The Moderator Role of Culture in the Relationship between Destination Brand Equity and Travel Intention

Gözde Seval Ergün
Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey
Hüseyin Keleş
Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey
Betül Taşpınar
Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey
Ebru Gözen
Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey
Engin Derman
Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey

Abstract
Brand equity and destination branding subjects are among the most important issues in the field of destination marketing that have concerned the business managers and destination management organizations operating in the tourism sector. Particularly in recent periods, as a result of the growing competition, there has been a significant increase in the studies on the branding of a destination. The main objective of this research is to determine the effect of destination brand value on travel intention and examine the moderator role of cross-cultural differences in this effect. Another primary objective of the research is to ascertain the effect of destination brand equity on travel intention. Besides, the moderator role of intercultural difference on the mentioned effect has been examined. The research was carried out with the participation of 395 tourists from different countries in Side, considered one of Turkey's most important tourist destinations. The research data were collected by convenience sampling method, and the created model was tested with structural equation modeling. Besides, Process Macro was used in order to determine the moderator effect. When the research results were examined, it was concluded that the brand equity dimensions of destination brand awareness and destination loyalty had a significant effect on travel intention. In addition to these, tourists from Europe and Asia play a moderator role in this effect. The absence of a study among the studies that measure the relationship between brand equity and travel intention that determines the moderator role of culture reveals the originality of the study and its contribution to the literature. In the light of the results taken from the research, a number of suggestions have been presented to sector representatives, academicians studying in the literature, and destination management organizations, as well.

1. Introduction

Brand equity is the most common concept used to represent brand performance and measured as a financial value in an organizational context (Pike, Bianchi, Kerr & Patti,2010). There are two types of brand equity perspectives in literature financial-based and consumer-based. The concept of consumer-based brand equity, which is taken as a basis in this study, is mostly related to customer perceptions and has been encountered as a determining factor in repeat purchases (Broyles, Leingpibul, Ross& Foster, 2010; Chang, Hsu & Chung, 2008).

The research carried out regarding the field of destination brand equity is mainly based on the studies on corporate brand equity or product brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Kim & Kim, 2005; Keller, 1993; Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Polat & Çetinsöz, 2021; Forgacs, 2003). According to Aaker's (1991) seminal study, brand equity measures could be classified into five dimensions: brand awareness, brand image/connotations, perceived quality, brand assets, and loyalty. It is seen that the first four dimensions of the mentioned components are included in the research models made in the context of destination brand equity. Each of these dimensions is linked to a different feature of the destination. Within this scope, brand awareness refers to the name of a destination, destination characteristics, brand image, perceived value, and personality. As for the perceived quality as another dimension, it is associated with organizational aspects, revisit intention, advice, and loyalty (Boo, Busser & Baloglu, 2009). In corporate and product branding, a brand is defined as "a product or service that contains a unique combination of functional attributes and symbolic values and is distinguished by its position and personality relative to the competition" (Hankinson & Cowking, 1993). Kotler (2000: 404) defines the brand as "a name, term, sign, symbol, design or a combination of them all that identifies the goods or services of a vendor or group of vendors and differentiates them from their competitors." According to Blain, Levy & Ritchie (2005), destination branding is considered a series of marketing practices (1) that easily identify a destination with a name, symbol, logo and distinguishes the destination by words, signs, or other graphics; (2) that consistently carry the anticipation of an unforgettable travel experience which is unequivocally connected with the destination; (3) that serve to reinforce and strengthen the emotional bond between the destination and the visitor and (4) reduce the perceived risk and the costs of consumer research.

It is understood that there is a limited effort in literature to be able to define the structural relationships developed amongst the dimensions of brand equity (Ferns & Walls, 2012). Within this context, this study has aimed to present an approach compatible with all four dimensions (awareness, quality, image, and loyalty) that includes destination brand equity. Measuring the effect of the aforementioned dimensions of destination brand equity on travel intention has constituted the main objective of the research. At the same time, the research has not only aimed to take the previous research (Boo et al., 2009; Chekalina, Fuchs & Lexhagen, 2018; Oyunchimeg & Gantuya, 2021; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Kim, Schuckert, Im & Elliot, 2017) to the next level, but to test a consumer-based destination brand equity model associated with culture. The tested model has aimed to determine the moderator role of culture in the effect of brand equity components on travel intention. According to Arzeni (2009), creating a strong relationship between tourism and culture may help destinations become more attractive and competitive. In this sense, the study looks at the concept of brand equity from a different perspective by adopting an integrated modeling approach focused on nationality. This research has a number of contributions to the literature in certain aspects. First of all, although brand equity has been examined in different areas in the literature, the number of destination-based studies is insufficient. For instance, Nodira & Premysl (2017) examined the effect of brand equity on fruit juice perceptions of consumers on purchase intention and found strong effects between related variables. As for this study, the subject was tested in a different area by analyzing the effect of destination brand equity on travel intention. The second contribution of the study can be stated as determining the moderator role of the European and Asian tourists' perceptions. Because Nodira & Premysl (2017) examined the moderator role of perceived risk in effect between brand equity and purchase intention and claimed that different variables could also play a moderator role. In this regard, it has been examined whether culture plays a harmonizing role among the related variables.

It is anticipated that the findings will put forward important inputs for both academicians and practitioners. Lastly, it is thought that the inferences that have been made based on the findings will enable the destination brand value to be understood and applied more easily by the destination stakeholders and will encourage future research.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Aaker (1991) defined brand equity as "a set of brand assets attached to or subtracted from the value provided by a manufacturer, a product or a service associated with a brand, brand's name and symbol". The conception of consumer-based brand equity, introduced by Aaker (1991, 1996) and Keller (1993, 2003), provides destination marketers with a potential performance measure of the degree to which the brand identity is successfully placed in the market (Pike et al., 2010).

