



## Developing an Integrated Process-Based Model of Tourists' Destination Brand Equity: A Conceptual View

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### ABSTRACT

Tourists' destination branding and the formation of destination equity are considered among the most critical areas of tourism marketing. This conceptual paper presents a holistic framework of tourist destination brand equity by highlighting the role of social, personal, and cultural factors in forming a tourist knowledge of a given destination that ultimately leads to destination equity. In addition, the proposed framework also highlights the role of rational and emotional paths in the formation of tourist knowledge of a destination. Once a tourist develops knowledge about a goal, it then forms the equity of a given tourist destination. The proposed framework thus adds a novel model of tourist destination-based equity by incorporating the role of social, personal and cultural factors and how rational and emotional aspects develop a tourist knowledge that further leads to destination equity. In the same vein, the proposed model provides a guiding map to tourism policy makers and practitioners on how to develop equity of a particular tourist destination.

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## 1. Introduction

The tourists' destination brand equity refers to the value that a destination adds to tourists' experiences. Previous research on tourists' destination brand equity is fragmented and has primarily focused on the conventional brand equity sources as proposed by Aaker (1996) such as brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty (Ishaq & Di Maria, 2020). There is consistent calls from recent researchers to develop a holistic view of the formation of tourists' destination-based equity model that should encompass different perspectives (e.g., Sokołowska, Pawlak, Hajduk, and Dziadkiewicz (2022); Errichiello (2021); Chatzipanagiotou, Christodoulides, and Veloutsou (2019). Addressing to such calls, this conceptual paper presents a holistic framework of destination-based equity by highlighting the role of social, personal, and cultural factors in forming a tourist knowledge of a given destination that ultimately leads to destination equity. In addition, the proposed framework also highlights the role of rational and emotional paths in the formation of tourist knowledge of a destination that ultimately develops tourists' destination equity. The proposed framework thus adds a novel model of destination brand equity by incorporating the role of multiple factors and hence provides a guiding map to tourism policy makers and practitioners on how to develop equity of a particular tourist destination.

Tourism is a rapidly growing industry that has a significant impact on the global economy (Patwary, 2020). With the increasing competition among tourist destinations, it has become crucial for tourist destinations to have a unique brand identity that differentiates them from others (Souiden, Ladhari, & Chiadmi, 2017). A tourist destination brand equity refers to the value that a destination adds to tourists' experiences and is shaped by various factors such as destination awareness (Tsaur, Yen, & Yan, 2016), destination image (Gallarza, Saura, & García,

2002), tourists' perceived quality of a destination (Ramseook-Munhurrun, Seebaluck, & Naidoo, 2015), and tourists' loyalty toward a destination (Di Leo, Sfodera, Cucari, Mattia, & Dezi, 2023).

Tourist destinations primarily aim to deliver memorable experiences to tourists, and such a memorable experience is influenced by multiple industries and stakeholders (He, He, & Xu, 2018). Thus, the tourism product (memorable experience) is considered to be complex and interconnected with various factors (Alwan, 2016; Jia, 2017). A favourable or unfavourable experience of a tourist develops a positive or negative equity of a destination. Previous research on destination brand equity is fragmented and has primarily focused on the conventional brand equity sources proposed by Aaker (1996) such as brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty (Ishaq & Di Maria, 2020; Sokołowska et al., 2022). The Gestalt theory of perception suggests that individuals tend to perceive objects and scenes as cohesive entities rather than isolated components, emphasizing that the entire entity is more significant than its individual parts (Errichiello, 2021). Accordingly, since destination brand equity is a complex concept, it should be studied holistically rather than in fragmented parts. Therefore, many recent researchers call for a broader perspective of destination brand equity that should encompass different perspectives and factors. For instance, there is a lack of comprehensive research that examines brand equity from a cultural and social perspective (Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2019). To gain a thorough understanding of destination brand equity, it is vital to recognize the importance of consumers' behaviour that can be influenced by both personal evaluations of the destination (antecedent variables) and external factors such as social and cultural aspects (Cano Guervos, Frías Jamilena, Polo Peña, & Chica Olmo, 2020). In the same vein, Kladou and Kehagias (2014) has stressed the need for further studies to compare and evaluate the various destination brand equity models in order to create a more comprehensive understanding.

