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Multidimensional model of destination brands: An application of customer -based brand equity

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MULTIDIMENSIONAL MODEL OF DESTINATION BRANDS:

AN APPLICATION OF CUSTOMER-BASED BRAND EQUITY

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ABSTRACT

**Multidimensional Model of Destination Brands:
An Application of Customer-Based Brand Equity**

by

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Branding's extension into tourism destination management is expanding. However, most studies to date have focused at the conceptual exploration level or expansion of image-level theory. This study examined empirical information on building the destination brand model through a scale purification process, ensuring its reliability and validity. The customer-based brand equity measurement model from the general marketing literature was applied in a destination context. The proposed model was tested with an online survey sample of Las Vegas and Atlantic City visitors because both destinations are in a similar destination brand category. Findings show that although the proposed model showed a good fit for the total sample, Las Vegas sample, and Atlantic City sample respectively, the relationship among the brand dimensions was inconsistent with theory. However, destination brand image shows a positive effect on both destination brand value and destination brand loyalty across the samples. In addition destination brand image was found to be the most significant predictor for destination brand loyalty across the samples.

As a result, an alternative model was developed that has a good fit across the samples. Combining destination brand image with destination brand quality created a new latent construct, destination brand experiences. Interestingly, path relationships among destination brand awareness, destination brand experiences, destination brand value, and destination brand loyalty were similar. However, invariance tests of structural coefficients between the Las Vegas and Atlantic City samples indicated that variances were different across the destination.

The findings indicate that the customer-based brand equity measurement model drawn from general marketing can be applied to a destination context. However, specific scale items that are appropriate for each destination should be developed. In addition, a destination brand model is difficult to generalize across destinations because of their unique and complex characteristics. This study showed that a destination brand is a multi-dimensional concept and provided a starting point as to how to empirically measure a destination brand. However, limitations in this study suggest that the issue of how destination brands can be measured is currently difficult to determine, while becoming an increasingly important part of destination management. An extension of this research is needed to validate the findings in the future.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Branding is a managed process to serve consumers, create identity for goods and services, and differentiate goods and services from competitors (Kapferer, 1997; Kotler, 1988). Branding has been considered a powerful means for creating competitive advantages in marketing corporations, products, and services. Cai (2002) acknowledged that branding is the single most important objective of marketing today. The ability to create value by developing and maintaining the attributes that appeal to consumers emotionally has become a main focus of branding (Knowles, 2001; Murphy, 1998). Therefore, branding refers to the process of transforming functional assets into relationship assets (Knowles, 2001) or the process of adding meaning to consumer products (Aaker, 1991).

Branding has developed into a modern concept that can be applied to anything from products and services to companies, not-for-profit causes, and even countries (Clifton, 2003). Modern branding is concerned increasingly with assembling and maintaining a mix of values, both tangible and intangible, which are relevant to consumers and which meaningfully and appropriately distinguish one supplier's brand from that of another (Murphy, 1998). Emotional benefits over and above a product's functional benefits are emphasized increasingly in the branding process.

Branding is a powerful means of differentiation, and differentiation is a significant competitive positioning strategy (Pappu, Quester, & Cooksey, 2005). Berry (2000) noted that "a brand reduces customers' perceived monetary, social, or safety risk in buying services, which are difficult to evaluate prior to purchase" (p.128). Due to greater opportunities to visit a variety of destinations, places are becoming increasingly substitutable and difficult to differentiate (Pike, 2005).

Travel destinations, just like other consumer products, have had to turn to branding to identify and distinguish themselves and to convey a positive and motivating message (Aaker, 1991). Although branding is a relatively new concept in tourism marketing (Cai, 2002; Pike, 2005), branding's extension into tourism destination management is expanding (William, Gill, & Chura, 2004). Consumers increasingly recognize that a destination can also be a perceptual concept which can be interpreted subjectively through the experience process (Buhalis, 2000). A strong and lasting destination experience for tourists, if appropriately managed, can act as a foundation for building destination brands (Hall, 2002).

Buhalis (2000) states that destinations offer an amalgam of tourism products and services which are subsumed under the name of destination brand. Also, Murphy, Pritchard, and Smith (2000) noted that a tourism destination may be regarded as "an amalgam of individual products and experience opportunities that combine to form a total experience of the area visited" (p.44). These characteristics of a destination imply the challenge of branding destinations (Cai, 2002) and the difficulty of creating marketing activities that produce a distinctive and competitive destination brand (Dredge & Jenkins, 2003).

Branding destinations is a significant aspect of current destination marketing efforts in order to identify and distinguish tourism destinations and to attract larger numbers of visitors (d'Hauteserre, 2001). Ritchie and Ritchie (1998) asserted that the primary role of a destination brand is the pre-experience roles of selection and reassurance (identification, differentiation, anticipation, expectation, and reassurance) and the post-experience roles (consolidation and reinforcement). Ooi (2004) provided four functions of branding a destination: to shape public perceptions of the place; to package the place selectively and aesthetically; to make the destination stand out in the global tourism market so as to compete with other destinations; and, to shape tourism experiences. These functions of branding play fundamental roles during consumer's purchase decisions at a reasonably broad level (Knowles, 2001).

In terms of destination brand management, different ways for a brand to communicate its benefits have been suggested in a conceptual context. However, specific information on destination brand management such as assessment of destination branding impacts has not been investigated. It is crucial to measure the effectiveness of branding for successful long-term destination management (Blain, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005).

In conceptualizing how destination branding effectiveness is measured, approaches to brand equity measurement can be applied. Brand equity is regarded as a very important concept in business practice as well as in academic research because marketers can gain a competitive advantage through successful brands (Lassar, Mittal, Sharma, 1995). Brand equity has been viewed from both marketing and financial perspectives. In the context of marketing decision making, the former focuses on the aim of improving the efficiency of the marketing process. The financial approach estimates

the overall value of a brand for investment purposes, such as a merger, acquisition, or divestiture (Motameni & Shahrokhi, 1998). In recent years, the return on investment is translated into other less tangible brand attributes. Researching brand equity deals with the measurement of intangible marketing concepts (Motameni & Shahrokhi, 1998).

Keller (2003) defined brand equity as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer responses to the marketing of the brand. This perspective is labeled as customer-based brand equity. According to Keller, customer based brand equity has been operationalized into two types: consumer perceptions and behaviors. Studies in general marketing showed that customer-based brand equity occurs when the customer is familiar with the brand (Kamakura & Russell, 1991). A customer based brand equity model has been employed to measure brand effectiveness.

The measurement of brand equity has been one of the most challenging and important issues for both academics and managers (Ailawad & Keller, 2004) because a brand is a complex phenomenon (Murphy, 1990) and brand equity is multi-dimensional (de Chernatonty & McDonald, 2003). The measurement issue also applies to the field of hospitality and tourism though it is very important in terms of destination management. When destination branding measurement is considered, the marketing perspective of destination brand equity can be employed to explore destination branding effectiveness. Due to the lack of academic investigation regarding branding destinations (Cai, 2002), the measurement of destination branding can draw its inspiration from the general marketing literature (Ooi, 2004).

Statement of Problem

Although there is an emerging interest in destination brands (Hem & Iversen, 2004; Williams et al., 2004), systematic academic investigations in hospitality and tourism are still rare (Cai, 2002). Some articles concerning destination brands reflect the application of a clear marketing approach in the retail environment but stayed at the level of conceptual exploration.

Interestingly, in spite of the growing importance of destination brands, most conceptual and empirical research has focused on destination images (Hall, 2002; Hankinson, 2004, 2005; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002; Pritchard & Morgan, 2001). These approaches (i.e., image-level conceptualization) imply that the measurement of destination brands relies on destination images because of limited theoretical contributions in the field. However, destination image has strong conceptualization as a construct (i.e., Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

Though brands are a relatively new concept in destination marketing (Cai, 2002), some studies suggested that destination brands can be measured uniquely from a customer perspective (Blain et al., 2005; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1998). Blain et al. (2005) indicated that the measurement of destination brands effectiveness is important and can be determined through consumer research. However, in spite of emphasizing the measurement of destination brands, Blain et al. did not conduct empirical research, using the direct approach, to measure customer-based destination brands.

Lack of research efforts regarding measurement indicates that it is complex to conceptualize how tourists evaluate a destination brand. However, academic efforts on

specifying the domain of the measurement construct is an important step towards developing a theory of destination brand which satisfies the methodological sets of criteria for theory evaluation.

Significance of the Study

The branding paradigm in destination marketing is emerging (Hem & Iversen, 2004). The challenge for destination marketers is to make the destination brand come alive, so that visitors experience the promoted brand values and feel the uniqueness of place (Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott, 2003). Keller (2003) showed that geographic locations, just like other consumer products, can be branded through campaigns to create awareness and favorable images of a destination. Researchers are consistent in the position that destinations can be branded.

However, destinations have been considered more difficult to brand than corporations, products, and services because of its complexity (Cai, 2002; Gnoth, 2002). Researchers suggest that all elements should be branded under the name of the destination, rather than just the specific characteristics of the destinations. For example, d'Hauteserre (2001) indicated that destination brand decisions should be based on a thorough understanding of the idiosyncracies of the consumers targeted, as well as the general political and cultural environment of the destinations.

Therefore, identifying major assets of destinations that represent core values concisely is very important because of the limited experience of tourists about destinations in their decision making process. It is also significant for destination marketers to attract larger number of tourists from competitors. This process can be

achieved by examining tourists' benefits of destinations because brands clearly provide benefits for consumers (Keller, 2003).

Hence, a study of measuring customer-based destination brand effectiveness in an integrated construct is important for several reasons. First, the exploratory work will help define the nature of a destination's brand, which is the first step towards developing a theory of the brand construct. Setting boundaries of the destination brand's construct is beneficial from the point of view of evaluating possible redundancy with other constructs. Second, this study will suggest a different approach to measure destination brands. Hankinson (2004) noted that existing conceptual models that postulate destination brands on entities and images can limit the development of destination brands. This implies that an academic advancement in measuring destination brands is needed at this point. Third, this study will contribute to destination brand measurement by providing a valid and reliable measurement model. This will result in the foundation necessary for future research. In addition, because there has been no accepted measurement method, the findings will be expected to spur additional research. Finally, destinations attempting to understand why tourists prefer a particular destination will find this study to be important. The results of this study will demonstrate which factors of destinations are valued by tourists and will suggest how destination marketing managers can manage destination branding effectiveness.

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated:

1. What are the variables that comprise the destination brand construct?
2. What are the relationships among the variables of the destination brand construct?

Statement of Purpose and Research Objectives

Developing destination branding measurement is important because it brings advantages against competitors (Aaker, 1991; Adams, 1995). Building brand equity has been considered as an important part of brand building in the marketing literature (de Chernatony & McDonald, 1998). The purpose of this dissertation is to apply the concept of customer-based brand equity (i.e., Keller's brand conceptualization of brand equity) to destination brand measurement in an integrated model. Also, the effectiveness of destination brand equity is predicted by examining tourists' behavioral aspect.

This dissertation has the following objectives:

1. To develop a valid and reliable model of consumer-based destination brand.
2. To empirically assess the dimensionality of the destination brand construct.

The process used to establish the content for related dimensions will be based on the assumption of multi-dimensional aspects of destination brands. The process of validating the scale psychometrically and theoretically will be provided based on Churchill's (1979) approach for developing measures of multiple-item marketing constructs. Then, the conceptualized proposed model will be tested. This dissertation will focus on theory based scale development and its measurement.

Definitions

Destination brand awareness (DBA): Brand awareness is the visitors' active and passive knowledge of a particular destination. This study limits the concept of brand awareness to the level of destination recognition (i.e., top-of-mind)

Destination brand equity: the tourists' subjective and intangible assessment of the destination. It refers to consumer equity (Kelly, 2003).

Destination brand image (DBI): the tourists' perceptions of the social approval and self-image Consumers project their own personality characteristic onto the brands. This study limits the concept of brand image to the visitor's perceptions of the self concept and social approval with the destination image.

Destination brand loyalty (DBL): the tendency to be loyal to a specific destination (attitudinal). It also refers to commitment to the future behavior intention such as revisit and word-of-mouth intentions (behavioral). Hence, the brand loyal is limited to both attitudinal and behavioral.

Destination brand quality (DBQ): tourists' perception of the functional benefits and performance of the destination. The perceived destination utility derived from expected performance of the destination (i.e., lodging, food, transportation, shopping, entertainment, etc.) will be included in the concept of destination brand quality.

Destination brand value (DBV): the perceived destination utility relative to tour costs, assessed by the tourist and based on simultaneous consideration of what is received and what is given up to receive it. It is related to how tourist evaluates the destination value with economic and monetary consideration.

Customer-based brand equity: refers to tourist perceptions rather than any objective indicators. Customer-based brand equity model approaches brand equity from the perspective of the consumer. It provides a unique point of view as to what brand equity is and how it should be built, measured, and managed (Keller, 2003).

Destination brand: an aggregation of distinguishing characteristics of a destination that identify the destination from competitors that appear to be identical. In terms of tourist perspective, the perception of destination brand can be formed through destination visit experience.

Destination branding: in terms of tourist perspective, it refers to the perceived process of destination brand equity that affects future behavior.

Destination brand equity: it is based on perceptions of destination brand. Destination brand image, destination brand quality, and destination brand value are considered as components of destination brand equity. Dimanche (2002) defined destination brand equity as the brand assets (or liabilities) linked to a destination's name and symbol that add to (or subtract from) the services and experiences provided.

Behavioral intention (BI): tourists' potential behavior for a specific destination. It conveys the expectation of a future travel experience. Willingness to revisit, intention to pay tour cost, intention to recommend are included in the future behavioral intention.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an introduction to the literature, the need and significance of the study, and the statement of purpose and specific research objectives. In the statement of problem, need for academic exploration of destination branding is discussed, and directions to be studied are presented. Several reasons for conducting this research study and how the results of this study will contribute to both the academic literature and industry practice are discussed in the significance of the study section. Finally, research questions and research objectives are presented, followed by the definitions of terms related to this study.

Organization of the Study

The dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter one provides overview of branding in the hospitality and tourism industry, statement of the research problem, significance of the study, research question, research objectives, and relevant definitions of terms used in this study. In chapter two, the previous studies on branding, both from consumer marketing and hospitality and tourism aspects are detailed. Then the theoretical background supporting the foundation for this study is discussed, followed by testable hypotheses. Consumer brand equity, in general and in the tourism context, is discussed. Based on the discussion, the important brand measurement attributes in the tourism context are derived. Finally, the conceptual framework is presented.

In chapter three, the research methods and design are presented. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is briefly reviewed as this statistical method is used to accomplish the objectives of the study. Research design, sample, definition of exogenous

and endogenous variables, data collection methods, and analysis are introduced. The progress of scale development for the destination branding model is specified for the study.

In chapter four, the results of the analyses are presented. First, specific information on pretests involving descriptive statistics of the respondents and their perceptions of destination branding attributes are presented. Next, structural equation modeling with latent variables is provided with specific information for investigating the pattern of relationships within the overall data set. Also, tests of the validity and reliability of the model are conducted.

In chapter five, the findings from the chapter four are discussed, followed by the theoretical contribution and managerial implications. Finally, the limitations of the study and directions for future research are presented.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section introduces the concept of brands which includes customer-based brand equity. The second section reviews destination brands, their role, characteristics, importance, and trends. The third section discusses measurement issues relating to destination brands, specifically, how the effectiveness of destination brands can be assessed. The fourth section discusses the conceptual domain of customer-based destination brands; the description of related dimensions and its rationale. Finally, testable hypotheses are generated and a proposed framework is developed in the fifth section.

The Branding Concept

Recent years have seen an increased emphasis on customer-focused marketing approaches, especially in terms of maximizing brand equity (Ambler, Bhattacharya, Edell, Keller, Lemon, & Mittal, 2002). Customer-based brand equity models emanate from the perspective of the consumer and are critical to understanding their behavior (Kelly, 2003). Branding is the process of capturing customers' minds regarding brand equity.

Branding offers managerial implications in terms of suppliers. Murphy (1998) indicated that branding consists of the development and maintenance of sets of product attributes and values which are coherent, appropriate, distinctive, protectable and appealing to consumers (p.8). Knowles (2001) posited that branding is concerned increasingly with assembling and maintaining a mix of values, both tangible and intangible, which are relevant to consumers and which meaningfully and appropriately distinguish one supplier's brand from that of another.

Although there is increased interest in branding, there are no published studies that provide a formal definition of branding. However, the concept of branding can be operationalized from the definitions of "brand" and "brand equity" that are widely recognized in the marketing literature (Aaker, 1991; Kotler, Bowen, Makens, 1996). Farquar (1989) noted that the major difference between products and brands is that a product is "something that offers a functional benefit" while a brand is "a name, symbol, design, or mark that enhances the value of a product beyond its functional value" (p. 24).

Aaker (1991) defines a brand as "a distinguishing name and/or a symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of one seller, or group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors" (p.7). Similarly, Kotler et al. (1996) viewed a brand as a combination of elements that is intended to identify goods and services and differentiate them from those of competitors. However, Aaker (1996) and Kotler et al. (1996) indicated that it is necessary to create a broad brand vision that recognizes a brand as something greater than a simple set of physical attributes.

The concept of brand emphasizes the emotional benefits to consumers through purchase experiences (Ambler 1997; Bhat & Reddy, 1998; Long & Schiffman, 2000). A brand is considered as a perceptual entity that resides in the minds of consumers (Keller, 2003) or the overall impression that the name or symbol creates in the minds of consumers (Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules, & Clip, 2003). A positive brand image can be very desirable to consumers who want to associate themselves with companies, products and services.

Consumer perceptions of a brand have been used to conceptualize the important marketing concept, *brand equity*, since the 1980s (Keller, 2003). Keller (2003) indicated that the emergence of brand equity has raised the importance of marketing strategy and provided focus for managerial interest and research activity. Basically, brand equity stems from the greater confidence that customers place in a brand compared to its competitors (de Chernatonty & McDonald, 2003). Also, brand equity is used as the overall utility that the consumer associates with the use and consumption of the brand (Vazquez, Belen del Rio & Iglesias, 2002). Hence, brand equity is a core concept concerning brand management.

The broadly accepted meaning attached to the term brand equity among scholars emphasizes the value of a brand to the customer (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). When reflecting a marketing perspective, brand equity is referred to as consumer-based brand equity (Keller, 2003). Asker (1991) defines brand equity as "a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers" (p.15). Keller (1993) defined brand equity as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer

response to the marketing of the brand (p. 8). Although there is little consensus on what brand equity is, most researchers suggest differential attributes underpinning a brand which gives increased value (Aaker, 1991; de Chernatonty & McDonald, 2003; Keller, 1993).

Based on the above related terms, "branding" can be viewed as creating differences by a set of dimensions of brand equity. Keller (2003) indicated that "Fundamentally, branding is about endowing products and services with the power of brand equity" (p. 42). Also, branding is viewed as a value creating process with an emotional significance over and above its functional value (Knowles, 2001) and it emphasizes the emotional relationship with customers (Morgan, Pritchard, Piggott, 2002). Therefore, exploring the concept of branding can be an important source of measuring the outcomes of brand equity as perceived by customers.

Destination Branding

Clifton (2003) noted that branding has been developed into a modern concept and can be applied to anything from products and services, to companies, not-for-profit causes, and even countries. However, the literatures in general marketing (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2003) suggests that the principles of product branding do not apply directly to services because there are three major aspects that distinguish services from products: intangibility, inseparability of production and consumption, and inconsistency in delivery (Knowles, 2001). Similarly, Ooi (2004) argued that similarities in branding products and services are accentuated but differences between them are ignored. Therefore, the unique

attributes of destinations, such as destination environments and service infrastructure, should be considered as important elements in destination branding (Buhalis, 2000).

A destination is regarded as a brand of all products, services, and ultimately experiences provided locally (Buhalis, 2000). McIntyre (1993) defined a destination as the location of a cluster of attractions and related tourism facilities and services which a tourist or tour group selects to visit or which providers choose to promote. Buhalis (2000) noted that tourists perceive the destination as a brand comprising a collection of suppliers and services. Therefore, the universality of branding has to be recognized in terms of tourism characteristics and destination attributes (Keller, 2003).

Tourism is based on the production, reproduction, and reinforcement of images (Ringer, 1998). Tourists consume destinations as a comprehensive experience during the visit (Buhalis, 2000). Ringer (1998) noted that "tourism, it is argued, differentiates space and time in response to the growing globalization and cultural homogenization of the travel market place" (p.8). Based on tourism characteristics, destination brand attributes, and features of the destination, researchers have defined destination branding as follows:

- Destination branding is the set of marketing activities that: (1) support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that readily identifies and differentiates a destination; (2) consistently conveys the expectation of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with destination; (3) serves to consolidate and reinforce in the emotional connection between visitor and the destination; and, (4) reduces consumer search costs and perceived risk (Blain, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005);

- Destination branding is selecting a consistent brand element mix to identify and distinguish a destination through positive image building (Cai, 2000);
- Destination branding is about combining all the attributes associated with the place under one concept, which expresses a unique identity and personality of the destination and differentiates it from its competition (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003);
- Destination branding is a process used to develop a unique identity and personality that is different from all competitor destinations (Gyimothy, n.d.).

Definitions of destination branding draw their inspiration from the general marketing literature because the concept of branding can be extended successfully to both tangible and intangible elements (Asker, 1991; Clifton, 2003; Murphy, 1998; Ward, Light, & Goldstein, 1999). Also, definitions imply that tourists perceive a destination as a product and they evaluate the attributes of the destination through both affective and cognitive processes. Hence, branding is considered significantly in the destination decision making process and brand becomes a key component of destination marketing (Morgan et al., 2002). Specifically, Morgan et al. (2002) stated that destination branding is "the most powerful marketing weapon available to contemporary destination marketers' due to increasing productivity, substitutability, and competition" (p.355).

There are studies which emphasize a unique combination of functional, symbolic, and experiential branding to create a unique destination identity (Dredge & Jenkins, 2003; Law, 1995, 2002; Williams et al., 2004). From this perspective, branding a destination is a complex process. Murphy, Pritchard, and Smith (2000) stated that in contrast to a specific manufactured product, a tourism destination may be regarded as "an

amalgam of individual products and experience opportunities that combine to form a total experience of the area visited" (p.44).

Specifically, Ooi (2004) provided four functions in branding a destination: the first function is to shape public perceptions of the place; the second function is to package the place selectively and aesthetically; the third function is to make the destination stand out in the global tourism market, so as to compete with other destinations; and the fourth function is to shape tourist experiences. Morgan et al. (2002) indicated that New Zealand's brand value pyramid involves three levels: what the brand is (functional benefits); what the brand does (emotional and self-expressive benefits); and, what brand means. These studies highlight functional, emotional, and self-expressive benefits of the destination's brand for tourists.

Destination branding emphasizes benefits. A strong brand benefits both business and consumers (Jago et al., 2003). Morgan et al.'s (2002) model showed that consumer's benefits should be monitored continuously using research to understand the important features of a destination and the meanings of place for consumers. The above studies imply that exploring the relationship between tourists and their benefits from visiting a destination can be a way to access the nature of destination's brand.

Gyimothy (n.d.) provided destination brand benefit pyramid. The consumer research process to answer the question at each level is related to measuring the effectiveness of destination branding. Basically, this dissertation attempts to explore the concept of destination brands. Specifying the domain and the boundaries of the construct is an important step towards developing a theory of destination brand. Hence, this exploratory work toward solving the question of what is the essential nature and character

of the brand (see Figure 1) will be the important step towards developing a brand theory construct.

