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Customer-based destination brand equity modelling – The role of destination resources, value-for-money and value-in-use

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INTRODUCTION

Countries, regions, cities and even small locations and resorts make efforts to strengthen their destination brands, aiming at differentiating themselves from competitors to convey a unique value proposition and in the end, attract visitors and facilitate repeat visitation, readiness to pay a premium price and positive word-of-mouth (Blain, Levy, and Ritchie 2005; Pike 2005). Destination management organizations (DMOs) invest substantial budgets into the design of logos, development of slogans, publication of brochures, creation of web-sites, organization of events and the implementation of a variety of additional branding efforts. Thus, an issue which inevitably arises is whether these efforts help destinations reach their marketing goals? Do they really create successful and fundamentally memorable brands?

To answer these questions, tourism research usually employs customer-based approaches for the conceptualization and measurement of brand equity with emphasis on consumers' response to a brand name (Gartner 2009; Christodoulides and de Chernatony 2010; Davcik, da Silva and Hair 2015; Round and Roper 2015). As shown in below literature review, previous research widely adopted Aaker's (1991, 1996) and Keller's (1993) conceptualization of customer-based brand equity (CBBE). It derives from cognitive psychology and focuses on multi-dimensional memory structures, like awareness, image perception, quality and value assessments as well as loyalty. Destination brand equity studies have developed reliable, valid, parsimonious and theoretically sound measurement constructs which can be implemented with "pen and paper" instruments, thereby demonstrating managerial usefulness as diagnostic tools, capable of identifying areas for improvement and how the brand is perceived by customers. Although scholars emphasize that the complexity and multidimensionality of destinations compared to goods complicates the measurement of CBBE in a destination context (Boo, Busser, and Baloglu 2009, Pike 2009; Gartner 2009),

destination brand equity studies directly transfer conceptualization and measurement approaches developed for product brands, especially consumer packaged goods (Christodoulides and de Chernatony 2010). Indeed, tourism literature exhibits a lack of a sound theoretical discussion regarding the dimensionality of model constructs, measurement scales and the linkages between core model dimensions under the supposition of tourism as a service industry. Nevertheless, the understanding of the mechanisms behind the formation of attitudes which tourists develop towards destination brands has become a managerial task of ultimate importance (Davis, Piven, and Breazeale 2014; Jung, Kim, and Kim 2014). Thus, in the absence of a CBBE theory adapted to the peculiarities of destinations, tourism research risks drawing the focus away from the essence of a destination brand and its value, thereby losing its managerial relevancy.

Christodoulides and de Chernatony (2010) suggest that the selection of model constructs should align with the brand category (product type), thus, incorporate service-specific dimensions that drive customer-based brand value. We similarly believe that destination branding research could largely benefit from the contemporary service-oriented marketing perspective (Li and Petrick 2008). Tourism literature traditionally addresses the heterogeneous and customer-centric nature of tourism. For example, Debbage and Daniels (1998) argue that the "tourist industry as a mode of production is enormous, highly commodified, and structured in ways that are fairly similar to other sectors of the economy" (ibid., 18). They further emphasize, that tourism is "no single product but, rather, a wide range of products and services that interact to provide an opportunity to fulfil a tourist experience that comprise both tangible parts (e.g. hotel, restaurant, or air carrier) and intangible parts (e.g. sunset, scenery, mood)" (ibid., 23). Furthermore, in order to address the complexity of tourism as an economic sector, the tourism marketing literature introduced the concept of tourism destination viewed as a market place where tourism demand and supply

finally meet (Murphy 1985; Goodall and Ashworth 1988; Buhalis 2000; Beritelli, Bieger, and Laesser 2013).Thus, Murphy, Pritchard and Smith (2000) define a tourism destination as "an amalgam of individual products and experience opportunities that combine to form a total experience of the area visited" (ibid., 44).

While experiences exist in consumers' minds, destinations and tourists co-create places where the tourist experience may occur. Destinations co-create experiences of individual tourists by offering the functional, emotional and symbolic value of the visitation (i.e., the brand) (Gnoth 2007). In turn, tourists choose between available products and services, directly participate in activities, interpret the elements of the physical environment devoted to tourism consumption and allocate their own resources, including time, money, efforts and skills (Mossberg 2007; Arnould, Price, and Tierney 1998; Fuchs 2004; Gnoth 2007; Pettersson and Getz 2009). By utilizing a destination's products, services and other tangible and intangible resources (e.g., natural amenities, local culture, atmosphere of the place, etc.), tourists experience the destination and evaluate whether their experience was valuable (i.e., value-in-use) (Vargo and Lusch 2004; Moeller 2010).

This study aims at contributing to the further development of the CBBE theory in a tourism destination context by bridging the gap between destination brand equity evaluation and the service nature of tourism consumption. After a review of the literature, a framework based on Keller's (2008) brand equity pyramid is utilized to compare findings from previous destination brand equity studies. In subsequent sections, the conceptual model and hypotheses are presented. More precisely, in order to adjust the CBBE model for tourism destinations we take into account the value-co-creation approach recently developed by service marketing scholars (Grönroos 2000, 2009; Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008). We propose that the core component of the CBBE model is about customers' evaluation of the destination promise to transform destination resources into value-in-use for the tourist. This approach is

consistent with Gnoth's (2007) conceptualization of destination brands viewed as a representation of functional, emotional and symbolic values as well as the benefits tourists are promised to receive as the result of service consumption. We, therefore, suggest to integrate the concept of value-in-use of tourism destination visitation into the CBBE model. Finally, the influence of destination brand awareness on the evaluation of the destination promise is hypothesized, which, in turn affects actual behavior and behavioral intentions of tourists towards the destination.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand equity considers the differentiation effect which the customers' knowledge of the brand has on the customers' response to a product or service, the overall utility that customers place in a brand compared to its competitors (Keller 1993; Lassar, Mittal and Sharma 1995; De Chernatony and McDonald 2003). It is also a measure of marketing efforts' effectiveness (Keller 2008). Brand equity is defined as "assets and liabilities, including brand awareness, loyalty, perceived quality and brand associations linked to a brand's name and symbol that adds to (or subtracts from) the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers" (Aaker 1996, 7-8). From a service marketing perspective, brand equity is the outcome of developing brand relationships (Grönroos 2000). Accordingly, Keller (2009) extended the CBBE model to reflect this relationship building process between customers and the brand. His hierarchical 'CBBE pyramid' describes four stages of brand development, including brand identity (*brand salience*), brand meaning (*performance* of tangible products and *imagery* related to intangible aspects of the brand), brand response (*judgements* and *feelings*), and brand relationships (*resonance*) aiming at the establishment of customer loyalty (Keller 2008, 2009).

Destination brand equity research focuses on the development of destination brand performance models, thus, enabling the measurement of the marketing effectiveness of tourism destinations and the prediction of the destination's brand development in the future. While destination brand equity measurement has only recently attracted attention, it is typically studied from the customers' perspective. By applying Aaker's (1996) and Keller's (1993) CBBE concept, tourism scholars view the CBBE model for destinations as "the sum of factors contributing to a brand's value in the consumer's mind" (Konecnik and Gartner 2007, 401). Konecnik and Gartner (2007) were the first to apply the CBBE model in a destination context, arguing that the image construct should be isolated from other brand

dimensions, such as awareness, quality and loyalty. Additional authors examine the relationships between CBBE model dimensions (Boo et al. 2009; Pike, Bianchi, Kerr, and Patti 2010; Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010; Kladou and Kehagias 2014) or take out destination loyalty of the CBBE model (Horng, Liu, Chou, and Tsai 2012; Im, Kim, Elliot, and Han 2012; Bianchi, Pike and Ling 2014). Other studies focus on the relationships between destination brand equity and social influence (Evangelista and Dioko 2011), destination involvement (Kim, Han, Holland, and Byon 2009) or enduring travel involvement (Ferns and Walls 2012). Finally, one group of authors suggests that destination brand equity analysis should not be limited to the customers' perspective, but rather should integrate stakeholders, including entrepreneurs and residents (Garcia, Gómez, and Molina 2012).

Table 1 summarizes existing CBBE models for tourism destinations by relating model dimensions to the respective brand building blocks of Keller's (2009) brand pyramid. It reveals similarities but also differences, overlaps and gaps on both the conceptual and measurement levels of CBBE model specifications. As will be discussed in detail next, the framework assists in better understanding the complexity of relationships within CBBE models previously adopted and validated in a tourism destination context.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Destination brand salience

Brand salience defined as; "the strength of awareness of the destination for a given travel situation" is the foundation of the CBBE model for destinations (Pike et al. 2010, 439). The majority of CBBE destination studies adopt Aaker's (1996) concept of brand awareness, defined as the strength of the brand's presence in the mind of the target audience (e.g., Boo et al. 2009; Kladou and Kehagias 2014; Konecnik and Gartner 2007). It is emphasized that "a

place must be known to the consumer in some context before it can even be considered as a potential destination" (Gartner and Konecnik Ruzzier 2011, 473). This implies that potential tourists are familiar with the destination and that an image of the destination exists in their minds (Konecnik and Gartner 2007; Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010). Therefore, brand awareness - as the first step in brand equity creation - must be of a positive nature (Gartner and Konecnik Ruzzier 2011). The majority of destination brand equity studies include awareness defined as tourists' ability to recall destination characteristics (e.g., Bianchi et al. 2014; Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010; Ferns and Walls 2012). Destination awareness exists on different levels, including brand recognition, recall, familiarity, top-of-mind awareness, recall of destination advertising, brand dominance, reputation and brand knowledge. Furthermore, some authors address various information sources affecting destination image (Baloglu and McCleary 1999; Beerli and Martin 2004), and distinguish between informational destination familiarity (based on previously used information) and experiential destination familiarity (reflecting previous destination experience) (Baloglu 2001).

