



Antecedents and Consequences of Destination Brand Experience (DBE): A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract *The main purpose of the present research is to present a conceptual model on destination brand experience (DBE). Wherein, the antecedents and consequences of DBE are identified with the help of past literature. Five antecedents (i.e., marketing strategies, service quality, tourist psychological factors, tourist personal interest, and resident behavior) and five consequences (i.e., tourist satisfaction, brand loyalty, brand credibility, and brand equity) of DBE have been identified in the present study. This study will help destination marketers and practitioners to formulate strategies to deliver quality DBE to the tourists in order to reap positive outcomes.*

Keywords: *Customer Satisfaction, Tourist Satisfaction, Service Quality, Domestic Tourism, Resort Tourism*

INTRODUCTION

Marketing of destinations as a brand needs “a special type of marketing” (Ashworth 1993, p. 648). Therefore, destination brands compete on the ground of providing quality brand experience to the tourist (Zouni and Kouremenos, 2008). However, destination is considered to be a complex service because it is an amalgamation of variety of services which provide integrated consumer experience (Buhalis, 2000; Wagner and Peters, 2009; Barnes, Mattsson and Sørensen, 2014). The destination brands are supposed to keep their promise by providing distinct and memorable experience to the tourists (Barnes et al., 2014). Therefore, it is always challenging for marketers to convert these intangible services into noticeable benefits and distinct experiences (Carbone and Haeckel, 1994). Moreover, tourism industry is a multifaceted one and it requires different stakeholders to provide quality experience to the tourists. It means that a tourist’s overall experience with a destination brand is outcome of several encounters with people such as taxi

driver, hoteliers, waiters, etc. and local attractions such as museums, theatres, beaches, theme parks, etc. (Zouni and Kouremenos, 2008). This is why, it is always a daunting task for marketers to create and communicate a distinct DBE for individuals and groups for a destination (Ritchie, Tung and Ritchie, 2011). However, some of the destination brands succeed in developing a clear and unique positioning to capture tourists’ attention and provide them a compelling reason to visit the destination by focusing on tourists’ experience rather than concentrating only on the physical aspects of the destinations (Blain, Stuart, Ritchie and Brent, 2005; Hudson and Ritchie, 2009).

According to Hosany and Gilbert (2010), tourism is a continuing process involving various stakeholders at different touch points where tourists’ emotions are built out of their experiences. In order to provide good brand experience to the tourists, it is important for the destination marketer to understand the core evaluations of the tourists’ brand experience from the perspective of multiple stakeholders. Brand experience is a critical element for the

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success of branding endeavors (Iglesias, Singh and Batista-Foguet, 2011) that creates strong emotional expressions on consumer's mind (Klaus and Maklan, 2007). However, the literature on DBE is of recent origin and there is need to conduct studies to strengthen the existing literature (Barnes et al., 2014). Moreover, the past literature has been found inadequate to conceptualize DBE and criticized for being narrow in nature (Brakus et al., 2009). Earlier brand conceptualizations have been failed to consider entire set of brand experiences evoked by brand stimuli which impact consumer behavior (Brakus et al., 2009; Barnes et al., 2014). Thus, there is need to comprehensively conceptualize the literature to explore the sources and outcomes of DBE. Hence, the present research aims to identify the antecedents and consequences of DBE in case of tourism industry.

The present research is organized as follows: first, the review of literature is carried out on the topic of DBE and then, the conceptual model is proposed based on antecedents and consequences of DBE. This conceptual model offers various propositions on the basis of antecedents and consequences of DBE. After explaining and discussing each of the antecedents and consequences of DBE, the article concludes with implications, limitations and future research directions.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

