

Unpacking the Magic Behind Successful Destination Brands: Understanding Beyond the Brochure

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ABSTRACT

Tourism, a burgeoning global industry, relies heavily on effective destination branding. Factors such as natural beauty, adventure, cultural heritage, and religious significance contribute to a destination's popularity. To understand the process of building a successful destination brand, this study explores key dimensions: awareness, image, experience, identity, and meaning. Through a systematic literature review, the researchers propose a model illustrating the interrelationships between these dimensions. By creating consumer-based brand equity, destinations can attract tourists and drive economic growth.

Keywords: Tourism, Destination brand, brand identity, brand experience

1. INTRODUCTION

It is a truism that tourist destinations are seen as intangible products; thus, depending on consumers' experiences (Chi et al., 2020). Hence, vendors need to promote tourism experiences through a differentiated branding strategy (García et al., 2012). Also, due to the development of increasingly fast and efficient transportation, tourists face more travel ranges, causing intense competition between different destinations and increasing the importance of branding in differentiating destinations sharing similar characteristics (Stepchenkova and Li, 2014). The term 'destination' is a combination of multiple aspects. It embraces not only the physical attractiveness of a place but also how tourists perceive and value various facets of a place.

Branding is a strategic marketing tool that helps gain a competitive advantage by creating an association between the product and various attributes of the product and carries importance to the customers (Ruiz-Real et al., 2020). Many researchers suggest that branding helps in differentiation, providing a competitive edge to the brand (Keller, 2003; Pappu et al., 2005). A strong destination brand has the invaluable ability to simplify consumer decision-making (Keller, 2003). It can represent the destination's characteristics and personality (Kladou et al., 2017). Previous studies confirm tourists' high-level love for a destination brand results in favourable behaviours like resistance to switching loyalty, willingness to invest and forgiveness of negative experiences (Aro et al., 2018; Swanson, 2017; Lee and Hyun, 2016), ultimately act as a vital source of competitive advantage. (Qu et al., 2011) state that destination branding may enhance visitors' awareness of a destination.

The significant problems tourism businesses face is increased competition among places (Medway et al., 2010) and homogenization due to the globalization of destination brands, leading to failure to capture the unique identities of the destinations they represent (Jamrozy and Walsh, 2008). Therefore, it is becoming difficult for any destination to stand apart from the others and entice tourists (Swanson, 2017). Consequently, it has become essential for marketers to focus on

branding destinations as it is the only way to differentiate one destination from another. Additionally, branding can help the destinations be considered in the consumers' evoked set and selected (Pitta and Katsanis, 1995). The idea of exploring the elements of a strong destination brand has been developed recently (Lin, 2015). Hence, it becomes pragmatic to identify all the elements that help in creating and promoting a brand for a destination. In line to such need of branding for destinations, this study attempts to identify key elements to develop a destination brand and how its effectiveness could be measured. Therefore, objectives of this study are:

OBJECTIVES

1. To conduct qualitative and bibliometric analysis in the area of developing destination brands.
2. To highlight the emerging research areas for future research in the area of developing destination brands.
3. To identify the key dimensions of destination branding.
4. To suggest a conceptual model for future researches and provide suggestions to the decision-makers in the area of developing destination brands.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review in this respect is presented under the following paragraphs:

2.1 Conceptualizing Destination Brands

The brand is an old concept that associates a product with the consumer's mind and creates a product's reputation. Destination branding is a complex phenomenon that includes elements of product, service and corporate branding (Stephens Balakrishnan et al., 2011). Destinations are entrenched in places. Hence, its branding should include place's cultural, economic, natural and social wealth (Gnoth 2007; Hankinson 2007). Earlier, branding was mainly associated with physical goods. Only recently have researchers applied the branding concept to tourism destinations (e.g., Williams and Palmer, 1999; Konecnik and Gartner, 2007; Swanson, 2017). This concept attracted the attention of researchers in the 1990s. The concept was discussed by various researchers at the AMS (the American Marketing Science) conference in Miami, USA, in 1997 and at TTRA's (the Travel and Tourism Research Association) conference in 1998 (Tasci and Kozak, 2006). A destination brand reflects the characteristics and personality of the destination (Kladou et al., 2017). An increasing number of similar tourism products and services raises the need for increasing branding activities by tourism destinations to differentiate their products and services from their competitors (Ampountolas, 2019; Qu et al., 2011). Branding, according to (Aaker's (1991, p. 7), is "a distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors."