Overall, tourism research concludes that brand salience, defined as the strength of destination awareness, is an important first step in destination brand equity creation. However, there is no agreement on construct operationalization, as the only destination awareness measure consistently employed in previous studies is the ability to recall destination characteristics. The literature review reveals a need for further theoretical and methodological developments of the brand salience model block. Thus, for the purpose of operationalization and empirical validation of the awareness construct, this study emphasizes aspects of destination characteristics, recall and the presence of information sources.

Destination brand performance and imagery

Image and quality reflect specific characteristics of the destination and belong to the brand performance and imagery building block (Keller 2009). Destination brand equity studies usually consider attribute-based conceptualizations when measuring perceived destination image and quality (e.g., Horng et al. 2012; Kladou and Kehagias 2014; Pike et al. 2010). These studies adopt Keller's (1993) conceptualization of brand image, defined as perceived destination brand reflected by a distinct set of associations, like knowledge, beliefs, feelings and impressions about a destination which consumers hold in memory and associate to the destination name. In turn, brand quality is defined as perceived overall superiority of a (service) product (Aaker 1991; Bianchi et al. 2014; Boo et al. 2009; Keller 1993). Tourism studies follow Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry's (1985, 1988) quality concept which compares customers' expectations and perceived performance, thereby reflecting an overall judgment towards the excellence of service delivery (Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010; Horng et al. 2012; Pike et al. 2010). Accordingly, destination brand quality is defined as "travelers' perception of a destination's ability to fulfil their expectation" (Ferns and Walls 2012, 29).

Previous studies typically address the specificity of tourism destinations by employing Echtner and Ritchie's (1991, 1993) framework further developed for destination image conceptualization by Gallarza, Saura and Garcia (2002). Dimensions include attribute-based and holistic images, functional and psychological characteristics as well as common and unique images of a destination. The approach presumes that destination brand image reflects those destination resources which make the destination attractive in the eyes of potential tourists (Horng et al. 2012). Similarly, destination brand quality refers to destination attributes perceived by tourists (Bianchi et al. 2014, 217). Konecnik and Gartner (2007) developed destination image and quality measurement scales by combining findings from in-depth interviews and previous research (Gallarza et al. 2002; Mazanec 1994; Baker and Crompton 2000; Ekinci and Riley 2001; Murphy et al. 2000). These scales have been adopted

and modified in later destination brand equity studies (e.g., Pike et al. 2010; Horng et al. 2012; Bianchi et al. 2014). However, there are only a few attributes employed by several studies simultaneously. Accommodation facilities is the most commonly utilized destination attribute employed for destination image and quality measurement. Fewer attributes comprise infrastructure, cleanliness, safety, history and culture, shopping, urban areas, dining, nightlife and entertainment, events, atmosphere, service personnel, communication and language. While nature and scenery is the most commonly employed destination image attribute (Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010; Ferns and Walls 2012; Im et al. 2012; Konecnik and Gartner 2007), less frequent attributes include weather, activities, recreation opportunities, friendliness of locals, beaches, political stability, being featured in movies and on TV, religion, sightseeing, technology, water sports and family vacation opportunities.

When it comes to effect measurement, a positive (inter-)relationship (Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010; Konecnik and Gartner 2007; Ferns and Walls 2012) between attribute-based image and quality has been identified. However, other empirical results remain inconclusive. While, a positive effect of brand awareness on the perceived quality of destination attributes is confirmed (Pike et al. 2010; Kladou and Kehagias 2014), the relationship is non-significant in Chen and Myagmarsuren (2010). To conclude, although literature has reached an agreement that destination-specific attributes should be applied when operationalizing destination brand performance and imagery, findings illustrate that attribute-based image and quality constructs greatly overlap on the measurement level. Therefore, following Ferns and Walls (2012), we propose that 'destination brand experience', manifested by attribute-based image and the quality of experienced destination attributes, can well constitute a single construct.

Judgments and feelings

Most previous studies include consumers' judgements and emotional responses towards the destination brand. These representations, however, remain fragmented and mutually inclusive. For instance, by adopting measures of quality experience, brand quality is conceptualized through brand performance dimensions in terms of "the destination's ability to meet tourists' functional needs" (Boo et al. 2009, 221). Accordingly, destination performance is defined as "perceived utility that one derives from visiting a destination relative to the cost of doing so" (Evangelista and Dioko 2011, 318). Thus, brand performance scales include overall quality and performance superiority. Moreover, in Evangelista and Dioko (2011) "trust" represents the "judgements and feelings" block and includes measures, like trustworthiness, being caring and not taking advantage of consumers. Similarly, overall quality is a measure of destination brand equity in Garcia et al. (2012), while trust (reliability) and believability (credibility) appear as the brand meaning construct (Berry 2000). Finally, Im et al. (2012), Kladou and Kehagias (2014) and Bianchi et al. (2014) consider brand associations, but lack an agreement on how to conceptualize the construct. Overall quality and destination attitude is combined as brand associations by Im et al. (2012). By contrast, brand associations, defined as image perception, signal brand personality and trust (Kladou and Kehagias 2014). Similarly, brand "uniqueness" and "popularity" represent brand associations and perceived quality (Kim et al. 2009), while some authors use the notion of brand associations interchangeably with destination brand image (Bianchi et al. 2014).

Moreover, destination brand value is defined as Zeithaml and Bitner's (2000) price-based concept of value in terms of customers' perceived balance between a product's price and utility (Boo et al. 2009; Evangelista and Dioko 2011; Bianchi et al. 2014). Measurements include value-for-money, reasonable price and being a bargain. Likewise, prior research confirms that perceived quality influences value-for-money (Boo et al. 2009). However, this

relationship is confirmed for only one out of two samples. Moreover, it is shown that destination awareness has a positive effect on brand assets (Kladou and Kehagias 2014; Pike et al. 2010), although this hypothesis was originally rejected (Boo et al. 2009). Furthermore, brand presentation influences the perception of brand meaning (Garcia et al. 2012). Likewise, brand associations turn out to influence perceived quality of destination attributes (Kladou and Kehagias 2014). However, this reverse relationship is tested as a post-hoc hypothesis, thus, is insufficiently justified from a theoretical viewpoint. Few studies examine the relationship between brand equity and tourist satisfaction. More precisely, it is confirmed that the perceived quality of destination attributes influences satisfaction, while the relationship between attribute-based image and satisfaction is found to be non-significant (Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010). Finally, inconsistent path relationships, satisfactory yet not perfect goodness-of-fit indices and a correlation between image and quality is reported by Boo et al. (2009). The authors suggest that tourists' previous experience might overshadow brand image.

To conclude, the examination of model dimensions representing the judgements and feelings block reveals that tourism literature emphasizes the judgements component, specified as overall quality and credibility of the destination brand. However, benefits of using the brand are only partly represented, e.g. by image dimensions and destination satisfaction. With the sole exception of Garcia et al. (2012), literature ignores emotional response dimensions (e.g. fun and excitement), whereby Keller (2008) identifies them as significant for the judgements and feelings block. Finally, literature suggests that in a (e.g. tourism) service context, satisfaction should be "conceptualized as an attitude-like judgement after a purchase or an interaction with a services provider" (De Chernatony, Harris, and Christodoulides 2004, 22). Following these suggestions, this study integrates destination-

specific emotional brand value dimensions as part of the brand equity measurement in a destination context.

Destination brand resonance

Loyalty and attachment are the dimensions of brand resonance at the top of the brand equity pyramid (Keller 2009). Loyalty constitutes the core of the destination's brand equity model representing the level of attachment a potential tourist has to a destination brand (Horng et al. 2012; Kladou and Kehagias 2014). Destination loyalty implies that potential tourists have a greater confidence in the destination brand compared to its competitors, which translates into a willingness to pay a premium price (Bianchi et al. 2014). Thus, *behavioral* brand loyalty refers to tourists' repeat visits to a destination and positive word of mouth referrals (Konecnik and Gartner 2007), while *attitudinal* brand loyalty is manifested by tourists' intention to revisit and recommend the destination to others as well as by the 'brand commitment' in terms of individual preference and disposition towards a destination brand (Gartner and Konecnik Ruzzier 2011).

While most studies specify attitudinal destination brand loyalty as an isolated construct, literature lacks consensus on measurement items and scales. The most commonly, although inconsistently, utilized measures of attitudinal destination brand loyalty comprise preference (destination as preferred vacation choice) and willingness to recommend (e.g., Boo et al. 2009; Kladou and Kehagias 2014; Garcia et al. 2012). Fewer studies additionally consider the intention to revisit (Konecnik and Gartner 2007; Ferns and Walls 2012; Im et al. 2012). Less common measures include overall loyalty (Boo et al. 2009; Garcia et al. 2012), enjoying the destination (Boo et al. 2009; Kladou and Kehagias 2014), readiness to pay a premium price (Im et al. 2012), confidence (Horng et al. 2012) and meeting the expectations (Kladou and Kehagias 2014). Identifying the drivers behind destination brand loyalty is a crucial task in

destination brand equity research. Thus, unsurprisingly, most studies in a relationship testing context are considering brand resonance.