Towards this end, this paper explores and incorporates multiples perspectives and proposes a holistic view of tourists' destination brand equity by looking into the interplay among various factors that form the tourist destination brand knowledge (e.g., personal, social and cultural factors, rational and emotional factors) which subsequently develop the destination brand equity. The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 provides theoretical ground for the development of proposed process-based integrated model of destination brand equity. Section 3 highlights the role of rational and emotional paths in the development of destination knowledge and its subsequent effect on destination equity. Based on the theoretical foundation in sections 2 and 3, section 4 presents a holistic model of destination-based equity. The last section (Section 5) presents the conclusion, discussion and significance of the proposed model.

## 2. Literature Review

Extant literature evidences that social, personal, and cultural factors play a crucial role in shaping tourists' perceptions and preferences for tourist destinations (Ma & Li, 2023). Social factors, such as peer influence and media exposure can influence tourists' perceptions of a destination (Ghazali & Cai, 2013). Similarly, the personal factors, such as travelers' motivations, interests, and lifestyles can also affect the way they perceive and experience a destination (Lee & Bai, 2016). Cultural factors that shape tourists' attitudes and behaviours towards different destinations include beliefs, values, and norms (Bekk, Spörrle, & Kruse, 2016).

Previous literature on destination brand equity emphasizes the crucial role that personal, social, and cultural factors play in comprehending destination brand equity. The earlier work on how social, cultural and personal factors contribute to destination brand equity is briefly reflected in table 1.

**Table 1: Previous studies on destination-based brand equity and the influence of personal, social and cultural factors on brand equity**

Study	Focus of Study	Outcomes	Types of Study
(Tasci, 2021)	A critical review and reconstruction of perceptual brand equity	Holistic view of brand equity literature and components relationship	Literature review
(Cervova & Vavrova, 2021)	Destination Brand Equity and Customer-Based Brand Equity	Destination image, perceived quality, and destination awareness are key sources of destination brand equity. these sources have a positive impact on tourist loyalty.	Empirical/ Casual study

(Stylidis, Woosnam, Ivkov, & Kim, 2020)	Tourism Destination Image and Destination Awareness	Destination awareness and image are positively related to tourist satisfaction.	Empirical/ Casual study
(Lemy, Nursiana, & Pramono, 2020)	The Influence of Destination Image, Perceived Quality, and Tourist Satisfaction on Destination Loyalty: An Empirical Study of Bali, Indonesia	The study found that perceived quality and tourist satisfaction have a positive impact on destination loyalty, while destination image has a weaker impact.	Empirical/ Casual study
(Tasci, Uslu, Stylidis, & Woosnam, 2022)	The Path Relationship between Destination Image, Perceived Quality, and Destination Loyalty: Evidence from Turkish Tourists Visiting Greece	The study found that perceived quality has a positive impact on destination loyalty, and destination image has a weak impact, with a path relationship between the two sources.	Empirical/ Casual study
(Sürücü, Öztürk, Okumus, & Bilgihan, 2019)	Customer-Based Brand Equity: A Review of Literature and Research Directions	The study found that these sources are interdependent and that their relationship is complex, with each source influencing the others.	Literature review
(Jeon & Yoo, 2021)	The Interplay between Emotional and Rational Factors in Customer-Based Brand Equity: Evidence from the Hospitality Industry	The study found that both emotional and rational factors have a positive impact on customer-based brand equity, and that the two factors are interdependent, with emotional factors serving as drivers and rational factors serving as mediators.	Empirical/ Casual study
(Pham, Woyo, Pham, & Truong, 2022)	The Role of Social Influence in Destination Brand Equity Development	The study found that social influence, such as recommendations from friends and family, media exposure, and online reviews, had a significant impact on tourists' perceptions of destinations and the development of destination brand equity.	Empirical/ Casual study
(Mastika & Nimran, 2020)	The Impact of Social, Personal and Cultural Factors on Destination Brand Equity: A Study of Bali, Indonesia	The study found that social and personal factors, such as media exposure, friends and family recommendations, and personal values, played a significant role in shaping tourists' perceptions of Bali and its destination brand equity.	Empirical/ Casual study
(Osei-Frimpong, McLean, & Famiyeh, 2020)	Social media brand engagement practices: Examining the role of consumer brand knowledge, social pressure, social relatedness, and brand trust	The study found that social media exposure was positively associated with tourists' destination brand knowledge, while peer influence had a negative impact.	Review Paper

