



Destination Brand Equity of UNESCO Heritage Sites: Evidence from Emerging Economies

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Abstract

The paper aims to explore the consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) model applications in tourism destinations from the perspective of domestic tourists. The study also examined the effect of brand equity dimensions on brand loyalty and destination brand equity construct. Further examined the mediating role of brand loyalty among the various brand equity constructs and overall brand equity (OBE). The current study is positioned in accordance with the positivism theory, adopted the cross-sectional survey research design to collect data from 366 tourists visiting the Lahore Fort and the Shalamar Gardens. The proposed hypotheses in the research model are tested using PLS (structural equation modeling). Results indicated that brand association has the most significant impact on brand loyalty followed by brand image. The paper finds distinctive effects of brand loyalty on overall brand equity (OBE). The results also showed that brand loyalty mediated the relationship between various brand equity constructs and OBE. Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model application helps determine the customer response and proved useful since the results suggest the multitude of means to support policy makers in adding value to destination brand performance and attract further tourists.

Keywords: Destination Brand equity, Destination Branding, Lahore Fort, Shalamar Gardens, Pakistan

1. Introduction

The rapid development of the service sector worldwide and increasing traveling populations has generated numerous world economy benefits (Balasubramanian and Ragavan, 2019). A substantial growth trend regarding tourist's visits to various destinations has been observed in Asia (Morgan et al. 2011). While cultural heritage sites are facing multiple marketing challenges, which need much attention from researchers and experts to distinguish one heritage site from each other's (Pike 2005). There is diminutive research on destination branding, according to Pike (2009), there have been 74 publications by 102 authors during (1998-2007).

Considering the significant substitutability of tourist destinations, the growth of destination brands is highly influenced by branding (Pike 2005). Over the years, branding has been known as a way to distinguish the goods and services of one company from its competitors (Aaker 1991; Keller 2003). According to Guest (1942) the literature on brand management appeared in journals in the earlier 1940s, although, the idea of making the destinations as a brand originated as a marketing research discipline in the late nineties (Pike et al. 2010). Ever since Brand Analysts have been highlighting numerous research gaps that exist in destination brands (Kashif et al. 2015). Several studies have suggested the idea of engaging key branding' principles as a model to explore different destinations (Konecnik and Gartner 2007).

The field within the marketing discipline is still in its early developmental stages, despite the applications of some significant studies to identify the distinction of destination brands (Pike et al. 2010). It is essential to derive a sound understanding of destination brands from the viewpoint of developing countries' consumers will support Destination Marketers to design strategies for sustainable market share (Pike 2009). The Essential elements of making destinations as a brand lie strongly in developing positive customer's services²-experiences, minimizing risk as well as inspiring them to visit their favorite destinations frequently (Blain et al. 2005).

Achieving customer expectations play an important role in forming a customer service experience worth memorable, which in turn positively influences destination brand equity (Im et al. 2012). Destination branding research has so far focused on destination brand identity; however, researchers ignored the perspective of measuring the overall performance of destination brands (Pike 2009).

Measuring brand performance is significant for destination' brands' success for two reasons. First, there is more competition and substitutability among destination brands, giving visitors more options (Morgan et al. 2002). Secondly, all investments are made by destination brands holders administered by many stakeholders with complete accountability (Pike 2005). Such challenging circumstances established the need to study the destination's performance as a brand; it has not been studied substantially till now (Kim et al. 2003).

A recent study by King and Grace (2010) explained that several branding models have been designed for measuring brand performance, but researchers in the field of service marketing have developed new matrices for brand equity

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measurement such as “Employee based brand equity model.” This prospect acknowledges that employees play a substantial role in contributing to service organization's brand equity. Whereas Bianchi et al. (2014) found that the model lapses empirical-generalization and modern researchers suggested the employment of the CBBE model for brand-equity measurements. The Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model has gained comprehensive recognition (Im et al., 2012; Pike et al., 2010).

There are four main features of the model: Brand awareness, Brand image, Brand- associations and brand resonance. According to Qu et al. (2011) Brand equity development continued to be key to a brand's success and managers must have to consider the customers perspective with respect to Brand Equity. Moreover, just a few studies have been done where the rationale behind the brand equity and its employment to various destinations is elaborated (Pike et al., 2010).

However, several research gaps that need to be identified in this context. First, the measurements of brands were performed for cultural and historical sites, but the perspective of the developing countries was overlooked (Balmer 2011). Frimpong and Wilson (2013) further elaborated that conducting a study from a developing country view will bring new horizons and comprehension in the field of service marketing. Second, most of the destinations are trying to gain a “competitive advantage” as customers now have more destination choices to visit, correspondingly studies have explored the sound brand equity theories about tourist destinations are deficient. This research aims to broaden the (CBBE) model and measure destinations brand performance considering the developing country perspective.

Pakistan has been a fascinating country to research because of its diversity in cultures, people, and customs and each attracts numerous tourists annually. Pakistan is a Muslim state in which many religious and historical tourist sites are in existence, ranging from holy shrines to UNESCO inscribed sites such as the Shalimar Gardens and Lahore Fort. Research suggests Muslims perceive brand promotions in an incredibly unique way, hence, they should be considered as an inimitable market for study (Behboudi et al. 2014).

However, no research characterized destination branding, particularly concerning several other places located across Pakistan, the country is still an exceptional place to delve into place branding (Haq and Wong 2010). The culture of Pakistan is rich and unique compared to western countries. Atilgan et al. (2009) elaborated that people from all over the world comprehend and interpret brand equity through personal experiences. Brands are interpreted differently by people living in collectivist cultures from others, with an individualistic mindset; brand equity is interpreted in the context of a specific phenomenon (Jerome 2012). From the perspective of Pakistan's collectivist society, it is possible to envision various outcomes regarding the applications of the CBBE model.

The Lahore Fort and the Shalimar Gardens were designated protected World Heritage sites by UNESCO in 1981. These historic monuments remind Mughal's architectural era that persisted for more than 200 years in the subcontinent. The Lahore Fort was built during Mughal emperor Akbar reign between 1556 and 1605. While the Shalimar Gardens was built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in 1641-42. The Royal monuments have been capturing the interest of a plethora of local and international tourists on the account of various social and cultural events being organized here. Whereas no research is conducted to determine the consumer perceptions of these historic monuments as a brand. This study would enable policymakers and government officials of Pakistan to make Royal monuments and other similar destinations as one of the top tourists' attractions not only for local visitors but for international tourists as well.

