



Destination Brand Experience and its relationship with Tourists Satisfaction and Intention to Recommend: A Conceptual Model

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Abstract

The objective of the article is to suggest the conceptual model which talks about the relationship between the brand experience (sensory, affective, behavioural, and intellectual dimensions) on tourist's satisfaction through the available literature. The research is qualitative in nature and the data has been collected by using the online resources like Ugc inflibnet, Ebsco host and Google Scholar. The literature clearly states that brand experience is very important than other brand constructs, in building up eloquent and long-lasting relationship with consumers. Literature available on tourist's satisfaction is also reviewed and reveals that satisfaction of tourist is an important factor for any place to emerge as leading destination around the world.

Keywords: destination, brand experience, tourist's satisfaction, Conceptual Framework

Introduction and Background

Tourism destinations play pivotal roles in the current tourism academic field because of the great competition that exists in global tourism markets. The idea of implementing destination branding as a basic strategy to differentiate one destination from potential competing destinations, has appealed increasingly to interested researchers globally. The brand tourism includes the imaginativeness and feelings that a country invokes in its visitors. It has a significant effect on the choice of people to travel to a particular destination. It, therefore, needs to reach out and strike an emotional chord with travellers.

A destination is defined as the communities that are surrounded by local government boundaries. A destination has a multidimensional nature that suggests that the smaller the region is the greater would be the state of homogeneity. Logically, since most tourism activity takes place at destinations, they can be described as "a place at which visitors temporarily base themselves to take part in tourism related activities or non-activities". One of the significant definitions of tourism destinations is by Buhalis (2000: 97), and he defined the tourism destinations as geographical areas and these can be interpreted as amalgams of tourism products and services. They offer an "integrated experience to consumers". According to Pike (2004), destinations are places that attract visitors for a temporary stay and range from continents to countries, to states and provinces, to the cities to villages to purpose built resort areas.



Destination branding

Destination Branding is a complicated subject not only because it is interlinked between service, corporate and product branding, but also because of the abundance of stakeholders, a remote customer base and different product offerings (Balakrishnan, Nekhili & Lewis, 2008). Destination branding is largely confined to the use of company logos and taglines (Pike, 2005). Destination branding is complicated as it comprises the elements of products, services and corporate branding involved; it also acts as an umbrella brand that extends to a profusion of different products that may or may not be related and has a diversified customer base (Balakrishnan, 2008; Fan, 2006).

Destination branding is used as a new marketing strategy that brands only the individualised characteristics of a place, thus invigorating the location's growth (Kavaratzis 2004; Zenker and Martin 2011). The individual characteristics can be in the form of the different natural places, including retail centers, heritage, landscape, cultural attractions, and entertainment, or special events that are held in order to lure more tourists and locals as well (Parkerson and Saunders 2005). The destination is always driven by the want to attract more tourists and uplift the economic status of a region. The stakeholders in the tourism industry and the government at different levels have all taken up the initiative in branding destination/places (Kerr and Johnson 2005). The destination is also a compound product, not least because it is an amalgam of different tourist products and is "also a concept based on perceptions, that can be interpreted personally by consumers, and is dependent on their travel itinerary, cultural background they poses, intention of visit, ..." (Buhalis, 2000: 97).

The main motive of destination/place brand marketers is to expand positive brand experiences. These brand experiences are conceptualized as "personal, internal consumer responses (feelings, sensations, and cognitions) and responses resulting in behavior that is elicited by brand-related stimuli that are part of a packaging, design of brand and identity, communication, and environments" (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello 2009: 53). Drawing from Schmitt's (1999) different experiences that are five in number (i.e., think, feel, sense, relate, and act), the four dimensions of brand experiences were developed by Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello: affective, behavioral, sensory, and intellectual experiences. These dimensions of experiences create emotional impressions that last on the consumer (Klaus and Maklan, 2007) and in the end they influence the success of branding efforts (Iglesias, Singh and Batista-Foguet, 2011).

Background to the Brand experience concept

Brand experiences take place in various contexts such as product brands, service brands, corporate brands, and place brands (Skinner 2008). ***A destination brand experience occurs when a person experiences a branded place and then gains pleasurable experiences*** (Hanna and Rowley, 2011). In fact, Mkhize (2010) proved that realizing these pleasurable experiences is the ultimate goal of locals and tourists when visiting a city. When tourists experience a destination brand, they often attach an emotional meaning to that place, thus feeling part of the place (Lindstedt, 2011). The positive brand experiences that occur lead to repeated interactions with the same place and positive word of mouth about the place (Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou, 2011), these are also the desired results that destination marketers want to attain.