## 2.1. Destination Brand Equity

Destination brand equity is a valuable concept for DMOs and other tourism industry stakeholders to understand. It provides a way to measure the strength of a destination brand in the minds of tourist and can help guide branding efforts and marketing strategies (Giannopoulos, Piha, & Skourtis, 2021). However, the development of destination brand equity is a complex process that involves multiple stakeholders, including DMOs, government agencies, businesses, and local residents (Hankinson, 2007). DMOs play a crucial role in creating and managing destination brands by developing marketing strategies that promote a destination and by establishing a clear and consistent brand identity. Thus, researchers (Bregoli, 2013) have stressed to better understand the factors that contribute to the development of destination brand equity and to refine methods for measuring this concept.

The concept of destination brand equity is based on the notion that a strong brand can increase customer loyalty, attract new visitors, and create a competitive advantage for a destination (Darwish & Burns, 2019). Destination brand equity is built through a variety of elements, including brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand associations (Darwish & Burns, 2019). Brand awareness refers to the extent to which customers recognize and remember a destination brand while brand loyalty is the degree to which customers consistently choose a particular destination over others (Darwish & Burns, 2019). Similarly, perceived quality refers to customers' beliefs about the overall level of quality of a destination's products and services. Brand associations are the emotions, thoughts, and perceptions that customers associate with a destination brand (Almeyda-Ibáñez & George, 2017).

## **2.2. Destination Brand Knowledge**

Tourist -based destination brand knowledge refers to the information and understanding tourists have about a particular destination (Hannam, 2008). This knowledge can include the destination's attributes, benefits, values, personality, and associations, among others. It encompasses the tourist's awareness and recognition of the destination brand, as well as their mental and emotional connections with it. Creating and managing destination brand knowledge is a crucial aspect of destination branding, as it directly impacts the destination's perceived value and ability to attract and retain tourists (Baker & Cameron, 2008). For example, a destination with a strong and well-established brand knowledge will be more likely to be selected over a competing destination that is less well-known (Morgan & Pritchard, 2007). Literature reveals that the development of destination brand knowledge is a dynamic and ongoing process, influenced by various factors such as the destination's marketing efforts, media coverage, word-of-mouth recommendations, and personal experiences (Hudson, Roth, Madden, & Hudson, 2015; Jalilvand, 2017; Tasci & Gartner, 2007).

In academic literature, destination brand knowledge has been extensively studied, and its importance has been highlighted in several research studies. For instance, the literature highlights that tourist-based destination brand knowledge positively impacts destination loyalty and repeat visit intention (Almeyda-Ibáñez & George, 2017; Chenini & Touaiti, 2018; Hsu & Cai, 2009). Instead, Rather, Najar, and Jaziri (2020) suggested that destination branding should aim to create a distinctive brand personality that can generate a strong emotional connection with consumers, increasing tourist-based destination brand knowledge. Brand knowledge and brand equity are closely related concepts. To build brand equity, a company must first develop strong brand knowledge among consumers (Jalilvand, 2017). Brand knowledge can be built by developing strong brand awareness and a compelling brand image, so companies can create a powerful brand (Keller, 2001).