Nevertheless, findings remain contradictory and inconclusive. For instance, the relationship between destination awareness and loyalty is confirmed by Pike et al. (2010), while other authors reject this hypothesis (Im et al. 2012). Furthermore, a positive influence of destination awareness on revisit intention can be demonstrated (Ferns and Walls 2012; Horng et al. 2012), while another study, again, rejects this hypothesis (Im et al. 2012). Similarly, the influence of attribute-based image on loyalty can be confirmed (Im et al. 2012), while other scholars reject the hypothesis on this relationship (Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010). Likewise, while some studies approve the influence of perceived quality of destination attributes on loyalty (Pike et al. 2010; Kladou and Kehagias 2014), this hypothesis is rejected by others (Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010; Bianchi et al. 2014). Finally, attribute-based image and quality positively influence travel intentions (Horng et al. 2010; Ferns and Walls 2012). However, this relationship turns out to be non-significant in Im et al. (2012). Findings are more consistent for destination judgements and feelings influencing destination brand resonance: literature agrees that brand associations (Im et al. 2012; Kladou and Kehagias 2014), perceived quality (Boo et al. 2009), social and self-image (Boo et al. 2009; Pike et al. 2010), value-for-money (Boo et al. 2009; Bianchi et al. 2014) and satisfaction (Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010) are antecedents of destination brand loyalty.

In conclusion, the issue of valid measurement of the brand resonance construct is not yet fully resolved. As it is difficult to distinguish between *attitudinal* and *behavioral* brand loyalty, brand resonance overlaps with destination judgements and feelings on the level of both, constructs and single measures. For instance, “benefits” in Konecnik and Gartner (2007) and Pike et al. (2010), as well as “enjoyment” in Boo et al. (2009), Horng et al. (2012) and Kladou and Kehagias (2014) semantically belong to the judgements and feelings brand

building block. Hence, this study focuses on destination preference, willingness to recommend and intention to return as the most commonly utilized dimensions of attitudinal destination brand loyalty. At the same time, we emphasize the need for continuing the theoretical discussion on the phenomenon of destination brand loyalty and its operationalization.

Hierarchy of CBBE dimensions in a destination context

Table 2 summarizes the findings from previous destination studies which go beyond the sole task of measuring CBBE model dimensions but also examine path-relationships between brand equity dimensions. The table highlights tested relationships between the four blocks of Keller's (2008, 2009) brand equity pyramid. The synthesis of prior studies' results enables the identification of gaps on the level of both the measurement and the structural composition of existing destination CBBE models.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

Interestingly, findings support the framework's hierarchical structure following Keller's (2009) brand equity pyramid. Particularly, relationships between directly adjacent model blocks are consistently confirmed empirically. Notably when the blocks located in the center of the model are omitted, findings from hypothesis testing are contradictory and disconfirmed (e.g. relationships between destination brand awareness and overall destination brand judgement dimensions, destination brand awareness and destination loyalty, as well as the impact of both attribute-based image and quality on loyalty).

As discussed, the conceptualization of model building blocks by existing studies remains fragmented. Only a few hypotheses are tested and confirmed by two or more studies.

More precisely, the relationships between destination awareness and destination brand resonance dimensions (i.e., loyalty and (re)visit intentions), attribute-based quality and destination loyalty, as well as the relationships between destination awareness and attribute-based quality have been tested by two studies, while the positive influence of consistency of tourists' self-image with destination brand on destination brand loyalty is the only relationship tested and confirmed by three studies (Bianchi et al. 2014; Boo et al. 2009; Pike et al. 2009).

Finally, previously tested hypotheses summarized in Table 2 reveal that most of previous studies tested the relationships between brand equity dimensions and destination brand loyalty (Hunter and Schmidt 1990). However, literature lacks consistency especially regarding the conceptual interpretation of attribute-based brand image, overall brand image and quality constructs resulting in conceptual overlaps and measurement gaps of brand equity constructs. As a result, the primary focus of this paper is to clarify the structural relationships within the inner core of the model.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

To resolve the aforementioned conceptualization and operationalization issues of destination brand equity modelling, we propose the application of the value co-creation framework (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Accordingly, attribute-based image and quality dimensions are related to the customers' perception of promised, experienced and retained performance of destination resources, which, in turn, contribute to the customers' value-in-use (Grönroos 2009). Previous studies (Konecnik and Gartner 2007; Boo et al. 2009; Pike et al. 2010) point at the difficulties of model conceptualization and measurement primarily explained by the complexity and multidimensionality of tourism destinations compared to goods and services. The complexity of destination experiences is the primary reason why measurement scales developed for consumer products and services cannot be directly applied in a tourism destination context (Pike 2009; Gartner 2009). Indeed, a tourism destination, viewed as an amalgam of various service products and experience opportunities, is an ideal illustration of the value network concept, which accentuates the co-production and exchange of service offerings and value co-creation from a customers' perspective (Murphy et al. 2000; Vargo 2009; Lusch, Vargo and Tanniru 2010). Thus, as destinations represent inherent value creation processes triggered, co-produced, experienced and evaluated by customers, the application of the value network in a destination context is justified to identify interactions which impact customers' brand experience (Grönroos 2006; Baron and Harris 2010).

Gnoth (2007) conceptualizes destination brands as the representation of the functional, emotional and symbolic values of a destination, as well as the benefits which tourists are promised to receive as the result of their service consumption (ibid, 348). This is consistent with the service marketing view on value co-creation, which distinguishes between value-in-use and value-in-exchange (Vargo and Lusch 2004; Grönroos 2009). While value-in-

exchange is embedded in the exchanged product, value-in-use is created when goods or services are used (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Thus, value for a customer is created as a result of the interaction between a firm and a customer by the total experience of all experiential elements, including the firm's resources, such as physical objects (e.g., goods), information, interactions with employees, systems, infrastructures as well as other customers (Grönroos 2008). In many instances, these elements cannot be directly controlled by a firm (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Rather, core values, like the cultural, social and natural dimensions of destination resources, are utilized as inputs for service provision aimed at satisfying tourists' needs. Accordingly, a destination is viewed as a promise to transform customers' resources, while the inherent value concept is communicated through the brand which, in turn, is collectively perceived by homogeneous tourist segments (Ek, Larsen, Hornskov, and Mansfeldt 2008).

More theoretically, the destination promise, as the inner part of the customer-based destination brand equity (CBDBE) model, includes customers' evaluations of tangible, intangible and human resources offered by the destination, the value-in-use as tourists' benefits from destination visitation, and, finally, the price-based value as the destination's value-in-exchange. Thus, destination resources as destination-specific dimensions of complex tourism experiences (Palmer 2010) include destination products and services, intangible characteristics of the destination and social interactions. Most importantly, resource availability is unique for every destination (Zabkar, Brencic, and Dmitrovic 2010). Similarly, the combination of desired and experienced resources is unique for every tourist in a particular visitation context (Moeller 2010). Against this theoretical background we propose that destination resources, customers' benefits and value-for-money together comprise the perceived destination brand promise reflected by the inner core of the destination brand equity model pyramid (Figure 1).

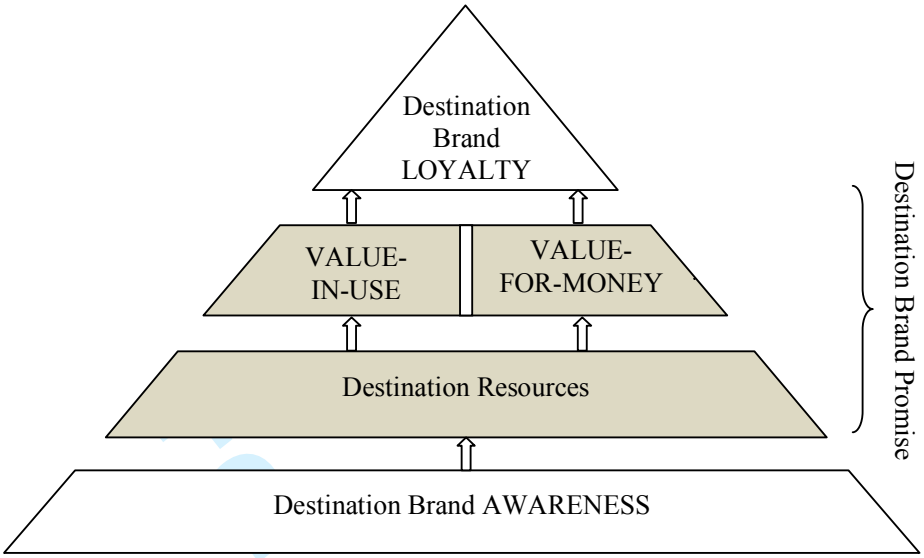

Figure 1. Tourism destination brand equity pyramid

CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

Within the CBDBE model framework, attribute-based image and quality represent tangible, intangible and social resources of the tourism destination. While studies integrating attribute-based image and quality simultaneously report high correlations between the constructs, conceptualization and measurement of these constructs greatly overlap (Konecnik and Gartner 2007; Ferns and Walls 2012). We resolve this issue by combining attribute-based image and quality into one single dimension as proposed by Ferns and Walls (2012). Thus, customers' perception of promised, experienced and retained performance on the level of destination resources contributes to the formation of tourists' benefits from destination visitation (Larsen 2007). As the perception of destination resources represents the performance and imagery building block of the CBDBE model, the model hierarchy stipulates the relationship between destination awareness and customer's perception of destination resources. Following Pike et al. (2010), Chen and Myagmarsuren (2010) and Kladou and Kehagias (2014), an integrative hypothesis has been formulated (Figure 2):

