The Effect of Destination Brand Authenticity on Tourist Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Sustainable Tourism Practices and the Moderating Role of Destination Familiarity

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ABSTRACT

Tourist satisfaction is the lifeblood of the tourism industry. When tourists are satisfied, they become repeat visitors, brand ambassadors, and catalysts for sustainable growth. In tourism business, destinations that consistently deliver memorable, satisfying experiences secure long-term viability and a resilient competitive edge. This study explores the effect of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction. The mediating role of sustainable tourism practices on the link between destination brand authenticity and tourist satisfaction is also investigated. Moreover, the moderating effect of destination familiarity was also tested. The study collected data from 347 tourists who visited Jabori and nearby villages having mountainous terrain and located on Siran River. Results show that the effect of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction is positive. A sustainable tourism practice partially mediates the link between destination brand authenticity and tourist satisfaction. Finally, destination familiarity positively moderated the effect of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction. The study discusses policy recommendations at end of the article.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism business is changing at a very fast pace. Tourists' needs and preferences are also rapidly evolving due to various destinations available to tourists. In this regard, it is important for tourism stakeholders to understand tourist satisfaction. Without satisfying tourists and providing them with unique experience, destinations would not be able to attract tourists (Jebbouri et al., 2022; Libre, Manalo, & Laksito, 2022). Destination brand authenticity refers to tourist experience before, during, and after travel to a specific destination. If the experience is close to what is communicated then destination brand authenticity is at a greater level. If tourists perceive a destination brand to be genuine and true to itself and credible and true to the tourist, the destination brand authenticity increases (Ramesh & Jaunky, 2021). When

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there is a match between on-brand promises and on-destination experiences, the destination brand becomes more authentic. Brand authenticity is an important concept in marketing and it is based on continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism. Continuity in destination brand authenticity is about being faithful to one's heritage and identity (Orden-Mejía & Huertas, 2022). Each destination has its own identity in terms of culture, heritage, and social fabric. Credibility is related to whether the destination delivers to the promises it makes. If the destination offers what it markets, it is known as a credible destination. Integrity in destination branding refers to keeping benevolent motives and maintaining a responsible tourist site for the future generations as well. Symbolism refers to whether tourists are comfortable in expressing themselves and how close the destination is to their identity, beliefs, and inner-self.

Research shows that sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral experiences determine destination brand authenticity (Syakier & Hanafiah, 2022). The current literature suggests that tourist satisfaction depends on individual level preferences as well as stakeholders' involvement and support. Jabori is relatively a new destination and there has been no study on tourist satisfaction in this region. This study has three objectives. First, the impact of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction is investigated. There have been limited studies on the effect of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction. Although destination brand authenticity is an important cognitive and emotional response to satisfaction concept, research studies have mainly focused on tangible aspects such as service quality, cost, destination image, government support, and tourist past experiences. Second, the mediating effect of sustainable tourism practices on the link between destination brand authenticity and tourist satisfaction is tested. Destination brand authenticity leads to sustainable tourism practices because when authenticity is achieved, it makes stakeholders to collectively think about the long term attributes of the tourism business. By focusing on environmental, economic, cultural, and social aspects of tourism, tourist satisfaction enhances. Third, the moderating effect of destination familiarity on the link between destination brand authenticity and tourist satisfaction is investigated in this study.

There are four theoretical contributions of the current study. First, destination brand authenticity and tourist satisfaction has been seldom explored in tourism literature. Majority of research has focused on brand image, destination attributes, personal factors, tourist operators, and government infrastructure facilities. However, the cognitive and emotional aspect of tourists is largely ignored in the current literature (Thipsingh et al., 2022; Torabi et al., 2022). This study adds to the body of knowledge by examining the effect of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction. Second, the link between destination brand

