



Gender as a moderation of destination brand experiences

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ABSTRACT

Following the pandemic, the tourism industry reopened and made strategic efforts to bring domestic and foreign tourists to Indonesia's top destinations. One of the priority national priority strategic areas is the Lake Toba tourist area. In addition to applying experiential marketing to the series during a visit to the destination, the initial strategy in this research is to create brand loyalty to the destination in the Lake Toba tourist area. The gender is used as an intervening variable in determining the destination brand experience, with the ultimate goal of forming destination brand loyalty. By understanding the role of the destination image in the formation of the destination brand experience; infrastructure and supporting services or attractions at destinations that are expected to shape destination brand loyalty in the Lake Toba tourist area. This study used purposive and quota sampling on domestic tourists, and the participants included 200 people. The data was processed using SmartPLS, and the findings indicated that gender can moderate destination attractions on destination brand experiences. Meanwhile, gender cannot moderate the impact of the destination image variable, as well as the infrastructure and support service variables, on the destination brand experience. The findings of this study can be used to identify interesting attractions in destinations that are expected to increase tourist visits to the Lake Toba Tourism Area.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2022, the tourism industry will enter a new season as the end of the pandemic season is announced. Opening tourist destinations in Indonesia, several tourist destinations even offer promotional programs to attract an increasing number of tourists. The tourism industry is beginning to improve, with increased awareness of tourist potential, improved infrastructure, supporting facilities and services, and attractions that tourists can follow at destinations (Tarigan, 2021). "Development Priority Areas in 2017" include food, energy, marine, tourism, industrial zones, and tourism special economic zones (KEK). The Lake Toba Tourism Area in North Sumatra, Indonesia, is one of the National Tourism

Strategic Areas (KSPN). Lake Toba is the world's second largest lake, after Lake Victoria in Africa. Lake Tobajärvi is one of the world's ten deepest lakes, with a maximum depth of 500 meters. The 45 geosites are divided into four geoareas: Porsea Caldera, Haranggaol Caldera, Sibandang Caldera, and Samosir Caldera (Badan Pelaksana Otorita Danau Toba (BPODT), 2017). Given the importance of tourism to the Indonesian economy, the government is investing in infrastructure such as international airports, inter-city toll roads, and services such as the availability of places of worship, restaurants, and themed attractions. The park provides tourists with destination literacy. This development may have an impact on the area surrounding the Lake Toba tourist area. The Lake Toba Authority Executing Agency (BPODT) has developed a portfolio of strategies for the development of the Lake Toba Tourism Area.

The number of foreign and domestic tourist visits in 2016-2020 in North Sumatra is presented in Table A, Appendix of Statistics report for 2021. From 2016 to 2019, the number of foreign tourists visiting North Sumatra decreased, despite the government's efforts to attract one million foreign tourists in 2019. Then, in the second quarter of 2019, Indonesia was declared closed. Many business sectors, including tourism, were forced to close or cease operations, and there are no tourist visits to the Toba tourist area. Table B, Appendix, presents tourist visit information for each regency surrounding the Lake Toba Tourism Area. Domestic tourist visits to the Lake Toba tourist area increased per region in 2019, with the exception of Humbang Hasundutan Regency, which was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic PPKM. In other communities, it will have an effect on the number of local tourist visits in 2020. Tourism development in North Sumatra undoubtedly necessitates the attention of all parties involved. Tourism demonstrates what activities are available to see, shop, and eat. Tarigan et al (2020) investigated the factors that influence destination brand experience in the Lake Toba tourist area. In this study, the factors influencing the destination brand experience are destination image, attractiveness, tourist self-portraits, infrastructure support services, and destination interactions.

Given North Sumatra's enormous tourism potential, facilities and infrastructure will be built in stages to increase foreign and domestic tourism and increase the loyalty of tourists visiting the Lake Toba tourist area. Loyalty in the tourism industry differs from loyalty in other industries because it is determined by repurchasing. Tourists typically visit a destination only once, with the intention of testing the attractiveness of other destinations. As a result, loyalty in this context is more about recommending or telling about vacations spent at the destination. Loyalty is created by providing testimonials or stories in person or online. Stories are subjective, involving all five senses before, during, and after a vacation at the destination, and are experienced by every tourist face-to-face or online. This study looks at Destination Brand Experience as a collection of pre-holiday tourist destination images, infrastructure and maintenance services that tourists receive at destinations and attractions that can be presented at destinations during holidays. Toba is a popular tourist destination. Based on research gaps, this study examines the impact of destination image, supporting infrastructure, and attractions on the destination brand experience in order to increase offline and online tourism recommendations.

