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DESTINATION BRAND PROMISE: THE CORE OF CUSTOMER-BASED BRAND EQUITY MODELING

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The present study contributes to the discussion on transferring the concept of customer-based brand equity (CBBE) to a tourism destination context. The core component of the proposed CBBE model for tourism destinations (CBDBE) considers customers' evaluation of the destination promise in terms of the transformation of destination resources into value-in-use for tourists. The introduced CBDBE model consists of six interdependent constructs, including awareness, tourists' perception of functional, tangible and social destination resources, value-in-use disclosing the purpose and benefits of consumption, value-for-money, satisfaction and loyalty. The model was tested for the leading Swedish mountain destination Åre for the summer season by using customer-based survey data and a linear structural equation modeling (SEM) approach. Findings confirm the hypothesized relationships and the hierarchical structure of the proposed model. Managerial implications are discussed and the agenda for future CBDBE research is outlined.

Key words: Destination branding; Customer-based brand equity model (CBBE); Brand promise; Value-in-use; Value cocreation; Structural equation modeling (SEM)

Introduction

Since tourism destination branding was introduced in the 2000s, destination brand equity measurement has become one of the main research streams in the destination marketing domain (Pike, 2009). However, from a theoretical perspective, the destination brand equity concept, defined as a measure of the power of the destination brand and the link between marketing efforts and destination performance, remains insufficiently elaborated (Gartner, 2009; Pike, Murdy, & Lings, 2011). More specifically, destination brand equity studies mainly attempt to directly transfer existing modeling approaches, developed and tested for product brands, especially consumer packaged goods, to a destination context (Christodoulides & de Chernatony, 2010). Accordingly, the majority of tourism destination brand equity studies (e.g., Bianchi, Pike, & Ling, 2014; Boo, Busser, & Baloglu, 2009; Horng, Liu, Chou, & Tsai, 2012; Im, Kim, Elliot, & Han, 2012; Kim, Han, Holland, & Byon, 2009;

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Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Pike, Bianchi, Kerr, & Patti, 2010) adopt Aaker's (1991, 1996) and Keller's (1993) conceptualization of customer-based brand equity (CBBE), which derived from the field of cognitive psychology and focused on multidimensional memory structures, such as awareness, image, quality, value, and loyalty (Christodoulides & de Chernatony, 2010).

Previous efforts to measure brand equity particularly employ a holistic view of the brand, focusing on the development of reliable, valid, parsimonious, and theoretically sound measurement constructs. The adopted approaches can easily be implemented with simple "pen and paper" instruments and demonstrate high managerial usefulness as diagnostic tools capable of identifying areas for improvement of how the brand is perceived by customers. Nevertheless, research has not yet developed a broad theoretical discussion on how the characteristics of tourism, defined as a service industry, are shaping the dimensionality of the tourism destination CBBE model and the relationships between major model constructs. In the absence of a customer-based brand equity theory adapted to the peculiarities of tourism destinations, tourism literature exhibits a lack of agreement on the composition of CBBE model dimensions, model structure, and utilized measurement scales. By directly transferring the product-based CBBE model without conceptual refinements according to destination-specific characteristics, there is a risk to draw the focus away from the core essence of destination branding and, as a result, lose managerial relevancy. Christodoulides and de Chernatony (2010) suggested to enhance the diagnostic capacity of the CBBE model as a tool for successful brand development by selecting the model constructs, which align with the brand category (product type) and, most importantly, incorporate industry-specific dimensions that drive brand value.

This article aims at contributing to the further refinement of the CBBE model in a tourism destination context. Although the customer-based brand equity literature for tourism destinations has reached consensus regarding the outer components of the CBBE model (namely destination awareness and destination loyalty), the composition of the inner core of the model remains a gap this study is aiming to close. More precisely, as a contribution to the literature, this study proposes that the core component of a revised customer-based destination brand equity (CBDBE) model considers customers' evaluation of the destination promise in terms of the transformation of destination resources into value-in-use for tourists (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). This transformation process discloses customers' benefits of destination consumption and experience, respectively (Grönroos, 2009).

Literature Review

Today, the CBBE model is a well-established marketing concept (Aaker, 1991, 1996; Keller, 1993, 2009). Aaker (1991, 1996) and Keller (1993) advocated a multidimensional conceptualization of the CBBE model. Particularly, Aaker (1996) defined brand equity as a set of assets and liabilities, including brand name awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand associations that are "linked to a brand's name and symbol that adds to (or subtracts from) the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers" (p. 7–8). Furthermore, Keller (2009) extended the CBBE model to also address the consumer knowledge structure behind the brand development and to reflect the process of relationship building between customers and the brand. The contemporary service marketing perspective enables the understanding of CBBE in terms of customers' evaluation of brand value cocreation (Merz, He, & Vargo, 2009) and the depth of developed customer–brand relationships (Aaker, 1991, 1996; Keller, 1993, 2009; Grönroos, 2009).

Although the issue of destination brand measurement has only recently attracted attention of tourism researchers, the body of literature on customer-based brand equity for tourism destinations keeps constantly growing. By applying Aaker's (1991, 1996) and Keller's (1993) CBBE concept, tourism scholars typically view the customer-based brand equity model for a destination as "the sum of factors contributing to a brand's value in the consumer's mind" (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007, p. 401). However, a comparison of prior studies reveals similarities and overlaps, but also differences and gaps on both the conceptual and the measurement level of the CBBE model for tourism destinations.