Contextualizing the previously mentioned theoretical gaps: this study has identified some specific research questions:

Research question No 1: Do brand awareness, image, associations, and loyalty predict Lahore Forts and Shalimar Gardens 'overall destination brand equity and to what extent?

Research question 2: Does brand loyalty mediate the relationship between the various brand equity constructs and OBE.

Research question 3: Does the measurement model of CBBE is valid and reliable, and generalizable across destination brands in developing countries'?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Destination Brands

The concept of branding has proved to be getting increasingly diverse with time i.e. not just limited to the products but also revolves around services and corporate and more recently branding of countries. This has led to a debate regarding brand theory adaptability (Kotler and Gertner 2002). To be more specific, tourist destinations are being investigated by destination marketing researchers, while experts had also raised questions on the replication of brand theory (Gartner and Ruzzier 2011). There is a common belief among these researchers that due to the presence of multiple stakeholders in destination brands, it is hard to investigate them and this is the reason why there is very little room for brand managers to implement their ideas (Morgan et al. 2002). In this context, the relevant stakehold-

ers consist of; public sector, donor agencies, and the community. Regardless of differences in opinion in relation to replication, destination brands investigation has received a positive response in the literature (Pike et al. 2010). There are a few more important components that have been identified for ensuring the success of destination branding in the literature. This includes; Individuality of Brand, targeting the right consumer, brand positioning and relationship building (Im 2003). A recent study by Baker and Cameron (2008) came up with 04 key aspects of a successful destination brand includes; (I) Comprehensive training for tourism plans, (II) maintaining the individuality of the brand as well as image, (III) involvement of stakeholders, and (IV) incorporating brand measurement procedures.

Moreover, Boo et al. (2009) and Pike et al. (2010) elaborated further that the idea of devising branding models is also something that has appealed to the researchers by following the Keller (1993) model (CBBE) measuring brand equity for tourist destinations. Brand equity is a sum of the brand's assets (or liabilities) concerning the name and symbol of the tourism destination that can induce changes in the value of the services and experiences provided (Aaker 1996). This helps in recognizing the trend of purchase intentions along with customers preferences (liking and disliking). Keller (1993) described CBBE as the “differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response related to marketing of brand.” Destination marketing experts and scholars have adapted these classic models (Kashif et al. 2015). Tourism marketers have strongly recognized the model proposed by Cai's (2002). Researchers determined that there is a ‘brand mix’ which leads to the success of the brand that consists of brand identity, brand image and several marketing strategies (Kashif et al. 2015). Konecnik and Gartner (2007) Branding model aimed at offering the brand features that can lead to strong bonding between customer and brand. Moreover, Boo et al. (2009) found that researchers also emphasized the contribution of brand image toward brand equity. Pike et al. (2010) examined the connection among the destination brand dimensions of quality, image, salience and loyalty. How favorably customers view the brand, influence their behavior and predict the success or failure of the brand (Tasci and Kozak 2006). Researchers not just focused on the significance of brand image, but also considered brand salience as a source to build a healthy customer-brand relationship that expected to be successfully adopted by the tourist industry practitioners.

2.2. Consumer-based destination brand equity

There are two main types of brand equity studies. The first of them is regarding determining consumer observation of brand image, brand awareness as well as brand associations. Another one is about to examine the loyalty potential of consumers i.e. the consumer behavior concerning tourist destinations (Baker and Cameron 2008). Other studies Aaker (1996) and Keller (1993) found that Destination brand loyalty is measured through integrating 04 constructs namely “brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality and brand associations. Qu et al. (2011) further explained that these particular constructs have analyzed independently by scholars of tourist destinations. Brand awareness reflects the extent of brand visibility in the mind of consumers, whereas “brand image” identifies consumer's impressions regarding the identity of the brand. Brand awareness deals with the formation of thoughts, feelings and attitudes about a brand i.e. the extent consumers conceive ample information about the brand (Aaker 1996). Moreover, Brand image is considered an important aspect of a brand's success. Having a little perceived difference against brand identity and brand image is considered one of the most positive aspects of a brand (Boo et al. 2009). In an older study, Qu et al. (2011) emphasized that brand associations gauge the characteristics of destination which come into customer's mind when brand is shown to them. Finally, perceived quality determines the level of overall efficiency of a brand as per the views of customers (Kashif et al., 2015). These elements were focused on and some other models were devised by marketing experts. For example, As a result of the analysis by Aaker (1996) a scale formed namely “Multidimensional Brand Equity” (Yoo et al. 2000). The study depicted a close relationship between brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations and perceived quality. Therefore, it concludes that by reinforcing these four factors, brand equity can be achieved (Yoo et al. 2000).

Researchers should address these four research concepts as they are significant contributors in building destination brand equity. Tourism destinations promote themselves through differential images which are based upon unparalleled characteristics unique to themselves (Baker and Cameron 2008). Tourists are most attracted to tourist destinations offering and providing functional qualities in the form of amenities like parking, restaurants, gardens and plenty of exposure to culture as well as avenues for exploring history (Hanna and Rowley 2011). The rise of destination brands hinges on these images and associations. According to Qu et al. (2011) experts recommend including these four components which play an important role in measuring brand equity of certain destination brand.