A destination combines tangible attributes like historical monuments or mountains and intangible aesthetics such as customs, culture and history (Qu et al., 2011). Hence, the tourist experience is an amalgamation of a place's physical characteristics and the quality of products, facilities, infrastructure, and services. Elements like accessibility, attractions, human resources, image and character, public and private amenities and price are the prominent influencers in attracting tourists (UNWTO, 2007). Tourism destination brands, according to (Di Matteo and Cavuta, 2016, p. 348), is "the sum of the elements that help to identify—in a systemic manner—the image of a destination and guide consumers towards a conscious decision, through various elements: brand value, favourable reputation, prestige, meaning warranty." (Zenker et al., 2017, p. 16), defined destination branding as a marketing tool to "communicate a destination's unique identity and distinguish it from other destinations." A destination brand is a differentiator with a distinguishing feature that differentiates a place. According to Morrison and Anderson (2002), destination branding is "a way to communicate a destination's unique identity by differentiating a destination from its competitors." A comprehensive definition of destination brand was given by Ritchie and Ritchie (1998), which is "a name, symbol, logo, word mark or another graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience." Due to its experiential nature, consumers enter the process of consumption with a unique mindset. Such as few would like to gain experiences, whereas others would like to know and enjoy different cultures (Morgan et al., 2003). Hence, destination brands help differentiate the tourism product and identify its values.

A destination brand differs from other service and product brands as it identifies and conveys the enjoyable travel experience related to the destination and reinforces that experience (Blain et al., 2005). Therefore, unlike branding for products, destination branding is based on the place's identity and image in the minds of stakeholders (Anholt, 2010).

Destination-Marketing Organizations (DMOs) have created Destination Branding (Blain et al., 2005) to differentiate and create a positive image of a destination (Gnoth et al., 2007). Therefore, a destination should have unique and distinct features to make it to the final selection. Such requirement focuses on the need to identify the elements of multifaceted destination for destination branding as it can provide identification and differentiation to a destination in the mindset of the consumers.

2.2 Differentiating Product/Service Branding and Destination Branding

As Pickton and Broderick (2000, p. 242) put it: As a marketing tool, branding is not just a case of placing a symbol or name onto products to identify the manufacturer; a brand is a set of attributes that have a meaning, and an image and produce associations with the product when a person is considering that brand of product. The most significant challenge while creating a distinct destination brand is understanding the nature of any destination's identity and the core features that define the destination. Usually, they are related to the place's culture and core values (Cai, 2002; Marzano and Scott, 2009).

The amalgamation of services and products leads to the highly complex nature of tourism destinations. It makes consumer involvement essential at every consumption stage compared to the other individual products (Chen and Tsai, 2007). The development of a strong brand can contribute significantly to a destination's competitive advantage (Milicevic et al., 2017), but a destination's multifaceted nature results in specific challenges in developing destination brands (Dredge and Jenkins, 2003; Gnoth, 2002; Murphy et al., 2000). Ooi and Stoeber (2010) suggest that destinations are more composite and varied than specific tourism products or services. The growing power of media increased campaigns of destination branding and increased movement of people and wealth has driven interest in destination branding (Green et al., 2016).

According to several studies, the branding of destinations is somewhat different from product or service branding (Cai et al., 2009; Marzano and Scott, 2009; Ooi, 2004). Munar (2011) suggests while developing destination brands, one has to consider various factors, including different stakeholders, sociocultural characteristics, as well as the intangibility and other features of a destination that are quite different from the product or service. On the other hand, Kotler and Gertner (2002) suggest that the product, service and destination brands differ majorly in building their brand concepts. Still, they are very similar in their branding strategies. The goal for all of them is to create unique and distinct brand concepts that could provide them a higher brand value than the competitors. That is why brand managers or marketers should look into the product or service branding concepts before approaching the branding of their destinations (Garcia et al., 2012). According to Baloglu and McCleary (1999), the destinations are treated like products by the tourists or visitors whose features are evaluated through cognitive and affective processes. Various studies suggest that a destination brand's functional, symbolic, and experiential components should be uniquely combined to create a unique destination identity (Laws, 1995; Williamset al., 2004; Hanna et al., 2020).

2.3 Identifying Key Dimensions of Destination Branding

Various studies have suggested a strong need to measure destination brands (Blain et al., 2005; Deslandes, 2003; Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2003; Ooi, 2004; Ritchie and Ritchie, 1998) due to its multidimensional nature (Pike (2005)). While measuring any brand, it is most appropriate to measure it in terms of brand equity. Many researchers have studied consumer-based brand equity in the context of the tourism and hospitality industry (Kim and Kim, 2005; Konecnik and Gartner, 2007; Lee and Back, 2008; Prasad and Dev, 2000). Konecnik and Gartner (2007) applied the concept of consumer-based brand equity to destination brands. They examined four variables: awareness, image, quality, and loyalty as its dimensions. According to Wood, 2007; Sirgy and Su, 2000, two underlying dimensions of a destination brand exist a functional dimension which includes tangible or practical attributes or delivery of key benefits; and a symbolic or emotional dimension which comprises intangible attributes.

