

# BUKTI KORESPONDENSI

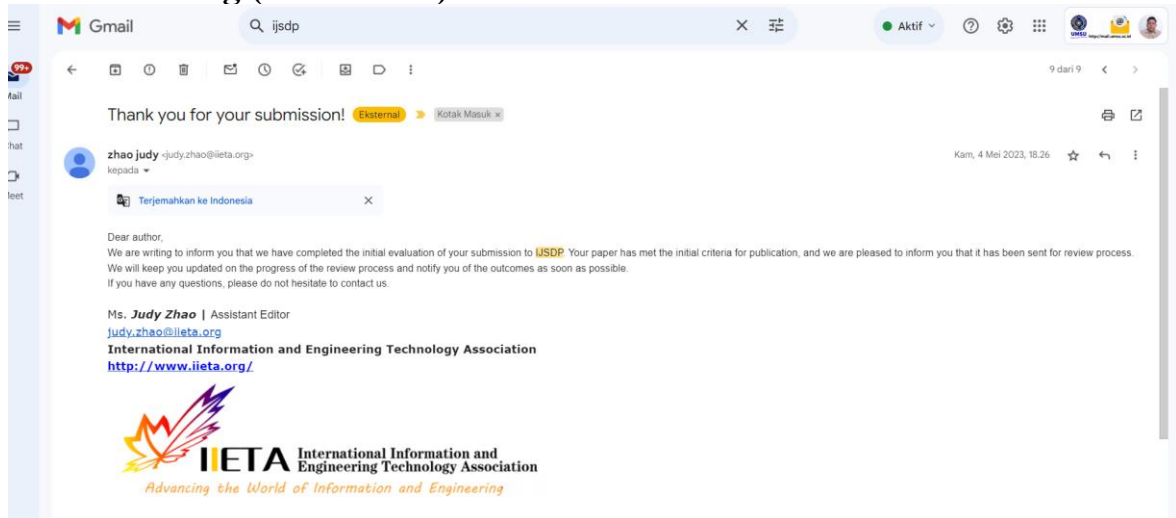
## ARTIKEL JURNAL INTERNASIONAL BEREPUTASI (SCOPUS Q3)

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# Destination Branding of Lake Toba Indonesia as Tourism Icon

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to formulate a destination branding model for the Lake Toba Region so that it can become a tourism icon in North Sumatra and even in Indonesia. This study uses an explanatory research approach. The population of this study is all Domestic Tourists visiting the Lake Toba Region. Determination of the number of samples using the formula and obtained as many as 96 respondents. Primary data collection is done by questionnaire (questionnaire). The data analysis method used is Partial Least Square (PLS) based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results of the study show that cognitive image, unique image, and affective image have a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction in tourist destinations in the Lake Toba region. Cognitive Image, Unique Image, and Tourist Satisfaction have a positive and significant effect on Tourist Loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations, but affective Image has no significant effect on Tourist Loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. Cognitive Image and Unique Image have a positive and significant effect on Tourist Loyalty Through Tourist Satisfaction at Tourist Destinations in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations, and affective image has no significant effect on Tourist Loyalty Through Tourist Satisfaction at Tourist Destinations in the Lake Toba Tourism Destinations.

**Keywords:** Cognitive, Unique, Affective, Image, Satisfaction, Loyalty

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the biggest contributors to Indonesia's foreign exchange. Tourism has a very big role in increasing the economy and people's income. The tourism potential in Indonesia has not been maximized properly, this is due to the lack of attention from the local government and the central government in managing existing natural and human resources [1].

The role of tourist destinations aims to improve people's welfare. The impact of tourism on the community's economy is an increase in people's income, employment opportunities, increased distribution of benefits and profits, ownership and control of the community's economy, and impact on regional development [2]. The impact of tourism development, namely employment, creating business opportunities, encouraging infrastructure development, increasing tax revenues, improving the community's economy, and increasing investment in the tourism sector [3].

The destination image of Lake Toba as the largest lake in Southeast Asia is an important point in the decision of tourists to visit. With a good and well-known destination image, it makes it easier for tourists to plan their vacations [4]. Image is defined as an idea, impression, feeling, and belief in a tourist destination [5]. Destination image is a place impression or area perception [6] while

according to [7] image is an indicator value of the potential of an area.

A good destination image will increase tourist visits, this is because the image influences visiting decisions and intentions to make repeat visits [6]. Image forming factors by increasing quality and quality, trustworthiness and reliability, usability, and benefits, service, risk, and price [8]; [9]; [10]; [11]; [12] and [13]. The dimensions used to measure destination image are friendly behavior, security posts, tourist activities, tourist information, tourist maps, cleanliness, tourist facilities, restaurants, lodging, art activities, and souvenirs [14]; [15]; [16]. The dimensions of image measurement are attributes, personality, and benefits. While the dimensions used to measure the image according to [17] are symbols, logos, names, citizens, and slogans, while according to [18] measuring image seen from popularity, good word of mouth, and commodities offered. Destination imagery can increase the number of tourist visits because it makes it easier for tourists to search for information on places to visit [5]. Indicators of destination image formation are divided into three, namely cognitive (belief), affective (feeling), and conative. Cognitive image refers to the quality, and friendliness of residents, cultural attractions, climate and weather, and price of services while affective image such as one's imagination, hope, and emotion about tourist attractions. While conative is a combination of

cognitive and affective decision-making [19]. The same is also explained by [20]; [21] that image is formed by cognitive, affective, and conative components.

It is widely recognized that tourism destinations should be included in the consumer-generated set, from which the final decision is made [22]; [23]; [24]. Consumers, on the other hand, often offer a wide range of places that give similar attributes such as great accommodations, beautiful scenic vistas, and/or nice people. As a result, it is not sufficient for the purpose to be included in the elicited set; alternatively, the goals must be distinct and distinct to be chosen as the final selection. From this perspective, the concept of destination branding is critical for destinations to be recognized and differentiated from alternatives in the minds of the target market. Although not explicitly examined in the context of branding, destination image must be regarded as a pre-existing concept following destination branding [25]. The essence of destination branding, on the other hand, is creating a positive destination image that defines and differentiates the location by using a consistent mix of brand materials [26]. Brand destination image can be defined as "a perception of a place reflected by associations held in tourists' memories [27].

Branding is now widely regarded as a significant tool for firms to employ to their advantage in gaining competitiveness through strengthening markets because it provides value for both producers and consumers [28]. To affect the destination brand, the location's distinct image must be viewed as a significant brand association. Creating a destination image is essential for survival in a globally competitive market where destinations fight fiercely [29]. Destination branding is the process of selecting a combination of components to identify and differentiate a location by constructing a positive image. Destination branding promises a memorable experience about a location [30]. Talking about a place, can not be separated from tourism. As one of the biggest drivers of the economy, tourism generates a large amount of state revenue. Seeing the importance of destination branding, countries in the world compete to show their unique character in the eyes of the world [31]. The competition for destination branding is increasing. Especially when it comes to Indonesian tourism, which is still inferior to that of other countries, particularly neighboring countries like Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand.

The goal of this study is to create and evaluate a theoretical destination branding model based on destination image studies as well as standard branding principles and practices. The current study, in particular, investigates the relationship between brand associations (images of cognitive, emotive, and distinctive components), brand image (total picture of a destination), and future visitor behavior. To that purpose, an empirical test was conducted at Lake Toba, Indonesia, where the goal of successful branding is required to overcome the destination's lack of a positive image.

Lake Toba is located in the area of North Sumatra, which is one of the most valuable national assets and is one of the important tourist destinations after Bali and Lombok, so this area is a source of pride. The determination of Lake Toba as a tourist destination is because of the assumption that it has a beautiful natural panorama [32]. In the Lake Toba Region, there are several tourist destinations such as Parapat, Simarjarunjung, Tanjung Camel, Haranggaol, and others. One of the most famous and popular areas is Parapat City which is also the capital of Girsang Sipangan Bolon District. Parapat is the main gate to Samosir Island and is often also called Parapat Tourism City. In 2020 tourist visits experienced a very sharp decline, this was due to the condition of the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on information from the Central Statistics Agency for Samosir Regency, foreign tourist visits in June 2020 were around 99 visits, or a decrease of 99.53 percent from 21,143 visits in June 2019. Local governments and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are attempting to thrive so that visitors can visit Lake Toba while adhering to health guidelines. The tourism business is expected to grow, one way being to improve the image of Lake Toba as a tourist destination in the eyes of the general public, both domestic and foreign. Enhancing the image of the Lake Toba destination is one approach to promote local and foreign visitor visitation. Destination image is considered one of the important factors for tourists in choosing a tourist destination. The purpose of this study is to measure the influence of image (Image) on tourist visit decisions in Samosir Regency. The tourism industry is expected to rise, one of which is by increasing the image of the tourist destination of Lake Toba in the eyes of the public, both domestic and foreign. One way to increase domestic and foreign tourist visits is by enhancing the image of the Lake Toba destination. Destination image is considered one of the important factors for tourists

in choosing a tourist destination. The purpose of this study is to measure the influence of image (Image) on tourist visit decisions in Samosir Regency. The tourism sector is expected to grow, one way being to improve the image of Lake Toba as a tourist destination in the eyes of both domestic and foreign visitors. Improving the image of the Lake Toba destination is one strategy to promote local and foreign visitor visitation. Tourists believe destination image to be one of the most essential elements when selecting a tourism destination. The goal of this research is to determine the impact of the image (Image) on tourist visit decisions in Samosir Regency.

One of the efforts made to create uniqueness in the Lake Toba Region is of course by fulfilling the concept of the destination branding model which has three dimensions, namely cognitive image, unique image, and affective image [29] and [33]. Several research results show that destination image is a total impression of cognitive and affective evaluation [34], it is suggested that brand association should include both cognitive image and affective image components [25]. These two components are indicators that influence the destination image [34] and [33].

## **2. THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### **2.1 Destination Branding**

Destination branding is a method of communicating a destination's distinct identity by distinguishing it from its competitors [33]. Based on this definition, a destination needs a brand as a medium to communicate to consumers about the type or purpose of the product, and that is what differentiates the product from other products. Destination brands, like general brand awareness, provide two crucial functions: identification and distinction. The definition of "identification" in brand literature is "explaining the source of the product to consumers." While a product in general refers to a physical offering that can be easily modified, a place as a product refers to a large entity that contains a variety of material and non-material elements to represent it [35]. A place, for example, comprises both tangible traits such as historical sites or beaches, and intangible characteristics such as culture, customs, and history [33]. Destination branding is a strategy for marketing an area's potential [7]. There are five (5) stages to carry out destination branding in changing the image of a region, namely: 1) market investigation, analysis, and strategic recommendations, 2) brand identity development, 3) brand launch and introduction: communicating

the vision, 4) brand implementation, and 5) monitoring, evaluation, and review [36].

### **2.2 Brand Identity and Brand Image**

According to a previous study, brand identity and image are critical components of successful destination branding. One major distinction is that they are formed from two distinct perspectives: sender and recipient [37]. Brand identity is a distinct collection of brand associations developed by brand strategists [5]. Brand identity is a distinct brand association that conveys promise to customers [38]. Brand image, on the other hand, can be defined as the consumer's view of the brand as a depiction of the brand connections that have been imprinted in the consumer's memory. The sender (that is, the destination marketer) projects the destination brand identity for destination brands through all of the qualities and activities that distinguish the destination from other competing locations. Meanwhile, recipients (i.e., consumers) perceive an image of the destination, which is formed and stored in their minds [35]. It should be noted that the relationship between destination brand identity and brand image is reciprocal. Brand image plays an important role in building brand identity [39], while brand image is also a reflection of brand identity [35]. That is, people form mental images of destinations depending on the brand identity conveyed by marketers. Then, based on their knowledge of the brand image of consumers at a specific destination, objective marketers build and enhance brand identity. As a result, the destination image is critical in developing a favorable and recognizable brand character.

### **2.3 Brand Association**

Brand associations are everything that directly or indirectly appears and is related to the consumer's memory of a brand [38]. In terms of destination branding, attitude can be a type of brand association to build a destination image [39]. Destination image is also regarded as an attitudinal construct composed of cognitive and emotive assessments [40]. This supports the idea that cognitive and affective image components in destination branding should be included [38]. Although it is claimed that the cognitive and affective image components are hierarchically related to form a destination image [39]. However, it is still possible that each cognitive and affective brand image component will make a distinct contribution to the overall image formation. To investigate the specific effects of cognitive and

affective components on consumers' attitude structure and future behaviors, cognitive and affective components must be treated separately [41]. As a result, this study indicates that positive cognitive and emotive components, as well as brand associations, will be favorably associated with a destination's overall image (e.g., branding image). Several studies investigated the cognitive and affective image components of brand associations that influence brand image (ie, destination image). This is offered because there is an additional picture component to consider as a brand association: unique image. Unlike common images, unique images are highlighted as structures that imagine the overall image of the destination [42]. Uniqueness is very important because it is influenced by the similar differences between goals in the mind of the target consumer [39]. Similarly, destination branding must promote the location's distinct image for consumers to distinguish it from competing places. In reality, destination branding is described in part as a method of communicating a fulfilling travel experience that is distinctively associated with a specific destination [38].

#### **2.4 Tourist Behavior**

The image of a destination has a direct impact on the intention to return and the inclination to recommend it to others. Meanwhile, the quality and satisfaction of a destination have an indirect effect on its intention to return and willingness to recommend it to others [43]. The image of a destination has a direct impact on trip quality and behavioral intention. Furthermore, destination image influences behavioral intention indirectly through trip quality, perceived value, and satisfaction [44]. The cognitive destination image has a direct effect on tourist behavioral intention, while the functional image is only associated to return intention, the psychological image is only related to recommendation intention, and the mixed image is not related to the two behavioral intentions [27]. Other studies have discovered a strong indirect relationship between destination image and intention to visit, which is moderated by service quality and tourist satisfaction [14]. By putting to the test a theoretical model to see if the destination image has a direct or indirect effect on loyalty. According to the research, the destination

image is associated with loyalty indirectly through satisfaction [12].

### **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

The explanatory research approach is used in this study to explain the causal relationship between the research variables and the testing hypothesis [45]. The location of this research was carried out in tourist destinations in the Lake Toba Region of North Sumatra in seven districts namely Simalungun Regency, Toba Samosir Regency, Samosir Regency, North Tapanuli Regency, Humbang Hasundutan Regency, Karo Regency, and Dairi Regency in North Sumatra - Indonesia. The population of this study is all Domestic Tourists visiting the Lake Toba Region. Because the number of tourists visiting was very large and the population size was unknown, a sample was selected using the Lemeshow formula, and a total of 96 respondents were obtained. Primary data collection was carried out using a survey method using a media questionnaire (questionnaire). The data analysis method used is Partial Least Square (PLS) based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

### **4. RESULTS**

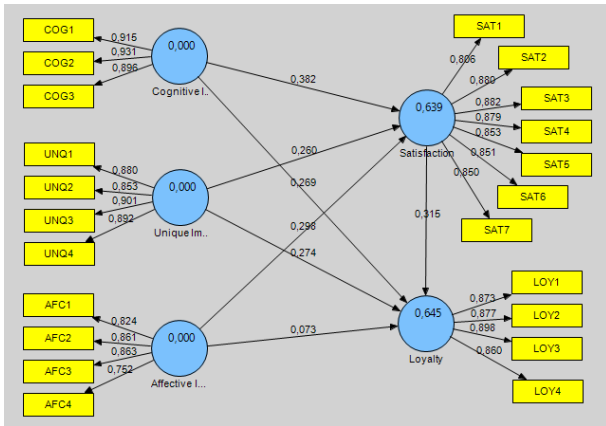
#### **4.1 Evaluation of Measurement Models**

Individual item reliability, internal consistency or composite reliability, average variance extracted, and discriminant validity are all examined as part of the indicator measurement model evaluation. The first three measurements are classified as having convergent validity.

##### **1. Convergent Validity**

###### **a. Item reliability**

The item's dependability is often known as the indicator's validity. The value of the loading factor (standardized loading) can be used to test the item's reliability (indicator validity). The size of the correlation between each indicator and the construct is represented by the factor loading value. The loading factor value greater than 0.7 is considered excellent, implying that the indicator is suitable for measuring constructions. Nonetheless, a standardized loading factor greater than 0.5 is acceptable. Meanwhile, values of the standardized loading factor less than 0.5 can be excluded from the model [46]. The following are the reliability item values that can be seen in the standardized loading column:



**Figure 1. Standardized Loading Factor Inner and Outer Model**

From the picture above it can be seen that all loadings are worth more than 0.5 so it doesn't need to be set aside. Thus, each indicator is valid to explain each latent variable, namely cognitive image, unique image, affective image, satisfaction, and loyalty.

For cognitive image, the indicator that has the greatest loading is COG2. As for the unique image, the biggest loading factor is UNQ3. For indicators on the affective image, the biggest loading factor is AFC3. Indicators of satisfaction, the biggest loading factor is SAT3. Loyalty indicator, the biggest loading factor is LOY3.

**b. Composite Reliability**

Cronbach's alpha and DG rho (PCA) are the statistics used in composite reliability or construct reliability. Cronbach's alpha and DG rho (PCA) values greater than 7.0 imply that the construct is extremely reliable as a measurement instrument. A limit value of 0.7 or higher indicates acceptable, while 0.8 or higher indicates highly satisfying [47].

**Table 2. Composite Reliability Results**

	Composite Reliability
Affective Image	0.896
Cognitive Images	0.938
Loyalty	0.930
Satisfaction	0.951
Unique Image	0.933

The five latent obtained a composite reliability value above 0.7 so it can be said that all factors have good reliability as a measuring tool.

**c. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) describes the amount of variance that can be explained by items compared to the variance caused by measurement errors.

**Table 3. Results of Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**

	AVE
Affective Image	0.683
Cognitive Images	0.836
Loyalty	0.769
Satisfaction	0.736
Unique Image	0.778

Based on the table above, shows that the AVE value for the cognitive image is equal to 0.683; the unique image of 0.836; affective image of 0.769. Meanwhile, satisfaction and loyalty were 0.736 and 0.778. The five variables have an AVE above 0.5 so the construct has good convergent validity where the latent variable can explain an average of more than half the variance of the indicators.

**2. Discriminant Validity**

The discriminant validity of the reflective measurement model is evaluated using cross-loading and a comparison of the AVE value with the square of the correlation between constructs. Good discriminant validity will be able to explain the indicator variables better than other construct indicators' variance. The value of discriminant validity for each indicator is shown below.