## **2.3. Destination Brand Knowledge and Destination Brand Equity**

Though destination brand knowledge and brand equity are two important and related concepts, these two are not exactly the same phenomena (Hsu & Cai, 2009). Destination brand knowledge refers to consumers' information, beliefs, and perceptions about a specific destination (Herrero, San Martin, & Collado, 2017). This includes their awareness of the destination, its attributes and benefits, and overall feelings toward it. Destination brand knowledge is often seen as the foundation for a destination's identity and is crucial for building destination loyalty and driving tourists' behavior toward the destination (Rather et al., 2020). A clear understanding of a tourist destination (destination Knowledge) is more likely to develop positive associations with the destination and perceive as a desirable and trust nation. Over time, this can lead to increased loyalty, repeat visits, and positive word-of-mouth recommendations, ultimately contributing to the destination's overall brand equity (Kim, Choe, & Petrick, 2018).

On the other hand, destination brand equity refers to the value a destination adds to a travel experience beyond its functional benefits (Shafaei & Mohamed, 2015). This value can come from various sources, including the destination's reputation, history, and associations (Pike & Page, 2014). Destination brand equity is seen as a critical driver of a destination's success and competitiveness. It is typically measured in terms of the premium that tourists are willing to pay for a trip to a specific destination over and above the cost of a similar journey to a different destination. It has been established in prior research that destination brand knowledge is generated by the efforts of destination management organizations and tourists' experiences with the destinations and their attributes. Personal, social, and cultural factors also shape this knowledge and form connections in tourists' minds (Wei, Zhao, Zhang, & Huang, 2019).

## **2.4. Personal Influence on Destination Brand Knowledge**

Personal influence plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's perception and knowledge of a destination brand. According to Gómez-Suárez and Yagüe (2021), personal experiences, recommendations from friends and family, and media exposure are the three most important factors that shape an individual's destination brand knowledge. Unique experiences include direct visits to a destination, whereas recommendations from friends and family reflect word-of-mouth communication (Papadimitriou, Kaplanidou, & Apostolopoulou, 2018). Media exposure encompasses all forms of media, including traditional media such as television and newspapers, and new media such as social media and online travel review websites (Davies & Cairncross,

2013). Similarly, the other facet of personal factors, including tourists' prior experiences, personal values, and cultural background, significantly influence an individual's destination brand knowledge (Szubert, Warcholik, & Żemła, 2021).

Personal values and cultural background determine an individual's preferences and attitudes toward a destination, shaping their perception and knowledge of the destination brand (Campelo, Aitken, Thyne, & Gnoth, 2014). Similarly, an individual's level of involvement in the travel process also influences their destination brand knowledge. According to Cai, Wei, Lu, and Day (2015), individuals who are highly involved in the travel decision-making process, such as those who engage in extensive destination research and planning, tend to have a higher level of destination brand knowledge than those who are less involved. Thus, the literature has sufficient evidence that personal factors have a significant role in shaping tourist destination knowledge.

## **2.5. Social Influence on Destination Brand Knowledge**

Social influence refers to the impact that others have on an individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. In the context of destination brand knowledge, social influence refers to how individuals' perceptions of a destination are shaped by the opinions and experiences of others (Campelo et al., 2014). Given the importance of social influence in shaping destination brand knowledge, it is essential for destination marketers to understand how social impact operates and to develop strategies that effectively leverage this influence. This may involve leveraging word-of-mouth recommendations through referral programs or encouraging positive online reviews and social media posts. An extant review of the literature also supports that social influence can play a significant role in shaping individuals' destination brand knowledge. For instance, Jalilvand (2017) found that word-of-mouth recommendations from friends and family were among the most essential factors influencing individuals' destination choice.

Similarly, Tham, Croy, and Mair (2013) found that social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, were becoming increasingly important in shaping individuals' destination knowledge and decision-making processes. In addition to word-of-mouth recommendations and social media, other forms of social influence can also shape individuals' destination brand knowledge. For instance, Law (2020) found that exposure to travel advertisements, magazines, and websites was also a critical factor in shaping individuals' perceptions of destinations.

## **2.6. Cultural Influence on Destination Brand Knowledge**

Culture refers to the shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that characterize a group or society. It has been widely recognized that culture plays a significant role in shaping an individual's perception and knowledge of a destination brand. According to Gössling, McCabe, and Chen (2020) cultural background influences an individual's destination brand knowledge by determining their preferences, attitudes, and expectations towards a destination. Cultural background includes an individual's nationality, ethnicity, religion, and language, all of which shape their values and beliefs. As a result, cultural background has a significant impact on an individual's decision to visit a destination and their subsequent experience of a tourist destination (Beerli & Martín, 2004).