Lai et al., 2017, conceptualized food image and examined the role of food and cuisine image in destination branding. Food is an essential dimension for a destination brand (Freire & Gertner, 2020). Many researchers recognize food as an important motivation for tourists to visit a destination (Long 2010; Wong, 2013; Getz et al. 2014; Wang et al. 2017). A compilation of dimensions from literature that help in building a story of destination branding used by some landmark studies is shown in Table 1. literature presenting the

Table 1: Review of Previous Studies

S. No.	Author(s)	Year	Dimensions used/identified for Destination Branding
1	Mandagi, Dave and Indrajit	2021	Story, Experience, Environment, Stakeholder
2	Freire and Gertner 2020	2020	Food (Cuisine & Restaurants)
3	Kladou et al 2017	2017	Culture, Identity, Image
4	Saraniemi and Komppula 2017	2017	Culture, Environment, Stakeholders, Destination Structure, Strategy, Communication
5	Lai, Khoo-Lattimore and Wang	2019	Food and Cuisine image
6	Campleo, Aitken, Thyne and Gnoth	2014	Sense of Place
7	Garcia, Gomez, and Molina	2012	Presented Brand, Brand Awareness, Brand Meaning, Brand Equity
8	Qu, Kim, and Im	2011	Destination Image
9	Munar	2011	Destination Awareness, Destination Image
10	Boo, Busser, and Baloglu	2009	Destination Brand Awareness, Destination Brand Quality, Destination Brand Image, Destination Brand Value, Destination Brand Loyalty
11	Konecnik and Gartner	2007	Destination Awareness, Destination Image with sub-dimensions as Cognitive Image, Affective Image and Conative Image, Destination Quality, Destination Loyalty
12	Pike	2005	Brand Loyalty, Brand Resonance, Brand Associations, Brand Salience
13	Hankinson	2005	Destination brand image
14	Kaplanidou and Vogt	2003	Destination Image, Destination Brand Identity
15	Oh	2000	Brand Awareness, Brand Image
16	Baloglu and McCleary	1999	Destination Image with sub-dimensions as Cognitive, Affective and Global Evaluation

The experiential nature of the tourism industry makes it a profoundly image-driven industry ([Morgan et al., 2003](#)). Numerous conceptual and empirical studies (e.g. Cai, 2002; Hall, 2002; Hankinson, 2004; Kim and Kim, 2005; Tasci et al., 2007; Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2021) have focused on the destination image concept while explaining destination branding. According to them, analyzing the destination's image is central to measuring the effectiveness of the destination brands. Pereira et al. (2012) argued that brand creation for a destination is interrelated with the desired preferred image of the destination. Ruiz-real et al., 2020 contend that destination image and marketing have played an important role in evolving destination branding. According to Blain et al. (2005), destination image should be considered while defining a destination

brand. Further, Ooi (2004) opined that most studies related to destination branding emphasize creating brand images. Baloglu and McCleary (1999) suggested that strong competition among destinations has resulted in the need to develop a positive destination image to achieve competitive advantage. Hence, the present study proposes *destination image* as an essential dimension of destination branding.

Brand awareness is associated with the probability a consumer can recall and is aware of a brand (Chi et al., 2020). In many countries, to gain a competitive advantage over competitors, creating brand awareness has become an important strategic tool (García et al., 2012). Brand awareness, along with the brand image, perceived quality and brand loyalty, are considered to be vital to the evaluation of a destination (Konecnik and Gartner 2007; Gartner and Ruzzier 2011). Oh (2000) considered brand awareness one of the main components of destination branding. According to him, the first stage of destination branding should be creating awareness. According to Garcia et al. (2012), there are two extreme points of brand awareness namely brand ignorance and dominant brand. Between these points, three levels of awareness exist which are brand recognition, brand recall, and top-of-mind awareness. Any prospect will pass through these levels while getting acquainted with the destination brand. Therefore, the present research proposes *destination awareness* as the second dimension of destination branding along with the sub-dimensions, *brand recognition*, *brand recall*, and *top-of-mind awareness*.

A brand can be seen as an intangible asset that creates a distinctive image and relates the minds of stakeholders, resulting in more economic benefits as well as value (ISO, 2019). Visible elements like logos, names, packaging, symbols, taglines and web designs collectively establish the brand identity. Brand identity is the essence of the brand as it conveys the core of the destination and also, the internal aspects of the brand (Saraniemi, 2011). Boo et al. (2009) have suggested that building brand image must be accompanied by building brand identity. In case of destination branding, the link between these two should be established. According to Kaplanidou and Vogt (2003), it is imperative to establish an image for a destination first followed by identifying other components so that it could be differentiated from other similar brands. Destination's brand identity is something which can help a particular destination in differentiating itself from other destinations. Therefore, the study proposes *destination brand identity* as the third dimension of destination branding.

According to Berry (2000), brand meaning refers to the dominant perception of the brand in the minds of the customer. It is the reputation or image of the brand with the customer. Berry and Seltman (2007) suggested that brand meaning's contribution is higher than dimensions like brand awareness. Aaker (1991) have described destination brand meaning as customers' attitudes or feelings towards the brand. Garcia et al. (2012) have called it as brand's reputation or image in addition to the customers' attitudes or feelings based on certain perceptions and suggested that brand meaning along with other construct plays an important role in the success of any destination's brand. In context of destination brand building process, such perceptions include trustworthiness, impressions, personality and trust which are actually the indicators of brand meaning. Therefore, the study proposes *brand meaning* as the fourth dimension of destination branding.

