Preliminaries of Destination Brand Experience at Lake Toba in Indonesia

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Abstract

The Indonesian government is known to implement priority destinations by developing 10 tourism sites. Furthermore, Lake Toba in North Sumatra is one of the six National Tourism Strategy Areas (KSPN), considered an experience-based destination widely discussed. The study examines the determination of the antecedents influencing domestic tourist’s experience to the Lake Toba brand. This study focused only on domestic tourists, which limited a broader insight needed from foreign tourists. The methodology used is quantitative methodology with several antecedents were estimated, including image, infrastructure and support service, interaction, attraction and tourist's self-expression. The data were obtained from 350 respondents with age above 17 years old who visit Lake Toba by using questionnaires. The respondents were sampled through a non-probability technique. Subsequently, analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Model, followed by hypothesis testing. The results showed that there is an impact on destination brands experience. Domestic tourists utilize attraction points to build experiences. The image of the place within the visitors’ minds become a cognitive basis to assess feelings during visitation or exploration of destinations.

Keywords

Brand Experience, Destination Marketing, Tourism, Lake Toba, Domestic Tourist.

JEL Classification: M30, M31, M37.
Introduction

Priority destinations are divided into two categories, including the National Tourism Strategy Area and Special Economic Zones. Lake Toba in North Sumatra is one of the six National Tourism Strategy Areas (KSPN). It is the second-largest lake in the world after Victoria and is located in the caldera of a super-volcano. Moreover, it is one of the ten deepest lakes globally, with the extreme point reaching 500 meters. The tourism sector is the Government's backbone to generate foreign exchange. Domestic tourist visits increased in 2017 but decreased for two consecutive years in 2018 and 2019. Similar trends have been observed in the visitation statistics of the Lake Toba Tourism Area. To counter these effects, marketing has widely been discussed, concluding that experience-based tourism enriches consumer behaviour perspectives. Also, experience-based tourism adds to the differentiation that can be offered to visitors. Therefore, this study determined the antecedents that affect the brand experience in Lake Toba tourism area. During the development of Lake Toba, the overall number of tourists has decreased due to unpleasant experiences based on the image of the destination and one's senses (Brakus et al., 2009). An Image in the tourism discipline refers to the perception of a place reflected by the associations held in one’s memory (Cai, 2002).

The decrease in visitation in this area has initiated interest in research that integrates the image of destinations with the concept of branding (Qu et al., 2011). Other related discussions about infrastructure services at tourism destination are of main interest to stakeholders. Collaboration between stakeholders is essential in fostering great experiences for visitors in all tourist destinations. The industry has strong interdependence between organizations such that suppliers pass customers to other companies to provide comprehensive experiences (Greffe, 1994). According to del Bosque and Martín (2008), tourism individuals experience positive and negative emotions because they closely interact with the destination's resources. This is in line with Moscardo (2008) and Poulsson and Kale (2004), which examined the importance of interaction in creating experiences. The organizational approach in tourism focuses on the capacity, surrounding environment and the duration of attraction. Contrastingly, the cognitive approach systematizes tourist attractions based on perceptions and experiences. This study adopted the latter approach considering that the tourism industry consistently reiterates the importance of innovative and diverse products that provide customers with unforgettable experiences (Xu, 2010). Products can form a key component in individual self-expression, which helps to build a person's identity.
Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Destination Brand Experience

This study creates a concept based on Brakus et al. (2009), which provided a customer-focused perspective and resulted from marketing cues response to defined destination brand experience. The presence of a brand should be introduced intensively and massively in the minds of public and potential consumers (Ilyas et al., 2020). According to Pham and Pham (2020) place or destination should be branded just like products and services. Destination brand itself can benefit the value of the destination image. Brand experience is investigated in the context of the destination which refers to sensation, feeling, cognition, and behavioral responses generated by product-related stimuli influenced by design and identity, packaging, communication, and the environment. Simply, it is any experience received by oneself from the stimuli generation to a brand. Due to the nature of the destinations, experiences need to occur at all stages of acquiring, consuming, and evaluating a brand. Also, to understand the criticality of this concept brand stimulus needs to be defined more broadly. The destination brand design and identity may refer to the interpretation of communications and certain cultural features. Environmental packaging refers to how goals are served to customers. The destination natural settings and city views become visual symbols of the experience, while place names become brands (Helmi et al., 2019; Morgan et al., 2010). Furthermore, the destination brand experience is a holistic concept that focuses on the result and not the goal. According to Morgan et al. (2010), destinations function as a medium by which tourists create experiences.