Hypothesis Development: Effect of Destination Image on Destination Brand Experience, The destination image becomes a representation of the destination's knowledge, feelings, and points of view. The most important criterion for visiting or not visiting a tourist destination is said to be its image (Dimitrios, 2000; Konecnik Ruzzier & Gartner, 2013). The role of destination image in behavior is twofold: 1) it influences the decision-making process in selecting destinations. 2) Post-decision-making behavior, such as tourist participation or interaction at the destination, satisfaction, intention to return, and recommendations. According to research by (Kani et al., 2017) , destination image has a positive and significant effect on the tourist experience at the destination

location. Empirical evidence (Chen & Tsai, 2007) shows that destination image influences destination brand experiences positively. Hypothesis 1st Destination image has a positive and significant effect on the Destination Brand Experience

The Impact of Infrastructure and Support Services on the Destination Brand Experience, Tourism products are complex consumptive experiences that result from a process in which tourists use a variety of services while visiting a location. Gopalan and Narayan (2010) identified important extrinsic factors (Language, Cleanliness, and Road Conditions) and intrinsic factors (tour operator service, location viewing, travel options) as important dimensions of service in destinations, along with several other factors (comfort stay, friendliness of local people, safety, and road congestion). Transportation services and related supporting service infrastructure, such as retail shopping facilities, food stores, garages/car care, gas stations, pharmacies, bookstores, laundries, and salons, are examples of other service infrastructure.

According to the findings of Andereck et al. (2006), access to recreational areas can influence the tourist experience at a destination. Other factors include the cleanliness of public restrooms, road conditions, and clear road signs leading to tourist attractions. According to Morgan (2010), the availability of local food and drink helps to strengthen uniqueness and memories. Infrastructure and support services at destinations are one of the forerunners of creating brand experiences through value collaboration (Pavlovich, 2003), with the Waitomo Caves (New Zealand) case study demonstrating how complementary companies add value to older "pull factors" as interdependencies between companies. According to Tarigan (2022) research, destination infrastructure and supporting services have a positive and not significant impact on the destination brand experience. The disparity in the study's results indicates a research gap. Second hypothesis The Destination's Infrastructure and Support Services have a positive and significant impact on the Destination Brand Experience.

The influence of attractions in the destination on the Destination Brand Experience, An attraction, according to (Crouch & Ritchie, 2011) offer an ideographic approach to classification, categorizing all tourist attractions into seven major categories: physiographic and climatic, cultural and historical, mix of activities, special events, entertainment, superstructure, and market relations. The organizational approach focuses on the capacity for attractiveness, the attractiveness of the surrounding environment, and the duration of the attraction. The cognitive approach organizes tourist attractions based on tourists' perceptions and experiences with these attractions. The latter approach is motivated by the tourism industry's consistent emphasis on the importance of innovative and diverse products that provide memorable experiences for a wide range of customers (Xu, 2010). The majority of tourists describe their experiences in terms of the quality of the attractions and activities they have participated in (Andereck et al., 2006). Attractions lay the groundwork for enjoyable and memorable destination experiences (Crouch & Ritchie, 2011). Through the use of a variety of resources, activities, and events that can elicit feelings of delight or surprise in tourists (Del Bosque & San Martín, 2008) Third hypothesis Destination attractions have a positive and significant impact on the Destination Brand Experience.