Although Konecnik and Gartner (2007) validated a measurement model, and replicated the

study in Gartner and Konecnik Ruzzier (2011), Boo et al. (2009), Pike et al. (2010), Chen and Myagmarsuren (2010), and Kladou and Kehagias (2014) specified the CBBE model for destinations as a structural model examining "causal" relationships between model dimensions. Furthermore, Horng et al. (2012), Im et al. (2012), and Bianchi et al. (2014) considered destination loyalty as a construct outside the CBBE model and examined how model dimensions determine brand loyalty in terms of visit intentions and destination preference. Likewise, Ferns and Walls (2012) examined the relationships between enduring travel involvement and destination visit intentions mediated by CBBE model dimensions, while Kim et al. (2009) specified destination brand equity as a first-order construct (in contrast to the higher-order construct as proposed by Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). Kim et al. (2009) tested the relationships between destination involvement, destination brand equity, customer satisfaction, intention to revisit, and willingness to spend money. In addition, Evangelista and Dioko (2011) conceptualized brand equity as a higher-order construct, thereby following the brand equity framework proposed by Lassar, Mittal and Sharma (1995). Finally, Garcia, Gómez, and Molina (2012) suggested that destination brand equity analyses should not be limited to the customers' perspective, but rather should integrate other stakeholders relevant for the creation of destination brand value, including entrepreneurs and residents.

Remarkably, most previous studies integrate destination awareness and attitudinal destination brand loyalty as CBBE model dimensions, which, according to Keller's (2009) framework represented the bottom (i.e., brand salience) and the top (i.e., brand resonance) levels of the brand equity pyramid, respectively. Gartner and Konecnik Ruzzier (2011) argued that attitudinal destination brand loyalty is about "making a choice based on attributes and benefits to be obtained from travel to a particular place modified by one's attitudes toward those benefits" (p. 474). Therefore, attitudinal destination brand loyalty is manifested by the intention to revisit and recommend visiting the destination to others, as well as by the "brand commitment" in terms of preference and disposition towards a destination brand. Overall, destination brand equity studies have reached an agreement that destination preference, willingness to recommend, and intention to return are the core dimensions of the attitudinal destination brand loyalty construct (Bianchi et al., 2014; Boo et al., 2009; Chen & Myagmarsuren, 2010; Ferns & Walls, 2012; Im et al., 2012; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Pike et al., 2010).

The inner core of Keller's (2009) CBBE pyramid consists of two levels representing the "brand building" blocks: brand performance and imagery as the stage of brand meaning creation represented by both tangible product qualities and intangible aspects of the brand. Together, imagery and performance constitute the "brand associations" dimension of the CBBE model, which refers to the customers' ability to identify and to evaluate the attributes and benefits of the brand (Aaker, 1991, 1996; Keller, 2009). Previous tourism studies typically adjusted the CBBE model to the destination context by integrating attribute-based image and quality dimensions as representations of destination performance and imagery. However, on the measurement level, attribute-based destination image and quality highly overlap, while functional, intangible, and social destination attributes constitute an isolated CBBE model dimension (Ferns & Walls, 2012; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007).

Brand response is the third stage of the brand development process (Keller, 2009). This stage aims at receiving positive reactions to the brand in form of judgements and feelings. Overall brand evaluations based on customers' beliefs about brand attributes and benefits constitute brand attitudes, which shape customers' behavior towards the brand (Keller, 1993). Review of prior research revealed that the operationalization of destination brand judgements and feelings remains the most disputable and fragmented part of the destination brand equity model. Moreover, different constructs found in previous studies, which represent the judgements and feelings building block of the CBBE model, overlap on the measurement level, including overall destination brand quality (Boo et al., 2009), brand performance and trust (Evangelista & Dioko, 2011), brand meaning (Garcia et al., 2012), and brand associations (Bianchi et al., 2014; Im et al., 2012; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014). Furthermore, dimensions related to the respective constructs

overlap with dimensions of the destination loyalty construct. Second, benefits associated with the destination brand are only partly represented by the destination brand image, which considers categories of self-esteem, social recognition, and consistency of a destination image with a person's self-image and personality (Bianchi et al., 2014; Boo et al., 2009; Evangelista & Dioko, 2011). Similarly, tourist satisfaction (Chen & Myagmarsuren, 2010; Kim et al., 2009), as the overall measure of tourists' well-being in the result of a destination stay (Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2009), represents benefits of a tourism stay. Moreover, literature review revealed that the emotional value of a destination stay has received only little attention in previous research (Garcia et al., 2012). Finally, only three studies consider destination brand value specified as value-for-money (Bianchi et al., 2014; Boo et al., 2009; Evangelista & Dioko, 2011). Hence, examination of prior tourism literature indicates that the composition of the judgements and feelings building block of the CBBE model for tourism destinations is insufficiently elaborated from a theoretical point of view.

Finally, a critical examination of previously tested relationships between CBBE constructs demonstrates that most destination brand equity studies aim at explaining destination brand loyalty as the endogenous model construct (Bianchi et al., 2014; Boo et al., 2009; Chen & Myagmarsuren, 2010; Ferns & Walls, 2012; Horng et al., 2012; Im et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2009; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Pike et al., 2010). However, in prior studies the inner core of the destination brand equity model predominantly remains a "black box." Particularly, the complex mechanisms of how destination performance and imagery, represented by functional, intangible, and social destination resources, transform into customers' destination judgements and feelings, have been overlooked.