Moreover, found that culture also affects how individuals process information about a destination. Cultural differences can lead to variations in the interpretation of destination information, affecting an individual's destination brand knowledge (Ferns & Walls, 2012). For example, the same destination may be perceived differently by individuals from different cultures due to differences in cultural values and beliefs. Cultural background, cultural differences in information processing, and cultural differences in marketing and promotion all shape an individual's perception and understanding of a destination brand (Sharifpour, Walters, Ritchie, & Winter, 2014). According to de Freitas Coelho, de Sevilha Gosling, and de Almeida (2018), cultural aspects of a destination can help travelers have a more fulfilling and enriching travel experience. Similarly, People's values and beliefs can also shape their destination knowledge. For instance, a person who values adventure and outdoor activities may prefer destinations that offer opportunities for hiking, kayaking, or skiing (Gardiner & Kwek, 2017).

## **3. Destination Brand Knowledge and Destination Brand Equity: The Rational and Emotional Paths**

As earlier mentioned, the combination of emotional connections and rational associations with a particular tourist destination, as embodied in the collective destination knowledge, leads

to the development of destination brand equity. Extant review of the literature reveals that tourist knowledge about a destination is formed through rational as well as emotional paths (Feng, Liu, & Li, 2022). Once tourist destination-related knowledge is developed, it then leads to destination brand equity.

According to Stojanovic, Andreu, Curras-Perez, R. J. J. o. H., and Technology (2022), rational thinking is a systematic approach to decision-making that involves evaluating evidence, considering alternatives, and weighing the pros and cons of different courses of action. The rational path reflects relationships among the factors, including tourist awareness, tourist image of a destination, tourist perceived quality of a destination, and destination loyalty. These rational factors ultimately support in the formation of a destination knowledge.

On the other hand, the emotional path assumes that tourist attach with a destination through emotional experiences. Such a path to destination brand knowledge consists of factors of destination loyalty, destination awareness, image of a destination, and tourist perceived quality of a destination. These emotional factors also ultimately support in the formation of a destination knowledge and hence destination equity. These paths interplay among its respective factors, thus developing the destination knowledge that subsequently develops the destination equity. Both the relational as well as emotional paths to destination knowledge and its subsequent effect on destination brand equity are discussed below.

### **3.1. Rational Path**

Within the rational path, the tourist knowledge about a destination is formed through the interplay among various sources of destination knowledge such as destination awareness, destination image, tourist perceived quality of a destination and tourist loyalty to a destination (Buhalis, 2000). The rational path reflected in the proposed conceptual framework explains how tourists form perceptions and attitudes towards a destination. The process can be broken down into several stages:

#### **3.1.1. Information Acquisition**

In the first part of the rational path to destination brand knowledge and destination equity, tourists become aware of a destination through advertising, publicity, or other forms of communication. This information serves as the basis for their perception of the destination.

#### **3.1.2. Perceptual image formation**

Tourists form a perceptual image of the destination based on the information acquired. This image is shaped by their prior experiences, expectations, and the information they have received.

#### **3.1.3. Destination evaluation**

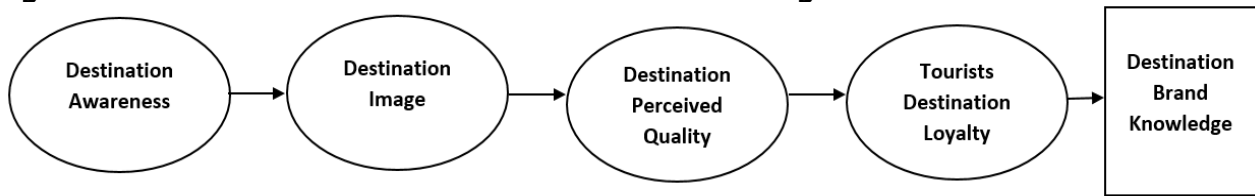
The tourists evaluate the destination based on their perceptual image and the information they have received. They use this evaluation to form their perceived destination quality.