**Table 4. Discriminant Validity**

	Affective Image	Cognitive Images	Loyalty	Satisfaction	Unique Image
AFC1	0.824	0.553	0.530	0.607	0.542
AFC2	0.861	0.466	0.531	0.627	0.511
AFC3	0.863	0.407	0.513	0.542	0.565
AFC4	0.752	0.438	0.422	0.428	0.410
COG1	0.529	0.915	0.619	0.649	0.508
COG2	0.547	0.931	0.685	0.640	0.540
COG3	0.472	0.896	0.569	0.623	0.501
LOY1	0.488	0.575	0.870	0.670	0.584
LOY2	0.624	0.617	0.879	0.631	0.586
LOY3	0.480	0.609	0.898	0.625	0.587
LOY4	0.531	0.600	0.861	0.643	0.624
SAT1	0.524	0.571	0.596	0.806	0.545
SAT2	0.622	0.557	0.638	0.880	0.622

SAT3	0.605	0.638	0.656	0.882	0.610
SAT4	0.593	0.579	0.613	0.880	0.577
SAT5	0.629	0.620	0.647	0.852	0.524
SAT6	0.542	0.585	0.563	0.852	0.522
SAT7	0.529	0.637	0.677	0.848	0.556
UNQ1	0.468	0.458	0.597	0.531	0.880
UNQ2	0.557	0.513	0.572	0.554	0.853
UNQ3	0.592	0.536	0.668	0.626	0.901
UNQ4	0.557	0.483	0.550	0.611	0.892

Based on the table above, shows that the value of discriminant validity or loading factor for AFC1 is 0.824. The correlation of the AFC1 indicator is higher for affective mages than for unique images, which is equal to 0.542; especially on the cognitive image (0.553), and on satisfaction by 0.607 and loyalty (0.530). The COG1 indicator correlation was higher for the cognitive image

(0.915) than the affective image, which was 0.529; especially on the unique image (0.508) and on satisfaction of 0.649 and loyalty (0.619), and so on. All loading factor values for each variable have a higher correlation with the variable compared to the other variables. Likewise with the indicators for each variable. This shows that the placement of indicators for each variable is appropriate.

## 4.2 Structural Model Evaluation

### 1. Path Coefficient

The route coefficient can be used to determine the significance of the influence between the constructs. The sign of the path coefficient must be consistent with the postulated

theory; the t-test (critical ratio) obtained from the bootstrapping procedure (resampling method) can be used to determine the significance of the path coefficient. The t-test results for the inner and outer models are shown below.

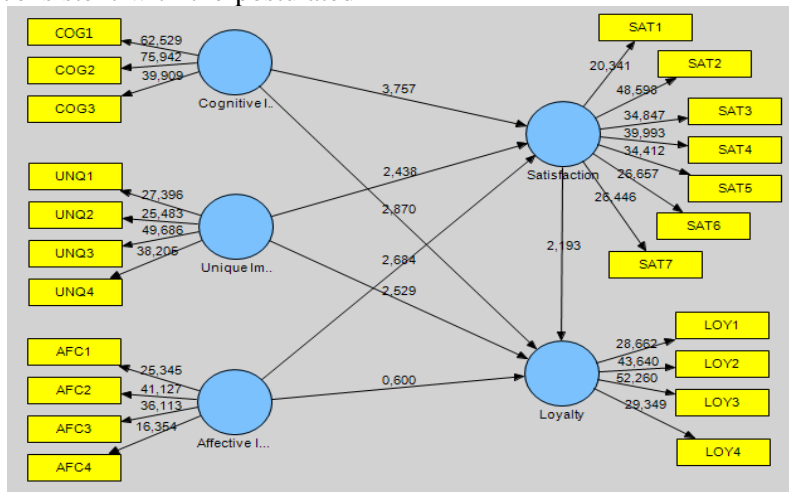


Figure 2. Inner and Outer T-Value Models

The t-test performed is the result of the t-test from bootstrap calculations. The results of the t-test in

the figure above will then be compared with the t-table values.

Table 5. Direct Effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Means (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	Standard Error (STERR)	T Statistics ( O/STERR )	T table
Affective Image -> Satisfaction	0.298	0.313	0.111	0.111	2,685	1.986
Cognitive Image -> Satisfaction	0.382	0.364	0.102	0.102	3,757	1.986
Unique Image -> Satisfaction	0.260	0.263	0.107	0.107	2,438	1.986
Affective Image -> Loyalty	0.073	0.057	0.121	0.121	0.600	1.986
Cognitive Image -> Loyalty	0.269	0.271	0.094	0.094	2,870	1.986
Satisfaction -> Loyalty	0.315	0.319	0.144	0.144	2,193	1.986
Unique Image -> Loyalty	0.274	0.284	0.108	0.108	2,529	1.986

**Table 6. Indirect Effect**

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Means (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	Standard Error (STERR)	T Statistics (O/STERR)	T table
Affective Image -> Loyalty	0.167	0.159	0.085	0.085	1.965	1.986
Cognitive Image -> Loyalty	0.389	0.389	0.106	0.106	3.661	1.986
Unique Image -> Loyalty	0.356	0.366	0.107	0.107	3.325	1.986

## 5. DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the study, shows that the marketing mix has a positive and significant effect on Tourist Satisfaction in Tourism Destinations in the Lake Toba Region. The results of this study mean that the better the Cognitive Image, the higher the Tourist Satisfaction. Conversely, if the Cognitive Image is not good, then the tourist will be more dissatisfied. The results of this study do not agree or are in line with the results of research conducted by [44]; [14] and [49] prove that the image of the destination consisting of a cognitive image, unique image, and affective image does not affect tourist satisfaction. The results of this study are in line with the results of the study [50] which concluded that cognitive image has a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction. In determining customer satisfaction, especially in service companies such as tourist attractions, it is indeed very diverse and what is felt by the customer himself, such as the costs incurred and the services of managers of existing tourist attractions [51].

Based on the results of the study, shows that Unique Image has a positive and significant effect on Tourist Satisfaction in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. The results of this study mean that the better the unique image, the higher the Tourist Satisfaction. Conversely, the more unfavorable the unique image is, the more dissatisfied the tourist will be. Results This study is in line with the results of the study [50] and [10] which concluded that a unique image has a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction.

Results This research is contrary to the results of research from [41], where destination images such as cognitive images, unique images, and affective images do not have a direct effect on satisfaction, due to different locations in the study where the Lake Toba Region is indeed very unique compared to with other tourist attractions and visiting time to enjoy tourism in the Lake Toba area is also unique because visitors who come specifically intend to take a vacation, this is what makes the unique image the satisfaction of visitors

to the Lake Toba area. Visitor satisfaction is also reflected in conformity with what visitors want because visitors use marketing information systems that exist in online media to find out what uniqueness there is [41] and [52].

Based on the results of the study, shows that Affective Image has a positive and significant effect on Tourist Satisfaction in Tourist Destinations in the Lake Toba Region. The results of this study mean that the better the effective image, the higher the Tourist Satisfaction. On the other hand, the more bad the affective image is, the more dissatisfied the tourist will be. This study showed the same results as previous research [53] and concluded that affective image has a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction. So are the research results [54] From the results analyzed using path statistical analysis, research was produced which indicated that there was a direct effect of affective image on the intention of tourists to return.

Based on the results of the study, shows that cognitive image has a positive and significant effect on tourist loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. The results of this study mean that if the Cognitive Image is better, it will increase tourist loyalty. Conversely, if the Cognitive Image is not good, the more disloyal the tourist will be. Empirically, the findings of this research study support the results of the research conducted [55] which concluded that cognitive image has a positive and significant effect on tourist loyalty. Research results contradict the results of the study [56] which reveals that cognitive image does not directly affect loyalty.

Based on the results of the study, shows that service quality has a positive and significant effect on tourist loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. The results of this study mean that the better the Unique Image, the more tourist loyalty will increase. Conversely, the more unfavorable the Unique Image, the more disloyal the tourist will be. Research in line with research from [33] where the image of the destination as a whole and unique in it affects the loyalty of tourists or customers. The

results of this study are in line with research conducted by [53] who researched that a unique image does not have a direct effect on tourist loyalty.

Based on the results of the study, shows that affective image has a positive and significant effect on tourist loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. The results of this study mean that the better the affective image, the more tourist loyalty will increase. Conversely, the more bad the affective image is, the more disloyal the tourist will be. The research results support the research conducted [57] which shows that affective image has a positive influence on the image of tourist visits where customers will recommend the area which means the loyalty of tourists or customers. So are the research results [53] who concluded that affective image has a positive and significant effect on tourist loyalty.

Based on the results of the study, shows that Tourist Satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on tourist loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. The results of this study mean that the higher the perceived Tourist Satisfaction, the higher the tourist loyalty. Conversely, the lower the Tourist Satisfaction feels, the more disloyal the tourist will be. The results of this study are in line with the results of research that has been done [58], [59], and [60] which shows that Tourist Satisfaction has a significant effect on tourist loyalty.

Based on Table 6, it is known that the t-statistic value for the cognitive image of loyalty through satisfaction is 3.661. When compared with the value of t-table, then  $t \text{ count } (3.661) > t \text{ table } (1.986)$  so that  $H_0$  is rejected. Thus it can be concluded that there is a significant influence of cognitive image on loyalty through satisfaction. The magnitude of the effect of cognitive image on loyalty through satisfaction is 0.389. The positive value of the path coefficient indicates that the better the cognitive image, the better the loyalty through satisfaction. This research illustrates the importance of a destination to create customer satisfaction which in turn will create customer loyalty [53] and [61]. Research conducted [49] also agrees that satisfaction arising from affective effects creates customer loyalty. The same thing was conveyed by [56] where cognitive image affects loyalty through satisfaction.

Based on Table 6, it is known that the t statistic value for a unique image on loyalty through satisfaction is 3.325. When compared with the value of t-table, then  $t \text{ count } (3.325) > t \text{ table } (1.986)$  so that  $H_0$  is rejected. Thus it can be

concluded that there is a significant effect of a unique image on loyalty through satisfaction. The magnitude of the influence of a unique image on loyalty through satisfaction is 0.356. The positive path coefficient indicates that the better the unique image, the better the loyalty through satisfaction.

This research is in line with research conducted by [62] where the unique image proposition at each destination contributes to customer loyalty through satisfaction, similar results are carried out by [63] and [64] where the image of the destination in which there is a unique image is very supportive for customers to come or visit again or is called loyal because it can mean that the customer is satisfied. The uniqueness of tourist attractions can cooperate with local tourism groups such as Tourism Awareness Groups so that these destinations will feel more natural and support the economy of local community groups [65] and [55].

Based on Table 6, it is known that the t statistic value for an affective image on loyalty through satisfaction is 1.965. When compared with the value of the t table, then  $t \text{ count } (1.965) < t \text{ table } (1.986)$  so that  $H_0$  is rejected. Thus it can be concluded that there is no significant effect of affective image on loyalty through satisfaction. The influence of affective image on loyalty through satisfaction is 0.167. The positive path coefficient indicates that the better the affective image, the better the loyalty through satisfaction.

This can happen because affective images such as safe, comfortable, and pleasant conditions obtained by tourists are the ones that make tourists satisfied. This research is in line with research conducted by [66] where the affective image which is part of the destination image influences loyalty through visitor satisfaction. From the results of the existing analysis, when observed from the direct influence and indirect influence, in general, it can be said that the image of the destination is very decisive in customer satisfaction and loyalty.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Based on data analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that cognitive image, unique image, and affective image have a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction in tourist destinations in the Lake Toba region. Cognitive Image, Unique Image, and Tourist Satisfaction have a positive and significant effect on Tourist Loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations, but affective Image has no significant effect on Tourist Loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. Cognitive Image and Unique Image have a positive and significant effect

on Tourist Loyalty Through Tourist Satisfaction at Tourist Destinations in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations, and affective image has no significant effect on Tourist Loyalty Through Tourist Satisfaction at Tourist Destinations in the Lake Toba Tourism Destinations.

It is suggested to related institutions improve services in the form of providing adequate public facilities so that the more loyal tourists are, the more loyal they will be in visiting tourist objects so it is hoped that the number of visitors will increase. The development of current new destinations should also be added and updated. This has also been started by managers such as people coming not only to the Lake Toba area but also to other destinations in the vicinity. In addition to this, the entrepreneurial spirit of the manager must also be updated with the spirit of visitors who are dominated by millennial souls so that the needs of this age can at least be accommodated, such as self-management photos, and others that still prioritize natural aspects. The entrepreneurial marketing spirit of the manager is needed so that tourist attractions will continue to exist and survive and have more competitive value. The aspects of attraction, accessibility, amenities, and ancillary should be maintained. Furthermore, in the development of tourist attractions, it is necessary to pay attention to regulations from the existing regional and central governments because the government's power in regulation is very large for the development of existing tourist objects. Aspects of digital promotion must also continue to be carried out even though the university community already knows the existence and exoticism of the Lake Toba area, but promotions must continue so that the latest information on the Lake Toba area continues to reach the community, such as traditional exhibitions or existing hotel bookings. considering that promotion with digital media is very effective for marketing a product or service. Local economic development around the Lake Toba area also needs to be maintained and enhanced by strengthening strategic alliances and the creative economy, because this method will be able to increase the existing local economy. To be able to maintain and add to the cultural treasures, managers must also pay attention to existing cultural trends and prices

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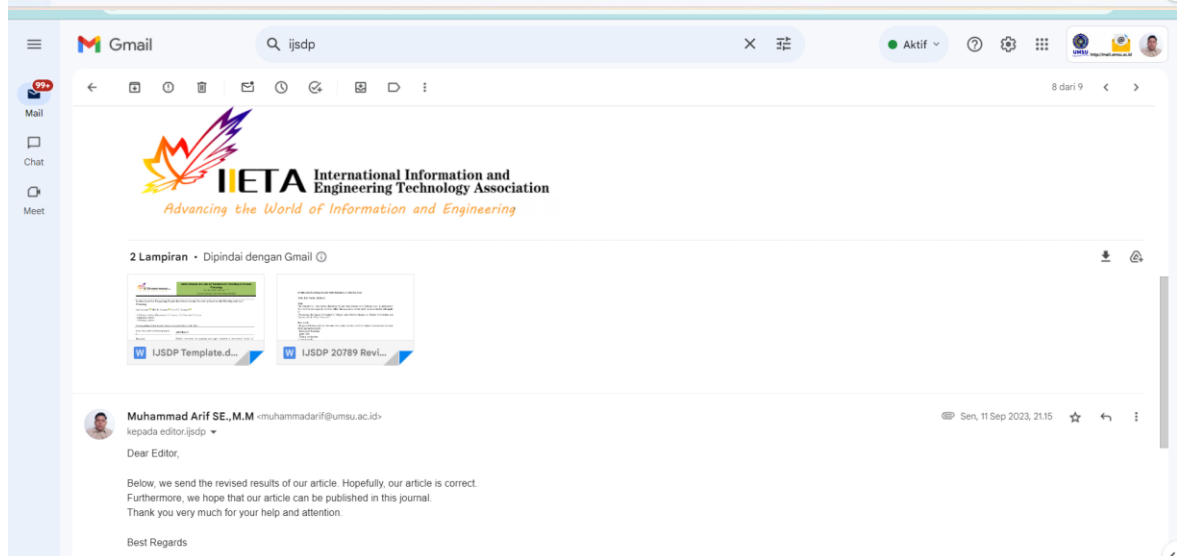
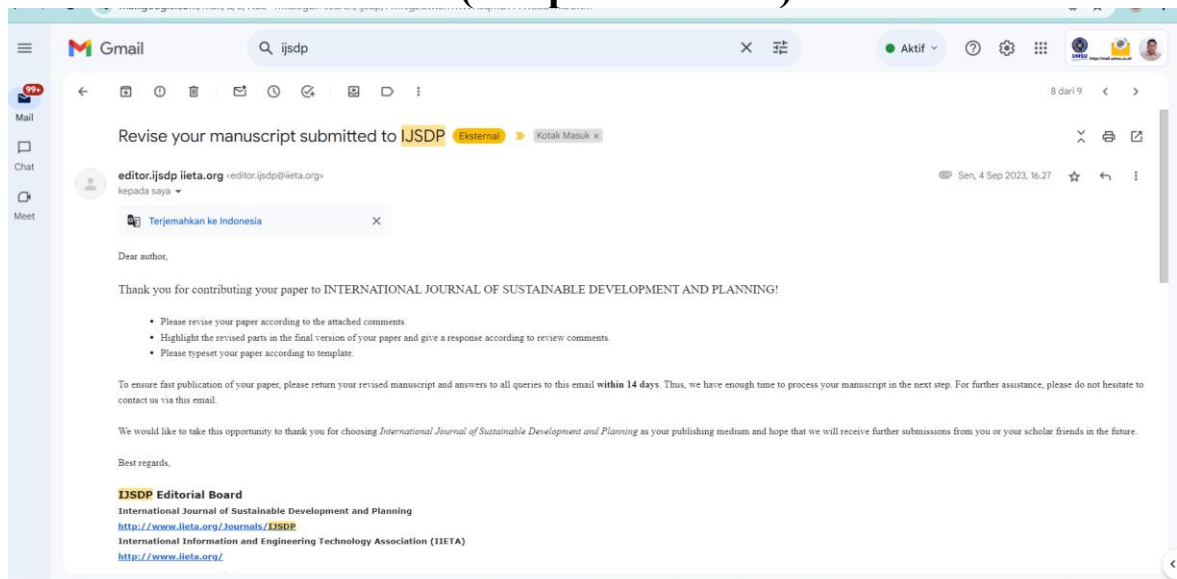
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## 2. Bukti Revisi Pertama (4 September 2023)



## **Destination Branding of Lake Toba Indonesia as Tourism Icon**

### **Title, Key words, Abstract**

#### **Title**

The current title, "Destination Branding of Lake Toba Indonesia as Tourism Icon," is informative but could be more specific to better reflect the main focus of the study. A more suitable title might be:

"Examining the Impact of Cognitive, Unique, and Affective Images on Tourist Satisfaction and Loyalty at Lake Toba, Indonesia."