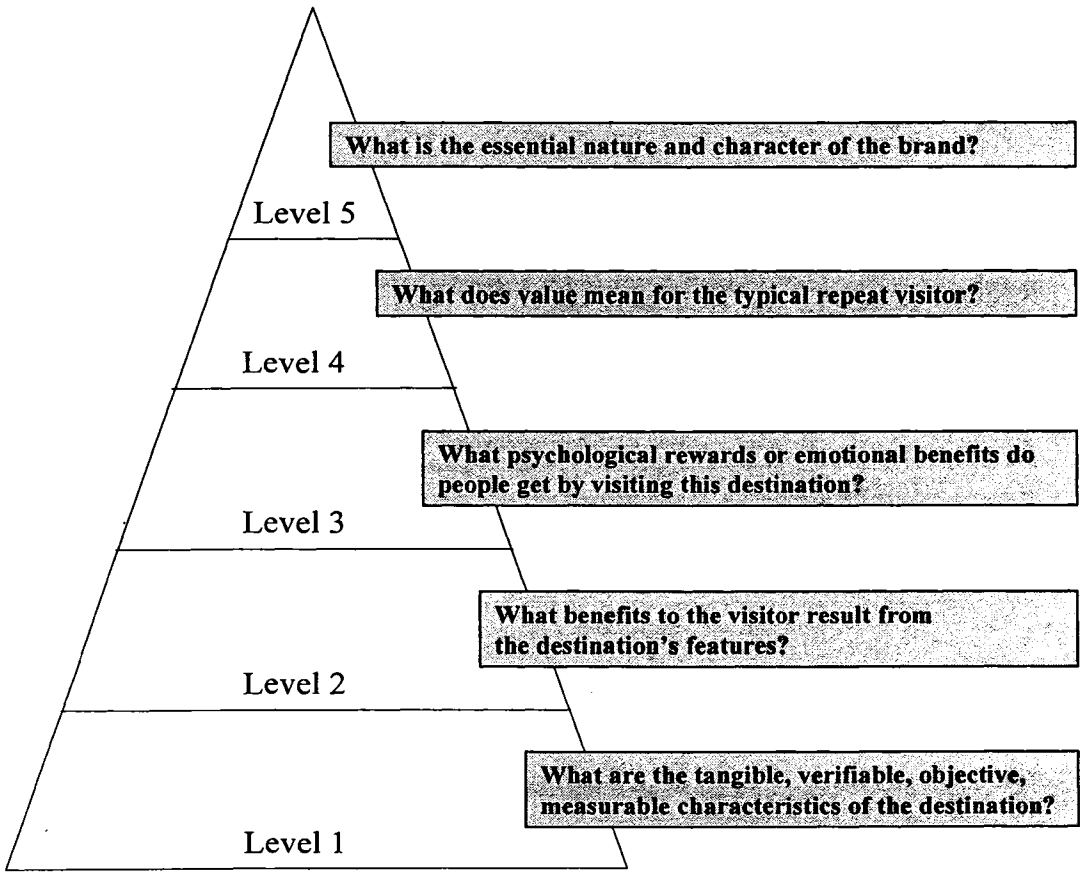

Figure 1. Destination Brand Benefit Pyramid. Adapted from Gyimothy (n.d.) www.humsamf.auc.dk/edu/snf/turisme

Studies on Destination Branding

Academic interest in the destination branding emerged only recently (Blain et al., 2005; Gnoth, 1999; William et al., 2004). The 1998 annual conference of the International Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA) focused on destination branding. Also that year, the American Marketing Science (AMS) conference uncovered

academic issues in a special track on branding tourism destinations. The following year, a special issue of the Journal of Vacation Marketing was dedicated to destination branding.

In 2002, a special issue of the Journal of Brand Management was dedicated to national branding. The limited availability of destination branding literature from academic journals means the exploration of the nature of destination branding is challenging. However, exploration is needed to enrich the practice of destination brand management. A growing body of literature describes emerging challenges associated with the branding of destinations (Williams et al., 2004).

Research on brands in the field of hospitality and tourism has been conducted to understand more about its importance for marketing purposes and attempting to describe a firms' valued brand assets (see Table 1). Bowen (1997), after reviewing hospitality marketing journal articles from 1990 to June of 1997, identified five sub-themed areas of: (1) market sensitivity; (2) segmentation, *branding*, and service customization; (3) service quality and customer retention; (4) product design; and, (5) internal marketing. Studies with the branding theme employed the concept of brand in addressing marketing activities of corporate services such as hotels, restaurants, and airlines. Recently, in the field of hospitality, studies of brands examined firm-based analysis such as brand integrity in brand loading (Mangan & Collins, 2002) or co-branding marketing strategies (Hahm & Kjan, 2001) rather than customer-based analysis. Table 1 shows the current studies on brands in the field of hospitality and tourism.

Table 1

Studies on the Topic "Brand" in the Field of Hospitality and Tourism

Topic	Author (year)
Brand creation and positioning	d'Hauteserre (2001), Morgan et al. (2002)
Brand effect in lodging industry	Oh (2000), Back & Parks (2003)
Brand effects in restaurants	Kwun & Oh (2004)
Brand equity evaluation of hotel brands	Kim & Lee (1998)
Co-branding of family restaurants	Lee et al. (2005)
Corporate branding on mount resort	Williams et al. (2004)
Destination branding strategies	Pritchard & Morgan (2001)
Emphasis on stakeholder's value	Buhalis (2000), Williams et al. (2004),
Leasing hotel food and beverage operations	Hallam & Baum (1992)
Logo development	Blain et al. (2005), Hem & Iversen (2004)
Market efficiency of hotel brands	Brown & Ragsdale (2002)
Multibranding strategy of quick-service Restaurants	Enz (2005)
National (Country) brand	Gilmore (2002), Gnoth (2002), Hall (2001), Lodge (2002), Morgan et al. (2002), Morgan et al. (2003), Ooi (2004), Papadopoulos & Heslop (2002), Supphellen & Nygaardsvik (2002)
Politics of branding	Ooi (2004)
Problems and benefits of branding in the hotel industry	Ooi (2004)
Quick service restaurant brand	Laroche & Parsa (2000)

(table continues)

Table 1

Studies on the Topic "Brand" in the Field of Hospitality and Tourism (continued)

Topic	Author (year)
Special events and destination brand equity	Dimanche (2002)
Slogan development	Pike (2005)
Stakeholders' role	Morgan et al. (2003)
Tourism brand attributes	Edwards et al. (2000)
Use for events in destination branding	Jago et al. (2003)

Most of the studies on destination branding focus on competitiveness. Dwyer and Kim (2003) noted that "to achieve competitiveness advantage for its tourism industry, any destination must ensure that its overall 'appeal', and the tourist experience offered, must be superior to that of the alternative destinations open to potential visitors" (p. 369). Competitiveness is both a relative concept and a multi-dimensional one (Spence & Hazard, 1988). Therefore, measurement of destination brand equity that is linked to a destination's overall competitiveness can be a criterion to evaluate a destination's multidimensional competitiveness.

Interestingly, in the field of tourism, destination image has been used to understand destination branding (Cai, 2002; Edwards et al., 2000; Hall et al, 2001; Hankinson, 2004, 2005; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002; Pritchard & Morgan, 2001). Also, Ooi (2004) indicated that most destination branding studies concentrate on how brand images and messages are formulated and presented.

A brand is generally recognized as an extension of brand image (Keller, 2003) that influences destination choice (Blain et al., 2005). Destination images have been

widely viewed as an influential factor in tourists' destination choice (Baloglu & McCleary, 1998). Blain et al. (2005) noted that collective marketing activities for branding serve to create a destination image that positively influences consumer destination choice. Cai (2002) suggested a conceptual model of destination branding based on Gartner's (1993) image components (congnitive, affective, and conative) and Keller's (2003) types of association (attributes, benefits, attitudes). Although Cai (2002) attempted to show a dynamic model of the destination branding process formed by brand element mix, brand identity, and brand image building, he did not provide specific information on their formation and measurement.

However, Hem and Iversen (2004) indicated that "image formation is not branding, albeit the former constitutes the core of the latter. Image building is one step closer, but there still remains a critical missing link: the brand identity. To advance destination image studies to the level of branding, the link needs to be established" (p.86). Kaplanidou and Vogt (2003) indicated that branding can further build upon other destination brand elements after establishing an image that differentiates a destination from its competitors. The literature on exploring destination branding examined destination elements in a conceptual context. Destination environments and service infrastructure were suggested as main categories of destination elements in conceptual studies (Buhalis et al., 2005; Murphy et al., 2000).

Several researchers attempted to conceptualize destination brand similar to the drivers of brand equity in general marketing; such as brand personality, brand value, and brand essence (Hankinson, 2004; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003; Morgan et al., 2002). It means that the trend toward a more systematic approach at the conceptual level regarding

what a destination brand comprises by including distinctive components has begun. However, there is no general agreement among researchers of destination brand components.

Efforts to enlighten the nature of destination branding and its construct drive current research. Such studies employ measurement techniques; to assess tourist perceptions of destination branding. In his conceptual study, Gnoth (2002) noted that a destination brand can be established at three levels involving the functional, experiential and symbolic, in addition to brand attributes. He implied that branding a destination can be achieved when consistency of attributes is developed within and across these three levels through tourists' experiences.

Several studies have appeared recently which measure some aspect of tourists' perception of destination branding, but these studies do not provide specific information on measurement techniques and hence, their results are not comparable. They also do not discuss the issue of how to conceptualize destination branding as a construct, but focus on identifying factors. Hence, the empirical work that operationalizes tourist brand perceptions as multi-dimensional construct need to be developed and tested.

Measurement of Destination Branding

Branding is about measuring the success of a brand (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003). Marketers have begun to pay closer attention to the ways that brands are created, strengthened, changed, and maintained (Jago et al., 2003). In the field of marketing, the concept of brand equity has been employed to measure how consumers assess a brand overall (Ford, 2005). In particular, the measurement of customer-based brand equity is

considered an important and challenging aspect of branding (Pappu, Quester, Cooksey, 2005).

Keller (2003) indicated that "brand equity is a multidimensional concept and complex enough that many different types of measures are required. Multiple measures increase the diagnostic power of marketing research" (p. 477). Although there have been no consistent measurement techniques among researchers, brand equity measurement based on consumer's perspective has been conducted. This research has conceptualized brand equity as consisting of different dimensions (Washburn & Plank, 2002; Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000) or dividing it into attribute and non-attribute components (Park & Srinivasan, 1994).

Recent studies have highlighted the need to refine and measure the dimensionality of the consumer-based brand equity construct. Hence, studies attempt to develop a multidimensional scale for consumer-based brand equity and test its psychometric properties (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). However, de Chernatony and McDonald (2003) indicated that an instrument to measure brand equity from a customer perspective has been lacking in spite of the increasing importance of the brand equity concept.

In terms of measurement, studies show that destinations are far more multidimensional than consumer goods and other type of services (Pike, 2005). However, most research focused on case studies (Cai, 2002; d'Hauteserre, 2001; Ooi, 2004; Pritchard & Morgan, 2001; Williams et al., 2004) at the exploratory level and did not provide empirical measurement of destination brand effectiveness. There are some

studies, however, that noted the importance of measurement for destination branding (Blain et al., 2005; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003, Ooi, 2004; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1998)

Ritchie and Ritchie (1998) indicated that "we have borrowed and adapted many of the concepts, theories, and methodologies of the marketing field. The transference and use of branding in tourism is thus part of this larger process" (p. 655). They suggested that the applicability of the marketing approach to destination branding has to be questioned because of the unique characteristics of tourism settings. Also, they asserted that pre-experience and post-experience roles can be measured by a consumer survey.

Kaplanidou and Vogt (2003) suggested additional factors that can be measured including brand name awareness, visitors' perceptions about the brand and its identity, visitors' opinions and attitudes, brand loyalty, and traveling behaviors. Blain et al. (2005) noted that "destination branding effectiveness is crucial to measure and can be determined through consumer research. Such research must include measurement of visitor perceptions of the destination logo and image before and after visitation to determine if the transmitted image that formed visitor expectations is matched by actual experience which forms the heart of visitor satisfaction" (p. 337).

However, these studies provide little empirical evidence of destination brand measurement. Riege and Perry (2000) indicated that the academic literature provides guidance about how destination branding can be conducted for destination marketing practitioners. Table 2 shows the destination branding measurement methods provided by researchers. It shows that studies regarding the measurement issue related to destination branding are scarce and focused at the conceptual level.

An exhaustive review of the literature will be performed to select the most appropriate way to measure each variable considered in this study. Because measurement of destination branding is relatively new, measurement items from general marketing should be modified appropriately with the destination context. For example, measurement items for the general brand image and the product brand image were proposed by Aaker (1996) and Martinez and de Chernatony (2004). However, items that are not relevant to tourism will be omitted.

Table 2

Indicators of destination branding and methods

Authors (year)	Indicators	Methods
Kaplanidou & Vogt (2003)	Brand name awareness, visitors perceptions about the brand and its identity elements, Visitors opinions and attitudes, Brand loyalty and traveling behaviors	Consumer Survey
Ritchie & Ritchie (1998)	Selection (identification, differentiation, anticipation, expectation, reassurance) and Recollection (consolidation and reinforcement)	Consumer Survey

Conceptual Domain

This study attempts to propose and test an approach to measure destination brand equity. There are definitions of the destination brand (Blain et al., 2005; Cai, 2002;

Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1998), yet a comprehensive theory of the destination brand construct is missing. Hence, it is difficult to specify the domain and the boundaries of the construct.

Low and Lamb (2000) noted that research has hypothesized that consumer perceptions of brands are multi-dimensional, yet many of the dimensions they identify appear to be very similar. Furthermore, Aaker's and Keller's conceptualizations of consumer's psychological representation of brands have not been subjected to empirical validation. However, it is an important step towards developing a theory of destination brand which satisfies formal and methodological sets of criteria for theory evaluation. Also, developing a theory of destination brand and setting boundaries of its construct is beneficial from the point of view of evaluating possible redundancy with other constructs. Therefore, the exploratory work toward defining the nature of destination brand will be the first step towards developing a theory of the brand construct by identifying the antecedents and consequences of destination brand experiences.

Deslandes (2003) attempted to develop a model of the perceptions underlying the destination branding process. Perceived quality, perceived price, and country image were selected as exogenous variables and perceived value, perceived satisfaction, destination image, and behavioral intentions were selected as endogenous variables. The destination perception model revealed that the relationship among variables were significant (i.e., intentions to return were influenced by satisfaction and destination images. However, overall the model did not fit the data well.

Table 3

Components of destination branding

Author(Year)	Components	Measurement	Analysis
Deslandes (2003)	Quality, price, destination value, country image, destination image, destination satisfaction, intention to visit	Likert scaling & Semantic differential scaling (SDS)	Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)
Blain et al. (2005)[a]	Image, recognition (awareness), differentiation, consistency, brand messages, emotional responses, and expectations	N/A	N/A
Kaplanidou & Vogt (2003)	Identity, image, personality, essence or soul, character, culture	N/A	N/A
Pike (2004)	Brand identity, brand position, brand image	N/A	N/A

Note. [a] Components in conceptual definition, N/A (non available)

The Proposed Model

Aaker (1996) noted that assets comprising brand equity are the primary source of competitive strategic advantage. Identifying the dimensions of destination brand equity is critical (Keller, 2003; Lindermann, 2004). Since there are few empirical studies that provide specific information on the measurement of destination branding, this study assumes the relationship among variables based on the general marketing literature

review. For example, in their conceptual model of brand equity, de Chernatonty and McDonald (2003) suggested the casual model among three brand equity sources: brand attributes→ brand strength→ brand value.

Also, various opinions of researchers are considered for this study. For example, Lindermann (2004) provided that research-based brand equity evaluations involve measuring consumers' perception of behavior upon which the success of the brand depends. Motameni and Shahrokhi (1998) showed customer based potency factors involving brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality contribute to the brand strength. They suggested that brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality could be measured with a customer survey.

In terms of brand loyalty and brand value, Ford (2005) suggested behavioral brand loyalty in discussing current strength of brand. He implied that brand strength can be assessed by measuring brand loyalty. Ritchie and Ritchie (1998) defined brand as the total accumulated value or worth of a brand. They implied that the effect of brand strength can be measured through brand value. It is consistent with the notion that brand value and brand loyalty are strongly related (Lindermann, 2004).

Six research hypotheses, according to a comprehensive review of the previously discussed literature and the propositions derived from them, are presented for the conceptual model. The above review offers several insights that past research has provided into destination branding considerations. Yet, much work clearly still needs to be done because there are a number of branding principles and concepts that could be productively applied to destination brands. Also, there still lacks a rigorously examined empirical model that specifies the factors affecting the dimensionalities of destination

brand equity with generalizability. Henceforth, establishment of such as model is both academically and practically necessary for destination brand management. This section reviews the five areas that deserve greater research attention. The variables in the construct and related hypotheses for this study are provided.

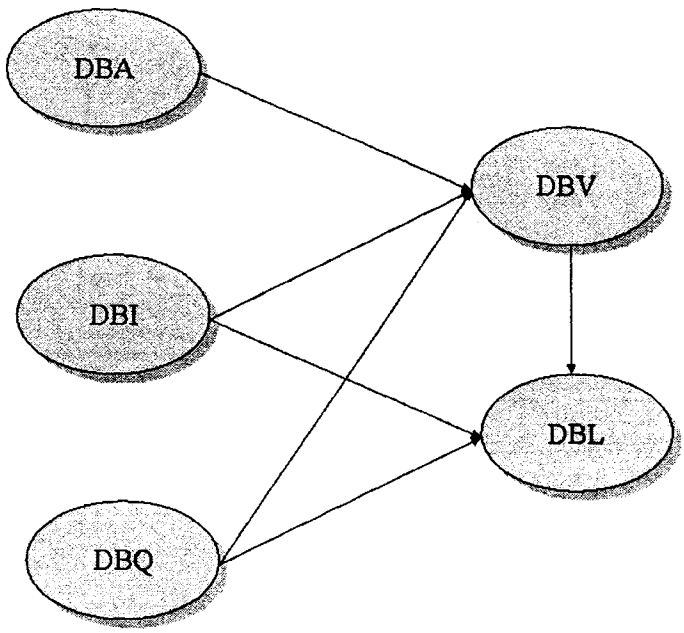

Figure 2. Baseline Model of Destination Branding

Note. DBA (Destination brand awareness), DBI (Destination brand image), DBQ (Destination brand quality), DBV (Destination brand value), DBL (Destination brand loyalty)

Exogenous Variables and Hypothesis Development

Destination Brand Awareness (DBA)

Destination marketing aims to raise awareness of a destination by creating a unique brand (Jago et al., 2003). Aaker (1991) defined brand awareness as the ability of a potential buyer to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category (p.61). He mentioned several levels of brand awareness, ranging from recognition of the brand to dominance, which refers to the condition where the brand involved is the only one recalled by a consumer. Brand awareness represents the strength of the brand's presence in the mind of the target and involves a continuum ranging from an uncertain feeling that the brand is recognized (Aaker, 1996). He presented the awareness pyramid by three different levels of brand awareness (p.62). The highest level is top-of-mind awareness that is ahead of the other brands in consumer's mind.

Among the brand effects that have been found to be important in consumer's purchasing decision (Belonax & Javalgi, 1989; Kwun & Oh, 2004; Oh, 2000; Sivakumar & Raj, 1997; Webster, 2000), brand awareness is considered as a main component of brand effects in hospitality and tourism (Kwun & Oh, 2004; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003; Oh, 2000). Aaker (1991) identified brand awareness as one of five categories of assets and liabilities related to brand equity.

Keller (1993) suggested that brand awareness consists of brand recognition and brand image as well as brand awareness is considered as a sub-component of brand equity. de Chernatonty and McDonald (2003) considered brand awareness as main brand attributes. Motameni & Shahrokhi (1998) provided that brand awareness can be measured by examining consumer's recognition, recall, and top-of-mind. Studying the impact of

brand on retail outcomes, Webster (2000) mentioned that it is important to incorporate consumer perceived value with respect to the positive effects of a well-known brand name.

Consumers tend to reduce the number of brands they consider purchasing, when the variability in product quality increases (Belonax & Javalgi, 1989). Since destinations provide complex attributes (Hankinson, 2005), brand awareness can be an important consideration in tourists' decision making process.

Barrows, Latuuca, and Bosselman (1989) noted that a restaurant's brand awareness might have a great influence on consumer's choice decision. Brand awareness creates value (Aaker, 1991). Oh (2000), and Kwun and Oh (2004) found that brand effects, such as brand reputation to be important antecedents of consumer value.

Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Destination brand awareness (DBA) is positively associated with destination brand value (DBV)

Destination Brand Image (DBI)

Brand image in general marketing is defined as perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations (attributes, benefits and overall brand attitudes) held in consumer memory (Keller,1993). Brand image has been considered as the reasoned or emotional perceptions consumers attach to specific brands (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Studies identified brand images as an important source of brand equity (Keller, 1998; Lassar, Mittal, Sharma, 1995).

Brand image has been measured differently. Low and Lamb (2000) conceptualized brand image as functional and symbolic perceptions and employed a measurement technique using semantic differential items for measuring brand image. Lassar et al.(1995) developed a scale for measuring consumer based brand equity, in which they refer to the image dimension as the social image, which is understood as the consumer's perception of the esteem in which the consumer's social group holds the brand. Tsai (2005) also considered brand image as the consumer's perceptions of the social approval.

Brand image has been considered in terms of brand personality (Hosany, Ekinci, and Uysal, 2006; Patterson, 1999; Phau & Lau, 2002; Upshaw, 1995). Hosany et al. (2006) provided that brand image and brand personality have been used interchangeably to gauge consumer perceptions of brands. However, Martínez and de Chernatony (2004) noted that the existing literature shows that brand image is a multi-dimensional concept, but there is no consensus on how to empirically measure it.

The concept of image consumption in general marketing has been extended to destination marketing. Blain et al. (2005) suggested that destination image should be included in the definition of destination branding. Cai (2002) considered brand image building to be an important component in the formation of a destination branding model (p.725).

In tourism marketing, destination brand image can also be expected to play an important role, especially where it is difficult to differentiate tangible or intangible attributes without actual visit experiences. Cai (2002) defined the image of a destination brand as "perceptions about the place as reflected by the associations held in tourists

memory" (p.723). They noted that building a brand image amounts to identifying the most relevant associations and strengthening their linkages to the brand.

Leisen (2001) noted that visitors envision their experiences prior to consumption as part of their image of a destination. The dimensions of destination image attributes have been studied (Etchner & Ritchie, 1991; Sirgy & Su, 2000; Morgan et al., 2002; Hankinson, 2005) and recently there has been a systematic attempt to understand the destination image formation process (Baloglu & McCleary, 1998). Etchner and Ritchie (1991) classified image attributes into functional attributes and symbolic attributes and Morgan et al. (2002) added a holistic image. Hankinson (2005) identified eight clusters of destination brand image attributes in terms of business tourism: physical environment; economic activity; business tourism facilities; accessibility; social facilities; strength of reputation; people characteristics; and, destination size.

Recently, in terms of destination image measurement, cognitive image (perceptual evaluations), affective image (affective evaluations), and overall image have been measured together (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Kim & Richardson, 2003). The destination image is a widely investigated and it has been conceptualized broadly.

However, in this study, the destination brand image is limited to the social image of Lassar et al. (1995) and self-image of brand personality dimension (Kapferer, 1997). Brand image has been defined in terms of brand personality at the conceptual level (Hosany et al., 2006). Hosany et al. (1996) found that destination image and destination personality are related concepts and the emotional components of destination image is highly correlated with destination personality dimensions. They also suggested that

cognitive image, affective image, personality dimension should be considered in order to create a favorable image.

Aaker (1996) argued that consumers interact with brands and can develop an active relationship with brands like people would with a friend. Belk (1988) suggested that consumers evaluate brands by referring to their self-concept. If a brand image and self-concept share a degree of communality, there will be a degree of congruence between the two (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998). Solomon (1999) states that self-concept is one of the essential components of brand evaluation. He mentioned about personality qualities that assigned to products by consumers. Brand personality is seen as key understanding the symbolic importance of consumptions.