Awareness, one of the consumer-based brand equity dimensions, is accepted as the main element of a brand's impact on tourism and hospitality sectors (Gomez, Lopez & Molina; 2015). Awareness also stands for the sustainable power of the brand's entity in the minds of the target group (Aaker, 1996). The studies mostly consider the elements related to the destination selection process to evaluate awareness in destination branding (Fernando, 2020). It is considered that destination awareness, which is an important concept in destination branding, may also affect travel intentions of individuals. From this point of view, the research hypothesis developed is as follows:

H1a. Destination brand awareness has a direct and positive effect on travel intention.

Perceived quality is often defined as an important dimension of brand equity (Lassar, Mittal & Sharma, 1995). When discussing the branding of a destination, organization, atmosphere and quality experiences should also be included in the process (Hunag & Liu, 2021). In literature, there are findings that the increase in service quality also increases the satisfaction and loyalty behavior of individuals (Bitner, 1990). For example, in their study, Wu & Liang (2009) found that the physical characteristics of service quality and effective communication between consumers and employees have a high impact on customer satisfaction and continuity. On the other hand, Ekinci, Dawes & Massey (2008) determined the effect of service quality on loyalty in accommodation businesses. It is thought that a similar effect may occur on destination service quality and loyalty. The research hypothesis developed in this context is presented below.

H1b. Perceived quality has a direct and positive effect on travel intention.

Brand image, which is another brand equity dimension, is considered to be very important (Keller, 1993) as it reflects the perceptions of consumers (Aaker, 1991). Brand image also includes perceptions of values, quality, emotions, and brand personality (Mody, Day, Sydnor, Lehto & Jaffe, 2017; Kutlu & Ayyıldız, 2021). The studies conducted on brand image indicate that the attitudes of individuals towards the product change (Nodira & Premysl, 2017). In addition, the destination brand image of individuals may lead to changes in their attitudes and behaviors towards the destination. Based on this information, the research hypothesis has been developed as follows:

H1c. Destination brand image has a direct and positive effect on travel intention

Brand loyalty as a dimension of brand equity has been described as the customer's being loyal to a specific brand (Keller, 2003) and accepted as the primary source of consumer-based brand equity (Aaker, 1991). Besides, Back & Parks (2003) states that loyalty is evaluated as a result of multidimensional

cognitive attitudes towards a specific brand. For this reason, it is observed that loyalty is widely researched in terms of repeated visits and recommendation. In this regard, various studies, measuring the effects of the aforementioned brand components on travel intentions, were found in the literature review conducted. Examining destination brand equity with the dimensions of destination experience, brand awareness and loyalty, Ferns & Walls (2012) determined that the three brand equity dimensions had a positive and strong effect on travel intention. According to another research, which states that there is an obvious positive connection between brand value and travel intentions in culinary tourism; it has been understood that destination awareness, which positively influences the effect of brand loyalty and perceived quality on travel intentions, has a moderating role (Horng, Liu, Chou & Tsai, 2012). Considering these points, the research hypothesis has been developed as follows:

H1d. Brand loyalty has a direct and positive effect on travel intention.

Chi, Huang & Nguyen (2020) revealed a positive relationship between brand value and travel intention in the study by which they analyzed the modulator effect of destination familiarity on the relationship between destination brand value (perceived quality, loyalty, awareness, image) and travel intentions. Apart from these, numerous studies have proven that destination-based brand equity has a positive effect on the intentions of tourists to revisit a particular destination (Myagmarsuren & Chen, 2011; Das & Mukherjee, 2016; Rahman, Bag, Hassan, Hossain, & Singh, 2021; Kumail, Qeed, Aburumman, Abbas & Sadiq, 2022). In another study, it was accepted that brand equity is a significant mediator linking novelty and travel intentions of tourists (Zhang, Li, Liu, Shen & Li, 2020). The empirical results obtained by Salehzadeh, Pool & Soleimani (2016) with the structural model show that brand personality and brand equity positively affect the revisit intention. In the research conducted by Kim, Han, Holland & Byon (2009) on Japanese tourists, it was discovered that the destination brand value had a direct effect on the satisfaction of the tourists, which in turn affected their intention to revisit the destination and their willingness to spend more money.

Cultural diversity stems from different cultural values and affects perceptions and experiences that play a crucial role in consumers' attitudes (Bartikowski & Walsh, 2015), satisfaction (Asmelash & Kumar, 2019) and loyalty (Chen & Rahman, 2018). Several studies have investigated the role that culture imposes on satisfaction, loyalty, and service quality. For instance, Spreng & Chiou (2002) determined dissimilar satisfaction and loyalty results for American and Taiwanese students during the evaluation process of a digital camera. Crotts & Erdmann (2000), having examined six different nations, ascertained that national cultural differences influence satisfaction and loyalty. Tsaur, Lin & Wu (2005) stated that, regarding perceived service quality, there are considerable differences between Asian, British, and European tourist groups in terms of loyalty, willingness to pay more and external responses. Kang & Moscardo (2006) found out that national cultures of tourists are considered to be important in modeling their behaviors. Kim & Malek (2017) stated that moderator effect of cultural differences on the relationship between emotional destination image and loyalty could not be ignored. Whang, Yong & Ko (2016) compared Chinese and Russian tourists in their study and concluded that travel intentions differ according to culture. Another study states that cultural differences are negatively related to the intention to visit various destinations. Accordingly, the greater the perceived cultural similarity of a destination with the visitor's nation, the higher the probability of visiting that destination will be (Chen & Rahman, 2018). Since cultural differences between societies can be discerned by examining their nationality, this study used nationality to examine whether cultural values play a differentiating role. Considering all these aspects, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H2a. Culture has a moderating effect on the relationship between destination brand awareness and travel intention.

H2b. Culture has a moderating effect on the relationship between perceived quality and travel intention.

H2c. Culture has a moderating effect on the relationship between destination brand image and travel intention.

H2d. Culture has a moderating effect on the relationship between brand loyalty and travel intention.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research instrument

In the research, regarding the brand equity, a total of 16 statements consisting of the sub-dimensions of destination brand awareness (3 statements), brand image (5 statements), perceived quality (5 statements) and brand loyalty (3 statements) were utilized adapting from the scale used by Im, Kim, Eliot & Han (2012). Besides, a 4-statement scale developed by Chi, Huang & Nguyen (2020) was used to measure travel intention. As a consequence, a total of 20 statements were applied to tourists visiting the Side destination using a 5-point Likert (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree).

