

YANGON UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES
MBA PROGRAMME

**THE EFFECT OF DESTINATION BRAND EQUITY ON
BRAND SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY OF VISITORS
TOWARDS BODH GAYA**

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EMBA II - 80

EMBA 19th BATCH (ONLINE)

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ACADEMIC YEAR (2022-2024)

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**This thesis is submitted to the Board of Examiners in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration (MBA).**

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ACCEPTANCE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**The Effect of Destination Brand Equity on Brand Satisfaction and Loyalty of Visitors towards Bodh Gaya**” has been accepted by the Examination Board for awarding Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree.

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore the destination brand equity on destination brand loyalty of Bodh Gaya, India. The objectives of the study are to examine the effect of destination brand equity on destination brand satisfaction of Bodh Gaya, India and to analyze the effect of destination brand satisfaction on destination brand loyalty of Bodh Gaya, India. To meet these research objectives, data is collected through online survey method with structured questionnaires. This study uses both primary data and secondary data. To collect primary data, two stage sampling method is applied. According to Myanmar Tourism Statistics, 28 outbound tourism companies are currently operating in Bodh Gaya tourism. First stage is applied to choose 8 outbound tourism companies among them and emails are sent to request to collect data. Second stage is selected 92 out of 120 visitors who had travelled in 2024 January and February according to Raosoft sample size calculator by using simple random sampling method. Questionnaires are distributed to 92 visitors that are choosing by applying a simple random sampling method. The findings indicate that the effect of destination brand equity which are destination brand image and quality have a positively and significantly effect on destination brand satisfaction. Destination brand satisfaction has also positive and significant effect on destination brand loyalty. Therefore, the tourism companies especially Bodh Gaya tourism groups should maintain destination brand equity to get brand loyalty of Bodh Gaya.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Tourism stands as a pivotal force in the global business landscape, applying a significant influence across diverse sectors and industries. Its wide-ranging supports the vitality of business across the world economic, social and cultural boundaries. The most important contribution is the substantial economic force it provides. Tourism serves as a strong source of income for many businesses strengthened in hospitality, transportation, entertainment, and even in retail sectors. The energetic activity in hotels, restaurants, tour operators and souvenir shops are a verification to the financial bonus created by the flow of visitors. This economic injection extends beyond profit margins, spread into the structure of the local economy stimulate growth and promote prosperity.

Tourism is really important for countries because it helps them growing and changing. It's not only just about people going on vacation but also it helps businesses, communities, and the environment too. When people visit a place, they spend money on things like hotels, food, souvenirs and so on. This helps local businesses make more money and creates jobs for people. It also makes the economy stronger and more stable.

Tourism also helps to improve the places people visit. Governments and businesses invest in things like better roads, hotels, and activities to make visitors happy. This not only makes the visitors' experience better but also makes life better for the people who live there. Besides tourism can bring people from different cultures together. When visitors visit a place, they learn about the local customs and traditions. This helps them to understand and appreciate other cultures better.

Moreover, tourism is about more than just money. It helps businesses to grow, improve communities, bring people together, and protect the environment. By making tourism more sustainable, countries can ensure that it continues to benefit everyone for years to come.

Destination branding plays an important role in shaping visitors' perceptions and choices. A strong destination brand can attract more visitors, stimulate economic growth, and enhance the overall competitiveness of a destination in the tourism market.

Destination branding encompasses the strategic communication and promotion of a location's unique identity and offerings to attract visitors and enhance its reputation. In cultural tourism of Bodh Gaya, destination branding is deeply intertwined with its historical significance as the birthplace of Buddhism and the site of the Buddha's enlightenment. This strategic branding approach has positioned Bodh Gaya as a premier destination for spiritual and cultural tourism and similarly contributed to the accumulation of destination brand equity over time. By exploring the relationship between destination brand equity, destination brand satisfaction, and destination brand loyalty, there is underlying mechanisms driving visitor behavior in Bodh Gaya.

Destination brand equity refers specifically to the brand equity of a geographical location or destination, such as a city, region, or country (Pike, 2005). It encompasses the intangible value and reputation associated with the destination as perceived by visitors, travelers, and stakeholders. Destination brand equity reflects the overall perception, awareness, and emotional connection that people have with the destination, influencing their decisions to visit, invest in, or engage with it.

According to Aaker's (1991) definition, destination brand equity also refers to the value and strength of a brand, which encompasses various dimensions such as brand image, brand awareness, and brand (perceived) quality of the destination. In the context of tourism, destination brand equity represents the overall perception and reputation of a destination among travelers. Brand equity encompasses a collection of brand assets and liabilities associated with a brand, encompassing its name and symbol. These factors contribute positively or negatively to the value offered by a product or service to both the firm and its customers. For assets or liabilities to contribute to destination brand equity, they must be directly associated with the brand's name and/or symbol of the place.

Bodh Gaya's brand equity is built on a foundation of rich historical and cultural heritage, serene ambiance, and the transformative experiences it offers to visitors. These positive characteristics contribute to Bodh Gaya's brand equity by enhancing its brand image, perceived quality, increasing brand awareness, visitor's satisfaction, fostering loyalty among visitors, and creating meaningful emotional connections. Brand equity comprises several key components that collectively contribute to the overall value and strength of a brand in such as brand image, brand awareness and brand quality (Stovel et al., 2005).

Brand image refers to the overall perception or impression that consumers have of a brand. It encompasses the associations, attributes, and emotions that consumers associate with the brand based on their experiences, interactions, and exposure to the brand's products, services, marketing communications, and other touchpoints. Brand image reflects the brand's personality, values, positioning, and identity in the minds of consumers. A strong and positive brand image can differentiate a brand from competitors, influence consumer perceptions and attitudes, and drive purchase decisions (Kotler, 1994). That brand image was designed to create high international visibility and position Bodh Gaya as a destination of choice.

The destination brand image includes infrastructure, local trade, tourism facilities, and information availability. On the religious dimension, the brand image of Bodh Gaya is included education on religious heritage and spiritual practice of destination (Moufakkir & Selmi, 2018).

Brand awareness is defined as the ability of the potential buyer recognizes and recalls that a brand is a member of a certain product category (Aaker, 1991). Brand awareness is of great importance, since without it there would be no communication and no transactions with customers (Rossiter & Percy, 1987). The same idea has been applied to tourism destinations, and thus destination brand awareness implies that an image of the destination exists in the minds of potential travelers (Gartner, 1993).

The brand awareness of Bodh Gaya, as described by the research, emphasizes its profound significance as a global pilgrimage site and spiritual center. Geary (2014), revealed how Bodh Gaya has garnered international recognition and respect, becoming synonymous with the enlightenment of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha. Through strategic promotion and marketing efforts, Bodh Gaya has established itself as a prominent destination for religious and cultural tourism, fostering a strengthened brand awareness among travelers and spiritual seekers worldwide.

Brand quality refers to the perceived excellence, reliability, and overall satisfaction associated with a destination. It encompasses various aspects of the visitor experience, including accommodation standards, service quality, cleanliness, safety, and the overall level of infrastructure and amenities. High brand quality instills confidence and trust in travelers, leading to positive reviews, repeat visits, and recommendations to others. Maintaining and improving brand quality requires continuous investment in infrastructure

development, service training, and quality assurance measures. Ultimately, a destination's reputation for superior brand quality contributes significantly to its competitive advantage and long-term success in the tourism industry (Pike et al., 2010).

For many Buddhist pilgrims an experience of peace is often used to describe the sublime quality that accompanies the bliss of enlightenment. The brand quality of Bodh Gaya represents a combination of historical significance, cultural richness, and spiritual authenticity (Bhonsale, 2019). The researcher stated Bodh Gaya's brand quality is rooted in its status as the place where Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment and became the Buddha.

Therefore, destination brand equity is the round off various interconnected factors that shape the overall perception and value of a destination in the minds of travelers. Brand image, representing the emotional and symbolic associations evoked by a destination, sets the tone for visitor expectations and experiences. Brand awareness ensures that the destination remains top-of-mind among potential travelers, driving consideration and visitation. Brand quality, reflecting the excellence and reliability of the visitor experience, builds trust and loyalty among travelers. Together, these elements contribute to destination brand equity, which encapsulates the intrinsic value, attractiveness, and competitiveness of a destination in the global tourism market. Successfully managing and enhancing destination brand equity requires strategic marketing, investment in infrastructure and service quality, and fostering positive visitor experiences to create a lasting impression and drive sustainable growth in tourism.

Brand satisfaction is defined according to Chinomona et al. (2013) as the level of pleasure and fulfillment experienced by consumers as a result of their interactions with a brand. It encompasses their perceptions of product quality, customer service, value for money, and overall brand experience. Essentially, destination brand satisfaction reflects how well a brand meets or exceeds the expectations and needs of its customers, leading to positive feelings, loyalty, and advocacy of the respective destination. It is a critical indicator of brand health and long-term success, as satisfied customers are more likely to make repeat purchases, recommend the brand to others, and maintain a strong relationship with the brand over time (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

The exploration of destination brand loyalty has been identified as a significant driving force in the contemporary marketing landscape (Brodie et al., 1997), the analysis

and exploration of this concept is relatively recent in tourism research. Understanding which factors increase destination brand loyalty is valuable information for tourism marketers and managers (Flavian et al., 2001). Many destinations heavily depend on repeat visitation due to the cost effectiveness of retaining returning visitors compared to attract new ones (Um et al., 2006). In addition, Baker and Crompton (2000) showed that the strong link between destination brand loyalty and profitability is a reality in the tourism industry. The study of the influential factors of destination brand loyalty is not new to tourism research. Some studies show that the revisit intention is explained by the number of previous visits (Petrick et al., 2001).

Additionally, tourism in its many forms acts as a catalyst for economic growth and development promoting a lively trade and exchange ecosystem. Among the various travel groups, religious tourism and cultural tourism are unique in their profound effect on local businesses and economies. These forms of tourism not only attract visitors seeking spiritual fulfillment and cultural wealth but it also stimulates economic activity in various industries.

Cultural tourism, on the other hand, revolves around the exploration of a country's heritage, traditions, and artistic expressions. Museums, historical sites, cultural festivals, and native communities all contribute to the tapestry of cultural tourism. Countries rich in cultural heritage attract visitors eager to immerse themselves in the cultural tourism of the destination. Cultural tourism not only promotes appreciation and preservation of heritage but also serves as an economic driver by creating opportunities for local artisans, craftsmen, performers, and entrepreneurs.

Bodh Gaya, India, holds monumental significance for Buddhists worldwide as it's the place where Gautama Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. For people in Myanmar, a predominantly Buddhist country, Bodh Gaya is a sacred pilgrimage site. Myanmar Buddhists often visit Bodh Gaya to pay their respects, offer prayers, and meditate at the Mahabodhi Temple, which marks the spot of Buddha's enlightenment. Myanmar people believe that visiting such holy places can bring them closer to enlightenment and deepen their spiritual practice. Therefore, Myanmar tourism companies are offering services for pilgrimage tours to Bodh Gaya that organizing religious or spiritual journeys to Bodh Gaya, to provide the needs of Myanmar Buddhist visitors.

1.1 Rationale of the Study

Building upon the foundation of destination brand satisfaction, destination brand loyalty represents the extent to which visitors are committed to a particular place, making repeat visiting and advocating for it over others. Brand loyalty is a critical indicator of business success, as it leads to increased customer retention, and higher profitability. Factors influencing brand loyalty include consistent delivery of high-quality products or services, positive customer experiences, emotional connections with the brand, perceived value, and trust. Effective strategies for building destination brand loyalty include delivering exceptional experiences, building emotional connections, implementing loyalty programs, and engaging with customers through targeted communication and feedback. By prioritizing destination brand loyalty, businesses can promote better relationships with customers and drive sustainable growth in a competitive marketplace.

Destination brand satisfaction and destination brand loyalty are key indicators of the success and sustainability of tourism destinations. Satisfied visitors are more likely to return to the destination, recommend it to others, and engage in positive word-of-mouth promotion.

Strategies for enhancing destination brand satisfaction include investing in staff training, continuously monitoring and responding to visitor feedback, enhancing infrastructure, and leveraging technology to personalize experiences. By prioritizing visitor satisfaction, destinations can enhance their competitiveness, foster repeat visitation, and create positive brand advocacy, ultimately contributing to their long-term success in the tourism industry.