Effect of Destination Brand Experience on Destination Brand Loyalty, According to (Barsky & Nash, 2002) well-managed company experiences contribute significantly to brand loyalty. Many argue that customer satisfaction and loyalty are influenced by the customer experience (Berry & Carbone, 2007). According to Barsky and Nash (2002) customer experience may influence loyalty. Subsequent research confirms that customer experience has a direct influence on brand loyalty (Rageh Ismail et al., 2011) and that customer brand loyalty translates into customer brand loyalty (Ismail et al., 2018). According to Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001), the dimensions of customer brand loyalty (Customer's Brand Loyalty) are formed by three indicators: always remember, recommend, and repurchase. on the Experience of a Destination Brand. Experiences are

the result of stimulation and lead to pleasurable outcomes, with the hope that the consumer will want to repeat the experience. This means that brand experience must influence not only satisfaction ratings in the past, but also consumer loyalty in the future. As a result, consumers are more likely to buy and recommend the brand again, while the tendency to buy alternative brands is decreasing (Mittal & Kamakura, 2001; Oliver, 1997) Forth hypothesis Destination Brand Experience influences Destination Brand Loyalty in a positive and significant way.

Gender influence in shaping the Destination Brand Experience, Gender differences can be seen from several perspectives including: men and women in basic assessment processes, differences in gender strategies in information processing, and decision making (Darley & Smith, 1995; Dubé & Morgan, 1998; Mitchell & Walsh, 2004) Women's buying behavior is more subjective and comprehensive in processing information, while men are more selective and analytic in processing information (Darley & Smith, 1995). Melnyk et al., (2009) explained that marketing experts have made efforts to better understand the role of gender in loyalty behavior and found a significant effect of gender on loyalty. Yusnaldi and Rabiqy (2016) found that gender moderates the influence of brand personality which includes the dimensions of Sincerity, Competence, Excitement, Sophistication and Ruggedness on customer loyalty. Based on previous research, gender is used as a moderating variable in shaping the destination brand experience in this study. As a result, the following hypothesis was developed; Gender's impact on the relationship between Destination Image and Destination Brand Experience as Fifth hypothesis; The anticipated dual impact of Infrastructure and Support Services on Destination Brand Experience as sixth hypothesis; and The effect of gender on the relationship of destination attractions to the Destination Brand Experience as seventh hypothesis

2. RESEARCH METHODS

Purposive sampling was used as the research method, with the following sample criteria; A 17-year-old respondent had visited a tourist destination in the Lake Toba area. This study's population consisted of domestic tourists, and the sample size was five times the number of indicators used (Ferdinand, 2014) . This study employed 40 indicators drawn from the five variables investigated. As a result, there were 200 samples of domestic tourists in this study. Quota sampling was used to distribute the target sample of 200 respondents in the seven districts surrounding the Lake Toba Tourism Area. This research employs a path diagram analysis method with SmartPLS software. A path diagram must take into account the constructs of exogenous or endogenous variables, as well as indicator variables from each of these latent variables.

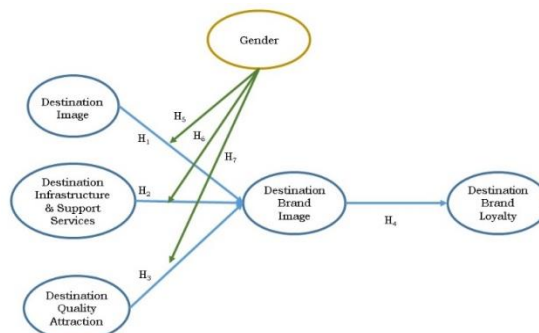


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework
Source: (Brakus et al., 2009; Tarigan, 2021)

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Domestic tourists visiting Lake Toba's tourist area are dominated by undergraduate education levels, with middle-high income levels, namely income ranging from Rp. 1,200,000 to Rp. 6.000.000,- with one to three days visit with family and friends. This information can help stakeholders implement business policies that are in line with the capabilities of domestic tourists. Tourists already have an image of the destination they want to visit before they go. Infrastructure and support services at domestic tourist destinations are not the most important factors in travel decisions; visiting time for tourists to Lake Toba tourist destinations is only one to three days, so opportunities for tourists to shop, eat, or be seen at destinations are still limited. As a result, stakeholders as business actors can present an appealing destination before, during, and after tourists visit, causing them to want to repeat a pleasant experience.