Antecedent of Destination Brand Experience

A Literature study was conducted to determine possible antecedents or factors that influence Destination Brand Experience. According to Pike (2007) image in the context, destination branding has a significant influence on experience. The image of each attraction destination plays a significant role in all visitation phases. Buhalis (2000) and Qu et al. (2011) stated that the image is undoubtedly the most important criterion for choosing a place to visit. After visiting a destination, consumer satisfaction depends on an assessment of the overall experience and perceived expectations.

The importance of service infrastructure in destination experience was recognized in Crouch and Ritchie (2005). Service infrastructure includes transportation and related
support facilities such as retail and food/car care shops, garages, gas stations, pharmacies, bookstores, laundries, and police services. Dwyer and Kim (2001) stated that destinations function more effectively when these services are abundant. According to Murphy et al. (2000), the lack of proper infrastructure affects the tourist experience. This is in line with Heath (2003) destination competitiveness model which stated that enabler provisions such as infrastructure and management capacity are essential foundations. This is a relevant factor in tourist decision making because infrastructure inefficiencies often influence the choice.

Mascarenhas et al. (2006), Moscardo (2008), and Poulsson and Kale (2004) analyzed the importance of interactions in creating experiences. Experience definition supports that response is subjectively relates to direct or indirect customers contact with the company (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). Customer experience stems from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, the company, or part of its organization (Gentile et al., 2007). According to Smith (2003) and Middleton et al. (2009), attractions are tourism products and services such as permanent resources managed for visitor enjoyment, entertainment, and education. However, this definition does not accommodate illicit tourism destination, such as major disaster sites and prisons related to individual deaths.

It is necessary to see oneself from a multidimensional perspective because a person's self-concept is multifaceted (Sirgy & Su, 2000). Three elements of the self are relevant to tourism and may help predict and understand travel behavior. These elements include social comparison, self-expression and the search for change (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Sirgy & Su, 2000; Solomon, 1983). The "true self" represents what is often defined as one's personality, or the protected image people have for themselves (Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987; Sirgy & Su, 2000). Therefore, consumers are complex creatures capable of expressing meaning through their experiences and the products they consume (Perez et al., 2010).

**Hypothesis Development**

The expected future thoughts, feelings, opinions, images, and intents of the location is defined as destination image, and this constitutes a depiction of familiarity and views of the segments. Furthermore, destination image is declared as the major significant yardstick in deciding whether or not to visit a tourist attraction (Buhalis, 2000; Qu et al., 2011). There are two crucial functions of destination image comprising the swaying of choice process in spot selection decisions, and impacting behavior after
resolution-making. This includes tourist participation or interaction at the destination spot, contentment, satisfaction, re-visit plans, and recommendation offers. Chen and Tsai (2007) attested a positive significant impact on tourist brand experiences by destination image. Destination Infrastructure and Support Service is one of the antecedents of creating a brand experience through value collaboration. Wulandari (2014) stated that destination infrastructure and support services had a significant positive effect on destination brand experience.

Interaction is an essential factor in creating experiences and influencing customers’ perception (Mascarenhas et al., 2006; Moscardo, 2008; Poulsson & Kale, 2004). Destination interaction refers to direct or indirect contact with destination elements that influence experiences such as other tourists, service personnel and residents (Morgan et al., 2010). According to Wulandari (2014), destination interaction does not significantly affect the brand experience. The difference between the two results of this study becomes the test material.

Majority tourists describe experiences in terms of the quality of attractions and activities available in destinations (Andereck et al., 2006). Attractions provide the foundation for exciting and memorable experiences (Crouch & Ritchie, 2005). The combination of resources, activities, and events capable of arousing feelings of pleasure or surprise is a major attraction (del Bosque & Martín, 2008). Vittersø et al. (2000) stated that tourist stimulation could correspond to affective responses that measure experience.

Tourist's self-expression is an important driver of destination preference and choice (Ladik et al., 2015; Richins, 1994). The findings from focus group discussions support self-expression as an essential decision-making factor in visiting goals. Experience plays a significant role in channeling self-expression once in a purpose. According to Binkhorst (2005), modern consumers want a related context, authentic experience and balance between control with stager experiences and self-determined activities with spontaneity, freedom, and self-expression.

$$H_1 = \text{Antecedents of destination brand experience have a positive and significant effect on destination brand experience.}$$

$$H_{1a} = \text{Destination brand experience is positively and substantially influenced by the image.}$$
H₁b = Destination brand experience is positively and substantially influenced by Infrastructure and Support Service.

H₁c = Destination brand experience is positively and substantially influenced by the interaction.

H₁d = Destination brand experience is positively and substantially influenced by brand experience.