2.3. Brand awareness

It is now established that consumers have a certain level of brand awareness when a brand is recognized (quickly and easily) as per its categorization (Aaker 1996). Creating ‘brand awareness is the first step in building brand equity which is true for the destination brands also (Gartner and Ruzzier 2011). The role of brand awareness is integral for the selection of a destination (Chon 1992). Prior to visiting the destination, the tourists develop an ‘awareness

set' which comprises identification of available destination brands (Kotler et al. 1993). Kotler et al. (1993) explored that an awareness set paves the way for having a consideration set that helps in choosing a destination brand. Moreover, when the consumer has abundant knowledge about the brands, then just a limited number of brands are left to have a set of choices. A recent study by Boo et al. (2009) found that these few integral aspects for tourist industry marketers should be considered to accelerate the choice of tourist destinations. In addition, Pike et al. (2010) examined that decision-makers, as well as marketers, emphasized imparting brand recognition, brand recall and brand knowledge which are the measures of brand awareness. Moreover, brand awareness leads to destination brand equity, which makes tourists more sincere to the brand (Boo et al. 2009). But there are also instances when brand awareness does not create an impact on brand equity. The reason for this has been identified as less investment in promotions of brands (Blain et al. 2005). Due to less emphasis on brand promotion, brand awareness also decreases that could influence the significance of brand equity (Hudson and Ritchie 2009). In this scenario, brand awareness contribution in creating brand loyalty can be varied according to destination brand under review and this aspect should be considered while exploring a tourist's attraction destination (Konecnik and Gartner 2007). A follow-up study by Pike et al. (2010) elaborated that multiple studies in the literature reflect the fact that strong brand loyalty depicts high brand awareness, favorable and unique brand image as well as an indicator of robust perceived quality.

2.4. Brand associations

Another element of brand equity is associations (brand associations) that people have in mind and associate with the brand. Associations and their friendliness, strength and uniqueness are crucial for building brand equity. Associations are connections with a certain product line, typical characteristics of the product that the brand represents or perceived quality. The most common way of forming associations is a personal experience, which established the strongest ties to a particular brand (Keller 2007). Brand Associations have an important role to play in branding literature. Positive brand associations can give consumers several advantages and researchers have recommended its replication to tourist destinations (Kashif et al. 2015). For example, brand associations have an impact on the consumer's intent to visit certain spots or inform others about it and enhance the chances to pay even premium price (Agarwal and Rao 1996). Aaker (1996) analyzed that brand Associations help people in maintaining knowledge about the brand in their minds, which ultimately leads to the rationale for buying a particular brand.

Brand associations can be considered, as the benefits customers are getting for the service/product/ destination, a description of functional advantages and the brand personality, which in sum contributing to building brand equity (Keller 1993; Pappu et al. 2005). Brand associations construct has been investigated by its different forms, for example, "attributes, sought benefits, attitudes, image, perceived quality, functions, a personality so on and so forth" (Atilgan et al. 2005; Del Rio et al. 2001; Keller 1993; Pappu et al. 2005). Whereas other studies focused on some other themes of brand associations such as "attitude, image and quality" (Boo et al. 2009; Konecnik and Gartner 2007; Qu et al. 2011).

According to Im et al. (2012) up until now, few studies have focused on multi-dimensional effects of brand associations construct by incorporating earlier mentioned themes in the same model to describe their interrelation as well as their diverging effects on brand equity. According to Aaker (1991) Integration of "brand quality" and "brand attitude" has been identified as a strong factor in determining brand association in destination brands. These two components have a strong effect on brand associations. According to Zeithaml (1988) brand quality often referred to as "customer perceived quality" which is described by "the consumers overall perception of product quality relative to the expectation of quality." Other studies Aaker (1991) and Pappu et al. (2005) elaborated perceived quality can be a useful way to counter competition and gives consumers an objective justification to purchase a particular brand. Boo et al. (2009) further elaborated that "visitors perceptions "regarding brand quality leads to a positive behavior which positively and significantly influence destination equity. Pike et al. (2010) argued a strong inclination of consumer towards destination brands produces an increase in brand equity. According to Baker and Cameron (2008) it is significant to comprehend visitors overall verdict about the quality of specific destinations, it will facilitate having a competitive advantage over other brands.

2.5. Brand image

Brand image identifies a mix of the associations consumers make based on each interaction they have had with your brand (Keller 1993). Aaker (1991) found that in the creation of the brand image, "information nodes" are created in the minds of consumers which enable to make brands known to them. Once this information is stimulated, it prompts the association of brand in the mind of consumers, which measures the association strength. Pike et al. (2010) found about destination brands same "informational nodes" trigger in consumer's memory, which enables them to describe the brand in multiple scenarios. Cai (2002) and Boo et al. (2009) further elaborated that the image of the destination brand has been widely studied and considered as an integral component in increasing destination brand's loyalty and equity. Researchers emphasized the significance of brand image to devise a branding model for tourist destinations (Kashif et al. 2015). Existing literature on destination brand image conceptualizes the six dimen-

sions; (I) tourism facilities (II) destination culture (III) hospitality (IV) nature and environment (V) comfort and (VI) additionally looking after the basic needs i.e. food item(s) (Boo et al. 2009). It is particularly noteworthy that properly managed associations make a distinctive destination brand image, which means it is an integrated phenomenon, the destination brand promoters should know brand identity clearly before it is communicated to the visitors (Qu et al. 2011). According to Cai (2002) a positive brand image leads to advantages including higher brand loyalty for tourist destinations and brand image contributions in building brand equity is well acknowledged by researchers as well.

2.6. Brand loyalty

There are two means to define loyalty in branding; behavioral and attitudinal (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001). Attitudinal perspective encompasses commitment with a focal brand considering preferences and dispositions of consumers towards brands as well as repurchases intentions (Yoon and Uysal 2005). Whereas, behavioral loyalty is linked to the repurchase of the brand (Pappu et al. 2005). Scholars of the tourist industry claimed that satisfying visitors needs help in building a favorable attitude towards destination brands (Kashif et al. 2015). Loyalty is widely explored in marketing literature, but destination branding is considered new (Pike et al. 2010). Brand loyalty has been noticed to create a significant impact on tourist behavior while making a choice (Chon 1992). Baker and Crompton (2000) explained that destination loyalty can be determined by the intention to visit and by suggesting specific destinations to people. However, Chen and Gursoy (2001) explained brand loyalty is an important measure to brand equity, which also considers some variables (I) brand awareness, (II) attitude, (III) image and (IV) performance. Gestelson and Crompton identified five factors in their studies that lead to a return to a destination they have already visited: 1. Reduce the risk of an unsatisfactory experience 2. Knowing that they could encounter some people with similar interests at the destination 3. Emotional dependence 4. An opportunity to visit facets of the destination which have not experienced before. 5. Show others that their previous experience has been satisfactory (Pike 2004). According to Yoo et al. (2000) Destination marketing researchers strongly believed that common attributes of brand equity are perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand awareness. Washburn and Plank (2002) argued affirmative intentions of consumers towards these attributes enhance brand equity (brand strength and brand value) of destination brands. Other studies Boo et al. (2009) and Gartner and Ruzzier (2011) recognized brand awareness and image as key attributes that assist in building brand equity for tourist destinations. Therefore, researchers have stressed the importance of these constructs, which help in measuring brand equity for destination brands (Kashif et al. 2015). As a result, the current study aims to fill the identified gaps in the literature by suggesting the following hypotheses:

H1: brand awareness is positively associated with brand loyalty.