Conceptual Model Refinements

The proposed CBDBE modeling approach is consistent with Gnoth's (2007) conceptualization of the destination brand, which represents functional, emotional, and symbolic values of the destination, as well as the benefits that tourists are promised to receive as a result of visiting the destination. Following the service marketing perspective (Grönroos, 2009; Vargo & Lusch, 2008), the attributes and benefits promised by the brand are explicitly considered through the notion of value cocreation. Accordingly, at the stage of brand meaning creation, brand awareness gradually transforms into customers' evaluation of the brand offer. Moeller (2010) defined the brand offer as a supplier's promise to transform customers' resources by integrating them with the supplier's resources to satisfy customers' needs and, thereby, to improve customers' state of being. As emphasized by Grönroos (2009), the firm's marketing department is not the only source of the brand's promise. Rather, the functional characteristics of the products used as input for the service process, employees involved at the service encounter, other customers, competitors, media, and various other entities that convey the messages regarding the brand of a certain service provider, all contribute to the articulation of the brand's promise.

The inner components of the proposed conceptual model (Fig. 1) correspond to the "performance and imagery" and the "judgements and feelings" building blocks of Keller's (2009) brand relationship framework and, thus, consist of customers' evaluation of the destination promise in terms of transforming functional, intangible, and social *destination resources* into tourists' *value-in-use* (Grönroos, 2009; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). The destination's products and services, intangible destination characteristics, as well as social interactions both at the service encounter, with locals, and other tourists shape the unique configuration of available destination resources (Palmer, 2010; Zabkar, Brencic, & Dmitrovic, 2010). In a similar way, the configuration of desired and experienced destination resources is considered as unique for tourists in a particular visitation context (Moeller, 2010). Likewise, tourists' state of being as the result of visiting the destination constitutes the value-in-use for tourists (Ballantyne & Varey, 2006). Following Woodruff (1997), value-in-use is created within a dynamic and hierarchical means–end process of utilizing product attributes to obtain desired experiences and to achieve customer's goals and consumption purposes. Particularly, emotional experience, social recognition, novelty, and knowledge related to a consumption experience are considered as major dimensions that have the potential to modify

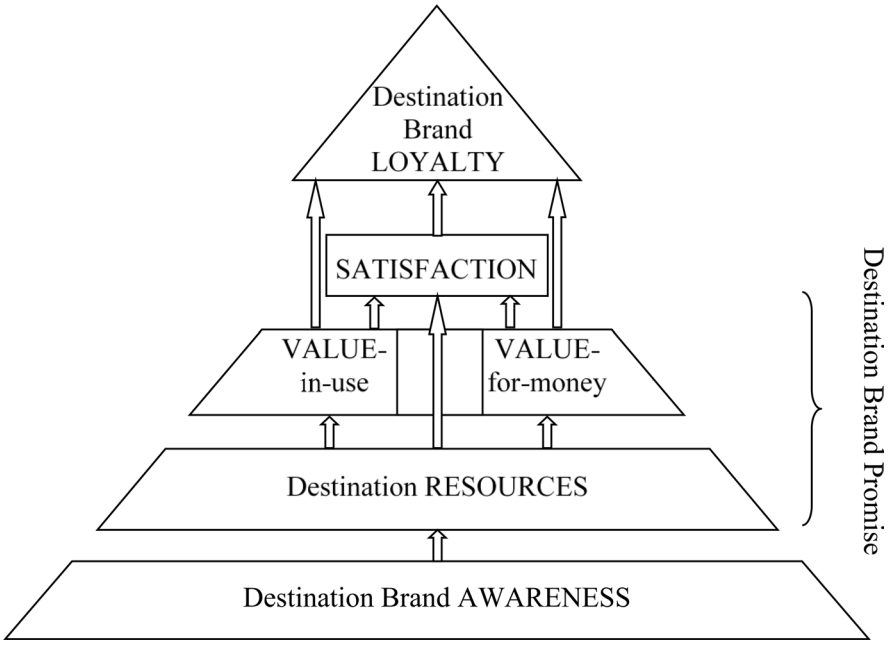

Figure 1. Customer-based brand equity model for tourism destination (CBDBE).

customers' state of being (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991). The relationship between visitors' perception of destination resources and *value-for-money* is affected by tourists' own resources placed into the cocreated service delivery process (Bianchi et al., 2014; Boo et al., 2009; Evangelista & Dioko, 2011). Following previous studies, *destination brand awareness*, defined as customers' ability to recall destination recourses, is hypothesized to affect the evaluative outcome of the destination promise (Chen & Myagmarsuren, 2010; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Pike et al., 2010), which, in turn, determines tourists' behavioral intentions towards the destination, specified as attitudinal *destination brand loyalty* (Boo et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2009; Pike et al., 2010). As suggested by de Chernatony, Harris, and Christodoulides (2004), in contrast to most prior studies on CBBE, customer *satisfaction* is hypothesized to represent a crucial CBBE model dimension in a service delivery context. Particularly, satisfaction is expected to act as major outcome dimension of the destination visitation, which, according to Cracolici and Nijkamp (2009), is linked to tourists' feeling of emotional well-being in relation to destination resources, mediated through customers' perceived value-in-use and value-for-money, respectively.