H1. The stronger the destination awareness, the more positive customers' perception of a) tangible, b) intangible and c) social destination resources

The value-in-use represents tourists' state of being as the result of visiting the destination. In general, customer value is created within a dynamic and hierarchical means-end process of utilizing product attributes to obtain desired experiences, thus, achieving the customer's consumption purposes (Woodruff 1997). As the most relevant perceived value dimensions Sheth, Newman and Gross (1991) identify emotional, social and epistemic value. Emotional value is the utility derived from feelings or affections generated by a product. Social value

represents the enhancement of a social self-concept. Epistemic value reflects the capacity of a product "to arouse curiosity, provide novelty, or satisfy a desire for knowledge" (ibid, 162). Emotional experience, social recognition, novelty and knowledge constitute the dimensions of modifying a customers' state of being, and, consequently, represent value-in-use for a customer. Similarly, Holbrook's (2006) customer value typology includes hedonic value as an intrinsic self-oriented pleasurable experience of fun or the aesthetic enjoyment as well as the extrinsic other-oriented social value of status-enhancement or the improvement of the self-esteem in the result of consumption. The value-in-use of a destination can, thus, be exemplified based on Crompton's (1979) classification of tourists' benefits from destination visitation in terms of satisfying internal socio-psychological needs. These benefits include push-motivation factors, such as escape from routine environments, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, social recognition, social interaction, novelty seeking and knowledge (Crompton 1979). Interestingly, Klenosky (2002) applies a means-end approach to examine relationships between pull and push motivation factors of destination choice. Pull factors (e.g. historical and cultural attractions, natural resources, activities, etc.) are considered as means to achieve benefits (ends), which correspond to travel pull motivations (e.g. fun and enjoyment, self-esteem, excitement, etc.). Similarly, Komppula (2005) applies Woodruff's (1997) customer value hierarchy to illustrate the link between the tourist product and customers' "desired consequence experiences" (ibid, 9). However, literature only partly reflects the value-in-use as a desired experiential state-of-being achieved in the course of tourism consumption and the fulfilment of needs. This, in particular concerns the social-value construct represented by the 'social image' and 'self-image' dimensions as discussed in Boo et al. (2009), Pike et al. (2010) and Evangelista and Dioko (2011).

Thus, we consider value-in-use as the dimension of the "judgements and feelings" brand building block and integrate destination-specific visitation benefits, such as emotional

(hedonic), social and epistemic value (Sheth et al. 1991; Holbrook 2006). The relationship between destination resources and value-in-use has been confirmed by Pike et al. (2010) as the positive influence of the quality of destination attributes on tourists' self-esteem and social recognition. However, on a broader scale, this relationship derives from the inherent means-end logic of destination resources transformed into desired customer benefits (Chi and Qu 2008; Yoon and Uysal 2005; Zabkar et al. 2010): This relationship is hypothesized as follows:

H2. The more positive the customers' perception of a) tangible, b) intangible, and c) social destination resources, the more positive the customers' perception of value-in-use

Three previous studies isolated value-for-money as a separate brand equity dimension (Boo et al. 2009; Evangelista and Dioko 2011; Bianchi et al. 2014). The construct belongs to the judgements and feelings brand building block and is consistent with the functional (economic) value, which Sheth et al. (1991) and Holbrook (2006) identify as part of customers' perceived value. Moreover, from the service marketing perspective (Vargo and Lusch 2004; Grönroos 2008), price-based value constitutes the value-in-exchange and considers customers' own resources used as inputs in the service process. Customers' resources, however, include not only money, but also time, efforts and skills (Fuchs 2004; Chen and Tsai 2007; Moeller 2010). Although the relationship between customers' perception of destination attributes and value-for-money has not yet been tested as part of the CBDBE model, Chen and Tsai (2007) empirically confirm that attribute-based trip quality has a strong and positive impact on perceived value in terms of money, time and effort. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3. The more positive the customers' perception of a) tangible, b) intangible and c) social destination resources, the more positive the customers' perception of value-for-money

The study at hand follows Konecnik and Gartner (2007), Pike et al. (2010), Chen and Myagmarsuren (2010), Im et al. (2012) and Bianchi et al. (2014) when specifying destination loyalty as an attitudinal concept. Thus, the intention to revisit and recommend the destination as well as the destination preference are included in the model. Like Boo et al. (2009), Kim et al. (2009), Pike et al. (2010), Chen and Myagmarsuren (2010), Im et al. (2012), Kladou and Kehagias (2014) and Bianchi et al. (2014), the following hypotheses, which reflect the relationships between the "judgments and feelings" dimensions and destination loyalty, are formulated:

H4. The more positive customers' perception of value-in-use, the stronger the loyalty to a destination

H5. The more positive customers' perception of value-for-money, the stronger the loyalty to a destination

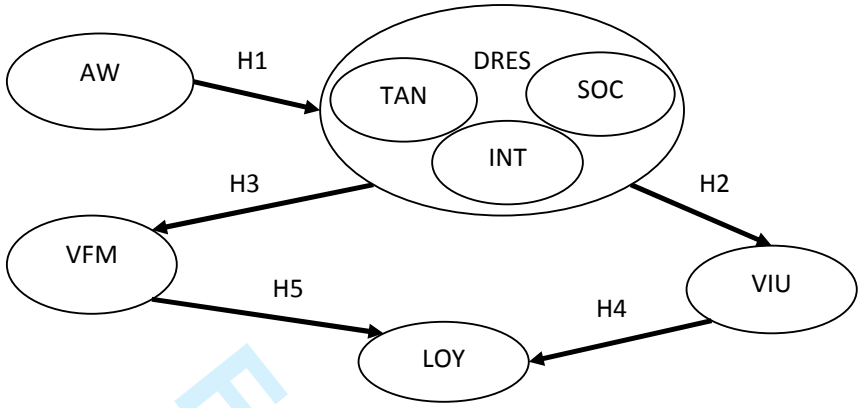

Figure 2. The Conceptual Model and Hypotheses to be tested

AW – awareness; DRES – destination resources; TAN – tangible destination resources; INT – intangible destination resources; SOC – social destination resources; VIU –value-in-use; VFM – value-for-money; LOY - loyalty

PILOT STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN

A pilot study was designed for international tourists with previous experience of the Swedish mountain destination Åre. Åre is the leading Swedish ski tourism destination which is actively expanding on international markets.

Previous studies focused primarily on top-of-mind aspects of awareness (e.g., Konecnik and Gartner 2007; Boo et al. 2009; Pike et al. 2010). However, Aaker (1996) points out that top-of-mind is difficult to measure when consumers already have direct product experience. This study, therefore, adopts metrics of brand knowledge and brand presence from Lehmann, Keller and Farley (2008) and formulates eight awareness items as statements to be rated on a five point Likert agreement scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

For tangible resources a total of 36 items ranging from 1=completely dissatisfied to 5=completely satisfied is deduced from the literature on ski destinations (Hudson and Shephard 1998; Weiermair and Fuchs 1999; Fuchs 2002; Faullant, Matzler, and Füller 2008; Komppula and Laukkanen 2009). Six intangible destination resource items and four social destination resource items are similarly deduced from previous studies (Yoon and Uysal 2005; Chen and Tsai 2007; Konecnik and Gartner 2007; Chi and Qu 2008; del Bosque and Martin 2008; Faullant et al. 2008; Zabkar et al. 2010) and are refined based on a content analysis of Åre-specific marketing communications and publications in media as well as customers' narratives in blogs (Creswell 2009). The item-rating ranges from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

Conceptualization of tourists' value-in-use of destination visitation is limited to the emotional (hedonic) value of destination visitation, assuming that hedonic value is of primary importance for alpine ski tourism (Holbrook 2006). However, we acknowledge that the scope of value-in-use of destination visitation is broader and, may include social value as well as

other types of value dimensions (Sheth et al. 1991; Crompton 1979). The construct is operationalized by four emotional value items for ski destinations (Klenoski, Gengler, and Mulvey 1993). Value-for-money is operationalized by two items adopted from Boo et al. (2009) formulated as statements and rated on a five point Likert agreement scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Finally, the study adopts the three most common measures of destination brand loyalty found in previous destination brand equity studies, comprising of willingness to recommend and to come back to the destination as well as destination preference as the measure of destination attachment (Konecnik and Gartner 2007; Boo et al. 2009). Loyalty items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

English, Swedish and Russian questionnaires were prepared by native speakers, thus, addressing the main target markets of the Swedish ski destination Åre. A pre-test with 44 students allowed a split-half test to check for item-reliability (Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson 2010). Finally, a web-survey was implemented to reach international guests after their visit to the destination. Target markets were examined using the number of overnight stays reported by the stakeholders SkiStar Åre and Holiday Club Åre, which represents approximately 96% of the international guest-base. Findings justified a proportional-stratified sampling strategy: e-mails were randomly selected from CRM-databases of these stakeholders for each sample strata. As the goal was an accuracy of 95% at a significance level of 5%, target sample size was n=384 (Creswell 2009).

In total, 5,668 web survey invitations were disseminated. Data was anonymously collected between April and May 2010. Final number of completed questionnaires is N=387 (response rate = 9%). The share of missing values was highest for items measuring tourists' perception of tangible attributes. This can be explained by the service heterogeneity characteristics, implying that only core destination components are used by most respondents. Thus, items

with more than 10% of missing-values were removed, resulting in an exclusion of 25 out of 36 tangible attribute-items. From a theoretical point of view, the removal of items illustrates a great degree of heterogeneity between consumers in terms of the combination of utilized resources as emphasized by Moeller (2010).