Destination brand satisfaction is integral to shaping visitor perceptions, influencing repeat visitation, and generating positive word-of-mouth. Key factors contributing to destination brand satisfaction include the quality of accommodations, amenities, and facilities, as well as the level of customer service and hospitality provided. Additionally, meeting visitor expectations based on the destination's brand image and promises, offering value for money, ensuring safety and cleanliness, and providing authentic experiences all contribute to visitor satisfaction. Effective measurement tools such as visitor surveys, online reviews, and sentiment analysis help destinations evaluate satisfaction levels and identify areas for improvement.

Destination brand equity stands the foundation for both destination brand satisfaction and destination brand loyalty. When a brand possesses strong brand equity, it means that it holds significant value and credibility in the eyes of consumers. This inherent value contributes to higher levels of satisfaction among customers, as they trust the brand to consistently deliver on its promises and meet their expectations. As satisfaction grows, so does the likelihood of developing destination brand loyalty. Satisfied customers are more inclined to repeatedly choose the brand over competitors, becoming loyal supporters who recommend it to others. Therefore, destination brand equity acts as the foundation upon which destination brand satisfaction and ultimately destination brand loyalty are built, creating a cycle where each element reinforces the others, fostering long-term relationships between visitors and the destination.

In the area of religious and cultural tourism, few destinations embody the essence of spiritual enlightenment and cultural heritage as profoundly as Bodh Gaya. As the birthplace of Buddhism and the site of the Buddha's enlightenment, Bodh Gaya stands as an inspiration for pilgrims and travelers seeking spiritual support and cultural enrichment. Furthermore, its significance exceeds its religious and historical importance, as Bodh Gaya has emerged as a prominent example of destination branding done right. Through strategic marketing initiatives and a commitment to preserving its religious sites and cultural authenticity, Bodh Gaya has successfully positioned itself as a premier destination for those in pursuit of spiritual awakening and cultural immersion.

During the 1956 Buddha Jayanti celebrations in Bodh Gaya, distinguished guest U Nu (1905-1997), the first Prime Minister of the new Democratic Republic of Myanmar was first visited to Bodh Gaya (Pryor 2005). His presence provided the continuing importance of pilgrimage and royal support from prominent leaders of the neighborhood country, Myanmar. It established the profound importance of Bodh Gaya in the field of religious and cultural tourism from Myanmar.

A deeper insight into its evolution as a destination brand is needed in which a journey from the sacred pilgrimage site of Bodh Gaya to a globally recognized travel brand. This shows the power of effective destination branding. By leveraging its rich historical and spiritual heritage; Bodh Gaya has captured the imagination of travelers around the world. Not just a physical destination but it was also a transformative experience and commitment to maintaining the cultural authenticity of investment in infrastructure through strategic marketing integration. Bodh Gaya has shaped a niche for itself in the competitive

landscape of global tourism. The brand identity represents a spiritual awakening of cultural immersion. A deep sense of peaceful makes it the destination of choice for those seeking enlightenment and fulfillment.

Bodh Gaya serves as a symbol of unity and shared heritage among Buddhists across different countries, including Myanmar. Visiting Bodh Gaya is a once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage that holds immense spiritual importance for Myanmar people. Moreover, Bodh Gaya pilgrimage is deeply rooted in Myanmar culture, reflecting the country's Buddhist heritage, spiritual values, and sense of communal identity.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The two main objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the effect of destination brand equity on destination brand satisfaction of Bodh Gaya, India
2. To analyze the effect of destination brand satisfaction on destination brand loyalty of Bodh Gaya, India

1.3 Scope and Method of the Study

This study focuses on destination brand satisfaction and destination brand loyalty which has been conducted at Bodh Gaya. This study uses both primary data and secondary data. To collect primary data, two stage sampling method is applied. According to Myanmar Tourism Statistics, 28 outbound tourism companies are currently operating in Bodh Gaya tourism. First stage is applied to choose 8 outbound tourism companies among them and emails are sent to request to collect data. Second stage is selected 92 out of 120 visitors who had travelled in 2024 January and February according to Raosoft sample size calculator by using simple random sampling method. Questionnaires are distributed to 92 visitors that are choosing by applying a simple random sampling method. The gathered data is analyzed through descriptive statistics and linear regression analysis. Secondary data is gathered from relevant textbooks, online sources, previous research papers, journals, and relevant information sourced from the India Tourism website.

1.4 Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one describes the introduction including rationale of the study, objectives of the study, scope and method of the study and organization of the study. Chapter two is presenting the theoretical background. In addition, this chapter presents previous research papers and conceptual framework for this study. Chapter three describes destination brand equity of Bodh Gaya including background of Bodh Gaya, destination brand equity of Bodh Gaya, demographic profile of respondents and reliability test. Chapter four analyzes on the effect of destination brand equity, destination brand satisfaction and destination brand loyalty of visitors towards Bodh Gaya, India. Chapter five explores the conclusion which includes findings and discussions, suggestions and recommendations and needs for further research.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter provides the groundwork by presenting the fundamental theoretical framework for the practical theories explored in this research. The study lays on the interplay among destination brand equity, destination brand satisfaction, and destination brand loyalty. Furthermore, it conducts a thorough examination of previous research studies relevant to the subject matter and constructs a conceptual model of destination brand equity. This model explains the correlation between destination brand satisfaction and destination brand loyalty specifically concerning to destination brand equity.

2.1 Destination Brand Equity

The most important intangible assets of the business is its brand and it is an important part of marketing need to manage value effectively. Building a strong brand is both an art and a science. It requires careful planning, long term commitment, strong creative marketing design and execution. The brand has gained a lot of loyalty from consumers and the heart of a brand is a good product or service. Strong construction of branding is a never-ending process.

American Marketing Association (2008) defined a brand as a name, word, mark, symbol, or design or a mixture of such marks; its purpose is to identify the goods or services of a single seller or group of sellers and to differentiate ourselves from our competitors. The product is therefore a product or service that has quality which is different from other products or services designed to meet the same needs. These differences may be functional, logical, or abstract which is related to product performance and it might be more symbolic, emotional or intangible relating to the meaning of a symbol or meaning in an abstract sense.

Aaker (1991) also explained that a brand is a distinguishing name and/or symbol such as a logo, trademark or package design intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors. A brand thus signals to the customer the source of the product, and protects both the customer and the producer from competitors who would attempt to provide products that appear to be identical.

Moreover, a brand operates as a protective shield, not only safeguarding the producer's reputation but also shielding consumers from potential confusion. It establishes a connection between the customer and the product source, offering a level of assurance regarding the quality and authenticity of the goods or services. Ultimately, a well-crafted brand goes beyond a mere label; it becomes a powerful tool in the competitive marketplace, fostering loyalty and influencing consumer perceptions.

Just like other consumer products, destinations recognize the necessity of branding to stand out in a crowded marketplace. Creating a distinct identity is essential for destinations to set themselves apart from competitors (Morgan et al., 2002). Branding is widely regarded as one of the most potent tools available to marketers for product or service differentiation. In the face of intense competition, a brand serves as a powerful marketing weapon and a crucial informational signal for destination marketers (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005).

Given its potential significance, destination brand equity has attracted considerable attention in academic research, even though most literature focusing on consumer goods. While numerous empirical studies have examined destination image, research on destination brand equity remains relatively embryonic (Huh, 2006). In the tourism sector, destination brand equity in marketing has received less attention compared to general marketing areas (Cai, 2002).

Understanding the factors that contribute to destination brand equity is essential for destination management and marketing strategies. Consumers are empowered to express themselves through the distinctive personality traits and dimensions that characterize a brand (Belk, 1988; Malhotra, 1988).

Yousaf and Amin (2017) utilized the scale to ascertain the correlation among the dimensions of destination brand equity. Their findings revealed a causal link between destination brand awareness, image, perceived quality, and loyalty. This suggests that a destination brand image is enhanced when perceived as having high brand awareness among visitors, consequently resulting in higher quality and, ultimately, influencing behavioral intentions.

Brands that are highly esteemed by customers can indeed yield a competitive advantage. This advantage stems from the creation of destination brand equity, which occurs when customers place greater trust and confidence in a brand compared to its

competitors' brands (Lassar et al., 1995). Destination brand equity can significantly influence consumers' decisions to choose certain place over competitors (Swait et al., 1993). Furthermore, comprehending the concept of destination brand equity is instrumental in developing effective marketing strategies (Keller, 1993).

Destination brand equity is the added value endowed to products and services with consumers at the certain destination. It may be reflected in the way consumers think, feel, and act with respect to the brand, as well as in the prices, market share, and profitability its commands (Kotler, 1994).

While the concept of a destination has historically been viewed in traditional terms, defined by tangible geographical boundaries such as countries or towns (Hall, 2000), it can also be perceived subjectively by consumers based on their travel experiences and individual factors such as cultural background, purpose of visit, and past experiences (Buhalis, 2000). A destination is regarded as a geographical region that is identified by its visitors as a distinct entity, supported by political and legislative frameworks for tourism marketing.

Aaker's brand equity model (1991) is explored to examine the relationships among the key dimensions and their effect on the overall destination brand equity. In an academic context when examining the effect of destination brand equity on destination brand satisfaction and loyalty among visitors to Bodh Gaya, India is involved multiple analyzes of the interactions between these structures.

From existing literature, the theory is put forward that Bodh Gaya's strong brand equity can create a meaningful association in the minds of both future and current visitors. This derives from its long historical and cultural significance and forms the basis for the following analysis. Research suggests that increased brand equity in a destination may result in higher visitor expectations. Therefore, it is expected to meet these expectations by providing a valuable experience and quality service. It has a positive effect on overall destination brand satisfaction.

Satisfied and loyal visitors are important actors in spreading a positive image of a destination and influencing favorable tourist perceptions. Research indicates that informed understanding of the relationship between destination brand equity, satisfaction and loyalty. It is a strategic approach to facility management. Iterative assessment of visitor feedback

and a quick way to address changing preferences are essential to maintaining and increasing brand equity in the Bodh Gaya area.

2.1.1 Brand Image

A service or product's brand name serves as a cue for consumers, embodying the images that have been shaped by their previous interactions with the brand or the information they have gathered about it. This perspective leads to the characterization of brand equity as a constellation of associations with brand names (Swait et al., 1993).

Destination brand image is crucial as it significantly influences potential visitors' decision-making processes. Cai (2002) characterized the brand image of a destination as the perceptions of a place as perceived through the associations reflected in visitors' memories. In essence, destination brand image encompasses the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person holds of a destination (Crompton, 1979).

Destination brand image is critical for the decision-making process as it often represents a mental picture formed by a set of attributes defining the destination, exerting a significant influence on tourist behavior (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Moreover, they stated that the effect of destination brand image on tourist satisfaction and intention to revisit depends on the destination's ability to provide experiences. Examining the relationship between destination brand image, quality, satisfaction, and visitors' behavioral intentions, Bigne et al. (2001) describe that destination brand image positively influences destination brand satisfaction and loyalty. Lin et al. (2007) also defined that destination brand image plays a pivotal role in shaping visitors' preferences and decisions regarding specific destinations. They find that destination brand image components, including cognitive, effective, and overall destination images, serve as antecedents of visitors' destination preferences.

Destination brand image has indeed been a cornerstone concept in consumer behavior research dating back to the 1950s. It has often been linked to the symbol of "brand as a person" or the image projected by the user (Biel, 1993).

Park et al. (1986) introduced three distinct types of benefits as dimensions of destination brand image, each catering to various consumer needs such as (1) Functional benefits address consumers' requirements to resolve consumption-related issues, (2) Symbolic benefits cater to consumers' desires for self-enhancement, ego identification, and

similar psychological needs (3) Experiential benefits satisfy consumers' cravings for sensory or cognitive pleasure.

2.1.2 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness has long been recognized by marketing experts as a key component of the consumer knowledge construct (Cordell, 1997). Park and Lessing (1981) explained that brand awareness is a significant factor in decision-making processes. In the tourism context, destination brand awareness is likely to exert a considerable influence on their behavior and decision-making (Gursoy, 2001).