Several previous studies confirmed that customers' evaluation of destination attributes influences satisfaction, defined according to Oliver (1999) as pleasurable fulfilment of needs, desires, and goals (Chi & Qu, 2008; Chen & Tsai, 2007, Fuchs & Weiermair, 2003; Zabkar et al., 2010). Moreover, a vast body of research confirms that overall satisfaction with the destination directly influences tourists' loyalty behavior (e.g., Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; del Bosque & Martin, 2008; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Zabkar et al., 2010). Kim et al. (2009) and Chen and Myagmarsuren (2010) emphasized the importance of the relationship between customer-based brand equity and tourists' overall satisfaction with the destination experience. Therefore, in the study at hand, tourist satisfaction is expected to be positively influenced by tourists' perception of destination resources, value-in-use, and value-for-money. In turn, overall customers' satisfaction with the destination experience is expected to serve as direct antecedent of destination loyalty, the endogenous construct of the model. In order to validate the proposed CBDBE model, the relationships

between model constructs are specified as a set of nine hypotheses:

H1. A strong destination awareness positively affects customers' perception of destination resources
H2. A positive perception of destination resources positively affects customers' perception of value-in-use
H3. A positive perception of destination resources positively affects customers' perception of value-for-money
H4. A positive perception of value-in-use positively affects customers' loyalty towards the destination
H5. A positive perception of value-for-money positively affects customers' loyalty towards the destination
H6. A positive perception of destination resources positively affects customers' overall satisfaction with the destination
H7. A positive perception of value-in-use positively affects customers' overall satisfaction with the destination
H8. A positive perception of value-for-money positively affects customers' overall satisfaction with the destination experience
H9. A positive overall satisfaction with the destination positively affects customers' loyalty towards the destination.

Data Collection and Model Testing

By implementing a web survey and using a linear structural equation modeling approach, the proposed model is validated for the leading Swedish mountain destination Åre. The destination is mostly famous as an international destination for alpine skiing. However, because the destination goal is to become an all-year-round destination, the summer destination product is in the focus of this study.

Operationalization of destination resources and value-in-use dimensions pertaining to the CBDBE model reflects a means–end hierarchy (Reynolds & Olson, 2001) between destination resources and value-in-use, which has been deduced from 41 semistructured qualitative interviews with tourists conducted in Åre in July 2012. As a result, a list of 40 functional, 4 intangible, and 4 social destination resources relating to a summer vacation in Åre served as input for the attribute-based satisfaction scale, reflecting the destination resources construct (Likert scale 1–5). In order to empirically indicate value-in-use, 35 items reflecting destination-specific benefits have been formulated based on scales used in prior studies on motivation and value of adventure tourism, mountain biking, and tourism in mountain areas (e.g., Pan & Ryan, 2007; Skår, Odden, & Vistad, 2008; Williams & Soutar, 2009). Finally, the list of measurement items (1–5 agreement Likert scale) describing destination awareness (three items), value-for-money (two items), overall satisfaction with the destination (one item), and loyalty (three items) is derived from prior customer-based brand equity studies (Boo et al., 2009; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Lehman, Keller, & Farley, 2008).

In December 2012, data were collected from customers by using a web-based e-mail survey with one reminder. The questionnaire was available in English and Swedish. In total, 3,957 e-mail addresses of tourists who visited Åre during the summer season 2012 were provided by key destination stakeholders, such as Skistar Åre and Holiday Club Åre. In total, 522 respondents completed the questionnaire and answered all items in the destination brand loyalty section of the questionnaire. Table 1 provides demographic characteristics of the sample.

The issue of missing values poses some constraints on the data analysis. First, only 6 items out of the 40 functional destination attributes, and 20 out of 35 value-in-use items show an acceptable share of missing values below 10% (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Additionally, one intangible attribute item and four social attributes items with a share of missing values in the range from 16% to 20% have been preserved to represent respective categories of destination resources. To conclude, the high share of missing values, related to destination attributes and value-in-use dimensions, points at the service heterogeneity characteristics, implying that only core destination components are used by most respondents (Murphy, Pritchard, & Smith, 2000).

The dimensionality of the model-construct *destination resources* has been examined using exploratory factor analysis (VariMax) with missing value substitution by means (Hair et al., 2010). After

Table 1
Demographics and Visitation Behavior Characteristics of Respondents ($N = 522$)

Item	Frequency (%)
Gender	
Female	223 (44%)
Male	287 (56%)
Total	510 (100%)
Country of residence	
Sweden	406 (78%)
Norway	92 (18%)
Finland	12 (2%)
Other	8 (2%)
Total	518 (100%)
Age	
Up to 25 years old	9 (2%)
26–35 years old	72 (14%)
36–45 years old	169 (34%)
46–55 years old	159 (32%)
56–65 years old	61 (12%)
66 years and older	34 (7%)
Total	504 (100%)

removal of items with factor loadings below 0.5 ("destination accessibility") and low communalities value ("quality of accommodation"), the produced one-factor solution explains 60% of the total variance. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy is at acceptable level of 0.675 (Hair et al., 2010), and Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant [$\chi^2(6) = 652.27$, $p < 0.001$]. Factor loadings vary from 0.666 to 0.872, while communalities vary from 0.444 to 0.729, and Cronbach's alpha is at 0.758 (Hair et al., 2010). The remaining four items combine the perception of "natural landscapes" and "nature quality" with the "variety of dining, shopping, entertainment" and "activities offered by the mountain destination."

Similarly, EFA (VariMax) was employed to examine the factor structure of the visitation outcome. After removal of items with factor loadings below 0.5 (sense of belonging) and above 0.4 on more than one factor (happy, joyful, well-being, different from everyday life, experience the beauty of nature), the analysis revealed a three-factor solution explaining 69% of total variance. The KMO measure is 0.903, and Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant [i.e., $\chi^2(91) = 3954.436$, $p < 0.001$]. The subdimensions of the destination value-in-use construct represent various aspects of the destination's emotional value, including relaxation and escape (factor loadings in range 0.653–0.815, communalities 0.624–0.762, Cronbach's alpha is 0.915), summer experience (factor loadings vary from 0.585 to 0.779, communalities 0.478–0.671, Cronbach's alpha is 0.836), as well physical exercise (factor loadings 0.906–0.919, communalities 0.905–0.906, Cronbach's alpha is 0.909).