Validity and Reliability Testing on the Outer Model (Measurement Model)

Convergent validity is a component of the measurement model, which is known as the outer model in SEM-PLS and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in covariance-based SEM (Sholihin & Ratmono, 2021). The outer model (measurement model) must meet two criteria to meet the convergent validity requirements for reflective constructs: (1) the loading must be greater than 0.7, and (2) the p-value must be significant (0.05) (Hair et al., 2011). However, loading requirements above 0.7 are frequently not met in some cases, particularly for newly developed questionnaires. As a result, a loading of 0.40-0.70 must still be considered. Loadings less than 0.40 should be removed from the model. However, for indicators with loadings ranging from 0.40 to 0.70, we should investigate the impact of removing these indicators on average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability. Indicators with loadings between 0.40 and 0.70 can be removed if they increase average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability above their threshold (Sholihin & Ratmono, 2021). The limit value of the AVE is 0.50, and the composite reliability is 0.7. Another factor to consider when removing indicators is their impact on construct content validity. Indicators with low loadings are sometimes kept because they help to validate the construct content. Figure 2: Validity testing data processing results based on the Loading Factor.

Based on testing the validity of the loading factor Figure 2, it is known that all loading values are greater than 0.7, indicating that they have met the loading value validity requirements. Furthermore, the average variance extracted (AVE) value was used for validity testing. The recommended AVE is greater than 0.5 (Sholihin & Ratmono, 2021). It is known that all AVE values are greater than 0.5, indicating that they have met the AVE-based validity requirements. CR and CA values greater than 0.7 are recommended (Mahfud and Ratmono, 2013).

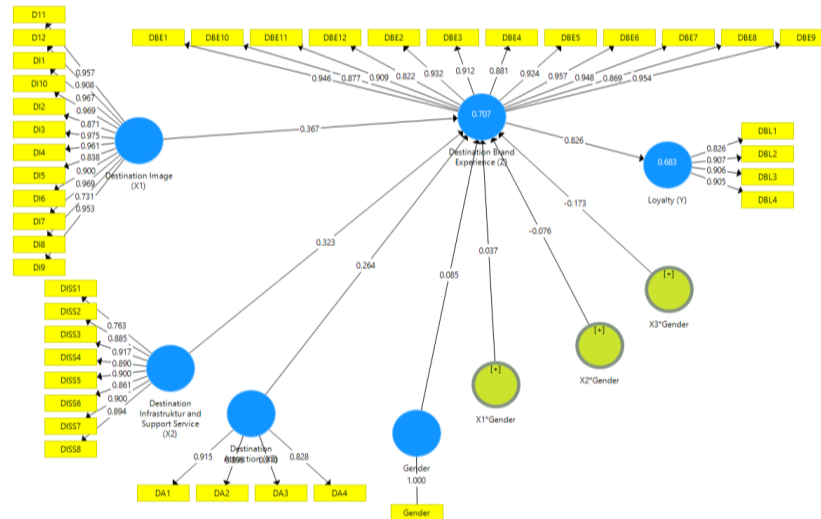


Figure 2 Validity Testing based on Factor Loading

It is known that all CR and CA values are greater than 0.7, indicating that they have met the CR and CA reliability requirements. The data processing results of AVE, CR, and CA are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Validity Test based on Average Variance Extracted (AVE), CR, CA

	Cronbach's Alpha (CA)	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Destination Attraction (X3)	0.910	0.937	0.788
Destination Brand Experience (Z)	0.981	0.983	0.831
Destination Image (X1)	0.983	0.985	0.845
Destination Infrastruktur and Support Service (X2)	0.957	0.964	0.770
Gender	1.000	1.000	1.000
Loyalty (Y)	0.909	0.936	0.786

Furthermore, the Fornell-Larcker approach was used to test discriminant validity. The results of discriminant validity testing are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity Testing

	Destination Attraction (X3)	Destination Brand Experience (Z)	Destination Image (X1)	Destination Infrastruktur and Support Service (X2)	Gender	Loyalty (Y)
Destination Attraction (X3)	0.888					
Destination Brand Experience (Z)	0.625	0.912				
Destination Image (X1)	0.481	0.689	0.919			
Destination Infrastruktur and Support Service (X2)	0.513	0.683	0.537	0.877		
Gender	-0.022	0.112	0.079	0.005	1.000	
Loyalty (Y)	0.598	0.826	0.642	0.651	0.071	0.887

The AVE square root value of a latent variable is compared to the correlation value between that latent variable and other latent variables when testing discriminant validity. Each latent variable's AVE square root value is greater than the correlation value between the latent variable and other latent variables. As a result, it is concluded that it satisfies the requirements of discriminant validity. Table 3 also includes the results of the significance test.

