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IMPACT OF DESTINATION BRAND EXPERIENCE TO INCREASE DESTINATION BRAND LOYALTY

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Abstract: Research related to brand loyalty is important, especially in the period following the Covid-19 pandemic. At that time, many tourism destinations and businesses were destroyed and tended to go bankrupt, so a strategy was needed to revive brand loyalty in tourist destinations in Indonesia which were famous as world tourist destinations. This research aims to provide a tourism marketing perspective with a destination brand experience. The brand experience felt by tourists is a series of efforts, activities or products received by tourists starting when tourists have a desire to travel. This research uses quantitative methods, data collection by questionnaire with a sample of tourists, the range of this research was conducted from January to May 2023 and by using a questionnaire on google form. The number of samples included in this study was 200 respondents, the sample determination was carried out by purposive sampling. Respondent data was analyzed by Structure Equation Model with Smart PLS 4.0. The results of this research found that destination brand experience has a positive effect on destination brand authenticity, destination brand satisfaction, and destination brand loyalty. Meanwhile, destination brand authenticity and destination brand satisfaction have a positive effect on destination brand loyalty. The results of the indirect influence show that destination brand authenticity and destination brand satisfaction mediate the influence of destination brand experience on destination brand loyalty.

Keywords: Brand Experience, Destination, Authenticity, Satisfaction, Loyalty

CITATION

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the leading sector outside the oil and gas sector as a source of foreign exchange for Indonesia. The Indonesian government is developing ten super-priority areas to become destinations for domestic and international tourists. One destination the Government developed is the Lake Toba Tourism Area (Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2020). Tourism marketing is carried out by implementing destination brand experience, which confirms the authenticity of the destination brand satisfaction with the destination brand, which is ultimately expected to increase destination brand loyalty in the Lake Toba tourist area. The uniqueness of the Lake Toba tourist area is that its border is directly surrounded by seven regencies that have different resources. This condition is in line with the region's entrepreneurship development (Jayawarsa et al., 2021). Tourism-supporting business actors are required to create local products and brands that are able to compete competitively. Increasingly fierce competition has a significant impact on brand loyalty (Rodrigues et al., 2023). The strategic development plan for the Lake Toba tourist area states the development of existing resources in the Lake.

The destination image of Lake Toba as the largest lake in Southeast Asia is an essential point in tourists' decisions to visit. With a good and well-known destination image, it makes it easier for tourists to plan their holidays (Mostafa and Kasamani, 2021). Image forming factors by improving quality and quality, trustworthiness and reliability, usefulness, and benefits, service, risk and price (Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2020). However, that alone is not enough because tourists prefer various tourism considerations so that their holidays remain of high quality (Shang et al., 2020). The Lake Toba brand is starting to fade due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Saputra, 2021). The Indonesian government is revitalizing tourism in this location to increase brand loyalty again. Based on this statement, it is necessary to investigate further regarding increasing brand loyalty in Lake Toba as an extension of the Indonesian government's program to restore the tourism sector as the country's highest foreign exchange contributor (Khan and Fatma, 2021).

Brand loyalty is a deep commitment to repurchase or repeat a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thus causing the same brand

or the same brand purchase, regardless of situational influences and marketing efforts that can potentially cause switching behavior (Park et al., 2023). Brand loyalty is consumers' tendency to repurchase certain brand services/products (Tran and Nguyen, 2022). Based on marketing theory, Manthiou et al. (2018) stated that brand loyalty can be increased through the Destination Brand Experience, Authenticity, and Destination Brand Satisfaction. However, Safeer et al. (2021) stated that Destination Brand Experience also influences the existence of Destination Brand Authenticity and Satisfaction. Södergren (2021) stated that there is an indirect influence between Destination Brand Experience and Destination Brand Loyalty through Destination Brand Authenticity. Park et al. (2023) also mentioned that Destination Brand Satisfaction is a mediator between Destination Brand Experience and Destination Brand Loyalty. Based on the results of previous research, the variables for this research are determined by Destination Brand Experience, Destination Brand Authenticity, Destination Brand Satisfaction, and Destination Brand Loyalty (Murshed et al., 2023). Measuring brand loyalty that includes switching behavior would provide good insights for this research. In the context of tourism, a recent article by Yunpeng and Khan (2021) distinguishes types of loyalty as vertical, horizontal, and experiential. This study identifies vertical loyalty which is loyalty to more than one level of the tourism system, and also experience loyalty which is loyal to a particular vacation style (Portal et al., 2019).

Oklevik et al. (2022) stated that an inclusive branding positioning must be immediately established for Lake Toba so that if it is promoted widely throughout the world, premium tourists will want to come to Lake Toba and even share testimonials about their impressions during their vacation at Lake Toba so that more foreign exchange is received for the welfare of society. As an amplification of super priority destination positioning, there must still be a single, inclusive branding for Lake Toba. The destination image of Lake Toba as the largest lake in Southeast Asia is an essential point in tourists' decisions to visit. With a good and well-known destination image, it makes it easier for tourists to plan their holidays (Shang et al., 2020; Yunpeng and Khan, 2021). To investigate brand experiences in the context of destinations is

unique because, unlike products or services where the offering consists of a majority of goods or a majority of services, destinations can be thought of as a mix of individual products and experiential opportunities that combine to form the total experience of the area visited (Bapat and Kannadhasan, 2022). Another distinct feature of the destination experience is that the experience needs to be delivered in each transaction phase. It is due to the nature of tourism products, which are required in front-end purchases and delay consumption. Thus, the experience becomes an important driver for purchase and consumption (Harjadi et al., 2023). Such features strengthen the rationale for investigating destination brand experience. In addition, brand stimuli need to be defined more broadly (Moreira et al., 2017). Design and brand identity in destinations may refer to the interpretations of brand communication as well as specific cultural features of the destination. Based on empirical results from Gultom and Hasibuan (2021), it is stated that the existence of Destination Brand Experience can influence Destination Brand Satisfaction. Likewise, a study conducted by Murshed et al. (2023) stated that Destination Brand Experience has an influence on increasing Destination Brand Authenticity. Other research stated that Destination Brand Authenticity has a positive role in increasing Destination Brand Loyalty (Bapat and Kannadhasan, 2022). However, several other studies stated that Destination Brand Satisfaction and Destination Brand Experience have no effect on Destination Brand Loyalty. Oklevik et al. (2022) and Portal et al. (2019) also stated that the Destination Brand Authenticity has a negative effect on Destination Brand Loyalty. The inconsistency of previous research results was an important motivation for conducting this research. Differences in research results give rise to ambiguity, resulting in gaps for research again by considering various things such as differences in samples, conditions and research time (Harjadi et al., 2023).