The share of missing values for destination awareness and value-for-money items was low and did not exceed 5%. Nevertheless, missing value substitution was employed as suggested by Hair et al. (2010). Finally, *z*-score examination revealed outliers ($z > 3.29$). The substitution procedure affected a total of 22 items, while the number of adjusted scores varied from 2 to 7 per item and, therefore, did not exceed 2% per item (Hair et al., 2010).

Model Validation and Hypothesis Testing

After completion of the data preparation, the proposed model was validated by a linear structural equation modeling (SEM) approach by using IBM SPSS AMOS 24. Validation of measurement constructs by means of confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the unidimensionality of the specified measurement model (Hair et al., 2010). All unstandardized loadings were statistically different from zero, all *t* values higher than 1.96 and varied from 5.982 to 20.117, and all standardized loadings were above the minimum of 0.50. However, model-of-fit statistics did not fully satisfy recommended thresholds: the relationship between the chi-square value and the number of degrees of freedom amounted to $\chi^2/df = 4.121$, thus exceeding the required minimum of 3 (Hair et al., 2010). Goodness-of-fit index (GFI = 0.793), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI = 0.759), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI = 0.840), and comparative fit index (CFI = 0.854) were all slightly below recommended thresholds (Hair et al., 2010). Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.077) indicated an acceptable fit. Finally, standardized root mean square residuals (SRMR = 0.077) were well below the recommended cut-off value of 0.08 (Hair et al., 2010).

Examination of standardized residuals revealed that most values in the matrix were below 2 in absolute values. However, values above 4 signal

an unacceptable degree of error, which requires removal of problematic items (Hair et al., 2010). Therefore, two functional, one intangible, and one social attribute items, two relaxation and escape, and one experience value-in-use items were removed from the analysis. The social attributes item "employees" was combined with the remaining intangible attribute items. The removal of less than 20% of items represents an acceptable level of adjustment and justifies model testing with remaining data (Hair et al., 2010). From a theoretical viewpoint, removal and combination of above items can be explained by a great degree of heterogeneity of the interviewed tourist sample in terms of both composition of the travel group and in terms of utilized resources as well as the structure of desired visitation outcomes (Moeller, 2010). This service heterogeneity characteristic in the summer

Table 2
Validating the CBDBE Measurement Model

Constructs/Scale items	Composite Reliability	Standardized Loadings	*t* Value (CR)	SMC	AVE
Destination awareness (AW)	0.79				0.56
Advertising		0.529		0.380	
News		0.805	11.057	0.648	
Famous		0.867	11.396	0.752	
Functional attributes (NAT)	0.86				0.76
Landscape		0.819		0.671	
Nature quality		0.916	15.269	0.840	
Intangible attributes (INT)	0.85				0.59
Tidy		0.811	18.537	0.658	
Family friendly		0.788	17.898	0.621	
Safe		0.772		0.597	
Employees		0.700	15.969	0.490	
Social attributes (SOC)	0.95				0.90
Other tourists' behavior		0.940		0.884	
Other tourists' friendliness		0.953	30.618	0.908	
Relaxation & escape (REL)	0.90				0.65
Peace		0.716		0.512	
Relaxation		0.781	17.567	0.610	
Avoid hustle		0.795	17.225	0.632	
Escape routines		0.878	18.756	0.771	
Freedom		0.854	18.253	0.729	
Summer experience (EXP)	0.83				0.54
Fun		0.670		0.449	
Thrill		0.752	15.009	0.565	
Diversity		0.781	14.836	0.609	
Story		0.745	14.173	0.555	
Exercise (TRA)	0.91				0.84
Training		0.953		0.908	
Body		0.876	17.351	0.768	
Value-for-money (VFM)	0.90				0.82
Worth		0.948		0.899	
Reasonable		0.855	17.512	0.731	
Destination loyalty (LOY)	0.75				0.50
Return		0.638		0.407	
First choice		0.665	12.473	0.442	
Recommend		0.801	13.040	0.642	
Destination resources (DRES)	0.79				0.56
Functional attributes (NAT)		0.615		0.379	
Intangible attributes (INT)		0.877	9.747	0.770	
Social attributes (SOC)		0.736	9.739	0.542	
Value-in-use (VIU)	0.79				0.57
Relaxation & escape (REL)		0.798		0.636	
Exercise (TRA)		0.525	9.581	0.275	
Summer experience (EXP)		0.897	11.323	0.805	

Table 3
Discriminant Validity of the CBDBE Model Measurement Scale

	LOY	VFM	AW	TRA	EXP	REL	SOC	INT	NAT
LOY	**0.500**								
VFM	0.203	**0.820**							
AW	0.127	0.048	**0.560**						
TRA	0.199	0.057	0.031	**0.840**					
EXP	0.581	0.165	0.089	0.222	**0.540**				
REL	0.460	0.130	0.071	0.176	0.513	**0.650**			
SOC	0.171	0.171	0.042	0.086	0.250	0.198	**0.900**		
INT	0.244	0.242	0.060	0.122	0.355	0.281	0.417	**0.590**	
NAT	0.120	0.119	0.029	0.060	0.175	0.138	0.205	0.292	**0.760**

destination context was observed at the qualitative stage of this study as well.