3.2. Sampling and data collection

Side is one of the most popular tourism destinations in Turkey. With the tourism sector gaining importance in Turkey, Side has had a considerable tourist potential, compared to the numbers, not only in Antalya but also throughout the whole country. In fact, when the data of 2020 have been examined, it is known that more than 2 million tourists came to Side destination despite the Covid19 pandemic (Ministry of Culture and Tourism-Turkey, 2022). The relevant tourism data indicate that one out of every four tourists visiting Antalya has preferred Side destination. In this context, it can be stated that Side is the destination visited by the most tourists in Antalya. Within this framework, the research data were obtained from the tourists visiting Side between July and August in 2021. A total of 417 tourists were included in the survey by means of convenience sampling method and analyzes were carried out on 395 questionnaires by excluding the questionnaires with erroneous and missing data.

3.3. Pilot test

Before proceeding to the stage of collecting the actual data of the research, a pilot study was conducted on 34 people in order to provide the intelligibility of the research questionnaire and determine the validity and reliability tests. The pilot study was carried out in two days. On the first day, 18 questionnaires were collected, and the detected figural errors were corrected. No problems were encountered in terms of the intelligibility of the expressions and the questionnaire was applied to 16 different people on the second day, as well. As a consequence of the data collected through the pilot test, by using the Principal Component Analysis method and the Kaiser Normalized Varimax vertical rotation method, it was observed that the factor loads of all values had a minimum value of 0.50 at the validity stage of the questionnaire. Within the scope of the reliability results, it was determined that the Cronbach alpha values were 0.70 and above for each structure. When it was concluded that all these values were appropriate (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham, 2005), the stage of collecting the actual data was started.

3.4. Data analysis

The skewness and kurtosis coefficients of the scales used in the research were examined as the structural equation model applications are based on the normal distribution approach. Skewness and

kurtosis coefficients are the values that show the deviation from the normal distribution (Kline, 2011). Both coefficients should not exceed ± 2 (Kunan, 1998; Kline, 2011). In this study, the skewness values of the related variables were determined to vary between -0.741 and +0.435; kurtosis values between -1,003 and +1.312. Within this context, it has been concluded that the data vary at a normal range. The obtained data were transferred to the SPSS package program and the analysis of the data was carried out in the AMOS software. Within the scope of AMOS structural equation modeling, the convergent and discriminant validity of each structure was examined and subsequently the coefficients for the path analysis were calculated (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In addition, in order to determine the moderator effect Process macro (Hayes, 2013; model 1) was used.

4. Findings

4.1. Tourist characteristics

As a result of the relevant research, when the demographic characteristics and travel characteristics of the tourists participating in the survey were examined, it was determined that 52.2% of the tourists were male (n=206), 39% were between the ages of 25-34 (n=154), 34.9% had a bachelor's degree (n=138) and 53.2% of them were single (n=210). In addition to these, it was determined that a large sum of the participants, 78.2%, travel for entertainment and vacation purposes, while the rest of them travel mostly for business and health purposes. Besides, it was found that 55.4% of the participants traveled to Side more than once and 44.6% of them preferred Side for the first time for holiday purposes. When the participants were analyzed in terms of nationalities, 14.7% of the participants were Russian (n=55), 10.9% were Iranian (n=43), 8.6% were Azeri (n=34), 6.3% were Kazakh (n=25), 5.8% were Kyrgyz (n=23), 2.3% were Ukrainian (n=9) and 1.5% were Kuwaiti (n=6) citizens and they represented Asian countries. Apart from this, it was determined that of the participants representing European countries, 21.5% were German (n=85), 15.2% were British (n=60), 6.6% were Belgian (n=26), 2.3% were Polish (n=9), 2.3% of them were Romanian (n=9) and 2% of them were Dutch (n=8) citizens.

4.2. Model validity

The validity and the reliability of the structural model were determined prior to the definition of the relationships specified in the structural model. Within this context, confirmatory factor analysis was applied in order to determine the relevant values and the results have been presented in Table 1. The results of the analysis indicate that the measurement model fits well ($\chi2$ = 939.198, df = 327, $\chi2$/df = 2.872, GFI = 0.923, AGFI = 0.907, RMSEA = 0.069, RMR = 0.036, CFI = 0.921, IFI = 0.921).$\chi2$ since the /df degree is below 3, it can be expressed that the model fits well (Marsh & Hocevar, 1985). CFI, GFI, AGFI, IFI values' being greater than 0.90 indicate a good fit (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Moreover, as a result of the RMSA value's being less than 0.80, it was decided that the model fit was provided (Hu & Bentler, 1999). In summary, the five-factor structure theoretically proposed in the measurement model has also been supported by the data collected as a result of the field research.

In Table 1, in addition to the data presented above, the factor loadings of the expressions in each latent variable have been included. It has been determined that all the factor loads are 0.50 and above the level that is accepted in the literature (Hair et al., 2005). At the same time, all of the calculated t values are statistically significant at p≤0.001 level. In other words, the expressions under the factors contribute significantly to the measurement of the relevant factor.

The alpha values belonging to each structure of the scales are between 0.824 and 0.905. This finding proves the reliability of the scale (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). What's more, the determination of composite reliability (CR) values as minimum 0.829 indicates that the reliability of the structure has been

provided (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). In the final step, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values have been examined within the scope of convergent validity and it has been observed that all values are 0.50 and above. Taking these results into account, it can be stated that the research model provides convergent validity (Malhotra & Dash, 2011).