No doubt that there is dearth of literature on service brand experience as it is a fresh concept used for measuring response to a brand (Barnes et al., 2014). At the same time, one can't ignore that fact that brand experience helps in capturing comprehensive evaluation of consumer response to a brand (Brakus et al., 2009; Kumar and Kaushik, 2017). Competition has forced every marketer to differentiate their destination by providing tourists with distinct experience through various experiential products and services (Buhalis, 2000). However, the nature and scope of the past studies based out of tourism experience is very narrow and these studies have failed to draw a holistic picture of DBE. Each study viewed a destination as a limited set of product or services than a brand. For example, Kivela and Crofts (2006) investigated the role of gastronomy in enhancing tourism experience. Zouni and Kouremenos (2008) examined the role of various tourists and services providers based service attributes in destination experience assessment for a heritage destination. Bosangit, Hibbert and McCabe (2015) analyzed the blogs of panel of bag-packer tourists and established the link between narratives and travel experience. This study came out with three components of self-experience i.e., stories of risk, challenge and, novelty and learning. Kirillova and Lehto (2015) investigated tourism experience in terms of six aesthetic components and differentiated home experience from destination experience using these components. The scope of the study was limited to experiential features of destination. Lin and Kuo (2016) also did a similar study

to analyze how perceived value mediates between tourist experience and satisfaction, and further leads to loyalty intentions.

In addition, multiple studies with multiple brand conceptualizations have been conducted to capture the DBE of tourists. For example, Rodriguez del Bosque, San Martín, Collado and del Mar García de los Salmones (2009) studies the role of various factors in building tourists' expectations and their impact on destination brand image construct. In a recent study, Jeuring and Haartsen (2017) also analyzed role of residents in destination branding. According to this study, the role of residents was again limited to build destination brand image. Similarly, Gómez, Lopez and Malina (2015) fragmented the destination brand image into designation of origin brand image and destination image to examine their impact on destination brand equity. In another study, Choo, Park and Petrick (2011) evaluated the significance of residents in building destination brand identity. Likewise, in an effort to advance Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale, Murphy, Benckendorff and Moscardo (2007) observed the relationship between travel motivation, tourist self-image and destination brand personality. Recently, Seljeseth and Korneliusen (2015) also validated an instrument to measure the destination brand personality using brand personality construct.

Boo, Busser and Baloglu (2009) proposed and tested an interesting model on customer-based destination brand equity where DBE emerged as a latent construct. They tested the relationship of destination brand awareness, destination brand image and destination brand quality with DBE. This study analyzed and evaluated the impact of DBE on destination brand value and destination brand loyalty as its outcome. Yang, Liu and Li (2015) also investigated the impact of DBE of customers on customer-based destination brand equity. They measured brand experience through destination brand awareness, destination brand image and destination brand quality. This study considered service performance, word-of-mouth and advertising as constituents and loyalty as outcome of DBE.

It is clear from above discussion that previous studies used different branding concepts like, brand image, brand equity, brand personality, brand awareness, etc., to capture customer insights towards a brand. However, according to Brakus et al. (2009), brand experience is not only a holistic and broader concept but also most critical element to apprehend consumers' perceptions towards a brand. Brakus et al. (2009) conceptualizes it as, 'sensation, feelings, cognitions and behavioral responses evoked by brand related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications and environments'. According to them, most of the earlier studies focused on brand experience in terms of utilitarian product attributes and category experiences. Thus, they identified four major dimensions of

brand experience, which are: sensory, affective, intellectual, behavioral. Therefore, it is quite evident that past literature was not able to capture the complete and broad experiences of customers with a brand using aforementioned constructs.

Brakus et al. (2009) conducted a comprehensive research to give a new direction to the field of brand experience. However, the scope of their study was also limited to the corporate brands and it was open to test for destination brands. Thus, the present study attempts to draw a comprehensive image of DBE and tries to explore the concept of DBE and addresses the aforementioned gaps by identifying the antecedents and consequences of destination brand experience. A broad conceptual model is proposed in the present study which summarizes the relationships of antecedents and consequences with DBE.