Oklevik et al. (2022) stated that Destination Brand Experience does not have a direct influence on Destination Brand Loyalty; instead, it is through Destination Brand Authenticity and Destination Brand Satisfaction. Apart from that, Yunpeng and Khan (2021) stated that the influence of Destination Brand Experience on Destination Brand Loyalty obtained insignificant results. However,

through Destination Brand Authenticity, you get positive and significant results (Portal et al., 2019). It means that there is an influence between Destination Brand Experience on Destination Brand Loyalty through Destination Brand Authenticity and Destination Brand Satisfaction (Budi et al., 2021). So, this research considers the results of previous research by placing Destination Brand Authenticity and Destination Brand Satisfaction as mediators of Destination Brand Experience on Destination Brand Loyalty (Oklevik et al., 2022; Portal et al., 2019). Based on differences in previous research results, which are still inconsistent and give rise to ambiguity, this research seeks to re-explore the relationship between the variables Destination Brand Experience, Destination Brand Authenticity, Destination Brand Satisfaction, and Destination Brand Loyalty (Mostafa and Kasamani, 2021). Then, research the context of the tourism business in developing countries. Previous research was conducted on manufacturing and service industries in developed countries (Hannan et al., 2023). So, it can be shown that the novelty of this research lies in brand-related observations carried out in the tourism scope, which includes the service industry, which is still rarely looked at by management researchers (Rodrigues et al., 2018). Another piece of news lies in the research process, which provides a wider space for marketing theory (Rizvi et al., 2020) in the relationship between Destination Brand Experience, Destination Brand Authenticity, Destination Brand Satisfaction, and Destination Brand Loyalty.

The benefits of this research are aimed at developing theory in the management field, especially marketing theory, in the context of brand research. Another practical benefit is, of course, to increase brand loyalty interest in the Lake Toba tourist location, which has traditionally been untouched by massive technological developments (Eklund, 2022). Building brand loyalty will create a good image for the tourist location. A good destination image will increase tourist visits because the image influences the decision to visit and interest in making repeat visits (Liu and Hu, 2022). So, this research aims to explore by testing and analyzing the existence of the concepts of Destination Brand Experience, Destination Brand Authenticity, Destination Brand Satisfaction, and Destination Brand Loyalty in world tourist locations that

are famous for their beautiful natural scenery and are based on traditional governance, namely Lake Toba in Indonesia (Hannan et al., 2023). The contribution of this research is aimed at Lake Toba tourism managers or management to pay attention to factors that influence brand loyalty, such as authenticity, experience, and satisfaction, so that they can be synergized with tourism marketing strategies in the Lake Toba area. Another contribution is aimed at the government to create a national and international policy to bring tourists to Indonesia, especially Lake Toba so that they have a competitive advantage strategy to restore tourist trust and restore the brand loyalty that once existed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Destination Brand Experience

Destination brands, also defined as complex experience brands (Barnes et al., 2014), are used as a marketing tool to represent the potential experience of tourists visiting the destination (Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2020), creating a positive image of the tourist attraction, and meeting tourist needs (Morgan et al., 2003). Destination brands are created through the process of providing legitimacy regarding a particular place in which there is promotional discourse regarding objects, symbols, and ideas that are associated with benefits for tourists, such as satisfaction, mental and physical health, social status, happiness, rest, regeneration and satisfaction (Watson and Kopachevsky, 1994). These brands consist of meanings and experiences that guarantee that a particular place has value by highlighting the elements that differentiate it from other destinations (Morgan et al., 2003). In other words, through names, symbols, logos, wordmarks, or graphics, destination brands promise memorable tourist experiences that are associated with the destination (Ritchie and Ritchie, 1998). The brand experience is empirically distinct from other brand and customer-related concepts, including brand attachment, involvement, and customer delight (Zarantonello and Schmitt, 2010).

Destination Brand Authenticity

Authenticity is defined differently across research domains (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010; Fritz et al., 2017). In philosophy, scholars associate authenticity with moral behavior, which implies that the self is authentic and independent as a

moral ideal of modernity (Taylor, 1991). In sociology, authenticity is primarily understood as not something that can be determined objectively or something 'real' but is a socially constructed phenomenon associated with expectations (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010). According to anthropology, authenticity is related to the preservation of cultural norms, values, and beliefs related to the individual's 'identity' (Handler, 1986). In psychology, authenticity is a perceived primacy of identity with oneself, meaning that an individual's authentic actions reflect their true self (Fritz et al., 2017; Kernis and Goldman, 2006). In short, authenticity is mostly understood as a subject-related behavioral attribute consisting of being 'true to oneself' and 'real' (Fritz et al., 2017; Moulard et al., 2016). This idea persists across various disciplines, including product and service branding (Fritz et al., 2017; Manthiou et al., 2018; Moulard et al., 2016). However, studies investigating brand authenticity are scarce so far.