In the context of products, Aaker (1991) defined destination brand awareness as the potential buyer's capability to recognize or recall that a brand belongs to a specific destination. Keller (1993) further elaborated on destination brand awareness, explaining that it comprises both brand recognition and brand recall. Destination brand awareness refers to consumers' ability to confirm previous encounters when presented with the destination brand as a cue. On the other hand, brand recall refers to consumers' ability to retrieve the brand when given the product category, requiring them to accurately recall the brand from memory. Essentially, destination brand awareness instills a sense of familiarity with the destination brand, which can sometimes influence purchasing decisions.

To assess familiarity, Baloglu (2001) devised a destination familiarity index, which incorporates both experiential (previous experience) and informational familiarity. It is unveiled that positive relationships among destination familiarity (destination brand awareness), destination brand image, destination brand satisfaction, and subsequent loyalty.

Keller (1993) delineated three key rationales for the significance of destination brand awareness in consumer decision-making. Firstly, it is crucial that visitors associate the brand with the destination when contemplating their options. Elevating destination brand awareness heightens the probability of the destination brand being included in the consideration set. Secondly, destination brand awareness holds control over decisions regarding destination brands within the consideration set, even in the absence of other brand associations. Thirdly, destination brand awareness shapes visitor decision-making by molding and fortifying destination brand associations within the destination brand equity.

Boo et al. (2009) highlighted the inclusion of destination brand awareness as a significant measurement in destination branding from the perspective of visitors. Im et al. (2012) discovered that enhancing brand awareness of a destination increases the likelihood of visitors preferring that destination, consequently boosting the likelihood of visitation. Bilal and Malik (2014) similarly established a robust association between destination brand awareness and satisfaction. This suggests that visitors' awareness of a destination is likely to result in a higher level of satisfaction with that destination.

2.1.3 Brand Quality

The destination brand quality has emerged as a prominent construct frequently employed by scholars in the conceptualization of destination brand equity models (Pike et al., 2010). Some studies, Gartner and Ruzzier (2011) have depicted destination brand quality as a subjective judgment, operationalized through various scales, while others have simply regarded it as meeting or surpassing expectations. Pike et al. (2010) delineated it as the perception of the destination brand quality of social amenities, hospitality services, and destination infrastructures. Im et al. (2012) identified destination brand quality as a pivotal dimension of destination brand equity, providing value to customers and differentiating the brand from competitors. Furthermore, other studies have characterized destination brand quality as consumers' perception of brand excellence or superiority (Keller, 2013).

Aaker (1991) explained about the evaluation of a destination brand quality, products can be gauged using five distinct criteria. Firstly, the brand quality offered by the destination or brand serves as a compelling reason to visit. Secondly, the level of differentiation or positioning relative to competing brands is considered. Thirdly, price plays a significant role, particularly as products become more complex to evaluate and status becomes a factor, leading consumers to view price as an indicator of quality. Additionally, the availability of a brand in various sales channels enhances visitors' perception of destination brand quality. Lastly, the number of product or brand extensions can convey to consumers that the brand represents a broad-scale quality guarantee.

Gartner and Ruzzier (2011) revealed that the destination brand quality significantly influences both repeat visitation and revisit intentions. This indicates that the perceived quality of a destination holds considerable importance in fostering destination brand loyalty. Similarly, several other studies have observed that perceived quality positively

effects visitors' intentions to revisit (Allameh et al., 2015). Furthermore, numerous studies have provided empirical evidence of the positive relationship between perceived quality and satisfaction.

2.2 Destination Brand Satisfaction

In the tourism context, destination brand satisfaction is predominantly viewed as a result of pre-travel expectations and post-travel experiences. Numerous studies in both marketing and tourism literature have shown that destination brand satisfaction exerts a positive effect on destination brand loyalty, with loyalty being an outcome of visitor satisfaction (Baker & Crompton, 2000). They observed that highly satisfied visitors demonstrated greater destination brand loyalty, thereby enhancing the likelihood of their return and their tendency to share positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

The ability to deliver products or services that effectively satisfy customers not only fosters customer retention but also stimulates positive word-of-mouth promotion. Likewise, destination brand satisfaction holds paramount importance in successful destination marketing, as it shapes destination selection, consumption patterns of products and services, and the likelihood of return visits (Oppermann, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). In marketing literature, various perspectives on destination brand satisfaction have been posited, with the most notable being the disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver, 1999).

Some research has defined destination brand satisfaction as a comparison between one's experience and expectations (Chen & Chen 2010). Other studies have defined it as the extent to which an individual perceives an experience to elicit positive emotions (Lee et al., 2007; Altunel & Erkut 2015). Ibrahim and Gill (2005) characterized destination brand satisfaction as the emotional state of a tourist following their encounter with a destination, while Oliver (2014) portrayed it as visitors' assessment of product or service fulfillment. Chen and Chen (2010) observed that destination brand satisfaction in the tourism context primarily hinges on pre-travel expectations and post-travel experiences.

Besides, destination brand equity also plays a significant role in shaping destination brand satisfaction levels. The encounter with diverse cultures offers visitors a distinctive blend of sensations and meanings that contribute to their satisfaction. Wu and Li (2014) proposed a correlation between destination brand satisfaction and the cultural characterization of destinations. Gholitabar (2018) elaborated on how the evolution of

culture-centric tourism shapes a distinct image for visitors, offering them a personalized and emotive journey that fosters emotional connections and fulfills their desires.

Destination brand satisfaction stems from an overarching assessment of interactions with service providers. When visitors perceive that the performance of the destination matches or exceeds their expectations, they deem it valuable and derive satisfaction from it (Aliedan et al., 2021; Kotler & Keller, 2012). Conversely, dissatisfaction arises when the service fails to meet their expectations (Shahijan et al., 2018). Loyalty, as defined by Lu et al. (2020), is deconstructed from the perspective of exchange theory.

Destination brand satisfaction of visitors is derived from a particular destination influences their likelihood of revisiting to that place. Baker and Crompton (2000) defined destination brand satisfaction as the tourist's emotional state after experiencing the trip. Therefore, evaluating destination brand satisfaction in terms of a travelling experience is a post-consumption process (Fornell, 1992; Kozak, 2001). Assessing destination brand satisfaction can help managers to improve services and to compare organizations and destinations in terms of performance (Kotler, 1994). In addition, effectively managing customer feedback has the potential to become a significant source of competitive advantage (Peters, 1994). Moreover, destination brand satisfaction can be used as a measure to evaluate the products and services offered at the destination. (Schofield, 2000).

2.3 Destination Brand Loyalty

In the context of destination brand loyalty, the term loyalty pertains to the degree to which visitors are inclined to become revisiting in the future, prioritizing the given provider above all others for any potential transactions (Woisetschläger et al., 2011).

Aaker (1991) defined in his Brand Equity Model that destination brand loyalty in the extent to which people are loyal to a brand is expressed in (1) reduced marketing costs (hanging on to loyal customers is cheaper than charming potential new customers), (2) trade leverage (loyal customers represent a stable source of revenue for the distributive trade), (3) attracting new customers (current customers can help boost name awareness and hence bring in new customers), and (4) time to respond to competitive threats (loyal customers that are not quick to switch brands give a company more time to respond to competitive threats).

Destination brand loyalty ensures a steady and reliable demand for the destination, while also erecting barriers that hinder the entry of competitors into the market. Moreover, it can lead visitors to be willing to pay a premium price, often 20 percent to 25 percent higher than for competing destinations. Despite competitors being able to replicate service quality and tourism offerings, they struggle to replicate the enduring impressions left in the minds of individuals and organizations through years of positive visitor experiences and marketing efforts. In essence, destination brand loyalty serves as a potent tool for securing a competitive advantage (Kotler, 1994).

A destination can be likened to a product with its own brand, comprising elements such as name, culture, and identity. When visitors perceive a destination positively and are inclined to revisit it and recommend it to others, it reflects destination brand loyalty (Chen & Gursoy, 2001; Vinerean, 2014). In essence, destination brand loyalty arises when visitors believe that a destination is worth visiting and feel compelled to recommend it to others (Vinerean, 2014).

Destination brand loyalty, termed as tourist commitment to a particular destination, serves as the cornerstone for building destination brand equity in tourism destinations, ultimately influencing their competitiveness (Lv et al., 2020). Alcocer et al. (2019) posited that visitors' perceptions of destination image are highly subjective, shaped by a multitude of factors encompassing individual thoughts, emotions, cognitive assessments, and affective components.

For service providers and retailers, the ultimate aim is to cultivate destination brand loyalty, characterized by repeat visits, repurchases, and recommendations. It's widely recognized that retaining existing visitors comes at a lower cost than acquiring new ones. Loyal customers often serve as advocates, freely endorsing products or services to friends, family, and potential customers through word-of-mouth advertising. In the tourism sector, it holds significant sway in decision-making processes due to the experiential nature of services. As a result, word-of-mouth communications are perceived as credible and trustworthy sources of information. Consequently, visitors commonly rely on it as their primary source of information about services (Bolton & Drew, 1991).

Zhang et al. (2014) categorized destination brand loyalty into three distinct forms: behavioral, attitudinal, and composite loyalty. Composite destination brand loyalty, also referred to as combined loyalty, involving the fusion of both behavioral and attitudinal

loyalty. Baker and Fulford (2016) and Chen and Tsai (2007) contended that the extent of destination brand loyalty is often reflected in visitors' willingness to recommend the destination and their intention to revisit. Other studies posited that an individual's future intention to consume a product or service holds greater significance than actual consumption (Yoon et al., 2010). This is because future intention encompasses revisiting the destination and recommending it to others, underscoring the importance of destination brand loyalty, which can generate positive post-purchase behavioral intentions through word of mouth. Furthermore, Hutchinson et al. (2009) argued that visitors are more inclined to recommend a destination to others if they intend to revisit it.

Therefore, visitors' intentions emerge as a crucial concept in comprehending their destination choices and future motivations. Consequently, delving deeper into visitors' intentions towards a destination could yield valuable insights and contribute to the tourism knowledge base. Understanding the decision-making process of individuals regarding the consumption of tourism services could represent a significant niche within tourism marketing research.

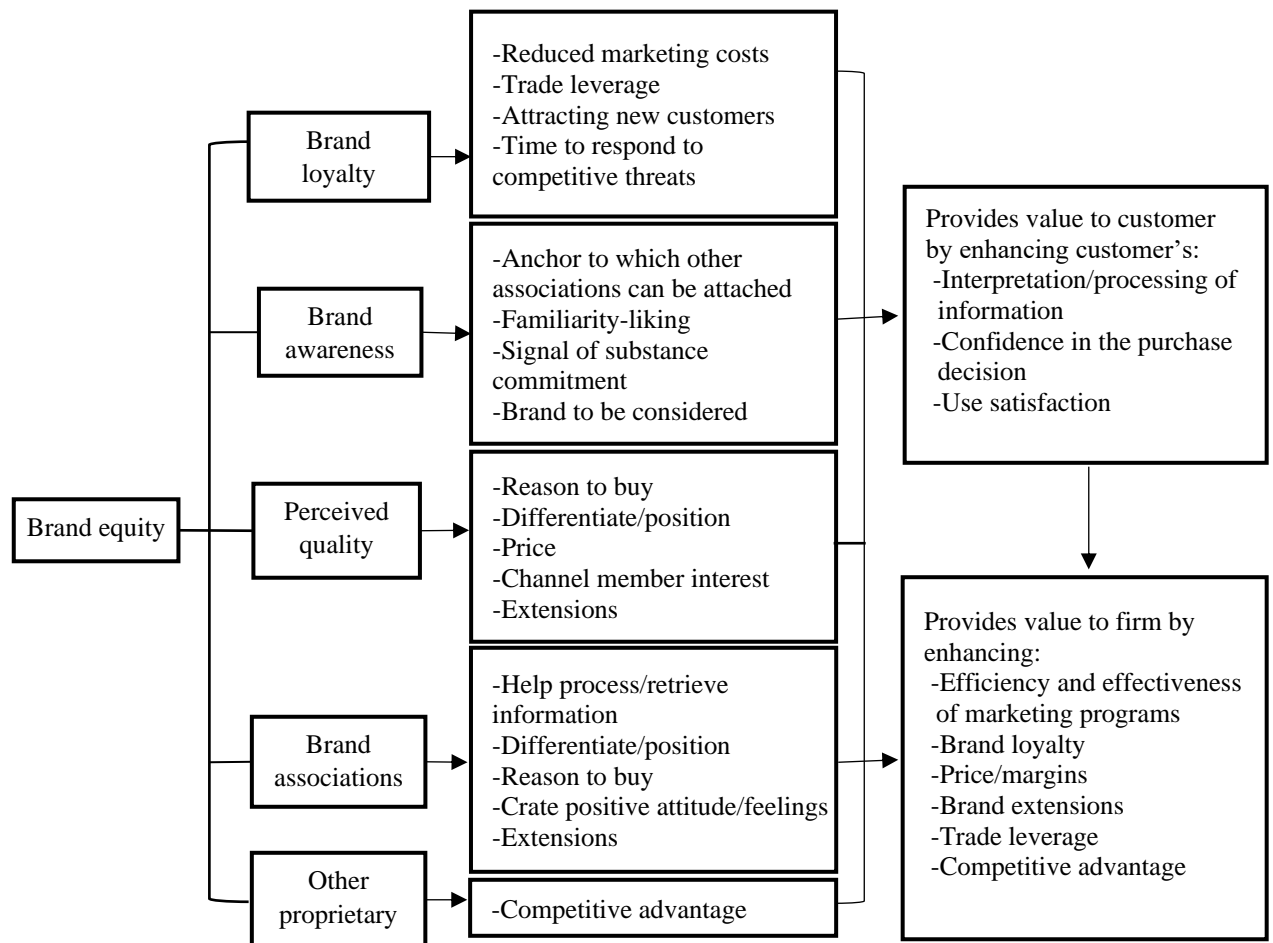
2.4 Previous Studies

In this section, a comprehensive review highlights the key findings and gaps in existing literature reviews, providing a basis for branding equity model and a conceptual framework as in Figure (2.1) and Figure (2.2).