To differentiate their brands, marketers focus on incorporating emotional values into their brands, portraying this through the metaphor of brand personality (Asker, 1996, Aaker, 1997; Smothers, 1993). Brand personality refers to the set of human characteristics associated with a brand (Aaker, 1997). Brand personality has been considered a key concept of brand identity (de Chernatony, 1999). Keller (2003) noted that "a brand, like a person, can be characterized as being modern, old-fashioned, lively, or exotic" (p.86). Keller (2003) indicated that abstract product imagery such as brand personality is often crucial to its brand equity because brand personality is seen as a valuable factor in increasing brand engagement and brand attachment, in much the same way as people relate and bind to other people.

Studies show the positive relationship between image and value (Michell, King, & Reast, 2001; Cretu & Brodie, 2005; Tsai, 2005). For example, Cretu and Brodie (2005) found that brand image has positive impacts on customer value in business markets.

Also, Aaker (1991) analyzed the contribution of image to the value of brand equity. Destination image has been identified as a key component of destination loyalty (Hosany et al., 2006). Studies provided that brand image may have an influence on customer loyalty (Cretu & Brodie, 2005; Zeithaml, 1998; Zins, 2001).

Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H2: Destination brand image (DBI) is positively associated with destination brand value (DBV)

H3: Destination brand image (DBI) is positively associated with destination brand loyalty (DBL)

Destination Brand Quality (DBQ)

Perceived quality is one of the key dimensions of brand equity (Aaker, 1996; Lassar et al., 1995). Perceived quality has been defined as customer's perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service with respect to its intended purpose, and relative alternatives (Aaker, 1991; Zeithaml, 1988). Zeithaml (1988) noted that perceived quality is not the actual quality of the product but consumer's subjective evaluation of the product (p.3). Zeithaml's (1988) model focuses primarily on product quality. Bitner (1990) extends this thinking to evaluations of service quality and showed that perceived service quality impacts customer behavior. Perceived quality is a global assessment based on consumer perceptions of what constitutes a quality product and how well the brand rates on those dimensions (Keller, 2003). Keller (2003) considered brand quality as one important type of brand judgments.

In the customer-based brand equity model, Keller (2003) has identified seven dimensions of product quality: performance; features; conformation quality; reliability; durability; serviceability; and, style and design. Among the seven dimensions, brand performance will be included to measure destination brand quality because brand performance relates to the ways in which the destination attempts to meet tourists' functional needs (Keller, 2003).

Also, brand performance, as a dimension of product quality, involves the salient characteristics of the product (Aaker, 1991). Lassar et al. (1995) identified brand performance as one of five dimensions of brand equity. In the general marketing literature, customers' perception of performance was examined by assessing product and service quality attributes. According to Keller (2003), what distinguishes a brand from its unbranded counter part and gives it equity is the sum total of consumer's perceptions and feelings about the product's attributes and how they perform.

Buhalis (2000) provided the framework for the analysis of destinations concerning products, services, and experiences (p.98). The components are attractions, accessibility, amenities, available packages (pre-arranged package by intermediaries and principals), activities and ancillary services. Murphy et al. (2000) discussed a conceptual model of the destination product to include destination environments and service infrastructure. These two conceptual models help to understand destination branding elements (Williams et al., 2004). Therefore, these elements can be considered in measuring destination brand performance.

Studies have shown that perceived quality is a direct antecedent of perceived value (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991; Oh, 2000). Low and Lamb (2000) noted that

perceived quality is central to the theory that strong brands add value to consumer's purchase dimension. Teas and Laczbiak (2004) noted that the perceived quality of a brand showed a positive effect on perceived value. Sweeney, Soutar, and Johnson (1999) found that the perceived product quality had a positive relationship with the perceived value among shoppers.

Studies on tourists' quality perceptions showed the importance of destination quality management (Go & Govers, 2000; Witt & Muhlemann, 1994). Oh (2003) found that perceived quality positively impacts lodging customers' value judgments. In addition a positive relationship between perceived quality and brand value has been found (Cretu & Brodie, 2005; Jayanti & Gosh, 1996; Michell, King, & Reast, 2001). Deslandes (2003) found that perceived quality of a tourist destination is positively related to the perceived value of that destination. Murphy et al.(2000) also showed that perceived trip quality positively affected perceived trip value. Also, consumers often combine quality perceptions with cost perceptions to arrive at an assessment of the value of a product.

Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H4: Destination brand quality (DBQ) is positively associated with destination brand value (DBV)

H5: Destination brand quality (DBQ) is positively associated with destination brand loyalty (DBL)

Endogenous Variables and Hypothesis Development

Destination Brand Value (DBV)

Brand value is included in the proposed model because the perceived value of a brand has been considered as a perceptual dimension of brand equity (Lassar et al., 1995) and consumer choice of a brand depends on a perceived balance between price of product and all its utilities (Lassar et al., 1995).

Zeithaml (1988) defined a perceived value as "the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given" (p.14). The most popular definition of customer value has been price-based definition (Sweeny et al., 1999). An economic definition of perceived brand value was prevalent among marketers (Tsai, 2005). However, there has been no generally accepted or consistent definition of consumer value (Parasuraman, 1997; Day & Crask, 2000; Flint, Woodruff, & Gardial, 2002).

Destination brands are designed to create a unique value. Williams et al. (2004) noted that a tourism destination brand represents a simplication and focusing on the core values. Kotler et al. (1993) defined a destination as a place that incorporates an interconnected and complementary set of attractions, events, services, and products, which together create a total experience and value proposition to visitors.

In the consumer behavior research, perceived value that affects consumer decision making has been explored with four basic approaches: economic utilitarianism, socio-cultural symbolism, emotional/affective marketing, and a holistic perspective (Tsai, 2005). The value-for-money conceptualization is linked to economic utilitarianism on which tradeoff purchase value theories such as a model proposed by Dodds, Monroe and

Grewal (1991) were developed, postulating that consumers decide whether to purchase a branded product mainly with considerations for its monetary worthiness.

In terms of measurement, brand value can be measured by asking customers whether the brand provides good value for the money, or whether there are reasons to buy one brand over a competitors' (Aaker, 1996). Consumer researchers verified with empirical findings that perceived value is supposed to be treated as a multi-dimensional construct (Hall, Robertson, & Shaw, 2001; Sirgy & Johar, 1999; Sweeney, Soutar, Whiteley & Lester, 1996). Sweeney and Soutar (2001) divided brand value into four components including emotional value, social value, functional value (price value for money), another functional value (performance/quality), and were measured with a consumer survey. Their scale was designed to determine what consumption values drive purchase attitudes and behaviors. They found the measure to be reliable and valid. Based on Aaker (1996) and Sweeney and Soutar (2001), this study will modify functional value (value for money) appropriately with the destination brand context

There is a positive relationship between perceived value of the product brand and future behavioral intentions characterized as repurchase intention (Petrick, Backman, & Bixler, 1999; Tsai, 2005; Teas & Laczniak, 2004; Woodruff, 1997). Oh (2000) found that customer value with lodging products was also positively associated with future behavior such as purchase and search intentions. Sweeney et al. (1999) also found that the perceived value has a positive relationship with the willingness-to-buy among shoppers.

Barrows et al. (1989) indicated that customers' perceived value might have a great influence on consumers' choice decision. Kwun and Oh (2004) also found that restaurant customer value has a significant effect on behavioral intention. Murphy et al.

(2000) found that perceived trip value positively affect traveler intentions to return. Chiou (2004) also found that the perceived value of ISP (Internet Service Providers) positively affect consumers' loyalty intention toward the ISP. These findings are consistent with the notion that value plays an important role in creating customer loyalty (Grewal et al., 2004) and customer value impacts customer loyalty (Oliver, 1980; Zeithaml, 1988).

Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H6: Destination brand value (DBV) is positively associated with destination brand loyalty (DBL)

Destination Brand Loyalty (DBL)

The ability to create customer loyalty is the major outcome of branding (Gilmore, 2002). The brand loyalty of the customer base is often the core of a brand's equity (Aaker, 1991). Also, Keller (2003) operationalzed brand loyalty as a main source of customer-based brand equity. Brand loyalty was defined as the attachment that a customer has to a brand (Aaker, 1991, p.39) or as a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having potential to cause switching behavior (Oliver, 1997, p. 392). Brand loyalty is viewed as the biased behavioral response expressed through individual decision-making with respect to one or more alternative brands and is a function of psychological processes (Jacoby & Kyner, 1973).

Generally, brand loyalty has been considered either an attitude or behavior (Odin, Odin, Valetter-Florence, 2001). The definition of Oliver emphasizes the behavioral

dimension of brand loyalty. On the other hand, from an attitudinal perspective, brand loyalty was defined as the tendency to be loyal (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). However, in terms of measurement, a review of the literature highlights the lack of clarity about the conceptual nature of brand loyalty. This has resulted in the use of a variety of measurement tools producing inconsistent findings (Odin et al., 2001). Hence, this study will conceptualize brand loyalty also based on an attitudinal aspect and consumer perception.

Although loyalty has been an interesting research topic in the field of tourism (Baloglu & Erickson, 1998; Niininen & Riley, 2004; Oppermann, 2000), there is no definition of destination brand loyalty within the concept of destination brand equity. Lassar et al. (1995) noted that "brand equity stems from the greater confidence that consumers place in a brand than they do in its competitors. This confidence translates into consumer's loyalty and their willingness to pay a premium price for the brand" (p.11). Also, Back and Parks (2003) noted that brand loyalty has been considered as a consequence of multidimensional cognitive attitudes toward a specific brand.

Odin et al. (2001) operationalized brand loyalty with strong brand sensitivity and examined its impact on repeat purchasing behavior. The results established a positive relationship between brand loyalty and future behavior. Branding influences consumers' willingness to pay a premium price and to recommend to others (Hutton, 1997). Word-of-Mouth (Belén del Río et al., 2001), retention to revisit (Cretu & Brodie, 2005), and price premium (Belén del Río et al., 2001) have been modified appropriately to measure behavioral dimension. This study limited the reference of the brand loyalty dimension to the attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of destination brand loyalty.

Also, studies showed a positive relationship between customers' perception of value and customer loyalty (Cretu & Brodie, 2005). This study proposes a significant relationship between the brand value and brand loyalty. It is envisaged that tourists' perception of value will be associated with their destination brand loyalty. The more favorable association consumers have towards a destination, the more their loyalty.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, a brief overview of branding, research on destination branding, and measurement issues were discussed. Based on the literature review, the proposed model was developed. In addition, the relationships among exogenous variables and endogenous variables were presented and hypotheses were developed.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation is to empirically test a conceptualization of destination branding that consists of several dimensions. A consumer-based brand equity model will be applied to a destination within a tourist context (Na, Marshall, Keller, 1999). Recent brand equity research reflects a conceptual and theoretical foundation although a comprehensive framework of theoretically based measures of brand equity is still lacking. This study aims to provide a method for measuring destination branding. The current measurement of destination branding suffers from limitations including a missing academic conceptual foundation. Therefore, this attempt to measure destination branding using the concept of brand equity is an initial step toward providing empirical evidence of the multidimensionality of consumer-based destination branding.

Most of the research on brand equity measurement attempted to understand the structure and composition of the construct for marketing purposes (Na et al., 1999). Exploration of the destination brand-building process within a model of brand equity formation is an effective way to assess tourist perceptions of a destination's brand. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is the statistical application that will provide an understanding of the multidimensional nature of destination branding.

Structural equation models are necessary for theory evaluation in marketing because theoretical constructs have been typically difficult to operationalize in terms of unavoidable measurement error. Modeling with latent variables allows for the testing of relationships among factors free of measurement error in terms of scale reliabilities (Burkholder & Harlow, 2003). Given the complexity of destination branding and the lack of measurement for the theoretical constructs of destination brand equity, structural equation modeling will provide the paths in a specified casual structure among latent variables for the destination branding process.

In this chapter, a brief overview of structural equation modeling will be discussed. Next, the research design, survey questionnaire development, scale development process involving reliability and validity issues, data collection for pre-tests, and main test are presented.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and Its Application

Pre-specified relationships between exogenous and endogenous variables that are measured with multiple items can be tested by confirmatory analysis (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). A major advantage of confirmatory analysis is that it allows for a large set of formal indices to assess the quality of the tested model. The most rigorous approach is to use the confirmatory factor analysis part of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) that tests how well the interim correlation matrix fits a single-factor (Reis & Judd, 2000).

SEM is a technique to specify, estimate, and evaluate models of linear relationships among a set of observed variables in terms of generally smaller number of

unobserved variables. Since SEM originate in Sewall Wright's 1916 work (Bollen, 1989), SEM has been considered as a useful tool to represent multidimensional unobserved constructs and simultaneously examine structural relationships that are not well captured by traditional research methods in the field of psychology and marketing (Gefen et al., 2000).

For this study, SEM will be estimated with Analysis of Moments Structure (AMOS). Based upon Maximum Likehood (ML) estimation, AMOS calculates several indices to evaluate the goodness-of-fit between specified a model and data set. In terms of overall model fit, among the multitude of adequation indices proposed, those that are recommended in the literature (Bentler & Bonett, 1980; Browne & Cudeck, 1992; Hair et al., 1998; Hu & Bentler, 1998; Steiger & Lind, 1980) will be computed.

Absolute fit measures involving chi-square index, goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), root mean square of approximation (RMSEA) and incremental fit measures involving normed-fit index (NFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and comparative fit index (CFI) will be reported. The chi-square index provides a test of the null hypothesis that the reproduced covariance matrix has the specified model structure. The higher the probability associated with the chi-square, the closer the fit between the hypothesized model and the ideal fit (Byrne, 2001). Chi-square statistic is inherently biased when the sample size is large but is dependent on distributional assumptions associated with large samples (Shah & Goldstein, 2006). Also, the recommended CMIN (minimum discrepancy) /*df* (degrees of freedom) ratio is below the cutoff of 3 that is recommended for sample size exceeding 200 (Byrne, 2001; Kline, 1998).

The GFI is a measure of the relative amount of the sample covariance matrix accounted for by the model and is independent of the sample size. The AGFI adjusts the GFI for the degrees of freedom in the model. GFI and AGFI are significantly influenced by sample size and are insufficiently sensitive to model specification (Hu & Bentler, 1998). The NFI is an alternative to the chi-square index. The CFI provides an assessment of comparative fit independent of sample size. The minimum value for GFI, AGFI, CFI, and NFI for this study is above the minimum value of .90.

The RMSEA has been recognized as one of the most informative criteria in covariance structure modeling (Byrne, 2001). It takes into account the error of approximation in the population and it estimates how well the model would fit the population covariance matrix if all parameter values are chosen optimally. In terms of the measurement model fit, it will be evaluated by assessing constructs' reliability and convergent and discriminant validity (Bollen, 1989). Cronbach's Alpha is frequently presented as proof to establish unidimensionalty. RMSEA values below .08 are considered acceptable, with values equal to or above .1 indicating unacceptable levels of fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993)

In terms of structural model fit, the sign, strength, and significance of the structural path coefficients will be examined in testing the hypotheses. The magnitude of standard errors and confidence interval (CI) with the statistical significance of path estimates will be provided. The magnitude of standard errors provide information such as a large standard error indicates an unstable parameter estimate that is subject to sampling error and CI around each path estimate provide an explicit indication of the degree of parameter estimate precision (Shah & Goldstein, 2006).

In terms of model specification, the hypothesized model will be applied to both a Las Vegas visitor sample and an Atlantic City visitor sample. For the model generation, the model will be modified with the use of modification indices until it fits adequately to both samples. Although comparison of alternative a priori models to uncover the model is recommended rather than use specification researches (Browne & Cudeck, 1989), this study will use model specification because there have been few similar studies dealt with testing destination brand model.

Findings from single sample studies are subject to limitations due to sample selection effects and their impact on the conclusions that can be drawn. Shah and Goldstein (2006) provided that a structural equation model is a hypothesis about the structure of relationships among observed variables and latent variables in a specific population. Therefore, identifying population is required. Replicating the results of a study in a different sample from the same population contributes to the generalizability. The expected cross-validation index, an index computed from a single sample, can indicate how well a solution obtained in one sample is likely to fit an independent sample from the same population (Browne & Cudeck, 1989)

Specifically, to validate the usual assumptions that groups are equivalent, samples can be required to have identical estimates for all parameters and the theoretical model is separately applied to each group (Lippke, Ziegelmann, & Schwarzwer, 2005). For the test of significant paths, a probability level of <. 5 will be used consistent with uni-directional hypotheses.

Constructs are the basis for forming causal relationships (Hair et al., 1998). In this study, the casual model refers to an explanatory scheme, which is usually specified as a

structural equation model. Empirical tests of these kinds of models are often based upon cross-sectional survey data. Hence, the findings will be interpreted only as a test of the a-priori explanatory scheme and not as strong evidence of causation (Bollen, 1989).

Research Design

Sampling design and participants

Pilot testing surveys will be conducted to get useful feedback on questions for the main study. To test the hypotheses, Web-based survey research design with self-administered questionnaires will be employed. Today, the use of Web-based surveys is rapidly becoming the method of choice for gathering survey data (Kaye & Johnson, 1999). The feasibility of internet surveys involving richness of the electronically collected data, decreased human errors, and nearly identical results with mail and telephone surveys have been supported (Stanton, 1998).

Strand and Weiss (2005) mentioned that self-administered questionnaires make it possible to collect information from a large number of people spread out over a large area at a relatively low cost, they make confidentiality and anonymity easier to achieve, and the absence of interviewers eliminates one important potential source of bias. Also, Zikmund (2003) provided that a developed theory should cohere with facts for confirmation criterion. That is, the extracted theory and its coherence with reality should be examined.

The target population is the complete group of specific population elements relevant to the research project (Zikmund, 2003). The target population for this study was comprised of adults who have visited Las Vegas or Atlantic City to gamble. The sample

population was obtained from Survey Sampling Incorporated (SSI), a company specializing in online sampling and surveying (www.surveysampling.com). This company offers lists of targeted email addresses of individuals who have their permission to be sent information on selected topic. This email list was the sampling frame in this research design.

The sample was chosen among members that expressed an interest in participating. It is an appropriate approach to get a list of potential respondents who are permitted to voluntarily participate (e.g., sampling frame). Zikmund (2003) noted that the sampling frame is the list of elements from which the sample may be drawn. Therefore, because of the difficulty of compiling a complete list of general adults who have visited either Las Vegas or Atlantic City, it is reasonable to use purposive sampling in this research design.

Non-probability relevance sampling is employed for more systematic research (Keeter, 2005). Also, since non-probability relevance sampling does not provide a basis for estimating sampling error (Keeter, 2005), the representativeness issue will not be addressed.

In this study, the SSI project manager invited individuals on their list to participate in the survey. When individuals clicked the link to the survey at Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com), a welcome screen was shown on the screen. Only individuals who fit the following were eligible to participate in the survey: (1) at least 21 years of age; (2) had visited Las Vegas to gamble; or, (3) had visited Atlantic City to gamble. Respondents can complete one of the two questionnaires. If participants answered "Yes", he or she would continue to the survey.

Sample Size

Sample size plays an important role in the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Adequacy of sample size has a significant impact on the reliability of parameter estimates, model fit, and statistical power (Shah & Goldstein, 2006). Smaller sample sizes are generally characterized by parameter estimates with low reliability, greater bias in Chi-square and RMSEA fit statistics, and greater uncertainty in future replication (Jackson, 2003).

However, there is no single criterion that dictates the necessary sample size in terms of SEM (Hair et al., 1998). For example, Anderson and Gerbing (1988) suggested 100~150 subjects for the minimum satisfactory sample size, while Boomsma (1983) indicated at least 400 subjects is necessary. Hair et al. (1988) suggested for factors that will impact the required sample size. Those four factors include model misspecification, model size, departures from normality and the estimation procedure. Also, they noted that different statistical tests have different requirements for the sample size. In terms of SEM, they recommended a sample size of 200.

Bollen (1989) suggested having a certain number of observations per variables and having a certain number of observations per parameters estimated. Hair et al. (1998) also provided that a ratio minimum of ten respondents per parameter is considered appropriate for SEM.

In determining sample size, statistical power is critical to SEM analysis because the goal is to produce a significant result between sample data and the implied covariance matrix derived from model parameter estimates (Shah & Goldstein, 2006). MaCallum, Roznowski, and Necowitz (1992) suggested conducting power analysis and they

indicated the adequate power of .80 to detect close model fit. Schulz and Grimes (2005) noted that the conventions of α=.05 and power=.80 usually suffice though there are many conflicting assumptions. They suggested the relative sample size of 200 at the level of α=.05 and power=.80.

Establishing a minimum sample size of 200 is simply considered a rule of thumb in the analysis of SEM (Shah & Goldstein, 2006). Additional subjects would be necessary if misspecification is suspected, the model is overly large or complex, the data exhibit non-normal characteristics, or an alternative estimation procedure is used. Given these considerations, a minimum sample size of 200 for each group (people who have visited Las Vegas and /or people who have visited Atlantic City) is necessary in this research design.

Instrumentation

The survey questionnaire is composed of two parts. The first part is composed of items representing the different dimensions of the destination brand construct. The second part contains demographic information questions such as sex, age, marital status, monthly income level, education level. Also, questions concerning gambling behavior were added. This information will be used to describe the characteristics of the sample.

Multiple items will be used to measure each dimension of brand awareness, brand image, brand quality, brand loyalty, and brand value. Developed by Rensis Likert, the Likert scale is extremely popular for measuring perceptions because the method is simple to administer (Likert, 1932). Participants were asked to use a point-and click procedure to select their responses. With the 7-point Likert scale, participants indicate

their perceptions by checking whether they strongly agree (7) or strongly disagree (1) with carefully constructed statements. A Likert scale may be used with several scale items that form an index. It is assumed that each statement represents an aspect of common attitudinal domain (Zikmund, 2003). A good Likert item should state the opinion, attitude, belief, or other construct under study in clear items.

One of the objectives of this study is to explore respondents' perceptions of the destination branding process. Respondents' perceptions and attitudes toward destination brand awareness, brand image, brand quality, brand value, and brand loyalty in the integrated model will be examined. Therefore, the reasoning underlying the use Likert scale is justified.

Reis and Judd (2000) noted that "the psychometric approach relies on aggregate patterns of data to evaluate a proposed measurement model" (p.341). To check the consistency level of a respondent's self-reported items of each dimension, semantically consistent items will be developed. In this study, the final items will be randomly arranged to minimize order bias (e.g., items of each latent variable will be mixed). Also, the order of items for the Las Vegas visitor sample and Atlantic City visitor sample will be arranged differently.

The scale selection of dimensions is important in this study. For example, there are numerous definitions of brand image in the literature which initially may cause confusion about what is the best scale to use (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). The final questionnaire for the survey will be developed after reviewing the literature, consulting with professionals, and conducting two different pre-tests. Table 4 shows the selected dimensions among sources of brand equity and the measurement item sources from

literature review. The dimension items are largely product and service category specific. This study proposes that the choice of scales should be dictated by the research problem and its context in terms of the destination branding paradigm.

Table 4

Dimension and References of Measurement Items

Dimension	References of measurement items
Destination Brand Awareness (DBA)	Arnett et al. (2003), Beerli & Martin (2004), Kaplanidou & Vogt (2003), Keller (1993), Kwun & Oh (2004), Lassar et al. (1995), Motameni & Shahrokhi (1998), Oh (2000), Pappu et al. (2005), Yoo et al. (2002)
Destination Brand Image (DBI)	Baloglu & McCleary (1999), Beerli & Martin (2004), Cretu & Brodie (2005), Deslandes (2003), Hankinson (2005), Keller (2003), Lassaret al. (1995), Low & Lamb (2000), Martinez & de Chernatony (2004), Tsai (2005)
Destination Brand Quality (DBQ)	Aaker (1996), Beerli & Martin (2004), Deslandes (2003), Lassar et al. (1995), Martinez & de Chernatony (2004), Murphy et al. (2000), Oh (2000), Oh (2003), Pappu et al. (2005), Sweeney & Soutar (2001), Tsai (2005), Yoo et al. (2002)
Destination Brand Value (DBV)	Aaker (1996), Amber et al.(2002), Deslandes (2003), Kwun & Oh (2004), Lassar et al. (1995), Murphy et al. (2000), Oh (2000), Oh (2003), Sweeney & Soutar (2001), Tsai (2005)

(table continues)

Table 4

Dimension and References of Measurement Items (continued)

Dimension	References of measurement items
Destination Brand loyalty (DBL)	Arnett et al. (2003), Back & Parks (2003), Belen del Rio et al. (2001), Deslandes (2003), Knox et al. (2003), Kwun & Oh (2004), Murphy et al. (2000), Na et al.(1999), Odin et al. (2001), Oh (2000), Pappu et al. (2005), Yoo et al. (2002)

Each construct in the destination brand model requires the scale items that are destination category specific. For example, scale items for measuring in the image of a product brand would be different than those that would measure the image of a destination brand. The goal of this study is to test a protocol for developing destination specific measures of destination brand. The five constructs should be standardized measures which are generalizable across the destinations. Using the construct definitions, this study modifies the recommended scale purification steps by Churchill (1979), Deng and Dart (1994), and Vazquez, Belen del Rio, and Iglesias (2002). The steps are set forth in Table 5.

