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EXTENDING THE TOURISM DESTINATION IMAGE CONCEPT INTO CUSTOMER-BASED BRAND EQUITY FOR A TOURISM DESTINATION

Abstract

This paper explores the demand-side perspective on tourism destination phenomenon and investigates whether more comprehensive measure for its evaluation could be applied to the destination brand. Unlike many previous studies dealing mostly with a tourism destination image concept, the approach employed in this paper proposes a more comprehensive measure of destination image and includes the dimensions of tourism destination awareness, quality, and loyalty. The theoretically proposed model was empirically verified for two competitive European tourism destinations (Slovenia and Austria) from the perspective of two culturally heterogeneous tourist markets (Germans and Croatians). The results imply that the traditionally investigated image concept represents the most important dimension in a destination's evaluation. However, for a more comprehensive evaluation the dimensions of tourism destination awareness, quality and loyalty should be added. Drawing on the results, the paper also offers some implications for tourism organizations in developing and implementing destination marketing strategies in foreign markets.

JEL classification: M31, M39

Key words: brand, destination, image, tourist, customer-based brand equity

1. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt, among academics and practitioners alike, that the investigation of a demand-side perspective on the tourism destination is of strategic importance for destination in order to obtain a competitive and sustainable position in the market (Konecnik Ruzzier, 2010; Uravić and Šugar, 2009). The concept of demand-side perspective on tourism destination has not, however, been uniquely defined and operationalised in the literature. Most tourism destination studies investigate it through the concept of tourist destination image, which has a dynamic and fruitful research history (Hunt, 1975; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Gartner, 1993; Baloglu, 2001; Gallarza, Gil and Calderon, 2002; Konecnik, 2004).

Latest research literature suggests, that tourism destination can be treated as a brand (Cai, 2002; Morgan and Pritchard, 2002; Olins, 2002; Konecnik and Gartner, 2007; Konecnik and Ruzzier, 2008; Konecnik Ruzzier, 2010). The question arises whether its evaluation, from the customer's perspective, can be similar to what is proposed in the branding literature. The demand-side perspective on the branding concept has mostly been introduced through the concept of customer-based brand equity (hereafter: CBBE) (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993) which has been viewed as comprising several dimensions. Within these studies, brand image represents one dimension but it is not the only one.

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The main purpose of this paper is to examine whether a more comprehensive approach to a tourism destination brand's evaluation is necessary. In the process of doing so the subject of an appropriate measurement instrument for analyzing the tourism destination brand is also addressed. During this investigation we seek to confirm the role of the tourism destination image dimension, as the most critical for the CBBETD concept, as indicated by previous studies. Therefore, a theoretically proposed model is tested via an empirical investigation of two competitive European tourism destination brands (Slovenia and Austria) from the perspective of two culturally heterogeneous tourist markets (Germany and Croatia).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1. TOURISM DESTINATION IMAGE

A significant amount of effort has been devoted to presenting and analyzing the complex nature of the tourism destination image concept. The concept has been intensively investigated over the last three decades (Gunn, 1972; Hunt, 1975) and today remains one of the prevalent topics among tourism researchers (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a and 1999b; Baloglu, 2001; Pike, 2002; Gallarza, Gil and Calderon, 2002). While various authors have been unable to accept a common definition, they do share a common opinion, namely that a tourism destination image plays an extremely important role in tourists' destination evaluation and selection processes. This important role has not been confined to the academic community but also involves many destination practitioners who in their investigations have sought answers to support further destination marketing strategies.

Although, so far, there has been no consensus on a general theoretical and empirical conceptualization of the destination image concept (Gallarza, Gil and Calderon, 2002), much work has been done in the area of its conceptualization (Gartner, 1993; Gallarza, Gil and Calderon, 2002) and operationalization (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Gallarza, Gil and Calderon, 2002). Especially the latter, making the concept operational, has been the subject of many tourism destination image studies, which have utilized an empirical perspective (Pike, 2002). Empirically-based destination image studies offer numerous attribute-based variables for image operationalization, which have already been systematically reviewed by many authors (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Mazanec, 1994; Gallarza, Gil and Calderon, 2002).

Unlike the systematic overview of attribute-based image variables (Mazanec, 1994; Gallarza, Gil and Calderon, 2002), none of the recent analyses explicitly mentioned that previous image investigations could also have possibly included a quality dimension. This argument was proposed by Baker and Crompton (2000:788), who stated that 'much of the image research reported in tourism measures perceptions of quality of a destination's attributes'. This argument is partly supported by the image concept investigation conducted by Baloglu and McCleary (1999a:881), where the 'quality of experience' represents one of the factors in conceptualizing the image construct. Another quality indicator is also evident from examining the influence of price on image evaluation. Price has been included as one of the attribute-based variables in many destination image investigations (Crompton, 1979; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Baloglu and Mangaloglu, 2001; Konecnik, 2002). The marketing literature has treated the price category as one of the important quality extrinsic cues (Olson, 1977).