Brand experience in context to tourism destination

Destination /place brand experiences may be conveyed through sensory delights based on smells, sights, tastes, and sounds (Balakrishnan, 2008). Destination brand experiences also include intellectual experiences that challenge an individual to learn or to think freely about a



branded place. These brand experiences can result from behavioral experiences that involve a visitor's performing actions such as walking in a park, getting a tattoo, and dancing (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009; Schmitt 1999). Destination or Place brand experiences may also become affective by sharing time with loved ones and participating in activities that have personal meanings (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2009; Kim, Ritchie and McCormick, 2010). In marketing, place brand experience has been related to "scapes," referred to as the physical environment that a consumer experiences. These "scapes" can be created to encourage visitors to gain unique experiences (Hall, 2008; Julier, 2005). For instance, the downtown of Leavenworth, Washington, offers a Bavarian theme in its architecture and business mix, creating staged experiences to visitors who may feel like they are in the Austrian Alps (Runyan and Huddleston, 2006). These types of experiences that have been staged or created have also been called "experience-scapes," defined as experiencing "stylized landscapes that are strategically planned and designed with market imperatives as the key design goal" (Hall, 2008: 237). Experience-scapes can be a major part of the overall brand experience in that they are created to help potential visitors identify the place brand.

Recently, a new concept has emerged, namely, brand experience, this provides a more compact view based on sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioral dimensions of the brand (Bracus et al., 2009). This concept is yet to be applied to research in tourism. Destinations/places are branded on the basis of different geographical sizes or scales at the country, state, regional, district, city, or downtown level (Brown, 1994; Hankinson, 2001; Jones, Jones and Woods, 2004, Mc Kercher, Law and Lam, 2006; Runyan and Huddleston, 2006; Hall, 2008). Destination brands, like product and service brands, generate sets of expectations or images of a place prior to consumption. Even though the branding literature emerged during the 1940s, the literature relating to branding of tourism destination has only gained momentum since the late 1990s. There is still dearth of theory in particular that addresses the measurement of the effectiveness of destination branding over time. One should also be aware of the state wide and individual destinations' brands, so that one comes to know how the marketing contractors and the destination visitors bureaus are marketing and promoting the destinations, and researchers can contribute in branding efforts by conducting research in different destinations keeping in view the tourists as well as locals perception.

Research Methodology

To review and analyse the available literature, content analysis was undertaken, that involved destination brand experience and its impact on tourist satisfaction. The discriminating characteristics of content analysis should be objective, systematic, and quantitative (Kassarjian, 1977; Krueger & Casey, 2009). In the first instance, researchers need to evolve precise rules and categories of analysis so that analysts can apply to the same body of content and generate the same results (Berelson, 1952). These rules and categories minimize the analyst's subjective predispositions and selective perception (Krueger & Casey, 2009). In addition to this, the attribute of objectivity in content analysis separates it from literary criticism because the latter is lacking in repeatability (Kassarjian, 1977). Second, consistently applying objective rules on each component of content analysis and securing the relevance of data to interesting questions demonstrates the requirement of systematization (Holsti, 1969).

The strategies and rules for analysis should be incontestably documented, clearly understood, and articulated by each member of a research team (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Third, the quantification requirement implies that "the data be amenable to statistical methods not only for brief and restrained summary of findings but also for interpretation and inference" (Kassarjian, 1977: 10). The process of content analysis includes categorizing articles into six main components: (a) unitizing, (b) sampling, (c) recording/coding, (d) reducing, (e) inferring, and (f) narrating (Krippendorff 2004), the first four components constitute the process of "data making," and create computable data from raw texts (Krippendorff, 2004). The last two use



the information generated from the previous four components and help researchers to search for and generate the potential answers to research questions.

Unitizing

It means dividing the text into units. It is defined as “the systematic distinguishing of a segment of text that is of interest to an analysis” (Krippendorff, 2004: 83). Based on the research questions formulated for the study, journal articles were segregated on the basis of relevant work on the topic. Thus, based on an overview of the existing literature initiated, 40 to 50 journal articles published from 1991 to 2016 were reviewed and coded.