H2: Brand associations are positively associated with brand loyalty.

H3: Brand image is positively associated with brand loyalty.

H4: Brand awareness is positively associated with overall brand equity.

H5: Brand associations are positively associated with overall brand equity.

H6: Brand image is positively associated with overall brand equity.

H7: Brand loyalty is positively associated with overall brand equity.

H8: Brand loyalty mediates the association between brand awareness and overall brand equity.

H9: Brand loyalty mediates the association between brand image and overall brand equity.

H10: Brand loyalty mediates the association between brand associations and overall brand equity

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Setting and Participants

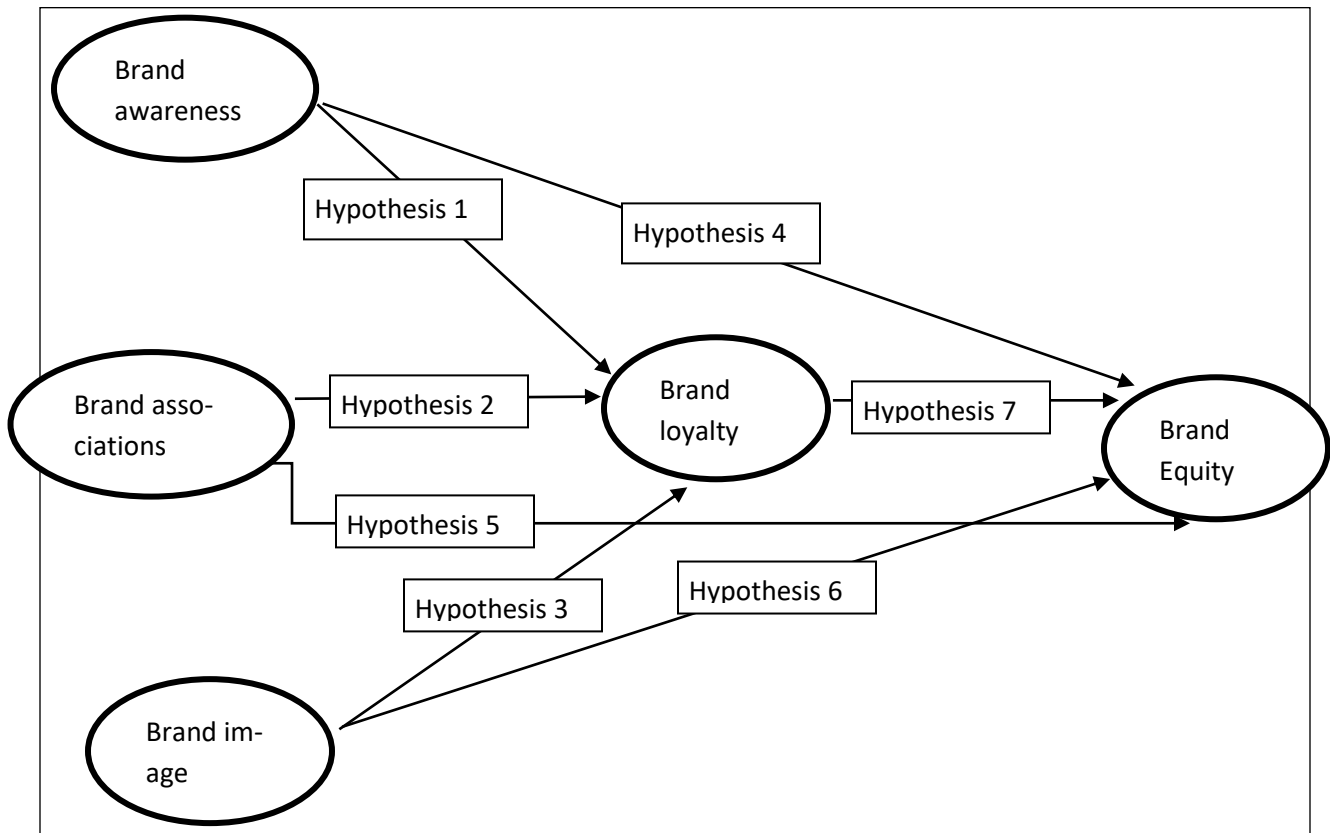
The study focuses on prioritizing the brand equity constructs according to their significance level from the perspective of domestic tourists. The study followed a survey research design for measuring the historical brand's strength, including the Lahore Fort and the Shalamar Gardens. Pakistan is a country, picked in this context because of the nonexistence of country-level research, gauging the strength of these historic monuments as a destination brand. The destination brands Shalamar Gardens and Lahore Fort were selected in this study, for they are the UNESCO inscribed sites and countless local and international travellers visit these heritage sites frequently. This study used the instrument of brand equity from previous literature studies, OBE included 40 items developed by Im et al. (2012) further used by (Kashif et al. 2015). The scale was decided following to passing judgment on face validity. A panel of five expert judges was asked to review the brand equity measure taking into consideration the comprehensiveness and quality of the instrument design. The research instrument was finalized based on expert recommendations.

3.2. Measurement

The study employed overall brand equity (OBE) scale developed by Im et al. (2012) constructs including Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Brand associations, Brand Loyalty, and Brand Equity. The survey questionnaire was di-

vided into two parts; the first part pertained to demographics' information (age and gender). The second part of the questions pertained to CBBE's five constructs. The questionnaire comprised 34 items measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This scale was preferred for certain key reasons: One it was designed in the Asian context of Malaysia being a Muslim state and a collectivist society. So, it is reasonable to argue that there is exact congruence in view of (culture and religion) between these two societies also recommended to study by today's research experts (Jerome 2012). In the second place, the instrument has been specifically designed as a measure for the destination brand equity studies, as an integral part of the current research. In the third place, this scale is further used by Kashif et al. (2015) to explore the brand equity phenomenon for the Lahore Fort, but the current research is adding novelty through assessing the brand equity of Lahore Fort as well as Shalimar Gardens. Thus, improving the chances of generalizability of the scale for future research. Furthermore, the details of the instrument include five major constructs and each having multiple sub-items for measuring the variable under study.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



3.2.1. Brand awareness

Construct brand awareness was measured through three items and sample items were: "I know how Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens look like" and "I recognized Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens as a tourist destination".