Destination Brand Satisfaction

Brand satisfaction is a customer response to the actual quality of a product and the customer's previous expectations after the customer consumes it (Erciş et al., 2012). Verbeke and Bagozzi (2002) explained that brand satisfaction results from a subjective evaluation of a brand when consuming it once or continuously. To feel satisfaction with a brand, a brand must have performance that meets or exceeds consumer expectations and is able to generate brand loyalty, recommend the brand, and provide positive expressions of the brand. Satisfaction is the main measurement by which consumers' needs and desires for a product can be met and remain loyal. Brand satisfaction is where a product's perceived performance matches the buyer's expectations. If the performance of a product or service meets expectations, then the customer will be satisfied or vice versa. Smart companies aim to satisfy customers by delivering more than they promise. Customers who are satisfied with a product can lead to loyalty.

Destination Brand Loyalty

Recent research shows brands' strong influence on a place, so much so that people with good cognitive beliefs about brands report more positive perceptions and willingness to visit brand-re-

lated places (Bulmer and Buchanan-Oliver, 2010). We extend this idea and suggest that emotional aspects such as affective brand loyalty influence people's relationships with places. First, loyalty reflects the deeply held commitment to provide positive responses to the chosen brand consistently in the future (Oliver, 1997). When people are loyal to a brand, the brand associations are salient and accessible. Second, an essential aspect of loyalty is that loyalty is emotionally rooted and associated with a relatively 'hot' affect (Oliver, 1997). When consumers achieve higher levels of loyalty, it is coded as cognition and affect, and the associations are integrated and emotionally colored (Olson, 2002). The loyalty shown is directed at the degree of affect (like), so the affective component is already available (Oliver, 1997). Therefore, we expect loyalty to have a greater influence than 'cooler' beliefs due to the presence of an affective component.

Loyalty will result in forming a series of memories rich in influence and associated with a brand. Consumers are motivated to use these emotional memories as categorization cues to allocate their emotional, cognitive, and behavioral resources toward the object and assess the anticipatory feelings of future involvement. Brand loyalty can increase tourists' feelings towards a place. Taking the perspective of feelings as information, people use the existing positive affect embedded in brand loyalty as a source of information to form a positive image of the place in question. Affective The loyalty aspect indicates high accessibility of affection towards the brand, producing anticipated emotions. People with positive affective brand loyalty will anticipate experiencing positive emotions from engaging with the brand and its associations (e.g., associated places).

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Destination Brand Experience and Destination Brand Authenticity

The relationship between brand experience and authenticity is developed from two perspectives. First is the direct relationship, which states that the elements of brand experience (Behavioral, Affective, Intellectual, and Sensory) contribute to generating genuine feelings (Eklund, 2022; Liu and Hu, 2022). Activities and experiences can refer to genuine experiences. The experience can generate

authenticity, and the brand experience can confirm the genuine feeling consistently (Harjadi et al., 2023; Khan and Fatma, 2021). The second is an indirect relationship where the antecedents of the brand experience contribute to authenticity. In this case, Interaction at the destination as an antecedent of the brand experience contributes to the experience that will provide a judgment for authenticity (Marliawati and Cahyaningdyah, 2020; Rodrigues et al., 2018). These interactions between guides, tour leaders, and fellow tourists and authenticity are essential to assessing the tourist experience (Pratiwi et al., 2021). Travelers are nostalgic about the "original" way of life and want to relive it in tourism, at least temporarily. Nostalgia is the universal buzzword for looking to the past. Given this centrality of nostalgia as a motivation for tourism, heritage is created and reinvented from the memories, artifacts, and sites of the past that still exist to serve contemporary demand (Hwang et al., 2021; Marliawati and Cahyaningdyah, 2020). Heritage has many creators, destinations, and consumers (Ashworth and McShane, 2012). Not every component of the experience needs to be original as long as the combination of elements generates the required feeling of nostalgia.

H1: Destination Brand Experience has a positive and significant effect on Destination Brand Authenticity.

Destination Brand Authenticity and Destination Brand Loyalty

Another avenue for an explanation of brand loyalty is brand authenticity. Södergren (2021), in their qualitative study, found that consumers with a high propensity for authenticity will choose any brand, ensuring it conforms to the authenticity criteria (Tran and Nguyen, 2022). Authenticity has also recently been found to influence loyalty in the context of tourism. As evidence is still scarce, it suggests further research between brand authenticity and loyalty. Murshed et al. (2023) identified authenticity as one of the key drivers of credibility, a concept closely related to trust. Brand Trust is found to have a positive relationship with brand loyalty (Yunpeng and Khan, 2021). Empirical findings Portal et al. (2019) prove that authenticity-confirmed experiences can lead to loyalty in the case of backpacker travelers. Oklevik et al. (2022) found that engaged and knowledgeable travelers

perceive higher authenticity.

H2: Destination Brand Authenticity has a positive and significant effect on Destination Brand Loyalty.

Destination Brand Experience and Destination Brand Satisfaction

Destination brand experience results in travelers' experience of products and services at the destination during the vacation. More and more research is developing measurements of experience scales for brands, as well as for satisfaction and loyalty (Bapat and Kannadhasan, 2022). Research Harjadi et al. (2023) state that "experience provides value, then it is expected to cause multidimensional experiences, providing a higher assessment of the experience, the higher the level of satisfaction with the brand." There is evidence that emotions in consumption impact customer satisfaction (Budi et al., 2021; Gultom and Hasibuan, 2021). Emotional responses based on consumption are strong predictors of intentions and brand attitude (Mostafa and Kasamani, 2021). Hannan et al. (2023) found a relationship between brand experience and satisfaction.

H3: Destination Brand Experience has a positive and significant effect on Destination Brand Satisfaction.

Destination Brand Satisfaction and Destination Brand Loyalty

Loyalty is a deep commitment to buy a product or service again. Brand loyalty suggests that maintaining satisfaction is associated with maintaining the brand by becoming a loyal customer through favorable comments (Rodrigues et al., 2018). When satisfied with a destination brand, travelers are more likely to repurchase and recommend it to family or friends (Eklund, 2022; Rizvi et al., 2020). Satisfaction as the most common influencer of loyalty is also found in the tourism discipline. Many studies have investigated why tourists make repeat visits as an indication of loyalty, including satisfaction (Portal et al., 2019; Gultom and Hasibuan, 2021; Rizvi et al., 2020). Meanwhile, Liu and Hu (2022) found that destination brand satisfaction does not significantly affect brand loyalty.