Sampling

A relevant sampling (purposive sampling) method was chosen for this study. This sampling method “aims at selecting all textual units that contribute to answering given research questions” by developing a systematically hierarchy to lower the number of units included in an analysis (Krippendorff, 2004: 119; Lee, Dattilo, & Howard, 1994). Therefore, two methods of data collection were used in this study: database searching and reference mining using three major databases: EBSCO, and Science Direct. These databases were selected because of their popularity and diverse content of data reported in them. The various sampling criteria were employed and summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Sampling Criteria

| Sampling criteria | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Topic selection | Destination brand experience, tourist’s satisfaction, behavioural intention (like revisit intention, word of mouth, etc.) |
| Data Type | Articles in academic journals |
| Data Source | Database searching (EBSCO, UGC Inflanet and Science Direct) and reference mining. |
| Keywords | Destination branding, place brand experience, tourist’s satisfaction, behavioural intention and any combination of the above |
| Publication Date | 1990 to 2016 |

Recording/Coding

Recording/coding provides a link between unitized texts and the researchers’ thoughts (Krippendorff, 2004). A well-developed recording procedure helps researchers organize and categorize the data and provides a brief overview of the information extracted from the articles. Using predetermined categories as an organizing tool, fundamental information from each article was recorded on a coding sheet developed for this study. The coding sheet was developed based on (a) previous studies that identified and reviewed the existing literature on a focused topic.

Reducing

The main concept of reducing is the reduction of multitudinous amounts of data down to the meaningful parts. “Reducing data serves analysts’ need for efficient representations, especially of large volumes of data” (Krippendorff, 2004: 84). Frequency reports were employed to portray the samples (journal articles) on the coding sheet. For instance: which journals are the articles from, how many of the studies were conceptual or empirical, and how many of the articles were from a database search and from database mining?



Inferring and Narrating

Abductive inference, “proceeding across logically distinct domains, from particulars of one kind to particular of another kind,” is taken on in content analysis in nature rather than deductive or inductive inference (Krippendorff, 2004: 36). Abductive inference provides a link between descriptive accounts of texts and the meanings they bring to a study. In addition, “narrating the answers to content analysts’ questions amounts to the researchers’ making their results understandable to others,” which could be shown in the significance, contribution, application, or recommendation of a study (Krippendorff, 2004: 85). Therefore, the two components, inferring and narrating, were applied in the results and conclusion sections.

Reliability and Validity

Three kinds of reliability are imperative to content analysis: (a) stability, (b) reproducibility, and (c) accuracy (Krippendorff, 1980; Weber, 1990). Stability refers to the extent to which the same results of content classification are produced over time (Weber, 1990). Reproducibility (inter judge) means the extent to which the same classification results of the same content are gained by more than one coder (Kassarjian, 1977; Weber, 1990). Accuracy refers to “the extent to which the classification of text corresponds to a standard or norm” (Weber, 1990: 17). The discreet development of sampling criteria and coding sheet for recording the information in this study may secure the stability reliability. In addition to reliability, validity is supreme to determine the quality of content analysis. Several types of validity can be applied in content analysis including: (a) face, (b) semantic, (c) construct, (d) hypothesis, and (e) predictive (or correlational) (Krippendorff, 1980; Weber, 1990). A category has face validity when the category measures what it is intended to measure. Face validity may be the weakest form of validity since only one variable is taken into consideration (Weber, 1990). Therefore, stronger types of validity engage in more than one variable. Semantic validity exists when researchers are familiar with the language and place a list of words (or other units) in a same category and agree that these words have similar meanings or connotations (Weber, 1990).

According to the purposes and research design of this study, face, semantic, and construct validity are more appropriately applied in this study than hypothesis and predictive validity. In essence, it is difficult to assess validity in a qualitative study. However, face, semantic, and construct validity may be moderate in this study because of careful development, cross-validation, and testing of the coding sheet. Nevertheless, multiple researchers and coders should improve face, semantic, and construct validity in this study.