3.2.2. Brand associations

A total of four items were used to measure brand association's construct which combined into two sub-dimensions: brand quality and brand attitude. Sample items were: "the overall quality of Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens is very high" and my attitude towards Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens is favorable".

3.2.3. Brand image

Construct Brand image has 17 items that measure all four brand image sub-dimensions: tourism facilities, environmental resources, convenience and comfort, and hospitality. Sample items were: "There are very interesting sightseeing at Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens" and "Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens reflects Islamic culture and traditions".

3.2.4. Brand loyalty

This construct was measured using the four items. Sample items were: “I intend to visit Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens in the next few months” and these destinations is my first choice visit”.

3.2.5. Brand equity

A total of three items were used to measure brand association’s construct such as: “if any other destination is as good as Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens, I would prefer these destinations”.

4. Data collection

In this study, the participants who visited Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens from September to October 2019 were targeted through an on-site survey. The study administered 550 survey questionnaires through a group of four highly qualified research assistants at a major private sector university located in Lahore. The lead researcher and his assistants in the research held consultations on how to collect data at the Gardens’. Our respondents from whom we collected data were educated and knew the questionnaire in the English language. Because of the better understanding of the regional history and culture, all the local respondents were chosen. Our priority was to fill the questionnaires from those who had twenty years of age or above so that we can collect quality data. We approached 550 respondents and requested to fill the questionnaire being given to them by research assistants. A huge number of people visit these monuments, but it was feared that they would least respond to our request. After proper sorting out (N=366 out of 550), questionnaires were selected, giving a 66 percent response rate. The survey's strength comes from a nonstudent sample, which has been previously tested in investigating tourist destinations (Boo et al. 2009).

5. Results

Demographic analysis showed that 47.4 percent of the respondents were males and 52.6 percent were females. This indicates that there are relatively equal numbers of participants from both genders. In consonance with age, 25.3 percent of them belonged to thirty years of age and below and 48.7 percent fell in the age bracket of 31-40. Lastly, 26 percent belonged to 41 and above years older. It indicates that the questionnaire features a mixture of different age-wise generations. Such an age-gender mixture corroborates the aim of the research being conducted.

Table 1: Profile of respondents

| Character | Category | Frequency | Percent | Character | Category(age) | Frequency | percent |
|-----------|----------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------|
| Gender | Male | 173 | 47.4 | Age | 20-30 | 93 | 25.3 |
| | Female | 193 | 52.6 | | 31-40 | 178 | 48.7 |
| | Total | 366 | 100 | | 41 and above | 95 | 26 |
| | | | | | total | 366 | 100 |

Moreover, a Structural equation modelling technique was used to test the hypotheses, Smart PLS (Ringle et al. 2015) second-generation (SEM) software was put to use through the application of the bootstrapping method in assessing the factor loadings’ validity as well as path coefficients. First, the measurement model was estimated based on validity and goodness of fit, followed by the structural model.

5.1. Measurement model

The measurement model was evaluated first, followed up with the structural model. To check the construct validity, factor loadings of the variable’ items must be analyzed. A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (reported in table 2) was performed on 34 items developed for measurement. The present study found that the factor loadings of all variable’ items are above than 0.6 except items C1 and H1. Chin (1998) suggests that the value of factor loading should be greater than 0.6 therefore, the factor of all items was greater than 0.6. So, we can say that there was good validity. Further, the measurement model was tested through composite reliability and average variance extracted the study follows the guidelines addressed by Hair et al. (2020) suggested that all CR values should be more than 0.7 and AVE values should be more than 0.5.

Table 3 indicates that the squared AVE (diagonal values) of a specific construct is greater than the correlation values of the specific construct with other constructs (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Since the correlation values are smaller than the respective square root value of AVE, thus the data holds discriminant validity.

5.2. Structural model

The structural model reflects the path hypothesized in the research framework. In order to find significant conclusions bootstrapping technique was followed, 5000 samples were taken to assess the quality of quantitative responses, weights of sub-constructs and path coefficients. The results of the analysis are shown in figure 2. The r square values indicate the predictive capability of the independent variable in the respective construct. Brand loyalty r square value is 24 percent. So 24 percent change in brand loyalty can be attributed to the studied each independent variables namely (brand awareness, brand image and brand associations). While brand equity r square value is 70 percent. This showed that the independent variables under study and brand loyalty in sum explain 70 percent brand equity.

Table 2: Convergent validity of the measurement model

| Constructs | Items | Loading | CR | (AVE) |
|---|--|---------|--------------|--------------|
| Brand awareness (reliability $\alpha=0.873$) | BAW1: I know how Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens look like | 0.840 | 0.917 | 0.787 |
| | BAW2: I am well aware of Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens | 0.929 | | |
| | BAW3: I recognize Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens as a cultural destination | 0.889 | | |
| Brand image (reliability $\alpha=0.858$) | Domain 1: Tourism facilities (reliability alpha= 0.830) | | 0.900 | 0.694 |
| | TF1: Latest technology is used to manage the facility | 0.773 | | |
| | TF2: Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens have good infrastructure | 0.716 | | |
| | TF3: There are good shopping facilities around | 0.790 | | |
| | TF4: Cultural events are organized at Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens | 0.634 | | |
| | TF5: Availability to visit featured destination of movies or TV dramas | 0.721 | | |
| | TF6: Sightseeing at Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens are interesting | 0.705 | | |
| | Domain 2: Environmental resources (reliability alpha= 0.723) | | | |
| | EN1: Safe and secure environment | 0.718 | | |
| | EN1: Beautiful natural attractions/scenery | 0.819 | | |
| | EN1: Interesting cultural/historical attractions | 0.861 | | |
| | Domain 3: Convenience and comfort (reliability alpha= 0.876) | | | |
| | C2: Standard hygiene and cleanliness | 0.828 | | |
| | C3: Barrier free communication | 0.922 | | |
| | C4: The attraction is visually appealing | 0.927 | | |
| | Domain 4: Hospitality (reliability alpha= 0.678) | | | |
| | H2: Friendly local people | 0.788 | | |
| | H3: Staff guides very well | 0.727 | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|-------|--------------|--------------|
| | H4: Staff is knowledgeable | 0.817 | | |
| Brand as-sociations (reliability $\alpha=0.939$) | BAS1: Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens provides high-quality tourist attractions | 0.877 | 0.956 | 0.846 |
| | BAS2: The overall quality of tourist's destination is very high | 0.930 | | |
| | BAS3: There are so many activities to perform | 0.938 | | |
| | BAS4: My attitude towards Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens is favorable | 0.932 | | |
| Brand Loyalty (reliability $\alpha=0.898$) | BL1: Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens are my first choice visit | 0.874 | 0.929 | 0.766 |
| | BL2: I intend to visit Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens in next few months | 0.902 | | |
| | BL3: I would strongly recommend others to visit Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens | 0.853 | | |
| | BL4: I am loyal to Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens | 0.870 | | |
| Brand Equity (reliability $\alpha=0.868$) | BE1: Even if some other destination has the same image, I would prefer to visit Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens | 0.888 | 0.919 | 0.792 |
| | BE2: if any other destination is as good as Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens, I would prefer to visit to these destinations. | 0.908 | | |
| | BE3: Given the other art places in the city, I think visiting Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens is a smart move | 0.872 | | |

