

# Empirical Study of Temple Visitors in Indonesia: Mediation Role of Brand Engagement on the Relationship between Destination Brand Self-Congruence and Behavioral Intention



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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this study is to prove the Mediation Role of Brand Engagement in the Relationship between Destination Brand Self-Congruence and the Behavioral Intention to Visitors of Kwan Sing Bio Temple in Tuban Regency, Indonesia. This study uses an explanatory research approach using path analysis. The type of data used is qualitative which is quantified, with the source of data obtained from distributing questionnaires. The sampling method used purposive sampling. The sample used as many as 90 visitors to the temple. The results of this study indicate that destination brand self-congruence affects brand engagement. Destination brand self-congruence affects the intention to recommend. Brand engagement affects the intention to recommend. The Sobel Test (Sobel Test) proves that the role of brand engagement can mediate the effect of destination brand self-congruence on the intention to recommend to visitors to the Kwan Sing Bio Temple in Tuban Regency, Indonesia.

**KEYWORDS:** Destination, Brand Self-Congruence, Brand Engagement, Behavioral Intention, Temple.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Tourist visits to a tourist attraction will cause continuous stimuli. This means that tourists will decide to revisit or be loyal to these attractions. According to (Kotler & Keller, 2016) loyalty is a deeply held commitment to buy or support a preferred product or service in the future despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause customers to switch. The emergence of a loyal attitude will have an impact on the intention to recommend the tourist attraction visited by friends, family, or other consumers. This statement is reinforced by the research of (Zeithaml, Bitner, 2006), which revealed that loyalty attitudes include two main indicators, namely the customer's intention to repurchase and the intention to recommend services to other potential customers.

Intention to recommend part of loyalty according to C. F. Chen & Tsai (2007), is the assessment of tourists whether there is a desire to tell and convey an area to be visited by others. Tourists who carry out activities intending to recommend to friends or family will tend to judge a destination as having an attachment to the passion of the tourist. Consumers will have a strong attachment when consumers consume a product or brand that is attachment to themselves, this will lead to loyalty in consumers (Kang et al., 2015). Intention to recommend to others indirectly arises from the existence of brand engagement on someone. Kotler (2000) defines customer brand engagement as a manifestation of customer behavior towards the brand outside of purchasing activities resulting from individual customer motivation such as word of mouth, recommendations, interactions between consumers, blogging, writing reviews and other similar activities.

Perceptions of tourists in expressing their identity will tend to choose destinations that they believe have characteristics following their self-concept. This statement is reinforced by research by Solomon (2011), which reveals that consumptive activities are closely related to self-concept. Self-concept refers to how people think about themselves which will be very influential in explaining consumer behavior in destination selection. The psychological process of consumers' attachment to their perceptions of a product or brand towards their self-concept is called self-congruence (Sirgy et al., 2017). The research of

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Usakli & Baloglu (2011) reveals that the creation of self-congruence refers to the consistency between the individual's self-concept and brand image.

The relationship between self-concept (Kumar, 2016) and this destination can also lead to an intention to recommend (Suryaningsih et al., 2020), it's just that this activity of intention to recommend can be positive or negative considering that when someone visits a tourist destination he will feel whether his self-concept appropriate or not with the destinations that tourists visit. If the destination visited is deemed to follow its self-concept, tourists will tend to be loyal to that destination. This statement is supported by the research of Haj-Salem et al., (2016), which revealed that a brand that is associated with the consumer's self-concept is able to create an attachment within himself so that consumers view the brand as part of themselves and create a loyal attitude (Mishra, 2014). Brand engagement will make tourists tend to carry out positive activities to recommend to others the tourist destinations they visit.