authenticity and tourist satisfaction is not straight forward. Tourist satisfaction is a complex phenomenon since it involves number of factors. The psychological mechanisms that intervene tourist satisfaction have been well studied in previous literature (Zulvianti, Aimon, & Abror, 2022). What is unknown is how sustainable tourism practices and policy level interventions would describe the effect of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction. This study adds to the literature on tourism and satisfaction by proposing that sustainable tourism practices mediate the effect of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction (Assaker & Hallak, 2013). Third, the boundary conditions always serve as the limitation of tourist satisfaction literature. It helps in explaining further the conditions that inhibit or strengthen tourist satisfaction. This study proposes the moderating effect of destination familiarity on the link between destination brand authenticity and tourist satisfaction. If tourists are more familiar with a particular destination, the effect of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction would further strengthen. Fourth, the research context (Jabori) of this study is a new addition to the current literature. Although there are studies on tourist satisfaction in Pakistani context, Jabori has not been taken into consideration. It is relatively a new destination for tourists and more and more people are visiting it now.

Jabori is located in Mansehra district and it is three hour drive from Islamabad. This travel time is reduced due to road infrastructure built by China and Pakistan. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor has constructed a road that connects Jabori with other cities of Pakistan and has reduced travel time quite substantially. Jabori is surrounded by villages that offer stunning beauty, scenic rivers and springs, thick forests, agricultural land, green plateaus, hiking treks, and swimming in crystal clear water. This research context is a new addition to the body of knowledge on tourism industry in Pakistan. Figure 1 presents the theoretical framework of the current study.

Hypotheses Development

Tourist satisfaction refers to the psychological state resulting from the evaluation of a tourism experience, where the perceived performance of the destination, product, or service meets or exceeds the tourist's expectations. When a tourist feels that perceived performance is greater than expectations, the tourist satisfaction tends to be high. In case where a tourist expects more but experiences less, thes atisfaction becomes weaker (Assaker, Vinzi, & O'Connor, 2011; Cheng & Lu, 2013). In tourism literature, tourist satisfaction is more of a holistic experience. This includes the accessibility of the destination, attractions in the area, facilities, features, local communities' behavior, cultural and social fabric of the local people,

emotional and psychological meaningfulness, food, transport, government support, feeling of safety and security, accommodation, calmness and natural beauty, heritage, traditions, and matching the destination offerings with one's inner self (Zhang et al., 2021). The service quality as identified in marketing literature is the foremost component of customer satisfaction. In tourist satisfaction context, service quality is the tangible items of tourism services such as transport, accommodation, reliability, security, and basic facilities. Another component of tourist satisfaction is the attributes of the destination such as local attractions, cultural identity, heritage, local events, host community's social fabric, accessibility, and infrastructure (Chi et al., 2020).
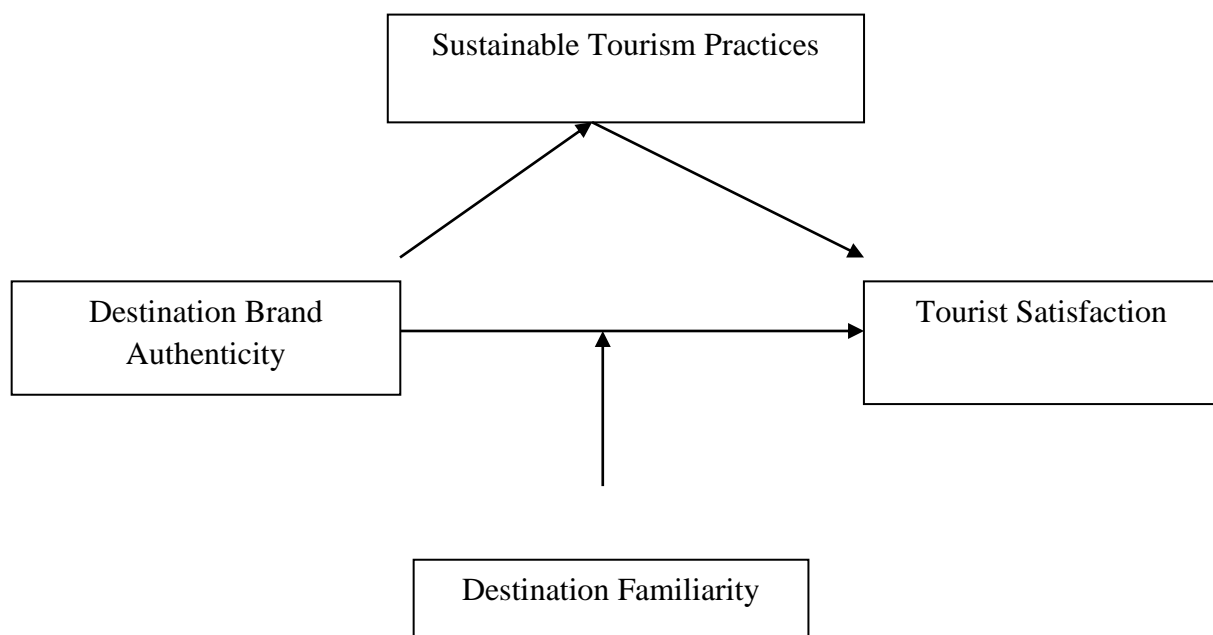