Note: α , Cronbach alpha (reliability)

All items loading > 0.6 indicates indicators reliability (Chin 1998).

All Average Variance extracted (AVE) > 0.5 indicates convergent reliability (Hair et al. 2020).

All composite reliability (CR) > 0.7 indicates internal consistency (Hair et al. 2020).

Table 3: Fornell & Larcker Criterion

| Fornell & Larcker Criterion | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | BAS | BAW | BE | BI | BL |
| BAS | 0.9199 | | | | |
| BAW | 0.0133 | 0.8873 | | | |
| BE | 0.8223 | 0.0856 | 0.8900 | | |
| BI | 0.4683 | 0.1060 | 0.4839 | 0.8333 | |
| BL | 0.4256 | 0.1139 | 0.4665 | 0.4145 | 0.8756 |

Numbers along the diagonal axis (in bold) are the square roots of AVE. The remaining elements show correlations between latent constructs

Brand loyalty can be explained as weak while Brand equity as substantial, based on the R^2 values 0.247 and 0.702, respectively. This crucial division was proposed by Chin et al. (2010) on the basis of R^2 values classifying endogenous construct as substantial, moderate and weak with their respective R^2 numerical values of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19.

5.3.

Direct effects

Table 4 reports the results from the PLS estimation. The findings of the study revealed that brand awareness was positively associated with brand Loyalty ($\beta = 0.0818^*$, $p < 0.05$). So, hypothesis H1 was supported and accepted on the research grounds. Second, brand associations positively and significantly influenced brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.300^{***}$, $p < 0.001$), and therefore, hypothesis H2 was also supported and accepted. Third, brand image significantly influenced Brand loyalty at ($\beta = 0.265^{***}$, $p < 0.001$). So, hypothesis H3 was accepted because this hypothesis supports the phenomenon of positive relationship. Fourth, H4 was also accepted and supported because brand awareness influenced brand equity with ($\beta = 0.0538^*$, $p < 0.05$). Fifth, brand association shows a positive and significant effect on brand equity with ($\beta = 0.732^{***}$, $p < 0.001$). So, hypothesis H5 was accepted and supported the research paradigms. Sixth, brand image was found to have a positive impact on brand equity ($\beta = 0.0888^{**}$, $p < 0.01$). So, hypothesis H6 was supported and accepted. Seventh, brand loyalty was proposed to have a vital nexus with brand equity ($\beta = 0.1119^{***}$, $p < 0.001$), the hypothesis H7 was also accepted and supported. Thus, findings provide stronger assistance for all the direct hypothesized relationships.

Figure 2: Structural model

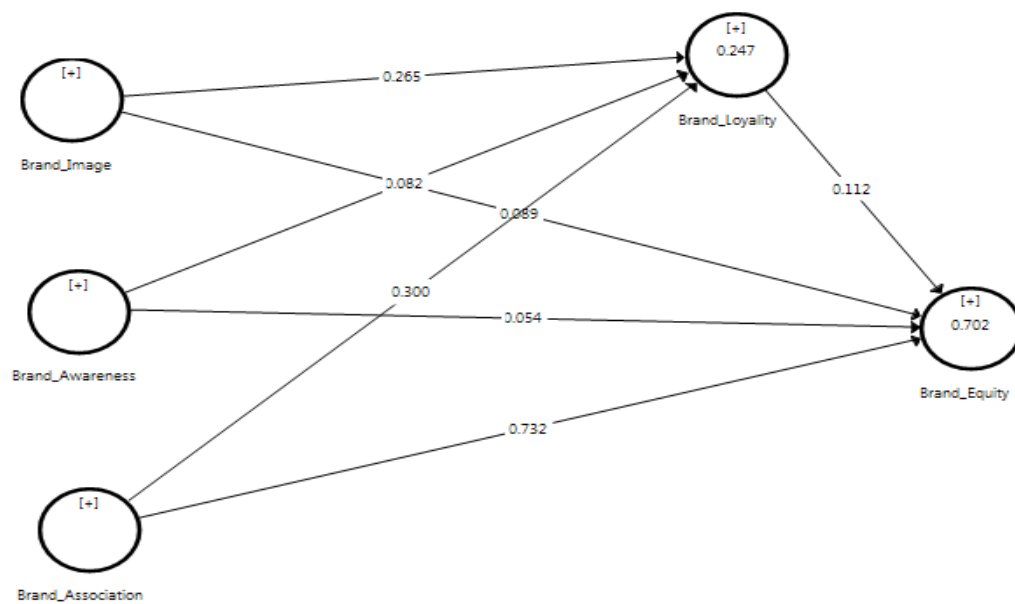


Table 4: Path estimates (hypothesis testing)

| | Hypothesis | B | S. E | T-Value | P-Values | Decision |
|----|------------|--------|--------|---------|----------|-----------|
| H1 | BAW → BL | 0.0818 | 0.0431 | 1.8972 | 0.0289 | Supported |
| H2 | BAS → BL | 0.3003 | 0.0483 | 6.2196 | 0.0000 | Supported |
| H3 | BI → BL | 0.2652 | 0.0539 | 4.9187 | 0.0000 | Supported |
| H4 | BAW → BE | 0.0538 | 0.0281 | 1.9116 | 0.0280 | Supported |
| H5 | BAS → BE | 0.7324 | 0.0453 | 16.1632 | 0.0000 | Supported |
| H6 | BI → BE | 0.0888 | 0.0336 | 2.6402 | 0.0042 | Supported |
| H7 | BL → BE | 0.1119 | 0.0357 | 3.1309 | 0.0009 | Supported |