Kwan Sing Bio Temple, which is located in Tuban Regency, Indonesia, is one of the largest pagodas in Southeast Asia, where the Kwan Sing Bio Temple building is very spacious and the place directly faces the wide sea. This pagoda uses a crab statue as a decoration on the gate. Apart from being a place of worship for the Tri Dharma people, this pagoda is also a tourist attraction. Kwan Sing Bio Temple is usually very crowded with tourists, both local and out-of-town tourists. Tourists who visit the Kwan Sing Bio temple are mostly not tri-dharma religious, but non-tri-dharma tourists. This gives rise to the perception of a destination brand of self-congruence between visitors and destinations, this is supported by the purpose of tourists, namely to enjoy the beautiful scenery in the inner courtyard of the pagoda. In addition to the beautiful scenery, this pagoda also has instagramable photo spots through the unique combination of building architecture, and also the statue of Kong Co Kwan Sing Tee Koen which is the statue of the tallest god in Southeast Asia. This makes Kwan Sing Bio Temple able to attract tourists to visit. The number of tourists visiting the Kwan Sing Bio temple will certainly lead to various assessments, such as the assessment of the Kang Sing Bio temple tourism rating on the Google website, then various reviews about this tourist destination. Based on the background, phenomena, theoretical and empirical that have been described, the urgency of this research is to examine the effect of destination brand self-congruence on the intention to recommend through brand engagement to visitors to the Kwan sing bio pagoda in Tuban Regency, Indonesia.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS**

### **The Effect of Destination Brand Self-Congruence on Brand Engagement**

Usakli & Baloglu (2011) define destination brand self-congruence as referring to the consistency between the tourist's self-concept and the destination's brand image derived from the construct of self-concept. Self-congruence occurs when a consumer's self-concept is consistent with a brand so that consumers are more likely to generate preferences, positive emotions, and a sense of belonging to the brand. Thus, brand self-congruence can be conceptualized as the main driver of brand engagement (France et al., 2016). This opinion is supported by research by De Vries & Carlson (2014) which reveal that destination brand self-congruence has a significant effect on brand engagement. Thus the hypothesis can be formulated:

H1: Destination brand self-congruence affects brand engagement.

### **The Effect of Destination Brand Self-Congruence on Behavioral Intention**

Research results by Zhang et al., (2017), show that destination brand self-congruence has a significant effect on loyalty. Consumers prefer goods or services that express their identity. This is corroborated by the opinion of Haj-Salem et al., (2016), that a brand that is associated with the consumer's self-concept is able to create an attachment within itself so that consumers view the brand as part of themselves and create a loyal attitude (Duong et al., 2022). Based on the description above, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H2: Destination brand self-congruence affects behavioral intention.

### **The Influence of Brand Engagement on Behavioral Intention**

Brand engagement is defined as the level of a consumer's motivation related to the brand and context-dependent thinking characterized by specific stages, namely cognitive, emotional and behavioral that interact directly with the brand (Khan et al., 2020). Brand engagement is an important method for building loyalty in the practical field (Bowden, 2009), this opinion is corroborated by the research of France et al., (2016) that brand engagement and consumer loyalty are interrelated with one another. Studies have indicated that highly engaged customers are advocates for a brand and are more likely to recommend it to others (Khan et al., 2020). Based on this description, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H3: Brand engagement affects behavioral intention.

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## Indirect Effect of Destination Brand Self-Congruence on Behavioral Intention through Brand Engagement

Brand engagement variable can be used as a mediating variable between destination brand self-congruence and behavioral intention through social media as studied by H. Chen & Rahman, (2018) and R. Chen et al., (2020). Based on the findings of previous studies, the proposed hypothesis is:

H4: Destination brand self-congruence affects behavioral intention through brand engagement.

