Reframing Destination Brand Experience: A Systematic Review of Its Influence on Tourist Satisfaction and Loyalty in Cultural Tourism

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a systematic literature review (SLR) of 35 global and Indonesia-based scholarly articles to investigate how Destination Brand Experience (DBE) influences tourist satisfaction and loyalty within cultural tourism contexts. The review adopts a hybrid SLR and interpretive synthesis approach to evaluate the impact of four DBE dimensions—sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual—on cultural tourism experience outcomes. Drawing on Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory, the analysis identifies satisfaction as a critical mediator between DBE and tourists' revisit/recommendation intentions. Findings reveal that while DBE is widely acknowledged as a multidimensional construct in tourism literature, empirical research remains concentrated in Western, festival, or nature-based settings. The case of *Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII)* is examined to contextualize these findings within a revitalized cultural theme park in the Global South. This review proposes a conceptual framework for empirical validation and suggests strategic directions for enhancing experience-based destination branding in culturally diverse emerging tourism economies.

Keywords: Destination Brand Experience, Tourist Satisfaction, Revisit Intention, Recommendation, Cultural Theme Parks, TMII, Experience Economy

INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourism has gained prominence as both a vehicle for heritage preservation and a strategic instrument for destination differentiation in the global tourism economy (Altunel & Erkurt, 2015). Unlike mass tourism, which often emphasizes passive consumption, cultural tourism fosters meaningful interactions with local values, traditions, and histories, providing transformative experiences that enhance personal growth and socio-cultural awareness (Zheng et al., 2025). These experiences are not only consumed but co-created, involving immersive participation by tourists in community-driven settings that prioritize authenticity and identity affirmation.

In Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, cultural tourism is being reframed through institutional interventions that emphasize inclusivity, sustainability, and digital engagement. Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII), a revitalized cultural theme park in Jakarta, offers a curated space for the nation's ethnocultural diversity. Managed by InJourney and PT TWC, TMII now adopts strategic pillars—Inclusive, Smart, Green, and Culture—that integrate experience-based branding with heritage interpretation. This shift aligns with broader trends in the experience economy, where destinations aim to deliver multisensory, emotionally resonant, and intellectually stimulating encounters (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). While Destination Brand Experience (DBE) has emerged as a dominant framework in tourism research, most empirical applications are situated in Western, urban, or nature-based destinations (Brakus et al., 2009;

Barnes et al., 2014). There is a paucity of research addressing how DBE functions in cultural tourism settings within the Global South, particularly in corporatized, revitalized venues such as TMII. Moreover, few studies examine how DBE interacts with constructs like authenticity, digital engagement, and identity affirmation in these emerging contexts. Addressing these gaps is crucial for advancing both theoretical understanding and practical strategies in cultural tourism destination management. This study, therefore, seeks to systematically review and synthesize the literature on DBE's influence on tourist satisfaction and loyalty within cultural tourism, with a particular focus on its application in Indonesia's evolving heritage attractions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with interpretive synthesis to critically examine how Destination Brand Experience (DBE) influences tourist satisfaction and loyalty within the scope of cultural tourism. Following PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al., 2009), the review ensures transparency and reproducibility through a structured process of literature identification, screening, and inclusion. A comprehensive search was conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar between January and March 2025, using targeted keywords related to DBE, cultural tourism, and tourist behavior. After an initial screening of 283 articles, 35 peer-reviewed studies published between 2010 and 2025 met the inclusion criteria, focusing on empirical or conceptual research examining DBE and its relationship to tourist satisfaction, loyalty, revisit intention, or recommendation intention. These studies span a variety of cultural contexts, including heritage parks, festivals, and museums, while non-relevant or non-peer-reviewed content was excluded.

For data analysis, articles were systematically coded by author, year, research context, method, DBE dimensions (sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual), and outcome variables. A literature matrix in Excel facilitated thematic synthesis, while NVivo enabled in-depth pattern tracing across studies. This dual approach ensured both deductive alignment and inductive insights. Methodological diversity was noted, though most studies relied on SEM or regression, with few employing experimental or mixed methods—highlighting a gap in causal testing. Despite limitations related to database scope, the review offers a comprehensive understanding of DBE's role in shaping satisfaction and loyalty, grounded in theories such as Expectancy-Disconfirmation (Oliver, 1980) and supported by empirical links between DBE, satisfaction, and loyalty behaviors (Chi & Qu, 2008; Lv et al., 2020). This synthesis lays the groundwork for contextual application in destinations like *Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII)*, emphasizing strategic implications for heritage tourism branding in emerging markets.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the thematic findings of the 35 reviewed studies, clustered into four core areas: (1) Dimensions of Destination Brand Experience (DBE); (2) The role of satisfaction as a mediating variable; (3) Loyalty as a dual construct; (4) Gaps in cultural tourism applications, particularly in Southeast Asia and (5) Recontextualizing DBE in Cultural Theme Parks.