2.4.1 Conceptual Framework of Aaker's Brand Equity

The conceptual model of first previous paper is shown in Figure (2.1). The relevant research paper investigated Brand Equity model developed by Aaker (1991).

Figure (2.1) Conceptual Framework of Aaker's Brand Equity Model



Source: Aaker, (1991)

Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) stands as a cornerstone in brand strategy, as highlighted by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993). It defined CBBE as the unique effect of a brand on customers' marketing activities, stemming from their knowledge of the brand. Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) laid the foundation for theoretical models in destination branding. Their respective models of CBBE are considered fundamental frameworks for assessing consumer behavior. Aaker's (1991) brand equity model, illustrated in Figure (2.1) above, serves as a pivotal reference in this context.

The author delineated brand equity as a set of brand assets and liabilities associated with a brand, its name, and symbol, which either enhance or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or its customers.

In this Brand Equity model, Aaker (1991) identified five brand equity components: (1) brand loyalty, (2) brand awareness, (3) perceived quality, (4) brand associations and (5)

other proprietary assets. Aaker (1991) also defined brand equity as the set of brand assets and liabilities linked to the brand - its name and symbols - that add value to, or subtract value from, a product or service. These assets include brand loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality and associations. This definition stresses 'brand-added value'; however, his model does not make a strict distinction between added value for the customer/consumer and added value for the brand owner/ company.

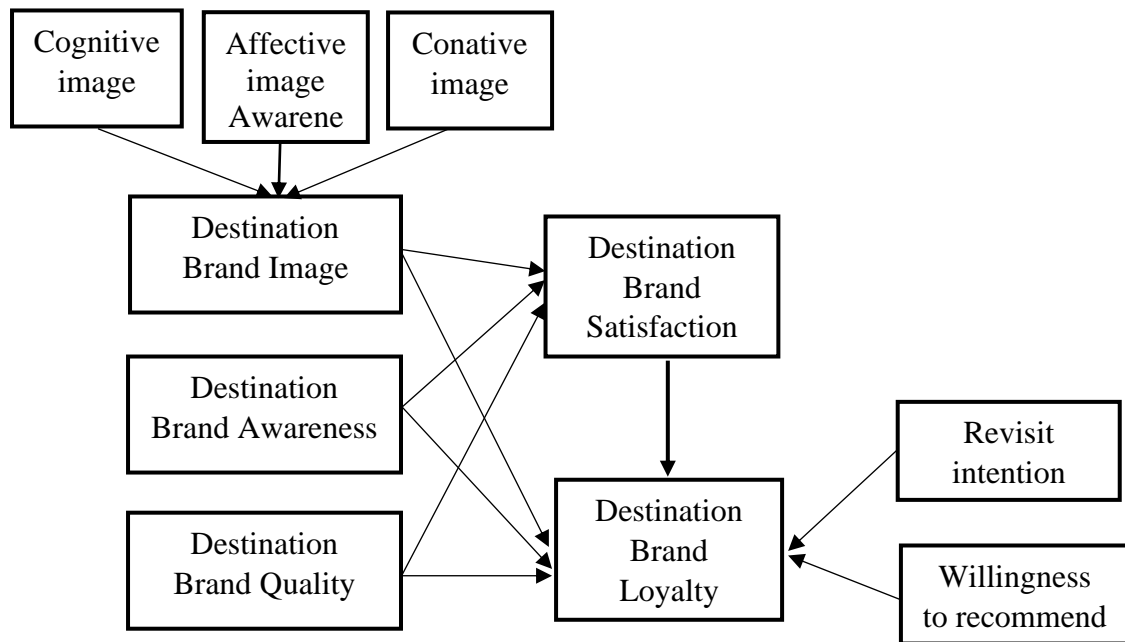
A CBBE model from the perspective of individual consumer was developed by Keller (1993). The study highlights that consumers' perception of a brand, whether positive or negative, is influenced by their reaction to the product or service and the marketing strategies employed when the brand is recognized versus when it is not.

This model serves as a tool for understanding a brand's equity and offers valuable insights into the relationship between the various components of brand equity and the brand's (future) performance. In addition to the five components, the model also encompasses indicators or outcomes of the adopted branding strategy. It is evident that as brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, strength of brand associations (and their positivity), and the quantity of brand-related assets increase, so does brand equity. Moreover, the model provides clarity on the criteria indicating the extent to which tangible value is generated for both consumers and companies through the implemented branding strategy.

2.4.2 Conceptual Framework of Nwobodo

Nwobodo (2020) conducted the study examined the investigation of destination branding factors and its influence on the behavior of medical tourists. It can be seen in Figure (2.2).

Figure (2.2) Conceptual Framework of Nwobodo



Source: Nwobodo (2020)

This study aimed to develop a destination branding model tailored to medical tourism organizations, with the goal of understanding medical tourists' perceptions and improving destination marketing strategies. It contributed to the medical tourism literature by expanding Keller's (2001) Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model to encompass medical tourism destinations. The primary outcomes of the study, destination brand satisfaction and loyalty, demonstrated the potential for extending destination branding efforts. This novel model represents the first destination branding framework specifically designed for medical tourism, offering the destination branding literature a fresh perspective on capturing medical tourists' perceptions of destinations. Hence, this study laid the groundwork for future research to utilize the empirically validated scales developed herein to assess medical tourists' perceptions across various regions and to enhance the effectiveness of marketing strategies for medical tourism destinations.

The second significant contribution of this study lied in the expansion of Keller's CBBE model, particularly in the image component. While Keller's (2001) model traditionally treated image as a singular entity, this study introduced a more nuanced approach by incorporating three distinct components of image. The study identified cognitive, affective, and conative image constructs, along with two sub-constructs within

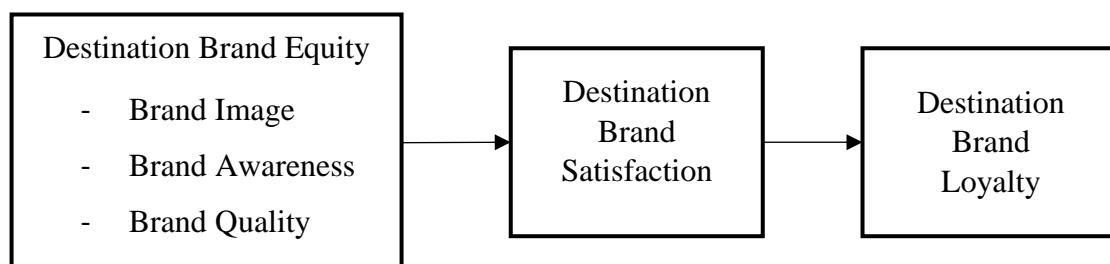
the cognitive image category, that collectively influence destination brand satisfaction and loyalty. Specifically, the findings indicated that medical tourists who possess a strong affective image towards a destination tend to express higher levels of satisfaction with the medical services offered. Furthermore, it became evident that emotionally connected medical tourists are more likely to revisit the destination and recommend it to others for medical services.

The study discovered that the two sub-constructs within the cognitive image category have a significant effect on satisfaction and loyalty. Specifically, medical tourists who perceived appealing conditions were more likely to express satisfaction with the destination. Conversely, those with essential-minded perceptions demonstrated a willingness to revisit the destination and recommend it in the future. This indicated partial support for the influence of medical tourists' cognitive image on satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, the study revealed that medical tourists with a strong conative image are inclined to revisit the destination and recommend it to others. By applying different constructs of destination brand image to medical tourism and assessing their effects on satisfaction and loyalty, this study broke new ground in destination branding research.

2.5 Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework of the study is constructed based on a comprehensive review of the literature, structural modelling and previous research paper. According to this framework, there are three independent variables: brand image, brand awareness and brand quality. The independent variable is destination brand satisfaction, while the dependent variable is destination brand loyalty. The conceptual framework, depicted in Figure (2.3), is adapted from studies by Nwobodo (2020).

Figure (2.3) Conceptual Framework of the Study



Source: Own Compilation (2024)

The research model developed for this study applied to analyze the research objectives by linking the effects of destination branding equity factors such as destination brand image, awareness and quality to destination brand satisfaction and then a direct effect on destination brand loyalty of tourism. Destination brand satisfaction explains the overall satisfaction of services that people received from a destination. This study discusses the rationale for support or lack of support on the significant effect between destination brand satisfaction and destination brand loyalty.

The main objectives of this conceptual framework are to examine the effect of destination brand equity such as destination brand image, destination brand awareness and destination brand quality on destination brand satisfaction of Bodh Gaya and then, to analyze the effect of destination brand satisfaction on destination brand loyalty of Bodh Gaya.

CHAPTER 3

DESTINATION BRAND EQUITY OF BODH GAYA

This chapter includes the background of Bodh Gaya, destination brand equity of Bodh Gaya, the demographic profile of respondents, and the reliability test of the study.

3.1 Background of Bodh Gaya

Pilgrimage tourism, religious tourism, spiritual tourism, holy tourism or religious tourism; this is one of the fastest and fastest growing forms of tourism in India. There are two main subgroups: visitors visit these places to get spiritual replenishment and other visitors who visit these places for non-religious purposes to study non-religious things in these places such as artefacts, monuments, buildings, treasures and sightseeing. India, which is famous for diversified, inheriting a variety of religious practices from its citizens. Although the majority of people are Hindus but there are other religions such as Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, and Buddhism as well. People in India practice many other religions, such as Vaishnavism (one of the main Hindu religions), ancient Jainism and there was an active Jewish community.

Historically, the term Bodh Gaya came into use around the eighteenth century and was primarily adopted to distinguish the sacred site from the larger city of Gaya, a prominent center of Hindu pilgrimage some 7km away (Asher, 2008). The government has developed and promoted several religious tourism zones to facilitate travel and accommodation in religious sites. Examples of religious communities in India include:

Sufi Circuit consists of the regions of Awadh, Delhi, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri and Aurangabad;

Christian Circuit includes churches in Goa, Kerala and Tamil Nadu;

Sarv Dharma Circuit promotes national integration such as Tirupathi, Velankanni, Nagoor and Vaishnodevi, Golden Temple, Sacred Heart Church, Nizamuddin etc.

The Buddhist Trail includes Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, Kusināra and Piprahwa (Kapilavatthu), along with a day trip to Lumbini in Nepal (SIGA Team, 2012).

Bodh Gaya, (latitude 24° 41' 45" N, longitude 85° 2' 2" E, elevation 113 m) is located 1.5 km from Patna, a capital city of Bihar. About 96 km in the Indian state, Bodh Gaya is one of the 24 districts of the Gaya district. As of the 2011 Census, the population of Bodh Gaya area was 197,804 (Census of India, 2011). It is well connected by road from Gaya, Nalanda and Varanasi. The airport and railway station at the closest are at Gaya (BSTDC, 2018).

