Exploring Satisfaction and Loyalty on Select Monastic Heritage Sites with Special References to Sikkim

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Abstracts: The study aims to identify factors affecting image and satisfaction on monastic heritage sites. The information is gathered via a methodological survey with 500 respondents who visited select monastic heritage sites. Out of 500 respondents,425 respondents' data were used in this study. The study has identified five factors that influence Tourists'' Satisfaction I.e. Culture heritage sites, Perceive value, Service quality, Image, and Environment. The study had a theoretical framework Confirmatory factor analysis is used for model fit. The study hypotheses have been verified by using structural equation modeling. Moreover, image, satisfaction, and Loyalty found a strong linkage among the constructs. Therefore, this study is limited to select Monastic heritage sites of the east district, Sikkim (Gangtok).

Keywords: Destination, Buddhist, Heritage, Image, Satisfaction, Loyalty, Monastery.

1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, tourism has become a major concern for the nation's gross domestic product. It has become an important channel for individuals and tourism development sustainability (Sharma, 1997). The development of the tourism industry has given individuals numerous possibilities. However, the growing competitiveness of tourism destinations is correlated with financial growth to draw a great number of tourists to the destination (Zealand, 1991). In tourism-related studies, the importance of satisfaction and destination image is growing in the selection of tourism destinations (Hunt, 1975). Similarly, tourism destination image is an individual general view of a comprehensive collection of experiences about a destination or the image in mind or a place (Chon, 1990; K. S. Chon, 1991). In this regard Jenkins, (1999) and Hernández-Lobato et al., (2006) an individual's opinion thoughts, and experience of a place are put together into an image. Similarly, choosing a destination is often influenced by its image (Crompton et al., 1993). The study by Danaher & Arweiler, (1996) and Prayag, (2009) identified image, tourist satisfaction, and loyalty have always been considered as vital in tourism (Cai et al., 2008; Dick, 1978; John L. Crompton, 1979). Nevertheless, the growing competitiveness of destination image, satisfaction, and loyalty is becoming progressively important in tourism research (Leiberman, 1980; Reddy, 1983). Moreover, it has attracted individual interest and awareness of image and satisfaction contributes to creating loyalty (Hernández-Lobato et al., 2006). India is one of the famous sites for pilgrimage tourism destination. Sikkim is one of the most popular travel destinations in the country. However, very few studies have been done in the area of destination image, tourist satisfaction, and loyalty but no systematic attempt has been made on the monastic heritage sites. Consequently, to fill the research gap. The research purpose is to identify factors influencing destination image and tourist satisfaction and also to evaluate connection between image, satisfaction, and loyalty to Monastic heritage sites. Therefore, the study findings will provide a concrete blueprint with recommendations and suggestions for the monastic management, policymakers, and Local stakeholders to develop and offer standard service to increase their satisfaction and loyalty to monastic heritage sites. Furthermore, the destination manager's professionals, and tour planners in particular fields, should modify their service delivery offerings, marketing communication tools, and technique to increase loyalty.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Destination image is an individual's faith, ideas, and intuition about a particular place (Crompton, 1979). (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). However, it is an element to enhance tourism destinations (Martı, 2004). According to Um &Crompton (1990) destination image is all about the picture of the sites, which attracts and motivates individuals to design, encompassing people about their customary conveyance to visit. So, a virtuous destination image will influence the perception of tourists. Particularly, destination image has become essential when choosing a location (Hunt, 1975). Constructing a destination image requires cognitive emotive and creative processes. A beautiful destination image attracts travelers and is expected to get satisfaction from that destination (Martı, 2004). Destination image is commonly associated with two stages i.e. developed after visiting and created before traveling (Jenkins, 1999). The success and failure of tourism management are linked with destination image(Hunt, 1975). Similarly, it has become an important part of tourism destinations. (Tasci, 2007; C. G. Chi & Qu, 2008; Moreira & Iao, 2014; Joppe et al., 2001). Moreover, destination image comprises various components such as natural scenery, food items, amenities and national parks, nightlife, etc. (Gartner, 1994; Martı, 2004; John L. Crompton, 1979).

