

Testing the cross-brand and cross-market validity of a consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) model for destination brands



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Tests the structure of a consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) model.
- Tests if the same CBBE model is valid for different destination brands.
- Tests if the same CBBE model is valid for different market segments.
- Identifies differences in model structure for different destination brands and markets.
- Recommends conceptual and methodological remedies for a robust CBBE model.

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ABSTRACT

Different studies on consumer/customer-based brand equity (CBBE), have revealed varying pictures of components and divergent relationships. The current study analyzed a large dataset with path analysis to test: 1) the validity of a general CBBE model (familiarity, image, quality, brand value, consumer value, and loyalty); 2) the validity of a customer model (+satisfaction) using data for a single destination brand; 3) the cross-brand validity of the general model for five U.S. destination brands; and 4) the cross-market validity of both models for different segments based on nationality, gender, and past visitation. The results revealed that familiarity and image were the two most prominent components explaining loyalty in both models, although both consumer value and brand value also had some mediating effects on loyalty. The model was variant for different destinations, variant for different nationalities, partially variant for different genders, and invariant for visitors and non-visitors of one destination brand.

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1. Introduction

As an important factor affecting the financial equity and stability of brands, perceptual equity from consumer and customer perspectives, known as consumer- or customer-based brand equity (CBBE), has received ample attention in many different fields. The groundwork for CBBE was set in the early 90s by Aaker (1991, 1992, 1996) and Keller (1993, 2003), who suggested several components and measures that have been adopted, modified, tested, and re-tested for over two decades. In fact, the most commonly-used CBBE components – awareness/familiarity, associations/image, quality, value, satisfaction, and loyalty – have long been investigated as separate and distinct constructs due to their critical roles in the success of products, brands, firms, and destinations. Perhaps

because Aaker's (1992, 1996) CBBE framework included more of these well-known components (i.e., awareness, associations, quality, loyalty), the majority of researchers, including those in the tourism and hospitality field, have followed his CBBE model with some level of modification, depending on the product context (e.g., Boo, Busser, & Baloglu, 2009; Kashif, Samsi, & Sarifuddin, 2015; Lee & Back, 2008; Vinh & Nga, 2015; Washburn & Plank, 2002; Yoo & Donthu, 1997, 2001). Although a large body of literature has investigated the components and structure of CBBE in different contexts, a consensus has not yet been reached regarding either its components or their relationships. Different scale items have been used to measure various CBBE components with contrasting relational structures, which in turn have not been validated for different brands and market segments.

In order to connect the meanings related to CBBE that have been identified in different studies, the current study conducted multiple tests of a CBBE model (adapted from Tasci, 2016a) that included

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four original components designed by Aaker (1992, 1996): familiarity (awareness), image (associations), perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Three additional components ramified from Aaker's original measures were also included: satisfaction, consumer value (perceived value), and brand value (perceived price premium). Although other factors can be added to the customer model, only satisfaction was included in the current study for scientific parsimony. Multiple tests were designed to check: 1) the validity of a general consumer-based brand equity model applicable to both actual and potential customers, including components of familiarity, image, consumer value, brand value, and loyalty, as described by seven hypotheses (H_{1-7}) in Fig. 1; 2) the validity of a customer-based brand equity model including the general CBBE components and satisfaction, as described by nine hypotheses (H_{1-9}) in Fig. 2; 3) the cross-brand validity of the general consumer-based brand equity model for different destination brands (H_{10}); and 4) the cross-market validity of the general consumer model (comparing visitors–non-visitors, males–females, U.S.–other nationalities) and the customer model (comparing males–females; H_{11-14}). Due to the lack of sufficient respondents from other nationalities, cross-market validity of the customer model could not be tested for different nationalities.