Discussion

The research has been designed to set forth the relation between the important aspects about the destination branding in the research, with different factors of brand experience, tourist satisfaction and behavioral intention. In the proliferating literature on tourism marketing, a number of concepts have been applied in order to infer and interpret tourist behavior, most of them have been adapted from the current marketing literature (Aaker, 1997; Keller, 1993). Cronin and Taylor (1992), Bolton (1998), Ostrom and Lacobucci (1995), Fornell et al. (1996) and Chang and Wildt (1994) have explained and examined the relationships, direct and indirect between value, quality, satisfaction and post-purchase consequences, such as customer loyalty, favourable word of mouth, price premiums and repurchase intentions). The conclusion of many studies was that, the relationships among the constructs were complex, diverse and dynamic. In 2000, Brady, Hult and Cronin proved that there was difference of opinions that was enough noticeable, about the relationships between value, quality, satisfaction, and behavioural intentions.

There appears to be a recognized strong link between satisfaction and re-purchase intention given by Rust & Oliver (1994) and Bitner (1990). Similarly, consumers’ perceptions about value seem to drive future intentions stated by Brady and Cronin (2001). It has been also found that satisfaction helps in predicting of the post-purchase behavioural intentions put forth



by Zeithaml (1998) and Patterson and Speng (1997). In context to pre-purchase, Chang and Wildt (1994) found that value was exhibited by quality and price and it also had positive impacts on re-purchase intentions. They also found price had a negative effect and quality had a positive effect on purchase intentions. In 1991, Bolton and Drew, and in 1997 Woodruff found that satisfaction is positively influenced by value, whereas Zeithaml (1998) and Chang and Wildt (1994) stated that value is negatively impacted by price. Anderson and Sullivan (1990), found service satisfaction was strongly related to repurchase intentions.

Finally, Anderson and Sullivan(1990), Cronin and Taylor (1994) and Patterson and Spreng (1997) arrived at a consensus that satisfaction is an antecedent to future intentions in service providing environment. Murray and Howat (2002) discussed that, even though satisfaction has major influence on future intentions, its relationship with value should also be closely determined as there are structural links between the two concepts.

Brand experience

Among the recent concepts for determining the response towards a brand is that of brand experience. Brakus et al. (2009) critically examined the existing brand constructs for providing incomplete and generalized conceptualizations. Brand experience, while related, is quite different to concepts such as brand attitudes, brand personality, brand involvement and brand attachment. Brand attitudes refer to general evaluations, while as brand experiences “include typical sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses triggered by specific brand stimuli. For example, experiences may include particular types of feelings, and not just an overall *liking*.” (Brakus et al., 2009: 53). Similarly, brand personality infers brand association which does not imply that consumers experience effective sensations, feelings, cognitions and behavioral responses; in essence, customers merely project particular characteristics of brand personality onto a specific brand. Bracus et al. (2009) propose and rigorously test a more comprehensive new scale, brand experience, composed of four aspects: sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioral brand experience.

Brand experience is suggested to be applied to all types of products and services as well, which includes complex products related to even tourism (Buhalis, 2000). The developed literature shows a link between different aspects of destination branding, including destination brand identity, brand positioning and the models, to loyalty towards brand and intentions to revisit the destination (Pike, 2009).

The research has been conducted regarding the destination brand experience which is of paramount importance so far as the steps of tourists is concerned. In the present study the dimensions under brand experience are considered and arranged as sensorial, affective, intellectual, and behavioral (Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010):

- (1) Sensory dimension: includes impulses associated with visual, auditory, gustative, olfaction, and touching;
- (2) Affective dimension: includes emotions created by the brand and emotional bound of this brand with the customer;
- (3) Intellectual dimension: includes the ability of the brand to be connected to convergent and divergent thoughts of the customer;
- (4) Behavioral dimension: includes physical experiences, life styles, and interactions created by the brand.

Long-term brand experiences recorded on customer memory affect customer satisfaction and loyalty (Lee & Kang, 2012). Seçkin, Zehir, and Kitapçı (2011) mentioned in their study that brand experience creates positive effects on customer satisfaction, confidence, and loyalty, and they specified that brand experience has created a confidence-based relationship between the brand and the customer, and this affects the customer satisfaction positively.



Enterprises from almost all sectors need to provide a successful brand experiences to their customers to build a strong brand. Although brand experience may be affected by different factors, either positively or negatively, the actual purpose here is to provide unique, unforgettable, or happy experiences. In other words, customers should be taken beyond to be satisfied (Chen, 2012).