Table 5

Scale Purification Steps

Steps	Contents	
Step 1	Literature review and specifying domain of customer-based destination branding	Content Validity
Step 2	Identification of factors that making up the construct domain	
Step 3	Generation of items representing the factors	
	Revision of proposed scales	
	Email survey to expert panel	
	Specialized journals and studies	
Step 4	Scale refinement through Pretest	
	Pretest I (Students)	
	Pretest II (Tourists)	
	Convergent validity and discriminant validity	
Step 5	Refine the questionnaire and data collection (Main tests)	Sample data
Step 6	Assess reliability	Psychometric
Step 7	Assess content validity:	assessment
	Convergent validity and discriminant validity	

Reis and Judd (2000) noted that "measurement models (i.e., scales) have to be reductions or simplifications to be useful" (p.340). Measurement as the process of building models must be specified to represent well the perception of a destination brand by respondents. Therefore, in this study, the issue of construct validation, as the crucial issue in the psychometric approach to measurement should be well examined through measurement procedures (Reis & Judd, 2000).

There are two main stages to determine the final scale items. At the first stage, a draft initial set of items was drawn from the literature review and then an email survey was conducted among a small group of researchers who will be considered an expert panel (i.e., Tourism and Marketing professors) to explore ideas and opinions that they held about destination branding. Feedback from the expert panel was used to refine the questionnaire. The result of stage one will be a comprehensive questionnaire to measure the brand model.

At the second stage, pilot tests were conducted with college students in tourism related classes and tourists who visited Las Vegas. A diverse sample of consumers is recommended by Churchill (1979). The data collected from both samples was used to test the validity and reliability of the scale items (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) by confirmatory factor analysis. Final revisions were based on the above analysis process.

A pre-test was carried out in order to detect any necessary changes in the wording of the items and determine the clarity of the survey. Reis and Judd (2000) provided that pretesting is especially important when data are to be collected via self-administered questionnaires because interviewers are unavailable to clarify question meaning or probe incomplete answers.

Whether the chosen items and dimensions are appropriate or not can be examined through the two different pre-tests. The two pre-tests were completed during April, 2006, with a purposive sample of tourists visiting Las Vegas and college students at a state university in the Southwest.

The data collected from the second stage was used for item reduction and exploratory investigation of dimensionality. Reduction of the scale was accomplished by examining coefficient alpha and plotting item-to-total scale correlations for each dimension. To enable an assessment if convergent, discriminant and criterion related validity of the constructs, subjects in the main survey were asked to answer a series of additional items derived from the literature after the pre-test. The initial scale items from the literature are provided on Table 6. This study followed Rigdon (1995) in terms of the number of observed variables. At least three observed variables per latent variables are recommended for CFA or SEM.

Table 6

Item Measures and Related Literatures

Dimension	Items	References
Destination Brand Awareness (DBA)	1. This (tourist) destination is very familiar to me 2. This destination has a good name and reputation 3. The characteristics of this destination come to my mind quickly 4. When I am thinking about gambling, this destination comes to my mind immediately	1-2. Motameni & Shahrokhi (1998), Oh (2000) 3. Arnett et al. (2003), Pappu & Quester (in press) 4. Kaplanidou & Vogt (2003)

Table 6

Item Measures and Related Literatures (continued)

Dimension	Items	References
Destination Brand Image (DBI)	1. This destination fits my personality 2. I would be proud to visit this destination 3. My friends would think highly of me if I visited this destination 4. The image of this destination is consistent with my own self-image 5. Visiting this destination reflects who I am 6. People similar to me visit this destination	1-3. Lassar et al. (1995) 4-6. Sirgy et al. (1997), Grace & O'Cass (2005)
Destination Brand Quality (DBQ)	1. This destination has high quality offerings (i.e., accommodation, transportation, gaming, shopping, entertainment) 2. This destination provides tourism offerings of consistent quality 3. This destination provides quality experiences 4. From this destination's offerings, I can expect superior performance 5. This destination performs better than other similar Destinations	1-3. Aaker (1991), Sweeney & Soutar (2001) 4-5. Lassar et al. (1995)

(table continues)

Table 6

Item Measures and Related Literatures (continued)

Dimension	Items	References
Destination Brand Quality (DBQ)	1. This destination has high quality offerings (i.e., accommodation, transportation, gaming, shopping, entertainment) 2. This destination provides tourism offerings of consistent quality 3. This destination provides quality experiences 4. From this destination's offerings, I can expect superior performance 5. This destination performs better than other similar Destinations	1-3. Aaker (1991), Sweeney & Soutar (2001) 4-5. Lassar et al. (1995)
Destination Brand Loyalty (DBL)	1. I am emotionally attached to this destination 2. I enjoy visiting this destination 3. This destination would be my preferred choice 4. Overall, I am loyal to this destination 5. I would advise other people to visit this destination 6. If the costs of visiting this destination increased, I would still be willing to pay for them	1-2. Baloglu (2002) Back & Parks (2003) 3-4. Aaker (1991), Odin et al. (2001) 5. Arnett et al. (2003), Belén del Río et al. (2001) 6. Belén del Río et al. (2001), Narayandas (1999)

Pretest I

In order to detect any issues that needed to be corrected before the final sample was surveyed and to assure the integrity of the questionnaire, the initial instrument was reviewed by a small group of academic experts and a peer group. Feedback led to minor wording changes in some of the items. Because this study developed some items and adapted other items to fit the destination context, this study pre-tested the instrument on a sample of college students. It is common and considered generally appropriate to use students in this context (Malhotra, 1981). A total of 237 students participated the survey. In this case, students did not exhibit serious problems to understand and answer adequately the survey. Table 7 showed the general information of college students.

Table 7

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Characteristic		N	%
Gender	Male	92	38.8
	Female	145	61.2
Academic year	Freshman	25	10.5
	Sophomore	49	20.7
	Junior	79	33.3
	Senior	84	35.4

(table continues)

Table 7

Demographic Profile of Respondents (continued)

Characteristic		N	%
Household Income	less than $20,000	86	36.3
	$20,000 to $39,999	45	19.0
	$40,000 to $59,999	21	8.9
	$60,000 to $79,999	23	9.7
	$80,000 to $89,999	22	9.3
	$100,000 or more	40	16.6
Ethnicity	African American	81	4.3
	Asian American	50	21.1
	American Indian / Alaskan native	1	0.4
	Caucasian	102	43.0
	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	13	5.5
	Others (International)	63	26.6

Table 8 shows the results of reliability tests of students' brand perception of Las Vegas as a destination. Rules of thumb suggest that the item-to-total correlations should exceed .50 and lower limit for Cronbach's Alpha be .70 (Hair et al., 1998). As measured by Cronbach's Alpha values, ranged from .915 to .929, indicating that the internal consistency was acceptable.

Table 8

Reliability Test: Item-total statistics

Dimension	Item number	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Destination	Dba1	.513	.317	.920
Brand	Dba2	.552	.451	.918
Awareness	Dba3	.227	.191	.929
(DBA)	Dba4	.562	.368	.919
Destination	Dbi1	.692	.584	.916
Brand	Dbi2	.616	.536	.917
Image	Dbi3	.595	.509	.917
(DBI)	Dbi4	.706	.655	.915
	Dbi5	.594	.606	.917
	Dbi6	.614	.550	.917
Destination	Dbq1	.615	.610	.917
Brand	Dbq2	.621	.620	.917
Quality	Dbq3	.328	.274	.925
(DBQ)	Dbq4	.676	.663	.916
	Dbq5	.707	.678	.916

(table continues)

Table 8

Reliability Test: Item-total statistics (continued)

		Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Destination	Dbv1	.563	.682	.918
Brand	Dbv2	.516	.533	.918
Value	Dbv3	.612	.545	.917
(DBV)	Dbv4	.370	.289	.925
	Dbv5	.705	.609	.915
Destination	Dbl1	.598	.557	.917
Brand	Dbl2	.650	.592	.916
Loyalty	Dbl3	.712	.684	.915
(DBL)	Dbl4	.666	.666	.916
	Dbl5	.655	.617	.916
	Dbl6	.668	.621	.916

Note. Cronbach's Alpha = .921

Pretest II

After conducting the first pretest with college students, Las Vegas tourists who are more heterogeneous were surveyed (Tian et al., 2001). Convenience sampling was also used with this group. A face-to-face survey was conducted between April 26 and May 3, 2006, in front of the "Fountain show" at the Bellagio Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. Two experienced surveyors approached subjects who were waiting for

the show and asked to them to participate in the survey. The subjects who agreed to complete the survey were provided with an informed consent form and a key chain for participating. The average length of time to complete the survey was 10 minutes.

A total of 250 surveys were collected: Of the total 26 questionnaires were excluded from the data analysis because they did not provide complete responses. The valid 224 surveys were used for the analysis. Table 9 shows the demographic information of Las Vegas visitors.

Table 9

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Characteristics		N	%
Gender	Male	100	44.6
	Female	124	55.4
Age	20s	49	22.0
	30s	77	34.5
	40s	45	20.2
	50s	42	18.8
	60s	8	3.6
	70s	2	9

(table continues)

Table 9

Demographic Profile of Respondents (continued)

Characteristics		N	%
Income level	less than $20,000	17	7.6
	$20,000 to $39,999	42	18.8
	$40,000 to $59,999	35	15.6
	$60,000 to $79,999	47	21.0
	$80,000 to $89,999	26	11.6
	$100,000 or more	53	23.7
Ethnic	African American	18	8.1
background	Asian American	2	9
	American Indian / Alaskan native	25	11.2
	Caucasian	139	62.3
	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	3	1.3
	Others (International)	36	16.1
LV visit for	First	79	35.3
Gambling	Revisit	144	64.3

Using data obtained from the Las Vegas visitor sample, all items that have corrected item-to-total subscale correlations above .50 were chosen. Table 10 provides the results of reliability tests. Cronbach's Alpha ranged from .943 to .947 indicating that internal consistencies were acceptable.

Table 10

Reliability Test: Item-total Statistics

Dimension	Item Number	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Destination	Dba1	.556	.412	.947
Brand	Dba2	.567	.501	.946
Awareness	Dba3	.591	.467	.946
(DBA)	Dba4	.505	.368	.947
Destination	Dbi1	.704	.670	.944
Brand	Dbi2	.734	.674	.944
Image	Dbi3	.545	.472	.946
(DBI)	Dbi4	.685	.692	.944
	Dbi5	.633	.706	.945
	Dbi6	.584	.486	.945
Destination	Dbq1	.523	.567	.946
Brand	Dbq2	.616	.720	.945
Quality	Dbq3	.655	.670	.945
(DBQ)	Dbq4	.660	.677	.945
	Dbq5	.630	.622	.945

(table continues)

Table 10

Reliability Test: Item-total Statistics (continued)

Dimension	Item Number	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Destination	Dbv1	.587	.641	.945
Brand	Dbv2	.568	.599	.947
Value	Dbv3	.629	.551	.945
(DBV)	Dbv4	.673	.711	.944
	Dbv5	.713	.629	.944
Destination	Dbl1	.638	.640	.945
Brand	Dbl2	.728	.689	.944
Loyalty	Dbl3	.742	.724	.943
(DBL)	Dbl4	.756	.736	.943
	Dbl5	.763	.705	.943
	Dbl6	.601	.523	.945

Note. Cronbach's Alpha = .947

Correlation analysis of 26 items was conducted. All items except DBQ5 *"This destination performs better than other similar destinations"* showed significant correlation. Next, principal axis factoring with promax (oblique) rotation was conducted due to correlations between factors in excess of .2 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). A cut off of .5 was established for factor loadings to be salient to the factor (Nunnally &

Bernstein, 1994). With oblique rotations, most researchers report the pattern matrix as opposed to the structure matrix (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). The results were satisfactory.

However, two items, DBI2 *"I would be proud to visit this destination"* and DBL6 *"If the costs of visiting this destination increased, I would still be willing to pay for them"* were crossloading onto the other dimension. In order to assure discriminant validity of the measures, these two items were not used in the final analysis. Also, DBQ5 *"This destination performs better than other similar destinations"* did not have a statistically higher correlation with the dimension to which they were hypothesized to belong in comparison with item correlations with remaining dimensions' total scores were also deleted (Bearden et al., 1989). Therefore, a series of confirmatory factor analyses resulted in a reduced scale of 26 items.

Next, a series of confirmatory factor analyses with the remaining 23 items was undertaken, with all of the multi-item scales yielded with one-factor solutions except for destination brand awareness and destination brand value. For each scale of destination brand image, destination brand quality, and destination brand loyalty, the individual scale items exceeded the recommended minimum standards in terms of construct reliability after deleting the three items (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

CFA results showed adequate fit with each item loading heavily on its expected factor and no substantial cross-loadings. Table 11 shows that indices of three latent variables were improved.

Table 11

CFA Results after Deleting Items

Variable	CFI	RMSEA	NFI	Chi-square	p
DBI	.997	.038	.987	6.627	.250
DBQ	.995	.071	.991	4.234	.120
DBL	.988	.069	.978	10.304	.067

Note. All items showed above 1.96 with C.R (SE/Estimates), DBI (Destination brand image), DBQ (Destination brand quality), DBL (Destination brand loyalty)

However, the CFA results showed that destination brand awareness and destination brand value need more constraints. After conducting various procedures to find a best set of items for the two latent variables, it was determined that more items are required for the main test. The result supported the idea that a scale may not be unidimensional even if it has high reliability (Gerbing & Anderson, 1984).

After the literature review, the three items *"This destination is very famous,"* *"This destination is well known,"* and *"I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of this destination"* were added to destination brand awareness items. Also, the two items *"Visiting this destination is a good deal,"* and *"Visiting this destination is economical"* were added to destination brand value items.

Through the process of pretest I and pretest II, the final 28 items were used for the main test (See Table 12).

Table 12

Final Items for Main Test

Dimension	Items	References
DBA	1. This destination is very familiar to me	1-2. Motameni & Shahrokhi (1998), Oh (2000)
	2. This destination has a good name and reputation	3. Oh (2000)
	3. This destination is very famous	4. A. C. R. van Riel et al. (2005), Oh (2000)
	4. This destination is well known	
	5. I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of this destination	5. Yoo & Donthu (2002)
	6. The characteristics of this destination come to my mind quickly	6. Arnett et al. (2003), Pappu & Quester (in press) Yoo & Donthu (2002)
	7. When I am thinking about gambling, this destination comes to my mind immediately	7. Kaplanid & Vogt (2003)
DBI	1. This destination fits my personality	1. Lassar et al. (1995)
	2. My friends would think highly of me if I visited this destination	2. Lassar et al. (1995)
	3. The image of this destination is consistent with my own self-image	3-5. Sirgy et al. (1997), Sirgy & Su (2000) Grace & O'Cass (2005)
	4. Visiting this destination reflects who I am	
	5. People similar to me visit this destination	

(table continues)

Table 12

Final Items for Main Test (continued)

Dimension	Items	References
DBQ	1. This destination has high quality offerings (i.e., accommodation, transportation, gaming, shopping, or entertainment) 2. This destination provides tourism offerings of consistent quality 3. This destination provides quality experiences 4. From this destination's offerings, I can expect Superior performance	1-3. Aaker (1991), Sweeney & Soutar (2001) 4. Lassar et al. (1995)
DBV	1. This destination offers good value 2. This destination has reasonable prices 3. Considering what I would pay for a trip, I will get much more than my money's worth by visiting this destination 4. The costs of visiting this destination are a bargain relative to the benefits I receive 5. This destination is a good place to enjoy a vacation for the price 6. Visiting this destination is economical 7. Visiting this destination is a good deal	1. Aaker (1996), Keller (2003) Sweeney & Soutar (2001), Oh (2000) 2. Ambler et al. (2002), Sweeney & Soutar (2001) 3-5. Lassar et al.(1995), Oh (2000), Dodds et al.(1991), 6. Sweeney & Soutar (2001), Grace & O'Cass (2005) Dodds et al. (1991), 7. Oh (2000)

(table continues)

Table 12

Final Items for Main Test (continued)

Dimension	Items	References
DBL	1. I am emotionally attached to this destination	1-2. Baloglu (2002)
	2. I enjoy visiting this destination	Back & Parks (2003)
	3. This destination would be my preferred choice for a vacation	3-4. Aaker (1991), Keller (2003) Odin et al. (2001)
	4. Overall, I am loyal to this destination	Yoo & Donthu (2002)
	5. I would advise other people to visit this destination	5. Arnett et al. (2003), del Rio et al. (2001)

Note. DBA (Destination brand awareness), DBI (Destination brand image), DBQ (Destination brand quality), DBV (Destination brand value), DBL (Destination brand loyalty)

Survey Administration

As mentioned previously, Web-based surveys were conducted. An online questionnaire was used as the method for data collection. A project manager from SSI formatted the designed survey into Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com). SurveyMonkey.com is an excellent survey and evaluation tool (Gordon, 2002).

Advantages to using online survey include rapid transmission of the survey, shortened time for completing data collection, avoidance of errors in data editing and entry, and respondent anonymity. Major advantages of a Web-based survey are that the survey can be made more visibly pleasing, the respondent can go directly to the survey on a Web address and the data are automatically collected and recorded (Dommeyer & Moriaty, 1999/2000). However, there may be drawbacks including the problems of

internet coverage of the general population and the difficulty of drawing probability samples (Couper, 2000).

Since the measurement of destination branding of tourists is the main purpose, subjects for this study are people who have visited the gambling destinations; Las Vegas and/or Atlantic City. This study assumes that Las Vegas and Atlantic City are in a destination brand category because these two destinations have similar gaming and entertainment.

Reis and Judy (2000) indicated that comparative model testing is the best strategy for evaluating and improving the measurement model. Regarding the selection of the brand studied, this study will follow the recommendation of Leuthesser, Kohli, & Harich (1995). Leuthesser et al. (1995) of analyzing brands that are sufficiently well-known to the consumer. Also, this study explored the cross-sectional generalizability of the destination branding model by validating across destinations. Also, a cross-sectional validation of the destination branding process is necessary to investigate the nature of the model.

The dimension of customer-based brand equity was applied to the measurement of destination branding. Kim and Lee (1998) indicated that brand equity is a concept that can be measured only in comparison with other brands in the same category. Therefore, this study assumes that Las Vegas and Atlantic City are the same category of gambling destination.

E-mail requests to participate in the survey were sent out to 10,000 SurveySpot members explaining the purpose of the research, along with a link to the online survey site. The questionnaire was posted from May 25, 2006 to June 6, 2006. The designed

survey became operational using an online survey program. Information about the purpose of the study was available on the website, and approval to undertake the study was provided by a university ethics committee.

Participants were asked to use a point-and-click procedure to select their responses. A 7-point "click-button" scale for all measures was used and their order of appearance in the questionnaire was randomized across the questionnaires. In order to minimize subject fatigue and error, all questions were presented to subjects in a Likert type format with a response scale of one through seven. The questionnaire could be submitted after all items had been completed and the completion of the questionnaire was voluntary. Project managers at SSI closed the survey when the targeted sample size was achieved.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, structural equation modeling (SEM) and scale purification steps were discussed. Also, a research design, sampling, a survey questionnaire development, and a data collection method were presented.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Data analysis in SEM involves the following steps: (a) developing the measurement models; (b) examining the fit of the proposed full structural model to the data; and, (c) examining the structural path coefficients representing the relations between constructs of interest.

To study whether the proposed model had stability across the samples, the theoretical destination brand equity model was tested on the total sample (T), Las Vegas (LV) sample and Atlantic City (AC) sample separately. For easy of interpretation, the baseline model was applied to the three samples respectively. The same analytical procedure was applied to the three samples to compare the findings and to find the appropriate destination branding model for all the three samples.

The results of the analyses for the study are presented in the two sections. The first section presents descriptive statistics for the samples and the analysis results of the proposed model. The second section presents the results for an alternative model.

Section I: Analysis I

Demographics of Participants

An invitation e-mail to visit the website on which the questionnaire was posted was sent out to 10,000 people who were interested in gambling. In particular, people who have visited Las Vegas and/or visited Atlantic City were invited to participate in the survey. The welcome screen provided brief instructions along with the notice that respondents should be over 21 years old and have visited the destination to gamble. A total of 510 respondents completed the survey (Las Vegas=270 & Atlantic City=240). The response rate was 5.1 percent. Klassen and Jacobs (2001) noted that because distribution, collection and data entry costs are minimal for Web surveys, lower response rates may be tolerable if the target pool is broadened. The coded data were downloaded from surveymonkey.com, and transformed into SPSS format. SPSS 13.0 and AMOS 6.0 were used in the process of data analysis.

Descriptive and frequency analyses for the total sample, Las Vegas sample, and Atlantic City sample were conducted. The characteristics of participants and additional information of the three online samples are provided in Table 13. Profiles of the survey respondents for Las Vegas and Atlantic City samples are similar. The majority of survey respondents were Caucasian and female. Education level and household income level was slightly higher in the Atlantic City sample.

In terms of the Las Vegas sample, the respondents included 88 males (34.2 %) and 169 females (65.8 %). More than half of the respondents were between 40-59 (52.6 %) and married (54.9 %). The majority of the respondents were educated (76.3 %) graduated college) and were Caucasian (89.5 %). Nearly 31.0 % of the respondents

visited Las Vegas in the past twelve months to gamble and 43.0 % of the respondents had intentions to visit Las Vegas within twelve months to gamble.

In terms of the Atlantic City sample, there was a slight overrepresentation of females (64.8 %). The age of respondents was recorded in categories, with the majority of the individuals in their 50s (26.7 %) followed by 30s (23.2 %). Martial status was almost evenly distributed between those who were single (48.3 %) and married (51.7 %). The majority of the respondents were educated (81.2 %), graduate colleges and Caucasian (90.1 %). Nearly 41.0 % of the respondents visited Atlantic City in the past twelve months to gamble and 48.7 % of the respondents had intentions to visit Atlantic City within twelve months to gamble.