H4: Destination Brand Satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on Destination Brand

Loyalty.

Destination Brand Experience and Destination Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is a deep commitment to repurchasing or resubscribing to a selected product or service in the future. Buying the same brand over and over again or buying a group of the same brands repeatedly, even though situational influences and marketing efforts have the potential to cause behavior change. Meanwhile, Liang (2022) stated that Brand loyalty is an asset where consumers are willing to pay more to get the goods or services offered. Olaoke et al. (2021) define brand loyalty in terms of conditions where consumers have a positive attitude towards a brand, are committed to the brand, and intend to damage future purchases. Brand loyalty in consumers is due to the influence of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the brand that accumulates continuously in addition to the perception of product quality (Marliawati and Cahyaningdyah, 2020; Pratiwi et al., 2021). Dimensionalization of customer's brand loyalty, according to Hwang et al. (2021), is formed by three indicators, namely: always remember, recommend, and repurchase. Experience results from stimulation and leads to pleasant results, expecting consumers to want to repeat the experience (Huang and Chen, 2022; Indarto et al., 2022). It means that the brand experience should influence not only past-directed satisfaction judgments but also future-directed consumer loyalty (Revaldi et al., 2022). So that consumers are more likely to repurchase the brand and recommend it, and the tendency to purchase alternative brands is reduced (Chung and Welty-Peachey, 2022; Eslami, 2020).

H5: Destination Brand Experience has a positive and significant effect on Destination Brand Loyalty.

Destination Brand Experience in Destination Brand Loyalty through Destination Brand Authenticity and Destination Brand Satisfaction

Problems related to consumer loyalty towards a brand are a problem faced by all brands in existence today. From several factors, including brand experience, brand satisfaction, and brand Authenticity is of course the main thing expected by the manufacturer or owner, the brand is able to increase brand loyalty (Olaoke et al., 2021). Re-

search by Budi et al. (2021) found that destination brand experience influences brand loyalty through authenticity. The same results were obtained by Mostafa and Kasamani (2021), who found that brand authenticity mediates the influence of brand experience on brand loyalty. Brand Experience has an indirect effect on brand loyalty through brand authenticity (Rodrigues et al., 2018). Other research also shows that brand experience influences brand loyalty (Liu and Hu, 2022), but these results are inconsistent. It was found from the results of Olaoke et al. (2021) that brand experience has no effect on brand loyalty. Different findings were also conveyed by Hannan et al. (2023), Harjadi et al. (2023), Rodrigues et al. (2018) that brand authenticity provides consistent results on brand loyalty. Based on previous research results, researchers justify the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty, mediated by brand authenticity (Gultom and Hasibuan, 2021).

Several other research results from Marliawati and Cahyaningdyah (2020) and Pratiwi et al. (2021) stated that brand experience has an indirect effect on brand loyalty through brand satisfaction. It is confirmed by Oklevik et al. (2022) through the results of their research, namely that brand satisfaction also mediates the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. In several previous findings, Rizvi et al. (2020), many stated that brand satisfaction has a positive influence on

brand loyalty.

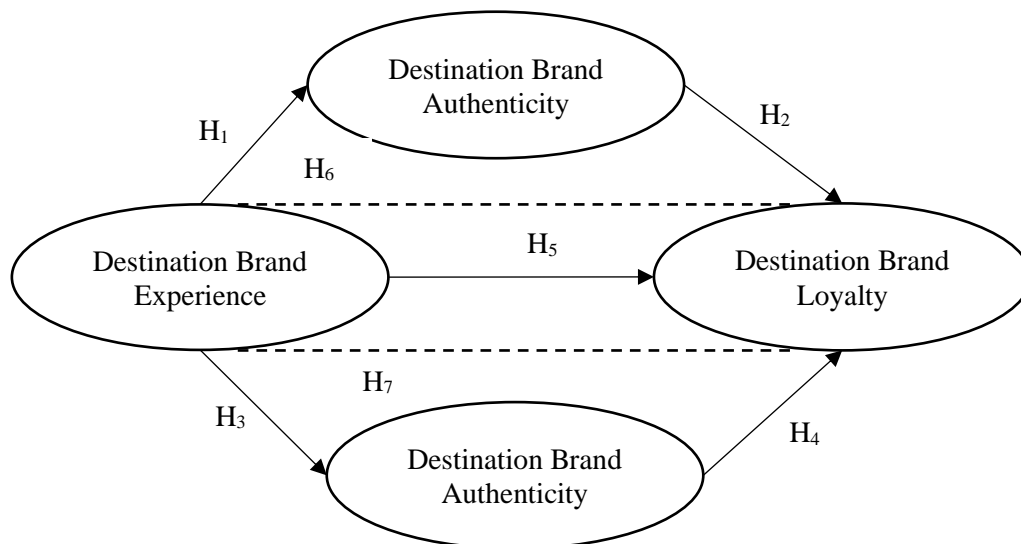
H6: Destination brand experience influences destination brand loyalty through destination brand authenticity.

H7: Destination brand experience influences destination brand loyalty through destination brand satisfaction.

This study also examines destination brand authenticity and destination brand satisfaction as mediation to achieve destination brand loyalty; this is H6 and H7. The following Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework in this study.

METHOD

This research uses quantitative methods. Quantitative research was conducted by collecting data from respondents using Google Forms, and documentation studies were conducted on the literature. The population in this study was determined to be foreign and domestic tourists. The number of samples included in this study was 200 respondents (Narindra et al., 2023). The sample determination was carried out by purposive sampling, with the criteria being at least 17 years old, having visited one of the destinations in Lake Toba tourist area. The distribution of participants in this study was done with quota sampling. The following is Table 1, the sampling distribution of respondents who participated in this study.