Tourist satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is regarded as overall satisfaction with the destination, which in turn is influenced by various aspects of the journey (e.g. transport, accommodation, restaurants, activities offered, etc.). Satisfaction is the important factor that has always been the focal point of business operation. It plays the crucial role in indicating the destination performance and the key point of differentiation.

The tourist destinations and the service providers must take greater care of customer satisfaction in the modern day environment because of the fast evolving competitive landscape resultant from recent consumer and technological trends, that make customer satisfaction more important than anything else (Confente, 2015; Oh, Fiore and Jeoung, 2007; Mohlmann, 2015; Sharma and Baoku, 2013; Sparks and Browning, 2010). Satisfaction is often assessed through evaluating service quality, which is also defined relative to expectation as “guest driven through meeting and exceeding guest expectations” (Chacko, Davidson and Green, 2005: 200). SERVQUAL developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) offers a validated measurement for evaluating service quality. Widely adopted across service sectors, SERVQUAL includes the five important dimensions, each measured by multiple items:

- Tangibility: refers to the appearance of equipment, physical facilities, personnel, and communication materials;
- Reliability: refers to the ability of service provider’s to perform and deliver the promised service in a dependable and accurate manner;
- Responsiveness: refers to the willingness of the service provider and its employees to help customers and to provide service promptly and quickly;
- Assurance: refers to the knowledge and kindness of employees as well as their ability to convey trust and confidence; and
- Empathy: refers to providing care and attention to each customer.

Ensuring visitor satisfaction is crucial for the long term success of a particular destination and brings out the benefits for key stakeholders including the industry, the visitors, and local communities (Foster, 1999). A tourism destination is also able to attain the competitive advantages through quality delivered and visitor satisfaction.

Table 2. Different views of authors on tourist satisfaction

| <i>Author</i> | <i>Year</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
|--|----------------------|---|
| Crompton Schneider, I. and Sonmez, S. | 1979 1999 | Satisfaction is ‘destination-determined’ and formed by experiences, it is critically important for all travel destinations to investigate satisfaction levels |
| Bolton and Drew Woodruff | 1991 1997 | Satisfaction is seen to be positively influenced by perceived value. |
| Zeithaml Chang and Wildt Sweeney, Soutar and Johnson. | 1988 1994 1999 | Perceived value is negatively impacted by perceived price. |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|---|
| Johnson and Anderson Foster | 1995 1999 | Satisfaction with a destination is therefore described as “cumulative satisfaction” and an “abstract construct that describes customer’s total consumption experience with a product or service”. |
| Baker & Crompton | 2000 | Satisfaction is the tourist’s emotional state after experiencing the trip. |
| Athanassopoulos | 2000 | Customer satisfaction is associated with value, which is influenced by service quality, as well as by other attributes, such as price. |
| Chen, Huang and Patrick | 2016 | Satisfaction is defined as consumers’ judgment of whether a product/service provides a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment. |

Customer satisfaction is indicative of destination performance. Much research (Chea and Luo, 2008; Gounaris, Dimitriadis and Stathakopoulos, 2010; Szymanski and Henard, 2001) offers insights into the outcomes of customer satisfaction which include:

- Referring through word of mouth,
- Consumers’ complaining behaviour,
- Loyalty towards brand,
- Continuance,
- Recommendation, and
- Intention to repurchase / repeat visits.

Visitor satisfaction, when studied with regard to a tourist destination shows that the higher the level of satisfaction, the higher would be the intention to revisit the same destination and promote it through word of mouth. Satisfied tourists refer destinations to their relatives and friends, thus providing free advertisement and they promote increased travel to the destination (Kau and Lim, 2005; Kozak and Rimmington, 2000; Yu and Goulden, 2006). Satisfaction also offers financial competitiveness through a number of ways, one of the most important being repeat purchase and positive word-of-mouth reduces business costs (Sheth, 2001).