Table 3. Significance of Influence Test

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Destination Brand Experience (Z) → Loyalty (Y)	0.826	0.829	0.054	15.447	0.000
Destination Infrastruktur and Support Service (X2) → Destination Brand Experience (Z)	0.323	0.329	0.090	3.599	0.000
Destination Image (X1) → Destination Brand Experience (Z)	0.367	0.353	0.117	3.147	0.002
Destination Attraction (X3) → Destination Brand Experience (Z)	0.264	0.271	0.091	2.888	0.004
X3*Gender → Destination Brand Experience (Z)	0.173	0.159	0.082	2.096	0.037
X2*Gender → Destination Brand Experience (Z)	-0.076	-0.072	0.085	0.892	0.373
X1*Gender → Destination Brand Experience (Z)	0.037	0.027	0.138	0.265	0.791

The following are the outcomes based on the results in Table 5: (a) Destination Image has a positive effect on Destination Brand Experience, with a path coefficient value (Original Sample column) of 0.367 and a P-Value of 0.002 (Hypothesis Accepted). (b) Destination Infrastructure and Support Service has a positive effect on Destination Brand Experience, with a path coefficient value (Original Sample column) = 0.323 and a P-Value of 0.000 (Hypothesis Accepted). (c) Destination Attraction has a positive effect on Destination Brand Experience, with a path coefficient value (Original Sample column) of 0.264 and a P-Value of 0.004 (Hypothesis Accepted). (d) Destination Brand Experience has a positive effect on loyalty, with a path coefficient value (Original Sample column) of 0.826 and a P-Value of 0.000 (Hypothesis Accepted). (e) With a P-Value of 0.037 < 0.05 (Moderation Hypothesis Accepted), gender significantly moderates the effect of X3 on Destination Brand Experience. (f) With P-Values = 0.373 > 0.05 (Moderation Hypothesis Rejected), gender does not significantly moderate the effect of X2 on Destination Brand Experience. (g) Gender does not moderate the effect of X1 on Destination Brand Experience significantly, with P-Values = 0.791 > 0.05 (Moderation Hypothesis Rejected).

The Destination Brand Experience has an R-Square of 0.707. This means that Destination Image, Infrastructure and Support Service, and Attraction can all have a 70.7% influence on the Destination Brand Experience. Loyalty has an R-Square value of 0.683. This means that the Destination Brand Experience has a 68.3% influence on Loyalty.

In this study, the destination image is an image of the Lake Toba tourist area that is embedded in the memories of tourists when they talk about the tourist area. This image can be formed by previous experiences, the marketing mix perceived by visitors, or social influences shaping perceptions of the Lake Toba tourist area. The destination brand experience that a person has will be influenced by their destination image. Visitors' mental images of tourist areas will serve as a cognitive foundation for assessing how they feel when visiting or consuming tourist destinations. Tourist visitors will evaluate their image of their tourism experience in this situation. When tourists consume tourism, the anticipation of a good tourist destination creates a pleasant atmosphere. However, it should be noted that a good image necessitates good expectations, and if these are not properly managed, they can have an impact on the minds of future visitors.

According to literature studies, the image of a tourist destination is an important component that visitors will evaluate before visiting (Keller, 2011). Before making a tourist visit, the image of a tourist destination becomes a promise that provides an overview and expectations of potential visitors. At this point, the image of a tourist destination has provided color and hope about what visitors will experience when they visit later. In this case, the findings of this study confirm the literature that the image of this tourist destination influences visitors' tourist experiences. Expectations created by a tourist

destination's image can even provide experiences before actual consumption or visits are made by these visitors.