The Government of India recognizes the importance of tourism and the contribution it can make not only from an economic perspective but it is also a tool for creating unity in society. To capitalize on this opportunity, India government has launched a national mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD) with the aim of consolidating the development of pilgrimage routes in a planned, sustainable manner and provide visitors with a profound spiritual experience. Bodh Gaya is a famous Buddhist site which is one of twelve sites identified under the project. This is despite the fact that approximately 450 million Buddhists around the world intend to visit some sacred place in their lifetime. But the Buddhist community as an integrated part has not yet reached its potential. This can be caused by a number of facts, such as low awareness, lack of supportive institutional policies, inadequate infrastructure, poor quality or lack of essential services related to tourism, lack of safety measures and poor communication. For this reason, it is reported that only 0.005% of Buddhists visit sacred Buddhist sites in South Asia (Bhonsale, 2019).

Nowadays, the pilgrimage has received a lot of attention from visitors especially places related to Buddha. The Department of Tourism has launched an integrated tourism development strategy for the Buddhist community in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (Geary, 2014). A Buddhist circle can be defined as including sacred Buddhist sites. It is where Lord Buddha was born, taught, preached and achieved 'enlightenment' and 'nirvana'. Buddhist spirituality, it is home to many Buddhist temples and important religious monasteries.

a) Lumbini

Lumbini is a tourist attraction in the Rupandevi district of Nepal. This is the place where Queen Mahamadevi gave birth to King Siddhartha in 563 BC. It is one of the most revered sites in Buddhism and has temples, monuments, monasteries, museums and a

sacred lake where the Lord Buddha's mother performed rituals before his birth and also where Siddhartha took his first bath.

b) Bodh Gaya

Located in Bihar. It is a place where Prince Siddhartha (later called Buddha) attained enlightenment under the Bodhivrika tree. After meditating for about 49 days, 528 BC. This holy city and center of pilgrimage for Buddhists from all over the world has the famous Mahabodhi Temple (World Heritage Site, inscribed in 2002) which serves as the center of all Bodh Gaya activities. It is also home to other temples, monasteries and many more were built by Buddhist monks from various countries. These temples attract many visitors and pilgrims to worship, meditate and find peace of mind (Singh & Kumar, 2011). Other important attractions in Bodh Gaya include Vajrasana Lake, Mushalina Throne, the site of Animesh Lochan and a number of sacred trees such as the Ratnachankramana, Ratnagaraha, Ajapala, Nikavra and Rajyatana, Bodh Gaya also has many temples which was founded by Buddhists from Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Japan and Thailand.

c) Sarnath

Sarnath is a part of Varanasi and it is 10 km from the city center, where Lord Buddha gave his first sermon after reaching enlightenment around the year 528 BC. It is here that the Buddha established the Sangha, or group of disciples, to develop his new teachings. The famous Lion Pillar built by King Ashoka is also in Sarnath. Other Sarnath attractions include Chaukhandi Stupa, Mulagandha Kuti Vihar and Sarnath.Ashram.

d) Kushinagar

This place is located in Gorakhpur city, Uttar Pradesh India. It is on the way to Kapilavastu and is the place where Lord Buddha was born and passed away in 483 BC. It is interesting to note that the four important events in the Buddha's life are: Birth 563 BC, Enlightenment 529 BC. The first sermon 528/527 BC and nirvana 483 BC. (Singh, 2003) occurred at Vaisakapurnama, i.e. the full moon dates of April-May.

In addition to the aforementioned places, festivals and ceremonies, it is also a tourist attraction that attracts many people of visitors from abroad. The most important festival is

Kalachakra Puja, a popular festival held every year in January. Other major attractions in the area include monasteries of the Mahayana and Theravada traditions. Although there is only one temple in the city of Bodh Gaya, there are approximately 58 monasteries listed on the website of the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee.

3.2 Destination Brand Equity of Bodh Gaya

Brand equity has been a subject of investigation not only for products and services but also for travel destinations, which encompass a multitude of products (services) from various providers and are influenced by factors like accommodation, dining, tourist attractions, and tourism policies. However, research on destination brand equity is relatively new and less extensive compared to that on product brand equity.

Destination brand equity of Bodh Gaya is shaped by various factors. Firstly, Bodh Gaya holds immense historical and cultural significance as the place where Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, attained enlightenment. This historical legacy positions Bodh Gaya as a revered spiritual destination, attracting pilgrims and tourists from around the world.

Secondly, Bodh Gaya boasts a rich cultural heritage, with its numerous temples, monasteries, and archaeological sites serving as important landmarks of Buddhist culture and history. These cultural attractions contribute to Bodh Gaya's brand identity as a center for spiritual enlightenment and cultural exploration.

Moreover, the Mahabodhi temple complex in Bodh Gaya was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2002, although this hermitage forest was not an important place of pilgrimage during the Buddha's time. But later, the Buddha's disciples began to visit and gradually transforming the place into a sacred center of worship and today Bodh Gaya is a social and cultural meeting place between domestic and international travelers as well as other prominent tourist destinations.

Furthermore, Bodh Gaya's brand equity is supported by its reputation for political stability, infrastructure development, and accessibility. The destination's political stability ensures a safe and secure environment for visitors, while ongoing infrastructure improvements enhance the overall visitor experience.

Additionally, positive word-of-mouth publicity and recommendations from satisfied visitors contribute to Bodh Gaya's brand equity, as visitors share their enriching experiences with others, thereby amplifying the destination's appeal.

Therefore, Bodh Gaya's destination brand equity is characterized by its historical and cultural significance, political stability, infrastructure development, accessibility, and positive word-of-mouth reputation. These factors collectively contribute to Bodh Gaya's strong brand presence and its ability to attract and retain visitors seeking spiritual enlightenment, cultural immersion, and memorable travel experiences.

3.2.1 Brand Image of Bodh Gaya

Bodh Gaya's brand image is deeply rooted in its status as a spiritual haven, raising images of peaceful and enlightenment under the sacred Bodhi Tree. It embodies a timeless sanctuary for spiritual seekers, offering relief and self-reflection within its serene surroundings. Central to Bodh Gaya's brand image is its rich cultural heritage, represented through ancient monasteries, complicated carved stupas, and vibrant rituals. This cultural gem reflects its historical significance and vibrant cultural images, captivating visitors with its timeless allure.

As the ultimate pilgrimage destination for Buddhists worldwide, Bodh Gaya's brand image symbolizes blessings, worship, and spiritual awakening. Its sacred grounds attract millions of pilgrims each year, embodying the pilgrimage journey and the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment.

Bodh Gaya's global brand image transcends cultural boundaries, portraying it as an iconic symbol of peace, harmony, and interfaith dialogue. Recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it promotes cross-cultural understanding and attracts visitors from diverse backgrounds. The brand image of Bodh Gaya is inseparable from its historical legacy as the birthplace of Buddhism. It serves as a living authentication to the teachings of Gautama Buddha, inspiring amazement and reverence among those seeking to connect with this ancient tradition.

Drawing on the images of Buddhism and Bihar as part of the incredible marketing initiative, it becomes evident how various places and destinations develop their own brands and are positioned in a way to enhance the larger brand image. Bihar predominantly relies on its Buddhist sector as a pivotal asset for tourism advancement. This sector, intertwined

with orientalist depictions, elevates destinations like Bodh Gaya, positioning them as destinations for spiritual tourism and integral components of cultural influence and historical legacy.

Bodh Gaya is great for families and offers good value for money. There are lots of things to do and see, liked cultural attractions and historical monuments. The weather is nice, making it enjoyable to visit. Bodh Gaya stands out from other cities and it makes an even more special destination.

3.2.2 Brand Awareness of Bodh Gaya

Bodh Gaya, India, enjoys significant brand awareness globally as one of the most revered Buddhist pilgrimage sites. It's renowned as the place where Gautama Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree. Its historical and spiritual significance attracts visitors from around the world, contributing to its strong brand recognition in the realm of religious and cultural tourism.

Bodh Gaya's brand awareness is amplified by its UNESCO World Heritage Site status, which highlights its cultural and architectural importance. Bodh Gaya and other cultural events in Bihar area further promote its visibility, drawing attention to its rich heritage and attracting tourists and pilgrims alike. Moreover, Bodh Gaya's association with meditation and mindfulness practices adds another dimension to its global recognition, resonating with individuals seeking spiritual growth and inner peace.

Bodh Gaya is well-known as a top tourism spot. It has a great reputation and is easily recognized among other similar destinations. When people think about cultural trips, Bodh Gaya comes to mind quickly. Its rich history and spiritual importance make it stand out in travel promotions, making it a go-to choose for those seeking cultural and spiritual experiences.

3.2.3 Brand Quality of Bodh Gaya

Bodh Gaya's brand quality derives from its profound historical and spiritual significance as the site where Gautama Buddha attained enlightenment. This revered status is deeply rooted in centuries of Buddhist tradition, making Bodh Gaya a sacred destination esteemed among Buddhists worldwide.

The brand quality of Bodh Gaya is further enriched by its rich cultural heritage. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is celebrated for its architectural and cultural importance, attracting historians, scholars, and cultural enthusiasts eager to explore its ancient roots. As a pilgrimage destination, Bodh Gaya holds a special place in the hearts of millions of pilgrims and tourists who visit annually. Its reputation as a sacred site for spiritual seekers and followers of Buddhism enhances its brand quality, solidifying its position as a place of profound significance.

Bodh Gaya enjoys significant global recognition, bolstering its brand quality. References in religious texts, travel literature, and media coverage ensure its visibility on the world stage, maintaining its status as a prominent destination for spiritual and cultural tourism. Efforts to preserve and protect Bodh Gaya's heritage contribute to its brand quality. Initiatives aimed at conserving its monuments, promoting sustainable tourism practices, and fostering intercultural dialogue ensure the authenticity and attractiveness of Bodh Gaya to visitors, ensuring its legacy for generations to come.

Bodh Gaya has good roads and infrastructure for visitors. It's easy to find travel information, making planning trips simple. People trust the tourism products in Bodh Gaya because they're reliable. The place is politically stable, so visitors feel safe. There are lots of historical sites and museums to explore in Bodh Gaya, offering something for everyone.

3.3 Demographic Profile of Respondents

To study the effect of destination brand equity on destination brand satisfaction and loyalty of visitors towards Bodh Gaya tourism groups, the initial analysis focuses on the demographic characteristics of respondents. Data is collected through google form with structured questionnaires from the visitors who have travelled to Bodh Gaya with tourism groups. The questionnaires encompass inquiries regarding respondents' general demographics, their views on destination brand image, brand awareness, brand quality, how much they satisfied to destination where they visited and also positivity about destination branding.

Table (3.1) Demographic Profile of Respondents

Sr. No.	Demographic Data		No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
	Total		92	100.0
1	Gender	Male	49	53.26
		Female	43	46.74
2	Age (years)	18 - 25 years	6	6.52
		26 - 35 years	28	30.43
		36 - 45 years	14	15.22
		46 - 55 years	22	23.91
		56 - 65 years	15	16.30
		66 years and above	7	7.61
3	Marital Status	Single	16	17.39
		Married	76	82.61
4	First visit to Bodh Gaya	Yes	63	68.48
		No	29	31.52
5	Education	High school level	26	28.26
		Under graduate	3	3.26
		Graduate	56	60.87
		Post Graduate (Master & PhD)	7	7.61

Source: Survey Data (2024)

According to Table (3.1), the demographic data collected for the study on destination branding in Bodh Gaya reveals interesting insights into the profile of visitors to the region. Male respondents make up the majority, comprising 53.26% of the total respondents, while female respondents make up 46.74%. This indicates a slightly higher representation of male visitors compared to female visitors to Bodh Gaya. Similarly, the

age distribution of respondents varies, with the majority falling between the ages of 26 to 55 years. The largest age group consists of respondents aged 26-35 years (30.43%), followed closely by those aged 46-55 years (23.91%). This distribution suggests a diverse range of age groups visiting Bodh Gaya, with a significant representation from both younger and middle-aged demographics.

Besides, the majority of respondents are married, accounting for 82.61% of the total, while single respondents make up 17.39% and this also indicates that Bodh Gaya attracts a larger number of married visitors, possibly including families and couples. A significant portion of respondents (68.48%) indicated that their visit to Bodh Gaya was their first time, while 31.52% had visited before. This suggests that Bodh Gaya attracts a considerable number of first-time visitors, indicating potential opportunities for effective destination branding strategies to create memorable experiences for newcomers.