2.2. CUSTOMER-BASED BRAND EQUITY

The marketing literature has investigated the demand-side perspective on the branding phenomenon through the customer's evaluation of brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Yoo and Donthu, 2001). As a relatively newly developed construct, the concept of CBBE has

attracted great interest in the last fifteen years (Barwise, 1993; Vazquez, del Rio and Iglesias, 2002). One of the most commonly accepted definitions of the CBBE concept was introduced by Keller, who defined it 'as the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand' (Keller, 1998: 45). Following the same author, brand knowledge is conceptualized according to an associative network memory model in terms of two dimensions, brand awareness and brand image. During this time, many valuable contributions regarding CBBE have been made, but several authors still recognize the absence of a general theoretical framework (Vazquez, del Rio and Iglesias, 2002) and agreement on how it should be measured (Yoo and Donthu, 2001). Unlike the previous level of versatility of measurement instruments, some efforts leading to an adjustment of brand equity measures are recognized. These steps are evident in analyses (Faircloth, Capella and Alford, 2001; Yoo and Donthu, 2001 and 2002) based on Aaker (1991) and Keller's (1993) categorization. Combining both approaches of the leading CBBE authors, we follow the line of researchers (Aaker, 1991; Yoo and Donthu, 2001) who claim that the customer's evaluation of a brand comprises awareness, image, quality, and loyalty dimensions.

All the presented measures are categorized in the so-called indirect approach (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993), which attempts to assess the potential sources of CBBE. On the contrary, the direct approach attempts to measure CBBE by assessing the impact of brand equity on the consumer's response to different marketing elements. The most useful approaches for directly assessing customer-based brand equity are 'blind' tests or conjoint or tradeoff analysis. Although the indirect and direct approaches are, for Keller (1993), complementary and should be used together, in our work we shall limit ourselves to the indirect approach, which fulfills all the criteria in which we are interested.

2.3. CUSTOMER-BASED BRAND EQUITY FOR A TOURISM DESTINATION

Contrary to numerous studies dealing with the tourism destination image concept (which also include a quality dimension), the other two dimensions have been less intensively studied. Tourism destination awareness has mostly been investigated within the topic of the destination selection process (Goodall, 1993). These studies argue that awareness is a first and necessary step leading to destination visitation, but it is not a sufficient one (Milman and Pizam, 1995). Destination loyalty has only attracted little interest within the volumes of tourism destination research. Oppermann (2000) shares the same opinion in his seminal work on tourism destination loyalty in which he argues that the loyalty dimension should not be neglected when examining tourism destination selection and performance. Some previous studies about tourism destination customer performance have only partly incorporated the loyalty dimension (Gitelson and Crompton, 1984; Bigne, Sanchez and Sanchez, 2001; Kozak, 2001).

However, not all recent tourism destination studies have employed all the proposed dimensions, although all dimensions have been the subject of some (i.e. loyalty) or numerous (i.e. image) previous tourism destination investigations. Many authors have combined the other proposed dimensions with the most investigated concept, destination image. For example, Milman and Pizam (1995) combined the concept of destination image with the awareness dimension. Tourism destination awareness has mostly been investigated within the topic of the destination selection process (Goodall, 1993; Sirakaya, McLellan and Uysal, 1996). These studies argue that awareness is a first and necessary step leading to destination visitation, but it is not a sufficient one (Milman and Pizam, 1995). Further, Bigne, Sanchez and Sanchez (2001) combined image with a quality dimension and added some variables investigating attitudinal loyalty. Other studies about tourism destination customer performance have partly incorporated the loyalty dimension (Gitelson and Crompton, 1984;

Fakeye and Crompton, 1991). In addition studies have investigated the relationship between image and attitudinal or behavioral loyalty variables (Milman and Pizam, 1995; Chen and Kerstetter, 1999; Woodside and Dubelaar, 2002) and Oppermann (2002) argues that the loyalty dimension should not be neglected when examining tourism destination selection and performance.

Studies, that combines more dimensions of the brand equity concept for a tourism destination, have been published just recently (Pike, 2007; Konecnik and Ruzzier, 2008; Boo, Busser and Baloglu, 2009; Pike, 2009).

3. METHODOLOGY
3.1. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL

What these previous tourism destination studies indicate is that a relationship between the proposed dimensions does exist, although the influence of each dimension on CBBE may not be the same. Therefore the following hypotheses were proposed to guide the direction of this study.

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive and significant relationship between the proposed dimensions of the CBBETD concept.

Hypothesis 1a: There is a positive and significant relationship between tourism destination awareness and tourism destination image.

Hypothesis 1b: There is a positive and significant relationship between tourism destination awareness and perceived quality.

Hypothesis 1c: There is a positive and significant relationship between tourism destination awareness and loyalty.

Hypothesis 1d: There is a positive and significant relationship between tourism destination image and perceived quality.

Hypothesis 1e: There is a positive and significant relationship between tourism destination image and loyalty.

Hypothesis 1f: There is a positive and significant relationship between perceived quality and loyalty.

Hypothesis 2: The level of the CBBETD is positively related to the extent to which dimensions are perceived by tourists.

Hypothesis 2a: The level of the CBBETD is positively related to the extent to which a tourist is aware of a tourism destination.

Hypothesis 2b: The level of the CBBETD is positively related to the extent to which a tourist has a positive image of a tourism destination.

Hypothesis 2c: The level of the CBBETD is positively related to the extent to which a tourist's perception of the quality dimension is positive.

Hypothesis 2d: The level of the CBBETD is positively related to the extent to which a tourist is loyal to a particular destination.

Hypothesis 3: Tourism destination image represents the core dimension of the CBBETD.