Source: Harjadi et al. (2023), Rizvi et al. (2020), and Rodrigues et al. (2018)

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The questionnaire was adopted from previous research and developed based on the research objectives. A pilot test was conducted on 30 domestic visitors to Lake Toba. From the results obtained, several questionnaire statements need to be corrected in the wording of the brand loyalty questionnaire so that they are not ambiguous. Several statements were corrected as suggested, and then a second trial was carried out again. The result was that the research instrument was declared valid and reliable for use in research on a wider sample overall.

Collinearity testing is carried out, which aims to test and find out whether, in a regression model, a high or perfect correlation is found between the independent variables. This test can be determined by looking at the tolerance and variance inflation factors (VIF) values. If the VIF value < 10, then it is stated that there is no multicollinearity (Sara et al., 2023). The results found that the

VIF value of the variables destination brand experience (0.801), destination brand authenticity (0.721), and destination brand satisfaction (0.772) means that it can be stated that there is no multicollinearity.

Determination of quota sampling based on districts obtained in two districts (Humbang Hasundutan and Dairi) where the target sample was less than 10 people; due to time and distance constraints, the quota samples of the two districts were distributed proportionally to other districts. The respondents involved in this study were 267 people: 38 respondents were disallowed due to incomplete questionnaire filling, 7 respondents were under the age of 17, and 22 respondents were respondents who last visited one of the Lake Toba tourist destinations more than five years ago. Data were obtained using the SEM (Structure Equation Model) with the SMART PLS analyzer version 4.0 (Atmadja et al., 2021).

Table 1. Distribution of Research Samples

District	Number of Travelers	%	Target Sample **	Rounding
	2021* (People)	Sample**	200	
Samosir	405.203	30.88	61,76	63
North Tapanuli	142.356	10.84	21.69	23
Simalungun	369.559	28.16	56.32	58
Toba	201.335	15.34	30.68	34
Humbang Hasundutan	9.902	0.75	1.51	0
Dairi	51.347	3.91	7.82	0
Karo	132.443	10.09	20.18	22
Total	1.327.194	100	200	200

Source: sample data analysis results (2023)

Table 2. Operational Definition of Variables

Variable	Indicator Measurement	Source
Destination Brand Experience	Planning, Information, and Travel decisions	Rodrigues et al. (2018)
Destination Brand Authenticity	Behavior, Tourist activities, Service, Facility, Art activities, and Souvenirs	Jiménez-Barreto et al. (2020)
Destination Brand Satisfaction	Quality, Price, Uses, and Benefits	Hwang et al. (2021)
Destination Brand Loyalty	Popularity, Word of mouth, Trust, and Feeling	Huang and Chen (2022)

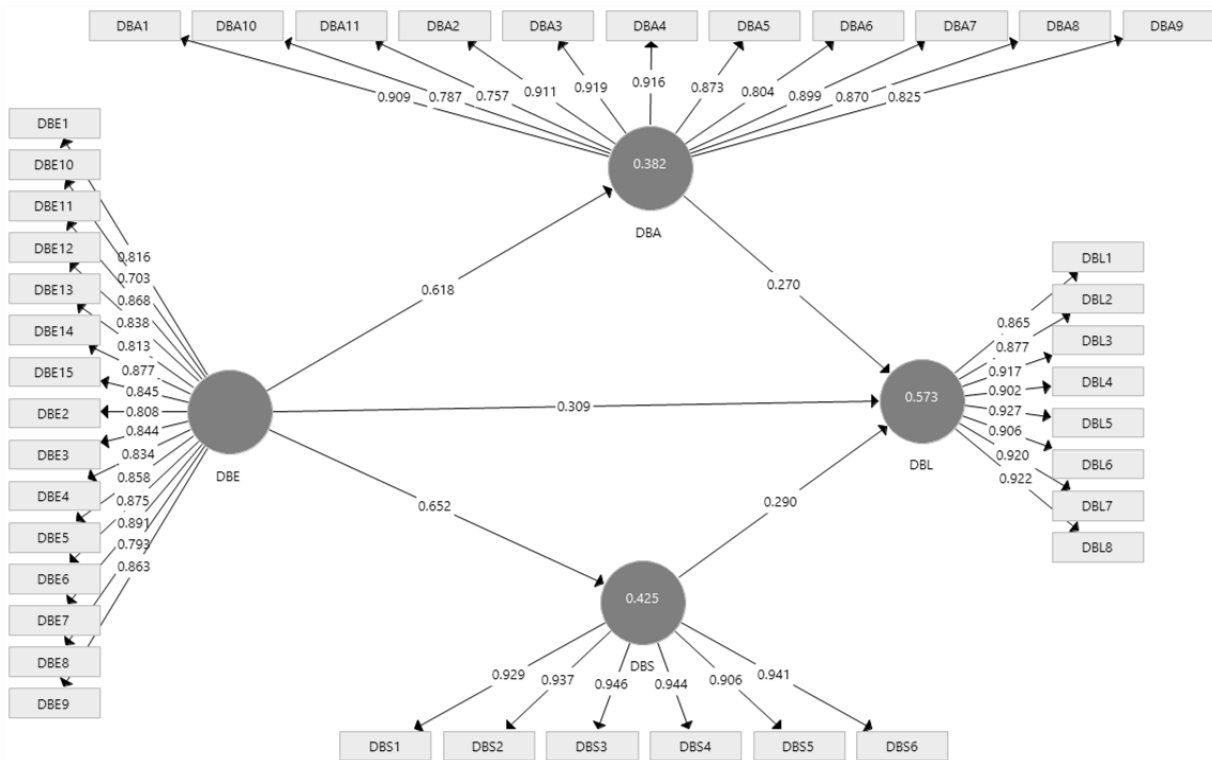
RESULTS

The data that has been obtained is then sorted and processed using Smart PLS 4.0. The following Figure 2 shows the relationship between constructs in this study. Based on testing the validity of factor loading, all loading values are > 0.7 , it has met the validity requirements based on the loading value. Furthermore, validity testing is based on the average variance extracted value. The recommended average variance extracted value is above 0.5 (Saputra et al., 2023). It is known that all average variance extracted values are > 0.5 , meaning they have met the validity requirements based on the average variance extracted. Furthermore, reliability testing is carried out based on the composite reliability value. The recommended composite reliability value is above 0.7. It is known that all composite reliability values are > 0.7 , which means that they have met the reliability requirements based on composite reliability. Furthermore, reliability testing was carried out based on the Cronbach's alpha value. The recommended Cronbach's alpha

value is above 0.7 (Saputra et al., 2023). It is known that all Cronbach's alpha values are > 0.7 , which means that they have met the reliability requirements based on Cronbach's alpha.