The study was conducted in the destination brand context, using five of the most popular tourist destination cities in the United States – New York (NY) City, Miami, Orlando, Las Vegas, and Tampa – along with each respondent's favorite city. These destinations were selected since they are globally popular tourism destinations with different tourism offerings. The National Travel and Tourism Office's (2016) visitation statistics reveal that in 2015, NY City was the first, Miami was the second, Orlando was the fourth, Las Vegas was the sixth, and Tampa was the twentieth most-commonly visited US cities by international visitors. NY City is a major inbound tourism hub in the east, with a metropolitan culture and diverse types of tourism products. Miami is another metropolitan city in the south, with a dominant Hispanic culture and sea-sand-sun products. Las Vegas is a gaming destination located in the West. Orlando, considered the capital city of theme parks, is located in the south, two hours from its close competitor, Tampa, which is also known for its theme parks, as well as sea-sand-sun destinations. Well-known in their tourism product categories, these destination brands have the potential to have a strong CBBE, which may help in acquiring solid results to support accepting or rejecting

the validity of the proposed CBBE model. Orlando and Tampa, in particular, were included in order to test the validity of the CBBE model for brands of similar products. Finding two identical destination brands is impossible, yet Orlando and Tampa in Florida may have the closest similarity in tourism offerings. The results will help solidify the theory concerning the components and structure of CBBE as an important market metric for assessment of the success of destination brands.

The CBBE literature in general refers to both consumers and customers when discussing CBBE components. The main difference between consumer-based brand equity and customer-based brand equity lies in the group of respondents upon whose perspective the brand is measured; the consumer model is all inclusive, whereas the customer model is exclusively from the perspective of actual customers. Hence, even though a general consumer model can capture the perspectives of actual customers, a customer model with user-pertinent variables such as satisfaction cannot be used to measure perspectives of general consumers, which also includes non-customers. The current study uses both terms, since it is testing a consumer model for both consumers and customers, and a customer model for customers only (for Orlando only). The review of literature below, thus, refers to literature discussing CBBE from both consumers' and customers' perspectives.

2. Literature review

2.1. CBBE components

The basis for CBBE theory was set by the seminal works of Aaker (1991, 1992, 1996) and Keller (1993, 2003). Aaker (1992) stated that “strong brand equity is based on awareness, association, perceived quality and brand loyalty” (p. 58), while Keller (1993) similarly stated that it “occurs when the consumer is familiar with the brand and holds some favorable, strong, and unique brand associations in memory” (p. 1). Keller (1993, 2003) formulated CBBE as a general brand knowledge composed of awareness and image, whereas Aaker (1991, 1992) included five core components in his conceptualization of CBBE and later operationalized these components by producing a Brand Equity Ten Scale (Aaker, 1996).

Aaker's (1991, 1992) CBBE dimensions included brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and other proprietary brand assets. Since proprietary brand assets are firm-

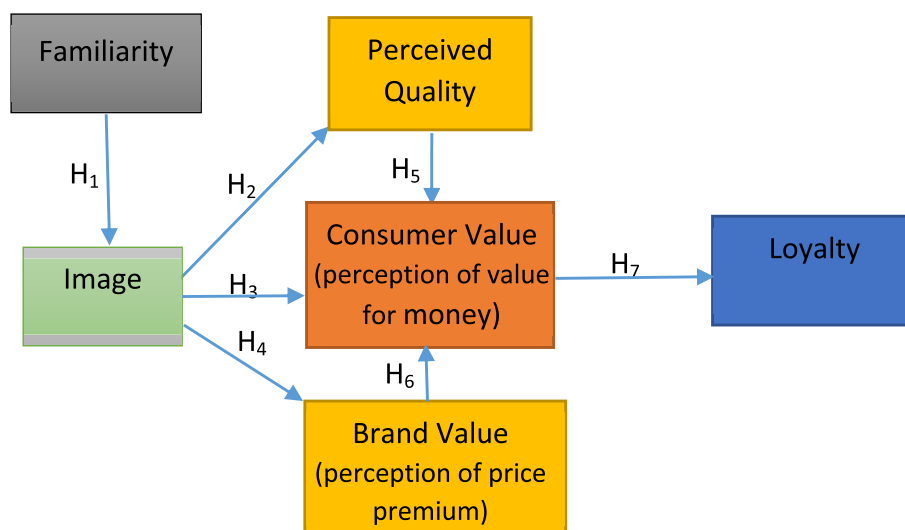


Fig. 1. Initial CBBE model proposed to be tested for general consumers (H_{1-7}) (adapted from Tasci, 2016a).

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