According to the survey results, the majority of respondents have completed their education at the graduate level (60.87%), followed by those at the high school level (28.26%). A smaller percentage of respondents hold postgraduate degrees (7.61%), indicating a diverse educational background among visitors. This suggests that Bodh Gaya appeals to visitors from various educational backgrounds, ranging from those with basic education to higher academic qualifications.

In summary, the study surveyed a total of 92 respondents in which the majority of respondents are male and young group. Additionally, most of the respondents reported their first visit to Bodh Gaya and are in married relationship. The majority of respondents are graduated.

Overall, these demographic insights provide valuable information about the profile of visitors to Bodh Gaya, which can inform destination branding strategies aimed at providing to the diverse needs and preferences of different visitor segments.

3.4 Reliability Test

The reliability test stands as a cornerstone in researchers' toolkit for assessing the core variables of their study. Its primary function test measuring the consistency between data collected. Furthermore, it provides clear statement that which variable and which one is not, thereby guiding researchers in their subsequent investigative steps. Employing the renowned Cronbach's Coefficient alpha method, researchers measure the reliability of their

instruments. This method, acknowledged widely for its effectiveness, offers a dependable means to ascertain the internal consistency of study instruments.

In this study, five variables of visitor attitude on destination brand equity such as destination brand image, destination brand awareness, destination brand quality with service provider, destination brand satisfaction and destination brand loyalty have been measured. Each dimension comprises a varying number of items, and each item is evaluated using a five-point Likert scale. A scale encompasses multiple items. Only when items within the scale are internally consistent and can be reliable. Cronbach's alpha is likened to the expected correlation between two tests measuring the same concept.

The reliability of scales is assessed through Cronbach's alpha coefficients, which range from zero to one. Cronbach's alpha values approaching zero signify poor reliability, whereas values nearing one indicate strong reliability. Although there is no cut-off value for how close to one is high reliability, it is commonly accepted, especially for academic purpose, that Cronbach's alpha value above 0.6 is satisfactory. The reliability analysis utilized the Cronbach's Alpha test is to examine internal consistency.

Table (3.2) Reliability Analysis

Sr. No.	Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
1	Destination Brand Equity			
	i The Brand Image of Destination	6	0.707	Reliable
	ii The Brand Awareness of Destination	5	0.754	Reliable
	iii The Brand Quality of Destination	5	0.750	Reliable
2	Destination Brand Satisfaction	7	0.706	Reliable
3	Destination Brand Loyalty	7	0.775	Reliable

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Table (3.2) shows Cronbach's alpha of all variables. All variables are reliable because all of them are above 0.6 variable. Then, Cronbach's alpha of the brand image, brand awareness, brand quality of destination, destination brand satisfaction and destination

brand loyalty are all reliable for this study. The destination brand loyalty response gets excellent state of reliable for this study.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS ON DESTINATION BRAND EQUITY, BRAND SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY OF VISITORS TOWARDS, BODH GAYA

This chapter describes the analysis of the study which also presents the visitor's perception towards brand equity such as brand image, brand awareness and brand quality of destination Bodh Gaya. The mean scores are also calculated by using with SPSS analysis and display the findings. Furthermore, the effect of destination brand equity on destination brand satisfaction and the effect of destination brand satisfaction on destination brand loyalty are calculated with the regression analysis to meet the objectives of the study.

The structured questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert scale to assess visitor perception regarding factors related to the service provider. Subsequently, the mean score is calculated. Each item is measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree). Therefore, the mean value may range from 1 to 5 in this study. It can be assumed that an average below 3 indicates dissatisfaction, while an average above 3 indicates satisfaction.

The mean values give the information on how destination brand image, destination brand awareness and destination brand quality can affect destination brand satisfaction and subsequently influence destination brand loyalty among visitors to Bodh Gaya. In alignment with Best's classification (1977), responses are interpreted as follows: mean values ranging from 1.00 to 1.80 are categorized as "strongly disagree," 1.81 to 2.60 as "disagree," 2.61 to 3.40 as "neither agree nor disagree," 3.41 to 4.20 as "agree," and 4.21 to 5.00 as "strongly agree" regarding the recognition of Bodh Gaya by visitors.

4.1 Visitor Perception on Destination Brand Equity, Destination Brand Satisfaction and Destination Brand Loyalty

This section presents the result of the survey regarding the visitor perception towards brand image, brand awareness, brand quality, destination brand satisfaction and destination brand loyalty of Bodh Gaya, India. Destination brand equity such as brand

image, brand awareness and brand quality are very important to achieve customer satisfaction.

4.1.1 Destination Brand Image

Destination brand image plays a crucial role in shaping visitors' perceptions, expectations, and emotional connections with a destination, all of which contribute to destination brand satisfaction.

Following the collection of the visitor responses, the data was meticulously analyzed to get the meaningful insights. The collected results of the overall mean value for each question, are shown in Table (4.1). The respondents are asked whether they agree or not according to the scale of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree or strongly agree across all six questions.

Table (4.1) Visitor Perception on Destination Brand Image

Sr. No.	Description	Mean Values
1	Suitable for family-oriented destination	4.17
2	A good value for money	3.29
3	Interesting cultural attractions	4.39
4	Interesting historical monuments and relevant events	4.34
5	Good climate	3.68
6	Being more special than other cities.	4.41
Overall Mean		4.05

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Table (4.1) describes an overview of the individual mean scores for six destination brand image related questions in which the overall mean value is 4.05 at agree level. According to Best's 1977 classification, respondents strongly agree that the destination has interesting cultural attractions, interesting historical monuments and relevant events, and is more special than other cities. They also agree that it is suitable for a family-oriented destination and has a good climate. However, they neither agree nor disagree that it offers good value for money.

4.1.2 Destination Brand Awareness

Destination brand awareness, defined as the extent to which a destination is recognized and recalled by potential visitors, serves as a crucial precursor to satisfaction. When individuals possess a strong awareness of a destination's brand, they are more likely to have clear expectations about what the destination has to offer. This strengthen awareness enables potential visitors to make informed decisions about whether the destination aligns with their preferences and desires. Furthermore, destination brand awareness contributes to the formation of perceptions and attitudes towards the destination. Individuals who are familiar with a destination's brand are more likely to have positive associations and perceptions of the destination, which can positively influence their overall satisfaction.

Regarding to destination brand awareness of Bodh Gaya, India is responded to five statements as shown in Table (4.2) where its overall mean value is shown as well.

Table (4.2) Visitor Perception on Destination Brand Awareness

Sr. No.	Description	Mean Values
1	Awareness of Bodh Gaya as a tourism destination	3.72
2	A good reputation.	4.02
3	Recognizing Bodh Gaya among other similar tourism destinations	3.88
4	The destination's cultural tourism traits readily come to mind	3.68
5	The quick recall of culture destination marketing.	3.38
Overall Mean		3.74

Source: Survey Data (2024)

In Table (4.2) overall mean value and four statements are at agree level with Best's classification. It indicates a favorable perception among visitors and reflects positively on the destination's branding efforts and strategies. Visitors to Bodh Gaya express agreement across various aspects of the destination's brand awareness which are the awareness of Bodh Gaya as a tourism destination, a good reputation, recognition of Bodh Gaya among other similar tourism destinations and cultural tourism traits of Bodh Gaya readily come to

mind. This indicates that visitors perceive Bodh Gaya positively and view it favorably among other tourism destinations, highlighting the destination's branding and standing.

However, visitors express a neutral level in regarding the quick recall of culture destination marketing, with a mean value of 3.38. This implies that while visitors may be aware of Bodh Gaya's cultural tourism traits, they may not readily recall specific marketing efforts aimed at promoting the destination's cultural attractions.

4.1.3 Destination Brand Quality

By delivering exceptional quality and consistently meeting visitor expectations, destinations can enhance satisfaction levels among visitors, leading to positive outcomes for both visitors and the destination itself. Destination brand quality reflects the overall excellence and superiority of the destination's offerings. When visitors perceive a destination's brand as synonymous with high quality, they are more likely to believe that their visit will provide exceptional value for their time and money.

The following Table (4.3) shows the overall of individual mean value of destination brand quality of Bodh Gaya with five relevant statements. Its overall mean value of 3.72 is also at agree level and it is a positive indicator of the destination's perceived excellence and consistency in delivering quality experiences to visitors.

Table (4.3) Visitor Perception on Destination Brand Quality

Sr. No.	Description	Mean Values
1	The presence of good infrastructure in the destination, such as driveways and roads.	3.43
2	Enhanced access to travel information	3.40
3	Reliability and trustworthiness characterize tourism products in Bodh Gaya.	3.54
4	Destination enjoyed political stability.	3.83
5	A variety of historical sites and museums in Bodh Gaya	4.41
Overall Mean		3.72

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Furthermore, visitor's express agreement regarding on the presence of good infrastructure in Bodh Gaya, reliability and trustworthiness characterize tourism products in Bodh Gaya and the political stability enjoyed by Bodh Gaya. In which, various historical sites/museums at Bodh Gaya with highest mean value of 4.41 occur strongly agree in visitors' experience on destination brand quality as reliable and consistent in delivering high-quality experiences, they feel more confident in their decision to visit. On the other hand, the agree level of assessment of travel information to Bodh Gaya with the mean value 3.40, a neutral level, meaning that respondents may not agree or disagree with the assertion that there has been an improvement in access to travel information in Bodh Gaya.

4.1.4 Destination Brand Satisfaction

In relation to destination brand satisfaction with the service provider, there are seven statements to response for visitors' experience. Destination brand satisfaction is also analyzed by fostering positive emotional connections, encouraging repeat visits, and eliciting word-of-mouth recommendations from satisfied visitors. When people are fulfilling experiences at a destination, they are more likely to return for future visits, recommend the destination to others, and become advocates for the brand.

In Table (4.4) with seven relevant statements, the overall mean value of 3.73 at agree level reflects a harmonious alignment between visitors' expectations, experiences, and perceptions of the destination's brand. Achieving and maintaining this state is essential for sustaining the destination's competitiveness, attracting repeat visitors, and fostering long-term success in the tourism industry.

Table (4.4) Visitor Perception on Destination Brand Satisfaction

Sr. No.	Description	Mean Values
1	Good experience of utilizing services in Bodh Gaya	3.82
2	Good decision to visit Bodh Gaya as a tourist with satisfaction	3.93
3	Real Enjoyment of services in Bodh Gaya	3.64
4	Satisfaction with the decision to visit Bodh Gaya as a tourist	3.85
5	Satisfaction with the touristic attractions of the destination	3.28
6	Satisfaction with the culture/traditions of the destination	3.48
7	Overall satisfaction with the destination as a whole	4.09
Overall Mean		3.73

Source: Survey Data (2024)

In this study, Bodh Gaya destination is only to mention that there may have few tourist attractions compared to other destinations due to its mean value of 3.28, at a neutral level. However, it is observed that the other statements of satisfied with the destination overall are at agree state. Such kind of a positive response indicates that the visitors found their experience satisfactory across multiple dimensions, including various aspects such as accommodations, tourist attractions, culture/traditions, hospitality services, memorable experience to visitors and overall atmosphere.

Analyzing responses to those statement can help destination marketing managers of Bodh Gaya tourism groups to understand visitors' overall satisfaction levels, identify strengths and weaknesses in the destination experience, and prioritize areas for enhancement to strengthen the destination brand satisfaction and competitiveness.

4.1.5 Destination Brand Loyalty

Table (4.5) presents statistical summaries in descriptive statistics for destination brand loyalty of Bodh Gaya, India, measuring the visitors' intention to revisit, which indicates a focus on the outcome. To explore destination brand loyalty towards Bodh Gaya, India, seven structured questions were designed. The mean score for destination brand loyalty to Bodh Gaya, India, is presented in Table (4.5), derived from survey responses.

