

**TRNC's Destination Image among Travelers:
Preliminary Analysis of Distance Decay Theory**

Seyed Mani Sadatgol

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Approval of Institute of Graduate Studies and Research

Prof. Dr. Elvan Yılmaz
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science in Tourism Management.

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Altınay
Dean, Faculty of Tourism

We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science in Tourism Management.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Rüchan Kayaman
Supervisor

Examining Committee

1. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Altınay

2. Asst. Prof. Dr. M. Güven. Ardahan

3. Asst. Prof. Dr. Rüchan Kayaman

ABSTRACT

This study reexamined the previous works regarding the customer based brand equity (CBBE) models. In this research the effect of brand equity components which are Brand loyalty, Brand Value ,Brand quality and Brand Salience on destination image following by tourist overall satisfaction with regard to the effect of the theory of distance decay will be inspected thoroughly.

Brand equity is one of the most recent and effective concept in tourism and hospitality industry. Destination image as well, is one of the most studied terms in tourism which has gained a huge attention in this industry. Distance is one of the major determinants which affect tourist behavior and their choice. The theory of distance decay, argues that as the distance between the place of residence and destination increases, the tourist demand automatically falls down. This theory determines cost and time as two major factors which affect tourist preferences.

A conceptual brand equity model showing the effect of brand equity components on destination image and the effect of destination image on overall tourist satisfaction has been examined. In order to verify the model 400 questionnaires were distributed among multi cultural tourist in North Cyprus. Throughout the study, the hypotheses explaining the impact of brand loyalty and brand value on destination image were significantly and positively supported. The effect of destination image on overall tourist satisfaction was significantly supported as well. Investigation based on the effect of distance decay supported the previous study regarding European and Turkish tourists. However,

regarding Iranian cases political issues were intervened in some extent. Based on the findings of the study, few implications for managers in tourism sector have been suggested, among which the impact of brand equity components on destination image and distance on tourist behavior were more on concentration.

Keywords: Destination Branding, Customer Based Brand Equity, Destination Image, Distance Decay Theory, Tourist Satisfaction

ÖZ

Bu çalışmada müşteri odaklı marke kaldırıcı incelenmiştir. Marka kaldırıcını oluşturan; marka değeri, marka sadakati, marka kalitesi ve marka farkındalığının destinasyon imajı üzerine etkisi ve turistlerin seyahat tatminlerine etki düzeyi incelenmiştir.

Marka değeri Turizm ve ağırlama endüstrisinde son yıllarda en etkili kavramlardan biridir. Uzaklık teorisinin turist davranışı üzerine etkileride literatürde tartışılan ancak henüz üzerinde yeterince literatür çalışması yapılmamış bir kavramdır. Teori, destinasyon ile turistin bulunduğu yer arasındaki uzaklığın turistlerin destinasyon tercihlerini etkilediğini varsaymaktadır.

Çalışmada Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta çeşitli milliyetlerden 400 ziyaretçiden veri toplanmış ve marka değeri kavramı için oluşturulan kavramsal model test edilmiştir. Hipotez testi sonuçlarına göre; marka sadakati ve marka değerinin destinasyon imajı üzerine olumlu etkisi doğrulanmış ayrıca destinasyon imajının destinasyon tatmin düzeyini olumlu etkilediğide doğrulanmıştır. Uzaklık kavramına yönelik olarak farklı ülkelerden gelen turistlerin destinasyon tercihleri incelenmiştir.

Çalışma sonuçları itibariyle; KKTC'nin turizmine, destinasyon imajının geliştirilmesi ve ileriye yönelik olarak pazar profillerinin belirlenerek strateji oluşturulması konularında karar vericilere bazı önemli veriler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Destinasyon Markası, Tüketici Odaklı Marka Kaldırıcı,
Destinasyon İmajı, Uzaklık Teorisi, Turist Tatmini

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Distance between the original position and the destination is one of the main components which affect tourist destination selection. As two scholars, Nicolau and Mas (2006) emphasized that the distance between the typical place of dwelling of a tourist and the destination is a particularly vital assessment, due to the clearly inherent spatial aspect of tourist destination choice.

The main theory used in this thesis is “Distance decay”. According to Bull (1995) based on being far or close, a touristic place or any destination have special image for travelers. The presumption offered by Scott, Schewe and Frederick in 1978, that the geographic region in which an individual resides has critical impact on insights of destinations and therefore the resultant consumer behavior.

According to this theory, distance wields frictional impact on tourism demand. Based on Mohand and Thomas (2012) in order to make a trip, a passenger should spend money, time and endeavor. In addition, according to Mckercher and Lew (2003), a balance is required between travel time and time which an individual spends in a specific

destination. Lew and Mckercher (2006) in another study, determined time and money as two major components of distance decay.

