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# Consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) in the context of an international stopover destination: Perceptions of Dubai in France and Australia

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A B S T R A C T

There has been limited published research examining travellers' perceptions of international stopover destinations. This manuscript reports the modelling of consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) for Dubai, the first CBBE study to do so in the context of a stopover destination. Dubai has emerged relatively recently as a stopover destination option during long haul travel between UK/Europe and Australia/South Pacific, to rival traditional destinations such as Hong Kong and Singapore. The CBBE model was tested using survey data from samples of consumers in two geographically distant markets; France (n = 365) and Australia (n = 403). The findings suggest destination brand awareness, destination brand image and destination brand value are positively related to attitudinal destination loyalty. However, destination brand quality was not positively associated with loyalty. As a relatively new stopover destination for long haul travellers, Dubai is perceived more positively by previous visitors than those who have never visited the destination.

## 1. Introduction

Measurement of the perceptions of destinations has been a popular theme within the tourism literature since the first studies were published in the early 1970s (see for example Anderssen & Colberg, 1973; Gearing, Swart, & Var, 1974) through the 1980s and 1990s (see for example Phelps, 1986; Selby & Morgan, 1996; Uysal, Chen, & Williams, 2000; Yau & Chan, 1990), to the current period (see for example Marine-Roig & Ferrer-Rosell, 2018). This is not surprising given the prominent role destinations play within the tourism system with most tourism activities taking place at destinations (see Leiper, 1979). Given the intangible nature of tourism services provided at destinations, it has long been recognised that consumers' perceptions can be as influential in travel decision making as a destination's tangible features (see Chon, 1990; Hunt, 1975; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

While measuring destination image has been the most popular theme within the destination marketing literature (Pike & Page, 2014), the model of consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) only emerged in the past decade, as a means to assess destination attractiveness. Conceptually, CBBE goes beyond measuring destination image, by exploring the relationship between consumers' perceptions of a destination and their attitudinal loyalty as the dependent variable. A key practical implication of the CBBE model is the potential to assess the effectiveness of past marketing communications, as well as provide indicators of possible future performance (Aaker, 1996). A small but growing number of destination CBBE studies has been reported since the first was published by Konečnic (2006). For lists of these studies see Pike (2016, p. 326) and Tasci (2018). This study aims to contribute to the destination marketing literature by testing CBBE theory in the context of a stopover destination for long haul international air travellers. No previous study in this travel context has been reported in the first 12 years of destination CBBE research. The findings will add to the debate around which latent variables are positively related to the dependent variable in the destination CBBE model.

The destination of interest in this study is Dubai, which emerged relatively recently as a major stopover destination during air travel between UK/Europe and Australia/South Pacific, to rival the traditional destinations of Singapore and Hong Kong. One of seven emirates comprising the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Dubai is located on the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, adjacent to Saudi Arabia, Oman and Qatar. This location has enabled Dubai to serve as a major hub for airline Emirates to operate direct services to most major European airports as well as direct flights to cities in Australia and New Zealand, and therefore as a stopover destination option during travel between UK/Europe and Australia/South Pacific. In 2008 Dubai opened the world's largest airport terminal, for exclusive use by Emirates, which lifted the airport's capacity to 60 million passengers per year. By 2013, Dubai International Airport had become the third busiest in the world

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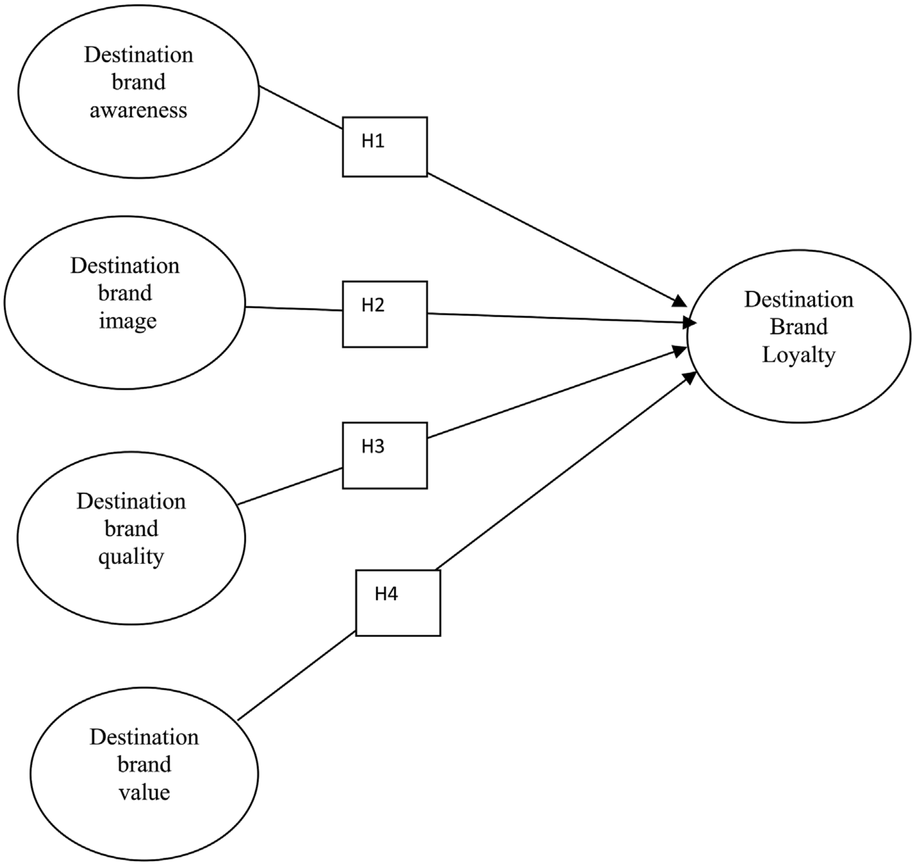
Destination brand awareness
Destination brand image
Destination brand quality
Destination brand value
H1
H2
H3
H4
Destination Brand Loyalty