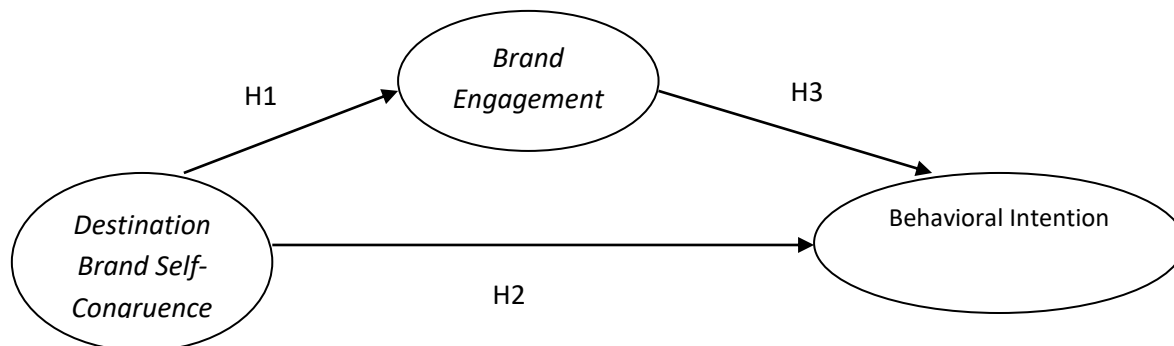


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

### III. METHODS

This research is explanatory research or explanatory research, namely research that explains the causal relationship between variables and examines the relationship between several variables through hypothesis testing or explanatory research. This study was used to examine the causal relationship between several variables, namely Destination Brand Self-Congruence, Brand Engagement, and Intention to Recommend. In this study, the selected population was visitors to the Kwan Sing Bio Temple in Tuban Regency. This study uses a non-probability sampling technique in sampling, this is because the number of tourists visiting the Kwan Sing Bio Temple is not known. In this study, the sampling technique used is the purposive sampling technique. Several criteria were set by the researcher, namely respondents aged over 17 years, active internet users to measure behavioral intention through social media, and having visited the Kwan Sing Bio temple in person. The type of data in this study is qualitative data which is measured so that it becomes quantitative data which is then processed using statistics...This study uses primary and secondary data. The data collection technique used in this study was a questionnaire.

A validity test is used to measure whether a questionnaire is valid/valid or not (Raykov, 2012). A reliability test is a tool to measure a questionnaire which is an indicator part of a variable or construct. Items of questions or statements are said to be reliable or reliable if someone's answers are consistent. Path analysis is used for the data analysis method. Path analysis is part of the regression analysis used to analyze the relationship between variables, where the independent variables affect the dependent variable either directly or indirectly through one or more intermediate variables (Ghozali, 2016). Path analysis will estimate the causal effect between variables and the position of each variable in the path, either directly or indirectly.

The classical Assumption Test (Gujarati, 2013) is a test that aims to provide certainty that the regression equation results are unbiased and consistent. In this study, multicollinearity can be seen from the tolerance value and its opposite variance inflation factor (VIF). The cut-off value commonly used to indicate the presence of multicollinearity is the Tolerance value of 0.10 or the same as the VIF value of 10. In this study, the Glejser test was used to test heteroscedasticity. Hypothesis testing is used to determine the level of significance of the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable by proving the truth of the research hypothesis. Test the hypothesis of this study using a t-test (partial). Path calculation explains the relationship of destination brand self-congruence (x) directly or indirectly to the intention to recommend (y) through the intervening brand engagement variable (z). Mediation Test with Sobel Test. The Sobel test is a test used to determine whether the relationship through a mediation variable is significantly capable of being a mediator in the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable (Fernandes & Solimun, 2018). If the results of the Sobel Test calculation show  $> 1.96$  and a significance value of 5%, it can be proven that the intervening variable is able to mediate the effect of variable X on variable Y.

### IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the following, descriptive statistics for each of the variables used in this study and data on the characteristics of the respondents are presented. The data used in this study include the following data: gender, age, occupation/profession, the origin of tourists, and purpose of visit. Descriptive data of respondents showed that the number of respondents who visited the

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Kwan Sing Bio Temple was dominated by young respondents with an average age of 18-25 years, namely 45 people or 50%, and ages 26-33 by 25 people or 27.8%. This shows that respondents among young and productive age groups visit the Kwan Sing Bio Temple more than older respondents because teenagers still have a lot of free time. Respondents who visited the Kwan Sing Bio Temple were dominated by respondents from among students, namely 40 people or 44.4%, and respondents with self-employed jobs 26 people or 29%. The student category is the most dominating because at a young age the desire for adventure is still very high, this is in line with the characteristics of respondents based on the age of 18-25 years who are also dominant in intending to travel. Tourists from the Kwan Sing Bio Temple were dominated from within the city or from the Tuban district as many as 70 people or 77.7% and those from outside the city as many as 30 people or 33.3%. Based on observations, most tourists from outside the city come from Lamongan, Gresik, Surabaya, Bojonegoro, and Rembang. The following descriptive statistical data of respondents are shown in table 1.