#### **Key words**

The provided keywords are relevant to the study, but they could be refined to emphasize the main focus and methodology:

- Destination branding
- Lake Toba
- Tourist satisfaction
- Tourist loyalty
- Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)
- Partial Least Square (PLS)

#### **Abstract**

The abstract provides an overview of the study's objectives, methodology, and main findings. However, it can be improved in terms of clarity, organization, and readability:

1. Objective: Clearly state the main objective of the study at the beginning of the abstract, emphasizing the focus on the relationship between cognitive, unique, and affective images and their impact on tourist satisfaction and loyalty.
2. Methodology: Provide more details about the explanatory research approach and briefly explain the rationale for using Partial Least Square (PLS) based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) as the data analysis method.
3. Results: Organize the results in a more coherent manner, first presenting the findings related to the direct effects of the images on satisfaction and loyalty, and then discussing the indirect effects through satisfaction. This will help readers better understand the relationships among the variables under investigation.
4. Conclusions and implications: Briefly mention the practical implications of the findings for destination branding and tourism management in the Lake Toba region, as well as potential limitations and directions for future research.

#### **1.Introduction**

1. The introduction provides a general overview of the importance of tourism and destination branding but lacks a clear statement of the research problem and research questions. To improve this section, the authors should explicitly state the research problem they aim to address and clearly outline the research questions or hypotheses they want to investigate. This will help readers understand the purpose and significance of the study more effectively.

2. The introduction would benefit from a more focused review of relevant literature, particularly within the context of Lake Toba and Indonesia. The authors should consider summarizing the existing research on destination branding and tourist satisfaction and loyalty in Indonesia and the Lake Toba region specifically. This will help establish the theoretical and empirical context for the study and highlight any research gaps or areas that require further investigation. Additionally, the authors should ensure that all the citations are complete and formatted according to the journal's guidelines.

## **2. Theoretical Review**

1. While the section provides a comprehensive overview of various aspects of destination branding, it is not well-structured, making it difficult for the reader to follow the flow of ideas. To improve the organization, the authors should consider dividing the section into subsections covering specific topics, such as destination branding, brand identity and image, brand association, and tourist behavior. This will help the reader understand the progression of concepts and their relationship to each other more clearly.

2. The section lacks a clear connection between the concepts discussed in the literature review and the context of Lake Toba and Indonesia. The authors should integrate specific examples from the study area or mention relevant studies conducted in the region to make the theoretical review more relevant to their research. This will help establish the applicability of the concepts discussed in the literature to the particular case of Lake Toba and demonstrate the significance of the study in addressing the research problem.

## **3. Research Methods**

### **1. Detailed Description of Sampling Technique and Data Collection Procedure**

The research methods section briefly describes the approach, study location, population, sample size, and data analysis technique. However, it lacks a detailed explanation of the sampling technique used to select the 96 respondents and the procedure for collecting data through the questionnaire. To enhance this section, the authors should provide a more comprehensive description of the sampling method, including the rationale behind selecting the Lemeshow formula, the specific steps for implementing the formula, and any relevant assumptions or limitations associated with the chosen sampling technique. In addition, the authors should outline the data collection procedure, such as how the questionnaires were distributed and collected, the type of questions included (e.g., Likert scale, open-ended), and any measures taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. By providing these details, the reader will have a better understanding of the study's methodology, enabling them to evaluate the research's rigor and trustworthiness.

## **4. Results**

The authors should connect the results to the existing literature on destination branding and tourist behavior, highlighting the contributions of their study to the field and suggesting possible explanations for any discrepancies between their findings and those of previous research.

## **5. Discussion**

### **1. Clarification on the Methodology**

While the results are interesting, more information is needed on the methodology used to conduct

the study. Specifically, the sample size and sampling technique should be provided to give readers a better understanding of the generalizability of the findings. It is important to know if the sample is representative of the population and whether the results can be applied to other tourism destinations.

#### 2. Provide justification for the selection of variables

The section outlines the variables used in the study, including cognitive image, unique image, affective image, service quality, tourist satisfaction, and tourist loyalty. However, it is not clear why these variables were selected and whether other variables were considered. A discussion on the theoretical framework that guided the selection of these variables would help readers understand why they are relevant to the study and how they contribute to the overall research question. Additionally, the section could benefit from a discussion on the operationalization of the variables to provide clarity on how they were measured in the study.

## **6. Conclusions**

### Limitations and Implications

#### 1. Discuss the limitations of the study and their implications for future research.

The section presents conclusions based on the data analysis and discussion of the study. However, it is important to also discuss the limitations of the study and their implications for future research. For example, the study was conducted in the Lake Toba region and may not be generalizable to other tourism destinations. Additionally, the study focused on the marketing mix and did not consider other factors that may influence tourist satisfaction and loyalty, such as cultural differences. A discussion of these limitations and their implications for future research would help readers understand the scope and generalizability of the study.

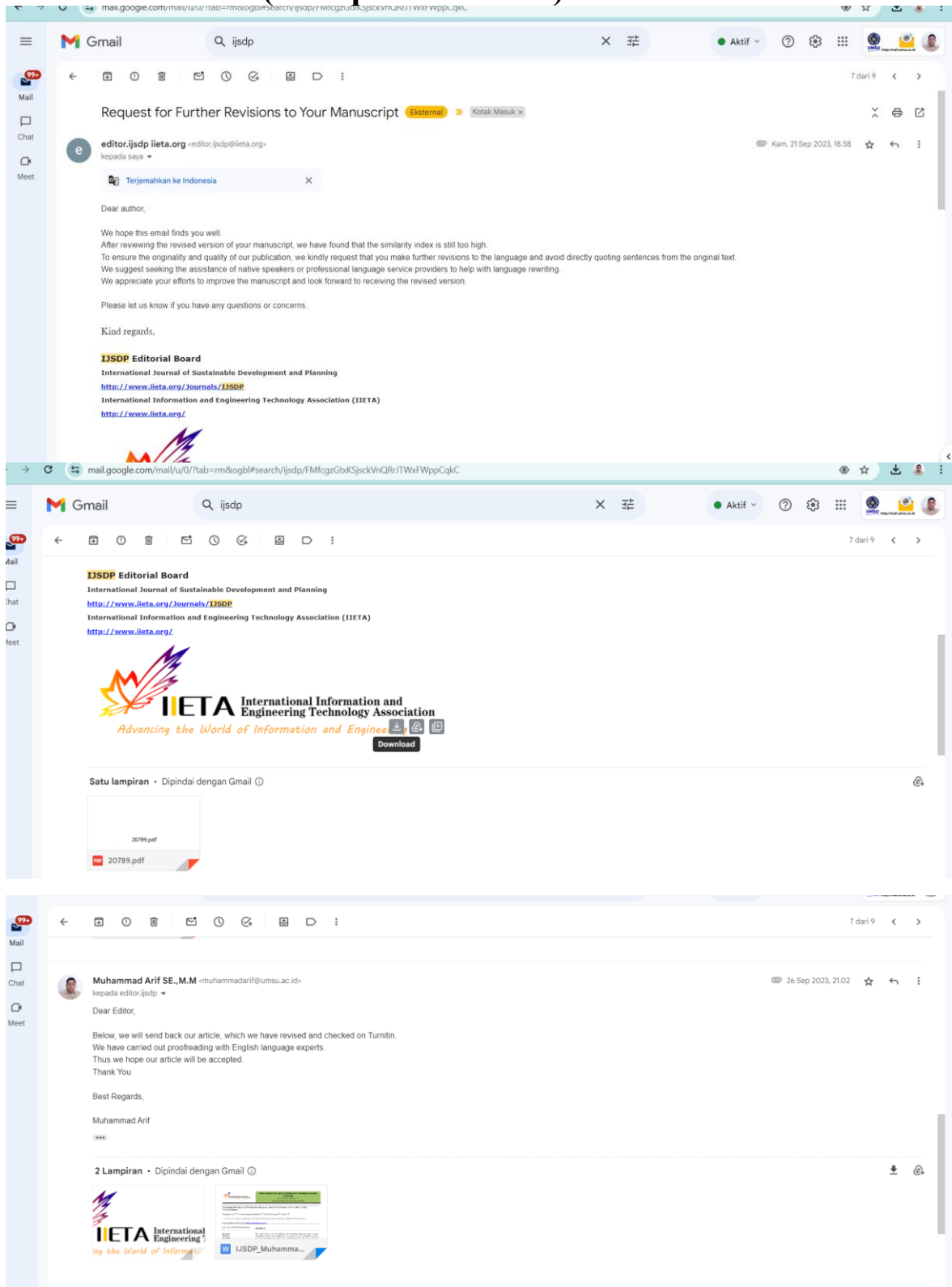
#### 2. Provide practical recommendations for stakeholders.

The section provides suggestions for related institutions to improve services and develop new destinations in the Lake Toba region. However, these recommendations are quite general and do not provide specific and practical guidance for stakeholders. It would be helpful to provide more concrete and actionable recommendations for stakeholders, such as specific strategies for improving public facilities or digital promotions. Additionally, the section could benefit from a discussion of the potential challenges and barriers to implementing these recommendations, and how stakeholders can overcome them. This would provide a more comprehensive and practical guide for stakeholders to improve tourism in the Lake Toba region.

## **Decision**

Based on the content and language evaluation, I recommend **minor revisions** to the forementioned paper before acceptance for publication.

### 3. Bukti Revisi Kedua (21 Septmber 2023) dan Artikel yang dikirim Kembali (26 September 2023)



20789.pdf

## Examining the Impact of Destination Image on Tourist Satisfaction and Loyalty at Lake Toba, Indonesia

### ABSTRACT

This study aims to test the influence of destination image on tourist loyalty satisfaction in Lake Toba, Indonesia. This study uses an explanatory research approach. The population of this study is all Domestic Tourists visiting the Lake Toba Region. Determination of the number of samples using the formula and obtained as many as 96 respondents. Primary data collection is done by questionnaire (questionnaire). The data analysis method used is Partial Least Square (PLS) based Structural Equation Model (SEM). The study results show that cognitive, unique, and affective images have a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction in tourist destinations in the Lake Toba region. Cognitive Image, Unique Image, and Tourist Satisfaction positively and significantly affect Tourist Loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. However, the affective image does not significantly affect Tourist Loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. Cognitive Image and Unique Image have a positive and significant effect on Tourist Loyalty Through Tourist Satisfaction at Tourist Destinations in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations, and affective image has no significant effect on Tourist Loyalty Through Tourist Satisfaction at Tourist Destinations in the Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. Lake Toba Area managers must carry out various relevant programs and maintain good relations with stakeholders in maintaining tourism destinations.

### Keywords:

destination image, satisfaction, loyalty, SEM-PLS, Indonesia

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the biggest contributors to Indonesia's foreign exchange. Tourism has a very big role in increasing the economy and people's income. The tourism potential in Indonesia has not been maximized properly, this is due to the lack of attention from the local government and the central government in managing existing natural and human resources [1].

The role of tourist destinations is to improve people's welfare. The impact of tourism on the community's economy is an increase in people's income, employment opportunities, increased distribution of benefits and profits, ownership and control of the community's economy, and impact on regional development [2]. The impact of tourism development, namely employment, creating business opportunities, encouraging infrastructure development, increasing tax revenues, improving the community's economy, and increasing investment in the tourism sector [3].

The destination image of Lake Toba as the largest lake in Southeast Asia is an important point in the decision of tourists to visit. With a good and well-known destination image, it makes it easier for tourists to plan their vacations [4]. Image is an idea, impression, feeling, and belief in a tourist destination [5]. Destination image is a place impression or area perception [6], while according to [7], image is an indicator value of the potential of an area.

A good destination image will increase tourist visits because the image influences visiting decisions and intentions to make repeat visits [6]. Image forming factors by increasing quality and quantity, trustworthiness and reliability, usability and benefits, service, risk, and price [8]; [9]; [10]; [11]; [12] and [13]. The dimensions used to measure destination image are friendly behaviour, security posts, tourist activities, tourist information, tourist maps, cleanliness, tourist facilities, restaurants, lodging, art activities, and souvenirs [14]; [15]; [16]. The dimensions of image measurement are attributes, personality, and benefits. The dimensions used to measure the

image, according to [17], are symbols, logos, names, citizens, and slogans, while according to [18], measuring image seen from popularity, good word of mouth, and commodities offered. Destination imagery can increase the number of tourist visits because it makes it easier to search for information on places to visit [5]. Indicators of destination image formation are divided into cognitive (belief), affective (feeling), and conative. Cognitive image refers to the quality and friendliness of residents, cultural attractions, climate and weather, and price of services. In contrast, affective image refers to one's imagination, hope, and emotion about tourist attractions. In contrast, conative is a combination of cognitive and affective decision-making [19]. The same is explained by [20]; [21] that cognitive, affective, and conative components form an image.

It is widely recognized that tourist destinations should be included in the consumer-generated set, from which the final decision is made [22], [23]; [24]. On the other hand, consumers often offer a wide range of places with similar attributes, such as great accommodations, beautiful scenic vistas, and nice people. As a result, it is insufficient for the purpose to be included in the elicited set; alternatively, the goals must be distinct and distinct to be chosen as the final selection. From this perspective, the concept of destination branding is critical for destinations to be recognized and differentiated from alternatives in the target market's minds. Although not explicitly examined in the context of branding, destination image must be regarded as a pre-existing concept following destination branding [25]. On the other hand, the essence of destination branding is creating a positive destination image that defines and differentiates the location using a consistent mix of brand materials [26]. Brand destination image can be defined as "a perception of a place reflected by associations held in tourists' memories [27].

Branding is now widely regarded as a significant tool for firms to employ to gain competitiveness through strengthening markets because it provides value for producers

and consumers [28]. The location's distinct image must be viewed as a significant brand association to affect destination brand. Creating a destination image is essential for survival in a globally competitive market where destinations fight fiercely [29]. Destination branding selects a combination of components to identify and differentiate a location by constructing a positive image. Destination branding promises a memorable experience about a location [30]. Talking about a place can not be separated from tourism. As one of the biggest drivers of the economy, tourism generates a large amount of state revenue. Seeing the importance of destination branding, countries compete to show their unique character in the eyes of the world [31]. The competition for destination branding is increasing, especially in Indonesian tourism, which is still inferior to other countries, particularly neighbouring countries like Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand.

This study aims to create and evaluate a theoretical destination branding model based on destination image studies as well as standard branding principles and practices. The current study, in particular, investigates the relationship between brand associations (images of cognitive, emotive, and distinctive components), brand image (total picture of a destination), and future visitor behavior. To that purpose, an empirical test was conducted at Lake Toba, Indonesia, where the goal of successful branding is required to overcome the destination's lack of a positive image.

Lake Toba is located in North Sumatra, one of the most valuable national assets and one of the important tourist destinations after Bali and Lombok, so this area is a source of pride. The determination of Lake Toba as a tourist destination is because of the assumption that it has a beautiful natural panorama [32]. The Lake Toba Region has several tourist destinations such as Parapat, Simarjarunjung, Tanjung Camel, Harangg and others. One of the most famous and popular areas is Parapat City, which is also the capital of Girsang Sipangan Bolon District. Parapat is the main gate to Samosir Island and is often called Parapat Tourism City. In 2020, tourist visits experienced a sharp decline, and this was due to the condition of the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on information from the Central Statistics Agency for Samosir Regency, foreign tourist visits in June 2020 were around 99 visits or a decrease of 99.53 percent from 21,143 visits in June 2019.

Local governments and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are attempting to thrive so visitors can visit Lake Toba while adhering to health guidelines. The tourism business is expected to grow, one way being to improve the image of Lake Toba as a tourist destination in the eyes of the general public, both domestic and foreign. Enhancing the image of the Lake Toba destination is one way to promote local and foreign visitor visitation. Destination image is considered one of the important factors for tourists in choosing a destination. This study aims to measure the influence of image (Image) on tourist visit decisions in Samosir Regency. The tourism industry is expected to rise, one of which is by increasing the image of the tourist destination of Lake Toba in the eyes of the public, both domestic and foreign. One way to increase domestic and foreign tourist visits is by enhancing the image of the Lake Toba destination. Destination image is considered one of the important factors for tourists in choosing a destination. This study aims to measure the influence of image (Image) on tourist visit decisions in Samosir Regency. The tourism sector

is expected to grow, one way being to improve the image of Lake Toba as a tourist destination in the eyes of both domestic and foreign visitors. Improving the image of the Lake Toba destination is one strategy to promote local and foreign visitor visitation. Tourists believe destination image is one of the most essential elements when selecting a destination. This research aims to determine the impact of the image (Image) on tourist visit decisions in Samosir Regency.

One of the efforts made to create uniqueness in the Lake Toba Region is, of course, by fulfilling the concept of the destination branding model, which has three dimensions: cognitive image, unique image, and affective image [29] and [33]. Several research results show that destination image is a total impression of cognitive and affective evaluation [34]. It is suggested that brand association should include both cognitive image and affective image components [25]. These two components are indicators that influence the destination image [34] and [33].

## 2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

### 2.1 Destination Branding

Destination branding communicates a destination's distinct identity by distinguishing it from its competitors [33]. Based on this definition, a destination needs a brand as a medium to communicate to consumers about the product's type or purpose, which differentiates the product from other products. Like general brand awareness, destination brands provide two crucial functions: identification and distinction. The definition of "identification" in brand literature is "explaining the source of the product to consumers." While a product in general refers to a physical offering that can be easily modified, a place as a product refers to a large entity that contains a variety of material and non-material elements to represent it [35]. For example, a place comprises tangible traits, such as historical sites or beaches, and intangible characteristics, such as culture, customs, and history [33]. Destination branding is a strategy for marketing an area's potential [7]. There are five (5) stages to carry out destination branding in changing the image of a region, namely: 1) market investigation, analysis, and strategic recommendations; 2) brand identity development; 3) brand launch and introduction: communicating the vision, 4) brand implementation, and 5) monitoring, evaluation, and review [36].

### 2.2 Brand Identity and Brand Image

According to a previous study, brand identity and image are critical to successful destination branding. One major distinction is that they are formed from two distinct perspectives: sender and recipient [37]. Brand identity is a distinct collection of brand associations developed by strategists [5]. Brand identity is a distinct brand association that conveys promise to customers [38]. On the other hand, brand image can be defined as the consumer's view of the brand as a depiction of the brand connections that have been imprinted in the consumer's memory. The sender (the destination marketer) projects destination brand identity for destination brands through all of the qualities and activities that distinguish the destination from other competing locations.

Meanwhile, recipients (i.e., consumers) perceive an image of the destination, which is formed and stored

in their minds [35]. It should be noted that the relationship between destination brand identity and brand image is reciprocal. Brand image plays an important role in building brand identity [39], while brand image also reflects brand identity [35]. People form mental images of destinations depending on the brand identity marketers convey. Then, based on their knowledge of the brand image of consumers at a specific destination, objective marketers build and enhance brand identity. As a result, the destination image is critical in developing a favourable and recognizable brand character.