ANTECEDENTS OF DBE

Marketing Strategies

The marketing strategies are considered as an important antecedent of DBE, which includes brand positioning strategies (Hudson and Ritchie, 2009), marketing communication (Hudson and Ritchie, 2009; Sharma and Shruti, 2015), sensory marketing (Pawaskar and Goel, 2014) and event marketing (Khan and Rahman, 2015). The brand positioning strategies should incorporate the memorable travel experience and should communicate the same to the target audience. Brand positioning strategy helps to develop a unique brand identity for the destination brand (Hudson and Ritchie, 2009). Sensory marketing should also be incorporated in destination branding as it affects the five senses of the potential customers/tourist (Pawaskar and Goel, 2014). Sensory marketing is also of great importance in tourism industry as tourism being a leisure activity. Moreover, event marketing is also associated with the destination brand because of customer involvement with the brand (Khan and Rahman, 2015). This gives the customers/tourists a first-hand experience of a destination (Whelan and Wohlfeil, 2006). Thus, the following propositions are proposed for marketing strategies and DBE:

Proposition 1: Marketing Strategies positively influence DBE.

Proposition 1a: Brand positioning positively influence DBE.

Proposition 1b: Marketing communication positively influence DBE.

Proposition 1c: Multi-Sensory marketing positively influence DBE.

Proposition 1d: Event marketing positively influences DBE.

Service Quality

Tourism services are a mix of tangible and intangibles services which help delivering tourists a quality experience (Barnes et al., 2014). Service quality is considered to be one of the important constituent of DBE (Zouni and Kouremenos, 2008; Narayan, Rajendran, Sai and Gopalan, 2009; Hosany and Gilbert 2010; Rajaratnam, Munikrishnan, Chand and Kumar, 2014; Sharif and Nair, 2014; Gupta and Sharma, 2016). Poon and Low (2005) identified different tourist touchpoints in tourism industry namely accommodation, hospitality, food and beverages, recreation and entertainment and transportation. Thus, the study proposes that the different service providers like hoteliers, restaurateurs, tour operators, transporters and other service providers in tourism industry should deliver good level of service quality to their customers. The following propositions are proposed in relation to service quality and DBE:

Proposition 2: Service quality positively influences Destination Brand Experience.

Proposition 2a: Good services at hotel positively influence DBE.

Proposition 2b: Good transportation services positively influences DBE.

Proposition 2c: Tour guide services positively influences DBE.

Proposition 2d: Restaurant services positively influences DBE.

Tourist Based/Tourist Psychological Factors

Tourists have perceived brand value for the tourist destination even before visiting the destination (Laaksonen, Laaksonen, Borisov and Halkoaho, 2006). They have their own psychological expectations from the destination brand (Pawaskar and Goel, 2014; Dițoiu and Cărunț, 2014; Chen and Noci, 2014). Brakus et al. (2009) identified senses as an important constituent of brand experience. Dițoiu and Cărunț (2014) extended the sensory dimension to tourism context and identified five different kinds of senses, which create brand experience. The identified senses are visual senses appealing to the eyes, auditory senses related with hearing senses, olfactory dimension is explaining the sense to smell, gustatory sense is related with sense of taste and flavor, while tactile dimension includes textures and touch senses of the human beings.

Proposition 3: Senses positively influences DBE.

Proposition 3a: Visual senses positively influence DBE.

Proposition 3b: Auditory senses positively influence DBE.

Proposition 3c: Olfactory senses positively influence DBE.

Proposition 3d: Gustatory senses positively influence DBE.

Proposition 3e: Tactile senses positively influence DBE.

Emotions are another aspect of human personality that shapes tourists' behavior (Zatori, 2013; Chen and Noci, 2014; Bosangit et al., 2015). Hosany and Gilbert (2010) identified three different emotions which are love, joy and positive surprises. The following propositions are proposed for the same:

Proposition 4: Emotions positively influence DBE.

Proposition 4a: Love positively influence DBE.

Proposition 4b: Joy positively influence DBE.

Proposition 4c: Positive surprises positively influence DBE.