**Table 1. The Descriptive of Respondents**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Origin of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	53,4	In Tuban Regency	77,7
Female	46,6	Outside Tuban Regency	33,3
<b>Age</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Tujuan Berkunjung</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
18-25	50	Travel	90
26-33	27,8	Worship	3
34-40	17,8	Educational Activities	7
>40	4,4		
<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Percentage</b>		
Armed Forces/Police	3,3		
Civil servant	11,1		
Entrepreneur	29		
Student	44,4		
Others	12,2		

The purpose of the respondent's visit is to travel as much as 90%. However, as many as 7% of tourists come to the Kwan Sing Bio Temple for educational activities, such as study tour activities as much as 7%, and for worship as much as 3%. This shows that most of the visitors to the Kwan Sing Bio Temple are for tourism activities. The photo spots combine the scenery and Chinese architecture, this affects most tourists choosing to travel to the Kwan Sing Bio Temple.

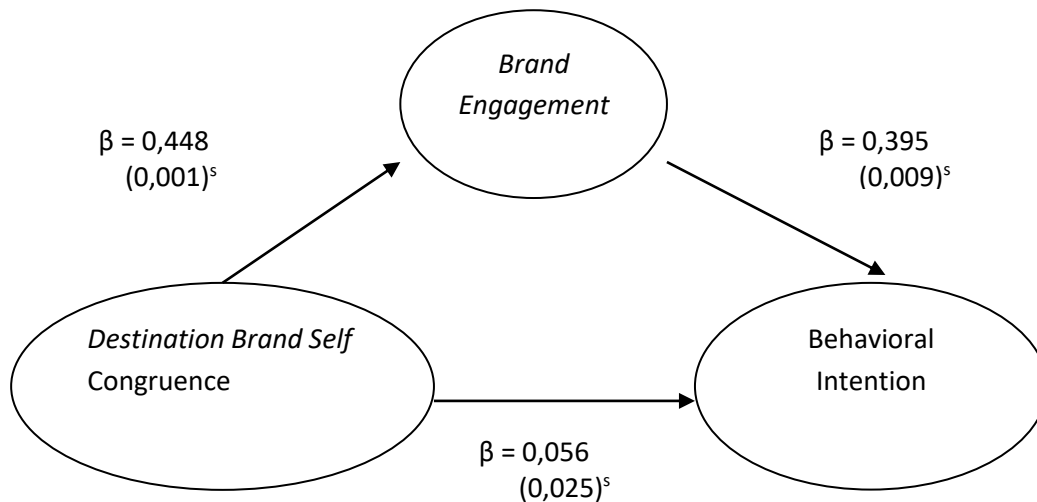
**Table 2. Validity and Reliability Test Results**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>r-table</b>	<b>r-count</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>	<b>Description</b>
Destination Brand Self-Congruence (x)	X1.1	0.1745	0,738	Valid	0,682	Reliable
	X1.2	0.1745	0,697	Valid		
	X1.3	0.1745	0,782	Valid		
Brand Engagement (z)	Z1.1	0.1745	0,583	Valid	0,681	Reliable
	Z2.2	0.1745	0,701	Valid		
	Z3.3	0.1745	0,644	Valid		
Behavioral Intention (y)	Y1.1	0.1745	0,659	Valid	0,789	Reliable
	Y2.2	0.1745	0,727	Valid		
	Y3.3	0.1745	0,714	Valid		