#### **3.1.4. Destination loyalty**

If the tourists' perceptual image of the destination is favorable and their experience with the destination is positive, they tend to develop loyalty towards the destination. This loyalty can lead to repeat visits, positive word-of-mouth, and a strong emotional connection with the destination.

In terms of rational path relationships, destination awareness is the starting point for the development of destination-based knowledge. Increased brand awareness can lead to a stronger brand image, which can, in turn, lead to higher brand perceived quality and increased brand loyalty and hence, greater destination knowledge. Thus, brand awareness, brand image, brand perceived quality, and brand loyalty are all interdependent and mutually reinforcing, which play a significant role in the formation of destination knowledge and hence destination equity (Gallarza et al., 2002). The relationship between these four aspects of destination brand knowledge and its subsequent effect on destination equity is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Rational Path to Destination Brand Knowledge**



**3.2. Emotional Path**

The emotional path explains how tourists form emotional attachments to destinations and how these attachments influence their perceptions and behavior (Tasci et al., 2022). In other words, these are the emotional factors that develop a tourist destination knowledge that subsequently builds the tourist destination equity. The emotional path highlights the role of emotions and personal experiences in shaping tourists' perceptions of destinations. By creating positive emotional experiences for tourists, destination managers can increase the likelihood of emotional attachment and destination loyalty (Ouyang, Gursoy, & Sharma, 2017). The emotional route to destination knowledge and destination equity is briefly presented in the following stages:

**3.2.1. Experience**

In the first part of the emotional path to destination brand knowledge and destination equity, tourists personally experience a destination, such as visiting the destination, meeting locals, or engaging with the destination's culture and attractions.

**3.2.2. Emotional attachment**

The experience with the destination then leads to an emotional attachment to the destination. Positive memories, personal connections, or other emotional factors can drive this attachment.

**3.2.3 A desire for knowledge**

The emotional attachment to the destination drives the tourist's desire to gain more knowledge about the destination, including its history, culture, and attractions.

**3.2.4. Mental image formation**

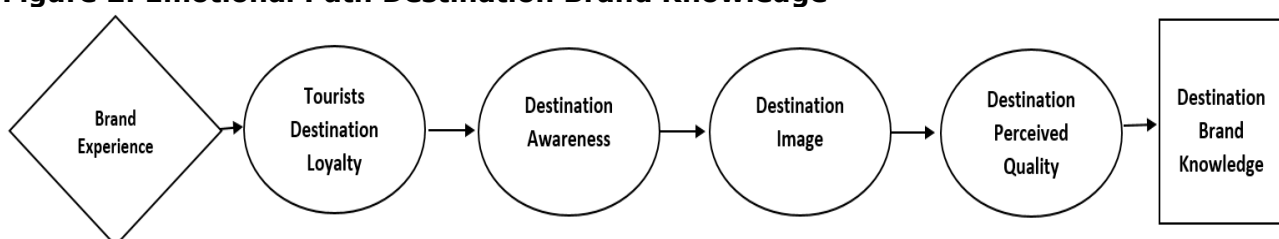
The tourist's desire for knowledge and the information they receive about the destination shape their mental image of the destination. This mental image serves as the basis for their expectations and perceptions of the destination's quality.

**3.2.5. Destination evaluation**

The tourist evaluates the destination based on their mental image and the information they have received. This evaluation helps them form their perceptions of the destination's quality.

When it comes to the emotional path between tourists and a destination, the tourist's experience is the initial step toward the development of destination-based knowledge. A memorable experience can create an emotional bond, which leads to tourist loyalty (Chen & Rahman, 2018). As a result, tourists become more interested in gathering information about the destination (awareness), which can contribute to a stronger brand image (Chi, Huang, & Nguyen, 2020). A positive brand image can enhance the brand's perceived quality, leading to increased destination knowledge. Therefore, the interdependence and mutual reinforcement of brand awareness, brand image, brand perceived quality, and brand loyalty are crucial factors in forming destination knowledge and, ultimately, destination equity (Cohen, Prayag, & Moital, 2014).