Table 13

Profile of Respondents

Characteristics	N			%		
	T	LV	AC	T	LV	AC
Gender						
Male	170	88	82	37.8	34.2	35.2
Female	320	169	151	62.2	65.8	64.8

(table continues)

Table 13

Profile of Respondents (continued)

Characteristics	N			%		
	T	LV	AC	T	LV	AC
Age						
21-29	62	33	29	12.7	12.8	12.4
30-39	103	49	54	21.0	19.1	23.2
40-49	117	68	49	23.9	26.5	20.4
50-59	131	67	64	26.7	26.1	26.7
60-69	57	30	27	11.6	11.7	11.3
+70	20	10	10	4.1	3.9	4.2
Education						
High school	106	61	45	21.7	23.7	18.8
Some college	162	100	62	33.1	38.9	25.8
Associate degree	66	30	36	13.5	11.7	15.0
Bachelors degree	108	50	58	22.1	19.5	24.2
Master degree	43	15	28	8.8	5.8	11.7
Doctoral degree	4	1	3	.8	0.4	1.3
Ethnicity						
African American	23	11	12	4.7	4.3	5.2
American Indian or Alaskan native	4	3	1	.8	1.2	.4
Asian American	12	7	5	2.5	2.7	2.2
Caucasian	439	229	210	90.0	89.5	90.5
Other	10	6	4	2.0	2.3	1.7

(table continues)

Table 13

Profile of Respondents (continued)

Characteristics	N			%		
	T	LV	AC	T	LV	AC
Martial Status						
Single (never married)	116	51	65	23.7	19.8	28.0
Single (divorced, separated, or widowed)	112	65	47	22.9	25.3	20.3
Married	261	141	120	53.4	54.9	51.7
$55,001-$75,000	109	60	49	22.3	23.4	21.1
$75,001-$95,000	58	34	24	11.9	13.3	10.3
Over $95,000	80	25	55	16.4	9.8	23.7
Visit experience in the past twelve months						
Yes	172	78	94	35.2	30.5	40.3
No	317	178	139	64.8	69.5	59.7
Intention to visit within twelve months						
Yes	222	110	112	45.4	43.0	48.1
No	129	59	70	26.4	23.0	30.0
I don't know	138	87	51	28.2	34.0	21.9

Data Screening

Data screening procedures were conducted for the Las Vegas sample and Atlantic City sample respectively. There were only moderate levels of missing data in the completed responses. As a result, it was assumed that data was random in missing data shown that Maximum Likelihood estimation will reduce bias even when the condition of

missing at random is not completely satisfied (Little & Rubin, 2002). The mean values were substituted for missing values (Tabachinick & Fidell, 2001).

Data screening involved tests for outliers and skewness. The presence of extreme outliers was assessed because outliers may affect model fit indices and parameter estimates, and compromise model estimation, leading to improper solutions (West, Finch, & Curran, 1995). According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) whether to omit or retain outliers is a decision that depends on the circumstances surrounding the origin of the case in question, sample size, and the importance of each case to the research conclusions. The Mahalanobis distance for each case was also computed to assess multivariate outliers.

In terms of the Las Vegas sample, although there were 22 outliers (Case number: 1, 9, 33, 31, 36, 46, 47, 50, 52, 56, 60, 81, 115, 116, 136, 145, 157, 177, 222, 248, 253, 264), it was decided to retain them as they were representative of the population (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). Also, these outliers were not influential cases affecting the Structural Equation Modeling analysis. The final model was also checked without these outliers and the pattern of results did not change.

Examination of univariate normality estimates indicated the existence of skewness and kurtosis in the data. Although a remedy for skewness is to transform the data (Hair et al., 1995), it is only recommended when an arbitrary measurement scale has been used (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Though all the variables in this research used interval measurement scales, it was determined that logarithmic transformation for positive skewness. Also, the multivariate normality of the data also was investigated by conducting normality checks through the AMOS software. The analysis indicated

skewness and kurtosis in the data. To compensate for this lack of multivariate normality, logarithmic transformation was necessary.

For the Atlantic City sample, a series of identical analysis procedures were conducted identical to that used for the analysis of the Las Vegas visitor sample. Descriptive statistics were used to assess the normality of the data. Examination of univariate normality estimates, skewness and kurtosis did not show normality. From the data 12 outliers were detected (case number: 77, 86, 95, 96, 114, 132, 154, 188, 189, 207, 220, 237). However, examination of outliers, skewness, and kurtosis values for all variables included in this study revealed no serious concern (West et al., 1995). Similar to the Las Vegas visitor sample, the logarithmic transformation was conducted.

Descriptive statistics of the 28 observed variables in the three samples are presented in Table 14. The table includes the mean, standard deviation, skewness indices, and kurtosis indices for examining normality of each variable. Generally, the Las Vegas sample showed a higher mean value than the Atlantic City sample.

As a preliminary analysis to the structural equation modeling the zero-order correlations between indicators were calculated. Table 15 shows that indicators were correlated moderately at the significance level $p < .0005$. On average, destination brand image in the Las Vegas sample correlates stronger with the other determinants than destination brand image in the Atlantic City sample. However, destination brand quality in the Atlantic City sample correlated higher with the other determinants than destination brand equity in the Las Vegas sample.

Table 14 Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, and Kurtosis of Items

	Mean			Std. Deviation			Skewness			Kurtosis		
	Total	LV	AC	Total	LV	AC	Total	LV	AC	Total	LV	AC
Dba1	5.09	5.22	4.95	2.056	2.031	2.078	-.808	-.965	-.645	-.650	-.344	-.901
Dba2	5.06	5.17	4.93	1.629	1.591	1.665	-.625	-.768	-.477	-.228	.142	-.516
Dba3	6.11	6.40	5.78	1.521	1.378	1.607	-1.917	-2.768	-1.351	3.050	7.110	1.193
Dba4	6.37	6.41	6.33	1.282	1.331	1.225	-2.699	-2.776	-2.626	7.520	7.476	7.817
Dba5	4.02	4.57	3.39	2.220	2.165	2.118	.004	-.375	.436	-1.408	-1.241	-1.100
Dba6	5.04	5.52	4.51	1.881	1.674	1.962	-.797	-1.187	-.440	-.411	.741	-.980
Dba7	5.23	5.77	4.63	1.992	1.725	2.103	-.840	-1.424	-.366	-.568	1.031	-1.176
Dbi1	4.15	4.08	4.22	1.856	1.816	1.901	-.136	-.103	-.177	-.951	-.868	-1.026
Dbi2	3.88	4.31	3.40	1.769	1.669	1.760	.024	-.219	.360	-.721	-.410	-.602
Dbi3	3.83	4.09	3.53	1.853	1.772	1.900	.020	-.173	.263	-.939	-.795	-.907
Dbi4	3.52	3.66	3.37	1.866	1.799	1.931	.193	.082	.327	-.951	-.839	-1.000
Dbi5	5.18	5.05	5.32	1.736	1.730	1.736	-.820	-.787	-.870	-.102	-.084	-.085
Dbq1	5.29	5.66	4.88	1.646	1.545	1.664	-.827	-1.284	-.439	-.035	1.162	-.480
Dbq2	4.90	5.17	4.60	1.584	1.513	1.611	-.522	-.734	-.306	-.237	.229	-.457
Dbq3	4.73	5.05	4.38	1.722	1.594	1.794	-.449	-.649	-.218	-.562	-.181	-.766
Dbq4	5.12	5.23	4.99	1.534	1.504	1.559	-.662	-.817	-.513	.031	.416	-.246
Dbv1	4.81	5.12	4.46	1.679	1.597	1.705	-.423	-.600	-.228	-.471	-.260	-.518
Dbv2	4.44	4.63	4.22	1.676	1.629	1.707	-.165	-.289	-.016	-.680	-.508	-.763
Dbv3	4.34	4.72	3.92	1.830	1.691	1.893	-.222	-.505	.104	-.867	-.380	-.992
Dbv4	4.29	4.34	4.24	1.701	1.641	1.768	-.170	-.167	-.164	-.636	-.564	-.715
Dbv5	4.73	5.00	4.42	1.771	1.706	1.797	-.432	-.590	-.261	-.643	-.368	-.802
Dbv6	4.14	4.18	4.10	1.686	1.621	1.759	-.033	-.097	.033	-.601	-.523	-.675
Dbv7	4.43	4.62	4.22	1.750	1.578	1.907	-.233	-.277	-.109	-.688	-.394	-.967
Dbl1	3.29	3.45	3.12	2.022	1.953	2.087	.396	.267	.546	-1.074	-1.013	-1.061
Dbl2	4.97	5.18	4.74	1.987	1.954	2.004	-.655	-.822	-.486	-.769	-.478	-.976
Dbl3	3.83	4.44	3.14	1.968	1.781	1.952	.016	-.343	.518	-1.116	-.662	-.883
Dbl4	3.84	4.22	3.43	2.101	1.999	2.140	.048	-.211	.358	-1.278	-1.088	-1.221
Dbl5	5.28	5.28	5.27	1.719	1.726	1.715	-.840	-.873	-.807	-.083	-.026	-.124

Table 15. Zero-order Correlations: Upper Quadrant for the LV Sample and Lower Quadrant for the AC Sample

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Dba1	1	.591	.667	.597	.463	.584	.607	.423	.761	.862	.670	.776	.609	.639	.492	.600	.601	.579	.664	.528	.723
Dba2	.595	1	.668	.675	.253	.217	.257	.140	.565	.645	.516	.584	.506	.455	.313	.310	.453	.477	.278	.263	.561
Dba3	.500	.441	1	.646	.443	.424	.531	.404	.730	.753	.562	.606	.557	.515	.427	.557	.580	.628	.454	.520	.591
Dba4	.555	.392	.567	1	.496	.423	.484	.340	.574	.636	.652	.656	.529	.516	.468	.404	.612	.548	.471	.511	.673
Dbi1	.564	.347	.649	.565	1	.573	.752	.749	.417	.477	.607	.581	.464	.482	.611	.494	.615	.481	.622	.721	.653
Ddi2	.448	.278	.686	.531	.641	1	.612	.533	.507	.563	.487	.541	.386	.455	.448	.515	.470	.433	.560	.529	.562
Dbi3	.532	.298	.708	.509	.684	.770	1	.765	.463	.607	.631	.603	.542	.610	.596	.642	.663	.549	.753	.785	.670
Dbi4	.472	.288	.606	.570	.686	.744	.784	1	.349	.422	.503	.454	.415	.513	.494	.524	.523	.410	.601	.746	.505
Dbq1	.750	.612	.585	.587	.593	.494	.518	.498	1	.767	.598	.651	.545	.488	.382	.489	.507	.609	.537	.445	.568
Dbq2	.731	.491	.562	.507	.590	.560	.591	.525	.678	1	.696	.797	.654	.600	.515	.601	.630	.616	.671	.567	.701
Dbq3	.642	.595	.630	.541	.704	.595	.615	.651	.654	.663	1	.772	.659	.617	.613	.526	.764	.502	.604	.628	.702
Dbq4	.656	.497	.591	.542	.660	.532	.575	.527	.663	.621	.663	1	.621	.636	.641	.585	.704	.567	.632	.620	.829
Dbv1	.572	.341	.587	.457	.594	.549	.663	.539	.568	.708	.600	.549	1	.679	.690	.623	.760	.466	.473	.460	.546
Dbv2	.546	.406	.657	.603	.671	.678	.684	.696	.582	.650	.746	.572	.725	1	.744	.720	.777	.442	.588	.591	.606
Dbv3	.483	.383	.573	.453	.660	.544	.570	.590	.584	.553	.716	.490	.669	.743	1	.671	.844	.370	.517	.579	.605
Dbv4	.498	.375	.579	.462	.519	.592	.662	.533	.531	.618	.617	.505	.786	.738	.671	1	.707	.441	.569	.575	.608
Dbv5	.599	.470	.696	.577	.677	.675	.713	.684	.649	.690	.813	.633	.742	.879	.765	.736	1	.481	.588	.625	.663
Dbl1	.629	.469	.733	.713	.726	.625	.669	.628	.673	.634	.732	.685	.595	.705	.615	.562	.762	1	.547	.574	.663
Dbl2	.502	.332	.634	.512	.584	.643	.696	.589	.520	.596	.554	.572	.573	.639	.472	.558	.639	.576	1	.697	.684
Dbl3	.473	.318	.624	.680	.657	.664	.693	.726	.532	.536	.626	.545	.566	.730	.557	.535	.688	.699	.622	1	.674
Dbl4	.629	.495	.618	.530	.645	.508	.555	.485	.601	.645	.633	.851	.560	.577	.485	.528	.660	.731	.524	.531	1

Model Building and Testing

Model testing is estimated by using a one step or a multi-step approach. The two step-approach, which is used in the study, applies separate estimation and respecification of the measurement model before proceeding to the simultaneous estimation of the measurement and structural model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Anderson and Gerbing (1988) recommended a two-step approach when the estimations are based on theory.

Using data obtained from the Las Vegas sample, items that did not have corrected item-to-total subscale correlations above .50 were deleted. Confirmatory factor analyses were used to determine whether the indicators loaded on the appropriate latent variable. One of the paths from the latent variable to one of its indicators was constrained by assigning it a value of 1.0. The fixed path helps in interpreting manifest indicators with different response patterns (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. If the correlation coefficient was significant at $p < .05$ level, principal axis factoring with promax (oblique) rotation was conducted. All variables exceeded the cutoff factor loading score of .4 used to screen out weak indicators (Nunnally, 1978). Hair et al.(1998) also suggested factor loadings of $\pm .4$ are considered significant based on the power of .8 at a significance level of $p \leq .05$ with a minimum sample size of 200.

In terms of destination brand awareness (DBA), dba1"*this destination is very familiar to me*" and dba 5 "*I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of this destination*", and dba 4 *"This destination is well known"* were deleted from the 7 scale items. Dba1 and dba 5 were crossloading onto the destination brand image. The dba item number 4 had a high correlation with dba number 3 (r=.865) and a lower factor loading.

Concerning destination brand image (DBI), dbi 5 "*People similar to me visit this destination*" was deleted from the five items because this item was crossloading onto the destination brand quality. In terms of destination brand quality (DBQ), the four items were accepted as one factor. In terms of destination brand value (DBV), dbv 1 "*This destination offers good value*" and dbv5 "*This destination is a good place to enjoy a vacation for the price.*" crossloading onto the destination brand image dimension and showed a high correlation (r=.803) between the two. In terms of destination brand loyalty (DBL), dbl 1 "*I am emotionally attached to this dimension*" was deleted because the item was crossloading onto the other dimension, DBI.

MacDonald and Ho (2002) indicated that researchers have the choice between using at least three indicators to represent a latent variable or using a composite variable (e.g., single or weighted sums of indicators). Using multiple indicators for each latent variable is preferable because such models correct for error of measurement. Table 16 shows the final items for confirmatory factor analysis and the overall model test. The proposed model with path diagram is depicted in Figure 3. For the examination of hypothesized relationships, Maximum Likelihood feature of AMOS 6.0. was used in estimation.

Table 16

Indicators for the Final CFA and Full Structural Model

Dimension	Items
Destination Brand Awareness (DBA)	Dba2. This destination has a good name and reputation
	Dba3. This destination is very famous
	Dba6. The characteristics of this destination come to my mind quickly
	Dba7. When I am thinking about gambling, this destination comes to my mind immediately
Destination Brand Image (DBI)	Dbi1. This destination fits my personality
	Dbi2. My friends would think highly of me if I visited this destination
	Dbi3. The image of this destination is consistent with my own self-image
	Dbi4. Visiting this destination reflects who I am
Destination Brand Quality (DBQ)	Dbq1. This destination provides tourism offerings of consistent quality
	Dbq2. This destination provides quality experiences
	Dbq3. From this destination's offerings, I can expect superior performance
	Dbq4. This destination performs better than other similar destinations

(table continues)

Table 16

Indicators for the Final CFA and Full Structural Model (continued)

Dimension	Items
Destination Brand Value (DBV)	Dbv2. This destination has reasonable prices
	Dbv3. Considering what I would pay for a trip, I will get much more than money's worth by visiting this destination
	Dbv4. The costs of visiting this destination are a bargain in relative to benefits I receive
	Dbv6. Visiting this destination is economical
	Dbv7. Visiting this destination is a good deal.
Destination Brand Loyalty (DBL)	Dbl2. I enjoy visiting this destination
	Dbl3. This destination would be my preferred choice
	Dbl4. Overall, I am loyal to this destination
	Dbl5. I would advise other people to visit this destination

Note. The items were randomly arranged on the questionnaire to reduce order bias

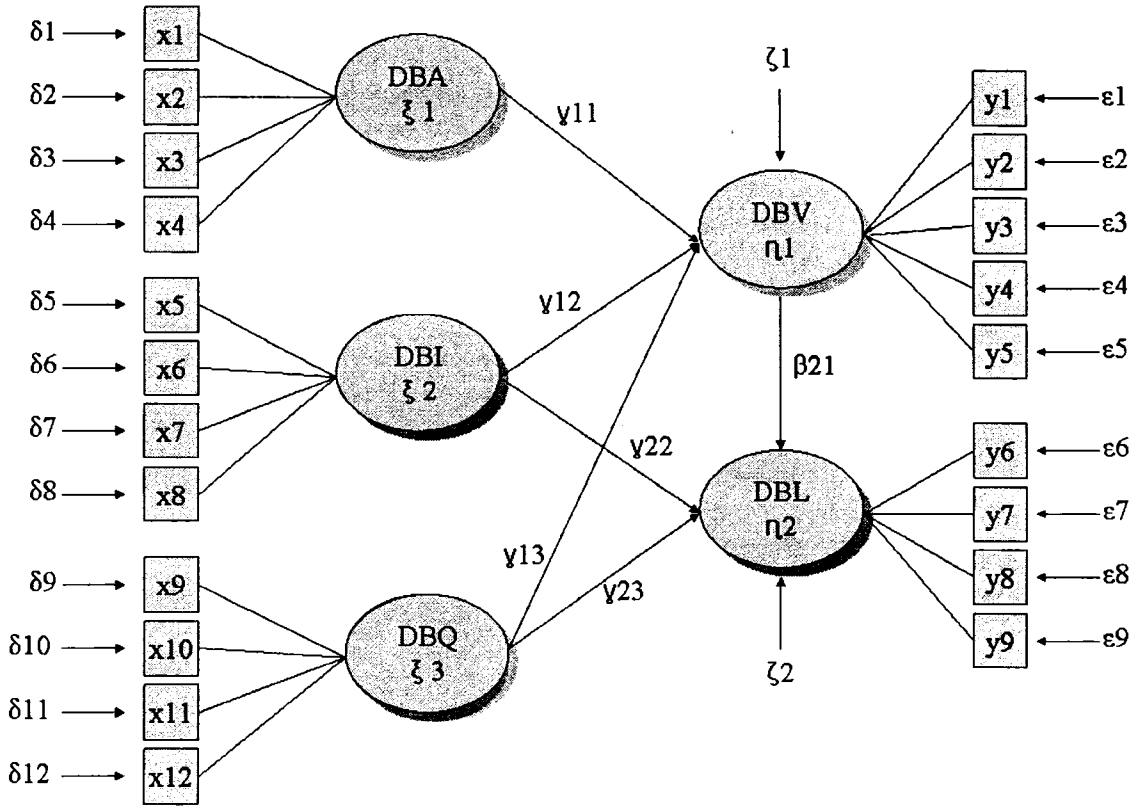

Figure 3. Proposed Model

Note: DBA (Destination brand awareness), DBI (Destination brand image), DBQ (Destination brand quality), DBV (Destination brand value), DBL (Destination brand loyalty)

Table 17 shows the construct reliability and validity of each latent variable. Cronbach's Alpha and composite construct reliabilities were computed to assess the internal consistency of the constructs. The reliability level of each construct exceeded the critical value of .7 which was suggested by Nunnally (1978). The results demonstrated that the SEM survey for the three samples is reliable.

Convergent validity measures the degree to which the indicators of a latent construct measure the same construct (Blanthorne, Jones-Faremer, & Almer, 2006).

Blanthorne et al., 2006). For each set of indicators, the standardized factor loadings were all relatively high. Factor loadings were significant and all above .5 guaranteeing convergent validity (Vazquez, Belén del Río, Iglesias, 2002).

Discriminant validity measures the degree to which two or more latent construct measure different constructs (Blanthorne et al., 2006). A correlation coefficient of .85 or higher indicates a lack of discriminant validity (Kline, 2005). Also, the confidence interval of all the possible correlations between the five factors contain the value of 1 shows the lack of discriminant validity (Vazquez et al., 2002). The confidence interval shown on Table 17 indicates that the discriminant validity was confirmed. Overall, the proposed scale of destination brand equity model is reliable and valid.

Table 17

Construct Reliability and Validity

		Construct reliability		Validity	
	Factor	Coefficient Alpha	Composite reliability	Discriminant validity	Convergent validity
T	DBA	.834	.842	.645-.872	.714-.858
	DBI	.913	.898	.645-.829	.773-.906
	DBQ	.891	.901	.718-.872	.807-.862
	DBV	.929	.933	.715-.781	.821-.937
	DBL	.860	.866	.768-.829	.766-.837

(table continues)

Table 17

Construct Reliability and Validity (continued)

		Construct reliability		Validity	
	Factor	Coefficient Alpha	Composite reliability	Discriminant validity	Convergent validity
LV	DBA	.879	.884	.517-.810	.428-.856
	DBI	.897	.896	.724-.809	.748-.960
	DBQ	.911	.911	.730-.841	.705-.869
	DBV	.938	.939	.594-.748	.839-.960
	DBL	.888	.890	.684-.841	.638-.935
AC	DBA	.841	.805	.662-.787	.670-.802
	DBI	.926	.911	.794-.896	.756-.877
	DBQ	.886	.884	.785-.817	.797-.825
	DBV	.935	.936	.787-.951	.815-.934
	DBL	.907	.864	.725-.881	.603-.905

Note. T (Total sample), LV (Las Vegas sample), AC (Atlantic City sample), DBA (Destination brand awareness), DBI (Destination brand image), DBQ (Destination brand quality), DBV (Destination brand value), DBL (Destination brand loyalty)

Table 18 shows the goodness-of-fit indices for each dimension using the one-factor solution. The indices improved after deleting the 7 items previously described. Overall, the indices suggested a satisfactory, yet not perfect degree of unidimensionality.

Table 18

The Results of CFA of the Five Latent Variables

	Factor	n	χ^2	p	χ^2/df	NFI	IFI	TLL	CFI	RMSEA
T	DBA	4	11.157	.004	5.579	.986	.989	.965	.988	.095
	DBI	4	9.978	.007	4.989	.992	.994	.981	.994	.089
	DBQ	4	12.797	.002	6.398	.990	.991	.957	.991	.103
	DBV	5	25.573	.000	5.115	.988	.990	.970	.990	.090
	DBL	4	21.117	.000	10.558	.978	.980	.939	.980	.137
LV	DBA	4	6.140	.046	3.070	.989	.992	.977	.992	.088
	DBI	4	4.864	.088	2.432	.993	.996	.987	.996	.073
	DBQ	4	36.440	.000	18.220	.953	.955	.865	.955	.253
	DBV	5	18.006	.003	3.601	.983	.988	.976	.988	.098
	DBL	4	28.082	.000	14.041	.949	.953	.857	.952	.220
AC	DBA	4	18.871	.000	9.436	.940	.946	.835	.945	.188
	DBI	4	1.061	.588	.531	.998	1.001	1.004	1.000	.000
	DBQ	4	2.621	.270	1.311	.995	.999	.996	.999	.036
	DBV	5	45.445	.000	9.089	.957	.962	.924	.962	.184
	DBL	4	9.942	.007	4.971	.977	.982	.945	.982	.129

Note. n (number of final indicators), T (Total sample), LV (Las Vegas sample), AC (Atlantic City sample), DBA (Destination brand awareness), DBI (Destination brand image), DBQ (Destination brand quality), DBV (Destination brand value), DBL (Destination brand loyalty)

Table 19 also shows the factor loadings of the items onto each latent variable. All loadings were significant and above .5. The individual components of the model are of primary interest. All of the indicators for the latent constructs were statistically significant, which indicates acceptable factor solution.