Moreover, tourists learning also influences destination brand experience (Zatori, 2013).

Proposition 5: Learning at the tourist destination positively influences DBE.

Tourist Personal Interest

Tourists have different motivation to visit the destination (Poria, Butler and Airey, 2004). There are different factors, which motivate the tourists to visit a particular destination. Tourists have their own personal interest to travel to a particular destination (Chandralal and Valenzuela, 2015). They seek fulfilment of their travel interest. Chan, To and Chu (2016) identified tourist motivation factors identified from the literature review are social esteem, desire for experiential travel and avoidance against rituality.

Proposition 6: Tourist personal interest positively influences DBE.

Proposition 6a: Social esteem positively influences DBE.

Proposition 6b: Desire for experiential travel positively influences DBE.

Proposition 6c: Avoidance against rituality positively influences DBE.

Residents Behavior

The residents' behavior at the destination and their receptiveness to the tourists shapes the tourists' experience (Chandralal and Valenzuela, 2015; Bakshi and Gupta, 2016). As far as the past literature is concerned, the role of resident behavior in shaping brand experience has been studied through different dimensions. Chandralal and Valenzuela (2015) studied the resident behavior through authentic local experience and interaction with locals. Moreover, Maitland (2010) emphasized on everyday life of the locals. Therefore, the following propositions have been proposed:

Proposition 7: Residents behavior positively influences DBE.

Proposition 7a: Authentic local experience positively influences DBE.

Proposition 7b: Everyday life of locals positively influences DBE.

Proposition 7c: Interaction with locals positively influences DBE.

CONSEQUENCES OF DBE

Tourist Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is an outcome of exceeding customer's expectations (Landrum, Prybutok and Zhang, 2007) and that too by providing them good experiences (Kim, Kima, Kim, Kim and Kang, 2008). Therefore, a positive DBE results in tourists' satisfaction and makes tourist happy (Rajaratnam et al., 2014; Khan and Rahman 2015; Chand et al., 2016). Higher the degree of satisfaction, more the tourist will feel delighted visiting the destination. Thus, following proposition is proposed in relation to DBE and tourist satisfaction:

Proposition 8: DBE positively influences tourists' satisfaction

Behavioral and Attitudinal Brand Loyalty

Tourists usually endorse and share their memorable experiences to family, relatives and friends after experiencing a destination (Hankinson, 2009). These experiences prompt them to visit the destination again (Hunt, 2008; Kaushal et al., 2018). Thus, the brand loyalty has been classified into two major categories i.e., behavioral brand loyalty and attitudinal brand loyalty (Othman, Musa, Muda and Mohamed, 2016). Behavioral brand loyalty represents tourist intention to revisit a destination; whereas, attitudinal brand loyalty signifies the tourist's intention to recommend the place to the others. Behavioral brand loyalty and attitudinal loyalty are also considered to be the important outcomes of DBE. Thus, the following propositions are proposed:

Proposition 9: DBE positively influences tourists' behavioral brand loyalty.

Proposition 10: DBE positively influences tourists' attitudinal brand loyalty.

Brand Credibility

Brand credibility (also known as brand trust) is also identified as one of the vital outcome of destination brand experience as it reduces the perceived risk (Kramer and Tyler, 1995).

Brand credibility benefits the brand by enhancing the perceived value of brand among the customers (Beckman, Kumar and Kim, 2013). According to Khan and Rahman (2015), brand credibility is defined as the, “tourists’ trust in the brand and its ability to deliver the brand promise”. It means that positive and promised brand experience will be result in increased brand credibility. Thus, the following proposition is proposed:

Proposition 11: DBE positively influences brand credibility.

