of Alternative Educational Tourism on Student Interest in Tourism

One of the most significant findings from this study is the strong positive impact of alternative educational tourism (AET) on student tourist interest. With a path coefficient of 0.536 and a high level of statistical significance, this suggests that exposure to alternative forms of tourism—such as virtual and experience-based educational tours—plays a crucial role in fostering student engagement with tourism. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that non-traditional tourism experiences, especially those that combine learning with leisure, positively influence tourists' perceptions and interest in tourism activities. In this context, AET serves as a bridge between traditional tourism and educational content, providing an engaging, accessible, and modern approach that is particularly resonant with students. As the tourism landscape becomes more digitally oriented, educational tourism that incorporates interactive and immersive technologies is likely to become even more attractive to younger generations seeking meaningful and adaptable learning experiences.

Non-traditional tourism experiences that blend learning with leisure have long been recognized for their educational and personal enrichment benefits. Educational components in settings like museums and heritage sites can significantly enhance tourist satisfaction, even when visitors primarily seek entertainment [22]. Educational tourism—or edutourism—integrates structured learning with travel, offering activities such as cultural workshops and guided heritage tours that deepen understanding of local contexts [8]. These learning experiences are often spontaneous or planned and are characterized by enjoyment, engagement, and reflective learning, which enrich the tourism experience [23]. Tourists' motivations, often linked to personal identity and self-exploration, further influence how they interact with educational aspects during travel [24]. Additionally, research highlights that immersive, interactive environments, such as those found in themed attractions, can boost both educational outcomes and emotional engagement, underlining the importance of thoughtful design and context in delivering effective learning through tourism [25].

2) Digitalization of Learning and Its Influence on Student Tourist Interest

The digitalization of learning was found to have a moderate but significant positive impact on student tourist interest, as indicated by a path coefficient of 0.368 and a p-value of 0.000. This aligns with the growing role of digital platforms in shaping how students engage with educational content,

particularly in tourism. Digital tools such as online platforms, virtual reality experiences, and multimedia resources enable students to explore tourism destinations, cultures, and histories without the need for physical travel. These tools not only supplement traditional study tours but also serve as accessible, affordable alternatives that bridge the gap between conventional tourism and modern educational needs. As tourism education becomes increasingly reliant on digital integration, these tools play a crucial role in sustaining and enhancing student interest in the field, particularly in contexts where travel is limited or unavailable.

Digital platforms are becoming central to tourism education, transforming how students acquire knowledge and develop practical skills. Tools like social media, multimedia content creation, and website development have been shown to boost engagement and facilitate real-world applications in tourism learning environments [26]. The flexibility offered by digital education allows for more authentic and context-rich learning experiences, which are highly valued by both learners and educators [27]. Moreover, digitalization supports the development of essential competencies, including AI usage and personalized services, which are vital for competitiveness in the tourism sector [28]. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the shift to innovative teaching methods, such as virtual and augmented reality and gamification, which have proven effective in increasing student motivation and deepening engagement [6], [29]. Together, these advancements highlight the transformative power of digital tools in modernizing tourism education and preparing students for a digitally-driven industry.

3) Effect of Stopping Study Tours on Student Tourist Interest

Although the cancellation of study tours (SST) was initially expected to negatively affect student interest in tourism, this study reveals a moderate positive relationship between SST and student tourist interest, with a path coefficient of 0.317 and a statistically significant p-value of 0.004. This suggests that while traditional study tours provide valuable firsthand experiences, their absence does not necessarily diminish student engagement in tourism education. The continued interest may be attributed to the growing influence of digital learning and alternative educational tourism models, which offer students meaningful, accessible, and engaging experiences even without physical travel. The finding is especially relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced institutions to cancel in-person learning activities and adopt new methods of delivering educational content. It indicates that student interest in tourism has remained resilient, bolstered by the availability of virtual tours, digital platforms, and localized educational alternatives that continue to deliver experiential value.

This shift marks a broader transformation in the role of educational tourism. Traditionally, educational tourism combines learning with travel to foster cultural enrichment and personal development [30]. It involves interdisciplinary experiences like guided tours and workshops that support both academic growth and sustainable tourism practices [8]. The pandemic catalyzed the closure of physical institutions and accelerated the adoption of virtual tours, which provided students with new ways to explore destinations and engage with content despite mobility restrictions[7]. These alternatives sustained student interest and illustrated that travel is no longer the sole medium for tourism learning. Studies also show that students have shifted toward more sustainable tourism preferences post-pandemic and maintained stable interest in tourism education despite disruptions [31]. As traditional study tours were suspended, co-curricular and alternative learning activities proved essential in preserving the experiential and motivational aspects of tourism education [14].

4) Practical Implications

This study presents several practical implications for both educators and tourism providers. For educational institutions, the findings underscore the importance of integrating digital learning platforms and alternative tourism experiences into the curriculum to sustain student engagement in tourism education, particularly when traditional study tours are not feasible. These approaches also expand access to educational tourism for students who may face financial or logistical barriers to travel. For tourism providers, the study highlights the growing potential of digital tourism experiences and alternative educational tourism products in capturing student interest. Providers are encouraged to develop virtual travel experiences, online cultural workshops, and interactive learning modules that cater to the evolving preferences of a digitally native and education-focused audience, aligning with the increasing demand for accessible, immersive, and meaningful tourism engagement.

5) Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of alternative educational tourism, digital learning, and the cancellation of traditional study tours on student interest in tourism, it is not without limitations. The research was conducted solely in West Java, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to regions with different tourism dynamics, educational infrastructures, or cultural contexts. Additionally, the sample size of 210 students, though adequate for statistical analysis, may not fully capture the diversity of student experiences and perspectives. Future research should consider expanding the geographic scope and sample diversity to enhance the applicability of the findings. It would also be beneficial to investigate the long-term effects of digital and alternative tourism models on students' tourism behaviors, as well as the influence of external variables such as socio-economic status, access to technology, or cultural background. Such expansions would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape student engagement in tourism and provide deeper insights into the evolving needs and preferences in tourism education.

5. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant influence of alternative educational tourism and the digitalization of learning on student interest in tourism in West Java. The findings suggest that both the integration of digital learning tools and the availability of alternative tourism experiences can foster a greater interest in tourism-related activities among students. While the cancellation of study tours had a positive but relatively smaller impact, it still contributed to the overall interest in tourism, albeit less significantly than digital and alternative tourism factors. The results underscore the need for educational institutions and tourism stakeholders to adapt to the digital age by leveraging digital platforms and alternative tourism models to engage students effectively. Given the high R^2 and Q^2 values, the study's model proves to be both explanatory and predictive, offering valuable insights into the factors that can enhance student participation in tourism, especially in the context of post-pandemic education and travel trends. The study serves as a basis for future research into the evolving relationship between education, digitalization, and tourism interest in young populations.

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