As suggested by Hair et al. (2010), missing-value imputation for resource variables was performed through means substitution. For the remaining variables, a list-wise deletion of cases with missing-values was applied. As a result, the number of usable cases is 248. Z-score-examination revealed outliers ($z > 3.29$) being substituted with "the next highest score plus one" (Field 2005, 116). This type of score substitution affected 17 out of 34 items. The number of adjusted scores varied from 1 to 4 per item and, therefore, did not exceed 2% per item.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (VariMax) examined factor structure, communalities, KMO-criteria and Cronbach's Alpha separately for those model constructs which could potentially have underlying dimensions, including tangible destination resources (two factors emerged, labelled "Skiing" and "Service"), intangible destination resources (one factor), social destination resources (one factor), destination awareness (one factor). Three destination awareness items with factor loadings below 0.5 were dropped from the analysis, namely "Åre has a good reputation", "I have heard about Åre from friends and relatives", and "I often find information about Åre on the internet" (Hair et al. 2010).

As discussed by Hair et al. (2010, 712), the removal of 20% of measurement items represents an acceptable level of measurement model adjustment and, thus, allows further model testing with remaining data. Therefore, in addition to model testing with data collected during the pilot study, the study has been replicated to collect new data and re-test the model.

PILOT STUDY RESULTS AND MODEL DEVELOPMENT

In a first methodological step, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed using the AMOS (v.21) software package to test the constitutive measurement constructs of the proposed CBDBE model. Unidimensionality of the specified measurement model was examined (Hair et al. 2010). All loadings (regression weights) were statistically different from zero and all t-values higher than 1.96. However, overall model-fit revealed that most fit-statistics were slightly below recommended thresholds (Brown 2006). Thus, the measurement model was slightly adjusted. Examination of standardized loadings (< 0.50), standardized residuals (> 2.58) and modification indices suggested the removal of three items ("Åre is a luxury winter resort", "Åre is a famous site for international winter sports competitions" and "Åre is known as one of the world's top ski resorts"). Additionally, Discriminant Validity analysis suggested the need to increase the extracted variance for the "Skiing" factor, which was achieved by removing the items "Safety in the ski area" and "Transportation at the mountain area". As a result, model-fit improved substantially (Table 3). Although Goodness of Fit Index (GFI = 0.878) is still slightly below the recommended threshold, all indexes satisfy cut-off requirements (Steenkamp and Baumgartner 2000). Moreover, the model shows satisfactory measurement results (Table 4).

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

INSERT TABLE 4 HERE

More precisely, Composite Reliability (CR) supports the model as all CR-values rank above the threshold-value of 0.7 (Hair et al. 2010). All estimates are significant (t-values > 1.96) and show high values (standardized loadings > 0.50). Squared-Multiple-Correlation

(SMC) demonstrates respectable portions while Average Variance Extracted (AVE) amounting at values of 0.5 (or higher) indicates convergent validity (Hair et al. 2010; Nunkoo, Ramkissoon, and Gursoy 2013). Finally, results confirm Convergent Validity, as indicators of the latent constructs share high proportions of common variance. Overall, CFA results are satisfactory: Convergent Validity is confirmed, while Discriminant Validity is attested for most model dimensions (Table 5).

INSERT TABLE 5 HERE

As a next step, the measurement model is transformed into a structural model to test the hypothesized relationships between validated CBDBE model-constructs (Reisinger and Turner 1999). A linear structural equation model (SEM) using maximum likelihood (ML) estimation is applied (Hair et al. 2010). The goodness-of-fit statistics for the path model, however, do not fully satisfy recommended thresholds (GFI = 0.773; RMSEA = 0.084 [LL 0.078; UL 0.091]; SRMR = 0.21; Normed-Chi-Square ($\chi 2$/df) = 2.76 (1002.94/363); TLI = 0.83; CFI = 0.85; AGFI = 0.73). Furthermore, not all hypothesized paths are statistically significant. Particularly, relationships between awareness and intangible attributes, the influence of intangible attributes on both value-in-use and value-for-money perception as well as the influence of social destination resources on value-for-money turned-out to be non-significant.

However, examination of modification indices revealed that the model fit is substantially improved by allowing theoretically plausible correlations between the four destination resource dimensions. Thus, in the revised model (figure 3) “Skiing” (SKI), “Service” (SER), “Intangible destination resources” (INT) and “Social destination resources” (SOC) constitute the sub-dimensions of the second-order construct DRES (“Destination resources”). As a

result of this model revision, the Goodness-of-Fit statistics reach a satisfactory level: GFI = 0.83; RMSEA = 0.065 (LL 0.058; UL 0.072); Normed-Chi-Square ($\chi 2$/df) = 2.04 (750.65/368); SRMR = 0.077; TLI = 0.90; CFI = 0.91; AGFI = 0.80.

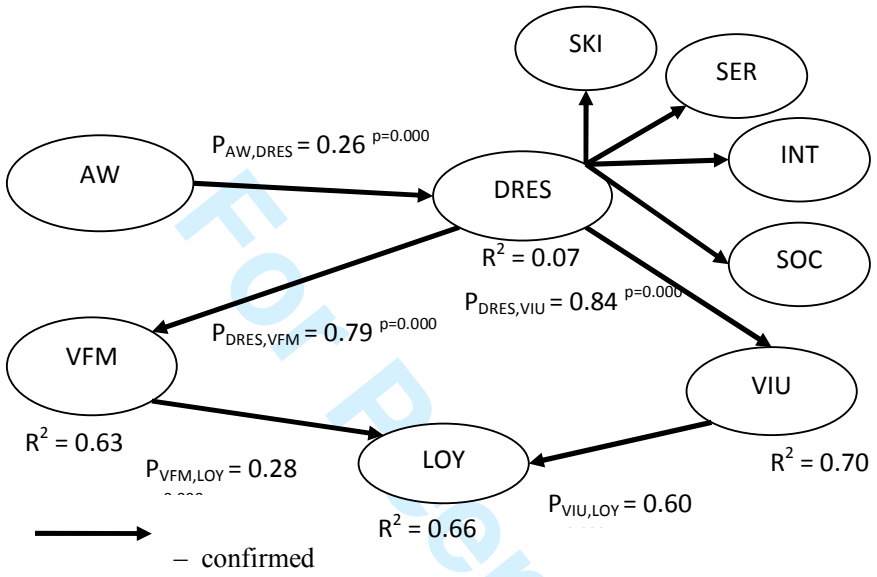

Figure 3. Standardized path estimates for the revised CBDBE structural model

AW – awareness; DRES – destination resources; SKI – tangible resources/skiing; SER – tangible resources/service; INT – intangible destination resources; SOC – social destination resources; VIU –value-in-use/emotional value; VFM – value-for-money; LOY - loyalty

Loadings pertaining to the four sub-dimensions of the second-order construct DRES are all statistically significant and vary from 0.675 for "Intangible destination resources" to 0.812 for "Social destination resources". The AVE Value for the DRES construct amounts at 0.59

(Hair et al. 2010). All proposed relationships between the model constructs are statistically significant (Table 6).

INSERT TABLE 6 HERE

To conclude, the hypothesized hierarchical structure of the proposed CBDBE model could be empirically confirmed. Thus, the test approach can be considered as plausible, reliable and valid (Hair et al. 2010). However, in order to re-test the model, the survey instrument is improved prior to collection of new sample data. Particularly, customers' perception of tangible, intangible and social destination resources are consistently operationalized on the basis of similar measurement scales.

REPLICATION STUDY RESULTS

In order to re-test reliability and robustness of the proposed CBDBE model, new customer data was collected during July-August 2013. The survey instrument was slightly modified, thus, a satisfaction scale was employed to measure the intangible and social destination resources and value-for-money. In order to address the issue of missing values and to re-test the model without missing value replacement, the guest-base was extended to both domestic and international visitors of the Swedish ski destination Åre in the winter season 2012/2013. In total, 23,243 e-mails from the CRM-databases of four major accommodation providers, including Skistar Åre, Holiday Club Åre, Copperhill Mountain Lodge Åre and Tott Hotell Åre, were disseminated. A reminder was sent out two weeks after the first invitation. While 3,013 respondents started the survey, resulting in a 13% response rate, 1,984 individuals completed the survey. Respondents who answered all the 29 measurement items of the CBDBE model made up the sub-sample for repeat model testing (n=752). The first effort to validate measurement constructs by CFA, again, produced fit statistics slightly below recommended thresholds (Brown 2006). Examination of standardized residuals (> 2.58) revealed the need to remove the social resource item "Friendliness and professionalism of employees". Additionally, results from Discriminant Validity analysis indicate the need to increase the extracted variance of the "Service" construct, which is achieved by removing the "Overall quality of accommodation" item with the lowest loading score. The performed adjustments resulted in a substantial improvement of the model fit (GFI = 0.896; RMSEA = 0.061 (LL 0.057; UL 0.065); SRMR = 0.062; $\chi 2/df = 3.781$ (1119.302/296); TLI = 0.93; CFI = 0.94; AGFI = 0.87. The Normed-Chi-Square statistic slightly above the threshold value ($\chi 2/df = 3.781$) may, however, be neglected due to the relatively large sample size (Hair et al. 2010).