Brand Equity

The final outcome of destination brand experience is brand equity. Brands are considered to be important assets that generate additional value for companies and/or consumers (Keller, 2003). “The added value endowed by a brand is known as brand equity” (Farquhar, 1994). According to Khan and Rahman (2015), positive brand experience results in enhancing the destination brand equity. Thus, the following proposition is proposed:

Proposition 12: DBE positively influences brand equity.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study attempts to develop a conceptual model identifying the different dimensions of destination brand experience and their inter-relationships. Five antecedents and five consequences of DBE have been identified with the help of available literature on destination brand experience as shown in Fig. 1. The identified antecedents of DBE are: marketing strategies, service quality, tourist psychological factors, tourist personal interest, and resident behavior; whereas, consequences of DBE are: tourist satisfaction, tourists’ brand loyalty, brand credibility and brand equity. In total, twelve propositions have been proposed to explain the

relationship of DBE with its antecedents and consequences. Seven propositions are proposed explaining the antecedents of DBE and five propositions have been formulated to establish the relationship between DBE and its outcomes. Based on the identified antecedents and consequences of DBE, authors also attempted to define the term DBE as, ‘the tourist’s feelings, attitudes, memories and emotions based on sensory experience during the tour, interaction with the different stakeholders (hoteliers, restaurant owners, transporters, fellow tourists, tour guides and local people) at various touch points, level of service quality, tour based learning, and fulfilment of personal travel interest. DBE can be positive or negative’.

The present research study will help destination marketers in making better decisions by taking into account all the antecedents and consequences of DBE. The conceptual model provide clear understanding of the concept of DBE which will benefit the destination marketer and various other stakeholders in tourism industry to provide best DBE to the tourists and develop a high brand value for their destination brand which will eventually create a destination brand equity. However, it is worth mentioning here that the present study is oriented towards the positive destination brand experience; whereas, negative DBE has not been taken into consideration in the conceptual framework. Therefore, future researches may explore different dimensions of negative DBE and their inter-relationships. Moreover, the study is conceptual in nature; the suggested model needs to be tested empirically. Therefore, the future research studies should focus on strengthening the foundation of the DBE model by quantitatively verifying the model under different conditions for the different destinations, so that the model can be generalized based on the empirical findings. In addition, the role of other stakeholders like tour operators, tour guides, shopkeepers, fellow tourists in creation of positive destination brand experience can be explored in detail in future research studies.

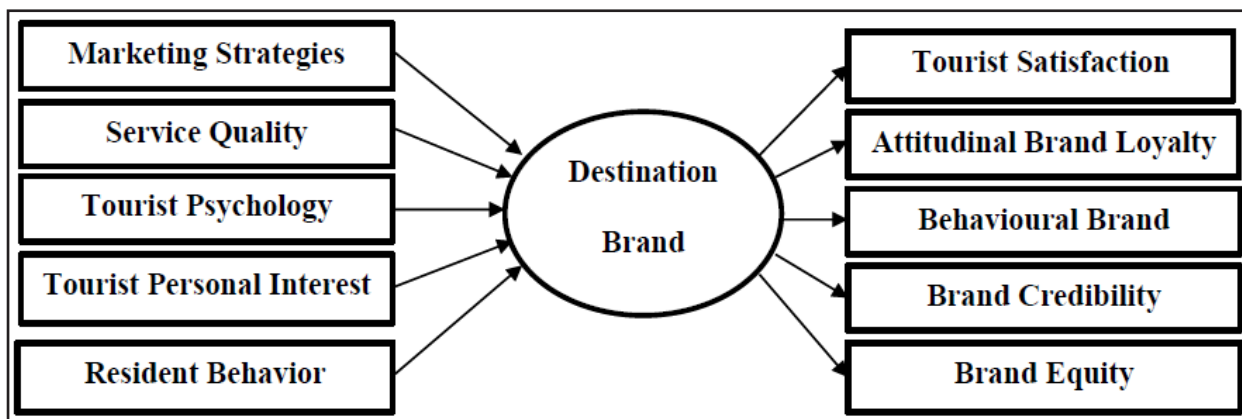


Fig. 1: Antecedents and Consequence of Destination Brand Experience

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