2.1. Tourists Satisfaction

Satisfaction is an individual psychological makeup belief and value system (R. L., 1980). In other words, it is the level of happiness that stimulates some things (Moshinsky, 1959; Pizam, 1997). According to R. L., (1980) and Reddy, (1983), performance and expectation are used to measure satisfaction. In this context, customer satisfaction is an outcome or reflection of the consumption of a product & service, or experience (Woodruff et al., 1983; Reddy, 1983). However, tourist satisfaction has been defined in various ways in marketing tourism (Pizam, 1997), and become a crucial part of tourism marketers in today's trends (Kandampully et al., 2000). Furthermore, it has been stated by Kaufman, (1999) and Danaher & Arweiler, (1996), tourist satisfaction is the idea of knowing the visitors' behavior level toward the products and services that meet their consumption (Bearden & Teel, 1983; Surprenant, 1982). Nowadays, it is believed that satisfied tourists will make more purchases or be loyal to the sites (J. Bloemer, 1998). In this context, it gives the overall picture of the customer about whether the consumption is willingly satisfied or not (J. Bloemer, 1998; Leiberman, 1980; Vaske et al., 2009). Similarly, Fornell,(1992) and Shahrivar, (2016) on their studies had identified various factors that influence satisfaction i.e. Cultural heritage sites, Quality service, Perceive value, events, Environment, etc (Mohamad et al., 2014; Teye & Leclerc, 1998). Moreover, cultural heritage, environment, service quality, cost price, and perceived value greatly influence tourist satisfaction (Faullant et al., 2008; Lawton & Weaver, 1998; Master & Prideaux, 2000; Murrmann & Mihalik, 2002; Mcdowall, 2010; Pizam, 1997; Woodruff et al., 1983). Future more, In this context (María et al., 2008) and (Surprenant, 1982) explain a satisfied customer is one whose perception of performance satisfies their expectation (Surprenant, 1982; Joppe et al., 2001; Vaske et al., 2009; J. M. M. Bloemer & Lemmink, 1992).

2.2. Loyalty

Repeated usage of products and services or purchasing or revisiting the sites are considered loyalty (Richard, 1999). According to Oliver (2007), the concept of cognitive and emotional is highlighted by the word loyalty. Loyal customer includes those who regularly purchase a given product and never seek out knowledge about rival products(Kotler, 1994; Hsu,2000). According to P. Chen & Chen, (2010) and King et al., (2011) loyalty can be in the form of business, tourism, particularly any products or services/brand. In this regard, destination loyalty refers fundamentally emphasizes a long-term context, that examines travelers visiting behavior over their lifetimes (Caruana et al., 2000; Oppermann, 2000). As a customer who frequently wants to repurchase a good or service. The higher level of devotion is sometimes referred to as ultimate loyalty. Loyalty is the two important domains, in tourism marketing that is interlinked (C. G. Q. Chi & Qu, 2008; Chenini, 2018; Della Corte, 2015;Loi & Sentosa, 2015; Oppermann, 2000). According to Reddy, (1983) and Pritchard et al., (1992), customers believe in the items and amenities that a destination refers to as destination loyalty. Similarly, destination loyalty refers to a tourism destination's ability to build long-lasting relationships with visitors (Baniya, n.d.; Leiberman, 1980). Hence, the previous studies' results showed tourists' loyalty was increased by the potential of the place and the high level of

satisfaction (Leiberman, 1980; Giese & Cote, 2002; Selin et al., 2009). In short, the satisfaction response received from the products or services delivered by the tourism destination marketers makes tourists loyal(Antonio et al., n.d.; Richard, 1999). Therefore, the study concludes that higher customer satisfaction reflects loyalty (Dick, 1978; Lee et al., 2008; María et al., 2008).