### 2.3 Brand Association

Brand associations are everything that directly or indirectly appears and is related to the consumer's memory of a brand [38]. Regarding destination branding, attitude can be a brand association to build a destination image [39]. Destination image is also regarded as an attitudinal construct composed of cognitive and emotive assessments [40]. This supports the idea that destination branding's cognitive and affective image components should be included [38]. However, it is claimed that the cognitive and affective components are hierarchically related to form a destination image [39]. However, it is still possible that each cognitive and affective brand image component will make a distinct contribution to the overall image formation. Cognitive and affective components must be treated separately to investigate the effects of cognitive and affective components on consumers' attitude structure and future behaviors [41]. As a result, this study indicates that positive cognitive and emotive components and brand associations will be favorably associated with a destination's overall image (e.g., branding image). Several studies investigated the cognitive and affective image components of brand associations that influence brand image (i.e., destination image). This is offered because there is an additional picture component to consider as a brand association: unique image. Unlike common images, unique images are highlighted as structures that imagine the overall image of the destination [42]. Uniqueness is very important because it is influenced by the similar differences between goals in the target consumer's mind [39]. Similarly, destination branding must promote the location's distinct image for consumers to distinguish it from competing places. In reality, destination branding is partly described as communicating a fulfilling travel experience distinctively associated with a specific destination [38].

### 2.4 Tourist Behavior

The image of a destination directly impacts the intention to return and the inclination to recommend it to others. Meanwhile, a destination's quality and satisfaction indirectly affect its intention to return and willingness to recommend it to others [43]. The image of a destination has a direct impact on trip quality and behavioral intention. Furthermore, destination image influences behavioral intention indirectly through trip quality, perceived value, and satisfaction [44]. The cognitive destination image has a direct effect on tourist behavioral intention.

In contrast, the functional image is only associated with returning intention, the psychological image is only related to recommendation intention, and the mixed image is not related to the two behavioral intentions [27]. Other studies have

discovered a strong indirect relationship between destination image and intention to visit, moderated by service quality and tourist satisfaction [14] by testing a theoretical model to see if the destination image directly or indirectly affects loyalty. According to the research, the destination image is associated with loyalty indirectly through satisfaction [12].

### 2.5 The Relationship Destination Image with Satisfaction and Loyalty

Creating a good image of a tourist destination will positively contribute to the development and progress of a tourist attraction. According to [45], ways that can be done to improve the image of tourist destinations are by strengthening cognitive image, unique image, and affective image. That cognitive image is knowledge obtained through the cognitive learning process, likewise with the learning carried out by the community (consumers) when selecting an area as a tourist destination [46]. People will look for information about a tourist destination from various literature. His learning will be evaluated, and in the end, he will determine a tourist destination based on the best image. The image of a tourist destination is also determined by image or affective evaluation. Affective images are based more on feelings than beliefs and knowledge about objects. People who believe and believe that a tourist destination will be able to provide high value for them will improve the image of a tourist area. This shows that affective image, trust, and knowledge of a tourist attraction will improve the image of a tourist attraction.

Apart from cognitive and affective images, another factor that influences the image of a tourist area is a unique image. The uniqueness of a tourist area will build the image of the tourist attraction in question. The uniqueness that a tourist attraction has and that other tourist attractions do not have will differentiate that tourist attraction. This is what attracts people to make this tourist attraction a tourist destination. The importance of image for a tourist destination, namely creating hope, can be used as a marketing strategy and market segmentation, is a form of consumption, influences prospective markets, and plays a role in satisfaction and choice of destination [47]. That image will influence consumer loyalty, which is manifested in the form of an intention to revisit and an intention to recommend. This shows that consumers with a good image of an area or tourist attraction tend to visit again, tell stories and provide recommendations to other people to visit that attraction [47].

## 3. RESEARCH METHODS

The way that section titles and other headings are displayed in The explanatory research approach is used in this study to explain the causal relationship between the research variables and the testing hypothesis [48]. The location of this research was carried out in tourist destinations in the Lake Toba Region of North Sumatra in seven districts, namely Simalungun Regency, Toba Samosir Regency, Samosir Regency, North Tapanuli Regency, Humbang Hasundutan Regency, Karo Regency, and Dairi Regency in North Sumatra - Indonesia. The population of this study is all Domestic Tourists visiting the Lake Toba Region. Because the number of tourists visiting was very large and the population was unknown, a sample was selected using the Lemeshow formula, and 96 respondents were obtained. Researchers used primary data and online research techniques using a web-based electronic questionnaire (Google form).

Furthermore, the constructs of this study's evaluation are graded using a scale (1 – disagree, 5 – strongly agree). The partial least squares (PLS) method was chosen because the most frequent PLS applications involve non-normal data, limited sample sizes, and constructive ideas [49]. The hypotheses and proposed research model were evaluated using the PLS method [49]

#### 4. RESULTS

##### 4.1 Evaluation of Measurement Models

Individual item reliability, internal consistency or composite reliability, average variance extracted, and discriminant validity are all examined as part of the indicator measurement model evaluation. The first three measurements are classified as having convergent validity.

##### 1. Convergent Validity

###### a. Item reliability

The item's dependability is often known as the indicator's validity. The value of the loading factor (standardized loading) can be used to test the item's reliability (indicator validity). The factor loading value represents the correlation size between each indicator and the construct. The loading factor value greater than 0.7 is considered excellent, implying that the indicator is suitable for measuring constructions. Nonetheless, a standardized loading factor greater than 0.5 is acceptable. Meanwhile, values of the standardized loading factor less than 0.5 can be excluded from the model [50]. The following are the reliability item values that can be seen in the standardized loading column:

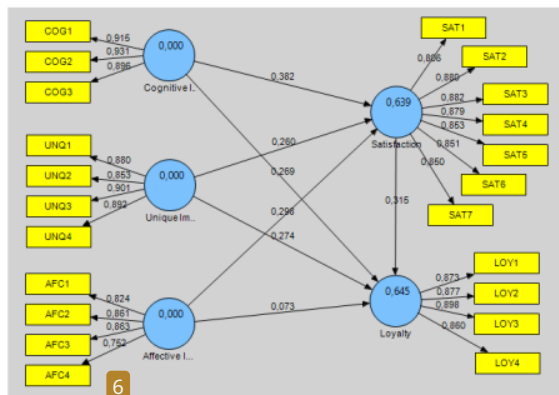


Figure 1. Standardized Loading Factor Inner and Outer Model

From the picture above, it can be seen that all loadings are worth more than 0.5, so it doesn't need to be set aside. Thus,

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

	Affective Image	Cognitive Images	Loyalty	Satisfaction	Unique Image
AFC1	0.824	0.553	0.530	0.607	0.542
AFC2	0.861	0.466	0.531	0.627	0.511
AFC3	0.863	0.407	0.513	0.542	0.565
AFC4	0.752	0.438	0.422	0.428	0.410
COG1	0.529	0.915	0.619	0.649	0.508

each indicator is valid to explain each latent variable, namely cognitive image, unique image, affective image, satisfaction, and loyalty.

For cognitive image, the indicator that has the greatest loading is COG2. As for the unique image, the biggest loading factor is UNQ3. For indicators on the affective image, the biggest loading factor is AFC3. Indicators of satisfaction: The biggest loading factor is SAT3. Loyalty indicator, the biggest loading factor is LOY3.

##### b. Composite Reliability

The statistics used in composite or construct reliability are Cronbach's alpha and DG rho (PCA). Cronbach's alpha and DG rho (PCA) values greater than 7.0 imply that the construct is extremely reliable as a measurement instrument. A limit value of 0.7 or higher indicates acceptable, while 0.8 or higher indicates highly satisfying [51].

Table 2. Composite Reliability Results

	Composite Reliability
Affective Image	0.896
Cognitive Images	0.938
Loyalty	0.930
Satisfaction	0.951
Unique Image	0.933

The five latent obtained a composite reliability value above 0.7, so it can be said that all factors have good reliability as a measuring tool.

##### c. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Average variance extracted (AVE) describes the variance that items can explain compared to the variance caused by measurement errors.

Table 3. Results of Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

	AVE
Affective Image	0.683
Cognitive Images	0.836
Loyalty	0.769
Satisfaction	0.736
Unique Image	0.778

The table above shows that the AVE value for the cognitive image equals 0.683, the unique image is 0.836, and the affective image is 0.769. Meanwhile, satisfaction and loyalty were 0.736 and 0.778. The five variables have an AVE above 0.5 so the construct has good convergent validity where the latent variable can explain an average of more than half the variance of the indicators.

##### 2. Discriminant Validity

The discriminant validity of the reflective measurement model is evaluated using cross-loading and comparing the AVE value with the square of the correlation between constructs. Good discriminant validity will be able to explain the indicator variables better than other construct indicators' variance. The value of discriminant validity for each indicator is shown below.

COG2	0.547	0931	0.685	0.640	0.540
COG3	0.472	0896	0.569	0.623	0.501
LOY1	0.488	0.575	0.870	0.670	0.584
LOY2	0.624	0.617	0879	0.631	0.586
LOY3	0.480	0.609	0898	0.625	0.587
LOY4	0.531	0.600	0.861	0.643	0.624
SAT1	0.524	0.571	0.596	0.806	0.545
SAT2	0.622	0.557	0.638	0.880	0.622
SAT3	0.605	0.638	0.656	0.882	0.610
SAT4	0.593	0.579	0.613	0.880	0.577
SAT5	0.629	0.620	0.647	0.852	0.524
SAT6	0.542	0.585	0.563	0.852	0.522
SAT7	0.529	0.637	0.677	0.848	0.556
UNQ1	0.468	0.458	0.597	0.531	0.880
UNQ2	0.557	0.513	0.572	0.554	0.853
UNQ3	0.592	0.536	0.668	0.626	0.901
UNQ4	0.557	0.483	0.550	0.611	0892

4 Based on the table above shows that the value of discriminant validity or loading factor for AFC1 is 0.824. The correlation of the AFC1 indicator is higher for affective images than for unique images, which is equal to 0.542, especially on the cognitive image (0.553), and on satisfaction by 0.607 and loyalty (0.530). The COG1 indicator correlation was higher for the cognitive image (0.915) than the affective image, which was 0.529, especially on the unique image (0.508), satisfaction 0.649 and loyalty (0.619), and so on. All loading factor values for each variable have a higher correlation with the variable compared to the other variables. Likewise, with the indicators for each variable. This shows that the placement of indicators for each variable is appropriate.

#### 4.2 Structural Model Evaluation

##### 1. Path Coefficient

The route coefficient can be used to determine the significance of the influence between the constructs. The sign of the path coefficient must be consistent with the postulated theory; the t-test (critical ratio) obtained from the bootstrapping procedure (resampling method) can be used to determine the significance of the path coefficient. The t-test results for the inner and outer models are shown below.

Table 5. Direct and Indirect Effect

	T-Statistics	T-table	Information
<b>Direct Effect</b>			
Affective Image -> Satisfaction	2,685	1.986	Supported
Cognitive Image -> Satisfaction	3,757	1.986	Supported
Unique image -> Satisfaction	2,438	1.986	Supported
Affective Image -> Loyalty	0,600	1.986	Supported
Cognitive image -> Loyalty	2,870	1.986	Supported
Satisfaction -> Loyalty	2,193	1.986	Supported
Unique image -> Loyalty	2,529	1.986	Supported
<b>Indirect Effect</b>			
Affective Image -> Loyalty	1,965	1.986	Supported
Cognitive image -> Loyalty	3,661	1.986	Supported
Unique image -> Loyalty	3,325	1.986	Supported

## 5. DISCUSSION

2 The study results show that the marketing mix positively and significantly affects Tourist Satisfaction in Tourism Destinations in the Lake Toba Region. The results of this study mean that the better the Cognitive Image, the higher the Tourist Satisfaction. Conversely,

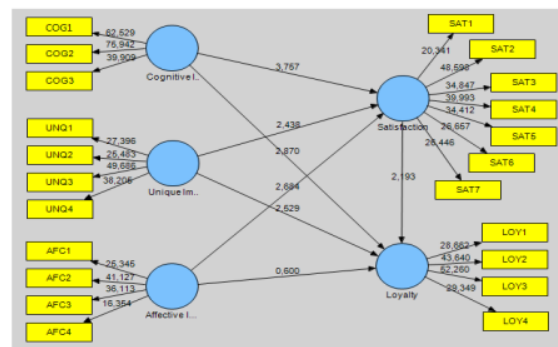


Figure 2. Inner and Outer T-Value Models

19 The t-test performed is the result of the t-test from bootstrap calculations. The t-test results in the figure above will then be compared with the t-table values.

the tourist will be more dissatisfied if the Cognitive Image is not good. The results of this study do not agree or are in line with the results of research conducted by [44]; [14] and [52] prove that the image of the destination consisting of a cognitive image, unique image, and affective image does not affect tourist satisfaction. This

study's results align with the study [6] results [53], which concluded that cognitive image has a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction. In determining customer satisfaction, especially in service companies such as tourist attractions, it is very diverse and what is felt by the customer himself, such as the costs incurred and the services of managers of existing tourist attractions [54].

Based on the study's results, Unique Image positively and significantly affects Tourist Satisfaction in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. The results of this study mean that the better the unique image, the higher the Tourist Satisfaction. Conversely, the more unfavorable the unique image is, the more dissatisfied the tourist will be. This study aligns with the study's results [53] and [10], which concluded that a unique image positively and significantly affects tourist satisfaction.

This research is contrary to the results of research from [41], where destination images such as cognitive images, unique images, and affective images do not have a direct effect on satisfaction due to different locations in the study where the Lake Toba Region is indeed very unique compared to with other tourist attractions. Visiting time to enjoy tourism in the Lake Toba area is also unique because visitors who come specifically intend to take a vacation, this is what makes the unique image the satisfaction of visitors to the Lake Toba area. Visitor satisfaction is also reflected in conformity with what visitors want because visitors use marketing information systems that exist in online media to find out what uniqueness there is [41] and [55].

The study results show that Affective Image positively and significantly affects Tourist Satisfaction in Tourist Destinations in Lake Toba Region. The results of this study mean that the better the affective image, the higher the Tourist Satisfaction. On the other hand, the more bad the affective image is, the more dissatisfied the tourist will be. This study showed the same results as previous research [56] and concluded that affective image positively and significantly affects tourist satisfaction. So are the research results [57]. From the results analyzed using path statistical analysis, research indicated a direct effect of affective image on the intention of tourists to return.

The study results show that cognitive image positively and significantly affects tourist loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. The results of this study mean that if the Cognitive Image is better, it will increase tourist loyalty. Conversely, if the Cognitive Image is not good, the tourist will be more disloyal. Empirically, the findings of this research study support the results of the research conducted [58], which concluded that cognitive image has a positive and significant effect on tourist loyalty. Research results contradict the study's results [59], which reveals that cognitive image does not directly affect loyalty.

Based on the results of the study shows that service quality has a positive and significant effect on tourist loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. The results of this study mean that the better the Unique Image, the more tourist loyalty will increase. Conversely, the more unfavorable the Unique Image, the more disloyal the tourist will be. Research in line with research from [33] where the image of the destination as a whole and unique in it affects the loyalty of tourists or customers. This study's results align with research conducted by [56], who researched that a unique image does not directly affect tourist loyalty.

The study results show that affective image positively and significantly affects tourist loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. The results of this study mean that the better the affective image, the more tourist loyalty will increase. Conversely, the more bad the affective image is, the more disloyal the tourist will be. The research results support the research conducted [45], which shows that affective image positively influences the image of tourist visits where customers will recommend the area, which means the loyalty of tourists or customers. So are the research results [56], who concluded that affective image positively and significantly affects tourist loyalty.

Based on the results of the study shows that Tourist Satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on tourist loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. The results of this study mean that the higher the perceived Tourist Satisfaction, the higher the tourist loyalty. Conversely, the lower the Tourist Satisfaction, the more disloyal the tourist will be. The results of this study are in line with the results of research that has been done [60], [61], and [62], which shows that Tourist Satisfaction has a significant effect on tourist loyalty.

Based on Table 6, it is known that the t-statistic value for the cognitive image of loyalty through satisfaction is 3.661. When compared with the value of t table, then  $t_{count} (3.661) > t_{table} (1.986)$  so that  $H_0$  is rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a significant influence of cognitive image on loyalty through satisfaction. The magnitude of the effect of cognitive image on loyalty through satisfaction is 0.389. The positive value of the path coefficient indicates that the better the cognitive image, the better the loyalty through satisfaction. This research illustrates a destination's importance in creating customer satisfaction, which will create customer loyalty [56] and [63]. Research conducted [52] also agrees that satisfaction arising from affective effects creates customer loyalty. The same thing was conveyed by [59], where cognitive image affects loyalty through satisfaction.

Based on Table 6, it is known that the t statistic value for a unique image on loyalty through satisfaction is 3.325. When compared with the value of t table, then  $t_{count} (3.325) > t_{table} (1.986)$  so that  $H_0$  is rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a significant effect

of a unique image on loyalty through satisfaction. The magnitude of the influence of a unique image on loyalty through satisfaction is 0.356. The positive path coefficient indicates that the better the unique image, the better the loyalty through satisfaction.

This research aligns with research conducted by [64], where the unique image proposition at each destination contributes to customer loyalty through satisfaction. Similar results are carried out by [65] and [66], where the image of the destination with a unique image is very supportive for customers to come or visit again or is called loyal because it can mean that the customer is satisfied. The uniqueness of tourist attractions can cooperate with local tourism groups such as Tourism Awareness Groups so that these destinations will feel more natural and support the economy of local community groups [67] and [58].

Based on Table 6, it is known that the t statistic value for an affective image on loyalty through satisfaction is 1.965. When compared with the value of the t table, then  $t_{count} (1.965) < t_{table} (1.986)$  so that  $H_0$  is rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that there is no significant effect of affective image on loyalty through satisfaction. The influence of affective image on loyalty through satisfaction is 0.167. The positive path coefficient indicates that the better the affective image, the better the loyalty through satisfaction.

This can happen because affective images such as safe, comfortable, and pleasant conditions obtained by tourists satisfy tourists. This research aligns with research conducted by [68], where the affective image, part of the destination image, influences loyalty through visitor satisfaction. From the results of the existing analysis, when observed from the direct and indirect influence, it can be said that the image of the destination is decisive in customer satisfaction and loyalty.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Based on data analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that cognitive, unique, and affective images have a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction in tourist destinations in the Lake Toba region. Cognitive Image, Unique Image, and Tourist Satisfaction positively and significantly affect Tourist Loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. However, affective image does not significantly affect Tourist Loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. Cognitive Image and Unique Image have a positive and significant effect on Tourist Loyalty Through Tourist Satisfaction at Tourist Destinations in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations, and affective image has no significant effect on Tourist Loyalty Through Tourist Satisfaction at Tourist Destinations in the Lake Toba Tourism Destinations.