Moreover, the measurement model shows satisfactory measurement results (Table 7). First, the values for Composite Reliabilities (CR) approve the model and CR values rank well above the recommended threshold amounting at 0.7. Estimated regression weights (factor loadings) are relatively high and significant. Particularly, all t-values are above 1.96 varying from 14.177 to 48.278; all standardized loadings are greater than 0.50 (varying between 0.541 and 0.961), whilst most of the standardized loadings exceed 0.7. Squared Multiple Correlations (SMC) demonstrate respectable portions. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ranks well above the recommended threshold value amounting at 0.5. Convergent Validity of the construct measurement is confirmed as indicators of latent construct are sharing a relatively high proportion of common variance (Hair et al. 2010). Additionally, the standardized loadings for the DRES second-order construct are all statistically significant and vary from 0.70 to 0.91. SMC values vary from 0.49 to 0.82, construct reliability is at the level of 0.86 and the AVE value amounts to 0.62.

INSERT TABLE 7 HERE

Table 8 shows the result of Discriminant Validity evaluation which is fully confirmed for all proposed model constructs. Thus, the results of the CFA are satisfactory as both Convergent and Discriminant Validity are confirmed (Hair et al. 2010). As the next step, the validated measurement model is transformed into a structural model (Figure 4).

INSERT TABLE 8 HERE

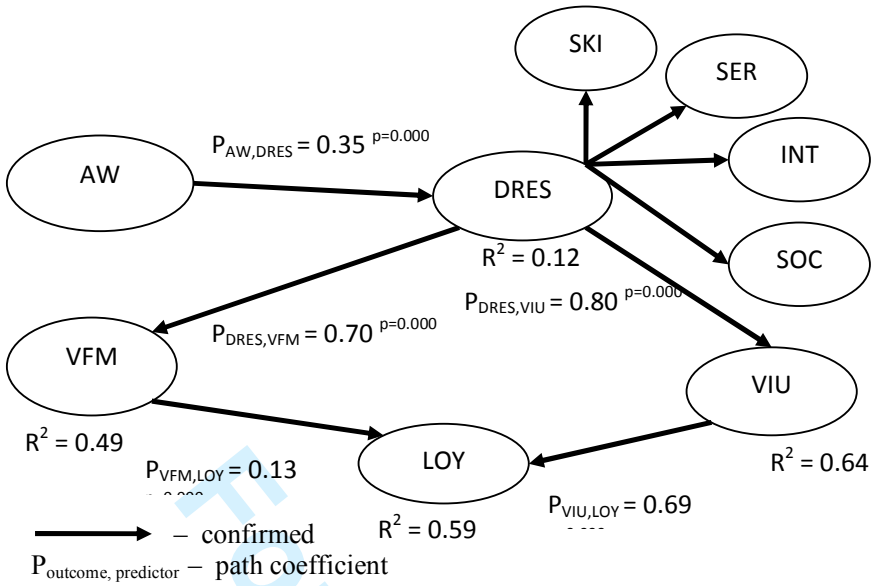

Figure 4. Standardized path estimates for the revised CBDBE Structural Model (Replicated study)

AW – awareness; DRES – destination resources; SKI – tangible resources/skiing; SER – tangible resources/service; INT – intangible destination resources; SOC – social destination resources; VIU –value-in-use/emotional value; VFM – value-for-money; LOY - loyalty

Goodness-of fit statistics for the path model are all satisfactory (GFI = 0.874; RMSEA = 0.066 (LL 0.063; UL 0.070); SRMR = 0.076; $\chi 2/df = 4.291$ (1351.587/315); TLI = 0.92; CFI = 0.93; AGFI = 0.85). The AVE value for the DRES construct amounts at 0.60 (Hair et al. 2010). All hypothesized relationships between model constructs are statistically significant (Table 9). The hierarchical structure of the CBDBE model has been

repeatedly confirmed, thus, demonstrating high reliability and empirical robustness of the proposed destination brand equity modelling approach (Hair et al. 2010).

INSERT TABLE 9 HERE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research contributes to the development of knowledge on transferring the concept of customer-based brand equity to a tourism destination context (Konecnik and Gartner 2007; Boo et al. 2009; Pike et al. 2010). The proposed CBDBE model was repeatedly tested for the leading Swedish ski destination Åre with data from international tourists visiting Åre (winter season 2009/2010) and a second sample consisting of domestic and international tourists (winter season 2012/2013). Results from a repeated test confirmed the hierarchical structure and demonstrated reliability and empirical robustness of the proposed CBDBE model. The explanation power of the CBDBE model is high and Squared Multiple Correlations (SMC) for destination value-in-use and loyalty exceed the value of 0.50 for both tourist samples. Similarly, the chain of causal relationships between customers' perception of destination resources, value-in-use and destination loyalty is strong and significant across both samples.

Findings are in line with previous research (Konecnik and Gartner 2007; Boo et al. 2009; Pike et al. 2010) and confirm the multidimensional nature of the tourism destination brand equity model which integrates the concepts of destination brand awareness, attribute-based perception of image and quality of tourism destinations, value-for-money and destination loyalty as isolated CBDBE model constructs.

Examination of the hypothesized relational structure within the CBDBE model confirmed previous findings regarding relationships between destination awareness and tourists' perception of tangible, intangible and social destination resources (Pike et al. 2010; Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010; Kladou and Kehagias 2014). However, this relationship is consistently weak and its contribution towards explaining tourists' perception of destination resources is only minor. Moreover, this study repeatedly confirms the significant, strong and positive relationship between tourists' perception of destination resources and destination value-in-

use. This finding is in line with prior studies' results demonstrating the positive influence of attribute-based destination image and quality on tourists' perception of desired destination benefits (Chi and Qu 2008; Chen and Tsai 2007; Klenosky 2002; Pike et al. 2010; Yoon and Uysal 2005; Zabkar et al. 2010). Similarly, the relationship between customers' perception of destination resources and value-for-money is significant, strong and in line with the traditional conceptualization of consumer value as the interplay between consumers' benefits and sacrifices (Zeithaml 1988).

The confirmation of the hypothesis that destination value-in-use is a direct antecedent of destination loyalty is, indeed, an important finding which has not been previously discussed in the literature. Nevertheless, the result is in line with studies demonstrating that overall judgements of destination performance and the consistency of destination image with the tourist's own image positively influence destination brand loyalty (Boo et al. 2009; Im et al. 2012; Kladou and Kehagias 2014; Pike et al. 2010).

Finally, the study confirms the relationship between value-for-money and destination loyalty (Chen and Tsai 2007). However, the relationship is comparatively weak, thereby, indicating that under certain circumstances, the evaluation of sacrifice is only a minor factor in the process of destination loyalty formation.

Theoretical implications

This study corroborates the assumption that the integration of the value-co-creation perspective into the destination brand equity framework provides an adequate extension to better understand the relationship-building process between tourists and destination brands by taking into consideration the complex and multidimensional nature of destinations as well as the heterogeneous consumption patterns of tourist segments (Moeller 2010). As the main theoretical contribution of this study, the inner core of the CBDBE model has been

conceptualized as the "perceived destination promise" depicting customers' evaluation of the service process comprising the resources offered by the destination and the transformation of these resources into customers' value-in-use (Vargo and Lusch 2008). Hence, this study introduced value-in-use as a new isolated CBDBE dimension.

This study emphasizes the need to understand the destination-specific and customer (i.e. segment) specific benefits of destination visitation by considering the unique, experiential and contextually dependent nature of value-in-use (Vargo and Lusch 2008). Most importantly, the findings support the co-creation logic behind the destination value promise to provide destination resources and to transform them into emotional values for tourists (Moeller 2010; Sheth et al. 1991). Therefore, findings also corroborate the conceptual distinction between value-in-use and value-in-exchange (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008).

Moreover, study findings bring up the discussion about the role destination awareness plays in the brand equity formation process, particularly in situations where tourists have already visited the destination (Milman and Pizam 1995). As Gartner and Konecnik Ruzzier (2011) reveal, the awareness dimension is more important for the renewal market compared to the repeat market. Therefore, the focus on customers which already visited the destination clarifies the rather low explanation power of the awareness construct in our study.

Similarly, the significant but weak relationship between value-for-money and destination loyalty is in line with the concept of the zone-of-tolerance (Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman 1996). This implies the existence of critical levels of sacrifices which may influence tourists' behavior in case of a negative or positive service perception.

This study solely integrates monetary sacrifices (value-for-money). However, as emphasized by Fuchs (2004) and Moeller (2010), there exist additional types of tourists' sacrifices, such as time required for travelling to the destination and physical efforts which

should be integrated in future CBDBE models following the logic of the value-co-creation as highlighted in this study.

To conclude, although the presented study empirically confirms the overall hierarchical structure of the proposed CBDBE model, the inner composition of the core model dimension "perceived destination promise" and its measurement remains a challenging task for future research, as it requires a better understanding of destination-specific consumption patterns across various tourism segments. Therefore, further empirical examination is required to validate the complex nature of CBDBE constructs as well as theoretically grounded relationships between these constructs.

Managerial implications

The proposed CBDBE model rests upon a resource-based view of marketing strategy (Fuchs 2004; Palmer 2010; Zabkar et al. 2010; Moeller 2010). This implies that for the most effective destination management, knowledge on the co-creative nature of unique destination experiences made by various customer segments is of utmost importance (Ek et al. 2008; Moeller 2010). By tracking awareness, tourists' perceptions of tangible, intangible and social destination resources for various customer segments, value-in-use of destination stay, value-for-money and attitude-based loyalty, the brand equity model can be successfully utilized as a tool for brand monitoring, diagnostics and the implementation of effective brand development strategies.