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Each destination has a unique culture and attractions die to which tourist experiences new and exciting attributes. Emotional experience is another dimension of tourist satisfaction. This is particularly true in visiting to natural destinations. When tourists visit villages that are in mountains, they understand that basic facilities such as accommodation, food, and infrastructure might not be as good as the destinations in urban areas (Dedeoğlu et al., 2019; Ghafari, Ranjbarian, & Fathi, 2017). However, emotional experience and emotional connection to the destination in mountain might be far more expressing. Tourists visit such destinations for natural beauty, untapped treks, hiking trails, lakes, lush green plateaus, and a serene environment. They feel that these natural settings are close to their heart and emotionally touching. The interaction with local communities and feeling close to the nature resonates with their inner-self (Kashif, Samsi, & Sarifuddin, 2015). The affective and cognitive evaluations in a tourist destination that is located in snowy mountains and villages across the northern areas of Pakistan would be far superior. These destinations now offer

affective experience in form of better quality service and destination attributes. The accessibility and infrastructure are improved tremendously due to government support. The amount of new hotels is also on the rise and this competition has made services quite better. The cognitive experience is also superior due to the incredible natural beauty of the northern part of the country.

Tourist satisfaction is a holistic experience including cognitive and affective attributes. Research shows that a number of factors affect tourist satisfaction such as destination image which is positive cognitive and affective image, service quality, perceived value that benefits are relatively more than costs, authenticity, accessibility and infrastructure that is ease of travel, transport, and accommodation quality (Engeset & Elvekrok, 2015). Tourist satisfaction leads to a number of positive outcomes such as revisit intentions and recommendation that loyal tourists are more likely to return, word-of-mouth by sharing positive experiences, influencing others' travel decisions. Higher tourist satisfaction can enhance spending and length of stay. Sustainable tourism practices are strategies, actions, processes, and policies implemented by tourism stakeholders (governments, local administration, provincial agencies, businesses, ministries and authorities, communities, tourists) to ensure that tourism activities meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs—socially, culturally, economically, and environmentally (Lu, Chi, & Liu, 2015). When authenticity of a destination is established, tourists feel genuine and real experience that makes them feel satisfied. This positive evaluation is due to destination being true to itself as well as tourist and providing unique, credible, self-expressive, and caring experience. Hence,

Hypothesis 1: *There is a positive relationship between destination brand authenticity and tourist satisfaction.*

Sustainable tourism practices are important to ensure that natural beauty, culture, and environment are preserved and protected. The cultural identity of the local villages is respected and social structure remain intact. Sustainable tourism practices also ensure proper waste management such as recycling effectively, and reducing plastic usage (Zhang et al., 2018). Resources are efficiently used by reducing energy, water, and material consumption in hotels and transport. Biodiversity protection is another dimension of sustainable tourism practices by providing support to the wildlife and habitat (Park et al., 2019). Eco-friendly transport is a key tourism practice that is used in many countries and destinations such as promoting cycling, electric vehicles, and public transit for tourists. Using renewable energy and sustainable materials in tourism facilities make tourism sustainable. There are socio-

cultural dimension of sustainable tourism practices. This can be done by involving local residents in planning and decision-making. They should be educated about the prospects of tourism. In Jabori, majority of the population is uneducated. That is why it is important to teach them that tourism is a potential source of additional income for them. Instead of passively participating in tourism business, they should take the lead role since it is their area that is being visited by tourists. They are the direct stakeholders of the tourism industry. Their sense of ownership can only be enhanced by involving them in tourism management process. From planning till implementation, they should be involved in decision making. By doing so, they would start owning the tourism business and they would protect the environment and other attributes of tourism to promote visits.