The management of places and tourist attractions located in the community and managed by the local community must also be under government supervision, and there is also a need for cooperation between the government and the community. The government must think carefully before taking direct action, such as holding an audience with the tourism business community, to reduce the chance of conflicting interests between the government and the tourism community. There is also a need for education about tourism

awareness among the public to improve the quality of tourism services, which will have a positive and memorable impact on tourists. The community and government must work together well so that existing strengths and opportunities can be utilized and developed into strong potential to attract tourists. The existing weaknesses and challenges must be used as lessons to improve the development of Lake Toba's tourism potential by making the weaknesses and challenges benchmarks that must be faced and overcome together.

# 33%

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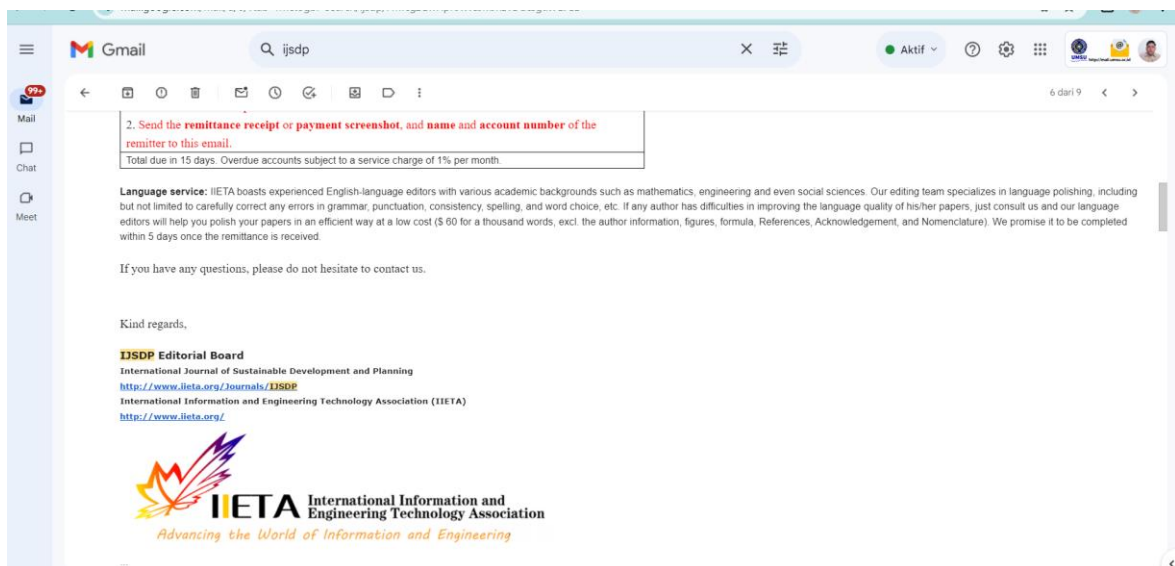
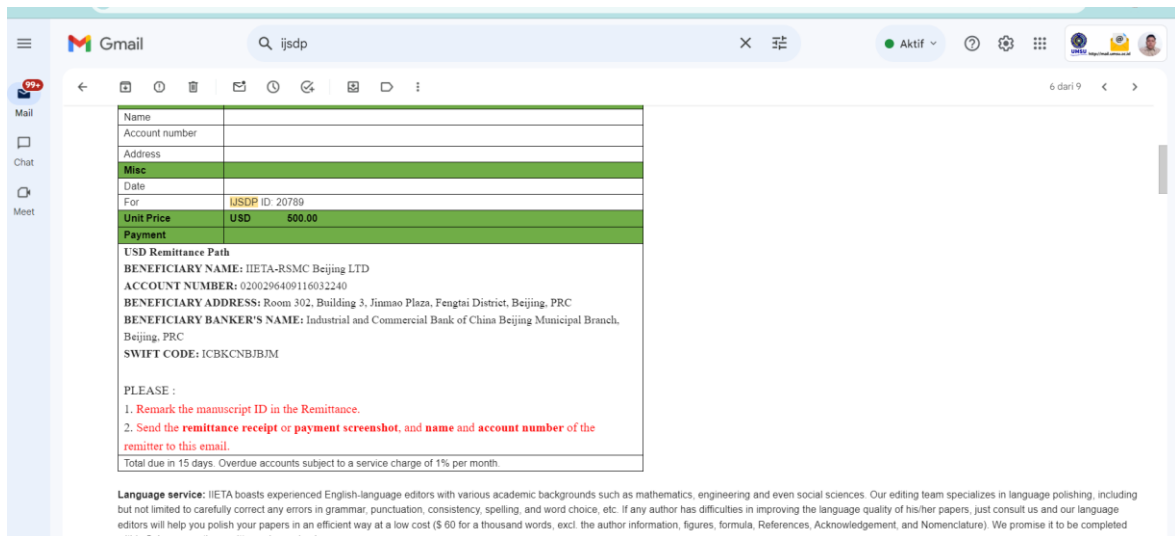
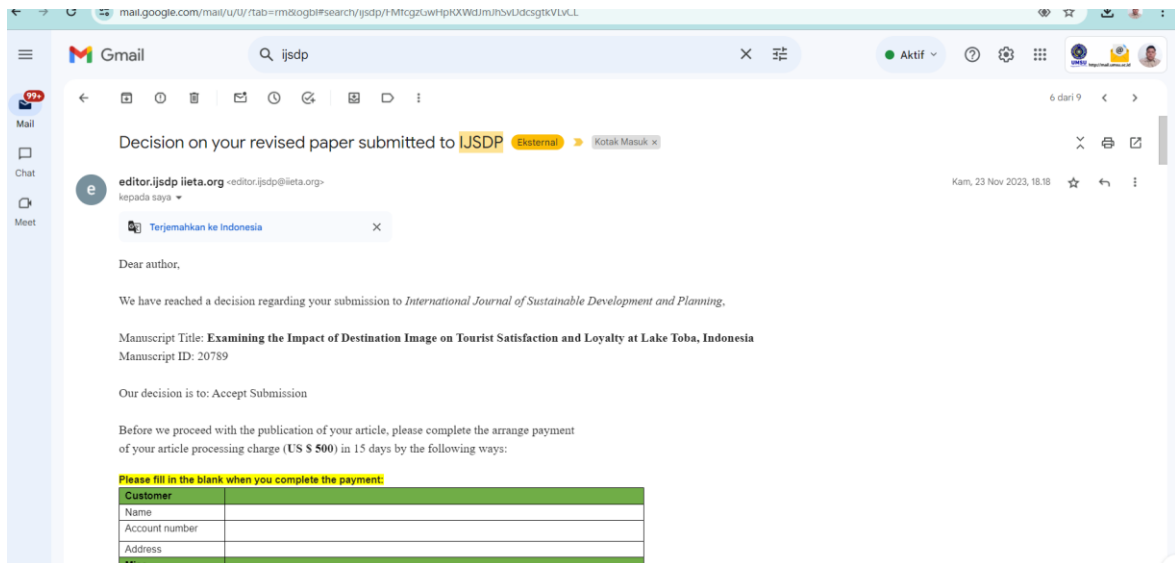
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## 4. Bukti Artikel Diterima (23 November 2023)



## **Examining the Impact of Destination Image on Tourist Satisfaction and Loyalty at Lake Toba, Indonesia**

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### **ABSTRACT**

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**Keywords:**

*destination image, satisfaction, loyalty, SEM-PLS, Indonesia*

This study aims to test the influence of destination image on tourist loyalty satisfaction in Lake Toba, Indonesia. This study uses an explanatory research approach. The population of this study is all Domestic Tourists visiting the Lake Toba Region. Determination of the number of samples using the formula and obtained as many as 96 respondents. Primary data collection is done by questionnaire (questionnaire). The data analysis method used is Partial Least Square (PLS) based Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The study results show that cognitive, unique, and affective images positively and significantly affect on tourist satisfaction in tourist destinations in the Lake Toba region. Cognitive Image, Unique Image, and Tourist Satisfaction positively and significantly affect Tourist Loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. However, the Affective Image only significantly affects Tourist Loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. Cognitive Image and Unique Image have a positive and significant effect on Tourist Loyalty Through Tourist Satisfaction at Tourist Destinations in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations, and Affective Image has no significant effect on Tourist Loyalty Through Tourist Satisfaction at Tourist Destinations in the Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. Lake Toba Area managers must carry out various relevant programs and maintain good relations with stakeholders in maintaining tourism destinations.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Tourism is one of Indonesia's largest sources of foreign exchange. Tourism plays a significant role in boosting the economy and the income of individuals. The tourism potential in Indonesia needs to be appropriately maximized. This is due to the need for more attention from the local and central government in managing existing natural and human resources [1].

The role of tourist destinations is to improve people's welfare. Tourism has a positive impact on the local community's economy, leading to people's income, employment opportunities, increased distribution of benefits and profits, ownership and control over the community's economy, and impact on regional development [2]. The effect of tourism development, namely employment, creating business opportunities, encouraging infrastructure development, increasing tax revenues, improving the community's economy, and increasing investment in the tourism sector [3].

The destination image of Lake Toba as the largest lake in Southeast Asia is an important point in the decision of tourists to visit. With a good and well-known destination image, it makes it easier for tourists to plan their vacations [4]. Image is an idea, impression, feeling, and belief in a tourist destination [5]. Destination image is a place impression or area

perception [6], while according to [7], image is an indicator value of the potential of an area.

A good destination image will increase tourist visits because the image influences visiting decisions and intentions to make repeat visits [6]. Factors contributing to image formation include improved quality and reliability, trustworthiness, usability and benefits, service, risk perception, and pricing [8]; [9]; [10]; [11]; [12] and [13]. The dimensions used to measure destination image are friendly behavior, security posts, tourist activities, tourist information, tourist maps, cleanliness, tourist facilities, restaurants, lodging, art activities, and souvenirs [14]; [15]; [16]. The dimensions of image measurement are attributes, personality, and benefits. The dimensions used to measure the image, according to [17], are symbols, logos, names, citizens, and slogans, while according to [18], measuring image seen from popularity, good word of mouth, and commodities offered. Destination imagery can increase the number of tourist visits because it makes it easier to search for information on places to visit [5]. Indicators of destination image formation are divided into cognitive (belief), affective (feeling), and conative. Cognitive image refers to the quality and friendliness of residents, cultural attractions, climate and weather, and price of services. In contrast, the affective image refers to one's imagination, hope, and emotion about tourist attractions. In

contrast, conative is a combination of cognitive and affective decision-making [19]. The same is explained by [20]; [21] that cognitive, affective, and conative components form an image.

Tourism destinations are widely acknowledged to belong in the consumer-generated set from which the final decision is made [22], [23]; [24]. On the other hand, consumers frequently offer a variety of locations with similar characteristics, such as great accommodations, stunning scenic views, and friendly people. Consequently, more effort is required for the objective to be included in the elicited set; alternatively, the goals must be distinct and distinct for the final selection to be chosen. From this perspective, destination branding is essential for destinations to be recognized and differentiated from alternatives in the consciousness of their target market. Although destination image is not explicitly examined in the context of branding, it must be considered a pre-existing concept following destination branding [25]. In contrast, the crux of destination branding is creating a positive destination image that defines and differentiates the location using a consistent blend of brand materials [26]. The brand destination image can be defined as "a perception of a place based on the memories of tourists" [27].

Branding is now widely regarded as a significant tool for firms to gain competitiveness through strengthening markets because it provides value for producers and consumers [28]. In order to affect the destination brand, the location's distinctive image must be perceived as a significant brand association. Creating a destination's image is crucial for survival in a global market where goals compete fiercely [29]. Destination branding selects a combination of components to identify and differentiate a location by constructing a positive image. Destination branding promises a memorable experience about a location [30]. Tourism is an integral aspect that cannot be ignored when discussing a location. As one of the biggest drivers of the economy, tourism generates a large amount of state revenue. By seeing the importance of destination branding, countries compete to show their unique character in the eyes of the world [31]. The competition for destination branding is increasing, especially in Indonesian tourism, which still needs to be improved in other countries, particularly neighboring countries like Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand.

This study aims to create and evaluate a theoretical destination branding model based on destination image studies and standard branding principles and practices. The current study, in particular, investigates the relationship between brand associations (images of cognitive, unique, and cognitive components), brand image (total image of a destination), and future visitor behavior. For this purpose, an empirical study was conducted at Lake Toba, Indonesia, with the aim of successfully brand the destination and counter its negative image.

The location of Lake Toba in North Sumatra is the most valuable national assets and significant tourist destination, alongside Bali and Lombok, that brings national pride. Lake Toba's designation as a tourist destination is predicated on the belief that it offers a breathtaking natural vista [32]. The Lake Toba Region has several tourist destinations, including Parapat, Simarjarunjung, Tanjung Camel, Haranggaol, and others. One of the most famous and popular areas is Parapat City, which is also the capital of Girsang Sipangan Bolon District. Parapat is the primary entrance to the island of Samosir and is often referred to as Parapat Tourism City. The condition of the Covid-19 pandemic precipitated a steep

decline in visitor visits in 2020. Based on information from the Central Statistics Agency for Samosir Regency, foreign tourist visits in June 2020 were around 99 visits or a decrease of 99.53 percent from 21,143 visits in June 2019.

Local governments and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are attempting to thrive so visitors can visit Lake Toba while adhering to health guidelines. The tourism business is expected to grow, one way being to improve the image of Lake Toba as a tourist destination in the eyes of the general public, both domestic and foreign. Enhancing the image of the Lake Toba destination is one approach to promote local and foreign visitor visitation. The tourism industry is expected to rise, one of which is by increasing the image of the tourist destination of Lake Toba in the eyes of the public, both domestic and foreign. One way to increase domestic and foreign tourist visits is by enhancing the image of the Lake Toba destination. The destination's image is one of the tourist's most essential deciding factors. This research seeks to quantify the impact of images on tourist visit decisions in Samosir Regency. Improving the image of the Lake Toba destination is one strategy to promote local and foreign visitor visitation. Tourists believe destination image is one of the most essential elements when selecting a destination. This research aims to determine the impact of the image (Image) on tourist visit decisions in Samosir Regency.

One of the efforts made to create uniqueness in the Lake Toba Region is, of course, by fulfilling the concept of the destination branding model, which has three dimensions: cognitive image, unique image, and affective image [29] and [33]. Several research results show that destination image is a total impression of cognitive and affective evaluation [34]. It is suggested that brand association should include both cognitive image and affective image components [25]. These two components are indicators that influence the destination image [34] and [33].

## **2. THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### **2.1 Destination Branding**

Destination branding communicates a destination's distinct identity by distinguishing it from its competitors [33]. Based on this definition, a destination needs a brand as a medium to communicate to consumers about the product's type or purpose, which differentiates the product from other products. As with general brand recognition, destination brands serve two essential functions: identification and differentiation. The definition of "identification" in brand literature is "explaining the source of the product to consumers." While a product generally refers to a physical offering that can be readily altered, a place as a product refers to a large entity that contains various material and non-material elements to represent it [35]. For instance, a location includes tangible features, such as historical sites and beaches, and ineffable features, such as culture, customs, and history [33]. Destination branding is a strategy for marketing an area's potential [7]. There are five (5) stages to carry out destination branding in changing the image of a region, namely: 1) market investigation, analysis, and strategic recommendations; 2) brand identity development; 3) brand launch and introduction: communicating the vision, 4) brand implementation, and 5) monitoring, evaluation, and review [36].

### **2.2 Brand Identity and Brand Image**

According to a previous study, brand identity and image are critical to successful destination branding.

There is a significant distinction between the sender and recipient perspective [37]. Brand identity is a distinct collection of brand associations developed by strategists [5]. The brand identity is a distinct brand association that conveys promise to customers [38]. On the other hand, the brand image refers to how consumers perceive a brand, which is influenced by its connections embedded memory. The sender (the destination marketer) portrays the destination brand identity for destination brands through all of the characteristics and activities that set it apart from competing locations.

In the meantime, recipients (consumers) construct and store in their minds a mental image of the destination [35]. It is important to note that the destination brand identity and brand image are reciprocal. Brand image plays a crucial role in establishing brand identity [39], and reflects brand identity [35]. People form mental images of destinations depending on the brand identity marketers convey. Then, based on their knowledge of the brand image of consumers at a specific destination, objective marketers build and enhance brand identity. As a result, the destination image is critical in developing a favorable and recognizable brand character.

### **2.3 Brand Association**

Brand associations are everything that directly or indirectly appears and is related to the consumer's memory of a brand [38]. Regarding destination branding, attitude can be a brand association to build a destination image [39]. Destination image is also regarded as an attitudinal construct composed of cognitive and emotive assessments [40]. This assessment supports the idea that destination branding's cognitive and affective image components should be included [38]. Nonetheless, it is asserted that the cognitive and affective image components are hierarchically linked to form a destination image [39]. However, it is still possible that each cognitive and emotional brand image component will contribute uniquely to formulating the overall image. To investigate the effects of cognitive and affective components on consumer's attitude structure and future behaviors, cognitive and affective components must be treated independently [41]. This study concludes that positive cognitive, unique, and brand associations will positively affect a destination's overall image (e.g., branding). Multiple studies examined the cognitive and affective image components of brand associations that influence brand image (i.e., destination image). The use of a unique image is suggested to establish a prominent brand image. Unlike ordinary images, a distinctive image can better convey the essence of the destination [42]. Uniqueness is critical because it is influenced by the similar differences between goals in the target consumer's mind [39]. Similarly, destination branding must promote the location's distinct image for consumers to distinguish it from competing places. In reality, destination branding is partly described as communicating a fulfilling travel experience distinctively associated with a specific destination [38].

### **2.4 Tourist Behavior**

The image of a destination directly impacts the intention to return and the inclination to recommend it to

others. Meanwhile, a destination's quality and satisfaction indirectly affect its intention to return and willingness to recommend it to others [43]. The image of a destination has a direct impact on trip quality and behavioral intention. Furthermore, destination image influences behavioral intention indirectly through trip quality, perceived value, and satisfaction [44]. The cognitive destination image has a direct effect on tourist behavioral intention.