Figure 1.
   Conceptual model of the customer-based brand equity of a tourism destination
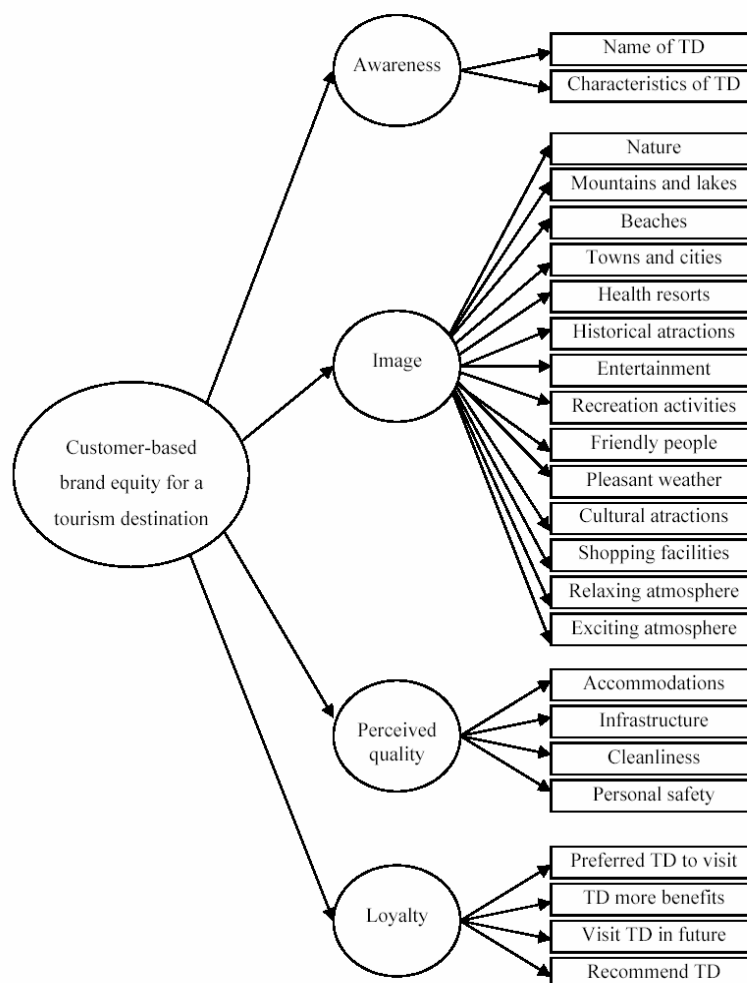
We propose a conceptual model of the customer-based brand equity for a tourism destination, consisting of four dimensions: awareness, image, perceived quality and loyalty, which represent first-order factors, whereas the CBBETD represents a second-order factor (Figure 1). The conceptual model proposed that relationships between dimensions exist and that the importance of each dimension for the second order factor, CBBETD, is not the same. The estimated values between measured variables and latent factors (so called first order factors, which are named as CBBE dimensions in our paper) and between first-order factors (CBBE dimensions) and second-order factor (CBBE) are for all four sub samples presented in Table 3 and Table 7.

3.2. OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE VARIABLES

For operationalisation of the awareness variables authors from marketing (Yoo and Donthu, 2002) and tourism area (Milman and Pizam, 1995) were considered. The tourism destination image, which also included the quality dimension, has been the subject of many empirical studies in tourism research (Hunt, 1975; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Gartner, 1986 and 1989; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a and 1999b; Gallarza, Gil and Calderon, 2002; Konecnik, 2002 and 2004). Operationalization of the brand loyalty dimension was achieved according to the suggestions of leading author in the marketing area (Oliver, 1996) as well as authors, who investigated this dimension within tourism destination studies (Gitelson and

Crompton, 1984; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Oppermann, 2000; Bigne, Sanchez and Sanchez, 2001). The detailed review of source of scale development is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Source of scale development for the customer-based brand equity dimension for a tourism destination

DIMENSION	SOURCE OF SCALE DEVELOPMENT
Tourism destination awareness	Milman and Pizam (1995) Yoo and Donthu (2002)
Tourism destination's image	Hunt (1975) Echtner and Ritchie (1993) Baloglu and McCleary (1999a and 1999b) Gallarza, Gil and Calderon (2002) Konecnik (2002 and 2004)
Tourism destination's perceived quality	Hunt (1975) Echtner and Ritchie (1993) Baloglu and McCleary (1999a and 1999b) Baker and Crompton (2000) Gallarza, Gil and Calderon (2002) Konecnik (2002 and 2004)
Tourism destination's loyalty	Gitelson and Crompton (1984) Fakeye and Crompton (1991) Oliver (1996) Oppermann (2000) Bigne, Sanchez and Sanchez (2001)

Content analyses from a preliminary qualitative research exercise was an additional source used for operationalisation of the variables. First, in-depth interviews with potential tourists from the generating markets was conducted. Twelve potential tourists were encouraged to participate in the interviewing process in April 2003. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. Content analysis was conducted independently by two researchers. The main purpose of the research was to identify the dimensions (awareness, image, quality, loyalty) Specifically, the research helped us with dividing traditionally proposed image attribute-based variables into variables presenting both the image and quality dimensions (Konecnik, 2010). Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with destination managers and marketers. Final variable selection was performed after both in-depth interview exercises were completed. Finally, scale refinement in line with experts' opinions, was performed to prepare the survey instrument for delivery. After careful review of all the previously mentioned information sources the final CBBETD scale consisting of five awareness, sixteen image, ten quality and seven loyalty variables for investigating each of the four proposed dimensions was developed.

3.3. THE STUDY INSTRUMENT

The study instrument was developed in English. Its wording and the face validity of the questions were examined by three other marketing and tourism destination area researchers. After that, the study instrument was translated into the German language by two bilingual experts fluent in both English and German. The verbal equivalence between the German and English versions was checked through a back-translation with another bilingual translator

(Brislin, 1976). Some adjustments were made for the final version of the study instrument. The same procedure was repeated for the Croatian version of the questionnaire.