Dimensions of Destination Brand Experience (DBE) Across the reviewed literature

DBE is consistently validated as a multidimensional construct encompassing sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual components (Brakus et al., 2009; Barnes et al., 2014). Sensory experiences refer to visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile stimuli, often exemplified by aesthetically rich environments, cultural performances, and physical layout of heritage sites. Affective experiences capture emotional responses such as nostalgia, pride, joy, or inspiration, particularly when tourists feel immersed in authentic local cultures (Altunel & Erkurt, 2015).

Behavioral DBE involves participatory engagements, such as learning crafts, joining rituals, or interacting with locals, which enhance perceived authenticity. Intellectual DBE refers to cognitive stimulation through storytelling, museum interpretation, or heritage narratives that promote cultural understanding (Zheng et al., 2025). Several studies (e.g., Liu et al., 2023; Matiza et al., 2023) further emphasize the overlap between DBE and spiritual or transformative tourism, where cognitive and affective engagement co-produce deeper value.

Satisfaction as a Mediating Mechanism

Tourist satisfaction consistently emerges as a key mediator between DBE and post-visit behavioral outcomes. Drawing from Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980), satisfaction arises when actual experience exceeds anticipated expectations. Studies (e.g., Chi & Qu, 2008; Weng, 2023) show that DBE dimensions—especially affective and sensory components—are significantly linked to satisfaction, which in turn drives revisit intention and recommendation.

In cultural tourism, satisfaction is not only transactional but also reflective, tied to how meaningfully the destination facilitates emotional and cultural connection (Pham et al., 2023). Several studies (Altunel & Erkurt, 2015; Lv et al., 2020) found that satisfaction mediates the relationship between visitor involvement and loyalty, with stronger mediation effects in experiential settings that offer immersion and narrative coherence.

Loyalty as a Dual Construct

Loyalty is conceptualized in most reviewed literature as comprising both behavioral intention (e.g., willingness to revisit) and attitudinal commitment (e.g., word-of-mouth advocacy). DBE contributes to both aspects of loyalty by evoking emotional affinity and memorability (Hosany & Prayag, 2013). Revisit intention is strengthened by sensory and behavioral dimensions, while affective and intellectual engagement more strongly predict recommendation behavior.

Interestingly, cultural tourism studies highlight that loyalty is not only shaped by individual experience quality but also by perceived authenticity, local hospitality, and identity resonance (Chen & Chen, 2010; Nguyen et al., 2020). These findings suggest that enhancing DBE requires not only thematic consistency but also alignment with cultural symbolism and visitor value systems.

Gaps in Context and Future Research Opportunities

Despite growing interest in DBE, most empirical studies are concentrated in Western, urban, or naturalistic settings. There remains limited exploration of revitalized, corporatized cultural destinations in Southeast Asia—such as TMII—which offer hybrid forms of education, recreation, and heritage curation. Few studies account for how digital storytelling, augmented reality, or interactive installations shape DBE in such contexts (Lee & Li, 2025).

Moreover, the interplay between DBE and spiritual or community-based cultural expressions remains under-theorized. Integrating DBE with constructs such as transformative value, identity affirmation, and environmental sustainability could yield more holistic destination models. Future research should also address methodological gaps by applying experimental or longitudinal designs, and by incorporating diverse visitor demographics to better understand generational differences in DBE perception.

Recontextualizing DBE in Cultural Theme Parks of Emerging Economies

Cultural theme parks in emerging economies such as Indonesia represent complex hybrids that serve as both leisure attractions and national identity platforms. Unlike entertainment-driven amusement parks, cultural theme parks like Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII) serve as curated environments that symbolize ethnocultural diversity and ideological narratives (Suzuki et al., 2021; Freitag et al., 2023). These destinations blend tangible elements (architecture, performances, exhibitions) with intangible values (tradition, belief systems, collective memory), offering a unique field for experiential branding.