Blain et al. (2005) have suggested that visitors' experience is a key component in building destination brands as it has positive impact on brand value. Rahman et al., 2020, suggest that tourists' experiences can help in achieving consumer-based heritage destination brand equity (CBHDE) to the organizations in the heritage tourism and hospitality industry. Experiences have substantive effect on satisfaction (Choudhury et al, 2016). While discussing destination brands, tourists' experience is something which can't be ignored. The tourists who have already visited a destination can act like opinion leaders. It is certainly a factor which may help in building a destination brand if properly taken care of. Hence, the present study proposes *destination brand experience* as the fifth dimension.

3. INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK

While developing a brand, its effectiveness can be measured in terms of brand equity. Building destination brand equity is a major part of destination brand building exercise (Konecnik and Gartner, 2007; Gartner, 2014). Various landmark studies such as Aaker (1991), Keller (1993), and Simon and Sullivan (1993) have considered brand equity as the core element of any brand. The same is applicable in case of destination branding also as various studies (Garcia et al., 2012; Boo et al., 2009; Konecnik and Gartner, 2007) have measured consumer-based brand equity to examine the destination brand effectiveness. As the present study has identified some dimensions for developing destination brands in the previous section, the next stage is to determine the possible relationships among these dimensions as well as their

possible impacts on consumer-based brand equity. Finally, based on the proposed relationships, an integrative framework for destination branding can be suggested.

Mayo (1975) has suggested destination image as a key factor for consumers' choice of destinations. According to Lee et al. (2002), destination image is a key dimension for influencing the visitor's choice. Hence, destination image is central to brand equity to truly measure consumer-based brand equity (Boo et al., 2009; Konecnik and Gartner (2007). According to Tasci and Kozak (2006), the two concepts brand and image are interlinked in case of tourism locations or destinations. A positive destination image helps in standing a destination brand strongly in the market. There is a debate, which comes first, but mixing up these concepts actually has benefits for the destination brands.

Further, various studies have suggested that there is a positive relationship between brand image and brand value (Michell et al., 2001; Cretu and Brodie, 2007; Tsai, 2005). Building brand image and brand identity together is important for destination branding (Florek, Insch, and Gnoth, 2006; Boo et al., 2009). According to (Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2003) first, brand image should be developed and then, brand identity should be created for destination brands. It is possible that destination image can influence consumer based brand equity routed through destination brand identity also. Therefore, the study sets forth the following propositions linking destination brand identity, destination image, and consumer-based brand equity.

Experiential nature makes tourism an image driven industry (Morgan et al., 2003). On the other hand, in today's highly competitive and dynamic global environment, destinations' image is broadly recognized as an influential managerial tool to reach to the target market (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990) and empower the tourism industry Afshardoost and Eshaghi 2020. It provides opportunities such as low marketing costs to retain existing customers as well as to attract new ones with positive publicity and better relations with customers, Fornell, C. (1992).

This leads to postulate that:

- **P1:** Destination image has significant impact on destination brand identity.
- **P2:** Destination brand identity has significant impact on consumer-based brand equity of a destination brand.
- **P3:** Destination image has significant impact on consumer-based brand equity of a destination brand.

According to Davis et al. (2009), brand equity can be created through brand meaning. Garcia et al. (2012) have defined brand meaning as the image or reputation of the brand in the consumers' mind set. It is further backed by consumer attitude or feelings which are based on their perceptions (Tsai, 2005; Cai, 2002). According to Keller (1993), developing consumer-based brand equity requires favourable, strong and unique brand associations held in consumers' mindset. Such brand associations are nothing but brand meaning which the consumers are having for the destination brand.

Therefore, the present study has following propositions linking brand meaning, destination image and consumer-based brand equity;

- **P4:** Destination image has significant impact on brand meaning.
- **P5:** Brand meaning has significant impact on consumer-based brand equity of a destination brand.

Blain et al. (2005), suggested that the visitor's experience should be included into the branding process (Boo et al., 2009) as it has positive effect on the value of brand. The tourists who have already visited a destination generally share their experiences with their affiliated groups (professional or personal. The prospective visitors take these feedbacks as a reliable source of information as they perceive such experiences or feedbacks not being marketed by the destination brands. It can be said that visitors' experience has an important role in creating brand equity for destination brands. Brokaw (1990) stated that before using image to influence behaviour of consumers, marketers should understand which dimensions could influence image. Further, various studies have also focused on the need of identifying the dimensions which could help in influencing as well as developing image (Fakeye and Crompton 1991; Gartner, 1993; Rein et al., 1993; Stern and Krakover 1993). According to Baloglu and McCleary (1999), visitor's previous experience with a destination majorly contributes in image formation of that particular destination. Echtner and Ritchie (1991) have also suggested that the image of a destination can also be formed by the overall impression created by the destination among the consumers. Based on above discussions regarding brand experience, destination image, and consumer-based brand equity, the present study has following propositions;

- **P6:** Destination Brand experience has significant impact on consumer-based brand equity of a destination brand.
- **P7:** Destination Brand experience has significant impact on destination image.