Model modification substantially improved fit statistics related to the validation of the CBDBE measurement model. Although the goodness-of-fit index (GFI = 0.899) just reached the recommended threshold of 0.90, normed-χ^2 statistics ($\chi^2/df = 2.540$) shows satisfactory fit, and all other indexes satisfy the cut-off requirements as incremental (CFI = 0.943; NFI = 0.910) as well as absolute fit indices (RMSEA = 0.054; SRMR = 0.053) rank well above recommended thresholds (Hair et al., 2010). Furthermore, after performed adjustments, the estimated model shows satisfactory measurement results in terms of composite reliability, (standardized) loadings, critical ratio (i.e., proxy for *t* value), squared multiple correlation (SMC), and average variance extracted (AVE). Results from validating the CBDBE measurement model are shown in Table 2.

Table 3 displays the results from testing discriminant validity. Although for most construct pairs discriminant validity is confirmed, the AVE value is slightly lower than the squared correlation estimate for the construct pair "Summer experience"–"Loyalty." Considering that the constructs are meaningfully distinct, the result signals that further efforts to strengthen construct measurement are necessary, particularly to further develop the theoretical conceptualization of destination loyalty serving as the endogenous CBDBE model construct (Hair et al., 2010).

Overall, the results of the conducted CFA are satisfactory (Hair et al., 2010). Thus, the next step in the analysis is to transform the measurement model into the structural form and to perform path analysis to test the hypothesized relationships between model constructs. Linear structural equation modeling revealed the following findings: Goodness-of-fit statistics relating to the path model are all satisfactory [GFI = 0.89; RMSEA = 0.055 (LL 0.050; UL 0.059); SRMR = 0.055; $\chi^2/df = 2.565$ (861.908/336); TLI = 0.93; CFI = 0.94; AGFI = 0.87]. Most hypothesized relationships between CBDBE model constructs behave as expected and are significant (Table 4). The only exception is the (i.e., direct) relationship between destination resources and tourists' overall satisfaction with the destination (H6).

Interestingly, path analysis revealed that the transformation of destination resources into value-in-use representing the promised destination-specific benefits of tourists' stay ("relaxation and escape," "summer experience," and "exercise") has the strongest single effect on the formation of attitudinal loyalty towards the destination (H4). Figure 2 displays the squared multiple correlations (SMC) for the constructs explained by the model. Hence, the proposed CBDBE model impressively shows the power to statistically explain more than 70% of the variance of the endogenous model construct (i.e., destination loyalty).

Summary and Discussion

This study contributes to the ongoing discussion on the CBBE concept development and validation in a destination context (Boo et al., 2009; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Pike et al., 2010). More concretely, the study adds to the existing body of tourism knowledge on how tourists perceive tourism

Table 4
Structural Parameter Estimates for the Revised CBDBE Model

Structural Relationships	Unstandardized Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	*t* Value (CR)	Standardized Parameter Estimate
H1: AW → DRES	0.130	0.025	5.174	0.318
H2: DRES → VIU	1.593	0.180	8.866	0.761
H3: DRES → VFM	2.338	0.270	8.667	0.570
H4: VIU → LOY	0.852	0.124	6.857	0.600
H5: VFM → LOY	0.058	0.031	1.896	0.080
H6: DRES → SAT	n.s.	0.240	0.049	n.s.
H7: VIU → SAT	1.023	0.115	8.861	0.726
H8: VFM → SAT	0.053	0.031	1.708	0.073
H9: SAT → LOY	0.251	0.067	3.757	0.249

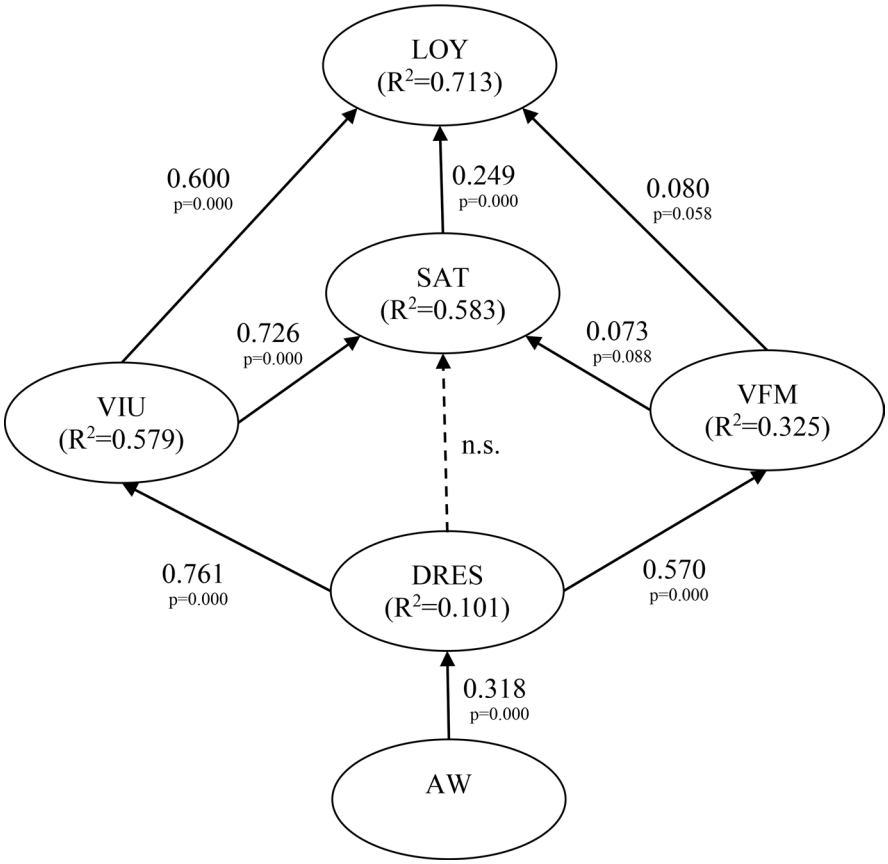

Figure 2. Standardized path estimates for the CBDBE structural model.