Based on the results of the validity test, it can be seen that the correlation between each variable indicator of Destination Brand Self-Congruence (X), Brand Engagement (Z), and Behavioral Intention (Y) shows that r-count r-table with Sig 0.05. From these results, it can be concluded that all statement items from Destination Brand Self-Congruence (X), Brand Engagement (Z), and Behavioral Intention (Y) are declared valid and can be used as tools for collecting research data. The results of the reliability test

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instrument show that each variable has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.60. From these results, it can be concluded that all statement items in the questionnaire can be said to be reliable and can be used as a tool for collecting research data. The results of the normality test show that the destination brand self-congruence (X) variable has a significance value of 0.062, the brand engagement variable (Z) has a significance value of 0.200, and the behavioral intention variable (Y) has a significance value of 0.200. The value is greater than 0, 05. Thus, it can be stated that the data in this study are all normally distributed variables.



**Figure 2. Path Analysis Test Results**

To analyze the first path, it can be explained that destination brand self-congruence (x) and brand engagement (z) have a significant effect. It can be seen by the results of a significant value that is 0.000 smaller than = 0.05. The second path between destination brand self-congruence (x) and the intention to recommend (y) has a significant effect, which is 0.025, which is smaller than = 0.05. The third path, between brand engagement (z) and behavioral intention (y), has a significant effect of 0.000, which is smaller than = 0.05.

**Table 3. Multicollinearity Test Results**

Path	Collinearity Statistics		Description
	Tolerance	VIF	
X Z →	1,000	1,000	There is no multicollinearity
X Y →	0,799	1,251	There is no multicollinearity
Z Y →	0,799	1,251	There is no multicollinearity

Based on table 3, it can be seen that there is no multicollinearity in the path. This can be seen from the results of the multicollinearity test where the VIF value of each variable is smaller than 10, and the tolerance value is 0.01., so it can be concluded that all variables consisting of destination brand self-congruence, brand engagement and intention to recommend no symptoms of multicollinearity. Hasil uji heteroskedastisitas pada jalur satu (x – z), jalur 2 (x-y), maupun jalur 3 (z-y) menunjukkan bahwa nilai signifikansi masing- masing variabel lebih besar dari 0,05, sehingga dari hasil tersebut dapat diketahui bahwa tidak terjadi heteroskedastisitas dari persamaan yang diuji.

**Table 4. t-test results**

Hypothesis	t-count	t-table	p-value	Description
H1	4,701	1,663	0,000	H <sub>0</sub> is rejected, H <sub>a</sub> is accepted
H2	1,719	1,663	0,025	H <sub>0</sub> is rejected, H <sub>a</sub> is accepted
H3	3,637	1,663	0,000	H <sub>0</sub> is rejected, H <sub>a</sub> is accepted

Calculating direct effect (Direct Effect or DE):

The effect of destination brand self-congruence (x) on brand engagement (z)

DE XZ = X → Z is 44.8%

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The effect of destination brand self-congruence (x) on intention to recommend (y)

DE XY = X → Y is 5.6%

The effect of brand engagement variable (z) on the intention to recommend (y)

DE ZY = Z → Y is 39.5%

Calculating indirect effects (Indirect Effect or IE):

The effect of destination brand self-congruence (x) on intention to recommend (y) through brand engagement (z)

IE XYZ = X → Z → Y is equal to (0.448 x 0.395) = 0.176

Calculating Total Effect:

Total effect : Y X→Z→Y, 0,056 + 0,176= 0,232 or 23,2%

**Table 5. Sobel Test Results**

<i>Path</i>	<i>Sobel Test</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Description</i>
<b>X→Z→Y</b>	2.87467466	0.004	Significance

The Sobel test is used to determine whether the relationship through a mediating variable is significantly capable of being a mediator in the relationship. the intervening variable was able to mediate the effect of variable X on Y. Thus, the variable brand engagement was able to mediate destination brand self-congruence on the intention to recommend Kwan Sing Bio Temple tourists.