5.4. Indirect effect

The mediated model was proposed to establish the effect of brand loyalty as a mediating variable in the relationships among BAW, BI, BAS and OBE. As shown in Table 5. H8 was supported and accepted, which hypothesized the indirect relationship between brand awareness and overall brand equity by the mediating role of brand loyalty at ($\beta = 0.0131^{**}$, $p = 0.005$), where brand loyalty exerted a partial mediating effect. Results showed partial support for H9, which hypothesized the indirect relationship between the brand image and overall brand equity by the mediating role of brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.0297$, $p = 0.002$). H10 hypothesized the indirect relationship between brand association and overall brand equity is mediated by brand loyalty was supported ($\beta = 0.0336^{**}$, $p = 0.003$). Further brand loyalty partially mediates the effect between brand association and overall brand equity.

Table 5: indirect effects

| | Hypothesis | B | S. E | T-Value | P-Values | Decision | Mediation Type |
|-----|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|---------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| H8 | BAW \rightarrow BL \rightarrow BE | 0.0131 | 0.0061 | 2.1737 | 0.0053 | Supported | Partial |
| H9 | BI \rightarrow BL \rightarrow BE | 0.0297 | 0.0108 | 2.7549 | 0.0029 | Supported | Partial |
| H10 | BAS \rightarrow BL \rightarrow BE | 0.0336 | 0.0123 | 2.7212 | 0.0033 | Supported | Partial |

6. Discussion

The current study is an academic response to queries for conducting marketing research to ensure that developing countries perspective is represented (Frimpong and Wilson 2013). The study focuses on prioritizing the brand equity constructs according to significant levels i.e. which construct is contributing more (in building brand equity) and which construct has the least effect on consumer perceptions of a destination brand. The CBBE model proposed by Aaker (1991) and Keller (2003) is extended by highlighting the role of brand loyalty as a mediator variable. This study considers the measurement perspective of brand equity of world- famous tourist destinations, such as the Lahore Fort and the Shalimar Gardens (Pakistani context). Pakistan being a developing country has lot of tourist attraction destinations (Kashif et al. 2015). The major strengths of the study are exploring the theory of brand equity regarding world famous tourist destination as well as the employment of OBE scale, which was developed by Im et al. (2012), further used by Kashif et al. (2015) which add new insights to the destination branding literature.

There are some fundamental findings of our study like H1 and H4 were tested and accepted highlighting brand awareness contributes to building brand loyalty and brand equity of Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens. These results initially offer support to the preceding studies conducted to establish the relationship in relation to brand awareness and brand loyalty in tourist attraction destinations (Pike et al. 2010). This entails that often brand awareness is underestimated as a major constituent of brand equity (Aaker 1996). This is why marketers show interest in understanding the traveler's behavior, which includes reasoning while choosing a particular destination brand from a group of destinations offering similar amenities (Im et al. 2012).

It was presumed that CBBE dimensions such as brand image and brand associations are positively and significantly associated with brand loyalty and these hypotheses were accepted. This signifies Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens as a historic Mughal heritage carries a clear image and visitors carrying positive associations in minds based on different interactions. The findings also confirm the results of previous research conducted to explore tourism marketing prospects (Boo et al. 2009; Kashif et al. 2015). Furthermore, brand image has been found to make a significant impact on brand success as both complements each other as major factors (Tasci and Kozak 2006).

Moreover, in prioritizing brand equity constructs, the brand associations remained a key contributor in building brand equity (Aaker 1991). Hypothesis H3 predicted that brand image contributes toward brand loyalty regarding destination brand. Whereas H6 was applied to establish the nexus between the brand image and its viability for the improvement and strengthening of brand equity and this hypothesis was accepted. The analysis of the research determined the fact that brand image is a major contributor in building brand equity with a maximum 0.265 beta value. This is new and refreshing but similar findings with the research conducted previously in the key area of destination marketing literature (Boo et al. 2009; Kashif et al. 2015; Im et al. 2012).

The variable brand associations were hypothesized to contribute significantly toward brand loyalty and brand equity, as we found and demonstrated by H2 and H5. Results imply that brand association represents the most significant dimension which is positively associated with brand loyalty. Brand availability and accessibility is another way forward in determining brand loyalty as they improve the comfort of consumers to get to their desired brands. Consum-

ers who have fewer brand options due to their geographical locations are probably more loyal to the brands which are easily accessible (Saleem et al. 2015). According to Mayvis and Janiszewski (2004) desirable associations are depending on the accessibility of association which in turn strongly influenced by the prevailing associations of others competing brands. Moreover, the greater the strength of favorable associations about a particular brand, customer loyalty as well as brand recall more likely to be high and strong (Suki and Sasmita 2015).

Brand associations' sub-themes are "brand attitude" and "brand quality" which considers determined relationship with brand equity. The net results unravel that both brand quality and brand attitude are two essential factors positively contributing toward brand equity. This keeps with similar previous studies which endorsed a positive brand association lead towards the formation of positive opinions and perceptions regarding tourist destinations, ultimately "guard" businesses against rival competition and competitive forces (Pappu et al. 2005; Kashif et al. 2015).