The study instrument had four parts. In the first and second parts, questions about proposed CBBE dimensions for both investigated tourism destinations (Slovenia and Austria) were posed. Since a primary objective was to obtain the opinions of respondents who have at least some minimal knowledge of the investigated country, a filter question was employed at the beginning of the questionnaire. Only those respondents who were familiar with the countries of Slovenia and Austria were asked to continue. In the third part, questions comparing both destinations were included. The fourth part of the study instrument dealt with the socio-demographic characteristics and travel profiles of the respondents.

The study instrument only employed closed questions. For each proposed dimension (awareness, image, perceived quality and loyalty) a separate set of variables was used. The variables were measured using a 5-point Likert type scale anchored by the statements 1 = 'strongly disagree' and 5 = 'strongly agree'.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

With the aim to verify the theoretically proposed model and test the separate hypotheses, structural equation modeling (SEM) was selected as the most appropriate method of analysis (Bollen, 1989; Zabkar, 1999). As a prior step to the SEM technique, exploratory factor analyses were conducted. EQS software was used for conducting confirmatory factor analysis. Because the primary goal was to estimate relationships among dimensions and among variables, second-order confirmatory factor analysis was employed (Byrne, Baron, Larsson, Melin, 1995).

4. RESULTS
4.1. SAMPLE

Because the CBBE concept is analyzed for two tourism destination brands (Slovenia and Austria) from the viewpoints of two potential groups of tourists (German and Croatian), all our analyses are made on four sub samples: CBBE for Slovenia as a tourism destination involving German respondents (hereafter: CBBE SLOG); CBBE for Slovenia as a tourism destination involving Croatian respondents (hereafter: CBBE SLOC); CBBE for Austria as a tourism destination involving German respondents (hereafter: CBBE AUSG); and CBBE for Austria as a tourism destination involving Croatian respondents (hereafter: CBBE AUSC).

The final sample consisted of 806 respondents, including 402 respondents in the German market and 404 respondents in the Croatian market. Telephone interviews were performed by a professional research agency in the German and Croatian markets at the end of June and beginning of July 2003. Individuals aged older than 18 years were invited to participate in the survey. These individuals represent the potential tourist population of both analyzed destinations – Slovenia and Austria. Simple random samples in both markets were ensured. Therefore, it is assumed that the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents reflect the characteristics of the whole population in the German and Croatian markets (Table 2).

Table 2.
Socio-demographic characteristics of German and Croatian respondents

GERMAN RESPONDENTS	Percent	CROATIAN RESPONDENTS	Percent
GENDER		GENDER	
Male	46.3	Male	48.0
Female	53.7	Female	52.0
AGE		AGE	
18-24 years	6.7	18-24 years	17.3
25-34 years	18.9	25-34 years	22.8
35-44 years	27.6	35-44 years	20.8
45-54 years	21.1	45-54 years	18.8
55-64 years	14.4	55-64 years	10.9
More than 65 years	10.7	More than 65 years	9.4
No answer	0.5		
EMPLOYMENT STATUS		EMPLOYMENT STATUS	
Employed	58.5	Employed	55.0
Self-employed	5.7	Self-employed	3.7
Student/scholar	5.0	Student/scholar	8.4
Retired	15.9	Retired	15.6
Housewife/Unemployed	13.9	Housewife	5.2
No answer	1.0	Unemployed	12.1
EDUCATION		EDUCATION	
Primary school (9 years)	25.9	Unfinished primary school	0.2
Secondary school	29.9	Primary school (8 years)	6.4
Grammar school	21.6	Secondary school (3 years)	19.1
University degree	22.1	Grammar school (4 years)	42.3
No answer	0.5	University degree	31.2
		Master's or PhD degree	0.7
PERSONAL INCOME		PERSONAL INCOME	
To 500 EUR	8.2	To 1200 kn	5.7
From 500 to 1000 EUR	15.4	From 1201 to 2000 kn	11.1
From 1000 to 1500 EUR	15.7	From 2001 to 4000 kn	31.2
From 1500 to 2000 EUR	16.9	From 4001 to 6000 kn	20.3
From 2000 to 2500 EUR	8.2	More than 6000 kn	9.9
From 2500 to 3000 EUR	4.0	Without personal income	19.1
From 3000 to 3500 EUR	1.2	No answer	2.7
From 3500 to 4000 EUR	2.2		
More than 4000 EUR	2.7		
Without personal income	10.0		
No answer	15.4		

German respondents (n=402)
Croatian respondents (n=404)
EUR – German currency (Euro); Kn – Croatian currency (Kunas)

Because it was decided to employ in the analysis only those respondents who had heard of the investigated destination, data analysis was conducted on the four sub groups of the sample population: SLOG (n=376), SLOC (n=401), AUSG (n=395) and AUSC (n=404).

4.2. EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

In all four exploratory factor analyses, principal axis factoring (PAF) and the Oblimin rotation method were used. The number of CBBETD dimensions to be extracted was determined *a priori* on the basis of the theoretical background – four. We were able to explain 55% (AUSC) to 61% (AUSG) of the variance according to the initial eigenvalues and somewhat lower percentage of variance were explained (44% to 50%) after the Oblimin rotation. The appropriateness of exploratory factor analyses was determined by examining the correlation matrix of CBBE variables. Barlett's test of sphericity showed that the correlation matrix has significant correlations (significant at 0.000 for all variables as well as retained variables in all four samples). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy indicated similar results. This measure varied from 0.84 (AUSC) to 0.90 (SLOG and SLOC), which indicates good or even very good sampling adequacy.