In contrast, the functional image is associated only with the intention to return, the psychological image is associated only with the intention to recommend, and the mixed image is not related to the two behavioral intentions [27]. Other studies have discovered a robust indirect relationship between destination image and intention to visit, moderated by service quality and tourist satisfaction [14], by testing a theoretical model to see if the destination image directly or indirectly affects loyalty. According to the research, the destination image is associated with loyalty indirectly through satisfaction [12].

### **2.5 The Relationship Destination Image with Satisfaction and Loyalty**

Creating a good image of a tourist destination will positively contribute to the development and progress of a tourist attraction. According to [45], ways that can be done to improve the image of tourist destinations are by strengthening cognitive image, unique image, and affective image. That cognitive image is knowledge obtained through the cognitive learning process, likewise with the learning carried out by the community (consumers) when selecting an area as a tourist destination [46]. Tourists search for information regarding tourist attractions through multiple sources. Their research will be assessed, and ultimately, they will choose a destination based on the best image. The image of a tourist destination is also determined by image or affective evaluation. Affective images are based more on feelings than beliefs and knowledge about objects. People who believe and believe that a tourist destination will be able to provide high value for them will improve the image of a tourist area. In this case, it shows that the affective image, trust, and knowledge of a tourist attraction will improve the image of a tourist attraction.

Apart from cognitive and affective images, another factor that influences the image of a tourist area is a unique image. The image of tourist attraction is built by its uniqueness. The uniqueness that a tourist attraction has and that other tourist attractions need to have will differentiate that tourist attraction. This attraction's appeal is what entices visitors and transforms it into a favored spot for tourist. The significance of image for a tourist destination, namely the creation of optimism, can be utilized as a marketing strategy and market segmentation, is a form of consumption, influences prospective markets, and influences satisfaction and destination choice [47]. That image will influence consumer loyalty, which is manifested in the form of an intention to revisit and an intention to recommend. Studies show that consumers with a positive image of an area or tourist attraction tend to visit again, tell stories, and provide recommendations to others to visit that attraction [47].

## **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employs the explanatory research strategy to elucidate the causal relationships between the research variables and to test the hypotheses by presenting section titles and other headings [48]. This research was conducted in seven

districts in the Lake Toba Region of North Sumatra, Indonesia, namely Simalungun Regency, Toba Samosir Regency, Samosir Regency, North Tapanuli Regency, Humbang Hasundutan Regency, Karo Regency, and Dairi Regency. The population of this study is all Domestic Tourists visiting the Lake Toba Region. Since the number of tourists visiting was huge and the population was unknown, a sample was selected using the Lemeshow formula, and 96 respondents were obtained. Researchers used primary data and online research techniques using a web-based electronic questionnaire (Google form).

Furthermore, the constructs of this study's evaluation were graded using a scale (1 – disagree, 5 – strongly agree). The partial least squares (PLS) method was chosen because the most frequent PLS applications involve non-normal data, limited sample sizes, and constructive ideas [49]. The hypotheses and proposed research model were evaluated using the PLS method [49]

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Evaluation of Measurement Models

The item-level reliability, internal consistency or composite reliability, extracted average variance, and discriminant validity are all evaluated as part of the indicator measurement model evaluation. There is convergent validity for the first three measurements.

#### 1. Convergent Validity

##### a. Item reliability

The item's dependability is often known as the indicator's validity. The value of the loading factor (standardized loading) can be used to test the item's reliability (indicator validity). The factor loading value represents the correlation size between each indicator and the construct. The loading factor value greater than 0.7 is considered excellent, implying that the indicator is suitable for measuring constructions. Nonetheless, a standardized loading factor greater than 0.5 is acceptable. Meanwhile, values of the standardized loading factor less than 0.5 can be excluded from the model [50]. The following are the reliability item values present in the standardized loading column:

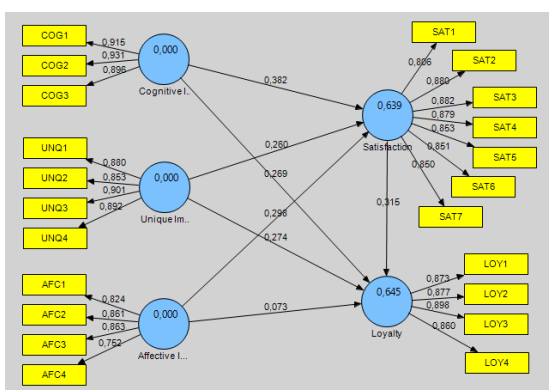


Figure 1. Standardized Loading Factor Inner and Outer Model

Figure 1 shows that all loadings have a value greater than 0.5, so nothing needs to be set aside. Consequently, each indicator adequately explains each latent variable, namely cognitive image, unique image, affective image, satisfaction, and loyalty.

The cognitive image indicator with the most significant loading is COG2. As for the unique image, the most significant loading factor is UNQ3. The most significant loading factor for indicators on the affective image is AFC3. Indicators of satisfaction: the most significant loading factor is SAT3. Loyalty indicator, the biggest loading factor is LOY3.

#### b. Composite Reliability

Cronbach's alpha and DG rho (PCA) are the statistics employed for composite or construct reliability. Cronbach's alpha and DG rho (PCA) values greater than 7.0 indicate that the construct is a highly reliable measurement tool. A limit value of 0.7 or higher indicates acceptability, whereas 0.8 or higher indicates extreme satisfaction [51].

Table 2. Composite Reliability Results

	Composite Reliability
Affective Image	0.896
Cognitive Images	0.938
Loyalty	0.930
Satisfaction	0.951
Unique Image	0.933

The five latent obtained a composite reliability value above 0.7, so all factors have good reliability as a measuring tool.

#### c. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) defines the variance that an item can explain in comparison to the variance resulting from measurement errors.

Table 3. Results of Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

	AVE
Affective Image	0.683
Cognitive Images	0.836
Loyalty	0.769
Satisfaction	0.736
Unique Image	0.778

Table 3 shows that the AVE value for the cognitive image equals 0.683, the unique image is 0.836, and the affective image is 0.769. Meanwhile, satisfaction and loyalty were 0.736 and 0.778. The AVE of the five variables is greater than 0.5, indicating that the construct has acceptable convergent validity when the latent variable can explain an average of more than fifty percent of the variance of the indicators.

#### 2. Discriminant Validity

The discriminant validity of the reflective measurement model is determined by cross-loading and comparing the AVE value to the square of the correlation between constructs. Good discriminant validity will better explain the indicator variable variance than other construct indicators variance. The value of discriminant validity for every indicator is shown in the table below.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

	Affective Image	Cognitive Images	Loyalty	Satisfaction	Unique Image
AFC1	0.824	0.553	0.530	0.607	0.542
AFC2	0.861	0.466	0.531	0.627	0.511
AFC3	0.863	0.407	0.513	0.542	0.565
AFC4	0.752	0.438	0.422	0.428	0.410
COG1	0.529	0.915	0.619	0.649	0.508

COG2	0.547	0931	0.685	0.640	0.540
COG3	0.472	0896	0.569	0.623	0.501
LOY1	0.488	0.575	0.870	0.670	0.584
LOY2	0.624	0.617	0879	0.631	0.586
LOY3	0.480	0.609	0898	0.625	0.587
LOY4	0.531	0.600	0.861	0.643	0.624
SAT1	0.524	0.571	0.596	0.806	0.545
SAT2	0.622	0.557	0.638	0.880	0.622
SAT3	0.605	0.638	0.656	0.882	0.610
SAT4	0.593	0.579	0.613	0.880	0.577
SAT5	0.629	0.620	0.647	0.852	0.524
SAT6	0.542	0.585	0.563	0.852	0.522
SAT7	0.529	0.637	0.677	0.848	0.556
UNQ1	0.468	0.458	0.597	0.531	0.880
UNQ2	0.557	0.513	0.572	0.554	0.853
UNQ3	0.592	0.536	0.668	0.626	0.901
UNQ4	0.557	0.483	0.550	0.611	0892

Based on the Table 4, it shows that the value of discriminant validity or loading factor for AFC1 is 0.824. The correlation of the AFC1 indicator is higher for affective images than for unique images, which is equal to 0.542, especially on the cognitive image (0.553), and on satisfaction by 0.607 and loyalty (0.530). The COG1 indicator correlation was higher for the cognitive image (0.915) than the affective image, which was 0.529, especially on the unique image (0.508), satisfaction 0.649 and loyalty (0.619), and so on. All loading factor values for each variable have a stronger correlation with the variable than other variables, similarly, for each variable's indicators. This demonstrates that each variable's indicator positioning is appropriate.

## 4.2 Structural Model Evaluation

### 1. Path Coefficient

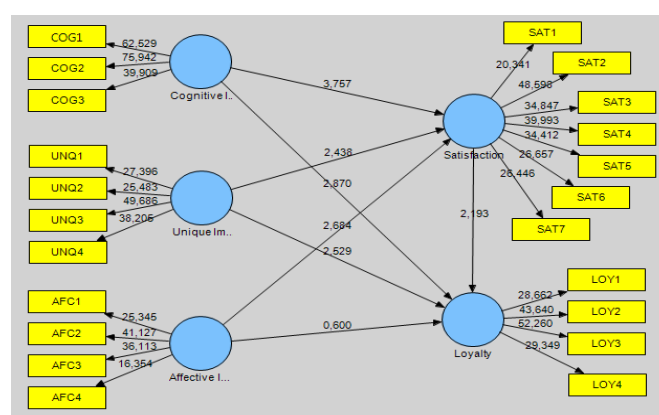
The route coefficient can be utilized to ascertain the significance of the influence between the constructs. The sign of the path coefficient must be consistent with the hypothesis; the t-test (critical ratio) derived from the bootstrapping procedure (resampling method) can be used to ascertain the significance of the path coefficient. The inner and exterior models' t-test results are presented in the table below.

**Table 5. Direct and Indirect Effects**

	T-Statistics	T-table	Information
<b>Direct Effect</b>			
Affective Image -> Satisfaction	2,685	1.986	Supported
Cognitive Image -> Satisfaction	3,757	1.986	Supported
Unique image -> Satisfaction	2,438	1.986	Supported
Affective Image -> Loyalty	0,600	1.986	Supported
Cognitive image -> Loyalty	2,870	1.986	Supported
Satisfaction -> Loyalty	2,193	1.986	Supported
Unique image -> Loyalty	2,529	1.986	Supported
<b>Indirect Effect</b>			
Affective Image -> Loyalty	1.965	1.986	Supported
Cognitive image -> Loyalty	3.661	1.986	Supported
Unique image -> Loyalty	3.325	1.986	Supported

## 5. DISCUSSION

The study results indicate that using a specific combination of marketing strategies positively impacts tourist satisfaction in the Lake Toba Region. Our study suggests a positive correlation between Cognitive Image and Tourist Satisfaction, where a stronger Cognitive



**Figure 2. Inner and Outer T-Value Models**

The t-test that was conducted is the result of bootstrap calculations. The results of the t-test depicted in the preceding diagram will then be compared to the t-table values.

Image corresponds to higher satisfaction level. Conversely, if the cognitive image is poor, the tourist will be more dissatisfied. The results of this study do not agree or are in line with the results of research conducted by [44]; [14] and [52] prove that the image of the destination consisting of a cognitive image, unique

image, and affective image does not affect tourist satisfaction. This study's results align with the study's results [53], which concluded that cognitive image has a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction. In determining customer satisfaction, especially in service companies such as tourist attractions, the customer's experience are diverse, such as the costs incurred and the services of managers of existing tourist attractions [54].

Based on the study's results, Unique Image positively and significantly affects Tourist Satisfaction in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. This study suggests that tourist satisfaction is positively correlated with the quality of the Unique Image, therefore, striving for high-quality images to enhance the overall tourist experience is important. Conversely, the more unfavorable the unique image is, the more dissatisfied the tourist. This study aligns with the study's results [53] and [10], which concluded that a unique image positively and significantly affects tourist satisfaction.

This research is contrary to the results of research from [41]. In the earlier study, it was observed that destination images, including cognitive images, unique images, and affective images did not directly impact satisfaction due to different locations in the study where the Lake Toba Region is indeed very unique compared to with other tourist attractions. Visiting time to enjoy tourism in the Lake Toba area is also unique because visitors who come specifically intend to take a vacation, this is what makes the unique image the satisfaction of visitors to the Lake Toba area. Visitors satisfaction in their ability to find unique offering on the site using online marketing information system [41], [55].

The study results show that Affective Image positively and significantly affects Tourist Satisfaction in Tourist Destinations in the Lake Toba Region. The results of this study mean that the better the affective image, the higher the Tourist Satisfaction. On the other hand, the more deficient the affective image is, the more dissatisfied the tourist will be. This study showed the same results as previous research [56] and concluded that affective image positively and significantly affects tourist satisfaction. So are the research results [57]. From the results analyzed using path statistical analysis, research indicated a direct effect of affective image on the intention of tourists to return.

The study results show that cognitive image positively and significantly affects tourist loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. The results of this study mean that if the Cognitive Image is more reasonable, it will increase tourist loyalty. Conversely, if the Cognitive Image is not good, the tourist will be more disloyal. Empirically, the findings of this research study support the results of the research conducted [58], which concluded that cognitive image has a positive and significant effect on tourist loyalty. Research results contradict the study's [59], revealing that cognitive image does not directly affect loyalty.

Based on the study results, tourist loyalty can be strengthened by using high-quality unique images. Conversely, the more unfavorable the Unique Image, the more disloyal the tourist will be. Research in [33] highlights the importance of a destination's overall image and uniqueness in influencing tourist or customer loyalty. This study's results align with research conducted by [56], who investigated a unique image does not directly affect tourist loyalty.

The study results show that affective image positively and significantly affects tourist loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. The results of this study mean that the better the affective image, the more tourist loyalty will increase. Conversely, the more deficient the affective image is, the more disloyal the tourist will be. The research results support the research conducted [45], which shows that affective image positively influences the image of tourist visits where customers will recommend the area, which means the loyalty of tourists or customers. So are the research results [56], who concluded that affective image positively and significantly affects tourist loyalty.

Based on the results of the study shows that Tourist Satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on tourist loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. The results of this study denote that the higher the perceived Tourist Satisfaction, the higher the tourist loyalty. Conversely, the lower the Tourist Satisfaction, the more disloyal the tourist will be. The results of this study are in line with the results of research that has been done [60], [61], and [62], which shows that Tourist Satisfaction has a significant effect on tourist loyalty.

Based on Table 6, it is known that the t-statistic value for the cognitive image of loyalty through satisfaction is 3.661. When compared with the value of t-table, then  $t \text{ count } (3.661) > t \text{ table } (1.986)$  so that  $H_0$  is rejected. Thus, there is a significant influence of cognitive image on loyalty through satisfaction. The magnitude of the effect of cognitive image on loyalty through satisfaction is 0.389. The positive value of the path coefficient indicates that the better the cognitive image, the better the loyalty through satisfaction. This research illustrates a destination's importance in creating customer satisfaction, which will create customer loyalty [56] and [63]. Research conducted [52] also agrees that satisfaction arising from affective effects creates customer loyalty. The same thing was conveyed by [59], where cognitive image affects loyalty through satisfaction.

Table 6, present the t statistic value for a unique image on loyalty through satisfaction is 3.325. When compared with the value of t-table, then  $t \text{ count } (3.325) > t \text{ table } (1.986)$  so that  $H_0$  is rejected. Thus, there is a significant effect of a unique image on loyalty through satisfaction. The magnitude of the influence of a unique image on loyalty through satisfaction is 0.356. The positive path coefficient indicates that the better the unique image, the better the loyalty through satisfaction.

This research aligns with a previous study by [64], which found that the unique image of each destination contributes to customer satisfaction loyalty. Similar results are carried out by [65] and [66], suggest that the unique image of the destination is an important driver of customers return and loyalty and an important indicator of customer satisfaction. The uniqueness of tourist attractions can cooperate with local tourism groups such as Tourism Awareness Groups so that these destinations will feel more natural and support the economy of local community groups [67] and [58].

Based on Table 6, it is known that the t statistic value for an affective image on loyalty through satisfaction is 1.965. When compared with the value of the t table, then  $t \text{ count } (1.965) < t \text{ table } (1.986)$  so that  $H_0$  is rejected. Thus, there is no significant effect of affective image on loyalty through satisfaction. The influence of affective image on loyalty through satisfaction is 0.167. The positive path coefficient indicates that the better the affective image, the better the loyalty through satisfaction.

This can happen because affective images such as safe, comfortable, and pleasant conditions obtained by tourists satisfy tourists. It is worth noting that this research collaborates the finding of [68], which highlights the affective image, part of the destination image, influences loyalty through visitor satisfaction. From the results of the existing analysis, when observed from the direct and indirect influence, the image of the destination is decisive in customer satisfaction and loyalty.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Based on data analysis and discussion, cognitive, unique, and affective images have a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction in tourist destinations in the Lake Toba region. Cognitive Image, Unique Image, and Tourist Satisfaction positively and significantly affect Tourist Loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. However, affective image does not significantly affect Tourist Loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. Cognitive Image and Unique Image have a positive and significant effect on Tourist Loyalty Through Tourist Satisfaction at Tourist Destinations in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations, and affective image has no significant effect on Tourist Loyalty Through Tourist Satisfaction at Tourist Destinations in the Lake Toba Tourism Destinations.

The management of places and tourist attractions located in the community and managed by the local community must also be under government supervision, and there is also a need for cooperation between the government and the community. The government must think carefully before taking direct action, such as holding an audience with the tourism business community, to reduce the chance of conflicting interests between the government and the tourism community. In addition, the public needs to be educated about tourism awareness in order to improve the quality of tourism services that leave positive and unforgettable impressions on tourists. The community and government must work together well so that existing strengths and opportunities can be utilized and developed into solid potential to attract tourists. The

existing weaknesses and challenges must be used as lessons to improve the development of Lake Toba's tourism potential by making the weaknesses and challenges benchmarks that must be faced and overcome together.