Table 19

Factor Loadings

		B			β			SMC		
		T	LV	AC	T	LV	AC	T	LV	AC
DBA	Dba2	1.000	1.000	1.000	.858	.966	.741	.526	.596	.510
	Dba3	.838	.818	.902	.714	.769	.662	.510	.592	.438
	Dba6	.948	.847	1.074	.815	.817	.787	.665	.667	.620
	Dba7	.872	.867	.919	.747	.822	.670	.558	.675	.449
DBI	Dbi1	1.000	1.000	1.000	.805	.849	.794	.647	.721	..630
	Dbi2	.956	.818	1.054	.773	.686	.850	.598	.470	.722
	Dbi3	1.115	1.067	1.118	.906	.908	.896	.821	.825	.804
	Dbi4	1.045	.972	1.077	.847	.822	.859	.718	.676	.738
DBQ	Dbq1	1.000	1.000	1.000	.828	.782	.817	.685	.611	.668
	Dbq2	1.043	1.228	.963	.862	.932	.785	.743	.869	.617
	Dbq3	.978	1.034	1.004	.807	.787	.815	.651	.619	.664
	Dbq4	1.014	1.172	.978	.836	.875	.788	.699	.766	.622

(table continues)

Table 19

Factor Loadings (continued)

		B			β			SMC		
		T	LV	AC	T	LV	AC	T	LV	AC
DBV	Dbv2	1.000	1.000	1.000	.821	.850	.787	.645	.652	.618
	Dbv3	.096	1.009	1.191	.895	.851	.923	.802	.725	.851
	Dbv4	.014	1.008	1.037	.829	.872	.803	.687	.760	.645
	Dbv6	.965	.924	1.015	.795	.794	.782	.632	.630	.611
	Dbv7	1.143	1.086	1.229	.937	.926	.951	.878	.858	.905
DBL	Dbv2	1.000	1.000	1.000	.815	.706	.881	.623	.468	.763
	Dbv3	.934	1.119	.823	.766	.791	.725	.586	.626	.525
	Dbv4	.955	1.136	.850	.780	.812	.750	.696	.757	.627
	Dbv5	1.022	1.424	.904	.837	1.007	.792	.610	.761	.570

Note: *T (Total sample), LV (Las Vegas sample), AC (Atlantic City sample), DBA (Destination brand awareness), DBI (Destination brand image), DBQ (Destination brand quality), DBV (Destination brand value), DBL (Destination brand loyalty)

*SMC of the total sample (DBV: 758, DBL: .922), SMC of the Las Vegas sample (DBV: .678, DBL: .893), SMC of the Atlantic City sample (DBV: .798, DBL: .923)

*All βs are significant at $p < .0005$.

Additionally, the squared multiple correlation coefficients (SMC), which give the proportion of the variability in the item indicators that is due to the respective latent construct, ranged from .438 to .905. Further, the squared multiple correlation coefficient for the latent construct behavior in the total sample indicates that about 76 percent of the

variability in destination brand value is accounted for by the model and about 92 percent of the variability in destination brand loyalty is accounted for by the model.

Table 20 shows that the structural equation model for the data using the three samples did not show a good fit although it is acceptable. Overall the proposed model appeared to provide more reasonable fit to the total sample than the Las Vegas sample and the Atlantic City sample

It is generally accepted that IFI and CFI values above .95 indicate a well-fitting model (Bollen, 1989). The IFI and CFI for this model were respectively .955 and .965. RMSEA value was .075 with a 90 percent confidence interval of the point estimate (.068, .082). The general heuristic for a well-fitting model is to obtain an RMSEA value lower than .08 which is recommended as the maximum (Browne & Cudeck, 1992). Despite the significant chi-square, the fit indices suggest that the model fits the data well for the total sample.

Table 20

SEM Results of Full Models

	χ^2	χ^2/df	p	IFI	TLL	CFI	RMSEA
T	476.171	3.840	.0005	.954	.935	.965	.075
LV	400.092	3.008	.0005	.932	.926	.953	.086
AC	330.288	2.664	.0005	.959	.929	.958	.083

Note. T (Total sample), LV (Las Vegas sample), AC (Atlantic City sample)

Table 21 presents the results from the path analysis in SEM. The regression weights indicate that destination brand image is significantly related to destination brand value and destination brand loyalty respectively across the samples. Also, destination brand quality is positively related with destination brand loyalty across the samples. However, the significant relationship between destination brand quality and destination brand value did not show for Las Vegas visitor ample. Also, the positive relationship between destination brand value and destination brand loyalty showed only for the Atlantic City sample. Interestingly, destination brand awareness did not show a statistically significant relationship with DBV across the three samples commonly.

Table 21

The Structural Paths and Hypotheses Testing

Path	β			t value		
	T	LV	AC	T	LV	AC
H1: DBV ← DBA	.223	.294	.083	1.593	1.812	.457
H2: DBV ← DBI	.412	.435	.438	7.980***	6.391***	5.047***
H3: DBL ← DBI	.554	.679	.349	8.718***	7.863***	4.118***
H4: DBV ← DBQ	.289	.164	.412	2.174**	1.054	2.576*
H5: DBL ← DBQ	.389	.289	.432	7.036***	4.409***	5.465***
H6: DBL ← DBV	.803	.042	.236	1.765	.853	3.228**

Note. T (Total sample), LV (Las Vegas sample), AC (Atlantic City sample), DBA (Destination brand awareness), DBI (Destination brand image), DBQ (Destination brand quality), DBV (Destination brand value), DBL (Destination brand loyalty)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .005$, *** $p < .0005$

More specifically, the analysis results for the total sample are as follows; The path between destination brand awareness and destination brand value resulted in a positive standardized regression, but was not significant. The paths from destination brand image to destination brand value and destination brand loyalty resulted in significant positive standardized regression weights respectively. The paths from destination brand quality to destination brand value and destination brand loyalty resulted in significant positive standardized regression weights respectively. However, the path between destination brand value and destination brand loyalty resulted in a positive standardized regression, but was not significant. From the results, destination brand image appears to be a better predictor than destination brand quality in the total sample. This result is similar for the Las Vegas sample and the Atlantic City sample. A summary of the hypothesis tests are provided in Table 22.

Table 22

Results of Hypotheses Testing

Path	Total	Las Vegas	Atlantic City
H1: DBV←DBA	Reject	Reject	Reject
H2: DBV← DBI	Accept	Accept	Accept
H3: DBL← DBI	Accept	Accept	Accept
H4: DBV←DBQ	Accept	Reject	Accept
H5: DBL←DBQ	Accept	Accept	Accept
H6: DBL←DBV	Reject	Reject	Accept

Note. DBA (Destination brand awareness), DBI (Destination brand image), DBQ (Destination brand quality), DBV (Destination brand value), DBL (Destination brand loyalty)

Structural equation modeling is able to estimate the relative effect size of the associations between variables. In particular, the effects of an explanatory variable are estimated indirectly through one or more mediating variables. Table 23 shows that destination brand awareness has no indirect effect on destination brand loyalty. However, destination brand image and destination brand quality respectively have a significant indirect effect on destination brand loyalty. The size of the indirect effect of destination brand image for the Atlantic City sample larger is than that of the Las Vegas sample.

Table 23

Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects

Exogenous variables	Endogenous variables					
	DBV			DBL		
	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE
DBA	.223 ^{T}	-	.223 ^{T}	-	.019 ^{T}	.019 ^{T}
	.294^{L}	-	.294^{L}	-	.012^{L}	.012^{L}
	.083^{A}	-	.083^{A}	-	.020^{A}	.020^{A}
DBI	.412	-	.412 ^{T*}	.554 ^{T*}	.034 ^{T*}	.588 ^{T*}
	^{T*}	-	.435^{L*}	.679^{L*}	.018^{L*}	.697^{L*}
	.435^{L*}	-	.438^{A*}	.349^{A}	.104^{A}	.452^{A}
	.438^{A*}					

(table continues)

Table 23

Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects (continued)

Exogenous variables	Endogenous variables					
	DBV			DBL		
	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE
DBQ	.289 ^{T*}	-	.289 ^{T*}	.389 ^{T*}	.024 ^{T*}	.413 ^{T*}
	.164^{L}	-	.164^{L}	.289^{L*}	.007^{L*}	.296^{L*}
		-	.412^{A*}	.432^{A*}	.097^{A*}	.530^{A*}
	.412^{A*}					
DBV	-	-	-	.083 ^{T}	-	.083 ^{T}
				.042^{L}	-	.042^{L}
				.236^{A*}	-	.236^{A*}

Note. * $p < .05$, All effects in standardized values

^{T} (Total sample), ^{L} (LV sample), ^{A} (AC sample), EX (Exogenous variables), ED (Endogenous variables), DE (Direct effect), IE (Indirect effect), TE (Total effect), DBA (Destination brand awareness), DBI (Destination brand image), DBQ (Destination brand quality), DBV (Destination brand value), DBL (Destination brand loyalty)

The hypothesized model is visualized in Figure 4. The path diagrams of the total sample, the Las Vegas sample, and the Atlantic City sample are shown on Figure 5, Figure 6, and Figure 7 respectively. Significant pathways are indicated by heavy lines.

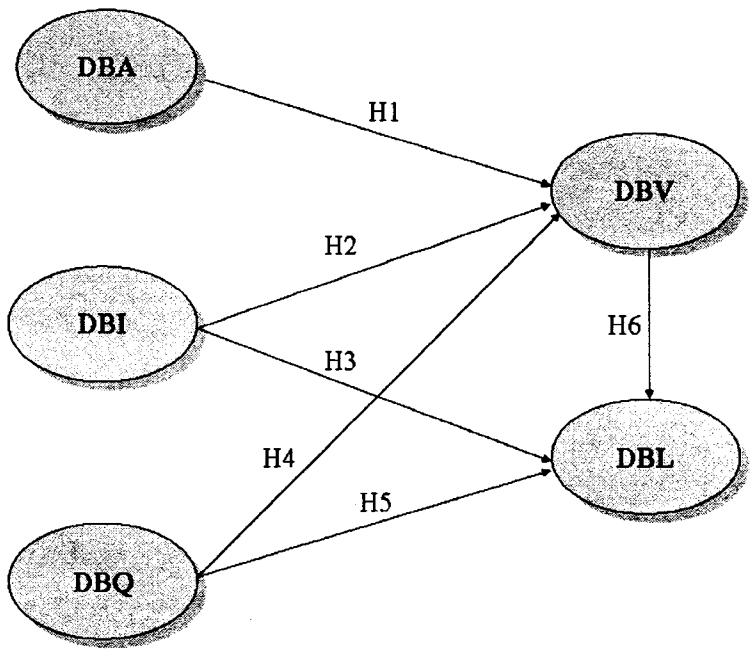

Figure 4. Hypothesized Model

Note. DBA (Destination brand awareness), DBI (Destination brand image), DBQ (Destination brand quality), DBV (Destination brand value), DBL (Destination brand loyalty)

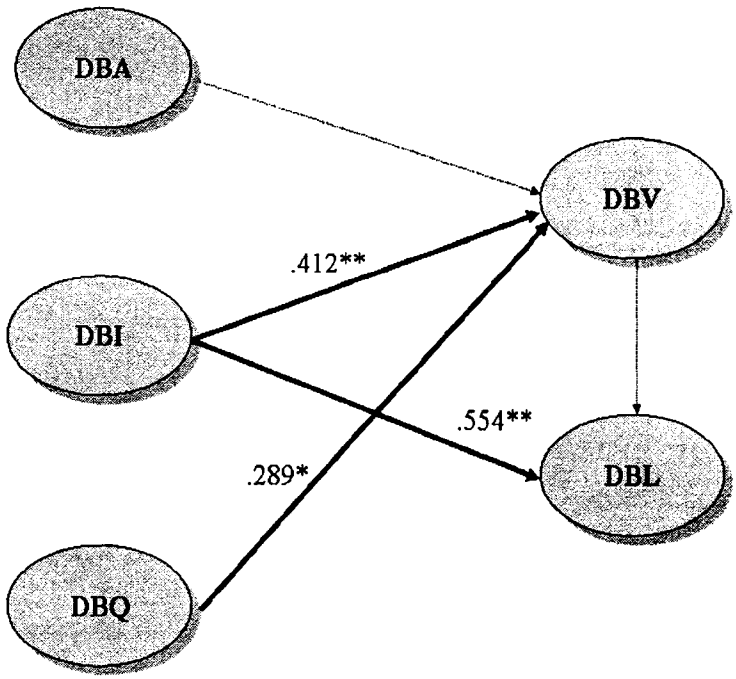

Figure 5. Total Sample with Path Coefficients

Note. *p < .05, **p < .0005. DBA (Destination brand awareness), DBI (Destination brand image), DBQ (Destination brand quality), DBV (Destination brand value), DBL (Destination brand loyalty)

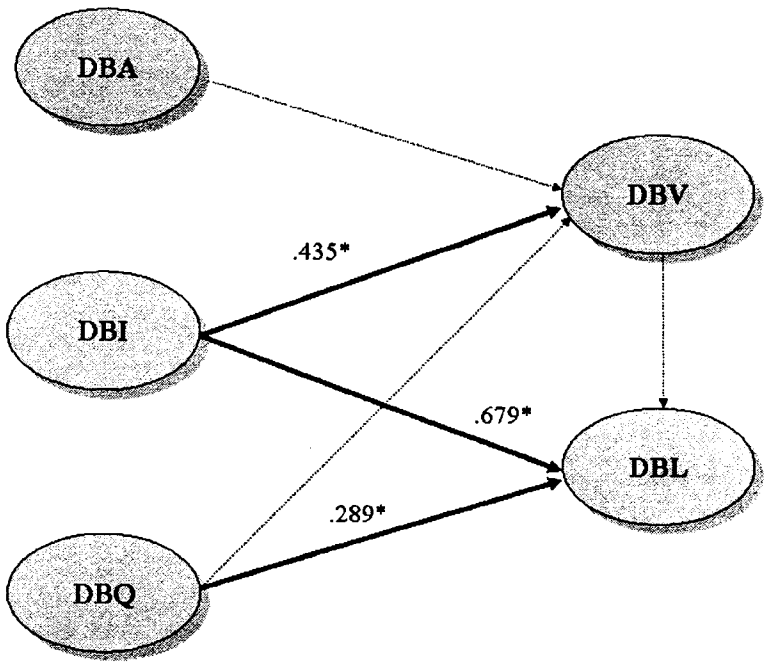

Figure 6. Las Vegas Sample with Path Coefficients

Note. *p < .05, DBA (Destination brand awareness), DBI (Destination brand image), DBQ (Destination brand quality), DBV (Destination brand value), DBL (Destination brand loyalty)

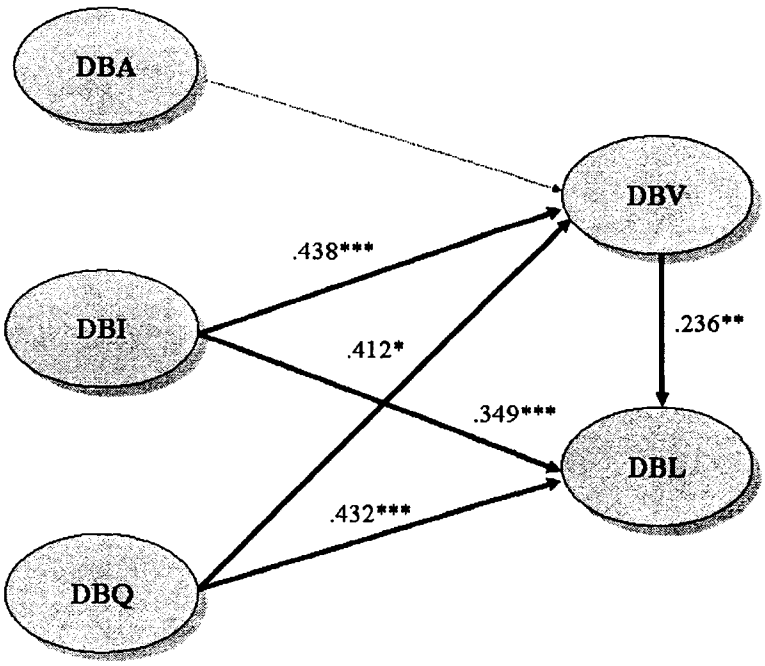

Figure 7. Atlantic City Sample with Path Coefficients

Note. *p < .05, ** p< .005, *** p< .0005

DBA (Destination brand awareness), DBI (Destination brand image), DBQ (Destination brand quality), DBV (Destination brand value), DBL (Destination brand loyalty)

Section II: Analysis II

Alternative Model Building

The best test of structural equation modeling is to compare different nested models that are plausible (Baumgratner & Homburg, 1996). The results in section I showed that the proposed model did not fit commonly across the three samples. Conflicting results may be due to the fact that destination branding is difficult to measure and thus measurement error could be one of the reasons for inconsistent results between Las Vegas sample and Atlantic City sample. In case any variable has been measured imperfectly, it is possible to work simultaneously with more than one measure by creating a latent variable.

Therefore, this study assumes that there is a rival or alternative model. Also, there exists a common variance between destination brand image and destination brand quality through the early statistical analyses procedure of EPA and CFA. The two factors destination brand image and destination brand quality might be components of the new construct destination brand experience (DBEX). Destination brand image and destination brand quality combined together and the second-order CFA model was examined. Through a series of careful comparisons of measurement model estimates, one model emerged. Three indicators of destination brand image and two indicators of destination brand quality were chosen for destination brand experience; Three items for destination brand image *("The destination fits my personality", "My friends would think highly of me if I visited this destination", "The image of this destination is consistent with my own self-image")* and two items for destination brand quality *("The destination provides quality experiences", "This destination performs better than other similar destinations")*

The second-order factor of destination brand experience showed the following the measurement model fit indices. The model fits well across the three samples indicating destination brand image with three items and destination brand quality with two items comprise destination brand experience for the Las Vegas sample and Atlantic City sample; Total sample ($\chi^2_{(11)}$=37.061, p=.000, χ^2/df =3.369, NFI=.988, CFI=.991, RMSEA=.068), LV sample ($\chi^2_{(12)}$=33.595, p=.001, χ^2/df =2.800, NFI=.980, CFI=.987, RMSEA=.082), and AC sample ($\chi^2_{(11)}$=13.002, p=.293, χ^2/df =1.182, NFI=.991, CFI=.999, RMSEA=.028).

Since one item from destination brand image and two items from destination brand quality were deleted, a measurement model using the other factors was necessary. Through the series of CFA for destination brand awareness, destination brand value, and destination brand loyalty, the two items of destination brand awareness (*"This destination has a good name and reputation", "The characteristics of this destination come to mind quickly"*) and three items of destination brand value (*"This destination has reasonable prices," "Considering what I would pay for a trip, I will get much more than money's worth by visiting this destination," "Visiting this destination is economical"*) were chosen. The early four items of destination brand loyalty were kept retained. The measurement model for each dimension with selected items fits the data well across the three samples.

Next, the hypothesized path relationship among destination brand awareness, destination brand experience, destination brand value, and destination brand loyalty was examined. In the previous hypothesis testing, the relationship between destination brand awareness and destination brand value did not show a statistically significant relationship.

Therefore, the path from destination brand awareness to destination brand value was deleted. The revised structural conceptual model is partially depicted in Figure 8.

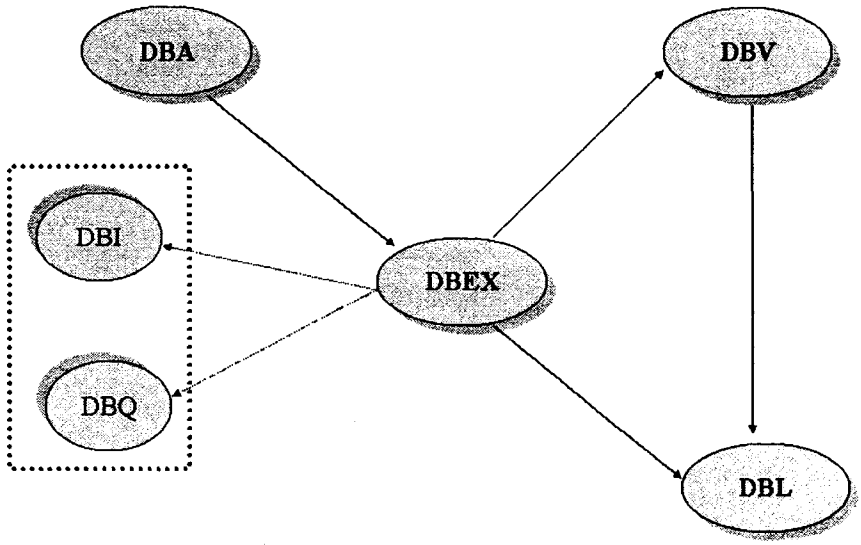

Figure 8.

The Alternative Structural Conceptual Model

Alternative Model Testing

A series of structural equation models was performed to estimate the construct parameters, identifying the best fit explications of relationships among the exogenous constructs, the endogenous mediating constructs, and the terminal endogenous construct. Generally, the emerged structural equation model provides a good fit to the data across the three samples. Table 24 showed the SEM model output. The alternative model had adequate fit across the three samples even though the Chi-square tests were significant.

This is not unusual given the sensitivity of the Chi-square test to sample size and hence it rarely provides the basis, in and of itself, to reject the tenability of the model. This sensitivity is said to be an issue when the sample size exceeds 200 respondents (Hair et al., 1998). A more useful measure of fit is to divide the Chi-square statistic by its degrees of freedom (Kilne, 2005). Kilne suggested that any ratio below 3 is indicative of a well-fitting model with critical n above 200. Therefore, Chi-square /df values for the three samples support an adequate model fit.

Table 24

SEM Model Output

	χ^2	p	χ^2/df	IFI	TLL	CFI	RMSEA
T	35.590	.034	1.618	.997	.989	.997	.035
LV	64.206	.000	2.918	.986	.939	.985	.084
AC	40.823	.009	1.856	.992	.967	.992	.060

Note. T (Total sample), LV (Las Vegas sample), AC (Atlantic City sample)

The structural paths in the revised model were examined. Interestingly, destination awareness has a significant effect on destination brand experiences across the three samples. Table 25 shows the regression weights and t-values. Destination brand value had a statistically significant effect on destination brand loyalty across the three samples. The results also showed destination brand experiences influenced destination brand value. However, the effects of destination brand experiences on destination brand loyalty were not only insignificant but also negative across the three samples. Destination brand value also had a statistically significant effect on destination brand loyalty across

the three samples. The latent variable destination brand experiences was found strongly related to destination brand value and the destination brand value was the significant predictor of destination brand loyalty.

Table 25

Regression Weights

Path	β			t-value		
	T	LV	AC	T	LV	AC
DBEX ← DBA	.917	.867	.574	7.385*	4.376*	5.529*
DBV ← DBEX	.798	.780	1.411	10.577*	6.151*	8.764*
DBL ← DBEX	-.145	-.255	-.086	-1.246	-1.302	-0.333
DBL ← DBV	1.076	1.228	.919	7.222*	4.982*	4.819*

Note. * $p < .0005$, T (Total sample), LV (Las Vegas sample), AC (Atlantic City sample), DBA (Destination brand awareness), DBEX (Destination brand experiences), DBV (Destination brand value), DBL (Destination brand loyalty)

SEM also produced indirect effects which closely examined the constructs whose effects were mediated toward other constructs. Table 26 shows the relative effect size among the factors. This study hypothesized that the dimension of destination brand experiences was related to destination brand loyalty, both directly and indirectly. Destination brand experiences did not have a direct effect on destination brand loyalty. However, destination brand experiences had an effect on destination brand loyalty indirectly via destination brand loyalty. Though destination brand awareness did not have effects on destination brand loyalty in the previously proposed model, destination brand

awareness had indirect effects on destination brand loyalty via destination brand experiences and on destination brand loyalty via destination brand experiences and destination brand loyalty. Also, though destination brand loyalty did not have a direct effect on destination brand loyalty for the Las Vegas sample in the previous model, the relationship between the two in the revised model was statistically significant. The alternative model of the current study specifies that the exogenous construct of destination brand awareness and destination brand experiences exert effects on destination brand loyalty through destination brand value.