Table 1. **The Results Structural Equation Model (SEM) regarding the research model**

Factors / Items	Standard loadings	t-value	R^2	CR	AVE	CA
Factor DBA: Destination Brand Awareness				0.885	0.720	0.881
DBA1	0.832	18.57*	0.69			
DBA2	0.895	19.94*	0.80			
DBA3	0.817		0.66			
Factor DSQ: Destination Service Quality				0.901	0.646	0.905
DSQ1	0.738	15.93*	0.54			
DSQ2	0.833	18.70*	0.69			
DSQ3	0.824	18.43*	0.67			
DSQ4	0.828	18.57*	0.68			
DSQ5	0.793		0.62			
Factor DBI: Destination Brand Image				0.856	0.546	0.864
DBI1	0.779		0.60			
DBI2	0.707	17.64*	0.50			
DBI3	0.759	15.48*	0.57			
DBI4	0.812	16.71*	0.65			
DBI5	0.626	12.42*	0.39			
Factor DBL: Destination Brand Loyalty				0.829	0.620	0.824
DBL1	0.702		0.49			
DBL2	0.835	15.46*	0.69			
DBL3	0.819	15.19*	0.67			
*Factor TI:*Travel Intention				0.859	0.689	0.897
TI1	0.802		0.64			
TI2	0.898	20.39*	0.80			
TI3	0.799	17.58*	0.63			
TI4	0.819	18.17*	0.67			

*p < .001

Source: own elaboration

In Table 2, the discriminant validity values of the related model have been given. When the results presented in the table are analyzed, it is clearly observed that the square root of the AVE value of each structure is higher than all the other values in the relevant row. Considering these results, it has been decided that the structure provided discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 2. **The Results of Discriminant Validity**

| Factor	1	2	3	4	5
1.DBA	0.848a				
2.DSQ	0.009	0.803a			
3.DBI	0.028	0.716	0.738a		
4.DBL	0.070	0.618	0.670	0.787a	
5.TI	0.121	0.577	0.538	0.629	0.830a

aThe square root of the AVE.

Source: own elaboration

4.3. Hypothesis tests

Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used in order to test the determined hypotheses. When the structural model fit values have been examined, it is observed that the data are within the acceptable limits ($\chi2 = 711.156$, df = 158, $\chi2$/df = 4,501, GFI = 0.921, AGFI = 0.903, RMSEA = 0.074, RMR = 0.040, CFI = 0.907, IFI = 0.907). Path analysis of the model has been presented in Figure 1. When the results have been analyzed, it has been found that the dimension of brand awareness, within the scope of destination brand equity, has a significant effect on travel intention ($\beta=0.35$, t=4.779, p<0.001). In addition, it has been determined that destination loyalty positively affects travel intention ($\beta=0.16$, t=2.115, p<0.05). On the other hand, no statistically significant effect on travel intention in the dimensions of destination service quality and destination image has been determined. In the light of these results, while H1a and H1d have been accepted, H1b, H1c, H2b and H2c hypotheses have been rejected.

Figure 1. **Hypothesis Tests**
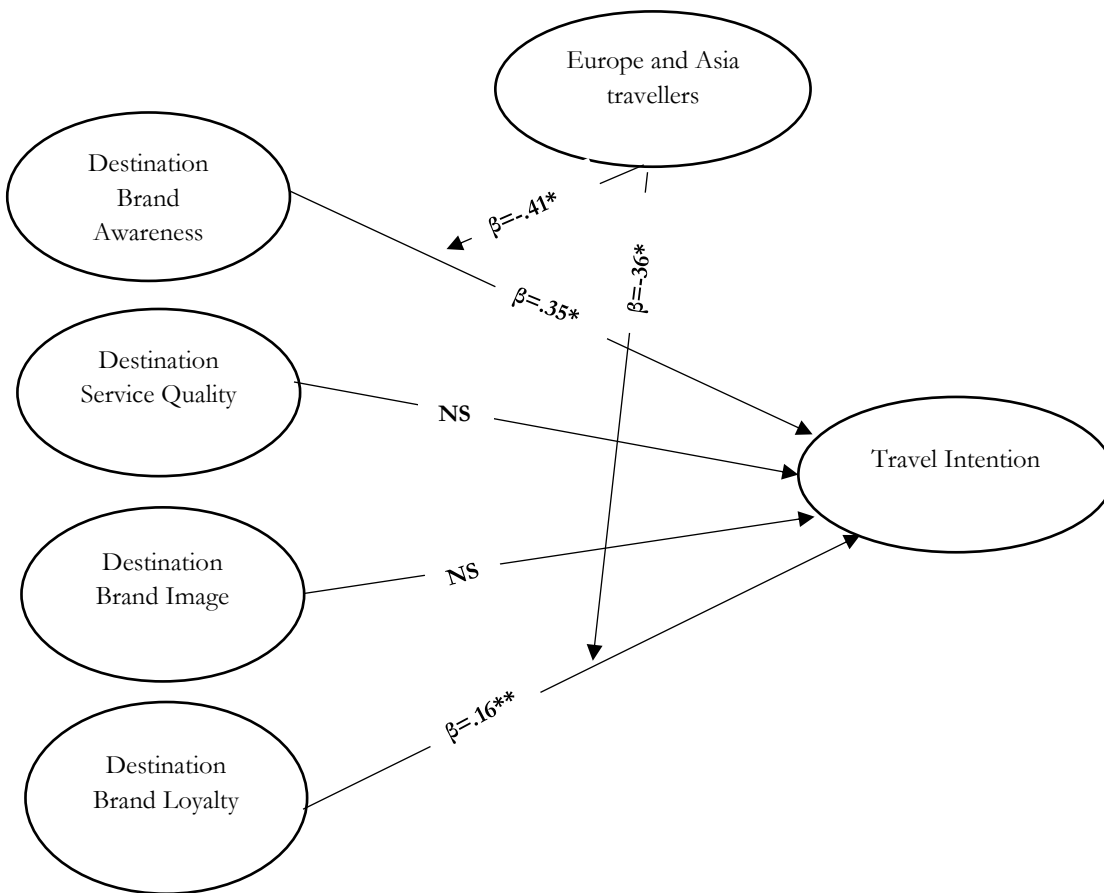
*p<0.001 ******p<0.05 **NS:** No significant