The contribution of brand loyalty in building brand equity has been well established in preceding studies regarding tourist's destinations (Konecnik and Gartner 2007; Kashif et al. 2015; Pike et al. 2010). In the backdrop of all that the results of this study also reveal that brand loyalty directly contributes toward brand equity. Moreover, Atilgan et al. (2005) found that strong 'brand loyalty' paves the way to the optimum levels of purchases and a strong recommendation to other customers to pull them over to the historical sites or tourist destination spots. The greater the strength of favorable associations and positive image with regard to a particular destination brand, the brand equity more likely to be high and strong (Kashif et al. 2015). Further, this study's results extend existing tourism literature, which signifies that brand loyalty mediated the relation between the research concepts (brand awareness, associations and image) and OBE positively strengthens previous research that has emphasized that brand loyalty is a strong element in building overall destinations brand equity (Kashif et al. 2015; Im et al. 2012; Torres et al. 2015).

Moreover, from a realistic point of view, these key conclusive points validate certain recommendations and some bottlenecks for destination marketers in the country, Pakistan. Apart from that uninterrupted tourism development in Pakistan direly need unbroken endeavors required of all the government and private stakeholders through public-private partnership. Today market compulsions require the need to devise strategies that impressively cater to awareness and promotional campaigns as well as improving structures for developing the historic brands.

Considering those strategies, no stone left unturned to develop functional attributes and overall quality dimensions of Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens to influence the visitors and tourists. On the heel of that tourism operators should stitch together awareness promotion with respect to the destinations to help develop it and acquaint the stakeholders with this promotion program. The focus should be on both domestic and international visitors, site seekers and tourists. To exemplify holding socio-cultural, sports competitions and "public events" can help in that direction of awareness and image regarding Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens historic sites.

As a result, tourism developers and promoters must showcase the significant strengths of the Royal Fort and Gardens; internationalize them for foreign visitors and promote the key characteristics of the destination's image where it lacks. These measures will aid the destination promoters in understanding improved driving forces to make adjustments to the perceptions of quality, conviction and inherent attachment. That way they will be able to produce adequate services and products in a cautious manner. Considering that, tourism-related authority and market promoters must consider the factors which potentially signal quality, loyalty and satisfaction.

7. Conclusion

Evidently, the preceding gamut of diverse studies, CBBE as an authentic, viable and applicable model has been successfully employed to investigate the strengthening factors behind the brand equity. Nevertheless, the major contribution, significance, and necessity of this research before us are to freshly take on the brand equity measurement of Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens through supporting the associated factors of the CBBE Model. Equally important is to mention that the study is of its first instance. Moreover, the application of the CBBE model was not explored in a way as the present study deals with i.e., considering brand equity a separate part from other dimensions (Yoo et al. 2000). Marketers of the destinations, promoters, tourism operators and official line departments including the department of tourism, and local governments can find significant results, providing useful insights in promoting famous and recognized destination brands in Pakistan, being a scenic, architectural, and monumental, civilizational hub of South Asia. We would suggest that several strategies should be used in enhancing the brand equity of tourists attraction destinations i.e. Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens that will help attract a plethora of tourists, visitors, adventurers and archeological academia and students to this historic UNESCO acknowledged site.

Our findings of the study reveal that brand image positively influenced brand loyalty as well as overall brand equity. So government and influential authorities responsible for this destination brand should concentrate on raising an Islamic image of these monuments and heritage besides other essentials for tourist sites such as safe, congenial, facilitated and conducive environment, local resource persons, local hospitality, local food being good, hygienic and economical and other comforts for visitors that correlate and bear on the brand.

Being conscious of fundamental facts, these elements were strongly recommended in the preceding study by Boo et al. (2009) for strengthening the brand image of a destination. In the second place, tourist brand's awareness should be made via diverse communication strategies to pull the visitors and tourists to the site. The advertisement of logos, messages and slogans, colors, symbols and other essential elements of the brand can cajole the visitors to feel honor for the and will surely influence their decision making to pay a visit to a destination (Boo et al. 2009).

Preceding arguments of the literature Hudson and Ritchie (2009) convinced that the absence of brand promotion prospects lead to decreased maximum levels of brand awareness. The Royal Fort and Shalamar Gardens are national controlled entities administered by Pakistan's ministerial-level efforts. Despite their centuries-long history, the state authority responsible for this heritage fails to promote the destination brand to the indigenous and foreign visitors. Due to the government's apathy, the stakeholders 'may lack awareness levels of the Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens as a tourist destination. The term "brand-specific-phenomenon" is used to explain the nexus between brand awareness to brand equity and well established past research works (Konecnik and Gartner, 2007). Interestingly, such research findings consider that a higher level of brand awareness doesn't necessarily contribute to higher brand equity levels (Kashif et al. 2015).

Likewise, it must be kept in mind that only enhancing awareness levels may not be successful to make the visitors pay visit to the sites (Kashif et al. 2015). The intended visitors who decide to visit a historic spot observe the functional features including guidance, facilitation, cleanliness, tuck shops, networking facilities, so on so forth. Therefore, the functional aspects of parking, cleanliness, guidance, accessible and affordable transport, and latest recreational facility, fresh and hygienic food of diverse quality, water being provided can improve the functional and working image of these monuments as a destination brand. In the third place, the brand loyalty variable of destination brand needs to be focused on that which would prove better for brand equity, as found by this study. This is also one of the key findings of this study. In order to make improvements to and facilitation of services, destination marketers should comprehend and employ the marketing strategies as hammered out by (Aaker 1996).

Furthermore, consumers of competitive brands, consumers of more than one brand and the customer's fall under the category of the loyalty group (Aaker 1996). After identification, these customers must be addressed via the state of the art marketing program. Usually, the significant Promotional Plan for Historic monuments (PPHM), besides a separate promotional strategy for international visitors help in building brand equity is essence and base. Nevertheless, despite its useful knowledge and model viability, the study under consideration contained several limitations as well: In the first place, the study considers only two Tourist destination (UNESCO inscribed), which limits results generalizability in Pakistan to other tourist attraction destinations.

This limitation should be overcome through more varied studies considering brand equity perspectives for other tourist attraction destinations in Pakistan. In the second place, due to the nature of data which is cross-sectional, could affect the visitor's attitude in relation to brand performance. Given the activities conducted under various weather conditions at the Lahore Fort and Shalamar Gardens, a longitudinal design has been proposed to examine the variations in the measurement of 'brand performance' over time.

Holistically and pragmatically, the study considers the views of customers who still require enough work in exploring service brands performance entirely. Consequently, considering the employee-based brand equity scale could also be another area of research, which can offer a comprehensive view for measuring brand performance.

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