Table 26

Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects

	Endogenous variables								
Exogenous	DBEX			DBV			DBL		
variables	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE
DBA	.917 ^{T*}	-	.917 ^{T*}		.732 ^{T*}	.732^{L*}	-	.654 ^{T*}	.654 ^{T*}
	.867^{L*}	-	.867^{L*}	-	.677^{L*}	.677^{L*}	-	.609^{L*}	.609^{L*}
	.574^{A*}	-	.574^{A*}	-	.810^{A*}	.810^{A*}	-	.696^{A*}	.696^{A*}
DBEX	-	-	-	.798 ^{T*}	-	.798 ^{T*}	-.145 ^{T*}	.858 ^{T*}	.713 ^{T*}
	-	-	-	.780^{L*}	-	.780^{L*}	-.255^{L*}	.958^{L*}	.703^{L*}
	-	-	-	1.411^{A*}	-	1.411^{A*}	-.086^{A}	1.297^{A}	.1.211^{A}

(table continues)

Table 26

Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects (continued)

	Endogenous variables								
Exogenous	DBEX			DBV			DBL		
variables	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE
DBV	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.076[T*]	-	1.076
	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.228[L*]	.	[T*]
	-	-	-	-	-	-	.919[A*]	-	1.228[L*]
									.919[A*]

Note. * $p < .05$, All effects in standardized values

[T] (Total sample), [L] (LV sample), [A] (AC sample), DE (Direct effect), IE (Indirect effect), TE (Total effect), DBA (Destination brand awareness), DBEX (Destination brand experiences), DBV (Destination brand value), DBL (Destination brand loyalty)

The results of hypotheses were summarized simply in Table 27.

Table 27

Results of Testing

Path	Total	Las Vegas	Atlantic City
DBEX ← DBA	Accept	Accept	Accept
DBV ← DBEX	Accept	Accept	Accept
DBL← DBE	Reject	Reject	Reject
DBL← DBV	Accept	Accept	Accept

Figure 9 depicts the alternative model including significant path coefficients. Significant pathways are indicated by heavy lines. The alternative model fit well for the total sample, the Las Vegas sample, and the Atlantic City sample.

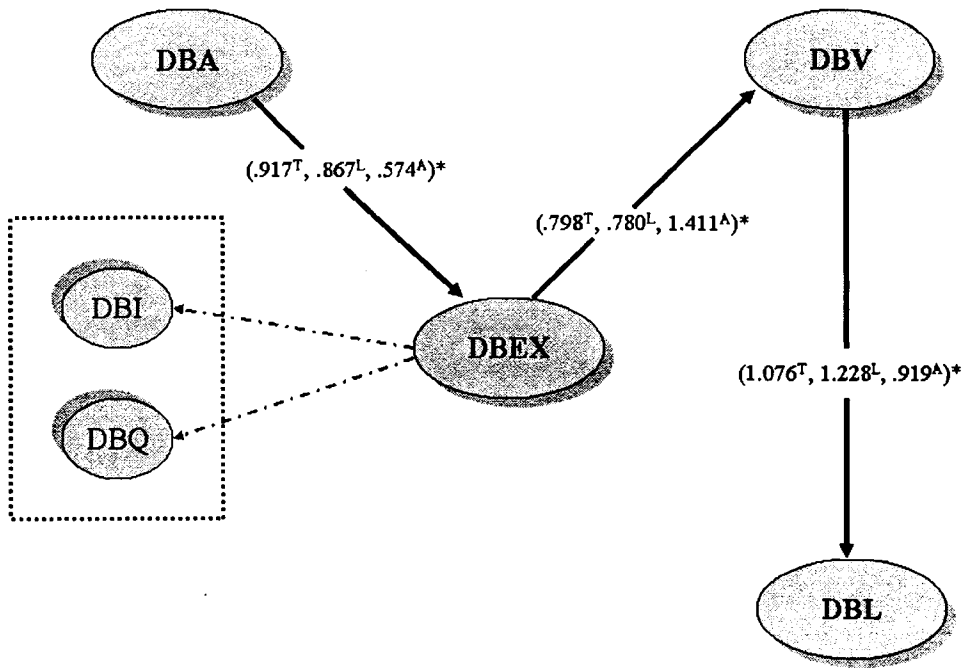

Figure 9. Alternative Model with Significant Path Coefficients

Note. *p < .0005. T (Total sample), L (Las Vegas sample), A (Atlantic City sample), DBA (Destination brand awareness), DBEX (Destination brand experiences), DBI (Destination brand image), DBQ (Destination brand quality), DBV (Destination brand value), DBL (Destination brand loyalty)

Model Comparisons

To examine whether a moderating relationship among predictors may vary by subgroups, Multi-Sample Structural Equation Modeling (Byrne, 2001) was used. The best-fitting model across the three samples was chosen as a baseline model for testing invariance of structural coefficients across the destination (LV sample vs. AC sample). Constraints of equality were imposed on the structural equations. Five equality constraints were entered simultaneously;

As shown in Table 28, results of sequential invariance tests suggest that the path coefficient varied across the groups. If the difference between the χ^2 s is not statistically significant, then the statistical evidence points to no cross-group differences between the constrained parameter (Byrne, 2001).

Cross-group invariance of six different types of parameter estimates can be evaluated (Byrne, 2001); equal actor loadings (Model 1), unique terms (Model 2), equal factor variances (Model 3), equal factor covariances (Model 4), equal factor regression coefficients (Model 5), and equal factor residuals variances (Model 6). In the constrained model, estimates from one sample are fixed parameters in other samples.

The constrained models were specified with equal factor loadings (Model 1) to determine whether the items comprising a particular measuring instrument operated equivalently across the groups. Model 1 showed a good model fit. The χ^2 difference was statistically significant ($p < .0005$). The other models proved to be acceptable at $p < .0005$, suggesting that factor loadings, unique terms, variances, covariances, regression coefficients, and the factor residuals were mostly sample specific.

As shown in Table 29, in the model comparisons, there were statistically significant differences. For example, Model 3 compared against models 1 and 2 was statistically different. When equal factor variances were added to model 2, model 3 improved.

Results indicate that the hypothesized latent variables did not have equivalent measurement properties; the indicators were not equally related to the factors, and cannot be comparable across the Las Vegas sample and Atlantic City sample, although the model fit well for both groups.

Table 28

Model Summary for the Tested Models: Multisample Analysis

	df	χ^2	p <	NFI	CFI	RMSEA (90% CI)
*Base Model	67	141.270	.0005	.987	.993	.033 (.025-.041)
Model 1	84	175.762	.0005	.983	.991	.033 (.026-.040)
Model 2	112	298.648	.0005	.971	.982	.040 (.035-.046)
Model 3	122	308.280	.0005	.970	.982	.039 (.034-.044)
Model 4	124	310.670	.0005	.971	.982	.038 (.033-.044)
Model 5	142	364.634	.0005	.965	.978	.039 (.034-.044)
Model 6	260	683.866	.0005	.935	.958	.040 (.040-.036)

Note. * no equality constraints

Table 29

Model Comparisons

Model comparisons	df	χ^2 differences	p <
Base Model and Model 1	17	34.492	.007
Model 1 and Model 2	28	122.886	.0005
Model 2 and Model 3	10	12.022	.0005
Model 3 and Model 4	2	2.39	.0005
Model 4 and Model 5	18	56.353	.0005
Model 5 and Model 6	118	319.232	.0005

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the results of data analysis were presented. The total sample, the Las Vegas sample, and the Atlantic City sample were analyzed separately. The identical analytical procedures were used. After data screening, descriptive analysis, measurement model testing, and estimating the overall measurement model was conducted. Based on the findings in section I, an alternative model was proposed and tested in section II.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study began with the question of how destination branding can be measured and what components comprise the destination branding construct. From the literature review of general marketing, this study found that the multidimensional concept of customer-based brand equity measurement is used for measuring brand effectiveness or customers' brand perception.

The study applied a customer-based brand equity measurement model to a destination context and tested the model. It was hypothesized that developing the model through scale purification process, and estimating the measurement model and overall model would strengthen the emerging concept of destination branding.

This study also investigated the nature of a destination's brand. This was accomplished by collecting data and examining the relationships among the variables in the destination brand model. For the model generalizations, two different online survey samples of Las Vegas visitors and Atlantic City visitors were collected. This sampling was based on the assumption that Las Vegas and Atlantic City are in the same destination brand category. The model was tested using the total sample, the Las Vegas sample, and the Atlantic City sample. The total sample is the combination of the Las Vegas sample and the Atlantic City sample.

By investigating whether a customer-based brand equity model can be applied to destination brands, this dissertation not only extends destination brand theory, but also addresses relevant practical implications in understanding the measurement of destination brands. In this chapter, the findings of the research are discussed. Then, theoretical contributions and managerial implications are presented. Finally, the limitations of the study and directions for future research are discussed.

Discussion

This study has provided empirical evidence for the development of a destination brand model. The factor structures of the destination brand using CFA for the total sample, the Las Vegas sample, and the Atlantic City sample were examined. The fit indices across the three samples did not provide a satisfactory account of the data indicating measurement errors existed. However, the full structural destination brand model of the three samples showed good fit indices. This means that the proposed model was acceptable despite the significant chi-square. However, regression coefficients among the factors suggested conflicting findings across the three samples. It can be interpreted that the customer-based brand equity model drawn from the general marketing, focusing on products, may not fully apply to a destination context. The conclusion is that the proposed model was still questionable.

Therefore, this study explored an alternative model. The alternative model with four factors fit the three sample data better than the previously proposed model. During the process of creating a new latent variable DBEX (destination brand experiences), indicators of each construct were modified and the full structural model fit indices

improved. Also, regression weights of specified relationships between factors showed similar positive associations across the three sample data.

This study expected respondents to consider Las Vegas and Atlantic City as a gambling destination when they answered the survey. However, this study did not assume that things may be different for destination markets in terms of other attractive attributes beyond gambling. Also, it was difficult to separate the destination characteristics from the gambling destination characteristics. It may appear that different measurement fit across the three samples indicated an incorrect specification of the model as well as problems relating to the measurement of the variables.

It also suggests that that there may be an item bias across the Las Vegas sample and the Atlantic City sample in the scale refinement procedures. This indicates that the scale items from general marketing should address the characteristics of destinations including the physical, environmental, and socio-cultural cultural features.

Modifications indices of the three samples indicated that the subscales were not perfectly unidimensional, but measuring another trait in addition to the destination brand subscales. This should be considered when the model is applied to other destinations even though they are in the same destination brand category. This indicates that the proposed model may not be generalizable to other samples or to the population (MaCallum, Roznowski, & Necowitz, 1992).

These analyses revealed that the model suffered from multicollinearity effects. Although SEM can be a powerful method for dealing with multicollinearity when interdependence is high, model results are poor and can be misleading (Hair et al., 1995). Another concern of the proposed model across the three samples was the low level of

discriminant validity, which may imply the lack of a validated suitable indicator. A more culturally or locally relevant scale, with a preferable response format should be provided in DB equity measurement approaches.

Also, the findings emphasize the importance of sampling equivalence. The target population in this study was made up of people who have experiences visiting gambling destinations. The two samples in this study may be considered appropriate in terms of their representativeness with respect to the relevant target population. However, sociodemographic characteristics and visit behavior cross-regionally may be different between the two destination samples.

Compared to the proposed model, the alternative model showed a better fit and consistent relationships among factors across the samples. The role of destination brand experience emerged as a significant factor in the destination brand equity measurement model. This is a major finding of this study.

In the proposed model, the findings on the hypothesized relationships between variables showed that destination brand image was the only significant antecedent to destination brand value and destination brand loyalty across the three samples. However, unlikely, destination brand awareness was not related with destination brand value across the three samples. Other relationships showed conflicting findings. For example, destination brand quality was related with destination brand value in the Atlantic City sample, but the relationship was not consistent for the Las Vegas sample. Also, destination brand loyalty was related with destination brand loyalty in the Las Vegas sample, but the relationship was not significant in the Atlantic City sample. What these results are suggesting is that the measurement scales are not perfect.

The alternative model showed consistent relationship among factors across the three samples. This indicates the importance of destination brand experience and choice of measurement indicators for each construct. Another point is that the relationship between destination brand experience and destination brand loyalty, was not significant, and in fact opposite to the prediction. This means that the perception of destination brand loyalty is lower than that of destination brand experience. In other words, tourists who have a positive experience at the destination do not necessarily have loyalty.

This finding indicates that negative associations might be created between destination visit experiences and the formation of loyalty that adversely affects the destination context. A dilution effect may occur in the beliefs associated with intrinsic or extrinsic cues when the attributes or characteristics of destinations are inconsistent with visitors' beliefs about the destination.

In both the proposed and alternative models, the mediating role of destination brand value raises interesting issues in relation to destination brand loyalty. Further, the role of destination brand experience suggests that destination brand experience should be an important factor in the destination brand equity measurement model. Also, a series of model comparisons found that there were significant variance differences between the two destinations. Tourists who have visited each destination perceived each destination brand differently.

Theoretical Contributions

This study attempted to develop a model of the perceptions underlying the destination branding process. The findings raise questions related to the conceptual exploration and methodology used to measure destination branding and underscores the difficulty of modeling for different tourism destinations.

Findings suggest that, while not all brand equity dimensions from the general marketing were replicated in the destination context, this study offers enhanced insight into how tourists perceive the destination brand. However, the findings with the proposed model were questionable in terms of model generalization. This indicates that respecifying the destination brand measurement model, free from the established relationships in the general marketing literature such as between awareness, image, quality, value and loyalty needs to be developed. Therefore, the new construct destination brand experience was created in the alternative model. The destination brand experience can be considered an emerging concept of the destination brand equity measurement model in terms of a destination context which is unique and different from constructs suggested in retail brand equity measurement approaches.

Branding research has largely focused on consumer goods markets and only recently has attention been given to destination markets. The review of branding research in destination markets indicates that it has largely been exploratory with little systematic development and testing of a comprehensive model (Blain et al., 2005; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003; Gnoth, 2002; Pike, 2004). Also, the recent destination brand literature has been limited to either exploring its conceptual nature or extending the notion of destination image (Hankinson, 2004; Hem & Iverson, 2004). The issue of how

destination brands can be measured is currently difficult to determine. It will, however, become an increasingly important part of destination management.

Therefore, through the literature review from general marketing, the concept of customer based brand equity was borrowed and applied in the context of destination brands. To provide a reliable and valid measurement procedure, the psychometric properties of the proposed scale were rigorously tested, and in this regard, results appear to be encouraging.

The findings of this study are inconsistent compared to those from the general marketing literature. For example, Cretu and Brodie (2005) found that brand image did not impact brand loyalty, while brand quality has an impact on brand value. The findings of this study might not be comparable to general marketing research because the concept of brand image in this study focused on self image congruence and social image congruence with the destination. The concept of self-identity or social identity was applied to this study and may not be relevant for retail brands.

More specifically, the brand image items used in this study were related to self image (Sirgy & Johar, 1999; Sirgy & Su, 2000). The findings in this study indicated that customers' image congruence with a destination is an important factor in destination loyalty that results from visiting the destination. This also supports Sirgy (1985) in that if a brand image is perceived as similar to the customer's self-image in terms of personality attributes, then customers tend to have favorable attitudes toward the brand when making purchasing decisions. Therefore, visitors' perception of self image can be used to identify destination brand-loyal customers.

The findings of this study also support Maeder, Huber, and Herrmann (2000) in that customer's brand loyalty is influenced by perceiving their own personality or self-concept. In the field of hospitality and tourism the findings support Back's (2005) positive relationship between self-image and brand loyalty in the lodging industry. Based on this line of reasoning, the findings lend support to Todd (2001) in that the tourist's self-concept will affect the choice of tourism product to be consumed.

This study also supports the importance of brand value. In the model of perceived value (value-for-money) by Dodds et al. (1991) conceptualization is linked with the brand of destination. This means that in the similar way of product-attributes along with perceived value in general marketing, destination-attributes along with perceived value is the key criteria for destination brand loyalty. Specifically, the mediating role of DBV between DBEX and DBL was significant in this study. Therefore, studies on the relationships among the three factors can contribute to the conventional exploration between tourists' value perception and loyalty attitude.

Generally, the results of this study demonstrate the applicability of customer-based brand equity measurement to a destination. Existing measurement techniques from the general marketing literature are reliable and valid ways to measure a destination's brand. However, more scale development of each construct is needed to apply brand equity measurement model to a destination context. For example, the measurement indicators of brand awareness and brand image are used for both concept in general marketing (Tsai, 2005).

Although no model will fit the real world exactly, a desirable outcome in SEM analysis is to show that a hypothesized model provides a good approximation of real

world phenomena. In terms of destination brand equity, the tested model in this study can lead to the development of future models. Comparison of multiple a priori models are recommended to uncover the model that the observed data best supports. Though an initial model of interest in this study does not satisfy this objective, specification search using the modification of a hypothesized model attempted to identify and eliminate errors. The revised model generation of this study can be an alternate a prior model (either nested or unnested model) for future research

This study shows that destination brand is a multi-dimensional concept, and it is a starting point to discuss how to empirically measure a destination brand. Based on the literature review this study proposed a theoretically based approach to destination brands. The concept of brand equity in general marketing (Aaker, 1996; keller, 1993, Lassar et al., 1995) was explored and then applied to the destination brand model. The method of measuring brand equity provides us with what we refer to as destination brand equity. The findings in this study provide useful insights into understanding methodological approaches to the study of destination brands.

There is a stream of literature that regards destination brand image as being directly related to the destination brand concept. However, this study extended the image-level destination brand to a broad concept by attempting to create a protocol for measuring destination brands based on their destination category.

This study broadened the conceptualization of destination brand to include multiple dimensions and established a foundation for understanding the interrelationship of destination brand variables to these dimensions. What is lacking in this study may stimulate conceptual thought and discussion in order to synthesize and harmonize

existing work and take it forward to a more easily understandable and parsimonious destination brand model.

Managerial Implications

This study provides some important implications for destination marketers, in managing repeat visitation by emphasizing the brand. In the proposed model, this study illustrated that the visitor's brand image perception that is related with self concept plays a significant role in destination brand evaluation. This implied that visiting destinations influence how visitors see themselves as well as how others see themselves. Symbolic meanings concerning self identity of visitors should be considered when planning destination marketing strategies. Managers should provide symbolic meanings that are desirable in a social and cultural context to visitors. Highly symbolized relationships between a destination and visitors individually and collectively, can influence destination choice behavior.

In the section II analysis, the concept of destination brand value emerged as an important factor that influences destination brand loyalty. In order to elicit favorable brand loyalty, considerable brand marketing and communication efforts can be geared around enhancing perceptions of brand value, an economic definition of perceived brand value was prevalent in the general marketing literature. Similarly, the economic value derived from the destination brands the visitors experience should be considered to improve the perception of destination brand loyalty.

Also, visitors' substantive visit experiences influence the perceived value of the destination. Managers should place emphasis on the economic value (i.e., what tourists

get for the money) in their promotional efforts. This points to the need for tourism managers to examine economic value more closely the factors that affect loyalty formation of repeat visitors.

In the proposed model, among the influential factors in this study, destination brand image has been identified as a key correlate of destination brand loyalty. Accordingly, this study suggests that tourism managers consider the concepts of destination brand image to improve loyalty attitude for future visit behavior. In contrast, destination brand awareness did not have an impact on destination brand value, but this does not necessary mean the destination marketers should not invest in building brand value.

Measuring components of destination brand equity is a desirable goal for destination brand measurement. Practitioners may want a simple protocol for measuring brand equity which can be applied across markets. Since they survey respondents are those who have already visited the researched destinations, it is reasonable to infer that the destination brand model is applicable to the destination management. Respondents have experienced destination brands. Therefore, the model can be used to elicit favorable revisit behavior by creating brand loyalty. This study offers a new protocol to measuring destination brand equity. The concept of destination brand experiences in the alternative model will be the main concern in the formation of the destination brand loyalty. The challenge is to select the scale items that tap into tourists' brand perception for a particular destination brand category.

The results derived from this study can also provide tourism managers with insights into brand building endeavors. In particular, by examining internet users'

perceptions, managers will be able to build potential tourists' destination brand loyalty that results in revisit behavior. There should be an attempt to understand the different influences of destination brand experiences, destination brand quality, and destination brand value.

In addition, the findings in the proposed model provided that differences existed between the two destinations and suggests that more careful consideration needs to be given to promoting individual characteristics of destinations as compared to promoting the entire destination.

The relationship between destination brand value and destination brand loyalty in the alternative model suggests that managers should pursue an understanding of the processes that create customers' perception of value, which in turn leads to customer loyalty (Cretu & Brodie, 2005). This is a fundamental issue in contemporary marketing because it is considered to provide the link between marketing and financial performance.

Also, the findings provide some practical implications for casino operators. The results of the present study suggest that casino operators should develop marketing strategies that continuously monitor visitors' perceptions of a casino's brand image. Selective target marketing should be carefully considered when using a casino's own brand image because people may think that casino images and destination images are identical. Characteristics of destination images are viewed with the mixture of tangibility and intangibility. Therefore, the creation of a consistent gaming image with an overall destination image is crucial.

As mentioned by Sirgy and Su (2000), creating and managing an appropriate destination image and destination personality has become vital for effective product

positioning. This study suggests that destination marketers, along with casino operators should develop promotional campaigns that emphasize the distinctive personality of tourism destinations, based on the components of visitors' self image. Furthermore, the image traits should fully reflect the unique characteristics that can be differentiated from competitors.

In addition, it is interesting for destinations to analyze the different dimensions that make up destination brand equity. Five dimensions of brand benefits could be identified as drivers of destination brand evaluation. Insights into the importance of the five dimensions allow tourism managers to increase their saliency for targeted visitors. This, in turn, allows the identification of destination brands that compete against other destinations from a tourist perspective. This strategy enables managers to evaluate the competitive position of their brand and consider its uniqueness and superiority. In terms of promotional strategy, it provides brand managers with information necessary for successfully tailoring brands to market segments by communicating the particular benefits that consumers within a segment seek.

At the very least, there exists clear agreement that a destination's brand distinguishes itself through visitors' perceptions. In other words, the destination brand means something to visitors. Visitors have a variety of feelings regarding being a tourist according to their actual travel behavior. The identity of the destination should become clearer to both the manager and the visitors, although the nature of tourism experiences is regarded as intangible, which is not easy to assess.

Yoo and Donthu (2002) indicated that since brand equity is created (or destroyed) by marketing activity, it is important for marketers to understand the process of brand

equity creation. In the tourism context, if the right approach to destination brand image management is important to destination brand equity creation, then managers should know and understand how to implement effective brand strategies.

Study Limitations

The present study had several limitations that warrant consideration. First, given the problems of Internet coverage of the general population and the difficulty of drawing probability samples for Internet-based surveys (Couper, 2001), the results of this study should be generalized with caution. The sample selection was limited because the subjects of this study were members of surveysampling.com. People who are not members of the SSI, people without Internet access, or people who experience technical problems with computers are eliminated from the sample. Furthermore, because only people who have an interest in the survey topic responded, a self-selection and selective dropout may have led to a sample who are interested in the topic of destination brand. Also, the low response rate in this study can cause non-response error.

Second, in the proposed model, although the scale reliabilities were good, CFA suggested problems relating to the validity of the constructs being measured across the samples. Because indicators to measure a latent structure can represent each destination uniquely and differently, this study excluded possible differences of destination characteristics. Initial items extracted from the Las Vegas visitor sample through the pretests and main test may inappropriately represent the other destination.

A contributor to model identification is the presence of a sufficient number of observed variables and the choice of the right indicators (Blanthorne, Jones-Farmer, &

Almer, 2006). Also, as a result of a lack of a priori evidence and theory in terms of the destination literature, most indicators were borrowed from marketing, in particular a product category relevant to the main study population.

Third, though there are remedies, the assumptions for SEM were difficult to strictly meet in practice. Though outliers that affect the covariance between variables can affect the estimated model parameters, outliers were kept for the analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). When transformations of the data did not result in approximate normality, alternate estimation methods within SEM may be used (Blanthorne et al., 2006). For example, Asymptotically Distribution Free (ADF) estimation methods that do not require the assumption of multivariate normality may be used. However, though ADF has few distributional assumptions it requires a large sample size for accurate estimates (Shah & Goldstein, 2006).

Fourth, the cross-sectional nature of this study precluded inferences among the latent variables and were concurrently measured. The specified theoretical model was only one plausible model of the data, and the direction of the regression paths was theoretical. Basically, this study focused specifically on the five factors related to destination brand equity. It is likely that other important influences on exogenous variables would contribute to the prediction of endogenous variables. Therefore, a unique latent variable that can represent each destination well, might not be included in this study.