destinations as brands and how the evaluation of destination brands affects loyalty. The study theoretically proposes and empirically tests an enhanced customer-based brand equity model for tourism destinations (CBDBE) by following Keller's (2009) brand equity hierarchy and by considering the concept of destination value-in-use (Grönroos, 2009; Vargo & Lusch, 2008) as a newly added model dimension. The model has been operationalized with a focus on the summer product offered by the Swedish mountain destination Åre. A qualitative preparatory research step aiming at uncovering destination-specific attributes and subdimensions of value-in-use preceded the model testing (Holbrook, 2006).

The proposed model consists of six isolated causally dependent constructs. First, destination awareness represents the brand salience block at the bottom of the brand equity pyramid and is positively related to visitors' perception of destination-specific functional, intangible, and social resources (Keller, 2009). Similar to prior studies (Chen & Myagmarsuren, 2010; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Pike et al., 2010), findings confirm H1. However, although being statistically significant, the relationship is weak and shows only a minor contribution towards explaining tourists' perception of destination resources. However, this weak relationship may be explained by the characteristics of the sample, which consists only of tourists who have already visited the destination, and the share of first-time visitors amounts to only 24%. As Milman and Pizam (1995) discussed and Gartner and Konecnik Ruzzier (2011) empirically revealed, the role destination awareness plays in the brand equity formation process is more important for the renewal market compared to the repeat market.

The positive relationship between the perception of destination resources and value-in-use of a destination stay (H2) discloses the destination brand promise to combine the destination's and tourists' resources and to transform them into valued benefits (Moeller, 2010). The proposed relationship is both strong and statistically significant, as well as the direct relationship between value-in-use and destination loyalty (H4). These findings illustrate the hypothesized importance of value-in-use introduced by this study as a new and isolated CBDBE dimension to better understand how tourists perceive destination brands and what might explain future behavioral intentions towards the destination. These results are in line with findings in Pike et al. (2009) regarding the relationship between attribute-based destination quality and tourists' self-esteem and social recognition, as well as the relationships between dimensions representing destination brand judgments and destination loyalty (Boo et al., 2009; Bianchi et al., 2014; Chen & Myagmarsuren, 2010; Im et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2009; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Pike et al., 2010).

Furthermore, customers' perception of a destination's resources is positively related to value-for-money, which constitutes the value-in-exchange of a destination stay and thus considers the input of tourists' own resources placed into the process of value cocreation during destination stay (Grönroos, 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Findings confirm this relationship empirically (H3). However, the relationship between value-for-money and destination loyalty (H5) is weak and significant only at the 0.1 probability level. Interestingly, this finding is in contradiction with results from a prior study (Chen & Tsai, 2007), thus indicating that a positive evaluation of sacrifice does not necessarily contribute to the process of destination loyalty formation. For instance, in the context of the Åre destination, tourists' investments into gear and equipment are of particular importance, while the access to nature, which is a primary tangible destination resource, family friendliness, and safety at the destination, as well as social interactions with other tourists, are free of charge.

As proposed by de Chernatony et al. (2004), the role of overall satisfaction with the destination, a newly introduced part of the CBDBE model, has been tested. Findings confirm H7 and H9 and thus constitute a need to further examine the capacity of customers' overall satisfaction with the destination to mediate the hypothesized relationship between value-in-use and destination loyalty. However, H6, suggesting a direct relationship between tourists' perception of destination resources and overall satisfaction, was rejected. H8, stipulating the relationship between value-for-money and tourists' overall satisfaction with the destination experience, is only significant at the 0.1 probability level. Interestingly, this finding again raises questions about the role of customer-based "sacrifices" in a nature-based

(i.e., mountain) summer destination context. Overall, the explanation power of the proposed CBDBE model is satisfactory and the squared multiple correlations (SMC) for both the constructs destination value-in-use and satisfaction exceed the 0.50 value. For destination brand loyalty, the endogenous model construct, the SMC value is as high as 0.71. However, results from confirmatory factor analysis and results of discriminant validity indicate the need for a further model refinement, particularly, the enhanced operationalization of the destination brand loyalty construct.

Implications, Limitations, and Future Research

As the main theoretical contribution, this study addressed the gap in the customer-based brand equity literature for tourism destinations regarding the inner core of the model (Chekalina, Fuchs, & Lexhagen, 2018). The latter has been conceptualized as "perceived destination promise," which depicts customers' evaluation of the various service cocreation processes taking place at tourists' destination stay (Grönroos, 2009; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). This evaluation comprises the resources offered by the destination and the transformation of these resources into value-in-use for the customer, thereby considering customers' resource inputs and sacrifices (Fuchs, 2004; Moeller, 2010). By relating value-in-use and value-for-money to destination brand loyalty placed at the top of the destination brand equity pyramid, the proposed model seeks to better understand the nature and depth of tourists' relationships with the destination brand (Keller, 2009). Empirical findings support the cocreation logic standing behind the destination's value promise, namely to make value propositions and to provide appropriate destination resources which are transformed into tourists' desired and valued benefits (Moeller, 2010; Palmer, 2010; Sheth et al., 1991). Similarly, the empirically found relationship between the perception of destination resources and value-for-money is in line with the traditional conceptualization of consumer value, defined as the interplay between consumers' benefits and sacrifices (Zeithaml, 1988). Thus, the theoretical distinction between the concepts value-in-use and value-in-exchange (Vargo & Lusch, 2008) is well demonstrated by the study.