The four-factor solution was consistently found in each sample. Except in a few cases, the previously suspected variables loaded on the right factors. This was consistently repeated for all samples. The final list of variables for proposed factors was based on a consideration of the variables communality index and its factor loadings. Following the suggestions of previous authors, variables with a factor loading of at least 0.4 were retained for further investigation. In selecting the variables we also followed the rule that the difference in loading (between the right factor in comparison to another factor) should be at least 0.2. The number and list of retained variables is identical for awareness (three variables), quality (five variables) and loyalty (four variables) dimensions, whereas the number of important variables varied for the image dimension varied depending on the sub sample (i.e. from five variables in the sample AUSC, to ten variables in the samples SLOG and SLOC).

4.3. MEASUREMENT MODEL

A confirmatory factor analysis was made on all four investigated sub-samples. All CBBETD variables had positive, high and significant coefficients (Table 3).

The results suggest that the CBBETD consists of tourism destination awareness, image, quality and loyalty dimensions. The revealed dimensions in the four investigated sub-samples confirmed that both the German and Croatian markets held similar perceptions of Slovenia and Austria for the awareness, quality and loyalty dimensions. Destination awareness in the minds of potential tourists mostly involves destination name recognition, as well as the ability to recall some characteristics of the destination. In addition, the CBBETD is strongly influenced by the quality dimension, especially with respect to cleanliness, accommodation opportunities, infrastructure and personal safety. Further, the loyalty dimension consists of all the proposed four attitudinal loyalty variables, which described the investigated destination as one of the preferred destinations to visit, as a destination that provides more benefits than others, intention to visit the destination in the future and intention to recommend it to friends or relatives. Although the same variables were recognized for each sub-sample, their relative impact on each sub-sample's dimensions was not the same.

Unlike the perception of the awareness, quality and loyalty variables in the minds of German and Croatian respondents, the image variables perception, especially for Slovenia, was not the same. Slovenia's image in the minds of the German market is a combination of natural attractions (i.e. beautiful nature, mountains and lakes, good beaches, good opportunities for recreation activities) and its 'active' image component (interesting historical and cultural attractions, nightlife and entertainment, and people's friendliness) in lovely towns and cities. Further, the 'active' image component in Slovenia's towns and cities was also perceived highly by Croatian respondents and was, contrary to its natural attractions,

combined with Slovenia's affective component (pleasant weather, relaxing and exciting atmosphere). In a similar way the Germans' and Croatians' image perceptions of Austria are built on the variables of Austria's lovely towns and cities, its interesting historical and cultural attractions, as well as its good nightlife and entertainment opportunities. The 'active' image component (excluding people's friendliness) was again perceived similarly by both groups of respondents. In addition, health resorts represent an important image perception of Austria in the eyes of German and Croatian respondents. The sole difference existed with respect to the perception of Austria's good opportunities for recreation activities, which only had a strong influence on Croatian respondents.

Table 3.

Standardized solution for the variables

VARIABLE	DIMENSION	Standardized solution			
		SLOG	SLOC	AUSG	AUSC
Name of TD	AW	0.78	0.81	0.81	0.76
Characteristics of TD	AW	0.57	0.59	0.70	0.76
Beautiful nature	IM	0.70			
Beautiful mountains and lakes	IM	0.67			
Good beaches	IM	0.58			
Lovely towns and cities	IM	0.73	0.72	0.80	0.63
Modern health resorts	IM			0.66	0.58
Interesting historical attractions	IM	0.65	0.68	0.65	0.56
Good nightlife and entertainment	IM	0.44	0.51	0.51	0.59
Good opportunities for recreation activities	IM	0.67	0.60		0.66
Friendly people	IM	0.68	0.65		
Pleasant weather	IM		0.63		
Interesting cultural attractions	IM	0.59	0.64	0.71	0.62
Good shopping facilities	IM		0.55		
Relaxing atmosphere	IM		0.75		
Exciting atmosphere	IM		0.58		
High quality of accommodation	Q	0.76	0.68	0.70	0.72
High quality of infrastructure	Q	0.73	0.75	0.76	0.72
High level of cleanliness	Q	0.78	0.69	0.71	0.68
High level of personal safety	Q	0.64	0.66	0.56	0.52
One of the preferred destinations to visit	LO	0.75	0.78	0.76	0.62
Destination provides more benefits	LO	0.80	0.82	0.74	0.73
Visit destination in the future	LO	0.78	0.80	0.83	0.80
Recommend destination to friends	LO	0.87	0.86	0.92	0.74

All standardized solutions (standardized loadings) were statistically significant at 0.01 or a better probability level

Fit statistics for SLOG: $\chi^2 = 274.9^*$(df=146); $\chi^2/df = 1.88$; NFI = 0.95; NNFI = 1.03; CFI = 1.00; IFI = 1.03; MFI = 1.11; GFI = 0.98; AGFI = 0.98; SRMR = 0.05; RMSEA = 0.00

Fit statistics for SLOC: $\chi^2 = 446.9^*$(df=164); $\chi^2/df = 2.72$; NFI = 0.94; NNFI = 1.00; CFI = 1.00; IFI = 1.00; MFI = 1.01; GFI = 0.98; AGFI = 0.98; SRMR = 0.05; RMSEA = 0.00

Fit statistics for AUSG: $\chi^2 = 165.9^*$(df=84); $\chi^2/df = 1.98$; NFI = 0.96; NNFI = 1.01; CFI = 1.00; IFI = 1.01; MFI = 1.02; GFI = 0.99; AGFI = 0.98; SRMR = 0.04; RMSEA = 0.00