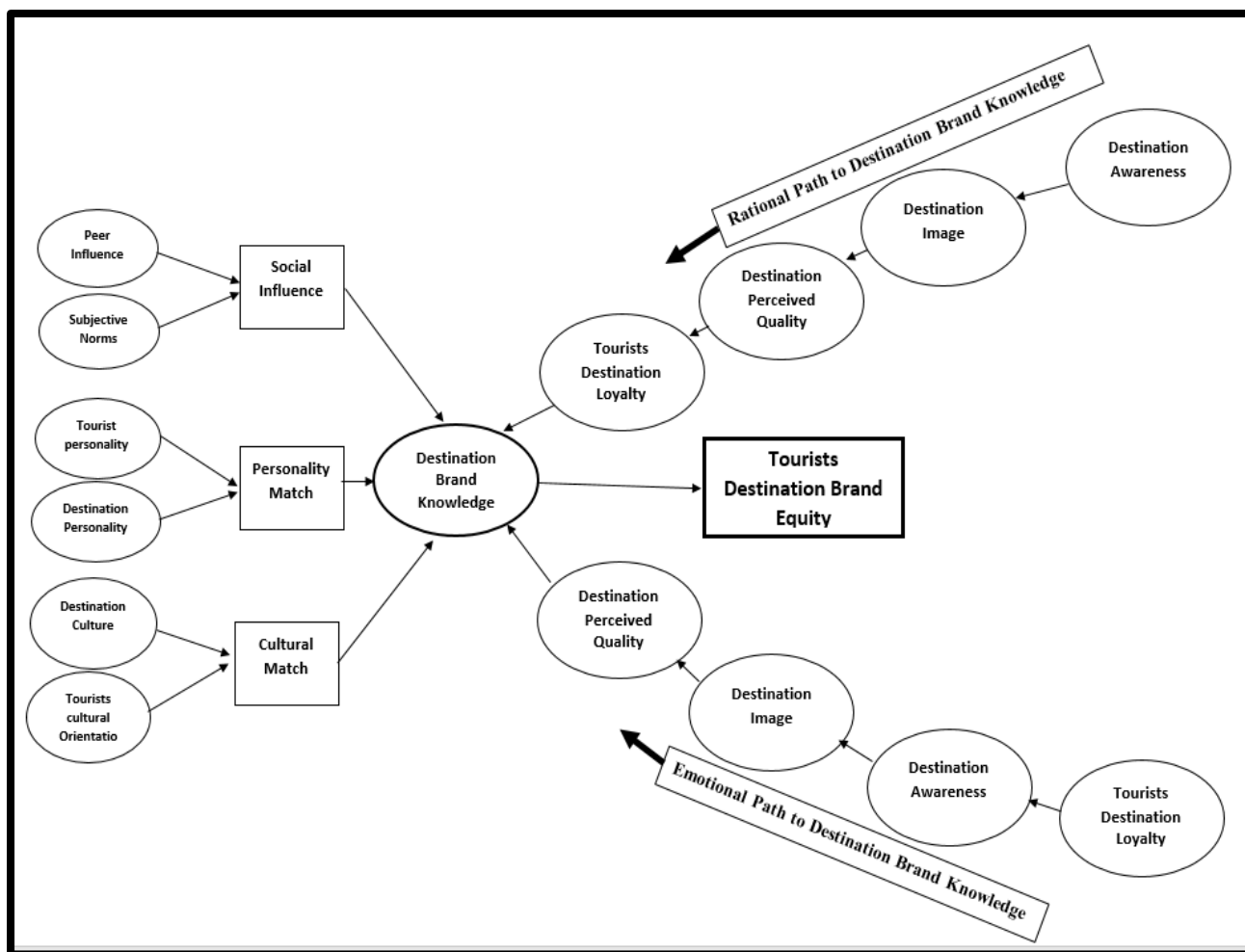
**Figure 2: Emotional Path Destination Brand Knowledge**