Source: own elaboration

4.4. Moderation effect

In order to test the moderator role of culture in the effect of destination brand awareness and destination brand loyalty on travel intention, regression analysis based on the bootstrap method has been applied. It is claimed that the Bootstrap method provides more reliable results than the traditional method

of Baron & Kenny (1986) (Hayes, 2013). The analyzes have been carried out using Model 1 in the Process Macro model developed by Hayes (2013). In the analysis, 5000 resampling options have been preferred with the bootstrap technique. The moderator effect results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. **The Result of Moderated Effect**

Moderating Effect:					Travel Intention		
					β	Confidence Interval	
Hypothesis 2a						Min.	Max.
Destination Brand Awareness (X)					0.74*	0.448	1.047
Culture (W)					0.32**	0.502	2.145
X.W (Interaction)					0.41*	0.214	0.614
R^2					0.10		
Culture	β	S.E.	t	LLCI	ULCI		
Asia	0.33*	0.06	5.10	0.205	0.462		
Europe	-0.08^{NS}	0.07	-1.03	-0.234	0.072		
Hypothesis 2d						Min.	Max.
Destination Brand Loyalty (X)					0.20*	0.933	1.479
Culture (W)					0.41*	0.747	2.080
X.W (Interaction)					0.36*	0.196	0.525
R^2					0.42		
Culture	β	S.E.	t	LLCI	ULCI		
Asia	0.84*	0.06	13.19	0.719	0.971		
Europe	0.48*	0.05	8.99	0.379	0.591		

*$p<0.001$ ******$p<0.05$
Source: own elaboration

According to the table results, it has been determined that destination brand awareness, culture and interactional term has a significant effect on travel intention, which is the result variable as pointed out in the H2a hypothesis of the research. The significant β value of the interactional effect variable, which indicates whether there is a moderator effect or not, indicates that culture has a moderator effect (β=-0.41, 95% CI [0.214, 0.614], $p<0.001$). As a result, the H2a hypothesis has been accepted. Subsequent to the results obtained, it has been observed that all estimation variables included in the regression analysis explain approximately 10% of the change in travel intention. When the details of the moderator effect are examined, it has been determined that as Asian tourists' destination brand awareness increases, their travel intentions also change positively, and this change has been confirmed as 33%. The aforementioned change is not significant regarding the tourists of European origin.

On the other hand, within the scope of the H2d hypothesis of the research, it has been determined that the effects of destination brand loyalty, culture and the interactional term on the outcome variable, travel intention, are similarly significant. The significant β value of the interactional effect variable, which points out whether there is a moderator effect or not, shows that culture has a moderator effect (β=-0.36, 95% CI [0.196, 0.525], $p<0.001$). In the light of these results, the H2d hypothesis has been accepted. According to the results, it has been found that all the estimation variables within the regression analysis explain approximately 42% of the change in travel intention. When the details of the moderator effect have been examined, it can be stated that as the destination brand loyalty of both Asian and European tourists increases, their travel intentions also change positively. While this change is 84% for tourists of Asian origin, it is 48% concerning the tourists of European origin.

5. Conclusion

This research was conducted in the sample of Side, one of the most important tourism destinations in Turkey, in order to examine the moderator role of culture in the effect of perceived destination brand equity on travel intention. Herezniak, Florek & Augustyn (2018) claimed that the studies on the destination brand are insufficient and new studies are needed in this area. Within this context, similar-themed studies including different samples are important in terms of generalizing the results obtained in the literature. In the qualitative study carried out by Rojas-Lamorena, Barrio-Garcia & Alcantara-Pilar (2022), they have found that brand awareness is the most discussed subject in the researches on brand equity. In this research, besides brand awareness, the concepts of image, quality and loyalty have also been examined. Depending on the research findings, it has been determined that destination awareness and destination loyalty dimensions have a strong effect on travel intention. This finding is in parallel with the results of other studies present in the literature (Rahman et al., 2021; Kumail et al., 2022).

On the other hand, despite the fact that there are studies on the effect of travel intention on brand equity in the literature, a study examining the moderator role of culture in the effect between these variables hasn't been found. The results of this research have shown that culture plays a moderator role in the effect of destination awareness and destination loyalty on travel intention. Although culture alone has a direct effect on the variables such as satisfaction (Van Birgelen et al., 2002) and loyalty (Mattila & Choi, 2005), the moderator role in awareness and loyalty, which are among the destination-based brand equity dimensions, remains unclear. Through this research, it has been determined that culture has a harmonizing role as well as its direct effects.

6. Discussion

This research has been carried out in order to determine the relationships between certain variables that are of great importance for destination marketing in Side destination, which is one of the important touristic destinations in Turkey. The data obtained from the research offers some theoretical and practical implications to the destination management organizations, sector managers and to the academicians conducting researches in the literature.

6.1. Theoretical implications

Today, understanding and developing the importance of destination branding has become a vital necessity in order for all tourism sector players to survive and to create travel intentions to the desired regions in the challenging competitive environment that international tourism destinations are exposed to. The fact that business outputs are becoming more and more similar, product substitutes are getting easier and the increase in competition have made the concept of destination branding a powerful and preferred marketing tool. Destination brand equity has a critical role for the destination selection process and learning how to encourage the tourists to visit specific areas is highly essential for the tourism industry. Within this context, in recent years, tourism scientists have become more aware of the importance of destination branding and an increasing number of tourism researchers have adopted the brand equity theory in their studies (Dedeoğlu, Niekerk, Weinland & Celuch 2019; Zhang et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2021; Uslu & Ergün, 2021). This study investigates the relational link between the effect of destination brand equity dimensions on travel intention and the moderator role of nationality by means of the application of structural equation model. The assumptions developed based on the created destination brand equity model have been reached as a result of an extensive literature review. The main objective of the research is to evaluate travel intentions with the effect of brand equity components

(brand awareness, image, perceived quality, and brand loyalty) and to determine the moderator effect of culture on the relationship between destination brand equity and travel intentions.

In this sense, the research has presented a number of significant theoretical contributions to the literature. The measurement tool of the research can be stated as one of the important theoretical contributions. The analysis results showed that the factor loads of the variables and the effects between the variables were suitable for the structural model. At this juncture, the research scale could be utilized in future studies.