In tourism and hospitality industry this theory is related to the term of Market accessibility. Market access comprises of obstacles and limitations to travel and intervening opportunities which offer same occasions. As Pearce (1989) contends that, according to this theory, destinations which are nearer to source markets are more competitive and attract more tourists rather than places which have similar attractions and situated in further geographic proximate.

A number of studies have confirmed this phenomenon (Distance decay) by analyzing both domestic and international tourism movements (e.g. Greer & Wall, 1979; Paul & Rimmawi, 1992; Hanink & White, 1999; Litew & McKercher, 2002; Zhang, Wall, Du, Gan, & Nie, 1999; Zillinger, 2005; McKercher, 2008; Yan, 2011).

Destination branding, destination brand equity and its components, push and pull factors are other main points of this study, which will be scrutinized thoroughly. Destination image as one of the most studied and applicable terms in the field of tourism and hospitality, has both literature and managerial importance in tourism and hospitality management.

Another term investigated in this research, is the concept of customer based brand equity (CBBE) and its four components, which are “Brand value”, “Brand quality”, “Brand loyalty” and “Brand attribute”. Despite the fact that, destination brand equity is an

important term in destination marketing, few empirical studies have been done regarding this concept.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

This research is based on Pike and Bianchi (2011), which concentrated on Chilean passengers who travel to Australia. The main purpose of this study is to make contribution toward the effect of distance decay on destination brand equity of multicultural tourists in Northern Cyprus. The concept of distance decay theory and its relation to multi cultural tourists in Northern Cyprus and their destination preferences based on this concept will be discussed and analyzed.

Testing and putting in to practice the components of CBBE (Customer based brand equity), regarding to Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and their result on destination image and the effect which destination image cause on tourist satisfaction are other main points discussed in this work.

1.3 Contribution of the Study

In this study, it has been tried to fill the literature and managerial gaps existed in previous studies. As there is no significant study regarding the effect of distance decay theory on an island with the political and economical situation of North Cyprus, the intention of this work is to find out the mentioned gaps and the impact which distance decay will have on tourist preferences and image as well.

Finding the effects of distance on tourist behavior is another significant part of this work. Moreover, in this study the relation between brand equity components (Brand loyalty, brand value, brand quality and brand attribute), destination image and multi cultural tourist (European, Turkish, Iranian) satisfaction has been investigated in an Island like North Cyprus. However, all previous works focused on mono cultural tourists.

It is expected that, developing this research would help the ministry of tourism and culture of Northern Cyprus, as well as the tourism agencies in considering the brand equity measures and distance decay theory in their schedule, to make the tourism industry of this part of the island more prosper.

1.4 Outline of the Study

This study contains seven chapters. Chapter one comprises of brief information about the whole project. Statement of the problem, significance of the study and aims of the thesis are discussed subtopics in this part. In chapter two, a brief overview of Turkish republic of Northern Cyprus, its districts, some statistical facts regarding its tourism

sector have been given. Chapter three comprises of relevant literatures used in the thesis with reference to the pertaining articles in the area of “Distance Decay Theory”, “Destination branding and brand equity” and “Destination image”.

Chapter Four, will discuss proposed model, along with hypothesis. In chapter five, the methodology used in the study, which is deductive approach is briefly explained. Instrument of the study, sample and data collection procedure are topics discussed in this chapter.

Chapter six comprises of analysis done on the collected data and their interpretation. This chapter includes demographic analysis of sample, distance decay theory analysis, and testing of hypothesis and regression analysis as well. Finally, in chapter seven conclusion, managerial implications, limitation and future studies will be discussed in details.

Chapter 2

TOURISM INDUSTRY IN NORTHERN CYPRUS

2.1 North Cyprus

Cyprus is known as the third largest island in the Mediterranean after Sicily and Sardinia and it is larger than Corsica and Crete (Wikipedia). It is situated between latitudes 30.33 and 35.41 and longitudes 32.23 and 34.55. The Republic of Cyprus obtained its independence from Britain in 1960. Today, Cyprus has two parts: North part which is administered by Turkish Cypriots and South part administered by Greek Cypriots since 1974.

North Cyprus covers an area of 3,355 square kilometers. The neighbors of North Cyprus are Turkey, 65 km to the north, Syria, 100 km to the east and Egypt, 420 km to the south.

The Island of North Cyprus is situated in the Northeast of the Mediterranean Sea. The Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC) with 1295 square miles of area has occupied the northern part of the island.