Preserving monuments, local traditions, local events, local social gatherings, and intangible cultural heritage would also contribute towards sustainability in tourism business (Kim & Kim, 2018). Local people should be hired in tourism departments, tourist operators, community services, hotels, and other tourism related businesses. Safe working conditions should also be provided to local residents so that they do not face any injuries while engaging in tourism related activities. The government should open more and more healthcare units that provide basic first-aid materials for the safety of the local people (Yi et al., 2017). Respect for Local Customs should be taught to tourists as well as hosts. Cultural sensitivity is an important element of sustainable tourism practice model. The culture of tourist is as important as the culture of the host. In this regard, hosts should be trained and their capacity should be built about cultural values of tourists. Similarly, tourists should also be educated about the cultural sensitivity of the local people. The awareness about local cultural values and traditions should be provided through social media campaigns. Tourists should respect cultural heritage of local villagers. Jabori is a conservative society and people are less educated. Tourists from urban areas usually visit these villages. They should be educated about the conservative nature and things such as dress code, way of communicating, food, and other cultural issues need to be highlighted and educated about. Local sourcing is another sustainable tourism practice that is planned and managed by tourist organizations all over the world. Purchasing goods and services from local suppliers such as handicrafts, souvenirs, and local made food should be encouraged. This would increase the income of local households and they would be more interested in preserving the natural beauty and culture of their areas. This would also give a feeling of pride and ownership to the people so that they make more handicrafts and become active in tourism business.

Sustainable tourism practices are not easy to implement especially in developing countries (Rares, 2014). Pakistan has recently started focusing on tourism as a source of income

generation. The government is trying to make policies that can ensure sustainable development of tourism business by taking into confidence all major stakeholders. However, there are challenges in sustainable tourism practices' effective execution (da Costa Mendes et al., 2010). Research shows that emphasis on short-term profit focus by the government agencies as well as host communities make it tough to look for the long term impact (Jiang et al., 2017; Marine-Roig, 2015; Ramkissoon, 2015; Silaban et al., 2020). Tourist operators and managers also look for short term profits and they are not concerned about long term prospects. Host communities also want to enjoy the income benefits of tourism activities. Businesses may prioritize quick gains over long-term sustainability because it is basic human nature to look for ways to make profits immediately rather than thinking about future profits. Lack of awareness among local communities, tourists, and tourism managers is also a critical barrier in effective sustainable tourism practices. Local communities in Jabori are not well educated and they are extremely poor. There is no additional source of income as majority are dependent on agriculture. The government also does not provide enough financial support to these economically marginalized local villagers. There is unemployment and limited economic opportunities that make their condition into further misery.

There is a lack of awareness among them about the principles of sustainability in tourism business. Moreover, tourists are also not aware of the consequences of environmental, social, cultural, economic, and traditional aspects of tourism business. They do not care for the environment and social settings to a great deal (Ramkissoon, 2015; Silaban et al., 2020). Jabori has no policing that can ensure effective implementation of sustainable tourism practices. Over-tourism pressures have also contributed in inhibiting sustainable tourism practices. Each year, number of tourists visiting Jabori is increasing due to better roads and infrastructure. However, villages near Jabori are not ready to accommodate excess tourists due to narrow road and limited hotels and restaurants. Tourists contribute to environmental pollution by throwing garbage and food without showing any concern for the natural beauty. Policy gaps and weak enforcement of environmental regulations make sustainable tourism more complex and difficult. There is no waste management systems in place in tourist destinations. Use of plastic bottles and plastic bags is normal and government is unable to implement strict policies. Moreover, littering is not banned or fined in tourist destinations. Based on above arguments, it is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 2: *Sustainable tourism practices mediate the effect of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction.*