2.3. The connection between image, satisfaction, and Loyalty

Most studies had identified that a location image significantly affects the levels of satisfaction (C, F, Chen & Phou, 2013; Zhang et al., 2014;). Satisfaction is influenced by favorable and unfavorable images of the location(Reddy, 1983). In a similar vein, the association between destination image has a positive impression of a place is more likely to return and encourage it to someone else, which indicates their commitment(Prayag, 2009). The destination images are an essential component impacting customer satisfaction meanwhile, destination images can anticipate visitors' behavior (C. G. Q. Chi & Qu, 2008). Many others discovered that destination image affects satisfaction(CAI et al., 2008), and satisfaction influences loyalty directly and indirectly(Ridley, 1993). In this regard Dick, (1978) and Surprenant, (1982) reported that providing excellent amenities boosts visitors' satisfaction and loyalty. Lee et al., (2008) found tourist satisfaction and loyalty were positively correlated in the Alpine Skies resort. As a result, the theoretical structure had a strong association between image, satisfaction, and destination loyalty (Coban, 2012;Moshinsky, 1959; Mahasuweerachai & Qu, 2009; Oom, 2006; Suhartanto et al., 2016;Yoon & Uysal,2005). A study conducted by (Leiberman, 1980) collected data from visitors who travel to Arabe, a Portuguese tourism destination to examine the connection between satisfaction and destination loyalty. Similarly, recent research has been done on heritage sites by Indian tour operators about visitor satisfaction and destination loyalty (Da Costa Mendes et al., 2010; Desiyanti et al., 2018; Kim, 2018; Mahasuweerachai & Qu, 2009). Algurneh et al., (2002) conducted a study to measure the image, satisfaction, and loyalty in Jordan. In the landscape of Zihuatanejo (Mexico) Hernández-Lobato et al., (2006) investigated the association between the picture of the destination, customer satisfaction, and faithfulness. and María et al., (2008) found satisfaction and loyalty have a strong association. Prayag, (2009) developed a conceptual framework by adding the elements i.e. satisfaction, image, and loyalty in Mauritius. (Mahasuweerachai & Qu, 2009) revealed that perceive value, satisfaction, and loyalty are noticeably inclined by destination image in the structural framework. Ali, (2011) conducted a study on Malaysia and identified how these three variables are interrelated. Prayag & Ryan, (2012) found that satisfaction level served as an intermediary linking attachment to location, interpersonal, and images of the Mauritius island. Therefore, hypothesis is framed.

- H1: Destination Image is positively associated with Tourists' satisfaction.
- H2: Destination Image has a positive relationship with Destination Loyalty.
- H3: Tourists' Satisfaction positively influences Destination Loyalty.

2.4. Research Framework

The conceptual framework includes satisfaction as a moderator to examine how the variables influence each other in this research. As shown in Figure 1. To check the relationship between the destination image, Tourist satisfaction, and Destination Loyalty while continuation is presented as the outcome variable is shown. (Figure 2).

2.5. The Conceptual Framework



Source: Authors' own model

3 METHODS

3.1 Research Site

Sikkim is known as land for monasteries and Gompas (Acharya, n.d.). Rumtek Monastery, Ranka Monastery, Enchey Monastery, and Phodong Monastery are the oldest monastic heritage sites of Sikkim (Kumar, n.d.; Exploration & Monastery, n.d.). These select four monasteries belong to the Nyingma sect and each monastery has a unique background to preserve the traditional customs and practices. According to Moran, (n.d.), with its magnificence and beautiful archeological design, it is considered as oldest Monastic heritage site. Monastic monuments, stupas, shrines, art galleries, music, literature, and historic sites are the attraction of the heritage sites (Patnaik, 2019; Saechau et al., 2015). All these Monastic heritages are open to tourists as well. Such attractive heritage sites will generate revenue, funds, and employment for individuals (Charleux, 2018). Likewise, the monasteries and local community celebrate Losar, Tse chu, Chaam, Saga Dawa, Mahakala, and Bumchi festivals, etc.

3.2 Participants and Procedure

The study adopted a mixed method approach using a structured questionnaire to fulfill the research objectives (Hair et al., n.d., Terrell & Ph, 2012). On the other hand, a convenience sampling method was applied for data collection (Bigné et al., 2001). The duration of data collection was seven months from November 2022 to January 2023. Out of 500 respondents, 425 responses were found suitable for this study. The duration period of the data collection was three months. Yielding the response rate of 84%.6 approx.