Fifth, because the analyses relied on self-reported data from individuals who have visited either Las Vegas and/or Atlantic City, this study was unable to fully discount the possibility of recall bias. Also, only two destinations (Las Vegas and Atlantic City) were

selected. Destination brand perceptions of other gambling destinations such as Chicago, Connecticut, Delaware, and Mississippi were not considered in this study. Therefore, the results of this survey are also not generalizable across gambling destinations.

Sixth, because the sample was composed of mostly individuals of Caucasian descent and was constrained by the two gambling destinations, the representativeness of the sample is restricted. The generalizability of the reliability and construct validity evidence presented must be tested through replication with visitors from various geographic regions and ethnic and racial background.

Finally, online sampling itself has limitations when psychometric approaches are applied. Therefore, the psychometric support for this measure needs to be expanded to include additional evidence of reliability and validity. Although this study demonstrated acceptable internal consistency for destination brand dimensions, the stability of these constructs needs to be examined. A more complete measure of destination brands would be on a tourist-by-tourist basis using in-depth interviews to elicit an unbiased picture of a tourist's perception of a destination. Also, this study was cross-sectional in nature, it was not longitudinal study. In this nature, it would not be helpful in determining patterns with tourists' brand perception of destinations. Nevertheless, within the limitations of the study design, the findings provide important information that could be used to examine the nature of destination brand.

Directions for Future Research

An extension of this research is needed to validate the findings. To provide stronger inference, the model developed could benefit from being tested in a longitudinal design. Future research needs to consider additional sources of destination brand equity. Destination brand-related concepts are likely to require inclusion of various travel market situations as well as a wide array of travel products.

The findings of this study suggest that it may be difficult to eliminate the problems of context effects in tests of models that have sequences of connected concepts. Teas and Laczniak (2004) indicated that the measurement items corresponding to some concepts can be expected to be highly diagnostic for the measurement items corresponding to other concepts. Therefore, the subject population should be extensively pretested to determine the degree to which perception of brand preexist and are likely to be spontaneously formed in the path model.

In addition, to secure reliability cross-sectional design SEM, scale item difficulty or scale item similarity parameters between destinations may be suggested for future studies. Indicators should measure different aspects or attributes that influence a latent variable. This effort may lead to a solution to the question about why the proposed model fit differently between the Las Vegas sample and the Atlantic City sample. In addition, studies examining convergent and discriminant validity are needed to affirm the distinct meaning of destination brand dimensions.

Future research should consider getting a more comprehensive sample from the general population as well as increasing the response rate. While the return rate of the web survey was lower than other survey techniques, a combined approach of using web

and other survey technologies are needed. In particular, collecting data from on-site visitors in order to minimize the disadvantages related to self-report data should be undertaken. The theoretical model may not have incorporated all relevant variables concerning the destination characteristics. Future studies should consider the representative variables.

For an accurate estimation of the destination brand equity model, a variety of estimation methods such as ordinary least square (OLS), and generalized least square (GLS) can be used for data analysis. Examining sample data for distributional characteristics impact the choice of estimation. Also, software programs to conduct SEM deal with covariance or correlation issues in different ways. Comparison or contrast with findings will provide correct estimation of a model fit.

Finally, for the cross-sectional validation of the customer based destination brand instrument, both conceptual and methodological issues in cross-sectional research should be considered. Specifically, sample equivalence, construct equivalence, and measurement equivalence should be ensured.

APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRES

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

Exit this survey >>

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

By clicking on the Next button I agree that I am at least 21 years of age.

Please click here if you are NOT 21.

Next >>

http://www.surveymonkey.com/Users/33554582/Surveys/4755821837 93/28031500-B9B2-...

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

Exit this survey >>

Dear Sir or Madam

Thank you for coming to this site to participate in the survey. My name is Soyoung Boo and I am a graduate student working on my dissertation at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The purpose of this study is to understand destination brand. Destination brand is about how you perceive the places you visit as a brand. Your answers will provide valuable information for destination management to understand tourists perceptions of destination brand.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to fill out a survey about destination brand. This study will take only 10-15 minutes to complete. This survey is anonymous, so there is little or no risk involved. There will be no financial cost to you to participate in this study. You will be compensated for your time by being entered into a contest to win $10,000 from Surveyspot.com. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas may not provide compensation.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact the principal investigator, Dr. James A. Busser at 702-895-0642, or the student investigator, Soyoung Boo at 702-895-4458. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 702-895-2794.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for at least 3 years after completion of the study. After the storage time the information gathered will be destroyed.

Thanks for your participation. Your opinions are valuable to us! We appreciate your consideration and thank you for your assistance in completing

Sincerely yours,

Soyoung Boo
Ph.D. Candidate
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

http://www.surveymonkey.com/Users/33554582/Surveys/4755821837 93/FFCC D4AC-CF...

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

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<< Prev Next >>

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Destination Brand: Atlantic City

Exit this survey >>

* 1. The following questions intend to measure your perception of the gambling destination, Atlantic City. Using the scale below, where "1" means "Strongly disagree" and "7" means "Strongly agree," please select only one response for each statement.

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly agree
1. People similar to me visit this destination							
2. This destination is well known							
3. I would advise other people to visit this destination							
4. From this destination's offerings, I can expect superior performance							
5. I am emotionally attached to this destination							
6. This destination fits my personality							
7. The costs of visiting this destination are a bargain							

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

relative to the benefits I receive

<< Prev Next >>

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

Exit this survey >>

* 2. The following questions intend to measure your perception of the gambling destination, Atlantic City. Using the scale below, where "1" means "Strongly disagree" and "7" means "Strongly agree," please select only one response for each statement.

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly agree
8. When I am thinking about gambling, this destination comes to my mind immediately							
9. Visiting this destination reflects who I am							
10. This destination provides quality experiences							
11 Overall, I am loyal to this destination							
12. Considering what I would pay for a trip, I will get much more than my money's worth by							

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

visiting this destination

13. Visiting this destination is a good deal							
14. This destination is very famous							

<< Prev Next >>

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

Exit this survey >>

3. The following questions intend to measure your perception of the gambling destination, Atlantic City. Using the scale below, where "1" means "Strongly disagree" and "7" means "Strongly agree," please select only one response for each statement.

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly agree
15. This destination offers good value							
16. I enjoy visiting this destination							
17. This (tourist) destination is very familiar to me							
18. My friends would think highly of me if I visited this destination							
19. This destination has high quality offerings (i.e., accommodation, transportation, gaming, shopping, or entertainment)							
20. This destination is a good place to enjoy a vacation for the price							
21. I can quickly recall the							

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Destination Brand: Atlantic City

symbol or logo of this destination

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Destination Brand: Atlantic City

Exit this survey >>

* 4. The following questions intend to measure your perception of the gambling destination, Atlantic City. Using the scale below, where "1" means "Strongly disagree" and "7" means "Strongly agree," please select only one response for each statement.

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly agree
22. This destination has a good name and reputation							
23. Visiting this destination is economical							
24. The image of this destination is consistent with my own self-image							
25. This destination has reasonable prices							
26. This destination provides tourism offerings of consistent quality							
27. This destination would be my preferred choice for a							

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Destination Brand: Atlantic City

vacation

28. The characteristics of this destination come to my mind quickly

<< Prev Next >>

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Destination Brand: Atlantic City

Exit this survey >>

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

* 5. Use the scale below to show the intensity of your feelings towards Atlantic City:

	1 Unsatisfactory	2	3	4	5	6	7 Satisfactory
Visiting this destination was							

<< Prev Next >>

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

Exit this survey >>

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

* 6. How many times have you visited Atlantic City to gamble? (I.e., 1, 2, 3, etc.)

* 7. Did you visit Atlantic City in the past twelve months to gamble?

- Yes
- No

* 8. Do you have intentions to revisit Atlantic City within twelve months to gamble?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

* 9. Other than Atlantic City, which of the following places have you visited to gamble?

	Yes	No
Las Vegas		
Chicagoland (IL, IN)		
Connecticut		
Delaware		
Other location		

<< Prev Next >>

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

Exit this survey >>

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

* 10. Please indicate your gender:

- Male
- Female

* 11. Please indicate your age:

- 21-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70+

<< Prev Next >>

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

Exit this survey >>

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

* 12. Please indicate your highest educational level achieved:

- High school
- Some college
- Associate degree
- Bachelors degree
- Master degree
- Doctoral degree

* 13. Please indicate your martial status:

- Single (never married)
- Single (divorced, separated, or widowed)
- Married

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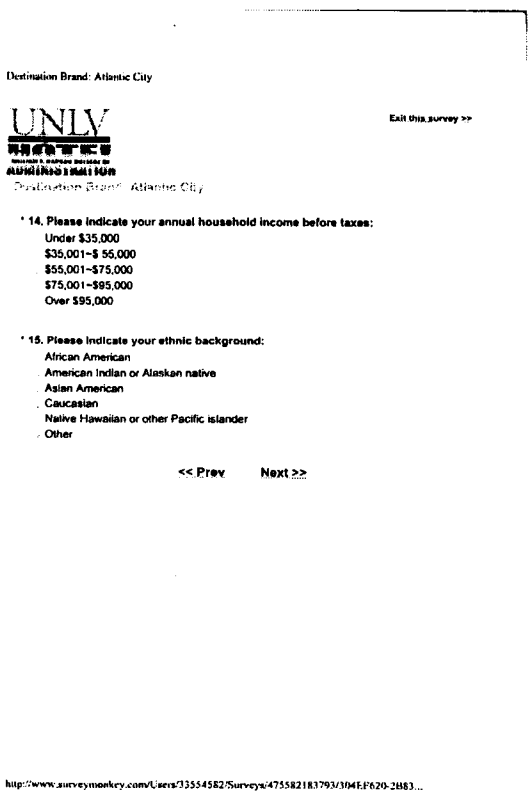

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

UNLV

Exit this survey >>

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

* 14. Please indicate your annual household income before taxes:

- Under $35,000
- $35,001~$ 55,000
- $55,001~$75,000
- $75,001~$95,000
- Over $95,000

* 15. Please indicate your ethnic background:

- African American
- American Indian or Alaskan native
- Asian American
- Caucasian
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific islander
- Other

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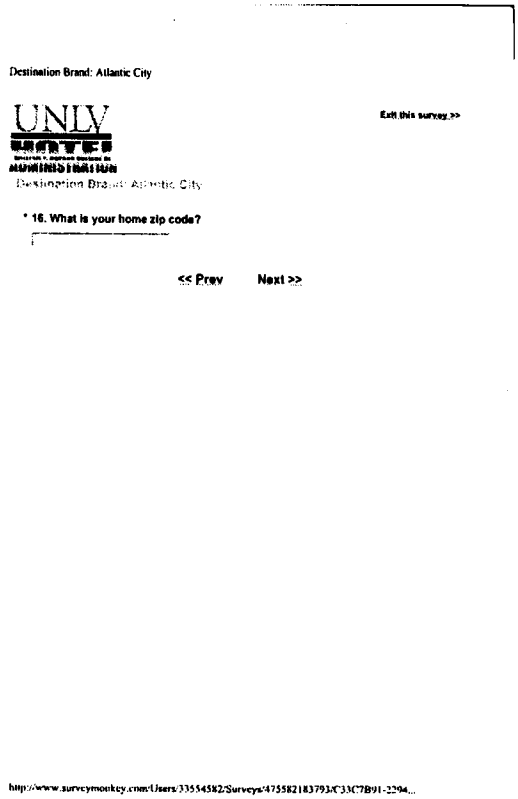

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

UNLV

Exit this survey >>

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

* 16. What is your home zip code?

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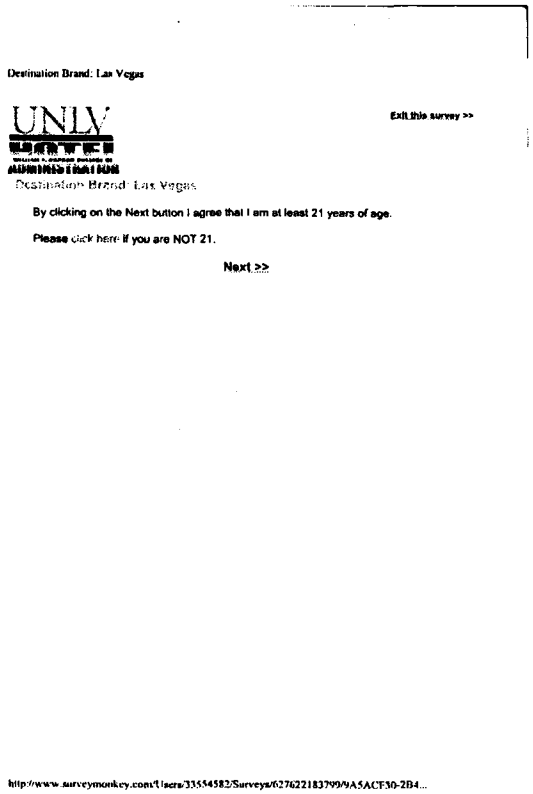


Destination Brand: Las Vegas

UNLV

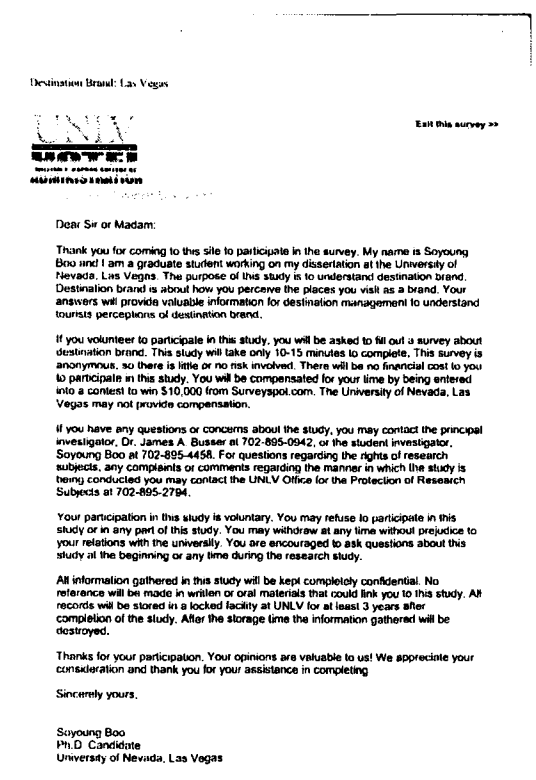
Exit this survey >>

Destination Brand: Las Vegas

By clicking on the Next button I agree that I am at least 21 years of age.

Please click here if you are NOT 21.

Next >>



Destination Brand: Las Vegas

UNLV

Exit this survey >>

Dear Sir or Madam:

Thank you for coming to this site to participate in the survey. My name is Soyoung Boo and I am a graduate student working on my dissertation at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The purpose of this study is to understand destination brand. Destination brand is about how you perceive the places you visit as a brand. Your answers will provide valuable information for destination management to understand tourists perceptions of destination brand.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to fill out a survey about destination brand. This study will take only 10-15 minutes to complete. This survey is anonymous, so there is little or no risk involved. There will be no financial cost to you to participate in this study. You will be compensated for your time by being entered into a contest to win $10,000 from Surveyspot.com. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas may not provide compensation.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact the principal investigator, Dr. James A. Busser at 702-895-0942, or the student investigator, Soyoung Boo at 702-895-4458. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 702-895-2794.

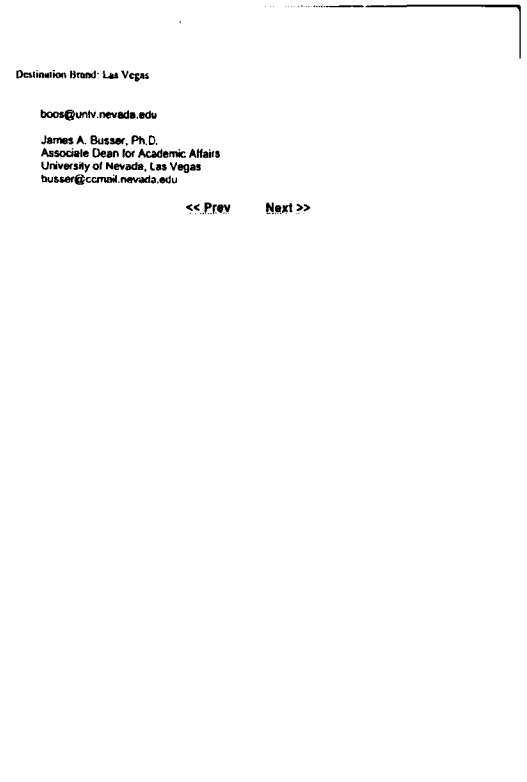
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for at least 3 years after completion of the study. After the storage time the information gathered will be destroyed.

Thanks for your participation. Your opinions are valuable to us! We appreciate your consideration and thank you for your assistance in completing

Sincerely yours,

Soyoung Boo
Ph.D Candidate
University of Nevada, Las Vegas



Destination Brand: Las Vegas

boos@unlv.nevada.edu

James A. Busser, Ph.D.
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
busser@ccmail.nevada.edu

<< Prev Next >>

Destination Brand: Las Vegas

Exit this survey >>

1. The following questions intend to measure your perception of the gambling destination, Las Vegas. Using the scale below, where "1" means "Strongly disagree" and "7" means "Strongly agree," please select only one response for each statement.

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly agree
1. This destination is very familiar to me							
2. I enjoy visiting this destination							
3. I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of this destination							
4. This destination is a good place to enjoy a vacation for the price							
5. My friends would think highly of me if I visited this destination							
6. This destination has high quality offerings (i.e., accommodation, transportation, gaming, shopping, or entertainment							
7. This							

Destination Brand: Las Vegas

destination offers good value

<< Prev Next >>

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Destination Brand: Las Vegas

Exit this survey >>

* 2. The following questions intend to measure your perception of the gambling destination, Las Vegas. Using the scale below, where "1" means "Strongly disagree" and "7" means "Strongly agree," please select only one response for each statement.

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly agree
8. This destination would be my preferred choice for a vacation							
9. This destination provides tourism offerings of consistent quality							
10. This destination has a good name and reputation							
11. The characteristics of this destination come to my mind quickly							
12. Visiting this destination is economical							
13. The image of this destination is consistent							

Destination Brand: Las Vegas

with my own self-image

14. This destination has reasonable prices

<< Prev Next >>

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Destination Brand: Las Vegas

Exit this survey >>

* 3. The following questions intend to measure your perception of the gambling destination, Las Vegas. Using the scale below, where "1" means "Strongly disagree" and "7" means "Strongly agree," please select only one response for each statement.

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly agree
15. This destination is very famous							
16. Considering what I would pay for a trip, I will get much more than my money's worth by visiting this destination							
17. When I am thinking about gambling, this destination comes to my mind immediately							
18. Visiting this destination reflects who I am							
19. Visiting this destination							

Destination Brand: Las Vegas

is a good deal							
20. This destination provides quality experiences							
21. Overall, I am loyal to this destination.							

<< Prev Next >>

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Destination Brand: Las Vegas

Exit this survey >>

* 4. The following questions intend to measure your perception of the gambling destination, Las Vegas. Using the scale below, where "1" means "Strongly disagree" and "7" means "Strongly agree," please select only one response for each statement.

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly agree
22. People similar to me visit this destination							
23. This destination is well known							
24. I would advise other people to visit this destination							
25. From this destination's offerings, I can expect superior performance							
26. I am emotionally attached to this destination							
27. This destination fits my personality							
28. The costs of visiting this destination are a bargain							

Destination Brand: Las Vegas

relative to the benefits I receive							

<< Prev Next >>

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Destination Brand: Las Vegas

Exit this survey >>

Destination Brand: Las Vegas

* 5. Use the scale below to show the intensity of your feelings towards Las Vegas:

	1 Unsatisfactory	2	3	4	5	6	7 Satisfactory
Visiting this destination was:							

<< Prev Next >>

Destination Brand: Las Vegas

Exit this survey >>

Destination Brand: Las Vegas

* 6. How many times have you visited Las Vegas to gamble? (i.e., 1, 2, 3, etc.)

* 7. Did you visit Las Vegas in the past twelve months to gamble?
- Yes
- No

* 8. Do you have intentions to revisit Las Vegas within twelve months to gamble?
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

* 9. Other than Las Vegas, which of the following places have you visited to gamble?

	Yes	No
Atlantic City		
Chicagoland (IL, IN)		
Connecticut		
Delaware		
Other location		

<< Prev Next >>

Destination Brand: Las Vegas

Exit this survey >>

Destination Brand: Las Vegas

* 10. Please indicate your gender:
- Male
- Female

* 11. Please indicate your age:
- 21-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70+

<< Prev Next >>

Destination Brand: Las Vegas

Exit this survey >>

Destination Brand: Las Vegas

* 12. Please indicate your highest educational level achieved:
- High school
- Some college
- Associate degree
- Bachlors degree
- Master degree
- Doctoral degree

<< Prev Next >>

Destination Brand: Las Vegas

Exit this survey >>

Destination Brand: Las Vegas

* 13. Please indicate your martial status:

Single (never married)
Single (divorced, separated, or widowed)
Married

<< Prev Next >>

Destination Brand: Las Vegas

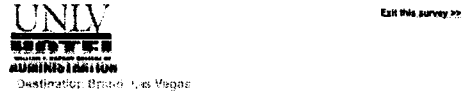
Exit this survey >>

Destination Brand: Las Vegas

* 16. What is your home zip code?

<< Prev Next >>

Destination Brand: Las Vegas



Exit this survey >>

Destination Brand: Las Vegas

* 14. Please indicate your annual household income before taxes:

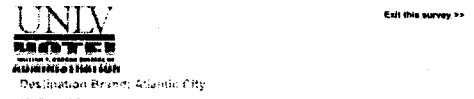
Under $35,000
$35,001~$ 55,000
$55,001~$75,000
$75,001~$95,000
Over $95,000

* 15. Please indicate your ethnic background:

African American
American Indian or Alaskan native
Asian American
Caucasian
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
Other

<< Prev Next >>

Destination Brand: Atlantic City



Exit this survey >>

Destination Brand: Atlantic City

13. End of Survey

Thank you for your time and cooperation!!

<< Prev Done >>

APPENDIX II

INFORMED CONSENT

UNLV
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS

Social/Behavioral IRB – Expedited Review
Approval Notice

NOTICE TO ALL RESEARCHERS:

Please be aware that a protocol violation (e.g., failure to submit a modification for any change) of an IRB approved protocol may result in mandatory remedial education, additional audits, re-consenting subjects, researcher probation suspension of any research protocol at issue, suspension of additional existing research protocols, invalidation of all research conducted under the research protocol at issue, and further appropriate consequences as determined by the IRB and the Institutional Officer.

DATE: April 3, 2006

TO: **Dr. James Busser**, Tourism and Convention Administration

FROM: Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

RE: Notification of IRB Action by Dr. Michael Stitt, Chair
Protocol Title: **The Measurement of Destination Branding: A Model Testing**
Protocol #: 0603-1899

This memorandum is notification that the project referenced above has been reviewed by the UNLV Social/Behavioral Institutional Review Board (IRB) as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45 CFR 46. The protocol has been reviewed and approved.

The protocol is approved for a period of one year from the date of IRB approval. The expiration date of this protocol is March 31, 2007. Work on the project may begin as soon as you receive written notification from the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS).

PLEASE NOTE:
Attached to this approval notice is the **official Informed Consent/Assent (IC/IA) Form** for this study. The IC/IA contains an official approval stamp. Only copies of this official IC/IA form may be used when obtaining consent. Please keep the original for your records.

Should there be *any* change to the protocol, it will be necessary to submit a **Modification Form** through OPRS. No changes may be made to the existing protocol until modifications have been approved by the IRB.

Should the use of human subjects described in this protocol continue beyond March 31, 2007, it would be necessary to submit a **Continuing Review Request Form** *60 days* before the expiration date.
If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at OPRSHumanSubjects@unlv.edu or call 895-2794.

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