Destination familiarity refers to the extent to which a tourist perceives themselves to have knowledge about, or experience with, a particular destination (Agustina & Artanti, 2020; Hahm & Severt, 2018). There is a subjective familiarity that means that tourists know the place without even making any visit. They understand and perceive the destination's culture, values, norms, traditions, attractions, and other attributes through secondary sources such as social media, documentaries, and others' experiences. Brochures, word of mouth, newspapers, books, and social media are major sources of obtaining subjective familiarity with a destination. Objective familiarity is related to the information that a tourist possesses as a result of first-hand knowledge that comes by actually visiting the destination (Kesgin, Murthy, & Pohland, 2019; Kim, Lehto, & Kandampully, 2019). Destination familiarity develops through direct experience such as past visits, length of stay, interaction with local hosts, and frequency of visits. Indirect experience also contributed to the development of destination familiarity such as advertising, films, social media, marketing of destination, travel vlogs, guidebooks, and recommendations from friends/family (Sanz-Blas, Buzova, & Carvajal-Trujillo, 2019; Su, Cheng, & Huang, 2021; Toyama & Yamada, 2012).

Destination familiarity reduces perceived risks about uncertainties, security, cost, and quality. Jabori is relatively a new destination for tourists. Unlike famous tourist sports such as Naran, Kaghan, Swat, Kalam, Malam Jabba, Murree, Hunza, and Skardu, there is limited information available about Jabori and its adjacent villages. That is why it is critical to get information before travelling. Knowledge about roads, infrastructure, safety and security, landslides, culture, and travel cost and time would make tourists comfortable and their perceived risk would reduce considerably. Destination familiarity influences both cognitive image (beliefs about destination attributes) and affective image (emotional response). It helps in building an image in mind about the destination. This image contains emotional attachment as well as actual attributes of the destination. Destination familiarity increases the likelihood of repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth (Kesgin, Murthy, & Pohland, 2019; Kim, Lehto, & Kandampully, 2019).

When there is high degree of destination familiarity, the effect of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction would strengthen. Tourist understand that the destination is true to itself and it is offering in reality what it is claiming by having destination familiarity. When tourists are familiar with the destination, they know what to expect from the destination. In such cases, the expectation and perceptions about the destination would translate into the positive evaluation of the travel experience. On the contrary, if tourists are not familiar with the destination, they would not be able to gather enough information and their expectation from the place might not resonate with the actual evaluation. Therefore,

Hypothesis 3: *Destination familiarity moderates the effect of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction such that when destination familiarity of tourist is high, the effect further strengthens whereas low level of information and familiarity results in weakening effect.*

METHODOLOGY

This study has three hypotheses to test. First, the impact of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction is positive and significant. Second, sustainable tourism practices mediate the link between destination brand authenticity and tourist satisfaction. Third, destination familiarity moderates the link between destination brand authenticity and tourist satisfaction such that the effect is stronger when tourists are familiar with the destination. This is a quantitative study. Deductive approach is used to test hypotheses. Data were collected through standardized questionnaire. To collect data, tourists visiting Jabori and vicinity villages were selected from May 2022 till August 2022. A total of 347 surveys were filled. The researcher went to these areas and asked tourists to fill the surveys. Before survey distribution, the purpose of research was communicated and their permission was asked for. Once tourists showed their willingness, then self-administered surveys were given to them. The sample had 68% males and average age of respondents was 28.3 years.

The measurements of key constructs (destination brand authenticity, sustainable tourism practices, destination familiarity, and tourist satisfaction) was done with the help of previous studies. All items were measured on a five point Likert scale. The opinions of respondents ranged from 1 which meant strongly disagree to 5 which stood for strongly agree. To measure tourist satisfaction, three items developed by San Martı́n et al. (2019) were used. To measure destination familiarity, four items were adapted from studies of Horng et al. (2012) and Chi et al. (2020). Destination brand authenticity was quantified with the help of 11 items adapted and slightly modified from studies of Chen et al. (2020) and Morhart et al. (2015). Sustainable tourism practices were measured through 12 items developed by Fermani et al. (2020).