Furthermore, the results have also elucidated that the brand awareness dimension, which creates the destination brand value, has a significant effect on the travel intention. Brand awareness is accepted as one of the key dimensions for destination selection (Pike et al., 2010). It is clear that this result has coincided with the studies in the literature (Ferns & Walls, 2012; Horng et al., 2012; Chi et al., 2020). Another finding obtained from the study is that brand loyalty has a positive effect on travel intention. It is known that brand loyalty leads to repeat purchases and individuals' willingness to recommend the destination to other potential tourists (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). In this regard, it has been observed that destination brand loyalty is an important antecedent of travel intentions. The acquired finding has tallied with the previous studies on the subject (Ferns & Walls, 2012; Horng et al., 2012; Chi et al., 2020). It has been determined that two of the ways tested on the model did not yield significant results. According to this, service quality and image from destination brand equity dimensions do not have a significant effect on travel intention. The research differs from previous studies in terms of these results (Horng et al, 2012; Chi et al, 2020). At this stage, it can be stated that destination brand awareness and destination loyalty are two important antecedent variables on travel intention rather than service quality and image.

For many years, culture has been accepted as a possible reason to make different decisions in terms of the individuals living in different countries. However, it is seen that research on the effect of culture in the context of tourism is relatively limited despite the importance of the subject. This study has aimed to fill this gap by examining the effects of cultural differences on the travel intentions of tourists. In this regard, the nationality variable was taken as the basis for determining the culture. Because there are studies that advocate the similarity of culture and nationality concepts in the literature (Maoz, 2007). In this respect, the moderator role of nationality has been tested in the hypothesis tests. According to the findings, it has been determined that brand awareness moderately affects the travel intentions of Asian tourists. What's more, another important finding is that brand loyalty has affected the travel intentions of both Asian and European tourists. In addition to this result, it has been observed that the degree of influence of Asian tourists by brand loyalty is quite high compared to that of European tourists.

6.2. Practical implications

The study, in terms of its results, serves as a roadmap for tourism managers and a resource for researchers in this field. Tourism marketers, to improve destination brand equity and increase the travel intention of tourists, should search the promotion methods of other destinations that they see as rivals, focus on the important unique features of the destination, and give importance to the development of positive memories about the destination, adopt awareness-raising promotion methods and form long-term marketing strategies in order to achieve these targets. Destination managers should focus on developing distinctive features that can be easily associated with the brand in the perceptions and memories of tourists. As a matter of fact, it is known that the increase in the number of activities and experiences related to the brand facilitates the placement of this information in their memories (Horng et al., 2012). Herewith, marketing managers can increase brand value and create a competitive advantage in the tourism industry by increasing all brand-related promotional activities and offering a unique experience to the tourist.

Considering the cultural similarities and differences is thought to increase the effectiveness of promotional and marketing activities of a tourism destination. Tourism marketers should consider the target market's cultural elements and include them in their promotional materials.

6.3. Limitations and recommendations for future research

In the research, determining which tourist intentions shape the culture's element will contribute to tourism marketers' promotion campaigns and will have a facilitating effect. Therefore, in future studies, measuring the effects of the components (traditions-customs, special days, eating-drinking, daily life, etc.) included in culture rather than just considering it as a nationality will enable us to reach more specific results. The research considers just nationality in terms of moderator effect. In future studies, whether the perception of destination brand value dimensions differs according to other demographic factors can be evaluated (e.g. gender, age, income level). Moreover, various different moderators can be included in the model that can affect the relationship between destination brand equity and travel intentions in future studies. Besides, the security perception of a destination can play a moderator role among the related variables. In addition to these, more comprehensive evaluations can be made via research in which qualitative or mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) are used.

References

1. Aaker, D., A. (1991). *Managing brand equity*. New York: Free Press.
2. Aaker, D., A. (1996). *Building Strong Brands*. New York: Free Press
3. Anderson, J. C. & Gerbing, D. W. (1988). Structural equation modeling in practice: Are view and recommended two-step approach. *Psychological Bulletin*, 103(3), 411–423.
4. Arzeni, S. (2009). Foreword. In *The Impact of Culture on Tourism,* (pp. 3). Paris: OECD.
5. Asmelash, A. G. & Kumar, S. (2019). The structural relationship between tourist satisfaction and sustainable heritage tourism development in Tigrai, Ethiopia. *Heliyon*, 5, e01335
6. Back, K.-J. & Parks, S. C. (2003). A brand loyalty model involving cognitive, affective, and conative brand loyalty and customer satisfaction. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 27, 4, 419–435.
7. Bagozzi, R. P., & Yi, Y. (1988). On the evaluation of structural equation models. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* 16 (1), 74–94.
8. Baron, R. M. & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 51(6), 1173-1182
9. Bartikowski, B. & Walsh, G. (2015). Attitude toward cultural diversity: A test of identity-related antecedents and purchasing consequences. *Journal of Business Research*, 68, 526-533.
10. Bitner, M. J. (1990). Evaluating service encounters: The effects of physical surroundings and employee responses. *Journal of Marketing,* 54(2), 69-82.
11. Blain, C., Levy, S. E. & Ritchie, J. R. B. (2005). Destination branding: insights and practices from destination management organizations. *Journal of Travel Research*, 43, 4, 328-338.
12. Boo, B., Busser, J. & Baloglu, S. (2009). A model of customer-based brand equity and its application to multiple destinations. *Tourism Management, 30*, 2, 219-231.
13. Broyles, S. A., Leingpibul, T., Ross, R. H., & Foster, B. M. (2010). Brand equity's antecedent/Consequence relationships in cross-cultural settings. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 19* (3), 159–169.
14. Chang, H., H., Hsu, C., H. & Chung, S. H. (2008). The antecedents and consequences of brandequity in service markets. *Asia Pacific Management Review,* 13 (3), 601-624.

15. Chekalina, T. Fuchs, M. & Lexhagen, M. (2018). Customer-Based Destination Brand Equity Modeling: The Role of Destination Resources, Value for Money, and Value in Use. *Journal of Travel Research*, 57(1), 31– 51.