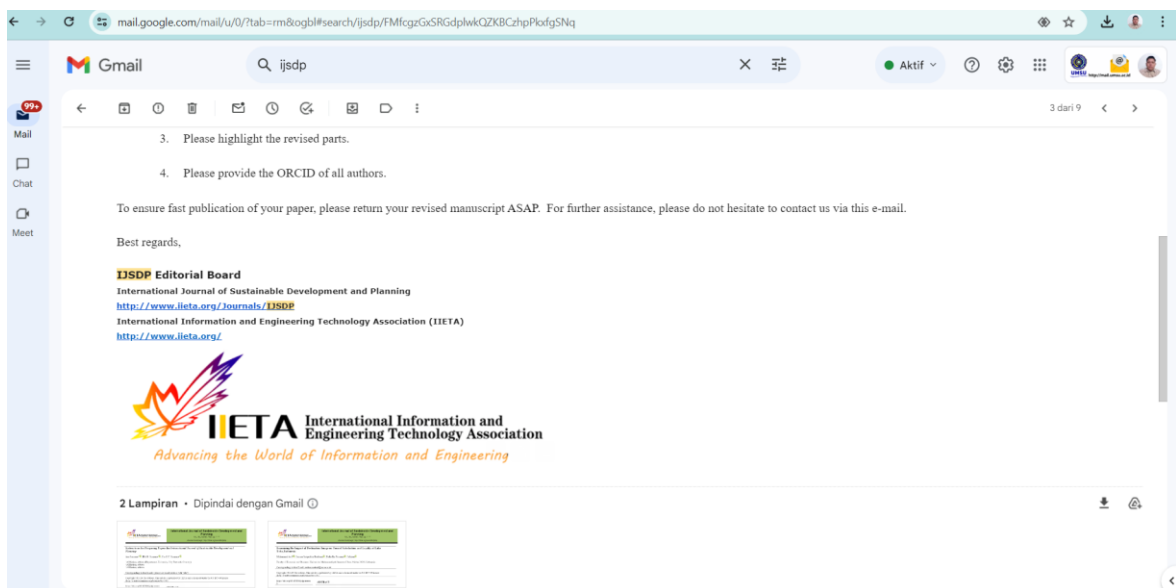
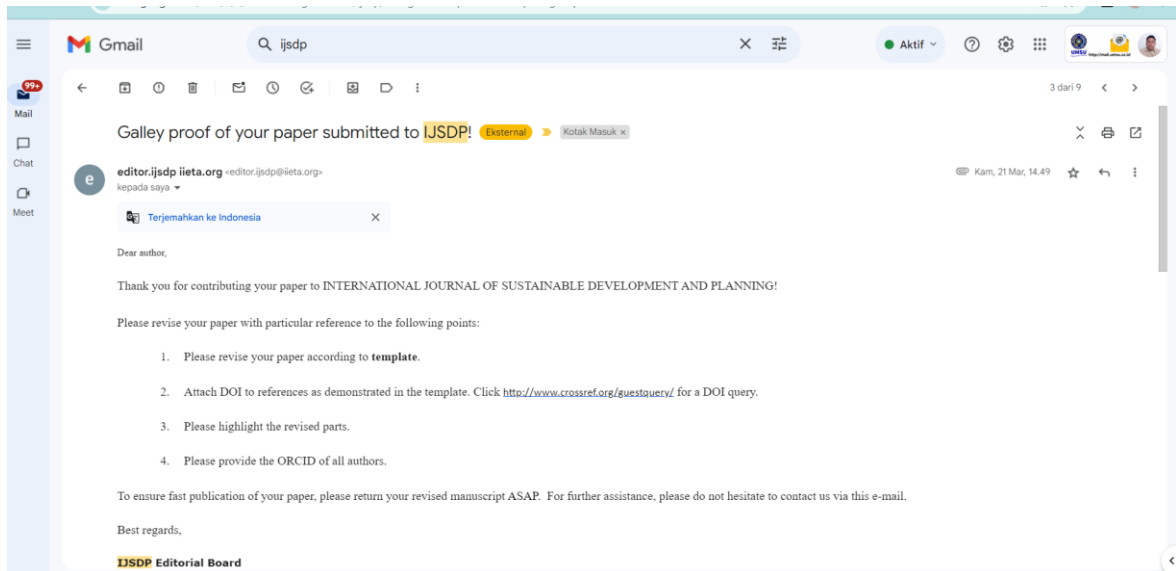
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## 5. Proofreading (21 Maret 2024)



## Acceptance Letter

# International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning

23 November 2023

**Muhammad Arif**

Faculty of Economic and Business, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, Medan 20238, Indonesia

Dear Muhammad Arif, Jasman Saripuddin Hasibuan, Nadia Ika Purnama, and Jufrizen,

MS: Examining the Impact of Destination Image on Tourist Satisfaction and Loyalty at Lake Toba, Indonesia

I am pleased to inform you that as per the recommendation of the editorial board, your above-mentioned manuscript has been accepted for publication in International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning (ISSN 1743-7601). The paper will be published when the administrative procedures are completed for importance.

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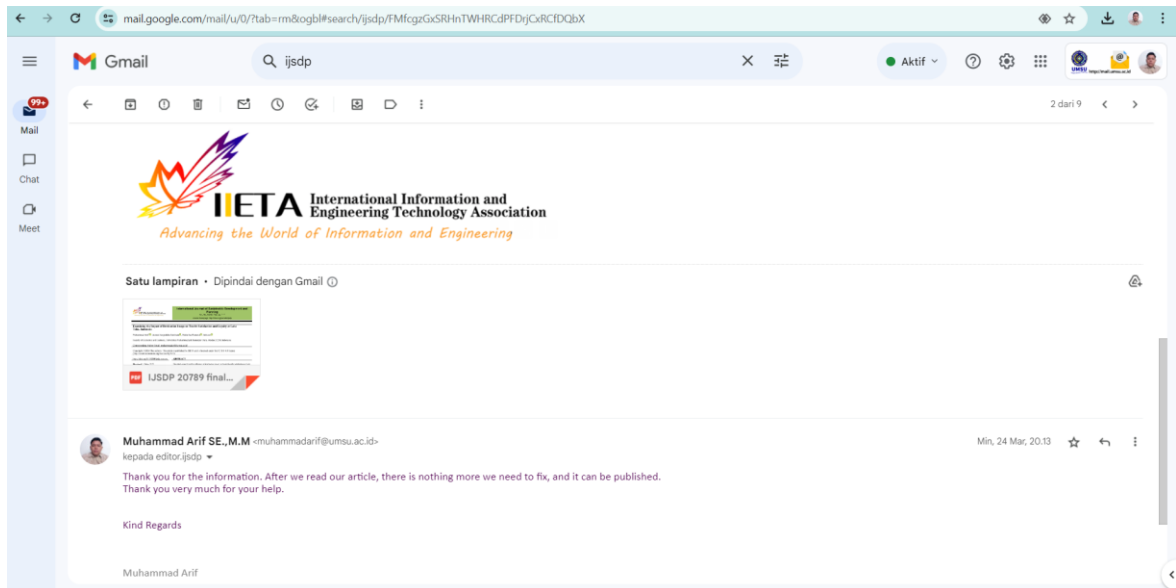
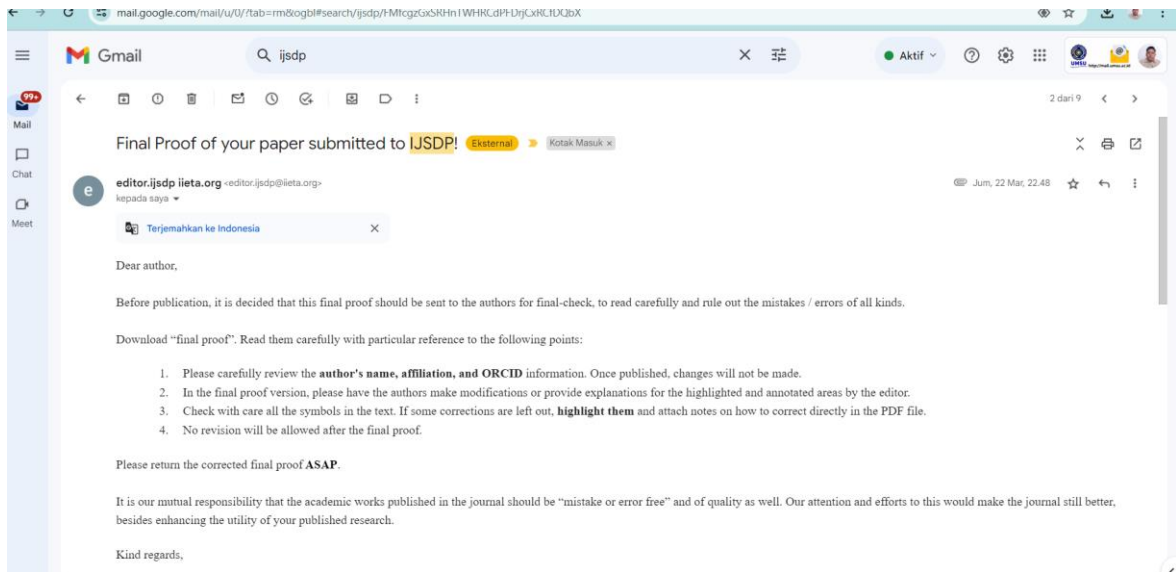
Yours sincerely,



Date: 23 November 2023

Place: Edmonton, Canada

## 5. Final Proofreading (22 Maret 2024)



## Examining the Impact of Destination Image on Tourist Satisfaction and Loyalty at Lake Toba, Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

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**Keywords:**  
*destination image, satisfaction, loyalty, SEM-PLS, Indonesia*

This study aims to test the influence of destination image on tourist loyalty satisfaction in Lake Toba, Indonesia. This study uses an explanatory research approach. The population of this study is all Domestic Tourists visiting the Lake Toba Region. Determination of the number of samples using the formula and obtained as many as 96 respondents. Primary data collection is done by questionnaire (questionnaire). The data analysis method used is Partial Least Square (PLS) based Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The study results show that cognitive, unique, and affective images positively and significantly affect on tourist satisfaction in tourist destinations in the Lake Toba region. Cognitive Image, Unique Image, and Tourist Satisfaction positively and significantly affect Tourist Loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. However, the Affective Image only significantly affects Tourist Loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. Cognitive Image and Unique Image have a positive and significant effect on Tourist Loyalty Through Tourist Satisfaction at Tourist Destinations in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations, and Affective Image has no significant effect on Tourist Loyalty Through Tourist Satisfaction at Tourist Destinations in the Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. Lake Toba Area managers must carry out various relevant programs and maintain good relations with stakeholders in maintaining tourism destinations.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of Indonesia's largest sources of foreign exchange. Tourism plays a significant role in boosting the economy and the income of individuals. The tourism potential in Indonesia needs to be appropriately maximized. This is due to the need for more attention from the local and central government in managing existing natural and human resources [1].

The role of tourist destinations is to improve people's welfare. Tourism has a positive impact on the local community's economy, leading to people's income, employment opportunities, increased distribution of benefits and profits, ownership and control over the community's economy, and impact on regional development [2]. The effect of tourism development, namely employment, creating business opportunities, encouraging infrastructure development, increasing tax revenues, improving the community's economy, and increasing investment in the tourism sector [3].

The destination image of Lake Toba as the largest lake in Southeast Asia is an important point in the decision of tourists to visit. With a good and well-known destination image, it makes it easier for tourists to plan their vacations [4]. Image is an idea, impression, feeling, and belief in a tourist destination [5]. Destination image is a place impression or area perception

[6], while according to a previous study [7], image is an indicator value of the potential of an area.

A good destination image will increase tourist visits because the image influences visiting decisions and intentions to make repeat visits [6]. Factors contributing to image formation include improved quality and reliability, trustworthiness, usability and benefits, service, risk perception, and pricing [8-13]. The dimensions used to measure destination image are friendly behavior, security posts, tourist activities, tourist information, tourist maps, cleanliness, tourist facilities, restaurants, lodging, art activities, and souvenirs [14-16]. The dimensions of image measurement are attributes, personality, and benefits. The dimensions used to measure the image, according to a previous study [17], are symbols, logos, names, citizens, and slogans, while according to a previous study [18], measuring image seen from popularity, good word of mouth, and commodities offered. Destination imagery can increase the number of tourist visits because it makes it easier to search for information on places to visit [5]. Indicators of destination image formation are divided into cognitive (belief), affective (feeling), and conative. Cognitive image refers to the quality and friendliness of residents, cultural attractions, climate and weather, and price of services. In contrast, the affective image refers to one's imagination, hope, and emotion about tourist attractions. In contrast, conative is a combination of cognitive and affective decision-making [19]. The same is explained

[20, 21] that cognitive, affective, and conative components form an image.

Tourism destinations are widely acknowledged to belong in the consumer-generated set from which the final decision is made [22-24]. On the other hand, consumers frequently offer a variety of locations with similar characteristics, such as great accommodations, stunning scenic views, and friendly people. Consequently, more effort is required for the objective to be included in the elicited set; alternatively, the goals must be distinct and distinct for the final selection to be chosen. From this perspective, destination branding is essential for destinations to be recognized and differentiated from alternatives in the consciousness of their target market. Although destination image is not explicitly examined in the context of branding, it must be considered a pre-existing concept following destination branding [25]. In contrast, the crux of destination branding is creating a positive destination image that defines and differentiates the location using a consistent blend of brand materials [26]. The brand destination image can be defined as "a perception of a place based on the memories of tourists" [27].

Branding is now widely regarded as a significant tool for firms to gain competitiveness through strengthening markets because it provides value for producers and consumers [28]. In order to affect the destination brand, the location's distinctive image must be perceived as a significant brand association. Creating a destination's image is crucial for survival in a global market where goals compete fiercely [29]. Destination branding selects a combination of components to identify and differentiate a location by constructing a positive image. Destination branding promises a memorable experience about a location [30]. Tourism is an integral aspect that cannot be ignored when discussing a location. As one of the biggest drivers of the economy, tourism generates a large amount of state revenue. By seeing the importance of destination branding, countries compete to show their unique character in the eyes of the world [31]. The competition for destination branding is increasing, especially in Indonesian tourism, which still needs to be improved in other countries, particularly neighboring countries like Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand.

This study aims to create and evaluate a theoretical destination branding model based on destination image studies and standard branding principles and practices. The current study, in particular, investigates the relationship between brand associations (images of cognitive, unique, and cognitive components), brand image (total image of a destination), and future visitor behavior. For this purpose, an empirical study was conducted at Lake Toba, Indonesia, with the aim of successfully brand the destination and counter its negative image.

The location of Lake Toba in North Sumatra is the most valuable national assets and significant tourist destination, alongside Bali and Lombok, that brings national pride. Lake Toba's designation as a tourist destination is predicated on the belief that it offers a breathtaking natural vista [32]. The Lake Toba Region has several tourist destinations, including Parapat, Simarjarunjung, Tanjung Camel, Haranggaol, and others. One of the most famous and popular areas is Parapat City, which is also the capital of Girsang Sipangan Bolon District. Parapat is the primary entrance to the island of Samosir and is often referred to as Parapat Tourism City. The condition of the Covid-19 pandemic precipitated a steep

decline in visitor visits in 2020. Based on information from the Central Statistics Agency for Samosir Regency, foreign tourist visits in June 2020 were around 99 visits or a decrease of 99.53 percent from 21,143 visits in June 2019.

Local governments and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are attempting to thrive so visitors can visit Lake Toba while adhering to health guidelines. The tourism business is expected to grow, one way being to improve the image of Lake Toba as a tourist destination in the eyes of the general public, both domestic and foreign. Enhancing the image of the Lake Toba destination is one approach to promote local and foreign visitor visitation. The tourism industry is expected to rise, one of which is by increasing the image of the tourist destination of Lake Toba in the eyes of the public, both domestic and foreign. One way to increase domestic and foreign tourist visits is by enhancing the image of the Lake Toba destination. The destination's image is one of the tourist's most essential deciding factors. This research seeks to quantify the impact of images on tourist visit decisions in Samosir Regency. Improving the image of the Lake Toba destination is one strategy to promote local and foreign visitor visitation. Tourists believe destination image is one of the most essential elements when selecting a destination. This research aims to determine the impact of the image (Image) on tourist visit decisions in Samosir Regency.

One of the efforts made to create uniqueness in the Lake Toba Region is, of course, by fulfilling the concept of the destination branding model, which has three dimensions: cognitive image, unique image, and affective image [29, 33]. Several research results show that destination image is a total impression of cognitive and affective evaluation [34]. It is suggested that brand association should include both cognitive image and affective image components [25]. These two components are indicators that influence the destination image [33, 34].

## 2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

### 2.1 Destination branding

Destination branding communicates a destination's distinct identity by distinguishing it from its competitors [33]. Based on this definition, a destination needs a brand as a medium to communicate to consumers about the product's type or purpose, which differentiates the product from other products. As with general brand recognition, destination brands serve two essential functions: identification and differentiation. The definition of "identification" in brand literature is "explaining the source of the product to consumers." While a product generally refers to a physical offering that can be readily altered, a place as a product refers to a large entity that contains various material and non-material elements to represent it [35]. For instance, a location includes tangible features, such as historical sites and beaches, and ineffable features, such as culture, customs, and history [33]. Destination branding is a strategy for marketing an area's potential [7]. There are five (5) stages to carry out destination branding in changing the image of a region, namely: 1) market investigation, analysis, and strategic recommendations; 2) brand identity development; 3) brand launch and introduction: communicating the vision, 4) brand implementation, and 5) monitoring, evaluation, and review [36].

## 2.2 Brand identity and brand image

According to a previous study, brand identity and image are critical to successful destination branding. There is a significant distinction between the sender and recipient perspective [37]. Brand identity is a distinct collection of brand associations developed by strategists [5]. The brand identity is a distinct brand association that conveys promise to customers [38]. On the other hand, the brand image refers to how consumers perceive a brand, which is influenced by its connections embedded memory. The sender (the destination marketer) portrays the destination brand identity for destination brands through all of the characteristics and activities that set it apart from competing locations.

In the meantime, recipients (consumers) construct and store in their minds a mental image of the destination [35]. It is important to note that the destination brand identity and brand image are reciprocal. Brand image plays a crucial role in establishing brand identity [39], and reflects brand identity [35]. People form mental images of destinations depending on the brand identity marketers convey. Then, based on their knowledge of the brand image of consumers at a specific destination, objective marketers build and enhance brand identity. As a result, the destination image is critical in developing a favorable and recognizable brand character.