According to Oh (2000), customer value of any brand depends on brand awareness. Konecnik and Gartner (2007) have applied the concept of consumer-based brand equity to destination brands and found that brand awareness has positive relationship with consumer-based brand equity. Further, there are many other studies like of Kwun and Oh (2004); Webster (2000); and Kim and Kim (2005) who have found brand awareness as a key antecedent of customer value. Further, while talking about the sub-dimensions of brand awareness, top-of-mind awareness may also contribute in image building of destinations. Therefore, the study has following propositions;

- **P8:** Destination awareness has significant impact on consumer-based brand equity of a destination brand.
- **P9:** Destination awareness has significant impact on destination image.

Based on the above-mentioned propositions, the present study proposes a conceptual baseline model as shown in Figure 1.

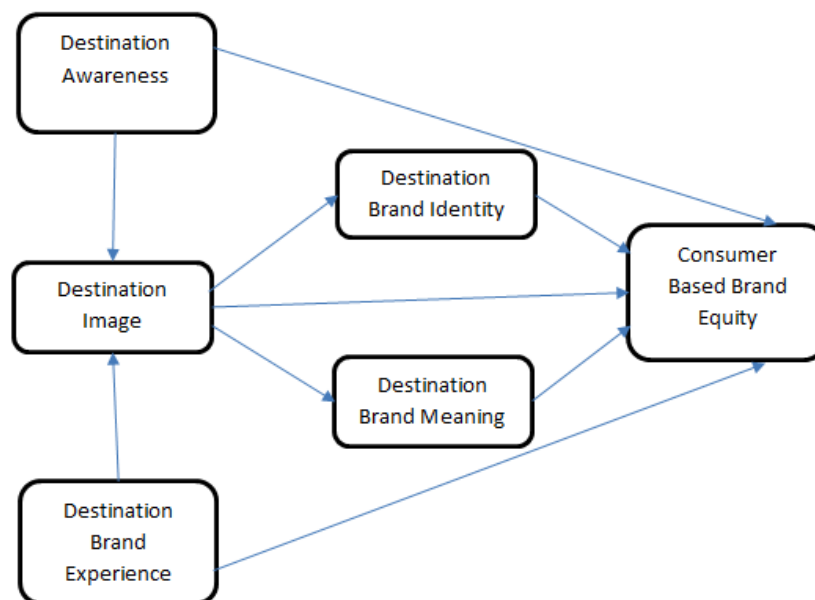


Figure 1: Conceptual (Proposed) Baseline Model

4. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to offer an overview of current researches in the area of developing destination brands. There is a need for reviewing the qualitative and quantitative researches (Singh et al, 2022; Singh et al, 2024) in order to organize the previous findings so that post pandemic the scenario of destination brands can be developed. This will help to arrange and categorize the literature till date in that area with emerging trends (Kajol et al, 2022). Bibliometric analysis can be useful when the literature is huge and scattered but needs to be analysed (Liu et al., 2015; Sun and Grimes, 2016) because it provides a systematic and transparent understanding of the research (Aria and Cuccurullo, 2017). This concept was first introduced as a scientific technique to observe a research areas' evolution over time with respect to multi-disciplinary approach (Pritchard, 1969). These analyses help in identification of impact on the basis of author data, research domain data, journal data and emerging themes (Sarin et al., 2020). VOSviewer is one of the useful software which helps in conducting the bibliometric analysis (Van and Waltman, 2011). Thus, bibliometric analysis was also done for identifying the research themes in the area. The recent trends in the area of developing destination brands will also be explored with the help of bibliometric analysis in this research. It will help to showcase qualitative and quantitative analysis in the field. The various emerging research areas will also be highlighted leading to upcoming research angles.

For the bibliometric analysis, SCOPUS database was considered for performing literature search in the area of role of emotional intelligence in leadership from the period of 2001 to 2022. The final search query which was used was as follows: TITLE-ABS-KEY (Developing AND "Destination Brands") AND (LIMIT

TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI") OR LIMIT TO (SUBJAREA , "SOCI") OR LIMIT
TO (SUBJAREA , "ECON") OR LIMIT TO (SUBJAREA , "ENVI") OR LIMIT-
TO (SUBJAREA , "ARTS")).

The number of the total data points collected was 67. The language was limited to English because other languages would be tedious to analyse in co-occurrence keyword analysis. A full record of the bibliographical information, all citation information, abstract and related information was downloaded as a CSV file for the further analysis. Bhattacharjee et al (2021) have also used similar kind of analysis in past.

5. RESULTS

The researches done till date in the area of developing destination brands have been shown in the below figures. The Figure 2 shows the growth of the research year wise. It can be seen very prominently that since 2014 the quantum of researches has increased and a major increase is post 2020. It shows the emphasis on this area is much for the researchers as it leads to growth and revival of tourism post pandemic. Figure 3 shows the country wise number of researches done in the area. As seen, United States of America has the maximum researches followed by Australia, China and India.