16. Chen, H. & Rahman, I. (2018). Cultural tourism: An analysis of engagement, cultural contact, memorable tourism experience and destination loyalty. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 26, 153-163.

17. Chi, H. K., Huang, K. C. & Nguyen, H. M. (2020). Elements of destination brand equity and destination familiarity regarding travel intention, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services,* 52, 1-10.

18. Crotts, J. C. & Erdmann, R. (2000). Does natioanl culture influence consumers' evaluation of travel services? A test of Hofstede's model of cross-cultural differences. *Managing Service Quality*, 10(6), 410–419. doi:10.1108/09604520010351167

19. Das, G. & Mukherjee, S. (2016). A measure of medical tourism destination brand equity. *International Journal of Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Marketing.* 10(1), 104-128.

20. Dedeoğlu, B. B., Niekerk, M. V., Weinland, J. & Celuch, K. (2019). Re-conceptualizing customer-based destination brand equity, *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 11, 211-230.

21. Ekinci, Y., Dawes, P.L. & Massey, G.R. (2008). An extended model of the antecedents and consequences of customer satisfaction for hospitality services. *European Journal of Marketing*, 42(2), 35-68.F

22. Fernando, I. N. (2020). Tourism Competitiveness by Shift-Share Analysis to way-forward Destination Management: A case study for Sri Lanka. *Journal of Tourism and Services*, 21(11), 88-102.

23. Ferns, B.H. & Walls, A. (2012). Enduring travel involvement, destination brand equity, and travelers' visit intentions: A structural model analysis. *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management,* 1, 27-35.

24. Forgacs, G. (2003). Brand asset equilibrium in hotel management. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management,* 15(6), 340-342.

25. Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating Structural Equation Models with Unobservable Variables and Measurement Error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18 (1): 39–50.

26. Gomez, M., Lopez, C. & Molina, A. (2015). A model of tourism destination brand equity: The case of wine tourism destinations in Spain. *Tourism Management*, 51, 210-222.

27. Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., Anderson, R. E., &Tatham, R. L. (2005). *Multivariate data analysis (6th ed.).* New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

28. Hankinson, G. A. & Cowking, P. (1993). *Branding in Action, Maidenhead*: McGraw-Hill.

29. Herezniak, M., Florek, M., & Augustyn, A. (2018). On measuring place brand effectiveness – between theoretical developments and empirical findings. *Economics and Sociology*, 11(2), 36-51.

30. Horng, J., Liu, C., Chou, H., & Tsai, C. (2012). Understanding the impact of culinary brand equity and destination familiarity on travel intentions. *Tourism Management, 33*, 815-824.

31. Hu, L. T.& Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cut off criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. Structural Equation Modeling: *A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 6(1), 1–55.

32. Huang, T. L. & Liu, B. S. C. (2021). Augmented reality is human-like: How the humanizing experience inspires destination brand love. *Technological Forecasting & Social Change*, 170, 120853.

33. Im, H. H., Kim, S. S., Eliot, S. & Han, H. (2012). Conceptualizing destination brand equity dimensions from a consumer-based brand equity Perspective, *Journal of Travel &Tourism Marketing*, 29 (4), 385-403.

34. Kang, M., & Moscardo, G. (2006). Exploring cross-cultural differences in attitudes Towards responsible tourist behaviour: A comparison of Korean, British and Australian tourists. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research,* 11(4), 303–320.

35. Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57, 1, 1-22.

36. Keller, K.L. (2003). *Strategic Brand Management: building, measuring and managing brand equity*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

37. Kim, H. B. & Kim, W. G. (2005). The relationship between brand equity and firms' performance in luxury hotels and chain restaurant. *Tourism Management*, 26, 549–560.

38. Kim S-H, Han H-S, Holland S, Byon K. K. (2009). Structural relationships among involvement, destination brand equity, satisfaction and destination visit intentions: The case of Japanese outbound travelers. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*. 15, 4, 349-365.

39. Kim, W., & Malek, K. (2017). Effects of self-congruity and destination image on destination loyalty: the role of cultural differences. *Anatolia*, 28(1), 1–13.

40. Kim, S., Schuckert, M., Im, H. H. & Elliot, S. (2017). An interregional extension of destination brand equity: From Hong Kong to Europe. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 23(4), 277–294.

41. Kline, R. B. (2011). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (3rd ed.). New York: The Guilford.

42. Konecnik, M. & Gartner, W.C. (2007). Customer-based brand equity for a destination. *Economic and Business Review, 34*, 2, 400-421.

43. Kotler, P. (2000).*Marketing Management,* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall International.

44. Kumail, T., Qeed, M. A. A. Aburumman, A., Abbas, S. M. & Sadig, F. (2022). How destination brand equity and destination brand authenticity influence destination visit intention: Evidence from the United Arab Emirates. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 28 (3), 332-358.

45. Kunan, J. A.(1998). An introduction to structural equation modelling for language assessment research. *Language Testing*, 15(3), 295-332.

46. Kutlu, D., &Ayyildiz, H.. (2021). The Role of the Destination Image in Creating Memorable Tourism Experience. *Journal of Tourism and Services*, 23(12), 199-216.

47. Lassar, W., Mittal, B. & Sharma, A. (1995). Measuring customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 12, 4, 11–19.

48. Malhotra N. K., & Dash, S. (2011). *Marketing research: An applied orientation*. London: Pearson.

49. Maoz, D. (2007). Backpackers' motivations the role of culture and nationality, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 34, 1, 122-140.

50. Marsh, H. W., & Hocevar, D. (1985). Application of confirmatory factor analysis to the study of self-concept: First- and higher order factor models and their invariance across groups. *Psychological Bulletin*, 97(3), 562-582.

51. Mattila, A.S., & Choi, S. (2005). A cross-cultural comparison of perceived fairness and satisfaction in the context of hotel room pricing. *International Journal of Hospitality Management,* 25(1), 146–153.

52. Ministry of Culture and Tourism-Turkey (2022). *Business (Ministry) certified facility accommodation statistics in 2021.* http://yigm.kulturturizm.gov.tr/TR-201121/isletme-bakanlik-belgeli-tesis-konaklama-istatistikleri.html, Access date: 19 January 2022.