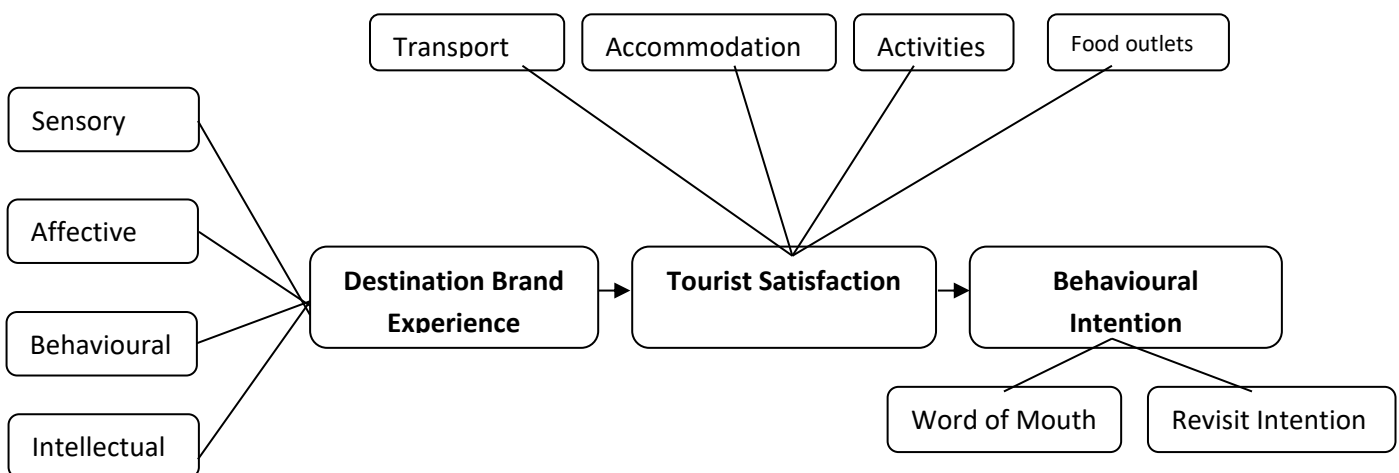


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Destination Brand Experience

Behavioral Intention

Intention to behave (behavioral intention) comes from Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) that tell that the actual behavior can be predicted from



intention which is directly related to the behavior (Ajzen and Fishbein 1975 in Ajzen, 1991). TRA and TPB are the theories that explain the relationship between attitudes and behavior. Intention is assumed as the immediate antecedent of behavior or behavioral intention is the immediate antecedent of actual behavior.

Behavioral intention is the attitude interaction, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control (their own desires), and it come from beliefs, knowledge or previous information, which is used to measure the actual behavior of the consumers. The actual behavior of tourists who experience the destination brand is studied through their behavioral intentions. According to Zeithaml et al. (1996), to measure the behavioral intentions of loyalty towards a product or service, telling positive things about them, recommending the same to other people, repeat purchasing, buying more and buying at a premium price. Opperman (2000) relates the intention to return to the destination in examining the value of previous experience in order to predict upcoming destination choices.

Conclusion

The main conclusion of the study is represented by the conceptual framework that is developed above, and it demonstrates the relationship between the three variables that are brand experience, tourist satisfaction and behavioral intention. It demonstrates that destination brand experience (including different factors) has a direct and indirect effect on tourist satisfaction and eventually on intention to behave. It shows that brand experience affects tourist satisfaction which in turn promotes the destination through word of mouth and repeat travel to the destination. The concept of destination brand experience forms the basis for assessing the ability of the local tourism destination to exploit these experiences as a means to enrich its performance. The deployments of destination brand experience, including sensory, affective, behavioural, and intellectual experience, play a pivotal role in the destination branding and the development of destination.

The factors about sensory-affective dimension, behavioural dimension, and intellectual dimension that compose sub-dimensions of brand experience have positive effects on tourists' satisfaction. Businesses should design and deliver the experiences that will contribute to their success at a particular destination so that it helps in the growth of tourism activities. These help improve tourist's satisfaction and bode well for destination sustainability. The greater the level of satisfaction the more positive will be the intention to behave well. Some of the authors who have conducted research on destination branding, brand experience and tourist satisfaction in different geographical areas of tourist repute on international and national level are Barnes, Mattsson. and Sorensen (2011) who suggested destination brand experience is an important determinant of visitor outcomes, specifically satisfaction, intention to recommend, and they assert that satisfaction plays a key role in further processing of enhanced visitor experience.

Limitations and Future Studies

There were several limitations in this study that could be addressed in future research. The survey cannot provide any complete information on behavior of particular tourist groups, but rather provides a direction towards complete information and towards a conclusion that can help to improve tourist satisfaction. There was also deficiency of time to conduct the research which was problematic. Further research conducted should be quantitative in nature. It should also focus on further antecedents and consequences of brand experience for a long time.

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