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the proposed hypotheses. The study evaluated the reliability and validity of the first-order measurement model**.** Item loadings on their respective latent constructs ranged from 0.712 to 0.928, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.6. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) values for all constructs were above 0.70, confirming internal consistency. Descriptive statistics, correlations, and reliability coefficients are presented in Table 1**,** with Cronbach's

alphas ranging from 0.826 to 0.917. As expected, destination brand authenticity showed significant positive correlations with tourist satisfaction (r = 0.52, p <.001), and sustainable tourism practices (r = .39, p < .001).

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviation, Reliabilities, and Correlations

	Variables	Mean (SD)	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Age	28.33 (7.1)		1							
2	Gender	.62(.19)		.02	1						
3	Income	3.22(1.4)		-.01	.03	1					
4	Marital status	1.23(0.4)		.02	.03	.02	1				
5	Destination brand authenticity	3.68(.41)	.712	-.01	.13*	.02	-.01	1			
6	Sustainable tourism practices	3.99(.31)	.869	.02	.04	.02	-.02	.29**	1		
7	Destination familiarity	3.71(.11)	.918	-.01	.08*	.01	-.04	.19	.13	1	
8	Tourist satisfaction	4.13(.32)	.852	.02	.02	.02	.04	.52***	.39**	.16	1

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001*

Table 2 presents the results of the model testing. First, destination brand authenticity was found to exert a significant positive impact on tourist satisfaction (β = 0.61, p < .001), thereby supporting Hypothesis 1. Additionally, evidence supports that destination brand authenticity significantly influenced sustainable tourism practices (β = 0.46, p < .001). Moreover, sustainable tourism practices positively impacted tourist satisfaction (β = 0.23, p < .001).

Table 2. Direct and mediating effects

	Coefficient	t-value	Percentile	
			Lower	Upper
Total effect				
destination brand authenticity → tourist satisfaction	0.61***	13.28		
Direct effect				
destination brand authenticity → tourist satisfaction	0.39***	9.21		
sustainable tourism practices → tourist satisfaction	0.23***	7.37		
Indirect effect				
destination brand authenticity → tourist satisfaction	0.18**	4.86	0.116	0.273
destination brand authenticity →sustainable tourism practices→ tourist satisfaction	0.11*	2.75	0.284	0.419

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001*

To examine the mediating effect, the total effect of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction was compared with the indirect effect through sustainable tourism practices.As previously discussed, the total effect of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction was significant and distinct from zero, indicating a direct positive relationship between the two constructs. When sustainable tourism practices was introduced as a mediator, the direct effect of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction was reduced. Moreover, the bootstrap analysis of the indirect effects revealed that the mediating pathways were statistically significant and different from zero. Based on the criteria outlined by Preacher and Hayes (2004), these findings provide empirical support for Hypotheses 2, confirming that the relationship between destination brand authenticity and tourist satisfaction is partially mediated by sustainable tourism practices.

Hypothesis 3 proposed that destination familiarity moderates the relationship between destination brand authenticity and tourist satisfaction. The analysis revealed a significant interaction effect (destination brand authenticity × destination familiarity; $\beta = 0.37$, $p < .01$), indicating that the influence of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction is strengthened when tourists have higher levels of destination familiarity and they possess more information about the destination. Thus, Hypothesis 3 is supported.

DISCUSSION

This study confirms all three hypotheses. The first finding of this study is that destination brand authenticity is positively associated with tourist satisfaction. Each destination has a unique culture and attractions die to which tourist experiences new and exciting attributes. Emotional experience is another dimension of tourist satisfaction. This is particularly true in visiting to natural destinations. When tourists visit villages that are in mountains, they understand that basic facilities such as accommodation, food, and infrastructure might not be as good as the destinations in urban areas (Dedeoğlu et al., 2019; Ghafari, Ranjbarian, & Fathi, 2017). However, emotional experience and emotional connection to the destination in mountain might be far more expressing. Tourists visit such destinations for natural beauty, untapped treks, hiking trails, lakes, lush green plateaus, and a serene environment. They feel that these natural settings are close to their heart and emotionally touching. The interaction with local communities and feeling close to the nature resonates with their inner-self (Kashif, Samsi, & Sarifuddin, 2015).