According to a previous literature study conducted by Wulandari, 2015, infrastructure and other service support will help achieve an optimal travel experience. Due to limitations in these services and infrastructure, visitors' travel experiences may suffer. According to the findings of (Andereck et al., 2006), access to recreational areas can influence the tourist experience at a destination. Other factors include the cleanliness of public restrooms, road conditions, and clear road signs leading to tourist attractions.

According to (T. Morgan et al., 2016), the availability of local food and drink contributes to the uniqueness and memory of experiences. This is one of the support services that needs to be prioritized in order to provide comfort and ensure safety when eating and drinking at destinations. Guarantees of convenience and security in terms of hygiene and halal food and beverages. In other destinations, such as Bali, Yogyakarta, and others, halal-related food and drink can be given a policy by ensuring the localization of non-halal food and drink. As a result of this research, infrastructure and support services in the Lake Toba Tourism Area empirically prove that infrastructure and support services have a positive and significant effect on the Destination Brand Experience in the Lake Toba Tourism Area.

According to the findings of this study, attractions in destinations have a positive and significant impact on the destination brand experience. The findings of this study are consistent with Xu's (2010) research, which shows that the attraction point becomes a core when it is accompanied by services, hospitality, freedom of choice, and involvement, which makes it a tourist attraction. According to this study, the higher the quality of attractions found at the destination (path coefficient = 1.000), the better the destination brand experience in the Lake Toba tourist area. Attraction factor (Crouch & Ritchie, 2011) present an ideographic classification of all tourist attractions, which divides them into seven major categories: Physiography and climate, Culture and history, Activity mix, Special events, Entertainment, Superstructure and infrastructure and market relation. The organizational approach focuses on attraction capacity, attraction proximity to the environment, and attraction duration. According to the results of the description analysis, tourists have both curiosity and exciting experiences during their visit. As a result, the attractions carried out in the Lake Toba tourist area require special attention in order to broaden market reach, as designed in the Lake Toba tourism strategy portfolio, which targets consumers, including personal, business, and foreign tourists.

According to literature studies, attraction is one of the core products of a tourist destination, though this definition has drawn criticism because a tourist destination's attraction is not always positive. According to Xu (2010), the attraction point becomes a core when it is accompanied by services, hospitality, freedom of choice, and involvement, which makes it a tourist attraction. The findings of this study provide empirical evidence that destination attractions have a positive impact on destination brand experiences. In other words, attractions in desirable locations will contribute to a positive tourist experience. Back to the motivation for tourist visits, one of the attractions that drives tourists to these tourist attractions is the attraction point. Visitors with this motivation take advantage of attractions at tourist destinations in search of tourist experiences. Thus, the tourist experience is obtained through the use of tourist objects, which are attraction points. Domestic tourists who visit Lake Toba's tourist area participate in the use of attraction points, which become a tourist experience for these visitors. The findings of this study confirm the importance of attractions in destinations in the creation of tourist experiences. Previous research demonstrates the significance of developing attraction points in creating a tourist experience that becomes a point of interest for visitors. This experience will be put into action in order to increase satisfaction and loyalty to these tourist destinations.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the destination brand experience has a positive and significant influence on destination brand loyalty, implying that changes in the value of the destination brand experience have a unidirectional effect on changes in destination brand loyalty. This study's findings support previous research by (Brakus et al., 2009), which found that destination brand experience has a positive and significant effect on destination brand loyalty. According to the findings of this study, achieving a good consumption experience can result in behavior change that leads to consumer loyalty. It appears that tourists have a positive brand experience in terms of emotions. Tourists can experience the emotional dimension with indicators of interest, a sense of comparison that gives an important impression, brands that create an emotional impression, and curiosity in the Lake Toba tourist area. This is related to the fact that tourist visits to specific destinations can evoke specific memories, as well as a sense of ownership of *bona pasogit* (hometown).

It takes human creativity (man-made) to manage this as an advantage of certain destinations. With the government's decision to develop the Lake Toba tourist area, domestic tourists are naturally interested in the tourism products available at destinations. This curiosity drives tourists to Lake Toba's tourist area, and the brand's experience at the destination confirms these expectations. The five senses of sight, touch, hearing, smell, and taste combine to form a complex experience in which these five senses are used together in an event or series of events at a destination known as consuming a tourism product and becoming an experience. This is a confirmation for the senses in the reality that tourists encounter in the tourist area of Lake Toba, which is beyond expectations. Tourists will be satisfied if the reality encountered exceeds expectations; descriptive statistics explain that the experience gained from beautiful scenery for the five senses of sight is stronger than the other five senses.