Validity and Reliability Testing

Based on the results of the validity test analysis, it was found that the validity of the Destination Brand Experience, Destination Brand Authenticity, Destination Brand Satisfaction, and Destination Brand Loyalty variables with an average variance extracted value greater than 0.5, so it was stated that the instrument used was valid. Meanwhile, the results of the reliability test, seen from the Cronbach's alpha value, obtained a value for all the variables each above 0.5, namely 0.965 for the Destination Brand Authenticity; Destination Brand Experience at 0.969; Destination Brand Satisfaction of 0.971 and the Destination Brand Loyalty of 0.968, which means that the research results when repeated in the same way are consistent or reliable.



Information:

DBE: Destination Brand Experience; DBA: Destination Brand Authenticity; DBS: Destination Brand Satisfaction; DBL: Destination Brand Loyalty.

Figure 2. Research Model Path

In testing discriminant validity, a latent variable's average variance extracted square root value is compared with the correlation value between the latent variable and other latent variables. It is known that the average variance extracted square root value of each latent variable is greater than the correlation value between these latent variables and other latent variables. So, it is concluded that it has met the requirements of discriminant validity.

Hypothesis Test

Table 3 presents the results of the influence and significance tests on each construct in this study. Destination Brand Experience has a positive effect on Destination Brand Authenticity, with a path coefficient value = 0.618, and significant, with a P-Values value = 0.000 <0.05, so it can be

concluded that H1 is accepted. Destination Brand Authenticity has a positive effect on Destination Brand Loyalty, with a path coefficient value = 0.270, and significant, with a P-Values value = 0.006 <0.05, so it can be concluded that H2 is Accepted. Destination Brand Experience has a positive effect on Destination Brand Satisfaction, with a path coefficient value = 0.652, and significant, with a P-Values value = 0.000 <0.05, so it can be concluded that H3 Accepted. Destination Brand Satisfaction has a positive effect on Destination Brand Loyalty, with a path coefficient value = 0.290, and significant, with a P-Values value = 0.002 <0.05 (H4 Accepted). Destination Brand Experience has a positive effect on Destination Brand Loyalty, with a path coefficient value = 0.309, and significant, with a P-Values value = 0.002 <0.05 (H5 Accepted).

Table 3. Path Coefficient Test and Significance of Influence

	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
Destination Brand Experience – Destination Brand Authenticity	0.618	0.623	0.072	8.529	0.000
Destination Brand Authenticity – Destination Brand Loyalty	0.270	0.267	0.098	2.772	0.006
Destination Brand Experience – Destination Brand Satisfaction	0.652	0.654	0.070	9.292	0.000
Destination Brand Satisfaction – Destination Brand Loyalty	0.290	0.283	0.095	3.069	0.002
Destination Brand Experience – Destination Brand Loyalty	0.309	0.316	0.101	3.049	0.002

Source: Data Processing (2023)

Table 4. R-Square and Q-Square

	R Square	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Destination Brand Authenticity	0.382	0.281
Destination Brand Loyalty	0.573	0.457
Destination Brand Satisfaction	0.425	0.366

Source: Data Processing Results, SEM-PLM (2023)

Table 6. Evaluation of Mediation Effect

Variable	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	VAF (%)	Mediator Type
Destination Brand Experience – Destination Brand Loyalty	0,356	0,666	53,45	Mediator Parsial

Source: Data Processing Results (2023)

The coefficient of determination test is carried out to see the amount of variance that the independent variable on the dependent variable can explain. The difference in the coefficient of determination from the value of 1 indicates the influence of other variables in explaining the variance in the dependent variable. The higher the R2 value, the greater the ability of the independent latent variable to define the dependent latent variable. R2 results of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 indicate "good," "moderate," and "weak" models.

Based on Goodness of Fit Model Testing, the Estimated Model value is $0.070 < 0.1$, which means that the model has FIT. Next, Table 5 shows the results of the mediation testing on Destination Brand Loyalty. Based on the mediation test results in Table 5 above, Destination Brand Authenticity significantly mediates the relationship between Destination Brand Experience and Destination Brand Loyalty, with a value of P-Values = $0.013 < 0.05$ (H6 Accepted). Likewise, Destination Brand Satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between Destination Brand Experience and Destination Brand Loyalty, with a value of P-Values = $0.007 < 0.05$ (H7 Accepted).

Mediator variables can be evaluated and grouped into three categories: non-mediators, partial mediators, and full mediators. The criteria for classifying the mediation effect category are carried out by looking at the amount of variance in the dependent variable that the mediator can explain. The variance explained through the mediator is calculated using the Variance accounted-for method. The Variance Accounted For method developed by Hair et al. (2022), as well as bootstrapping in the distribution of indirect effects, is considered more appropriate because it does not require any assumptions about the distribution of variables so that it can be applied to small sample sizes. This approach is most appropriate for PLS, which uses resampling methods and has higher statistical power than the Sobel method (Capeda et al., 2017).