H₁e = Destination brand experience is positively and substantially influenced by Tourist Self Expression.

Research Methodology

This research employs a quantitative approach, with the population comprising home tourists exploring the Lake Toba area, North Sumatra, Indonesia. Data collection was collected and sampled using survey and non-probability approaches. The 350 study respondents were over 17 years and had visited the Lake Toba tourist area. Ferdinand (2014) stated that the ratio of samples with the minimum number of responses is 5 to 1. Data was analysed using Structure Equation Modelling. The research variables and indicators is shown in table 1 below;
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Destination Image (DI)**                   | 1. Attribute                        | 1. *Family Destination*  
2. *Water Sport*  
3. Beautiful scenery  
4. Adventure  
5. Away from the crowd  
6. Caldera |
|                                              | 2. Benefits                          | 7. Rich of culture  
8. Friendly Local  
9. Relax  
10. Adding experience |
| **Destination Infrastructure and Support Service (DISS)** | 1. Facilities/Infrastructure | 1. Technology  
2. Accessibility  
3. Mode of Transportation at the destination  
4. Transportation means for traveling to other destinations |
|                                              | 2. Support Services                  | 5. Public Service Information  
6. Emergency assistance |
| **Destination Interaction (DIn)**            | 1. Interaction Between Travelers     | 7. Group activities  
8. Outdoor |
|                                              | 2. Interaction with Officers         | 1. Interaction Intensity  
2. Responsive Officer |
|                                              | 3. Interaction with Local People     | 3. Attractions involving tourists  
4. Activities of local residents open to tourist  
5. Local people's knowledge to explain |
| **Destination Attraction (DA)**              | Quality of Attractions               | 1. Attraction Activities  
2. Attraction Innovations  
3. Indoor attractions  
4. Outdoor attractions |
| **Tourist’s Self Expression (TSE)**          | Life Style                           | 1. Activities  
2. Interest  
3. Opinion |
| **Destination Brand Experience (DBS)**       | 1. Sensory                           | 1. Visual Sense  
2. Smell  
3. Touch  
4. Taste  
5. Hearing |
|                                              | 2. Affective                         | 6. Interest the sense  
7. Appeal Senses  
8. Emotional Brand  
9. Curiosity |
|                                              | 3. Intellectual                      | 10. Feel the Past  
11. Self Confirmation  
12. Heritage |
14. Bodily Experience  
15. Scare Experience |

Source: Primary Data, 2020
Results and Discussions

Results

The respondents' educational profile was 68% with a bachelor’s degree, 17% in the second place, 14% with a postgraduate and 5% with high school education. Also, 44%, 42% and 14% of the total respondents had middle, high and middle-lower income. From the total number of respondents, 38%, 22%, 23 %, 10% and 3% had 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 or more days-vacation in lake Toba. The results showed that 62%, 34% and 4% chose the vacation with their family, friends, and colleagues.

Table 2 Results of Respondent Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Respondent Characteristics</th>
<th>Total (People)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Senior High School</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>350</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Income per Month (World Bank Version)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Poor Rp. 354.000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Low Rp &gt;354.000 s.d 532.000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Middle - Low Rp &gt;532.000 s.d 1.200.000</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Middle – High Rp &gt;1.200.000 s.d 6.000.000</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>High Rp &gt;6.000.000</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>350</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Home town</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Medan and surroundings</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Others (Outside North Sumatra)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>350</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The duration of the vacation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1 Day</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2 Days</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3 Days</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>4 Days</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>5 Days</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>6 Days</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>&gt;6 Days</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>350</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Vacation Partners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Work Partner</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Solo Traveler</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>350</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data, 2020
The 350 respondents described the statement items comprising brand experience, authenticity and loyalty as 15, 11, and 8 items respectively. Furthermore, a closed semantic scale with a 1 – 7 answer range was employed to measure each indicator derived from the dimension (where the value is larger, signifies better assessment).

The questionnaire results on respondents’ replies for brand experiences indicate a higher score for the scenery as eye-pleasing, while the lowest was having a frightening encounter. Therefore, this confirms the tourists possessed a pleasurable encounter in the senses and emotions. Also, the findings indicate replies regarding destination brand authenticity, and confirmation of the location’s genuineness comprises architectural forms, ornaments, events celebrations, and resident’s living events. For brand loyalty, the largest value consisted of plans to revisit Lake Toba tourist area.

![Figure 2 Path Diagram Based on Loading Factor Value](image)

**Figure 2 Path Diagram Based on Loading Factor Value**

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing Results (2020)

Figure 2 shows the test for the loading factor validity. Furthermore, the results reveal all factor loading values as > 0.7, and signifies the data meets the validity requirements.
accordingly. The average variance extracted (AVE) value is employed to conduct the validity test.