Visitors are generally pleased with the sights and smells they experience during their tourist visits. Unfortunately, the structural evaluation indicates that these two factors are ineffective in evaluating the travel experience. On the one hand, it is true that the sights and fresh smells experienced in Lake Toba's tourist area are classified as very appealing as a point of interest for a tourist destination. According to (Brakus et al., 2009), experience produces pleasure, which influences future decisions, and tourists tend to repeat and recommend to others. Furthermore, (Tarigan et al., 2020) states that tourists rarely return, but the intention (intense) to visit can already be considered a level of loyalty. The findings of this study back up previous research by (Wulandari, 2015), which found that visitors' experiences shape their attitudes and behavior toward a tourist destination. A pleasant and unforgettable experience from a tourist visit is one of the motivators for visitors to plan a future return visit.

The effect of gender as a moderating variable that shapes the destination brand experience from each of the independent variables is discussed in this study. Gender has a moderating effect on the relationship between attractions in the destination and the experience of the destination brand. Yusnaldi and Rabiqy (2016) discovered that gender moderates the influence of brand personality on customer loyalty, which includes the dimensions of Sincerity, Competence, Excitement, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. This study demonstrates empirically that gender moderates the influence of attractions in destinations with destination brand experiences. The attractions displayed at each destination in the Lake Toba tourist area can be designated as such. At certain events, attractions such as dance, music, fashion, water sports, and games can be complementary for both men and women, enhancing the destination brand experience for tourists visiting the destination. Providing an experience is not just for vacations; providing a meaningful experience will produce tourists who have true loyalty by providing positive recommendations and still intend to return to Lake Toba as a tourist destination.

4. CONCLUSION

The Lake Toba tourist area's destination image can still be developed in accordance with the portfolio of Lake Toba tourism strategies planned at the start of its development, such as sports tourism, ecotourism, shopping and culinary tourism, and others. Collaboration with various parties by raising local community awareness to protect and maintain existing infrastructure and facilities, on the other hand, concern for natural and cultural heritage is fostered from an early age, resulting in a constructive sense of ownership for Lake Toba's preservation. Gender inclusion in this study may provide an alternative strategy for developing the Lake Toba tourism area. Gender has no influence on the destination brand experience when developing the destination image and infrastructure strategy, according to the findings of this study. Gender is a moderation in the formation of the destination brand experience from the attractions at the destination, so the selection of attractions displayed can provide meaningful memories for tourists. This study was conducted with a sample of domestic tourists in accordance with the Lake Toba tourist area's strategic development plan to attract foreign tourists, so that future research can include foreign tourists. Family packages dominate the services available in the Lake Toba tourist area. In the future, business actors will be able to create attractions/events that focus on gender or masculinity-feminism elements. Consideration of the gender element in the selection of attractions at destinations will increase engagement between tourists and destinations in the Lake Toba tourist area, according to the findings of this study, which will shape the destination brand experience, resulting in destination brand loyalty.

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APPENDIX

Table A. Tourist Visits to North Sumatra 2016 - 2020

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
International Tourists (Person)	233.643	270.792	236.431	258.822	44.000
Domestic Tourists (Million People)	10,8	14,04	10,34	63,57	13,04

Source: (Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), 2021)

Table B. Number of Tourist Visits to the Lake Toba Tourism Area

Regency	Number of Domestic Tourists (people)			
	2017	2018	2019	2020
Samosir	278.059	378.649	418.271	405.203
North Tapanuli	145.765	150.931	483.100	141.350
Simalungun	305.832	212.291	539.647	369.559
Toba	741.566	644.261	801.006	217.462
Humbang Hasundutas	100.015	122.580	16.663	9.830
Dairi	115.193	139.771	118.509	51.347
Karo	241.797	316.473	429.521	132.443

Source: (Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), 2021)