In this context, DBE must be understood not merely as a marketing tool but as a mechanism for cultural communication and social meaning-making. For instance, the sensory and behavioral dimensions of DBE in TMII are embedded in spatial storytelling and participatory displays that allow visitors to explore Indonesia's plural identities. Meanwhile, the affective and intellectual dimensions resonate through historical reenactments, museum narratives, and curated digital content that encourage emotional engagement and reflection (Lee & Li, 2025).

Operating within an emerging market context presents both constraints and opportunities. Limited awareness, digital literacy gaps, and affordability concerns can hinder adoption of sophisticated DBE strategies. However, growing youth tourism, urban middle-class expansion, and government-led revitalization initiatives—like InJourney's role in repositioning TMII—indicate fertile ground for experience-driven differentiation. TMII thus offers a valuable testbed for evaluating how revitalized cultural destinations in the Global South can activate DBE to foster satisfaction and loyalty.

This reframing also calls for a redefinition of success in cultural theme parks—not merely in visitor numbers but in their capacity to inspire revisitation, advocacy, and cultural understanding. DBE frameworks, when situated within the realities of emerging markets, provide critical insights into designing inclusive, meaningful, and future-ready cultural tourism experiences.

Summary of Key Findings

Based on the synthesis of 35 reviewed studies, the following key findings emerge:

1. Destination Brand Experience (DBE) consistently comprises four core dimensions—sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual—with affective and sensory experiences most frequently associated with heightened tourist satisfaction in cultural tourism contexts.

2. Tourist satisfaction acts as a pivotal mediating construct between DBE and loyalty outcomes. Particularly in cultural settings, satisfaction is influenced by emotional immersion and perceived authenticity, linking visitor experience to both revisit intention and recommendation behaviors.

3. Loyalty is widely conceptualized as a dual construct, encompassing both behavioral loyalty (e.g., revisit intention) and attitudinal loyalty (e.g., word-of-mouth advocacy). Sensory and behavioral experiences tend to predict revisit intentions, while affective and intellectual engagement more strongly influence recommendation.

4. The existing body of DBE research remains heavily concentrated in Western, urban, or festival-based destinations. There is limited empirical focus on revitalized or hybrid cultural theme parks in emerging markets, despite their growing strategic importance.

5. TMII represents a novel empirical context where DBE intersects with nation-branding, cultural representation, and digital storytelling in a Global South setting. The destination's revitalization strategy—combining spatial reorganization, cultural curation, and experiential immersion—offers valuable insights for future DBE research.

6. The integration of DBE with transformative value, spiritual experience, and community co-creation remains underexplored. Future studies should account for these deeper dimensions to better understand the cultural and psychological depth of experience-driven loyalty in emerging tourism economies.

These findings serve as a conceptual foundation for future research frameworks and destination management strategies that aim to optimize visitor experience in cultural tourism destinations, especially those undergoing structural and narrative transformation.

No	Author(s) & Year	Title	Source	Main Indicators	Method	Main Finding	Further Reading	Suggestion for Future Research
1	Brakus et al. (2009)	Brand experience: What is it? How is it measured? Does it affect loyalty?	Journal of Marketing	Sensory, Affective, Behavioral, Intellectual	Conceptual & Quantitative	Developed DBE Construct and measurement model; DBE impacts satisfaction and loyalty	Barnes et al (2014) & Pine & Gilmore (2011)	Apply DBE model in tourism and cultural context
2	Barnes et al (2014)	Destination brand experience and visitor behavior: Testing a scale in the	Annals of Tourism Research	All DBE dimensions, visitor behavior, satisfaction	Quantitative (SEM)	Validated DBE scale in tourism; DBE significantly influences	Brakus et al. (2009), Chen & Chen (2010)	Test DBE scale in different types of tourism destinations