As a managerial tool, the brand equity model proposed and validated in this paper clearly separates between value-in-use and value-for-money as drivers behind customer loyalty. This study finds that value-in-use affects loyalty to a larger extent than value-for-money. Managers cannot directly control value-in-use and value-for-money, which represent the customer's perception of the benefits and sacrifices of a destination stay. However, the study

exemplifies the complexity of destination consumption by tourists and shows the transformation process of tangible, intangible and social resources into value-in-use and value-for-money, which now can be better understood and controlled. It enables destination managers to effectively implement brand development strategies by formulating segment-specific value propositions, which include respective destination resources relevant for customers' expected value outcomes of a destination stay (Vargo and Lusch 2008). By doing so, managers can effectively build customer loyalty. For instance, for winter tourists of the Swedish mountain destination Åre, skiing, service quality, intangible destination resources, such as family-friendliness, tidiness and safety and interaction with other tourists, serve as the main resource inputs to the generation of emotional value for a destination stay. The study also showed the importance of key emotional value dimensions, such as fun, thrill and variety. Thus, the amplifying relationship between resources and value-in-use will be communicated through the destination brand.

Managerial relevance of the proposed customer-based brand equity goes beyond brand communication development, as it also provides opportunities for discovering promising innovation potentials. Insights obtained by applying the CBDBE model in an empirical context translate into a valuable source of customer-based knowledge and, therefore, represent an important element of organizational learning and innovation in tourism destinations (Fuchs, Höpken, and Lexhagen 2014).

The proposed CBDBE model enables destination managers to measure customers' brand perceptions on different stages of the brand value co-creation process and, ultimately, the measurement of the value of the destination brand. Particularly, the model integrates customers' evaluation of various brand messages associated with the destination brand. However, beyond brand messages controlled by the destination management (e.g. promotion campaigns, online and offline destination information provided by the destination

management organization, tourism firms operating at the destination, as well as travel agencies), there are uncontrolled and unplanned brand messages, such as information in "various media channels (TV, magazines and newspapers), social media (e.g. online communities and customers' review websites, such as TripAdvisor) and word-of-mouth from family members, friends and acquaintances.

Furthermore, destination managers and marketers can evaluate the brand's ability to promise value to customers and to facilitate this value by guiding tourists on how to assemble (configure), use, and interpret destination resources during their destination stay. Hence, the model provides managers with a tool to evaluate the individual contribution of destination stakeholders (e.g. hotels, restaurants, activity providers etc.) in creating the total destination experience of tourists' visitation.

The proposed CBDBE model enables the evaluation of the destination brand's ability to encourage existing and potential customers to establish and maintain stable and mutually beneficial relationships with the destination brand and to identify the nature, strength and stability of these relationships. However, a current brand equity evaluation reflects both the past and the future of the brand, and, is thus, only the first step in the long-term process of (destination) brand value creation (Keller and Lehmann 2009). Hence, a longitudinal measurement of destination brand performance should be considered in a managerial context.

Limitations and future research

For the study at hand, the following limitations were identified. Notably, alternative aspects of customers' benefits, such as social value, remained outside the model. Another limitation arises from testing the model only for actual visitors. Moreover, operationalization of destination brand awareness needs improvement, as there is a need to properly conceptualize the construct of destination awareness relevant to both, repeat, new and

potential customers, respectively. Although not yet intensively discussed in the literature (Konecnik and Gartner 2007) but supported by the findings of this study, the CBDBE dimension "awareness" can be assumed to be relatively more important for a destination at the national level (i.e., country's tourism brand). By contrast, for local or regional destination brands, functional characteristics become more critical.

Analysis of discriminant validity suggests the need to further strengthen the destination loyalty construct operationalization. For future research, we propose to further develop the theoretical conceptualization of destination brand loyalty as the endogenous CBDBE model construct. In particular the construct should combine items reflecting both the degree of cognitive and affective attachment to the brand, future purchase intentions and the extent of using the brand when communicating to other customers, searching for information and responding to promotion activities (Back and Parks 2003; Oliver 1999; Keller 2008).

Further limitations refer to the issues of study design and data collection and, specifically, a relatively high number of missing values. The high share of missing values, however, is not merely a measurement problem, but rather illustrates the complexity of the consumption process across different tourism segments. Interestingly, only few resources are commonly utilized, thus, experienced by customers. This observation is in line with the nature of both value-in-use (Vargo and Lusch 2004; Grönroos 2008) and the service co-creation process (Moeller 2010). Nevertheless, additional exploration of survey data is necessary to identify valuable customer segments based on consumption patterns during destination stay (Park and Almeida Santos 2016).

To increase the generalizability of the findings for (mountain) destinations, we propose to re-test the model for different seasonal products and validate the model for different markets (a priori segments) in terms of country of origin, age groups and travel group composition as well as for customer segments based on homogeneous destination activity patterns (a-

posteriori segments). Furthermore, we recommend to test the CBDBE model for other destinations, including destinations at higher geographical aggregate levels (e.g. provinces or countries).

Future research should also consider the time dimension in CBDBE modelling, as the hierarchy of the CBDBE model dimensions inherently reflects stages of relationship development between tourists and destination brands (Keller 2009; Park and Almeida Santos 2016). Finally, ethical aspects of brand relationship building were left beyond the scope of this study. However, ethical aspects are embedded within the value-co-creation paradigm (Vargo and Lusch 2008). As discussed by Williams and Aitken (2011), value-co-creation implies mutual dependency and reciprocal exchange, thus, it is the result of differences in goals and desires of economic actors. Goals and desires, vary because actors have different access to resources and different values and judgments about what is 'good' and 'bad'. In contemporary digital societies characterized by a heavy use of social media, failure to make ethically sound decisions spread globally in near-real time and have immediate impact on brand value. Thus, global connectedness implies that target audiences for marketing communications have expanded far beyond the traditional set of potential customers. Indeed, everyone has the power to amplify or weaken the value of a (destination) brand in accordance to the coherence of brand-related messages.

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Table 1. Comparison of CBBE measurement models in previous tourism destination studies

Previous Study	Brand Building Blocks			
	I. Brand Salience (*Identity*)	**II. Performance and Imagery (*Meaning*)**	**III. Judgments and Feelings (*Response*)**	**IV. Brand Resonance (*Relationships*)**
Bianchi et al. 2014	- Brand salience	- Quality	- Image - Value	- Loyalty
Boo et al. 2009	- Awareness	- -	- Image - Quality - Experience (revised model) - Value	- Loyalty
Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010	- Awareness	- Image - Quality	- Satisfaction (*)	- Loyalty (*)
Evangelista and Dioko 2011	- -	- -	- Image - Performance - Trust - Value	- Attachment

Ferns and Walls 2012	-	Awareness	-	Image - Quality - Experience (revised model)	-	-	- Loyalty - Visit intention (*)
Garcia et al. 2012	-	Presented Brand (*) - Awareness (*)	-		-	Brand meaning (*) - Quality	- Loyalty Word-of-mouth
Horng et al. 2012	-	Awareness	-	Image - Quality	-	-	- Loyalty - Travel intentions (*)
Im et al. 2012	-	Awareness	-	Image	-	Brand associations	- Overall Brand Equity - Loyalty

(*) The construct is included into the respective study but it is considered outside of the CBBE model

Table 2. Summary of findings in previous tourism destination brand equity studies

Relationships between Brand Building Blocks (BbB)	Hypothesis tested	Findings	Destination Brand Equity Study by
Brand salience (BbB I) → Performance and Imagery (BbB II)	AST → Pqatt	post-hoc confirmed	Kladou and Kehagias 2014
	AW → IMatt	confirmed	Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010
	AW → PQatt	confirmed	Kladou and Kehagias 2014; Pike et al. 2010
		n.s.	Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010
Brand salience (BbB I) → Judgements and Feelings (BbB III)	AW → BA	confirmed	Kladou and Kehagias 2014
	PB → BM	confirmed	Garcia, Gomez and Molina 2012;
	AW → EX	confirmed	Boo et al. 2009
	AW → IM	confirmed	Pike et al. 2010
	AW → V	n.s.	Boo et al. 2009
Brand salience (BbB I) → Brand resonance (BbB IV)	*AW → LOY*	confirmed for 2 out of 3 samples	Bianchi et al. 2014
		n.s.	Im et al. 2012
		post-hoc confirmed	Pike et al. 2010
	AW → VI	confirmed	Ferns and Walls 2012; Horng et al. 2012

	AW → *OBE*	confirmed	Im et al. 2012
Performance and Imagery (BbB II) → Judgements and Feelings (BbB III)	PQatt → IM	post-hoc confirmed	Pike et al. 2010
	PQatt → SAT	confirmed	Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010
	IMatt → SAT	n.s.	Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010
Performance and Imagery (BbB II) ← Judgements and Feelings (BbB III)	PQatt → BA	post-hoc confirmed	Kladou and Kehagias 2014
Performance and Imagery (BbB II)→ Brand resonance (BbB IV)	IMatt → LOY	confirmed	Im et al. 2012
		n.s.	Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010
	IMatt → VI	confirmed	Horng et al. 2012
	IMatt → OBE	n.s.	Im et al. 2012
	PQatt → LOY	confirmed	Kladou and Kehagias 2014; Pike et al. 2010
		n.s.	Bianchi et al. 2014; Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010
	PQatt → VI	confirmed	Horng et al. 2012
	EXatt → VI	confirmed	Ferns and Walls 2012
Judgements and Feelings (BbB III) → Brand resonance (BbB IV)	BA → LOY	confirmed	Kladou and Kehagias 2014; Im et al. 2012
	IM → LOY	confirmed	Bianchi et al. 2014; Boo et al. 2009; Pike et al.