Demographic data on the participants include males and females, age, level of education, and financial stability. The value shows the equality in Gender wise category. Most of the visitor's age ranges between 20-30 and 30-50 comprise the groups. Most of the respondents have the PG and UG categories. 40.9% have the highest income group of respondents in this study. Hence, the table shows the details of the respondents. The respondents were national and international visitors

3.3 Data Analysis

The study employed exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory analysis, and structural equation modeling to measure the data (Gerbing & Hamilton, 1996; Hair et al., n.d.; Maccallum & Widaman, 1999). Descriptive statistics like frequency and distribution were used in this study(DiStefano & Hess, 2005;Dyer et al., 2005; Hair et al., n.d.;Hernández-Lobato et al., 2006; Hoyle,2017;Raykov, 1998; Stapleton & Texas, 1997; Marsh et al., 1998) Likert scale has used in this study, with 5 showing highly agree 1 strongly disagree indicator (Gliem & Gliem, 2003; Hurley et al, 1997; Hossain et al., 2021; Johns, 2010; Joshi & Pal, 2015; Zou et al., n.d., 2019).

Table 2	Descriptive Statistics a	and Reliability Validity	of All Dimensions.	
Dimension	Mean	S.D	КМО	
QS	3.4031	.68481	.849	
TSAT	3.3231	.54345	.922	
DL	3.2011	.42362	.878	

Source: Authors' Model

All the constructs have adequate values highlighted in(Table 2).

Dimension	CR	AVE	MSV	DI	TSAT	DL
DI	0.809	0.715	0.382	0.846		
TSAT	0.828	0.719	0.471	0.463	0.848	
DL	0.916	0.686	0.471	0.493	0.686	0.828

Table 3	Discriminant	Validity	and	Reliability	' (C	Correlation I	matrix)
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Source: Authors' Model

The Cornbrash was used to measure the validity and reliability of the scale (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Distefano & Hess, 2005; Felder & Spurlin, 2005). The CR value range within 0.50 less than composite reliability (CR) signifies the data reliability (Hurley et al., 1997; Kaiser, 1958; Kenny & Editor, n.d; Watkins, 2018). (Factors in factor analysis, 1965; Maccallum & Widaman, 1999). (Table 2). The reliability table shows all the (AVE) average variance explained, (MSV) and (CR). AVE is more than MS (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988, Brown, n.d.; Hoyle, 2017; Sturgis, n.d.; Terrell & Ph, 2012). It shows that all factors are reliable and can analyze for future study (DiStefano & Hess, 2005; Hoyle, 2017; Preacher & Maccallum, 2002; Taherdoost et al., 2004; Watkins, 2021). The study check reliability before structure equation modeling (SEM)(Baglin, 2014; Jackson et al., 2009; Velicer-Jackson-1990).

3.4. Measurement of Model Fit

The constructs' latent variables in the model are given meaning by the measurement (Haslam & Fiske, 1999; Hurley et al., 1997;Lee et al., 2015; Miles & Shevlin, 1998; Prudon, 2015; Puad et al., 2011; Reuterberg & Gustafsson, 1992; Setiawan, 2014; Wood, 2008). The framework must be properly examined before being investigated (Distefano & Hess, 2005). The value corresponding to each variable were momentous (Levine, 2005). In this regard, all the values i.e. Comparative fit index (CFI=.960), Goodness of Fit Index (*GFI*=.954), Normed Fit Index (*NFI*=.952), and Trucker Lewis Index (*TLI*=.956), (*Cmin/df*=1.2685), AGFI=.950, RMSEA=0.03 (Bosscher & Smit, 1998). The measurement model fit was found adequate (D. Watkins, 1989;Marsh et al., 1998). (Table 6).

Dimension				
CU1				
CU2	.818			
	.786			
CU3	.783			
CU4	.770 .769			
CU5				
HS1		.858		
HS2		.821		
HS3		.821		
HS4		.761		
NA1			.761	
NA2			.744	
NA3			.740	
NA4			.705	
ACCE1				.798
ACCE2				.796
ACCE3				.784

Source: Authors' Model

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Note (CU: Culture, HS: Heritage sites, NA: Natural attraction, and ACCE: Accessibility).