The first step in the mediation testing procedure is to ensure that the direct effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable is significant. Second, the indirect effect must be significant; each path, namely the independent variable on the mediating variable and the mediating variable on the dependent variable, must be significant to fulfill this condition. This indirect effect is

obtained by the formula of the effect of the independent variable on the mediating variable multiplied by the effect of the mediating variable on the dependent variable. If the indirect effect is significant, then this indicates that the mediating variable is able to absorb or reduce the direct effect in the first test. Third, calculate Variance Accounted For method with the formula as follows: Variance Accounted For method = Indirect Effect / Total Effect. If the Variance Accounted For method value is $> 80\%$, the mediating variable is a full mediator, if $20\% \leq$ Variance Accounted For method $\leq 80\%$, the mediating variable is a partial mediator, and if Variance Accounted For method $< 20\%$, the mediating variable is not a mediator (Hair et al., 2022).

DISCUSSION

Destination Brand Experience and Destination Brand Authenticity

The results prove that destination brand experience has a positive and significant effect directly on destination brand authenticity. The results of this study provide empirical evidence that the effect of destination brand experience is positive and significant on destination brand authenticity, which is in accordance with the results of research by Lacap and Tungcab (2020), which states that brand experience at the destination confirms the sense of brand authenticity at the destination. The relationship between brand experience and brand authenticity is developed from two perspectives. The first is a direct relationship, which states that the elements of brand experience (Behavioral, Affective, Intellectual, and Sensory) contribute to generating a feeling of authenticity (Revaldi et al., 2022; Yadav et al., 2023). According to Chung and Welty-Peachey (2022), activities and experiences can refer to authentic experiences. Experience can generate authenticity, and brand experience can generate a sense of authenticity by doing it consistently.

The tourist brand experience in the Lake Toba tourist area destination consists of several dimensions, namely emotions (affective) with a path value of 0.906, sensory with a path value of 0.895, intellectual with a path value of 0.865, and behavioral with a path value of 0.793. It appears that the brand experience in terms of emotions, tourists experience it very well. The emotional dimension in-

cludes indicators of a sense of attraction, a sense of comparison that gives an important impression. The brand creates an emotional impression, and curiosity can be experienced by tourists in the Lake Toba tourist area destination. It is related to tourist visits to destinations that can evoke certain memories and arouse a sense of ownership of *bona pasogit* (hometown).

Destination Brand Authenticity and Destination Brand Loyalty

The results prove that destination brand authenticity has a positive and significant effect on destination brand loyalty, meaning that changes in the value of destination brand authenticity have a direct influence on changes in destination brand loyalty (Febrian and Fadly, 2021; Lacap and Tungcab, 2020). This study's results are confirmed by previous research, where authenticity is one of the main drivers of credibility, a concept closely related to trust (Yadav et al., 2023). Brand Trust was found to have a positive relationship with brand loyalty (Febrian and Fadly, 2021). Empirical findings by Marliawati and Cahyaningdyah (2020) prove that authenticity can lead to loyalty in the case of backpacker travelers. (Hwang et al. (2021) found that engaged and knowledgeable travelers perceive higher levels of authenticity. Destination brand authenticity is measured by three dimensions: in-destination authenticity with a path value of 0.909, object authenticity with a path value of 0.886, and semiotic with a path value of 0.868. Authenticity in the destination relates to the local way of life, experiencing the past, gaining a spiritual experience, and gaining a sense of calm or peace. The experience of authenticity involves participation in rituals, where foreigners gather in cultural performances to share feelings of closeness or solidarity (Liang, 2022; Liu and Hu, 2022).

These cultural performances are not a complete re-creation of the past. A series of nostalgic memories selectively reconstruct the past to serve the needs of the present (Eslami, 2020). As is done in Tuktuk destinations that involve tourists following the *Sigale-gale* ritual series, which, according to descriptive statistical data, domestic tourists make many visits to these destinations (Chung and Welty-Peachey, 2022; Huang and Chen, 2022). Therefore, it is necessary to explore the history, culture, and habits of residents in other destina-

tions. As mentioned, that a series of nostalgic memories does not mean creating the whole of the past, a series of nostalgic memories is selectively done to serve the needs of the present (Revaldi et al., 2022). Tourists come to visit to relieve fatigue and after the routine have curiosity and want to have an exciting experience in the destination; this can mean doing new things in the destination (Lacap and Tungcab, 2020; Olaoke et al., 2021). The authenticity of the object through the architecture of the building in the destination, the ornaments on the building, the motifs applied to the places that are the highlight in the destination, on the fabric (ulos or uniform of the officer's official clothes) or on the advertising media used in promoting the destination (Indarto et al., 2022; Marliawati and Cahyaningdyah, 2020). Authenticity is also related to the tourist experience in evaluating historical sites, ancient writings, and other historical relics. Culture and art are also part of the authenticity the Lake Toba tourist area offers. Authenticity is one of the factors that is a consideration for tourism in the future (Liang, 2022; Pratiwi et al., 2021; Revaldi et al., 2022). Therefore, this authenticity is related to the level of loyalty to tourist destinations in the Lake Toba tourist area. Therefore, for every destination with cultural and historical value, efforts by the local government to continue to emphasize the authenticity of the attributes that show the identity of the local destination.

Destination Brand Experience and Destination Brand Satisfaction

The results prove that destination brand experience has a positive and significant effect on destination brand satisfaction, meaning that changes in the value of destination brand experience directly influence changes in destination brand satisfaction (Huang and Chen, 2022). The results of this study provide empirical evidence that destination brand experience has a positive and significant effect on Destination Brand Satisfaction, with a path value of 0.854. This finding confirms the theory of consumer satisfaction put forward by Hwang et al. (2021), which states that consumer satisfaction is a condition achieved after product consumption, in this case, after visiting tourist destinations by comparing expectations and the reality of the tourist brand experience at the Lake Toba tourist area destination (Pratiwi et al., 2021). The

tourist brand experience at Lake Toba tourist area destinations consists of several dimensions, namely emotions (affective) with a path value of 0.906, sensory with a path value of 0.895, intellectual with a path value of 0.865, and behavioral with a path value of 0.793. Brand satisfaction experienced by tourists at the destination is measured by the consumer satisfaction scale, with a path value of 1.000. The consumer satisfaction scale described by Indarto et al. (2022) illustrates that the concept of consumer satisfaction should be a confirmation of expectations with the reality achieved in a consumption made. This research also confirms the concept of Bapat and Kannadhasan (2022), which shows that confirmation of the destination brand experience felt by tourists is part of the confirmation model to achieve visitor satisfaction. The results of this study confirm the findings in the previous research literature by Gultom and Hasibuan (2021), which shows that destination brand experience has a positive effect on destination brand satisfaction. The experience felt during consumption or tourist visits will be confirmed by the expectations of the tourist visit, which results in the level of satisfaction of the tourist visit.