From a praxeological perspective, the proposed CBDBE model empowers destination managers to combine and interrelate various silos of knowledge referring to the fulfilment of the value proposition promised to tourists by the destination. This is directly linked to destination loyalty as the main strategic target and key performance indicator in destination marketing practice (Bianchi et al., 2014). Moreover, the link between destination resources and value-in-use can be understood and communicated through the brand (Gnoth, 2007). For instance, based on study findings, the destination management of Åre can now identify the concrete attributive dimensions behind customers' value-in-use of destination visitation (e.g., scenic natural landscapes, family friendliness, safety and security at the destination, cleanliness and tidiness, friendliness and professionalism of employees, as well as friendliness and behavior of other tourists) and customers' loyalty for the respective summer tourism product. Finally, and most importantly, also customer dimensions most relevant for cocreating value-in-use, namely, relaxation and escape, exciting, diverse, and memorable summer experiences, as well as training and exercise, can be identified by destination managers and planners.

The study shows several limitations and prospects for future research and, therefore, results cannot be generalized. The main limitation arises from testing the model only for actual visitors confined to the Swedish resort of Åre. Thus, empirical results can only be generalized if the proposed model has been successfully retested for other destinations. Despite the difficulty to reach potential visitors for a small-scale destination like Åre, the model could be retested, as suggested by Gartner and Konecnik Ruzzier (2011), for both repeat and renewal markets in destinations at higher geographical levels (e.g., a tourism region or a country). Moreover, the operationalization of destination awareness should be further improved, since top-of-mind awareness becomes irrelevant in situations of repeated purchase (Aaker, 1996). Thus, there is a need to properly conceptualize the construct of destination awareness for repeat, new, and potential customers, respectively. Similarly, the analysis of discriminant validity suggests the need to refine the conceptualization and to strengthen the operationalization of destination loyalty as the endogenous CBDBE model construct.

The second set of limitations refers to issues of study design and data collection. Particularly, the data set gathered for empirical analysis contained relatively large shares of missing values. However, the primary reason for missing values was the original effort to address the large variety of destination resources used as possible inputs for value cocreation during summer season (Moeller, 2010). The study additionally aimed at exploring the dimensional structure of the value-in-use model construct. Thus, all potentially relevant value-in-use measures were included as part of the CBDBE measurement instrument (i.e., online questionnaire), including measures that are of relevance only for narrow niche segments. Because the share of missing values was relatively high, for future research the validation of the proposed model should be replicated on the base of new data. However, the high share of missing values is not merely a measurement problem, but rather illustrates the complexity of consumption patterns across different tourist segments, as only few resources and, eventually, few visitation benefits are commonly utilized and thus experienced by strongly differing customer segments. This observation is in line with the nature of value-in-use (Grönroos, 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2008) and of the service cocreation process (Moeller, 2010). However, this aspect should be further addressed by adjusting the measurement model for various summer tourism segments, such as hiking, mountain biking, wellness tourists, village tourists, etc. A priori segmentation as well as data-driven clustering (i.e., hierarchical and nonhierarchical techniques) and more advanced methods, such as association rules and artificial neural networks (Larose, 2005; Fuchs, Höpken, & Lexhagen, 2014), can be considered as useful methods for solving the task of identifying homogenous subsamples for repeated validation of the proposed CBDBE model. Furthermore, recent service marketing literature suggests that a brand, and that what is branded, should be alienated and, therefore, a brand has a value-in-use of its own (Merz et al., 2009). This implies that the value-in-use of destination brands does not have to be directly related to a destination visitation. Thus, a future model version should integrate dimensions that do not only reflect value-in-use as communicated through the various destination and customer channels, but also value-in-use of the brand beyond destination visitation, such as the symbolic value of the tourism destination brand (Evangelista & Dioko, 2011).

Moreover, future research should consider the time dimension into the conceptualization and empirical validation of the CBDBE model. Particularly, the hierarchy of CBDBE model dimensions reflects the dynamically interlinked stages of the relationship development process between tourists and the destination brand (Keller, 2009). Although the "relationship" concept inherently implies that time dynamics are taken into account, the existing definition and operationalization of the CBDBE model remains static and is thus only able to reflect tourists' perceptions of the destination brand at a given moment of time. However, the question that inevitably arises is how relevant will various model dimensions be at different stages of the destination relationship development process. For instance, the conceptualization of destination awareness is particularly relevant for renewal markets. At the same time, Gartner and Konecnik Ruzzier (2011) argued that in the case of repeated visitation, destination awareness becomes less important compared to other CBDBE dimensions. On the contrary, because customers' attitude and service performance evaluation adjust over time, the assessment of respective dimensions should be performed later when the experience is completed; for instance, when tourists returned home and had sufficient time to reflect upon their holiday stay (Arnould & Price, 1993; Palmer, 2010). Thus, integrating the time dimension into the CBDBE model becomes an essential element for enhancing both theoretical and managerial relevancy. Finally, we believe that the proposed model is similarly relevant for the broader service industry, as the focus is shifting away from single firms towards value networks of service products, providers, systems, and other customers that collectively cocreate value-in-use for the customer (Lusch, Vargo, & Tanniru, 2010).

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