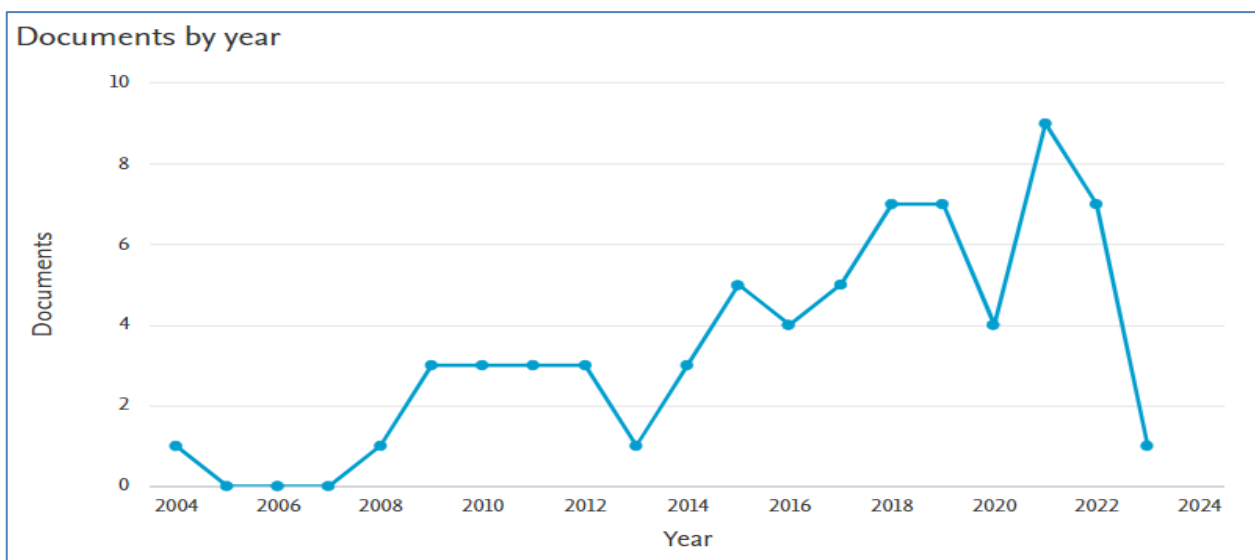


Figure 2: Year wise Scientific Production

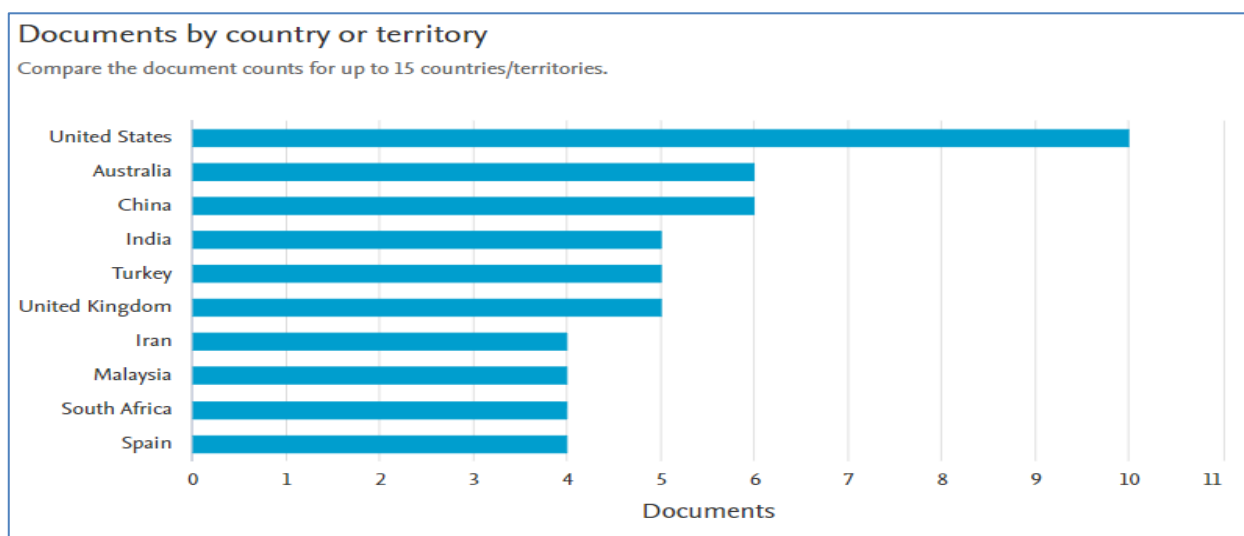


Figure 3: Top 10 countries based on publication frequency

5.1 Bibliometric Analysis

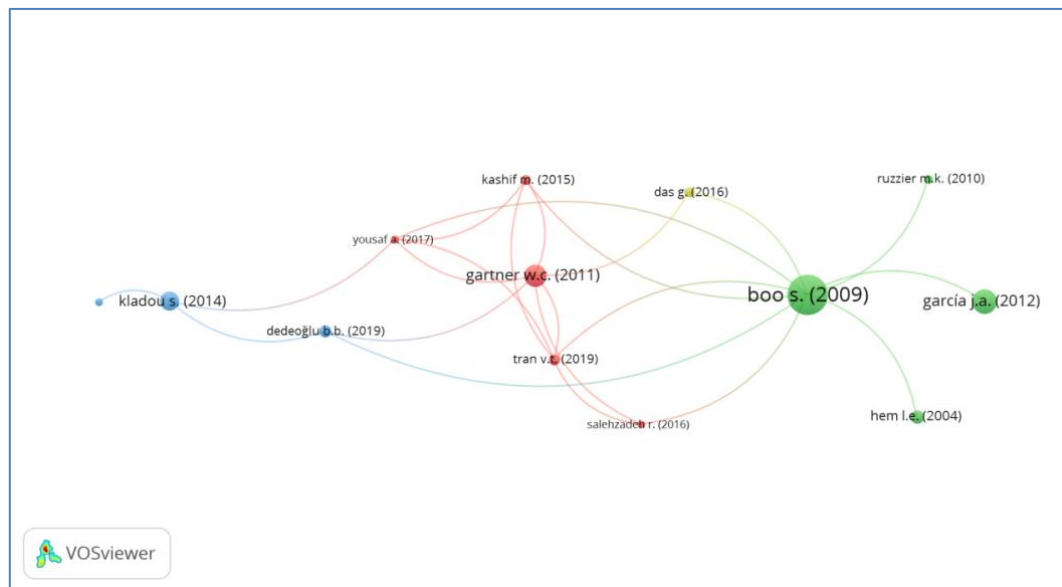


Figure 4: Co-citation network analysis

The co-citation network analysis shown in Figure 4 shows the top authors in the researched area of developing destination. The authors have researched in the central theme and are connected by the related researches. As seen in the figure, there are three major connected clusters having color coding Green, Red and Blue. The bigger the circle, the more connectivity that research work has with other researches in this area. The co-citation network of the cited references shows the papers which are most cited. The researches act as the initial interaction points with respect to the domain of research. The other noteworthy researches in each cluster have been cited and discussed in the research work at relevant places. The co-citation network in itself is the connecting link between the research papers when the third research paper has its citation (Hummon and Dereian, 1989).

Figure 5 depicts the keywords co-occurrence network analysis in which the macro clusters have been identified after the bibliometric analysis. The different colors visible in the co-occurrence diagram show the connectivity with the related keywords in the cluster. There are four colored clusters viz. Yellow, Red, Green and Blue. The co-occurrence keyword destination branding is the biggest in size which indicates that this word is the central theme and rest keywords are related to it. The optimization algorithm identifies communities in huge networks by combining nodes with the help of heuristics (Kumar et al., 2020). The keywords co-occurrence analysis offers a distinctive understanding through several areas and their application in few domains of research.

In co-occurrence network analysis, the keywords are classified into six clusters like this:

Cluster-1: Central Theme (Blue Cluster) - This cluster is the central theme which connects with keywords like brand identity and destination image. The impact of brand identity and image is crucial for developing destination brand. The role of destination marketing in increasing tourism has also been discussed. The correlation and relatedness of these sub-topics with destination branding has been discussed.

Cluster-2: Brand Value (Red Cluster) - This cluster reflects the various researches done in the area of branding and use of brand value for developing destination brand. The various customer based brand equity models which have been proposed in the researches are in this cluster. Additionally, the empirical analysis done in the area have also been highlighted.

Cluster-3: Brand Equity and Loyalty (Green Cluster) - This cluster includes the various researches in the area of brand personality and brand loyalty which definitely lead in developing a destination brand. The overall connect between branding and tourism has also been discussed.

Cluster-4: Aspects of Tourism (Yellow Cluster) - The topics and keywords like tourist destination and tourism development has been discussed in these cluster. The co-occurrence keyword like tourism management shows the overall importance of the concept. Upcoming areas like ecotourism have also been researched.