		tourism context				satisfaction and revisit intentions		
3	Martins et al (2021)	Destination brand experience in nature-based cultural destinations: Evidence from Peneda-Gerês National Park	Sustaina bility	Sensory, Affective, Visitor Satisfaction , WOM	Quantit ative (SEM)	Sensory and affective DBE dimensions strongly influence satisfaction and intention to recommen d	Wulan dari (2015) , Chi & Qu (2008)	Apply DBE in cultural theme parks and post-revitalizati on contexts
4	Wulandari (2015)	COMPREHE NSIVE MODEL OF DESTINATI ON BRAND EXPERIENC E	UI Dissertat ion	All DBE dimensions, visitor behavior, authenticity , satisfaction	Quantit ative (SEM)	Developed a holistic model of DBE; found DBE significantl y influences destination loyalty with brand authenticit y as a mediating variable	Martin s et al. (2021) , Konec nik & Gartne r (2007)	Apply holistic DBE–authenticit y–loyalty framewor k to other culturally significant destinatio ns such as TMII
5	Jiménez-Barreto et al. (2020)	Linking the online destination brand experience and brand credibility with tourists' behavioral intentions toward a destination	Tourism Manage ment	Online DBE, Brand Credibility, Revisit & Recommen dation Intention	Quantit ative (SEM)	Online DBE positively influences brand credibility and tourist behavioral intentions; credibility mediates DBE and loyalty	Litvin et al. (2008) , Nguye n et al. (2020)	Explore DBE and brand trust in digitally mediated cultural tourism contexts
6	Nguyen et al. (2020)	Factors influencing intention to revisit and recommendati on in cultural tourism contexts	Journal of Cultural Tourism Research	Destination Image, Cultural Contact, Risk Perception, Satisfaction , Revisit & Recommen dation Intention	Quantit ative (SEM)	Tourist satisfaction mediates the influence of destination image, cultural contact, and perceived risk on revisit and recommen	Chi & Qu (2008) , Chen & Chen (2010)	Apply extended mediation models in heritage and cultural theme park contexts in Southeast Asia

						dation intention		
7	Chi &Qu (2008)	Examining the structural relationships of destination image, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty: An integrated approach	Tourism Management	Destination Image, Satisfaction, Loyalty	Quantitative (SEM)	Confirmed that satisfaction mediates the effect of destination image on tourist loyalty	Oliver (1980), Chen & Chen (2010)	Integrate this model in experiential cultural destinations with segmented generational analysis
8	Chen & Chen (2010)	Experience quality, perceived value, satisfaction and behavioral intentions for heritage tourists	Tourism Management	Experience Quality, Perceived Value, Satisfaction, Behavioral Intention	Quantitative (SEM)	Experience quality and perceived value positively influence satisfaction and behavioral intention in heritage tourism	Chi & Qu (2008), Lv et al. (2020)	Examine role of perceived value in DBE-driven satisfaction models for cultural destinations
9	Lv et al. (2020)	Expanding theory of tourists' destination loyalty: The role of sensory impressions	Tourism Management	Sensory Impressions, Loyalty, Satisfaction	Quantitative (SEM)	Sensory impressions significantly impact tourist loyalty through affective and satisfaction pathways	Chen & Chen (2010), Hosany & Prayag (2013)	Investigate multi-sensory DBE strategies across diverse cultural attractions
10	Hosany & Prayag (2013)	Patterns of tourists' emotional responses, satisfaction, and intention to recommend	Journal of Business Research	Emotional Response, Satisfaction, Intention to Recommend	Quantitative (Survey)	Positive emotional responses (e.g., joy, love, surprise) increase satisfaction and recommendation intention	Lv et al. (2020), Chi & Qu (2008)	Explore emotional segmentation in DBE design and communication strategy in cultural destinations

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review synthesizes findings from 35 scholarly articles and confirms that Destination Brand Experience (DBE)—encompassing sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual dimensions—significantly shapes tourist satisfaction and loyalty

within cultural tourism. The affective and sensory aspects are especially influential, with tourist satisfaction consistently mediating the relationship between DBE and loyalty intentions such as revisiting and recommending destinations. The review highlights a research gap, noting that most studies focus on Western or naturalistic contexts, with limited exploration of revitalized cultural destinations in emerging economies like *Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII)*. Theoretically, the findings suggest expanding DBE frameworks to include constructs like transformative value and co-creation, while managerial implications emphasize designing immersive, emotionally resonant experiences aligned with cultural narratives. For future research, it is recommended to broaden the geographical scope, utilize longitudinal and experimental methods, and develop culturally adaptive DBE instruments, particularly by integrating digital sentiment and visitor-generated content to better capture the evolving dynamics of cultural tourism in diverse settings.

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