***The Influence of Destination Brand Self-Congruence Variables on Brand Engagement***

Based on the results of the path analysis on the t-test that the destination brand self-congruence variable has a significant effect on the brand engagement variable. This shows that the increasing destination brand self-congruence will further increase the brand engagement of visitors to the temple or any destination visited by tourists. According to (Sirgy et al., 2017), Destination brand self-congruence is a psychological process of consumers' attachment to their perception of a product or brand with their self-concept. In this case, what is meant is the compatibility of a person with the destination of the Kwan Sing Bio Temple of Tuban which has an image, distinctiveness, and characteristics that are suitable for the personality of each tourist. The big side that will be obtained in this case is that the Kwan Sing Bio Temple of Tuban is not only enjoyed by the Chinese for worship. The results of the study prove that the destination brand self-congruence variable on brand engagement is equally influential. This can be seen from the number of visitors who agree that they have an emotional attachment. In the sense that tourists who visit the Kwan Sing Bio Temple in Tuban, both from within the city and outside the city, teenagers and adults, both from the student level and those who have also worked, feel that the tourist attractions of the Kwan Sing Bio Temple in Tuban have an attachment to each tourist. . However, in this case, it can also be shown that the Kwan Sing Bio Temple of Tuban has also become a tourist spot and has become a brand or added value for foreign tourists, both from within the city and outside the city, the article shows that the results of this study agree regarding the influence of destination brand self-congruence to brand engagement is that tourists who have visited the Kwan Sing Bio Temple in Tuban have the same attachment according to their personality to the tourist attractions as well as places of worship.

***The Influence of Destination Brand Self-Congruence Variables on Behavioral Intention***

Destination brand self-congruence has a significant effect on behavioral intention variables. According to (Sirgy et al., 2017), Destination brand self-congruence is a psychological process of consumers' attachment to their perception of a product or brand with their self-concept. Destination brand self-congruence consists of a match between a person's self-concept and the tourist destinations visited, such as the atmosphere, ornaments, and values that exist in the tour.

Based on the results of the distribution of questionnaires and calculations state that they both agree. The researcher concludes that the influence of destination brand self-congruence on the intention to recommend tourism as well as a place of worship for the Kwan Sing Bio Temple of Tuban is stated to be influential. The reason is that tourist visitors both from the city and outsiders have agreed to the intention of recommending the Kwan Sing Bio Temple, in this case, it becomes an added value to tourist attractions as well as places of worship at the Kwan Sing Bio Temple. In other words, tourists visiting the Kwan Sing Bio Temple in Tuban feel that the quality of the Kwan Sing Bio Temple in Tuban is worthy of being recommended. In this case, some of them will upload photos of their experience of visiting the Kwan Sing Bio temple through social media, or make a review about their visit to the Kwan Sing Bio temple through social media or may recommend it, so that other people visit the Kwan Sing Bio temple through the media. social.



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### ***The influence of brand engagement variable on behavioral intention***

The brand engagement has a significant effect on behavioral intention variables. So this proves that a higher level of brand engagement will increase the intention of tourists to recommend tourist destinations (H3 is accepted). According to Spratt et al., (2009), brand engagement is an individual difference that shows the tendency of consumers to include important brands as part of how they see themselves. This concludes that when someone has an attachment to a travel brand/destination, someone will tend to make it their top choice.

Based on the results of the explanation above, in the research conducted by the researcher, it can be explained that the brand engagement variable (z) on the intention to recommend (y) the results has an effect. Here it is seen that, brand engagement or the level of a consumer's motivation related to the brand and context-dependent thinking at specific stages, namely cognitive, emotional, and behavioral that interacts directly with the brand. This means that visitors who come to the Kwan Sing Bio Temple in Tuban will recommend these tourist attractions as well as places of worship. Here it can be seen from how visitors when they come to visit the Kwan Sing Bio Temple feel, are interested in visiting the Kwan Sing Bio Temple, feel happy when visiting the Kwan Sing Bio Temple and feel like the Kwan Sing Bio Temple destination rather than other similar religious tours. Because later visitors will recommend the Kwan Sing Bio Temple in Tuban in the form of, some of them will upload photos of their experience of visiting the Kwan Sing Bio Temple through social media or make reviews about visiting the Kwan Sing Bio Temple through social media or may recommend that people others visited the Kwan Sing Bio temple through social media (Duong et al., 2022).