Table (4.5) Visitor Perception on Destination Brand Loyalty

Sr. No.	Description	Mean Values
1	A lifelong dream to visit Bodh Gaya as a destination	4.45
2	Promoting positive aspects of Bodh Gaya tourism to others	3.68
3	Recommendation of Bodh Gaya for tourism advice seekers.	3.73
4	Encouragement of friends and relatives to explore tourism in Bodh Gaya	3.96
5	Top choice for cultural tourism to Bodh Gaya	3.82
6	Contribution to positive word-of-mouth publicity for Bodh Gaya	3.78
7	Commitment to visiting Bodh Gaya even in potential cost increases	3.62
Overall Mean		3.86

Source: Survey Data (2024)

When destination brand loyalty is described as being at an agree level with its overall mean value of 3.86 in Table (4.5), it typically means that respondents or visitors generally express agreement or positive sentiments regarding their loyalty to the destination's brand. In other words, they indicate a favorable intention or willingness to revisit the destination in the future, recommend it to others, or actively engage with the destination's offerings and promotions.

Similarly, visitors to Bodh Gaya exhibit an agreement in their perception of destination brand loyalty, expressing willingness to promote positive aspects, recommend Bodh Gaya for tourism advice seekers, encourage friends and relatives to explore the destination, consider it their top choice for cultural tourism, contribute to positive word-of-mouth publicity, and maintain commitment to visiting even in potential cost increases.

As a feature in it, the statement of dream-destination to visit in the lifetime with mean value of 4.45 is at a strongly agree level to express full agreement for Buddhism since Bodh Gaya holds a central place in the hearts and minds of Buddhists, symbolizing the essence of their faith and serving as a beacon of enlightenment and spiritual awakening. As

such, Bodh Gaya is considered one of the most sacred pilgrimage sites for Buddhists worldwide.

4.2 Analysis on the Effect of Destination Brand Equity on Destination Brand Satisfaction

Examining the effect of destination brand equity on destination brand satisfaction of Bodh Gaya, India, is one of this study's objectives. Therefore, this objective is subjected to analyze the effect of three destination brand equities is measured by using a multiple regression tool such as destination brand image, destination brand awareness and destination brand quality. In this study, it is been examined how the strength of a destination's brand effects the satisfaction experienced by the visitors. It is been utilized both Linear Regression and Descriptive methods to analyze the relationship between destination brand satisfaction (the dependent variable) and several independent variables including destination brand image, destination brand awareness, and destination brand quality. The results of the regression analysis can be found in Table (4.6).

Table (4.6) The Effect of Destination Brand Equity on Destination Brand Satisfaction

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardize Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics
	B	Std. Error	Beta			VIF
1. (Constant)	2.137	0.336		6.363	0.000	
Brand Image	0.216*	0.114	0.266	1.898	0.061	2.281
Brand Awareness	-0.127	0.11	-0.161	-1.152	0.253	2.267
Brand Quality	0.320***	0.092	0.400	3.468	0.001	1.547
R	.492					
R Square	.242					
Adjusted R Square	.216					
Durbin-Watson	1.885					
F Value	9.362*** (p-value = .000)					

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Note: *** 1%, ** 5%, * 10% level of significant

Based on the analysis presented in Table (4.6), it is evident that the brand quality of destination variable has a significant positive effect on the satisfaction of Bodh Gaya visitors with the destination brand. The regression model accounts for approximately 24.2% of the variability in destination brand satisfaction, as indicated by an R squared value of 0.242. Furthermore, the p-value associated with the F-test statistic is less than 0.001, providing making strong evidence in support of the multiple regression model's validity. Multicollinearity, a concern in multiple linear regression models, has been assessed, and it is not considered as problematic in this case since all variance inflation factor (VIF) values are below 10. The correlation coefficient (R) value of 0.492 falls between 0 and 1, indicating a correlation between the independent and dependent variables. Additionally, the Durbin-Watson statistic value is close to 2 (1.885), suggesting the absence of autocorrelation within the sample.

Based on the findings, it's evident that the destination's brand quality holds significant importance at the 1% level, whereas the brand image of the destination also shows significant coefficient values at the 10% significance level. As demonstrated earlier, the unstandardized coefficient and p-value associated with the destination's brand image are both positive and significant ($B=0.216$, $p<0.10$). Consequently, it can be assumed that the destination's brand image influences positively and significantly on the destination brand satisfaction at the 10% significance level.

The unstandardized coefficient and p-value associated with the destination's brand quality factor were found to be positive and significant ($B = 0.320$, $p<0.01$). Thus, it can be supported that the brand quality of the destination effects positively and significantly on the destination brand satisfaction at the 1% significance level.

Based on the standardized coefficients values, it's evident that the destination's brand quality ($\beta=.400$) has the strongest influence on destination brand satisfaction, followed by the destination's brand image ($\beta=.266$). For visitors to Bodh Gaya, India, a key factor driving their interest is the perceived high quality of Bodh Gaya as a travel destination. The results demonstrate that both the brand quality and brand image of the destination positively and significantly effect on the destination brand satisfaction. Notably, the brand quality of the destination emerges as having a particularly significant positive effect on destination brand satisfaction. Consequently, it can be inferred that enhancements in the destination's brand quality and image contribute to an increase in destination brand satisfaction.

The effect of the destination brand equity of Bodh Gaya, India, coupled with the brand image of destination, significantly influences the perception of Bodh Gaya, India. The brand image of Bodh Gaya can significantly influence the satisfaction levels of its visitors and pilgrims. Bodh Gaya is one of the most sacred sites in Buddhism, as it is where Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment and became the Buddha. As such, the brand image associated with Bodh Gaya is deeply intertwined with spiritual significance, tranquility, and enlightenment.

The effect of the destination brand equity of Bodh Gaya, India, towards Bodh Gaya tourism groups, with brand quality of destination, significantly effect to choose the place to visit. The brand quality of Bodh Gaya, encompassing infrastructure, services, cleanliness, safety, accessibility, tourism products, and travel information, plays a crucial

role in shaping visitor perceptions and satisfaction levels. By continuously improving and maintaining high standards of quality, Bodh Gaya, India, can enhance destination brand satisfaction and attract more visitors over time.

Therefore, strategically managing and promoting a positive destination brand image and quality can enhance visitor satisfaction into ultimately driving tourism growth and economic benefits.

4.3 Analysis on the Effect of Destination Brand Satisfaction on Destination Brand Loyalty

To analyze the effect of destination brand satisfaction on destination brand loyalty of Bodh Gaya, India, multiple regression analysis was also applied. This study explores the extent to which visitor satisfaction with a destination's brand affects their loyalty to that destination. Both linear regression and descriptive methods were employed to examine the relationship between destination brand loyalty (the dependent variable) and independent variables representing destination brand satisfaction. The findings of the regression analysis are presented in Table (4.7).

Table (4.7) The Effect of Destination Brand Satisfaction on Destination Brand Loyalty

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics
	B	Std. Error	Beta			VIF
1. (Constant)	0.655	0.378		1.734	0.086	
Brand Satisfaction	0.860***	0.101	0.668	8.516	0.000	1.000
R	.668					
R Square	.446					
Adjusted R Square	.440					
Durbin-Watson	1.744					
F Value	72.524***(p-value = .000)					

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Note: *** 1%, ** 5%, * 10% level of significant

Based on the findings presented in Table (4.7), it is clear that visitor satisfaction with the destination's brand significantly enhances Bodh Gaya visitors' loyalty to the destination brand. The regression model explains approximately 44.6% of the variation in destination brand satisfaction, as evidenced by an R-squared value of 0.446. Moreover, the p-value associated with the F-test statistic is below 0.001, strongly supporting the validity of the multiple regression model. Concerns regarding multicollinearity, typical in multiple linear regression, have been evaluated and found to be non-problematic in this instance, with variance inflation factor (VIF) values at 1.000 (where Multicollinearity is considered problematic when exceeding 10). The correlation coefficient (R) of 0.668 falls within the range of 0 to 1, indicating a correlation between the independent and dependent variables. Furthermore, the Durbin-Watson statistic value is close to 2 (1.744), suggesting no autocorrelation within the sample. This suggests that the observations are independent of each other, strengthening the reliability of the regression analysis.

The results indicate that destination brand satisfaction is significant at the 1% level of coefficient value. As previously illustrated, both the unstandardized coefficient and the associated p-value for destination brand satisfaction are positive and significant ($B=0.860$, $p<0.001$). Therefore, it can be assumed that destination brand satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on destination brand loyalty at the 1% significance level.

Therefore, it can be said that all these results suggest a statistically significant effect in destination brand loyalty in Bodh Gaya. Higher levels of satisfaction with the destination brand are associated with greater loyalty among visitors, highlighting the importance of enhancing visitor experiences and perceptions to foster long-term loyalty and positive brand associations.

The effect of destination brand satisfaction on destination brand loyalty of Bodh Gaya is assessed to the effect of visitors' satisfaction with the Bodh Gaya destination brand on the destination brand loyalty to that destination. Destination brand satisfaction represents how pleased or content visitors are with various aspects of Bodh Gaya, such as its attractions, services, cultural offerings, and overall experience. Destination brand loyalty, on the other hand, reflects visitors' inclination to return to Bodh Gaya in the future and recommend it to others. It signifies a deeper emotional connection and commitment to the destination, which often leads to repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth promotion.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This is the last chapter containing the conclusion for the whole research. This section includes three main sections. The first part is the findings and discussions of the effect of destination brand equity on destination brand satisfaction and destination brand loyalty of visitors to Bodh Gaya, India. The second part is the suggestions and recommendations according to the findings of the study. Finally, in the direction of further researches the paper discusses how this research can be improved.

5.1 Findings and Discussions

According to the demographic data collected for the study on destination branding in Bodh Gaya makes interesting insights into the profile of visitors to the region in which the number of males is more than female, however there is no significant difference between the number of male and female since Myanmar people are equally interested to the religion regardless of the gender. Most of the respondents are 26-35 age group; what this shows is that the members of this age group are young people who love to travel, and they go on religious trips out of the many options for travelling. The second group members are 46–55 years old; their travels are those who visit the religious pilgrimages they want to do while they are healthy enough to travel.

The majority of the respondents are married whether marital status may influence travel motivations, decision-making processes, or satisfaction levels. Married individuals might prioritize family-friendly activities or seek out destinations that offer opportunities for relaxation and bonding.

Moreover, a significant portion of the respondents indicated that they were visiting Bodh Gaya for the first time. This provides an opportunity to examine the factors influencing first-time visitors' perceptions and satisfaction with the destination. It can be seen how their experiences compare to those of repeated visitors and identify any areas for improvement in welcoming and orienting first-time visitors.

The demographic profile of respondents reveals insightful information about the educational background of the surveyed individuals. Analysis of the data indicates a diverse distribution across various educational levels. Notably, a significant proportion of respondents have achieved higher levels of education, in graduate-level qualifications. This group likely comprises individuals who have completed bachelor's degrees, signifying a substantial portion of the surveyed population with advanced academic credentials. Furthermore, the presence of respondents holding Post Graduate degrees, including master's and doctorates, underscores the prevalence of highly educated individuals within the sample.

Along with the mean values of visitor perception, it provides insights into the perception of various aspects of destination brand equity in which brand image, brand awareness and brand quality receive at an agree level. However, there is a lower mean value in the brand image's statement of a good value for money showing that visitors may perceive the destination as relatively expensive or not offering enough value for the money spent. Similarly, with a lower mean value, Bodh Gaya may struggle with brand awareness and recall in its culture destination marketing efforts. Visitors may not easily associate the destination with its cultural attractions or may have limited exposure to Bodh Gaya's marketing campaigns. Besides, Bodh Gaya's brand may also not be perceived as providing high-quality access to travel information, as indicated by the lower mean value in visitor perception on destination brand quality since visitors may encounter challenges in accessing accurate, comprehensive, and user-friendly information about accommodations, transportation, and attractions.

Similarly, destination brand satisfaction and destination brand loyalty receive respective mean values at an agree level. Although satisfaction with specific touristic attractions received a comparatively lower mean value. Visitors may appreciate the services and overall experience in Bodh Gaya, they may not find the touristic attractions as fulfilling or captivating as they had hoped. This could be from overcrowding, inadequate facilities, or a lack of diverse experiences.

The first objective of to examine the effect of destination brand equity on destination brand satisfaction of Bodh Gaya, India. The analysis of the effect of destination brand equity on destination brand satisfaction by using multiple regression model, among the destination brand equity such as the brand image and the brand quality have the positive significant effect on destination brand satisfaction of Bodh Gaya, India.