The second finding of this study is that sustainable tourism practices mediate the effect of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction. Sustainable tourism practices also ensure proper waste management such as recycling effectively, and reducing plastic usage

(Zhang et al., 2018). Resources are efficiently used by reducing energy, water, and material consumption in hotels and transport. Biodiversity protection is another dimension of sustainable tourism practices by providing support to the wildlife and habitat (Park et al., 2019). Eco-friendly transport is a key tourism practice that is used in many countries and destinations such as promoting cycling, electric vehicles, and public transit for tourists. Using renewable energy and sustainable materials in tourism facilities make tourism sustainable. There are socio-cultural dimension of sustainable tourism practices. This can be done by involving local residents in planning and decision-making. They should be educated about the prospects of tourism.

The last finding of this study is that destination familiarity moderates the effect of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction such that when destination familiarity of tourist is high, the effect further strengthens whereas low level of information and familiarity results in weakening effect. There is a subjective familiarity that means that tourists know the place without even making any visit. They understand and perceive the destination's culture, values, norms, traditions, attractions, and other attributes through secondary sources such as social media, documentaries, and others' experiences. Brochures, word of mouth, newspapers, books, and social media are major sources of obtaining subjective familiarity with a destination. Objective familiarity is related to the information that a tourist possesses as a result of first-hand knowledge that comes by actually visiting the destination (Kesgin, Murthy, & Pohland, 2019; Kim, Lehto, & Kandampully, 2019). Destination familiarity develops through direct experience such as past visits, length of stay, interaction with local hosts, and frequency of visits. Indirect experience also contributed to the development of destination familiarity such as advertising, films, social media, and recommendations from friends/family (Sanz-Blas, Buzova, & Carvajal-Trujillo, 2019; Su, Cheng, & Huang, 2021; Toyama & Yamada, 2012). Destination familiarity reduces perceived risks about uncertainties, security, cost, and quality.

Destination familiarity influences both cognitive image (beliefs about destination attributes) and affective image (emotional response). It helps in building an image in mind about the destination. This image contains emotional attachment as well as actual attributes of the destination. Destination familiarity increases the likelihood of repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth (Kesgin, Murthy, & Pohland, 2019; Kim, Lehto, & Kandampully, 2019). When there is high degree of destination familiarity, the effect of destination brand authenticity on tourist satisfaction would strengthen. Tourist understand that the destination is true to itself and it is offering in reality what it is claiming by having destination familiarity. When tourists are familiar with the destination, they know what to expect from the

destination. In such cases, the expectation and perceptions about the destination would translate into the positive evaluation of the travel experience. On the contrary, if tourists are not familiar with the destination, they would not be able to gather enough information and their expectation from the place might not resonate with the actual evaluation.

Managerial implications

This study suggests critical implications to policy makers and practitioners. The tourism officials should leverage authenticity to drive tourist satisfaction. Emphasize heritage continuity, local cultural expressions, and credible narratives in promotional campaigns to strengthen perceived destination brand authenticity. Policies should support truth-in-advertising standards that ensure the promised experience aligns with the delivered one. Jabori is a new tourist destination and its local identity and attractions should be frequently shared on social media. Integrate sustainable tourism practices such as eco-certifications, responsible waste management, carbon footprint reduction, and biodiversity protection. Ensure these sustainable practices are visible to tourists through signage, tour guide scripts, and official websites to reinforce authenticity perceptions. Sustain tourist satisfaction by refreshing the experience by introducing new sustainable initiatives, community projects, or lesser-known attractions to avoid "been-there, done-that" fatigue. Provide pre-visit educational content on authenticity and sustainability. Destination apps, pre-arrival guides, and storytelling videos can help build familiarity and manage expectations. Mandate stakeholder participation in destination branding committees, including local artisans, business owners, and environmental groups, ensuring authenticity is not artificially constructed but co-created with residents.

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