### ***The effect of destination brand self-congruence on behavioral intention through brand engagement***

Based on the results of the Sobel Test calculation, the Sobel test value (2.874) > 1.98 with a significance level of  $0.004 < 5\%$ , it proves that the intervening variable is able to mediate the effect of the X variable on Y. Thus, the brand engagement variable is able to mediate the destination brand self-congruence to the intention to recommend Kwan Sing Bio Temple tourists (H4 accepted). The indirect effect of the destination brand self-congruence variable on the intention to recommend through brand engagement has a coefficient of (0.176). Based on the test results, the researcher concludes that the effect of the destination brand self-congruence (x) variable on the intention to recommend (y) through brand engagement (z) has an effect. Where visitors from the Kwan Sing Bio Temple in Tuban feel that the Kwan Sing Bio Temple in Tuban is a tourist place that they think reflects their personality side of themselves so visitors who come to the Kwan Sing Bio Temple will ultimately recommend tourist attractions as well as places of worship for the Chinese. This is an interesting tourist spot.

Tourist visitors to the Kwan Sing Bio Temple in Tuban feel that the quality of the Kwan Sing Bio Temple in Tuban is worthy of being recommended. In this case, some of them will upload photos of their experience of visiting the Kwan Sing Bio temple through social media, make a review of their visit to the Kwan Sing Bio temple through social media, or may recommend that other people visit the Kwan Sing Bio temple through social media.

Then afterward, through brand engagement, visitors who after coming to visit the Kwan Sing Bio Temple feel also interested in visiting the Kwan Sing Bio Temple, feel happy when visiting the Kwan Sing Bio Temple, and feel like the Kwan Sing Bio Temple destination rather than other similar religious tours. So in this case, visitors who feel that Kwan Sing Bio Temple tourists have an attachment side according to their personality, then the intention of recommending (Yu et al., 2019) them will appear when they feel very comfortable, and happy when they come or will come back to Kwan Sing Bio Temple Tuban.

## **V. CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion that researchers have explained, it can be concluded as follows: Destination Brand Self-Congruence has a significant effect on Brand Engagement. The direction of the relationship between Destination Brand Self-Congruence and Brand Engagement is positive. This proves that a higher level of Destination Brand Self-Congruence will increase Brand Engagement. Destination Brand Self-Congruence has a significant effect on the Intention to Recommend. The direction of the relationship between Destination Brand Self-Congruence and Intention to Recommend is positive. This proves that the higher the level of Destination Brand Self-Congruence, the higher the Intention to Recommend. Brand Engagement has a significant effect on the Intention to Recommend. The direction of the relationship between Brand Engagement and Intention to Recommend is positive. This proves that a higher level of Brand Engagement will increase the Intent to Recommend. The Sobel Test (Sobel Test) proves that the intervening variable, namely Brand Engagement, is able to mediate the effect of the Destination Brand Self-Congruence variable on the Intention to Recommend Kwan Sing Bio Temple tourists. The contribution of this research to the management of Kwan Sing Bio Temple is expected to be able to improve marketing strategies. The better the marketing strategy, the more tourism will be maintained and more widely known and can develop for the better. Marketing strategy can be done by paying attention to the facilities and needs of tourists so that tourists feel the attachment between

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tourist destinations and themselves so that the intention arises to recommend them or even make repeat visits. The results of this study indicate that Brand Engagement has a positive effect on the Intention to Recommend to tourists. Brand Engagement must be considered because at this time the level of tourist visits is a measure of the success of a destination. Local governments must continue to develop the tourism sector, such as paying attention to road access or facilitating licensing of festivals in order to further develop the tourism sector.

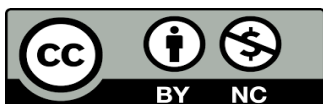
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