Destination Brand Satisfaction and Destination Brand Loyalty

The results prove that destination brand satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on destination brand loyalty, meaning that changes in the value of destination brand satisfaction have a direct influence on changes in destination brand loyalty (Harjadi et al., 2023; Södergren, 2021). The results of this study confirm the theory of consumer behavior, which states that consumers who achieve satisfaction will achieve loyalty. Manthiou et al. (2018) stated that destination brand satisfaction is key to achieving destination brand loyalty. Being in the Lake Toba tourist area destination, respondents felt the atmosphere was in accordance with what they had previously thought. The destination brand satisfaction felt by respondents compared with before and after the vacation experienced (Oklevik et al., 2022; Yunpeng and Khan, 2021). Likewise with suitability to needs, respondents still need a vacation to get out of the routine and get a different atmosphere from the daily environment (Budi et al., 2021; Hannan et al., 2023). Visiting the Lake Toba tourist area is something

they feel fulfills their vacation needs, so this is the best decision they can make. This suitability can be improved into something more than expectations so that the level of satisfaction felt by tourists can increase (Harjadi et al., 2023; Safeer et al., 2021; Södergren, 2021).

Brand satisfaction at the destination can increase commitment, recommendations, and future visit intentions. Loyal consumers will show three behaviors, namely repurchasing in the form of re-visit intention, recommending in the form of word of mouth, or showing commitment (retaining) to a product that they are loyal to. In this case, achieving the level of loyalty (destination brand loyalty) is an essential key in tourism marketing of tourist areas in Lake Toba, which is the focus of this research (Oklevik et al., 2022; Portal et al., 2019). One of the efforts to achieve this is to achieve the destination's brand satisfaction. Satisfaction is often associated as an influencer of loyalty (Mostafa and Kasamani, 2021; Rodrigues et al., 2018). Visitors who are satisfied with their tour will recommend or write positive things about their tour experience. The results of this study confirm previous research literature that confirms the effect of satisfaction on loyalty in tourist destinations (Harjadi et al., 2023; Manthiou et al., 2018; Rodrigues et al., 2018; Safeer et al., 2021).

Destination Brand Experience and Destination Brand Loyalty

Based on the research results, Destination Brand Experience has an influence on Destination Brand Loyalty. It means that brand experience can be felt directly by consumers. Consumers will feel the brand experience directly after they consume or enjoy the products or services offered, thereby providing comfort that is synonymous with satisfaction, which leads to brand loyalty. Harjadi et al. (2023) concluded that a positive brand experience with a brand will make customers feel satisfied and will ultimately encourage them to make another purchase in the future, which will lead to brand loyalty. Budi et al. (2021) said that based on marketing theory, brand experience views a brand as impacting the development of marketing strategies. Several other studies, which are in line with the results of this research (Södergren, 2021; Manthiou et al., 2018; Rodrigues et al., 2018), stated that destination brand experience has an effect on brand

loyalty.

Word-of-mouth action can be called a halo effect and a benchmark for other destinations (Pratiwi et al., 2021). Word of mouth helps customers to change from what was originally just a casual outing to something with high expectations due to the amount of information gathered (Gultom and Hasibuan, 2021). It is part of brand loyalty, the condition can also be explained as a substitute for loyalty and leads to destination performance (Oklevik et al., 2022). Someone who receives a recommendation from a colleague can follow or reject the recommendation, but usually, most people who recommend a destination have had a positive experience with that destination; this is what is called brand loyalty (Harjadi et al., 2023; Safeer et al., 2021; Södergren, 2021). Destination Brand Loyalty is the desire to provide recommendations to others who need information about what is considered high quality (Yadav et al., 2023).

IMPLICATIONS

The results of this research have theoretical implications by providing evidence that expands the scope of marketing theory into the domain of brand loyalty. The practical implications of the results of this research are aimed at Lake Toba tourism managers to increase their efforts and strategies in maintaining brand loyalty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Observing that this research still has limitations, there are still wide opportunities for future research to expand and deepen the scope of the research focus. For this reason, this research recommends several points of advice. First, it involves more independent variables, which are factors that trigger brand loyalty. Second, tourism management is advised to develop the concepts of brand experience, brand authenticity, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty.

The model that was built also adopted previous research. Therefore, researchers realize that there are a number of limitations to it. The first limitation is related to bias caused by the ambiguous and complex choice of words in the research instrument so that respondents can provide a different meaning to that intended by the researcher (item characteristics bias). The second limitation lies in the scope of the research, which is limited

to the Lake Toba tourist attraction. This limitation makes the results of this research exclusive and cannot be stated for the entire tourism industry.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examines the direct and indirect effects (mediation) by showing a greater mediating effect than partial. In the future, it can be studied with the influence of joint moderation. The results of this study show that Destination Brand Experience as a shaper of Destination Brand Authenticity and Destination Brand Satisfaction can be implemented in improving affective aspects, namely by creating a sense of nostalgia and also Destination Brand Satisfaction on a consumer satisfaction scale. What can be explored is to create expectations of satisfaction since the visit to the destination is still planned; this is possible by strengthening the destination image through offline and online media and continuing with the commitment of business people in providing quality service to tourists during visits.

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