Table 5 Dimensions of Tourist Satisfaction

IM1	.718			
IM2	.856			
IM3	.883			
S Q1		.757		
S Q2		.752		
SQ 3		.898		
S Q4		.921		
PV1			.634	
PV2			.726	
PV3			.786	
PV4			.882	
Cost/Price1				.855
Cost/Price2				.966
Cost/Price3				.898

	Chi-					
FACTORS	square	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA
DI	3.12	.840	.823	.884	0.37	0.033
TSAT	2.820	.987	.951	9.93	0.14	0.036
DL	1.913	.995	.997	9.98	0.21	0.051

Table 6 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Source: Authors' Model

3.5. The Structural Model



Source: Authors' Model

Fig 2: Structural relationship between Image, satisfaction, and, Loyalty. Notes: Significant level: 0.005 level=425. Destination Image, Tourist Satisfaction, Destination Loyalty) Default Model.

Table No 7 Hypothesis Testing

Standard Regression Weight		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	Ρ
Tourists Satisfaction	Destination Image	.446	0.050	8.944	***
Destination Loyalty	Destination Image	.360	.043	8.294	***
Destination Loyalty	Tourists Satisfaction	.323	.044	7.329	***

Source: Author Own Model

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study identified the four factors that influence the destination image i.e. culture, natural attraction, and historical sites and accessibilities. Similarly, the study also identifies five factors of satisfaction i.e. Cultural heritage, Service quality, Perceived value, Cost/price, and Image. In this regard, all the identified factors are linked to monastic heritage sites. In particular, the various factors aid in exploring the Monastic Heritage sites globally. The study found a major correlation among the constructs towards Monastic Heritage sites. The present study found Select Monastic heritage sites are unique for exploring the cultural festivals, rituals traditional rites, and spiritual activities which are an extraordinary part of the Monastic monastery culture. So this study will contribute to local people, monks, tourism stakeholders, Government organizations, and destination marketers of the region. The study provides valuable insight for policy making and the growth and development of Monastic tourism. In this respect, the study will motivate the researcher to investigate the Buddhist heritage monasteries of other districts in the future to explore other factors of tourist satisfaction and their interrelationship with Monastic monasteries in the coming days. Future, research can be included more components of tourist satisfaction and loyalty that are not included in this study (Huh & Uysal, n.d.). For instance, this research in the area is expected to generate findings for both theoretical and practical applications (Ali, 2011). As a result, this study confirmed and suggested the model interrelationship concerning the sequence proposed by the present research work (María et al., 2008; Moshinsky, 1959; Suhartanto et al., 2016). Therefore, this study has a theoretical as well as practical significance value which highlights the importance of image, satisfaction, and loyalty in select Monastic Heritage sites.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

The structural equation modeling analysis provides significant associations among the variables. The proposed theoretical framework was confirmed. In this context, Structure Equation Modelling is used in such studies (Ramseook-underrun et al., 2015; Suhartanto et al., 2016). In this study, loyalty is influenced by image and satisfaction. The image had an immediate effect on visitor satisfaction and had also an impact on loyalty. Moreover, it was established that the newly proposed direct pathway between tourist satisfaction and loyalty has a positive association. As a result, it was found that satisfaction has a direct effect on loyalty. According to this study image, satisfaction, and loyalty were theoretically underpinned. The result showed that destination loyalty was increased by a positive image of the place and a high level of satisfaction. The findings of the research indicated viable support for the suggestion. Destination loyalty was directly associated with satisfaction as well. The study found that three antecedents are directly correlated. Tourist satisfaction also had an impact on destination loyalty. The study demonstrates that destination image is crucial to gaining an individual trust and that is important to address tourist satisfaction proactively to create an ongoing connection that benefits both sides. The study highlights that tourists' satisfaction and destination loyalty were both positively impacted by destination image. An individual inclination to give a favorable review about the trip grows when that perception of the location as a whole is improved. Therefore, the previous study emphasized causal relationships to support the conceptual framework. Despite, the fact that image is considered significant in literature. To keep improving visitors' experience, destination image should increase the expenditure they make on their tourist attraction products and services. The study has highlighted five latent dimensions of tourist satisfaction that influence destination loyalty. The finding of the study highlights destination marketers, policymakers, and professionals need to understand the components that affect tourist delight and trustworthiness. According to Mcdowall, (2010), destination loyalty is a significant determinant and has a direct antecedent of satisfaction. Consequently, destination management must work to enhance the perception that travelers have their own place to travel. So it is hard to modify an image once it has been developed, therefore it is crucial for destination management to offer the appropriate one to maintain it. In contraction Leeuwen, (2013) and Andreea, (2018) it is stated that destination organizers have a responsibility to maintain place since the location will influence the tourist's satisfaction with the traveler experience with positive word of mouth during their visit. As well as their intention to revisit it in the future. In this context, management service quality, and the provision of the tourist infrastructure are some factors that can be managed through promotion and advertising (Bowie & Chang, 2005). Similarly, the present study suggested a conceptual framework that is reliable and valuable for assessing concurrently. In this respect, to enhance the tourists, experience all efforts should be made because visitors frequently depend on tourist satisfaction ratings(Caruana et al., 2000). All these variables have an impact on how