Fit statistics for AUSC: $\chi^2 = 240.6^*$(df=98); $\chi^2/df = 2.45$; NFI = 0.91; NNFI = 0.97; CFI = 0.97; IFI = 0.97; MFI = 0.94; GFI = 0.97; AGFI = 0.96; SRMR = 0.06; RMSEA = 0.04

*Probability value for the χ^2 statistic is 0.00000

The fit indexes (Table 3) indicate an excellent level of fit for all four models. Except for the measure of the χ^2 statistic, where the significance level was no greater than 0.00 in all proposed models, all other investigated indexes reached the level needed for their acceptance. However, the results of further investigated indexes: Bentler-Bonett normed fit index (NFI), Bentler-Bonett nonnormed fit index (NNFI), comparative fit index (CFI), Bollen fit index (IFI), McDonald fit index (MFI), goodness-of-fit index (GFI) and adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) exceeded the suggested threshold of 0.90. In addition, the models are also accepted due to measures of standardized root mean square residuals (SRMR) and the root mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), with values less than 0.05.

The correlations among CBBE dimensions were all significant and ranged from 0.37 to 0.75, demonstrating convergence but not redundancy of the dimensions (Table 4). The highest correlations were recognized between image and quality dimensions (ranging from 0.58 to 0.75). The relationship between awareness and image dimensions as the highest correlation in the AUSC sample was the only exception.

Table 4.
Correlations among dimensions

	SLOG				SLOC				AUSG				AUSC			
	AW	IM	Q	LO	AW	IM	Q	LO	AW	IM	Q	LO	AW	IM	Q	LO
AW	1	0.52	0.46	0.58	1	0.46	0.38	0.42	1	0.49	0.49	0.52	1	0.63	0.42	0.37
IM		1	0.66	0.59		1	0.75	0.74		1	0.58	0.44		1	0.55	0.49
Q			1	0.63			1	0.63			1	0.48			1	0.50
LO				1				1				1				1

All correlations were statistically significant at 0.05 or a better probability level

Internal consistency measures were calculated with the aim of confirming the model's reliability and validity. On average, the CBBETD dimensions demonstrated good reliability (Table 5), which exceeded the threshold of 0.70. We calculated Cronbach alpha and composite construct reliability as our measures for checking the model's reliability. The suggested minimum criterion was not reached when examining Slovenia's awareness from both the German and Croatian market's point of view. However, this situation can be partly explained due to the small number of variables (two) included in the awareness dimension. For those scales consisting of a small number of items some authors have suggested (i.e. Pedhazur and Schmelkin, 1991) that the acceptable alpha limit is as low as 0.60 or 0.50.

Table 5.
Internal consistency measures of dimensions of the customer-based brand equity of a tourism destination

DIMENSION/SAMPLE	SLOG			SLOC			AUSG			AUSC		
	α	CRR	VE	α	CRR	VE	α	CRR	VE	α	CRR	VE
Awareness	0.64	0.64	0.47	0.67	0.68	0.50	0.73	0.74	0.57	0.73	0.74	0.58
Image	0.86	8.88	0.41	0.87	0.88	0.41	0.80	0.82	0.45	0.78	0.79	0.38
Quality	0.79	0.80	0.49	0.76	0.78	0.44	0.74	0.76	0.42	0.73	0.75	0.41
Loyalty	0.84	0.85	0.57	0.86	0.86	0.60	0.86	0.87	0.60	0.79	0.81	0.48

α – Cronbach alpha
CCR – composite construct reliability
VE – variance extracted

The measure of variance extracted (Table 5) was found to be satisfactory (over the threshold of 0.50) in the awareness and loyalty dimensions and somewhat below the expected

level for the image and quality dimensions. Because this criterion of construct validity was not satisfactory for the image and quality dimensions, we compared the measures of variance extracted for the image and quality dimensions with the squared correlation between suspected dimensions and any other dimension. In comparisons of variance extracted and squared correlation between the image and quality dimensions, the higher measure of variance extracted was confirmed in a comparison with at least one suspected correlation, which indicates the acceptance of the model's discriminant validity. The only exception in this case was found in the sample of Slovenia's evaluation by Croatian respondents, where the measure of squared correlations between the image and quality dimensions (0.56) was greater than either the variance extracted for image (0.41) or quality (0.44) dimensions.

In addition to confirming the construct's multidimensionality and especially in confirming the discriminant validity of the four-factor model, we performed tests on the significant χ^2 differences between the two models. The significant χ^2 differences between the models confirmed the multidimensionality of the construct in each sample (Table 6). Further, χ^2 differences were also statistically confirmed in the three-factor model in comparison to the four-factor model (χ^2 difference is presented in column M2-M4). In our three-factor model, the dimensions of image and quality were combined. However, the results indicated that the improvement in the χ^2 difference according to degrees of freedom is substantial in the four-factor model in comparison to the three-factor model in all four examples. The appropriateness of the four-factor model was also confirmed in the sample of Slovenia's evaluation by Croatian respondents (χ^2 difference 91.8; df=3).