**Fig. 1.** Proposed model of stopover destination CBBE.

after London and Paris (Kotsi & Michael, 2015).

The purpose of this study is to report the first modelling of CBBE in the context of a stopover destination during long haul international air travel. The Dubai stopover destination CBBE model is tested with consumers in two geographically distant markets in opposite hemispheres; France and Australia.

## 2. Literature review

The perceived attractiveness of a place, in the minds of travellers, is as important as the destination's tangible features (Hunt, 1975; Stylidis, Shani, & Belhassen, 2017), since *perception is reality* (Thomas & Thomas 1928, in Patton, 2002). That is, what a consumer believes to be true will guide their decision making, regardless of whether those perceptions are accurate or not. Destination attractiveness is therefore one of the key antecedents of destination competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). For any travel situation, consumers are spoiled by the choice of destinations available to them. Therefore, understanding market perceptions is a critical issue for destination marketing organisations (DMO), with major implications for the wider business community since the success of individual tourism businesses is reliant to some extent on the competitiveness of their destination (Pike, 2016). Consequently the field of destination image has been the most popular in the first 40 years of destination marketing research (Pike & Page, 2014). For reviews of the literature around perceptions of destinations see Chon (1990), Pike (2002, 2007), Gallarza, Saura, and Garcia (2002), Tasci, Gartner, and Cavusgil (2007), Stepchenkova and Mills (2010), Zhang, Fu, Cai, and Lu (2014), and Josiassen, Assaf, Woo, and Kock (2015).

Understanding an individual's perceptions of a place can lead to an understanding of their attitude towards the destination. Therefore, it is important to distinguish a consumer's beliefs and their attitudes (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Fishbein, 1967). Beliefs are representative of knowledge held about an object, while an attitude is an overall evaluation. A critical component of an individual's attitude towards a destination, which has not always been captured in destination image studies, is the concept of conation (see Pike & Ryan, 2004). Conative perceptions represent the extent to which an individual intends to act on their knowledge (cognitive image) and evaluation (affective image), such as their future intent to visit. Until the relatively recent emergence of CBBE in the destination marketing literature, there had been a paucity of empirical evidence exploring the relationship between perceptions of destinations and conation. In CBBE theoretical models, conation has been conceptualised as attitudinal loyalty, and is recognised as the dependent variable (see for example Bianchi & Pike 2011; Bianchi, Pike, & Lings, 2014; Boo, Busser, & Baloglu, 2009; Chi & Qu, 2008; Konečnik & Gartner, 2007; Tasci, 2018).

CBBE was introduced in the marketing literature by Aaker (1991, 1996) and Keller (2003) as a structured means to measure branding performance, based on the proposition that a brand's power resides in the minds of consumers. Therefore any financial valuation of a brand's equity on the balance sheet is underpinned by consumer attitudes. While a financial valuation of a destination's brand equity is probably meaningless, the CBBE model has potential to provide a DMO with measures of effectiveness of past marketing communications as well as indicators of possible future performance. The first reported modelling of destination CBBE was for Slovenia by Konečnik (2006). In the time since there has been increasing interest by destination researchers, due to the demonstrated associations between various latent variables and attitudinal destination brand loyalty. Attitudinal loyalty is considered important for attracting visitors, repeat visitors and word of mouth recommendations (Gartner & Hunt, 1987; Li & Petrick, 2008). Two key indicators of attitudinal loyalty are intent to visit and likelihood of recommending the destination to others. The other key latent variables

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