satisfied tourists are and how they intend to behave in the future(Azhar et al., 2018). Therefore, this contribution to visitor satisfaction reflects the growth of destination loyalty(Hernández-Lobato et al., 2006). Therefore, the study offered empirical support that claims satisfaction positively impacted destination loyalty. Satisfied visitors with their tourism practice remain loyal to the destination, which encourages or recommends it to others(Qeed et al., 2012). Therefore, to increase and maintain destination competitiveness administrators must concentrate on identifying a extraordinary degree of visitor pleasure(Prayag, 2009).

Managerial Implication

According to these studies, the Department of Tourism Administration, policymakers, experts, and destination managers should increase their investment in tourism-related resources to keep improving the experience of visitors. Destination management recognizes the elements that influence satisfaction and loyalty to the image and encourages them to supply carefully selected goods and services that satisfy visitors' requirements and preferences. To increase visitor satisfaction and destination loyalty, it is advised that destination management should consider these underlying attributes in the correct ways. To succeed in the competitive travel industry destination management works to enhance the image the traveler has about the place or region. It is much more crucial for a destination to provide the appropriate picture and keep it up once the image is framed. Because it is hard to adjust an image after it has been developed, it is much more crucial for a destination to provide the appropriate picture and then preserve it. To sum up, all the heritage sites must pay close attention to the message they want to spread and the quality of the goods and services they provide, since both of these factors will influence tourist satisfaction and their revisit intention. Destination managers/ management need to take into account how important visitors' satisfaction is in promoting awareness of the site. It makes natural sense to support that travelers who are happy with their travels are more likely to recommend a place to others and return there in the future. Likewise, they also have to design a visitor's management plan for travelers at the heritage sites. So, this study is considered to prove a significant capacity for producing more accurate applications connected to destination behavior, particularly to tourist loyalty (S. H. Kim et al., 2009). Furthermore, the research confirms that tourist satisfaction is crucial to improving a person's loyalty and is an important part of addressing visitors' satisfaction proactively to building a long-lasting relationship which has benefits for both sides (Kozak et al., 2004; Da Costa Mendes et al., 2010; Mohamad & Ab Ghani, 2014; Ramseook - Munhurrun et al., 2015). So loyalty to travel to a place has links with satisfaction (Faullant et al., 2008). Furthermore, loyalty was driven by satisfaction which is influenced by destination image. The present study is limited to the east district region of Sikkim, Gangtok selects Monastic Heritage sites. The data collected in the east district cannot be implemented in another district region of Sikkim. So, all the Monastic heritage sites i.e. monasteries should take advantage of the government, stakeholders, social media platforms, and destination marketers for exposure to monastic tourism globally. It has been observed that all the monastic heritage sites have a scope in the region that is the highly demanding business in upcoming market trends and the right time has arrived for all the circuits of Monastic heritage sites of Sikkim. In the future comparative analysis can be conducted in the field of research.

Authors' Contribution

The concept of the study was designed by both authors. The questionnaires were designed by Urgen Mangar and it is reviewed by Dr.Happyson Gachuiwo. The Survey was conducted by Urgen Mangar under the guidance of Dr. Happyson Gachuiwo. Urgen Mangar cleaned, analyzed, and interpreted the data by using SPSS, Amos 23 version by both authors. Urgen Mangar writes the manuscript of the study under the guidance of Dr. Happyson Gachuiwo.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors state that they have no affiliation with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest, or financial interest in the subject matter, or matter discussed in the manuscript.

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