Table 6.
Measures of construct validity

χ^2 (df)/SAMPLE	SLOG	SLOC	AUSG	AUSC
M1	650.9*(df=152)	783.3* (df=170)	768.0* (df=90)	583.9* (df=104)
M2	274.9* (df=146)	446.9* (df=164)	165.9* (df=84)	240.6* (df=98)
M3		395.2* (df=150)	147.0* (df=75)	181.5* (df=88)
M1-M3	252.1* (df=133)	388.1 (df=20)	624.0 (df=15)	402.4 (df=16)
M2-M3	398.8 (df=19)	51.7 (df=14)	18.9 (df=9)	59.1 (df=10)
M4	22.8 (df=13)	538.7* (df=167)	321.5* (df=87)	357.1* (df=101)
M5	413.2* (df=149)	418.3* (df=150)	164.9* (df=75)	200.6* (df=88)
M1-M5		365.3 (df=20)	603.1 (df=15)	383.3 (df=16)
M4-M5	270.3* (df=133)	120.4 (df=17)	156.6 (df=12)	156.5 (df=13)
M2-M4	380.6 (df=19)	91.8 (df=3)	155.6 (df=3)	116.5 (df=3)
	142.9 (df=16)			
	138.3 (df=3)			

M1 – one-factor model

M2 – four-factor model
M3 – model with a common factor and 4 dimensions
M4 – three-factor model (image and quality are combined)
M5 – model with a common factor and three dimensions
M1-M3 and M1-M5: contribution of dimensions
M2-M3 and M4-M5: contribution of the common factor
M2-M4: contribution of the four-factor model
*Probability value for the χ^2 statistic is 0.00000

4.4. STRUCTURAL MODEL

The previous analysis revealed the presence of high correlations between the proposed dimensions, which often suggests the presence of a second-order general factor (Byrne, Baron, Larsson, Melin, 1995). The appropriateness of second-order factor analysis (fit indices, reliability and validity measures) remains the same as in the previously presented measurement model (Table 3 and 5). The second-order factor analysis represents the structural model because the first-order factors (awareness, image, quality and loyalty) are related to the higher-order factor (CBBETD). In this analysis, all covariations among awareness, image, quality and loyalty were considered as being explained by the common factor – CBBETD (Byrne, Baron, Larsson, Melin, 1995). In our analysis, all causal paths of the CBBETD measure to the dimension of awareness, image, quality and loyalty were significant at the 0.001 probability level and are presented in Table 7 in a standardized solution.

Table 7.

Standardized solution for dimensions

DIMENSION	2OF	Standardized solution			
		SLOG	SLOC	AUSG	AUSC
Awareness	CBBETD	0.66	0.49	0.71	0.68
Image	CBBETD	0.78	0.93	0.72	0.82
Quality	CBBETD	0.82	0.80	0.76	0.70
Loyalty	CBBETD	0.78	0.80	0.64	0.63

All standardized solutions (standardized loadings) were statistically significant at 0.001 or a better probability level
2OF – second-order factor

Image as the most important dimension of the CBBETD measure (Table 7) was confirmed in the Croatian evaluations of both investigated destinations. However, the quality dimension was recognized as the most important one in the eyes of German respondents. This relationship was confirmed for both tourism destinations Slovenia and Austria. Generally we can conclude that the relatively small differences between the standardized loadings or path coefficients for the CBBETD dimensions indicate the importance of all the proposed dimensions in the general factor of the CBBETD measure.

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Consistent with our expectations, the correlations among CBBETD dimensions were all significant and positive. Further, the highest correlations were recognized between the image and quality dimensions (except in the sample AUSC). At the same time, the high correlations between the proposed dimensions of awareness, image, quality and loyalty revealed the presence of a second-order factor, namely the CBBETD. The results indicate the importance of all the proposed dimensions in the CBBETD concept (Table 8).

Table 8.

Relationship between dimensions

HYPOTHESES		SLOG	SLOC	AUSG	AUSC	RESULTS
H1	Significant and positive relationship between CBBETD dimensions					
H1ab	AW ↔ IM (+)[a]	0.52[b]	0.46	0.49	0.63	Supported
H1ac	AW ↔ Q (+)	0.46	0.38	0.49	0.42	Supported
H1ad	AW ↔ LO (+)	0.58	0.42	0.52	0.37	Supported
H1bc	IM ↔ Q (+)	0.66	0.75	0.58	0.55	Supported
H1bd	IM ↔ LO (+)	0.59	0.74	0.44	0.49	Supported
H1cd	Q ↔ LO (+)	0.63	0.63	0.48	0.50	Supported
H2	Dimension of CBBETD related positively to CBBETD					
H2a	AW → CBBETD (+)[a]	0.66[b]	0.49	0.71	0.68	Supported
H2b	IM → CBBETD (+)	0.78	0.93	0.72	0.82	Supported
H2c	Q → CBBETD (+)	0.82	0.80	0.76	0.70	Supported
H2d	LO → CBBETD (+)	0.78	0.80	0.64	0.63	Supported
H3	Tourism destination image core dimension of CBBETD					
	Core dimension	Q	IM	Q	IM	Supported

AW – awareness; IM – image; Q – quality; LO – loyalty; CBBETD – customer-based brand equity of a tourism destination
a. Hypothesized direction of effect
b. Completely standardized estimates. All were significant at 0.05 or a better probability level.

Tourism destination image was recognized as the most important dimension in the investigated CBBETD concept. These results support previous research findings from numerous tourism destination image studies which treated tourism destination image as a pivotal factor in a tourism destination choice. In addition, the proposed model suggested that a tourism destination image plays an important role in destination evaluation, but it is not the only factor. For more complete perceptions of tourism destination phenomena in tourists' minds, the dimensions of awareness and loyalty should be taken into consideration.