## 2.3 Brand association

Brand associations are everything that directly or indirectly appears and is related to the consumer's memory of a brand [38]. Regarding destination branding, attitude can be a brand association to build a destination image [39]. Destination image is also regarded as an attitudinal construct composed of cognitive and emotive assessments [40]. This assessment supports the idea that destination branding's cognitive and affective image components should be included [38]. Nonetheless, it is asserted that the cognitive and affective image components are hierarchically linked to form a destination image [39]. However, it is still possible that each cognitive and emotional brand image component will contribute uniquely to formulating the overall image. To investigate the effects of cognitive and affective components on consumer's attitude structure and future behaviors, cognitive and affective components must be treated independently [41]. This study concludes that positive cognitive, unique, and brand associations will positively affect a destination's overall image (e.g., branding). Multiple studies examined the cognitive and affective image components of brand associations that influence brand image (i.e., destination image). The use of a unique image is suggested to establish a prominent brand image. Unlike ordinary images, a distinctive image can better convey the essence of the destination [42]. Uniqueness is critical because it is influenced by the similar differences between goals in the target consumer's mind [39]. Similarly, destination branding must promote the location's distinct image for consumers to distinguish it from competing places. In reality, destination branding is partly described as communicating a fulfilling travel experience distinctively associated with a specific destination [38].

## 2.4 Tourist behavior

The image of a destination directly impacts the intention to return and the inclination to recommend it to others.

Meanwhile, a destination's quality and satisfaction indirectly affect its intention to return and willingness to recommend it to others [43]. The image of a destination has a direct impact on trip quality and behavioral intention. Furthermore, destination image influences behavioral intention indirectly through trip quality, perceived value, and satisfaction [44]. The cognitive destination image has a direct effect on tourist behavioral intention.

In contrast, the functional image is associated only with the intention to return, the psychological image is associated only with the intention to recommend, and the mixed image is not related to the two behavioral intentions [27]. Other studies have discovered a robust indirect relationship between destination image and intention to visit, moderated by service quality and tourist satisfaction [14], by testing a theoretical model to see if the destination image directly or indirectly affects loyalty. According to the research, the destination image is associated with loyalty indirectly through satisfaction [12].

## 2.5 The relationship destination image with satisfaction and loyalty

Creating a good image of a tourist destination will positively contribute to the development and progress of a tourist attraction. According to a previous study [45], ways that can be done to improve the image of tourist destinations are by strengthening cognitive image, unique image, and affective image. That cognitive image is knowledge obtained through the cognitive learning process, likewise with the learning carried out by the community (consumers) when selecting an area as a tourist destination [46]. Tourists search for information regarding tourist attractions through multiple sources. Their research will be assessed, and ultimately, they will choose a destination based on the best image. The image of a tourist destination is also determined by image or affective evaluation. Affective images are based more on feelings than beliefs and knowledge about objects. People who believe and believe that a tourist destination will be able to provide high value for them will improve the image of a tourist area. In this case, it shows that the affective image, trust, and knowledge of a tourist attraction will improve the image of a tourist attraction.

Apart from cognitive and affective images, another factor that influences the image of a tourist area is a unique image. The image of tourist attraction is built by its uniqueness. The uniqueness that a tourist attraction has and that other tourist attractions need to have will differentiate that tourist attraction. This attraction's appeal is what entices visitors and transforms it into a favored spot for tourist. The significance of image for a tourist destination, namely the creation of optimism, can be utilized as a marketing strategy and market segmentation, is a form of consumption, influences prospective markets, and influences satisfaction and destination choice [47]. That image will influence consumer loyalty, which is manifested in the form of an intention to revisit and an intention to recommend. Studies show that consumers with a positive image of an area or tourist attraction tend to visit again, tell stories, and provide recommendations to others to visit that attraction [47].

## 3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs the explanatory research strategy to

elucidate the causal relationships between the research variables and to test the hypotheses by presenting section titles and other headings [48]. This research was conducted in seven districts in the Lake Toba Region of North Sumatra, Indonesia, namely Simalungun Regency, Toba Samosir Regency, Samosir Regency, North Tapanuli Regency, Humbang Hasundutan Regency, Karo Regency, and Dairi Regency. The population of this study is all Domestic Tourists visiting the Lake Toba Region. Since the number of tourists visiting was huge and the population was unknown, a sample was selected using the Lemeshow formula, and 96 respondents were obtained. Researchers used primary data and online research techniques using a web-based electronic questionnaire (Google form).

Furthermore, the constructs of this study's evaluation were graded using a scale (1 - disagree, 5 - strongly agree). The partial least squares (PLS) method was chosen because the most frequent PLS applications involve non-normal data, limited sample sizes, and constructive ideas [49]. The hypotheses and proposed research model were evaluated using the PLS method [49].

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Evaluation of measurement models

The item-level reliability, internal consistency or composite reliability, extracted average variance, and discriminant validity are all evaluated as part of the indicator measurement model evaluation. There is convergent validity for the first three measurements.

#### 4.1.1 Convergent validity

##### (a) Item reliability

The item's dependability is often known as the indicator's validity. The value of the loading factor (standardized loading) can be used to test the item's reliability (indicator validity). The factor loading value represents the correlation size between each indicator and the construct. The loading factor value greater than 0.7 is considered excellent, implying that the indicator is suitable for measuring constructions. Nonetheless, a standardized loading factor greater than 0.5 is acceptable. Meanwhile, values of the standardized loading factor less than 0.5 can be excluded from the model [50]. The following are the reliability item values present in the standardized loading column:

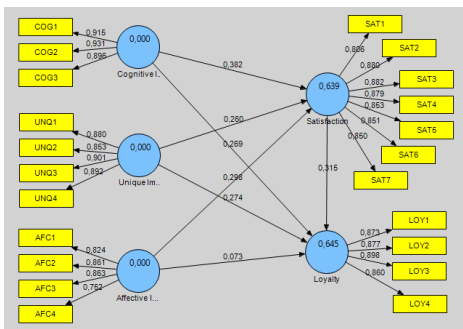


Figure 1. Standardized loading factor inner and outer model

Figure 1 shows that all loadings have a value greater than 0.5, so nothing needs to be set aside. Consequently, each indicator adequately explains each latent variable, namely cognitive image, unique image, affective image, satisfaction, and loyalty.

The cognitive image indicator with the most significant loading is COG2. As for the unique image, the most significant loading factor is UNQ3. The most significant loading factor for indicators on the affective image is AFC3. Indicators of satisfaction: the most significant loading factor is SAT3. Loyalty indicator, the biggest loading factor is LOY3.

##### (b) Composite reliability

Cronbach's alpha and DG rho (PCA) are the statistics employed for composite or construct reliability. Cronbach's alpha and DG rho (PCA) values greater than 7.0 indicate that the construct is a highly reliable measurement tool. A limit value of 0.7 or higher indicates acceptability, whereas 0.8 or higher indicates extreme satisfaction [51].

Table 1. Composite reliability results

Composite Reliability	
Affective Image	0.896
Cognitive Images	0.938
Loyalty	0.930
Satisfaction	0.951
Unique Image	0.933

The five latent obtained a composite reliability value above 0.7, so all factors have good reliability as a measuring tool.

##### (c) Average variance extracted (AVE)

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) defines the variance that an item can explain in comparison to the variance resulting from measurement errors.

Table 2. Results of average variance extracted (AVE)

AVE	
Affective Image	0.683
Cognitive Images	0.836
Loyalty	0.769
Satisfaction	0.736
Unique Image	0.778

Table 2 shows that the AVE value for the cognitive image equals 0.683, the unique image is 0.836, and the affective image is 0.769. Meanwhile, satisfaction and loyalty were 0.736 and 0.778. The AVE of the five variables is greater than 0.5, indicating that the construct has acceptable convergent validity when the latent variable can explain an average of more than fifty percent of the variance of the indicators.

#### 4.4.2 Discriminant validity

The discriminant validity of the reflective measurement model is determined by cross-loading and comparing the AVE value to the square of the correlation between constructs. Good discriminant validity will better explain the indicator variable variance than other construct indicators variance. The value of discriminant validity for every indicator is shown in Table 3 below.

Based on the Table 3, it shows that the value of discriminant validity or loading factor for AFC1 is 0.824. The correlation of the AFC1 indicator is higher for affective mages than for unique images, which is equal to 0.542, especially on the cognitive image (0.553), and on satisfaction by 0.607 and

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loyalty (0.530). The COG1 indicator correlation was higher for the cognitive image (0.915) than the affective image, which was 0.529, especially on the unique image (0.508), satisfaction 0.649 and loyalty (0.619), and so on. All loading factor values

for each variable have a stronger correlation with the variable than other variables, similarly, for each variable's indicators. This demonstrates that each variable's indicator positioning is appropriate.

**Table 3.** Discriminant validity

	Affective Image	Cognitive Images	Loyalty	Satisfaction	Unique Image
AFC1	0.824	0.553	0.530	0.607	0.542
AFC2	0.861	0.466	0.531	0.627	0.511
AFC3	0.863	0.407	0.513	0.542	0.565
AFC4	0.752	0.438	0.422	0.428	0.410
COG1	0.529	0.915	0.619	0.649	0.508
COG2	0.547	0.931	0.685	0.640	0.540
COG3	0.472	0.896	0.569	0.623	0.501
LOY1	0.488	0.575	0.870	0.670	0.584
LOY2	0.624	0.617	0.879	0.631	0.586
LOY3	0.480	0.609	0.898	0.625	0.587
LOY4	0.531	0.600	0.861	0.643	0.624
SAT1	0.524	0.571	0.596	0.806	0.545
SAT2	0.622	0.557	0.638	0.880	0.622
SAT3	0.605	0.638	0.656	0.882	0.610
SAT4	0.593	0.579	0.613	0.880	0.577
SAT5	0.629	0.620	0.647	0.852	0.524
SAT6	0.542	0.585	0.563	0.852	0.522
SAT7	0.529	0.637	0.677	0.848	0.556
UNQ1	0.468	0.458	0.597	0.531	0.880
UNQ2	0.557	0.513	0.572	0.554	0.853
UNQ3	0.592	0.536	0.668	0.626	0.901
UNQ4	0.557	0.483	0.550	0.611	0.892

**4.2 Structural model evaluation**

**4.2.1 Path coefficient**

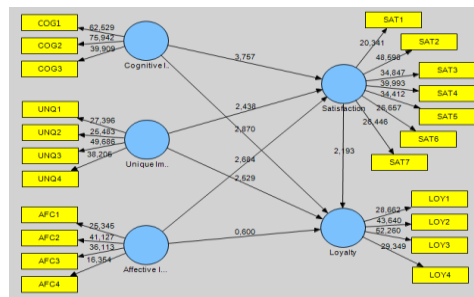
The route coefficient can be utilized to ascertain the significance of the influence between the constructs. The sign of the path coefficient must be consistent with the hypothesis; the t-test (critical ratio) derived from the bootstrapping procedure (resampling method) can be used to ascertain the significance of the path coefficient. The inner and exterior models' t-test results are presented in Table 4 below.

**Table 4.** Direct and indirect effects

	T-Statistics	T-table	Information
<b>Direct Effect</b>			
Affective Image -> Satisfaction	2,685	1.986	Supported
Cognitive Image -> Satisfaction	3,757	1.986	Supported
Unique image -> Satisfaction	2,438	1.986	Supported
Affective Image -> Loyalty	0,600	1.986	Supported
Cognitive image -> Loyalty	2,870	1.986	Supported
Satisfaction -> Loyalty	2,193	1.986	Supported
Unique image -> Loyalty	2,529	1.986	Supported
<b>Indirect Effect</b>			
Affective Image -> Loyalty	1,965	1.986	Supported
Cognitive image -> Loyalty	3,661	1.986	Supported
Unique image -> Loyalty	3,325	1.986	Supported

The t-test that was conducted is the result of bootstrap calculations. The results of the t-test depicted in the preceding

diagram will then be compared to the t-table values.



**Figure 2.** Inner and outer T-value models

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**5. DISCUSSION**

The study results indicate that using a specific combination of marketing strategies positively impacts tourist satisfaction in the Lake Toba Region. Our study suggests a positive correlation between Cognitive Image and Tourist Satisfaction, where a stronger Cognitive Image corresponds to higher satisfaction level. Conversely, if the cognitive image is poor, the tourist will be more dissatisfied. The results of this study do not agree or are in line with the results of researches [14, 44, 52] prove that the image of the destination consisting of a cognitive image, unique image, and affective image does not affect tourist satisfaction. This study's results align with the study's results [53], which concluded that cognitive image has a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction. In determining customer satisfaction, especially in service

companies such as tourist attractions, the customer's experience are diverse, such as the costs incurred and the services of managers of existing tourist attractions [54].

Based on the study's results, Unique Image positively and significantly affects Tourist Satisfaction in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. This study suggests that tourist satisfaction is positively correlated with the quality of the Unique Image, therefore, striving for high-quality images to enhance the overall tourist experience is important. Conversely, the more unfavorable the unique image is, the more dissatisfied the tourist. This study aligns with the study's results [10, 53], which concluded that a unique image positively and significantly affects tourist satisfaction.

This research is contrary to the results of research from a previous study [41]. In the earlier study, it was observed that destination images, including cognitive images, unique images, and affective images did not directly impact satisfaction due to different locations in the study where the Lake Toba Region is indeed very unique compared to with other tourist attractions. Visiting time to enjoy tourism in the Lake Toba area is also unique because visitors who come specifically intend to take a vacation, this is what makes the unique image the satisfaction of visitors to the Lake Toba area. Visitors satisfaction in their ability to find unique offering on the site using online marketing information system [41, 55].

The study results show that Affective Image positively and significantly affects Tourist Satisfaction in Tourist Destinations in the Lake Toba Region. The results of this study mean that the better the affective image, the higher the Tourist Satisfaction. On the other hand, the more deficient the affective image is, the more dissatisfied the tourist will be. This study showed the same results as previous research [56] and concluded that affective image positively and significantly affects tourist satisfaction. So are the research results [57]. From the results analyzed using path statistical analysis, research indicated a direct effect of affective image on the intention of tourists to return.

The study results show that cognitive image positively and significantly affects tourist loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. The results of this study mean that if the Cognitive Image is more reasonable, it will increase tourist loyalty. Conversely, if the Cognitive Image is not good, the tourist will be more disloyal. Empirically, the findings of this research study support the results of the research conducted [58], which concluded that cognitive image has a positive and significant effect on tourist loyalty. Research results contradict the study's [59], revealing that cognitive image does not directly affect loyalty.

Based on the study results, tourist loyalty can be strengthened by using high-quality unique images. Conversely, the more unfavorable the Unique Image, the more disloyal the tourist will be. Research in [33] highlights the importance of a destination's overall image and uniqueness in influencing tourist or customer loyalty. This study's results align with research conducted by authors who investigated a unique image does not directly affect tourist loyalty [56].

The study results show that affective image positively and significantly affects tourist loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. The results of this study mean that the better the affective image, the more tourist loyalty will increase. Conversely, the more deficient the affective image is, the more disloyal the tourist will be. The research results support the research conducted [45], which shows that affective image positively influences the image of tourist visits where

customers will recommend the area, which means the loyalty of tourists or customers. So are the research results [56], who concluded that affective image positively and significantly affects tourist loyalty.

Based on the results of the study shows that Tourist Satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on tourist loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. The results of this study denote that the higher the perceived Tourist Satisfaction, the higher the tourist loyalty. Conversely, the lower the Tourist Satisfaction, the more disloyal the tourist will be. The results of this study are in line with the results of research that has been done [60-62], which shows that Tourist Satisfaction has a significant effect on tourist loyalty.

Based on **Table 5**, it is known that the t-statistic value for the cognitive image of loyalty through satisfaction is 3.661. When compared with the value of t-table, then t count (3.661) > t table (1.986) so that  $H_0$  is rejected. Thus, there is a significant influence of cognitive image on loyalty through satisfaction. The magnitude of the effect of cognitive image on loyalty through satisfaction is 0.389. The positive value of the path coefficient indicates that the better the cognitive image, the better the loyalty through satisfaction. This research illustrates a destination's importance in creating customer satisfaction, which will create customer loyalty [56, 63]. Research conducted [52] also agrees that satisfaction arising from affective effects creates customer loyalty. The same thing was conveyed by former researchers [59], where cognitive image affects loyalty through satisfaction.

**Table 5**, present the t statistic value for a unique image on loyalty through satisfaction is 3.325. When compared with the value of t-table, then t count (3.325) > t table (1.986) so that  $H_0$  is rejected. Thus, there is a significant effect of a unique image on loyalty through satisfaction. The magnitude of the influence of a unique image on loyalty through satisfaction is 0.356. The positive path coefficient indicates that the better the unique image, the better the loyalty through satisfaction.

This research aligns with a previous study [64], which found that the unique image of each destination contributes to customer satisfaction loyalty. Similar results are carried out by previous studies [65, 66], suggest that the unique image of the destination is an important driver of customers return and loyalty and an important indicator of customer satisfaction. The uniqueness of tourist attractions can cooperate with local tourism groups such as Tourism Awareness Groups so that these destinations will feel more natural and support the economy of local community groups [67, 58].

Based on **Table 5**, it is known that the t statistic value for an affective image on loyalty through satisfaction is 1.965. When compared with the value of the t table, then t count (1.965) < t table (1.986) so that  $H_0$  is rejected. Thus, there is no significant effect of affective image on loyalty through satisfaction. The influence of affective image on loyalty through satisfaction is 0.167. The positive path coefficient indicates that the better the affective image, the better the loyalty through satisfaction.

This can happen because affective images such as safe, comfortable, and pleasant conditions obtained by tourists satisfy tourists. It is worth noting that this research collaborates the finding of study [68], which highlights the affective image, part of the destination image, influences loyalty through visitor satisfaction. From the results of the existing analysis, when observed from the direct and indirect influence, the image of the destination is decisive in customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Based on data analysis and discussion, cognitive, unique, and affective images have a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction in tourist destinations in the Lake Toba region. Cognitive Image, Unique Image, and Tourist Satisfaction positively and significantly affect Tourist Loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. However, affective image does not significantly affect Tourist Loyalty in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations. Cognitive Image and Unique Image have a positive and significant effect on Tourist Loyalty Through Tourist Satisfaction at Tourist Destinations in Lake Toba Tourism Destinations, and affective image has no significant effect on Tourist Loyalty Through Tourist Satisfaction at Tourist Destinations in the Lake Toba Tourism Destinations.

The management of places and tourist attractions located in the community and managed by the local community must also be under government supervision, and there is also a need for cooperation between the government and the community. The government must think carefully before taking direct action, such as holding an audience with the tourism business community, to reduce the chance of conflicting interests between the government and the tourism community. In addition, the public needs to be educated about tourism awareness in order to improve the quality of tourism services that leave positive and unforgettable impressions on tourists. The community and government must work together well so that existing strengths and opportunities can be utilized and developed into solid potential to attract tourists. The existing weaknesses and challenges must be used as lessons to improve the development of Lake Toba's tourism potential by making the weaknesses and challenges benchmarks that must be faced and overcome together.

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