53. Mody, M., Day, J., Sydnor, S., Lehto, X. & Jaffe, W. (2017). Integrating country and brand images: Using the product—Country image framework to understand travelers' loyalty towards responsible tourism operators. *Tourism Management Perspectives*. 24, 139-150.

54. Myagmarsuren, O. & Chen, C. (2011). Exploring relationships between destination brand equity, satisfaction, and destination loyalty: a case study of Mongolia, *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Culinary Arts*, 3, 2, 81-94.

55. Nodira, Z., & Premysl, P. (2017). The Effects on Purchase Intention: The Case of Fruit Juice. *Journal of Competitiveness*, 9 (3), 111-128.

56. Oyunchimeg, L. & Gantuya, N. (2021). Understanding of Travel Motivations of Domestic Tourists. *Journal of Tourism and Services*, 22(12), 1-22.

57. Pike, S., Bianchi, C., Kerr, G. & Patti, C. (2010). Consumer-based brand equity for Australia as a long-haul tourism destination in an emerging market. *International Marketing Review*, *27*, 4, 434-449.

58. Polat, A.S. & Çetinsöz, B.C. (2021). The Mediating Role of Brand Love in the Relationship Between Consumer-Based Brand Equity and Brand Loyalty: a Research on Starbucks. *Journal of Tourism and Services*, 22(12), 150-167.

59. Rahman, M.S., Bag, S., Hassan, H., Hossain, M.A. & Singh, R.K. (2021). Destination brand equity and tourist's revisit intention towards health tourism: an empirical study, *Benchmarking: An International Journal*, DOI 10.1108/BIJ-03-2021-0173.

60. Rojas-Lamorena, A., Barrio-Garcia, S. & Alcantara-Pilar, J. M (2022). A review of three decades of academic research on brand equity: A bibliometric approach using co-word analysis and bibliographic coupling. *Journal of Business Research,* 139, 1067-1083.

61. Salehzadeh, R., Pool, J. K. & Soleimani, S. (2016). Brand personality, brand equity and revisit intention: an empirical study of a tourist destination in Iran, *Tourism Review*, 71, 3, 205-218.

62. Spreng, R.A., & Chiou, J-S. (2002). A cross-cultural assessment of the satisfaction formation process. *European Journal of Marketing*, 36(7/8), 829–839.

63. Tabachnick, B. G.,& Fidell, L. S. (2007). *Using multivariate statistics*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

64. Tsaur, S.-H., Lin, C.-T., & Wu, C-S. (2005). Cultural differences of service quality and behavioral intention in tourist hotels. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 13(1), 41–63.

65. Uslu, A. & Ergün, G. S. (2021). The Moderator Effect of the Perception of Value Co-Creation on the Relationship between Hotel Brand Equity and WOM*, Academica Turistica*, 14, 2, 149-164.

66. Van Birgelen, M., De Ruyter, K., De Jong, A., & Wetzels, M. (2002). Customer evaluations of aftersales service contact modes: An empirical analysis of national culture's consequences. *International Journal of Research in Marketing,* 19(1), 43–64.

67. Whang, H. Yong, S. & Ko, E. (2016). Pop culture, destination images, and visit intentions: Theory and research on travel motivations of Chinese and Russian tourists, *Journal of Business Research,* 69, 2, 631-641.

68. Wu, H.C. & Liang, R. (2009). Effect of experiential value on customer satisfaction with service encounters in luxury-hotels restaurants. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 28, 586-593.

69. Yoo, B. & N. Donthu (2001). Developing and validating a multidimensional consumer-based brand equity scale. *Journal of Business Research*, 52, 1, 1–14.

70. Yoon, Y. & Uysal, M. (2005). An examination of the effects of motivation and satisfaction on destination loyalty: a structural model, *Tourism Management*, 26, 1, 45-56.

71. Zhang, Y., Li, J., Liu, C.-H., Shen, Y., & Li, G. (2020). The effect of novelty on travel intention: the mediating effect of brand equity and travel motivation. *Management Decision,* 59(6), 1271-1290.

Brief description of Author/Authors:

Gözde Seval Ergün
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5697-626X
Akdeniz University, Manavgat Tourism Faculty, Department of Tourism Management. Turkey.
Email: gates@akdeniz.edu.tr

Gözde Seval Ergün is Assistant Professor at the Manavgat Tourism Faculty, Akdeniz University, Turkey. Her primary research interests involve tourism management, tourist behaviour, destination marketing and complaint behaviour in tourism.

Hüseyin Keleş, corresponding author
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1469-0017
Akdeniz University, Manavgat Tourism Faculty, Department of Tourism Management. Turkey.
Email: hkeles@akdeniz.edu.tr
Hüseyin KELEŞ is a Lecturer at Manavgat Tourism Faculty in Akdeniz University, Turkey. His primary research interest involves tourism security, festival management, destination management and tourist behaviour.

Betül Taşpınar
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1070-2562
Akdeniz University, Social Science Institute, Department of Tourism Management. Turkey
Email: gvenbetl@gmail.com
Betül Taşpınar is a master's student at the Social Science Institute, Akdeniz University, Turkey. Herv primary research interests involve destination, gastronomy, street food, and tourist behaviour.

Ebru Gözen
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3476-5023
Akdeniz University, Manavgat Tourism Faculty, Department of Recreation Management. Turkey.
Email: ebrugozen@akdeniz.edu.tr
Ebru Gözen is Assistant Professor at the Manavgat Tourism Faculty, Akdeniz University, Turkey. Her primary research interests involve human research management, destination brand, destination management, hospitality.

Engin Derman
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1171-6242
Akdeniz University, Manavgat Tourism Faculty, Department of Tourism Guidance. Turkey.
Email: ederman@akdeniz.edu.tr
Engin Derman is Assistant Professor at the Manavgat Tourism Faculty, Akdeniz University, Turkey. His primary research interests involve destination management, sports tourism, festivals, and event tourism.