Table 3 Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destination Image</td>
<td>0.635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination Infrastructure and Support Service</td>
<td>0.673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination Interaction</td>
<td>0.665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination Attraction</td>
<td>0.640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist Self Expression</td>
<td>0.706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination Brand Experience</td>
<td>0.613</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing Results (2020)

The recommended AVE value exceeds 0.5 and therefore has met the validity requirements since all AVE values are popularly known to be > 0.5. Furthermore, the discriminant validity method was applied to perform structural model evaluation by a comparison of the cross-loadings values for each construct with the correlation between this and others in the model. Table 4 shows the discriminant validity model.

Table 4 Discriminant Validity Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>DI</th>
<th>DISS</th>
<th>DIn</th>
<th>DA</th>
<th>TSE</th>
<th>DBE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DI</td>
<td>0.796</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISS</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.819</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.814</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.797</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.840</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.783</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing Results (2020)

In addition, the composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha values were used to perform reliability testing.

Table 5 Reliability Testing Results based on Composite Reliability (CR)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Composite Reliability</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destination Image</td>
<td>0.874</td>
<td>0.807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination Infrastructure and Support Service</td>
<td>0.925</td>
<td>0.904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination Interaction</td>
<td>0.908</td>
<td>0.873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination Attraction</td>
<td>0.876</td>
<td>0.811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist Self Expression</td>
<td>0.878</td>
<td>0.792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination Brand Experience</td>
<td>0.927</td>
<td>0.910</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing Results (2020)
The findings of composite reliability and Cronbach alpha analysis indicate a > 0.7 value, and this meets the benchmark for construct reliability in the structural equation. Therefore, conditions for the structural equation construct validity and reliability are met by the model.

**Table 6 Results of Path Coefficient and P-Value**

|                                    | Original Sample (O) | Sample Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (STDEV) | T Statistics (|O/STDEV|) | P Values |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Destination Image -> Destination Brand Experience | 0.324               | 0.328           | 0.052                       | 6.281                    | 0.000    |
| Destination Infrastructure and Support Service -> Destination Brand Experience | -0.082              | -0.073          | 0.059                       | 1.397                    | 0.163    |
| Destination Interaction -> Destination Brand Experience | 0.110               | 0.105           | 0.073                       | 1.513                    | 0.131    |
| Destination Attraction -> Destination Brand Experience | 0.114               | 0.110           | 0.057                       | 1.984                    | 0.048    |
| Tourist Self Expression -> Destination Brand Experience | 0.458               | 0.455           | 0.072                       | 6.351                    | 0.000    |

Source: output SmartPLS

Table 6 shows the findings as follows:

1. There is a positive impact on brand experience by destination image, with 0.324 as path coefficient and significant P-Values of 0.000 <0.05.
2. There is an impact on brand experience by destination infrastructure and support service, with -0.082 as path coefficient and insignificant P-Values of 0.163 > 0.05.
3. There is an impact on brand experience by destination interaction, with 0.110 path coefficient and insignificant P-Values of 0.131 > 0.05.
4. There is a positive impact on brand experience by destination attraction, with 0.114 as path coefficient and significant P-value of 0.048 <0.05.
5. There is a positive impact on brand experience by tourist self-expression, with 0.0458 as path coefficient and significant P-Values of 0.000 <0.05.
The destination brand experience variable is supported by image, infrastructure and support service, interaction, attraction, and tourist self-expression values at 0.652 or 65.2%, while 34.8% is accounted for by other factors outside this research. Therefore, this proposed research model reveals predictors or antecedents possess moderate ability to explain destination brand experience.

Discussions

This research explores the Lake Toba tourist area appearance as a destination image implanted in the visitors’ memories during conversations. Furthermore, this image is capable of formation from earlier encounters, marketing mix experienced, or social mapping the area’s perception. This investigation found the brand experience felt is positively impacted by one’s destination image. This picture in visitors’ minds becomes a cognitive basis to assess feelings during visitation or exploration of destinations. Therefore, tourists here assess appearances possessed in the experience, and where the spot is good, the mind develops a pleasant atmosphere. However, concern arises because high expectation is derived from good images and failure to properly handle this causes a decrease in the visitor’s future mental picture of the destination, causing an effect of lessened brand experience and individual loyalty.

The impact of path coefficient evaluation is insignificant and affirms the attainment of uniformity in distributed answers by sampled domestic tourists to evaluate infrastructure and support services offered by a destination. Furthermore, indicator measurements comprising internet availability, road access, transportation, and public information are deemed satisfactory by visitors. However, the findings showed domestic tourists are not primarily concerned about this facility and support type since majority arrive from within the province and usually employ private vehicles for accessibility.