The second objective is to analyze the effect of destination brand satisfaction on destination brand loyalty of Bodh Gaya, India. The result also indicates that destination brand satisfaction has a significant effect on destination brand loyalty. These two significant resulting on destination brand satisfaction and destination brand loyalty suggests in improving to focus on brand quality, strengthen brand image, increase brand awareness, enhance visitor engagement and loyalty programs for continuous monitoring and improvement of Bodh Gaya, India.

In conclusion, through an analysis of visitor perceptions, it becomes evident that Bodh Gaya holds a significant brand influence among visitors and pilgrims alike, bringing from its rich historical and cultural heritage, spiritual significance. Moreover, the strong preferences towards loyalty, as evidenced by visitors' willingness to recommend Bodh Gaya, promote positive word-of-mouth publicity, and maintain commitment to visiting despite potential cost increases, highlights the destination's strong branding and its ability to encourage long-term relationships with its visitors. As Bodh Gaya grows and adjusts to new tourism trends, it's ready to make visitors even happier and keep them coming back, solidifying its reputation as a top spiritual and cultural destination worldwide.

5.2 Suggestions and Recommendations

According to the above findings derived from visitors who recently experienced Bodh Gaya through tourism groups, several key recommendations emerge to enhance the branding opportunities and strengthen visitor satisfaction. This study offers valuable insights into the diverse perspectives and perceptions of visitors to Bodh Gaya, as reflected in the demographic profile of the respondents. The relatively balanced gender distribution among participants suggests that both male and female visitors contribute to the artwork of Bodh Gaya's visitor demographics, though further investigation into potential gender differences in perceptions and preferences could yield valuable insights for destination management and marketing efforts.

Furthermore, the wide range of age groups represented in the study highlights the multi-generational appeal of Bodh Gaya as a destination. From young adults to seniors, each age group brings unique expectations and motivations for their visit, emphasizing the importance of tailoring experiences and services to gather to diverse visitor needs.

Additionally, the predominance of married respondents underscores the significance of family-oriented experiences and accommodations in Bodh Gaya's tourism offerings.

The substantial portion of first-time visitors indicates the ongoing attraction of Bodh Gaya as a pilgrimage and cultural destination, with opportunities to enhance the welcoming and orientation process for newcomers. Likewise, the visitors' education level suggests that the survey sample consists of individuals with a relatively high level of educational attainment, which could influence their perceptions and responses to the survey questions.

By recognizing and addressing the diverse demographic characteristics of Bodh Gaya's visitors, business owner can better understand their needs, preferences, and behaviors, ultimately enhancing the overall visitor experience and fostering long-term destination loyalty.

The findings of this study suggest that Bodh Gaya tourism companies could introduce value-added packages or promotional deals, offer discounts for early bookings or group reservations, enhance transparency in pricing, and collect feedback from visitors to identify areas for improvement. The destination could also develop targeted marketing campaigns, utilize a mix of traditional and digital channels, collaborate with influencers and cultural organizations, and invest in memorable branding strategies in order to promote the quick recalling of culture destination marketing. By developing a centralized online platform, it can ensure user-friendly and multilingual providing up-to-date information and robust customer support channels for easily assessment of travel information.

Moreover, Bodh Gaya could enhance infrastructure and facilities, diversify attractions, implement crowd management strategies, and invest in interpretive signage and guided tours to enhance visitor engagement and understanding for better touristic attractions of the destinations.

To optimize the destination's brand, it should be focused on strengthening brand quality to ensure consistent excellence in services and experiences. Concurrently, implementing targeted marketing strategies must be done to enhance brand awareness among potential visitors, tailor offerings to meet or exceed visitor expectations and emphasizing aspects that drive destination brand satisfaction. Encouraging of repeated visiting and positive word-of-mouth through loyalty programs and personalized engagement is fostered to strong destination brand loyalty. Performance metrics and adapt

strategies should be monitored continuously based on data-driven insights to maintain a competitive edge in the market.

Additionally, this study was conducted to investigate the effect of destination brand equity on destination brand satisfaction and its subsequent effect on destination brand loyalty in Bodh Gaya, India. The data findings reveal several key insights into the dynamics of destination branding and visitors behavior in this context.

The analysis of destination brand equity components, including brand image, awareness, and quality, demonstrated that brand image and brand quality significantly influence destination brand satisfaction, while brand awareness did not exhibit a statistically significant effect. This suggests that the perceived image and quality of Bodh Gaya play pivotal roles in shaping visitors' satisfaction with the destination.

While destination brand awareness did not show statistical significance in predicting destination brand satisfaction, it's still crucial for long-term brand success. Focusing on targeted marketing efforts to increase brand awareness can be done including online campaigns, partnerships with travel influencers, and participation in relevant events and travel fairs. Additionally, regularly monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of these initiatives can provide valuable insights for refining brand awareness strategies and enhancing overall brand performance.

Building upon these findings, the second analysis examined the effect on destination brand satisfaction and destination brand loyalty resulting that there is a strong positive relationship between destination brand satisfaction and destination brand loyalty.

The results show the importance of cultivating a strong brand identity and delivering high-quality experiences to enhance visitor satisfaction and foster destination brand loyalty in Bodh Gaya, India. While brand awareness did not directly affect satisfaction or loyalty in this study, it remains a foundational aspect of destination branding efforts, serving as the initial point of contact for potential visitors.

Therefore, the above findings have important implications for tourism management and marketing in Bodh Gaya following strategic decision-making and branding initiatives. By focusing on enhancing brand image and quality, stakeholders can create a more compelling destination perception and strengthen visitor loyalty. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on destination branding and highlights the importance of effective branding strategies in the tourism industry.

Besides, Bodh Gaya tourism groups should focus on communicating Bodh Gaya's unique brand more effectively, emphasizing its spiritual and cultural significance through various marketing channels. Additionally, investing in high-quality experiences and services aligned with Bodh Gaya's brand identity is essential to ensuring visitor satisfaction and loyalty.

Moreover, developing loyalty programs and incentives to encourage repeat visitation and referrals can foster long-term relationships with Bodh Gaya tourism groups customers. Engaging visitors through cultural events, workshops, and guided tours not only enhances the visitor perception but also promotes Bodh Gaya's brand presence. Staying abreast of market trends and forging strategic partnerships with local stakeholders are also essential strategies to remain competitive and relevant in the tourism industry.

Finally, establishing a system for continuous monitoring and evaluation of visitor satisfaction and loyalty metrics ensures that Bodh Gaya tourism groups remain responsive to visitor feedback and adaptable to market dynamics. By implementing these recommendations, Bodh Gaya tourism groups can further distinguish as a leading provider of transformative travel experiences of Bodh Gaya.

5.3 Needs for Further Research

This study investigated the effect of destination brand equity on brand satisfaction and loyalty of visitors towards Bodh Gaya. However, there might be other factors in destination branding that also play a role in shaping visitor satisfaction and loyalty, which were not addressed in this study. Therefore, further research should explore alternative destination branding frameworks. Further studies could also gain insights by examining additional branding elements that contribute to visitor satisfaction and loyalty.

Further research could do more into the role of brand awareness in destination branding, exploring how variations in awareness levels affect tourist behavior and decision-making processes. Additionally, investigating the effectiveness of specific brand awareness strategies, such as advertising campaigns or digital marketing initiatives, in increasing tourist engagement and visitation to Bodh Gaya would be valuable. Understanding the degree of brand awareness and its interplay with other branding dimensions could provide valuable insights for destination marketers seeking to optimize their promotional efforts and enhance the overall destination experience.

On the other hand, comparing destination brand satisfaction and destination brand loyalty between Bodh Gaya and similar cultural destinations like Cambodia is a connecting area for further research due to the cultural richness and historical significance shared by these destinations. Bodh Gaya, as the place where Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment and became the Buddha, holds immense spiritual importance for Buddhists worldwide. Similarly, Cambodia boasts iconic cultural sites of the Angkor Wat temple complex, which attracts visitors and pilgrims fascinated by its ancient history and architectural grandeur.

Furthermore, researchers could explore additional sources of data, such as online reviews, visitor feedback platforms, and tourist behavior data. Analyzing online reviews and feedback can provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of each destination's branding efforts and visitor experiences. Researchers could examine common themes in positive and negative reviews to identify areas for improvement or enhancement in Bodh Gaya. As in conclusion, further research in this area has the potential to contribute valuable insights to destination management and marketing practices in both Bodh Gaya and cultural destinations across Asia.

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APPENDIX I
QUESTIONNAIRES
THE EFFECT OF DESTINATION BRAND EQUITY ON BRAND
SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY OF VISITORS TOWARDS
BODH GAYA

This questionnaire is only for MBA thesis required to submit for the attainment of MBA degree conferred by Yangon University of Economics. It is not related to any other business purpose or any person. Please kindly provide feedback to this questionnaire and we do appreciate for your time. All the data will be strongly kept confidential.

Section (A): General Information

(Please indicate the most appropriate response with click)

1. Gender

☐ Male

☐ Female

2. Age

☐ 18 – 25 years

☐ 26 – 35 years

☐ 36 – 45 years

☐ 46 – 55 years

☐ 56 – 65 years

☐ 66 years and above

3. Marital Status

☐ Single

☐ Married

4. First visit to Bodh Gaya

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. Education

☐ High school level

☐ Under graduate

☐ Graduate

☐ Post Graduate (Master & PhD)

Section (B) (Part II): Questions related to the effect of destination brand equity on brand satisfaction and loyalty of visitors towards Bodh Gaya.

Please indicate the most appropriate response with the scale given below;

5 = Strongly Agree 4 = Agree 3 = Neutral 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree

Section 1

No .	The Brand Image of Destination (Bodh Gaya, India)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Bodh Gaya, India, is suitable for family-oriented destination	1	2	3	4	5
2	Bodh Gaya destination is a good value for money	1	2	3	4	5
3	Bodh Gaya has interesting cultural attractions	1	2	3	4	5

4	Bodh Gaya has interesting historical monuments and relevant events	1	2	3	4	5
5	During my visit to Bodh Gaya has good climate	1	2	3	4	5
6	Bodh Gaya is more special than other cities.	1	2	3	4	5

Section 2

No .	The Brand Awareness of Destination (Bodh Gaya, India)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I am aware of Bodh Gaya as a tourism destination	1	2	3	4	5
2	This destination has a good reputation.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I can recognize Bodh Gaya among other similar tourism destinations	1	2	3	4	5
4	The characteristics of this destination come to my mind quickly when I think about cultural tourism	1	2	3	4	5
5	I can quickly recall the marketing about the culture destination	1	2	3	4	5

Section 3

No .	The Brand Quality of Destination (Bodh Gaya, India)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I had good infrastructure in destination (such as driveway, roads)	1	2	3	4	5
2	I had more access to travel information	1	2	3	4	5
3	Tourism products in Bodh Gaya are reliable and trustworthy.					
4	I had political stability in destination	1	2	3	4	5
5	Bodh Gaya has various historical sites/museums	1	2	3	4	5

Section 4

No .	The Brand Satisfaction of Destination (Bodh Gaya, India)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Using services in Bodh Gaya has been a good experience	1	2	3	4	5
2	I feel good about my decision to visit Bodh Gaya as a tourist	1	2	3	4	5
3	I have truly enjoyed the services in Bodh Gaya	1	2	3	4	5
4	I am satisfied with my decision to visit Bodh Gaya as a tourist	1	2	3	4	5

5	I am satisfied with the touristic attractions of the destination	1	2	3	4	5
6	I am satisfied with the culture/traditions of the destination	1	2	3	4	5
7	Overall, I am satisfied with the destination as a whole	1	2	3	4	5

Section 5

No .	The Brand Loyalty of Destination (Bodh Gaya, India)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Bodh Gaya was always a dream-destination to visit sometime during my lifetime	1	2	3	4	5
2	I will say positive things about Bodh Gaya tourism to other people	1	2	3	4	5
3	I would recommend Bodh Gaya to someone who seeks advice for tourism	1	2	3	4	5
4	I would encourage friends and relatives to visit Bodh Gaya for tourism	1	2	3	4	5
5	I consider Bodh Gaya as the first choice for cultural tourism	1	2	3	4	5
6	After visit the Bodh Gaya, I think destination brand get good word of mouth publicity.	1	2	3	4	5

7	I will visit Bodh Gaya even if costs increase.	1	2	3	4	5
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