		2010
PQ → LOY	confirmed	Boo et al. 2009
V → LOY	confirmed confirmed for 1 out of 2 samples; confirmed for revised model	Bianchi et al. 2014 Boo et al. 2009
EX → LOY	n.s.	Boo et al. 2009
BA → OBE	confirmed	Im et al. 2012
SAT → LOY	confirmed	Chen and Myagmarsuren 2010
SAT → VI	confirmed	Kim et al. 2009
SAT → WtS	confirmed	Kim et al. 2009

AST – brand assets; AW – awareness, PQatt – perceived quality of destination attributes; IMatt – attribute-based image; BA – brand associations; PB – Presented brand; BM – brand meaning; EX – destination experience; IM – social image and self-image; V – value-for-money; LOY – loyalty; VI – intention to (re)visit; OBE – overall brand equity; SAT – satisfaction; EXatt – experience of destination attributes; PQ – perceived destination quality; WtS – willingness to spend money

Table 3. CBDBE Measurement Model: CFA Goodness-of-Fit Statistics

Indicator [Threshold value]	Statistic value
Absolute Fit Measures	
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) [>0.90]	0.852
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.058
[<0.08: acceptable fit; < 0.05: good fit]	
90 percent confidence interval for RMSEA [0.05;0.08]	(0.051; 0.065)
Standardized root mean residual (SRMR) [<0.08]	0.059
Normed-Chi-Square (χ2/df) [<2]	640.09/349=1.834
Incremental Fit Indices	
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) [>0.90]	0.92
Comparative Fit Index (CFI) [>0.90]	0.93
Parsimony Fit Indices	
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) [>0.80]	0.81

Table 4. CBDBE Measurement Model: Test Statistics

Construct	Scale Item		Reliability	Std. Loadings	*t*-Value (CR)	SMC	AVE
Awareness (*AW*)	AW1	I see a lot of ads about Åre	0.85	0.871	-*	0.758	0.66
	AW2	I often read about Åre in newspapers and magazines		0.898	14.326	0.807	
	AW3	Many people know the Åre ski resort		0.638	10.764	0.407	
Tangible destination resources. Skiing (*SKI*)	SKI1	Snow reliability	0.85	0.622	-	0.387	0.60
	SKI2	Number and variety of ski slopes		0.753	9.505	0.567	
	SKI3	Overall quality of alpine skiing		0.840	10.329	0.705	
	SKI5	Overall quality of skiing experience		0.859	10.483	0.738	
Tangible destination resources. Service (*SER*)	SER1	Overall quality of accommodation (e.g., hotel, cabin, apartment)	0.80	0.699	-	0.489	0.50
	SER2	Service level of the staff in accommodation facilities		0.702	10.011	0.492	
	SER3	Quality of food and beverages		0.712	9.457	0.507	
	SER4	Service level of the staff in restaurants and bars		0.715	9.422	0.512	
Intangible destination resources (*INT*)	INT1	Åre has a peaceful and restful atmosphere	0.85	0.654	-	0.427	0.55
	INT2	Åre is family-friendly		0.803	10.729	0.645	
	INT3	Åre is clean and tidy		0.875	11.019	0.766	
	INT4	Åre is safe and secure		0.775	10.145	0.600	
	INT6	Landscape and scenery are beautiful in Åre		0.538	7.528	0.289	

Social destination resources (*SOC*)	SOC1	Employees were friendly and professional	0.79	0.767	-	0.589	0.50
	SOC2	I liked the behavior of other tourists		0.579	8.315	0.336	
	SOC3	It was easy to interact and communicate with other tourists		0.698	10.245	0.488	
	SOC4	Local people were hospitable and friendly		0.754	11.439	0.568	
Value-in-use. Emotional value (*VIU*)	VIU1	Åre is a thrilling winter destination	0.89	0.807	14.435	0.651	0.68
	VIU2	Åre offers various winter experiences		0.828	13.973	0.685	
	VIU3	Åre offers fun and excitement		0.854	14.696	0.729	
	VIU4	Åre brings you the joy of achievement		0.806	-	0.650	
Value-for-money (*VFM*)	VFM1	Compared to other destinations, visiting Åre is good value-for-money	0.90	0.959	17.339	0.919	0.83
	VFM2	Overall, Åre as a skiing destination has reasonable prices		0.855	-	0.731	
Loyalty (*LOY*)	LOY1	I will come back to Åre in winter within 2 years	0.83	0.768	-	0.589	0.61
	LOY2	I consider Åre to be my first choice of a ski resort		0.803	12.821	0.644	
	LOY3	I will encourage friends and relatives to visit Åre in winter		0.781	11.318	0.611	

*- indicates: paths fixed to one to estimate parameters

Table 5. Discriminant validity of the CBDBE model measurement scale

	AW	SKI	SER	INT	SOC	VIU	VFM	LOY
AW	**0.660**							
SKI	0.067	**0.600**						
SER	0.019	0.251	**0.500**					
INT	0.004	0.295	0.334	**0.550**				
SOC	0.019	0.323	0.714	0.456	**0.500**			
VIU	0.094	0.517	0.426	0.255	0.389	**0.680**		
VFM	0.095	0.460	0.356	0.255	0.343	0.476	**0.830**	
LOY	0.107	0.521	0.318	0.183	0.275	0.612	0.468	**0.610**

Note: the bold diagonal elements show AVE values; off-diagonal elements show squared correlations between model constructs

Table 6. Structural parameter estimates for the revised CBDBE model

Structural Relationships	Unstandardized Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	*t*-Value	Standardized Parameter Estimate
H1: AW → DRES	0.119	0.035	3.447	0.265
H2: DRES → VIU	1.192	0.148	8.045	0.841
H3: DRES →VFM	1.335	0.170	7.876	0.794
H4: VIU → LOY	0.816	0.117	6.985	0.596
H5: VFM → LOY	0.119	0.035	3.447	0.265

Table 7. CBDBE Measurement Model: Replicated Test Statistics

Constructs	Scale items	Composite Reliability	Standardized Loadings	t Value (CR)	SMC	AVE
Awareness	AW1	0.79	0,878	-*	0,771	0.57
	AW2		0,805	18,914	0,649	
	AW3		0,541	14,177	0,292	
Tangible destination resources. Skiing	SKI1	0.87	0,620	-	0,384	0.64
	SKI2		0,822	17,787	0,675	
	SKI3		0,856	18,257	0,733	
	SKI5		0,870	18,443	0,757	
Tangible destination resources. Service	SER2	0.79	0,621	-	0,386	0.56
	SER3		0,799	15,651	0,638	
	SER4		0,806	15,647	0,650	
Intangible destination resources	INT1	0.86	0,736	-	0,542	0.56
	INT2		0,790	20,764	0,624	
	INT3		0,768	20,272	0,591	
	INT4		0,808	21,177	0,652	
	INT6		0,638	17,21	0,407	
Social destination resources	SOC2	0.89	0,933	-	0,870	0.74
	SOC3		0,961	48,278	0,924	
	SOC4		0,655	21,751	0,429	
Value-in-use. Emotional value	VIU1	0.92	0,870	29,623	0,756	0.75
	VIU2		0,858	30,297	0,736	
	VIU3		0,887	30,641	0,787	
	VIU4		0,845	-	0,714	

Value-for-money	VFM1	0.91	0,942	29,338	0,887	0.84
	VFM2		0,893	-	0,798	
Loyalty	LOY1	0.87	0,731	-	0,534	0.69
	LOY2		0,858	23,131	0,736	
	LOY3		0,889	22,807	0,791	

*- indicates: paths fixed to one to estimate parameters

Table 8. Discriminant Validity of the CBDBE model measurement scale (Replicated study)

	AW	SKI	SER	INT	SOC	VIU	VFM	LOY
AW	**0,57**							
SKI	0,046	**0,64**						
SER	0,097	0,234	**0,56**					
INT	0,081	0,392	0,493	**0.56**				
SOC	0,039	0,175	0,309	0,464	**0,74**			
VIU	0,158	0,477	0,378	0,497	0,218	**0,75**		
VFM	0,048	0,212	0,289	0,392	0,356	0,275	**0,84**	
LOY	0,083	0,496	0,213	0,324	0,142	0,573	0,245	**0,69**

Note: the bold diagonal elements show AVE values; off-diagonal elements show squared correlations between model constructs

Table 9. Structural parameter estimates for the revised CBDBE model (Replicated study)

Structural Relationships	Unstandardized Parameter Estimate		Standard Error	*t*-Value	Standardized Parameter Estimate
H1: AW → DRES	0,145	0,02	7,244	0,145	0,352
H2: DRES →VIU	1,528	0,116	13,221	1,528	0,798
H3: DRES →VFM	1,702	0,142	11,95	1,702	0,698
H4: VIU → LOY	0,724	0,047	15,411	0,724	0,690
H5: VFM → LOY	0,108	0,029	3,679	0,108	0,131

Dear Prof. Crouch,

Thank you very much for careful reviewing process and valuable advice on how to develop the manuscript. We are submitting the revised version of the manuscript with the following changes being made:

- the phrase “black box” has been removed from both the abstract and the main body of the paper;
- the manuscript has been reduced by about 700 words;’
- the manuscript has been proof-read by a native English speaker;
- we have carefully revised the references in the manuscript and in the reference list;
- by following the artwork guidelines, we inserted the figures in the body of the manuscript (all figures are created in MS Word). All tables remain in the end of the manuscript;
- we have slightly revised the list of keywords.

Yours sincerely,

The authors