Earlier literature studies reveal an optimal tourism experience is attained via infrastructure and other support services, with inadequacies capable of lessening a traveler’s encounter. According to Kusumaningrum (2021) there is significant relationship between quality and loyalty dimension of destination brand which indicated the importance of building quality and loyalty in the travel world. This research finding offer empirical evidence to show present existing literature review is inapplicable to domestic visitors due to preparation of supporting facilities prior to visiting. An instance is where travel itineraries and lodging access are clearly booked or reserved by potential visitors, with no needed support from hence similar services. Also, transportation mediums to aid tour journeys are ignored due to use of private vehicles.
In addition, former literature works claimed interaction is significant to create travel experiences (Mascarenhas et al., 2006; Moscardo, 2008; Poulsson & Kale, 2004). However, this study found a statistically positive effect but insignificant. Also, the focused group discussion results affirm the significance of communication to build tourism experiences but the performed field study comprising 350 domestic tourist respondents found interaction level of a destination does not determine visitors’ experience. Theoretically, group interactions is capable of supporting better travel encounters but team goals tend to differ from tourist objectives per individual, and therefore the hypothesis is not always true. The point of interest in a visit does not also include contact with the local community and officers, and in the case of tourism motive, brand experience is not significantly impacted by destination interaction.

The findings offer literature corroboration for earlier investigations where complex interactions were found to not usually offer experience co-creation. Furthermore, there is close connection between destinations and visit motive, and tourist experience is not impacted because sometimes the objective does not necessitate considerable interaction. This study shows for domestic visitors, absence of substantial impact between interaction and brand experience.

The conducted literature investigations indicate attraction is an essential product of a tourist destination, but this definition has attracted criticism due to lack of positivity of attraction. According to Xu (2010), the attraction point is fundamental and complements services, hospitality, freedom of choice, and involvement. This research findings offer empirical evidence to show a positive effect of destination attraction on brand experience. This means good destination attraction boosts enjoyable tourist experience and draws visitors. Therefore, tourists are motivated to exploit the spot desirability for seeking tourist experiences as objectives. Also, domestic tourists utilize attraction points to build experiences.

The findings affirm the crucial role of developing destination attraction to create tourism experiences, and earlier investigations indicate this as an interest point for visitors. According to domestic tourists, activities enabling expression provided by business people created a pleasant experience. Furthermore, literature works on consumer behavior declares "self-concept" as significant, being the foundation for self-expression on tourist visits. Self-expression constitutes freedom to share appreciation and opinion concerning the experience by visitors and is an appeal due to ability to convey personal identity. The self-expression incongruence theory is recognized by certain studies involving self-confirmation by visitors.
These findings offer empirical evidence to prove tourist self-expressions positively and significantly influence destination brand experiences development. Furthermore, the ability or power to explore visitors’ expression leads to travel experience improvement. Therefore, accommodation of objectives or interests of visits is essential and boosts attaining quality encounters. The descriptive statistical analysis findings indicate non-optimal tourist self-expression incidences with room for improvement. However, this concept is comparatively harder to utilize in a tourist area requiring personalized visits. Nonetheless, the attained suitability from these tourist self-expressions is beneficial to develop a travel experience and is, therefore, an antecedent to tourism encounters.

Conclusion

Destination image impacts brand experience significantly, while infrastructure and support systems possess an insignificant influence. Furthermore, destination infrastructure and support systems possess a negative path coefficient value. The location attraction affects brand experience insignificantly, with a positive path coefficient value is positive. Also, destination interaction and tourist's self-expression possess substantial influence on brand experience. There is no interaction among domestic tourists since majority visit with families, and lack of infrastructure and support system in the Lake Toba Tourism Area is an option for domestic tourists. Challenges that that may occur include creating a smooth and enjoyable vacation trip for tourists. This requires cooperation from various stakeholders and actors such as tour and travel agencies, guides, and other SMEs interested in Lake Toba Tourism Area. All stakeholders need to consistently show good collaboration which will provide awareness and be a marketing strategy. The government should ensure the comfort and safety of transactions while travelling by eliminating are no illegal fees and implementing transparent pricing.

Limitation and Study Forward

This study focused only on domestic tourists, which limited a broader insight needed from foreign tourists. The local tourism areas need to focus on brand experience as a marketing strategy by ensuring every offer makes a deep impression emotionally and creates curiosity. This will create a positive experience and the intention to visit or recommend the area's services.

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