In our empirical investigation of the CBBETD we separated the traditionally investigated concept of tourism destination image into image and quality dimensions. However, although the so-called traditionally investigated concept of a tourism destination image represents the core dimension in the CBBETD concept, our analysis of the four samples confirmed the differing importance of these two dimensions. Image as the most important dimension was found in Croatians' evaluations of the CBBETD concept, whereas quality was recognized as the core dimension in Germans' evaluations of the destinations Slovenia and Austria. When interpreting these results, we can speculate that this finding may also be connected with Germans' cultural specifics because Germans generally stress the importance of quality. At the risk of stereotyping it does appears that commonly held cultural beliefs may actually be warranted in some cases. At the very least cultural differences should be investigated when analyzing the CBBETD concept. Drawing on these research findings a further conclusion can be made. It is possible that tourists from less developed countries (in our example Croatians) still evaluate and choose a tourism destination primarily on their

image perception, whereas quality is becoming the most important dimension in tourism destination evaluations in more developed countries, especially when the developed country has a history of being a long haul market (e.g. Germany).

The concept of the CBBETD therefore suggests that (national) tourism organizations as well as other organizations responsible for destination marketing in foreign markets should bear in mind that a tourist's opinion of a destination consists of awareness, image, quality and loyalty dimensions. Strategic tourism destination marketing campaigns should be employed in order to increase tourist destination awareness, its image and quality perceptions, and consequently also the loyalty dimension. The awareness dimension should be carefully considered, especially when we dealing with unknown tourism destination brands. In this study it was revealed that awareness was behind the other dimensions in terms of importance. However it must be emphasized that no destination can succeed without market awareness and the countries investigated in this study share the same geographical space thus awareness was a given and would not be expected to be the most important dimension in the CBBETD concept for the two markets studied. This points out one of the benefits of using dimensional analysis for studying the CBBETD concept and that is customization of the marketing strategy for different generating markets.

For example promotional campaigns should emphasize tourism identity characteristics with an aim to have an impact on tourists' destination image and quality perceptions. Tourists' positive perceptions can lead to visiting a destination but only if awareness precedes image and quality.

The hypotheses that were presented as guiding this research must all be accepted as the evidence indicates all dimensions are important in customer evaluation of a destination the four dimensions are related and do combine to create the concept of the CBBETD. Further all dimensions do not necessarily have equal importance to the customer. Each market has its own characteristics and each destination has its own ratio of repeat/renewal visitation. Both are instrumental when deciding what dimensions of the CBBETD concept to emphasize in the destination promotion strategy.

6. CONCLUSION

The paper introduced the concept of CBBETD and in doing so addressed the literature on a destination's evaluation from a customer's perspective. From an empirically verified model, at least two further conclusions can be drawn. First, consistent with previous findings, it was confirmed that tourism destination image plays the most important role in a destination's evaluation. In addition, some insights into the separation of the traditionally investigated image concept into image and quality dimensions were provided. The results imply that, although general image attributes are the most important variables in a destination's evaluation, tourists in different countries may find different dimensions of the CBBETD concept important to them. In this study quality represents the most important criterion in the destination evaluated for the German market. Image was the most important dimension for the Croatian market even though both destinations (i.e. Slovenia, Austria) were the same for each. Second, although the traditionally investigated image represents the most important dimension in a tourist's destination evaluation, for a more comprehensive evaluation the dimensions of tourism destination awareness and loyalty should be added.

While the results of the empirically verified model imply that a comprehensive measurement instrument which contributes to previous findings on a customer's evaluation of a tourism destination has been developed, this study is not free of limitations. First, the measures of the CBBETD dimensions could be more refined and developed. Further studies should increase the number of awareness variables and thereby improve the reliability test for

the awareness dimension. At the same time additional investigations are needed in the area of separating the traditionally investigated image concept into the proposed image and quality dimensions. Second, for improved generalizability of the proposed model additional tourism destinations as well as target groups of tourists should be investigated. It would be particularly interesting to investigate the different types of tourism destinations from the perspective of even more heterogeneous groups of tourists. Finally, and most importantly, although the extensive literature review undertaken for this study led to the development of four dimensions of the CBBETD concept their may be more. The emergence of four was predicted as the operational variables chosen all related to one of the dimensions. Further study may reveal the existence of even more dimensions than those revealed in this paper.

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ŠIRENJE KONCEPTA IMIDŽA TURISTIČKE DESTINACIJE U ROBNU MARKU TURISTIČKE DESTINACIJE U OČIMA POTROŠAČA

SAŽETAK

Ovaj članak istražuje fenomen turističkih destinacija s persepktive potražnje i proučava da li bi iscrpniji postupci ocjenjivanja mogli biti primijenjeni na robnu marku destinacije. U usporedbi s prijašnjim studijama, koje su se uglavnom bavile konceptom imidža turističke destinacije, u ovom su članku postupci ocjenjivanja imidža destinacije iscrpniji i uključuju dimenziju svjesnoti, kvaliteta i odanosti turističkoj destinaciji. Teoretski predložen model empirički je provjeren na dvjema konkurentnim Europskim turističkim destinacijama (Sloveniji i Austriji) s perspektive dviju kulturno heterogenih turističkih tržišta (njemačko i hrvatsko). Rezultati su pokazali da tradicionalno istraživanje koncepta imidža predstavlja najvažniju dimenziju pri ocjeni destinacije. Ipak, za što iscrpniju ocjenu ne smijemo zaboraviti na svjesnost, kvalitet i odanost turističkoj destinaciji. Naslanjajući se na rezultate, članak nudi nekoliko implikacija turističkim organizacijama glede razvoja i primjene tržišnih strategija turističke destinacije na stranim tržistima.

JEL: M31, M39

Ključne riječi*: marka, destinacija, imidž, turist, robna marka u očima potrošača*