### 3.3. Destination Brand Equity: A Proposed Holistic Model

Based on the review of marketing and brand equity literature with a particular focus on its relevance to tourism marketing, a sound theoretical foundation was developed that leads to the proposed destination brand equity model shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: An Integrated Process-Based Model of Destination Brand Equity: A Proposed Framework**



### 4. Conclusion

An extant review of the literature suggested the absence of a comprehensive understanding of destination brand equity (Huerta-Álvarez, Cambra-Fierro, & Fuentes-Blasco, 2020). To address this gap, this study proposes a framework for destination-based brand equity based on examining the interactions among various personal, social, and cultural factors. In addition, the proposed framework also includes the rational and emotional paths that form the destination knowledge and hence its subsequent role in forming tourist destination equity. A review of the literature provides sufficient evidence that personal factors such as tourist personal experiences, recommendations from friends and family, and media exposure are the three most important factors that shape an individual's destination brand knowledge (Mutinda & Mayaka, 2012). Similarly, personal values and cultural background play a significant role in influencing an individual's destination brand knowledge, thus forming tourist destination equity. Besides, there are social factors that influence the destination knowledge of tourists. In the context of destination brand knowledge, social influence refers to how individuals' perceptions of a destination are shaped by the opinions and experiences of others. Some of these social factors that influence the formation of destination knowledge include word-of-mouth recommendations from friends and family, the increased usage of social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, which have a very positive effect on tourist exposure to travel advertisements, magazines, and websites, are considered much instrumental in shaping individuals' perceptions of a destination (Hudson et al., 2015). The third category of influential factors shaping tourist destination knowledge and hence the, destination equity are cultural factors. Cultural background



includes an individual's nationality, ethnicity, religion, and language, all of which shape their values and beliefs (Li, Zhang, & Cai, 2016). Research has shown that cultural background influences an individual's destination brand knowledge by determining their preferences, attitudes, and expectations towards a destination (Cai et al., 2015). The cultural background has a significant impact on an individual's decision to visit a destination and their subsequent experience. Research has found that cultural differences can lead to variations in the interpretation of destination information, affecting an individual's destination brand knowledge.

Besides the role of personal, social and cultural factors in shaping tourist's destination knowledge and their subsequent effect on destination equity formation, the proposed framework also reflects a rational and emotional path to the formation of destination knowledge. The rational path to tourist destination knowledge is formed through the interplay among the rational factors such that first, the tourist becomes aware of a destination, followed by the tourist's impression of a destination (Destination image), the tourist's perceived quality of a destination and tourist loyalty with a destination. All these rational factors ultimately develop tourist knowledge about the destination, forming tourist destination equity. On the other hand, tourist knowledge of a destination is also developed through various emotional factors called an emotional path to destination knowledge. The emotional path explains how tourists form emotional attachments to destinations and how these attachments influence their perceptions and behavior. The emotional path to destination knowledge formation states that tourist knowledge about a destination is formed through the tourist's personal experience, followed by the tourist emotional attachment (tourist loyalty). Such an emotional attachment persuades the tourist to collect all preliminary information about the destination that ultimately develops a destination image in the tourist mind. Such a destination image provides a base for the formation of tourist expectations of the destination quality (Tourist perceived quality), which ultimately forms the destination knowledge. Thus, the tourist destination knowledge formed through rational and emotional paths as well as influenced by the personal, social, and cultural factors form the tourist destination equity.

The proposed destination equity framework has significant theoretical as well as practical implications. Theoretically, to the best of the authors' knowledge, a holistic view of the formation of destination equity is missing in the available literature. The proposed framework has covered multiple perspectives that lead towards the formation of destination equity. This includes personal, social, and cultural factors that influence the tourist destination knowledge, ultimately leading to destination equity. Similarly, the framework also reflects the importance of rational and emotional paths in the formation of tourist destination knowledge and its subsequent role in building destination equity.

In the same vein, the proposed framework of destination equity provides a guiding path to all the stakeholders, including the tourism department, destination marketing organizations (DMOs) as well as academic researchers. The model proposed can be much helpful for policymakers in the tourism industry while promoting tourist destinations and hence developing the equity of a tourist destination.

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