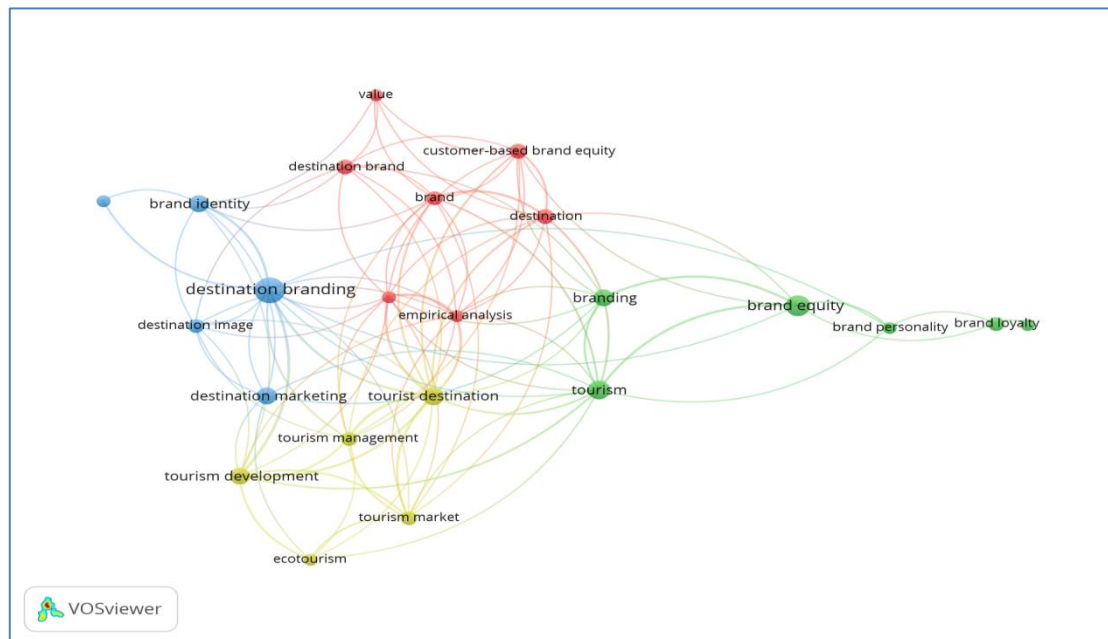


Figure 5: Co-occurrence network analysis

6. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

It is evident after reviewing the literature that destination branding is being studied by researchers worldwide. Although many conceptual and empirical studies have been conducted on destination branding, this topic is still growing and has many unexplored areas for in-depth research. As the tourism industry has become one of the key sources of economy for many countries, it is imperative to know the variables that can help these states or countries convert their existing or potential tourism locations into destination brands. After an extensive literature search, the present study has identified specific dimensions capable of developing a destination brand. These dimensions are destination brand awareness, destination brand identity, destination image, destination brand experience, and destination brand meaning.

Further, it has been concluded that creating consumer-based brand equity is the leading brand-building exercise for destination brands. Therefore, it is essential to know how the dimensions identified for building destination brands can contribute to creating consumer-based brand equity. In line with this, this study has tried to determine possible relations among the dimensions, i.e., awareness, image, identity, experience, and meaning, as well as their relations with consumer-based brand equity. The present study has proposed that destination brand awareness and brand experience can contribute to building a destination's image and consumer-based brand equity. It implies that destination marketers should look to create awareness first regarding the destination (Bhattacharjee and Singh, 2017; Bordoloi et al., 2020). They can create awareness using different elements of the promotion mix (Singh and Bhowal, 2009; Singh and Bhowal, 2011; Singh and Bhowal, 2012) especially advertising through social media and other online platforms.

Further, destination organizations should also promote tourists' positive experiences through testimonials through various online or offline platforms. Such activities will help in building a positive image for the destinations. The present study also proposed that destination image, directly and indirectly, impacts consumer-based brand equity. Indirectly, it is routed through destination brand meaning and destination brand identity separately. It can be concluded that the image of a destination the customers have in their mind provides an identity to that destination. It also results in consumers' feelings or attitudes, positive or negative, toward the destination. Such brand identity and brand meaning further get translated into brand equity. Hence, after creating awareness and an image of a destination, destination marketers should focus on determining some unique brand identity and brand meaning through which they could associate their brand with the

consumers. As the destination brands provide similar services, a destination with clear brand meaning and a unique identity will have the edge over other destinations. Therefore, the accountability of the marketers should also be fixed (Agarwal and Singh, 2023). The findings indicate that the field is rapidly growing and following specific growth patterns, particularly in destination management, tourist loyalty, destination, ecotourism, brand equity and destination image and marketing, etc. These results suggest that current research in developing destination focuses on the branding portion and highlights the image, marketing strategies, and innovation of destinations in attracting tourists, which previous tourism research have focussed less.

7. LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Nevertheless, this study is not exempted from limitations that may be considered in future research. WoS and other databases, along with the SCOPUS database, can be utilized in future studies. Future research can also contemplate other concepts that have not been included. The review comments of the tourists with respect to any tourist destination can also be analysed as it was done by Agarwal et al (2024). This study highlights the need for research that combines marketing, destination image, and tourism improvement and management to enhance the competitiveness of destinations. Based on various possible relationships between the identified variables, this study has proposed a conceptual baseline model which can be tested further by conducting an empirical study involving statistical tools like exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modelling (SEM) as it was done by Sharma et al (2024). Further research is needed to be conducted to explore the factors affecting elements like brand image, Brand Identity, brand awareness etc., to explore the role they play in destination branding. Social Network Analysis can be done to find out the interrelationship among the factors (Kajol et al, 2020a; Kajol et al, 2020b). Another fruitful research area would be to do the comparative testing of the model for virtual tourism. The impact of training imparted to employees should also be assessed (Singh and Bhowal, 2010). The robustness of the model can be examined by investigating the role of technology innovation.

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