Northern Cyprus extends to the Karpas Peninsula from the north east, westward to Morphou (Guzelyurt) Bay and Cape Kormakitis (the Kokkina/Erenköy exclave marks the westernmost extent of the area), and from south to the village

of Louroujina/Akıncılar. A buffer zone under the control of the United Nations stretches between Northern Cyprus and the rest of the island and divides Nicosia, the island's largest city and capital of both states (www.wikipedia.com).

According to the last census in 2011 the population of Northern Cyprus is 294,906 which shows the limited physical and human resource in this island, as a result this island is heavily dependent on foreign sources and trades.



Figure1. Map of North Cyprus

2.2 Economy of Northern Cyprus

The economy of Northern Cyprus is a mixture of public and private economy sector (69% of GDP in 2007) which includes trade, tourism, construction and education. The revenues grasped by the education sector in 2011 was USD 400 million. Industry includes light manufacturing forms 22% of GDP and agriculture 9% (Zaman newspaper, 1 Sep 2011). Owing to the internationally recognition problem of this island and also embargo put on the island, less foreign investment is being done. From 2002 to 2006 there was a 10.9% of annual growth in the economy on average. Despite limitation obliged by international recognition, the economy of North Cyprus is in steadily progress during the past few years.

2.3 Regions of North Cyprus

North Cyprus is administratively divided into five different regions. 1. Famagusta (Gazi Magusa), 2. Kyrenia (Girne), 3. Nicosia (Lefkosa), 4. Trikomo (Iskele), 5. Guzelyurt (Mophou).

2.3.1 Famagusta

Its real name is Ammochostos which means “hidden in sand”. Famagusta is known as the historical center of TRNC. In the ancient era it was inhabited by Egyptians. The city is called “Gazi magusa” by Turkish Cypriots, however, it is still internationally known as Famagusta. Its foundation in 300 B.C shows that Famagusta is an ancient port, where used to be a fishing village erstwhile. Famagusta is considered as one of the most important cities in North Cyprus. There are many historical sites and museums in Famagusta, among which the most popular is the Church of St- Nicolas which has been

renamed to Lala Mustafa Pasa after the Ottoman conquest and converted to a mosque. In addition, Othello castle, Salamis's ruins, and dozens of churches and Turkish baths have given a historical perspective to this old city. In recent years plenty of new hotels have been constructed, especially by the sea shore (www.northcyprus.co.uk). Famagusta possesses the deepest harbor in the island (www.wikipedia.com).



Figure 2. Lala Mustafa Pasa Mosque in Famagusta Walled City



Figure 3. Famagusta Harbor

In addition, the most important and accredited university in the Island of Cyprus, is situated in Famagusta, which has turned this city to the most academic spot of this island. It is actually considered as the major economic source for Famagusta. Thousands of new students enter this university annually. Figure2 and Figure3 show two of the most important and attracting places in Famagusta, which are Lala Mustafa Pasha mosque and Famagusta Harbor respectively.

2.3.2 Kyrenia (Girne)

It is named as the pearl of the Island and capital of tourism of North Cyprus. This city is popular for its picturesque horse shoe shaped harbor built by Britain and Byzantine castle as well. There are many restaurants and hotels around the harbor. There are also other places to visit in Kyrenia, like Shipwreck museum, Saint Hilarion castle and folk and arts museum and Bellapais abbey as well (www.northcyprus.co.uk). There are plenty of restaurants and bars around the harbor of Kyrenia.

Kyrenia is also famous for its nightlife and live music heard around the harbor when the sun sets .There are also lots of workshops and handcrafts stores in the streets of Kyrenia. (Cyprus tourist guide 2010).



Figure 4. Harbor

2.3.3 Nicosia

This is the capital city of North Cyprus which Turkish Cypriot changed its name to Lefkosa. In 7th B.C its name was Ledra. It is the only capital city in the world which has two sectors and is the administrative center for both the recognized Republic of South Cyprus and the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus and the most populated city in North Cyprus. It is the economic, cultural and political center of the island (www.Lefkosa.com). Some of the most important places to visit in Nicosia are Mevlana Museum, Great inn (Buyuk Han), Arab Ahmet Mosque and Kyrenia Gate.



Figure 5. Kyrenia Gate (Lefkosa)

2.3.4 Guzelyurt(Morphou)

Moving toward west of the island from Kyrenia, two important towns are situated, Guzelyurt and Lefke with over 12,000 population. “Guzelyurt” is internationally known as “Morphou”. In Turkish it means “beautiful place”. It has been situated at the foothills of Trodos Mountains. It is famous for its fruitful soil. Most of the fruit and vegetables in Cyprus are produced in Guzel yurt and the city is surrounded by citrus trees. (www.turkishcyprus.com). The city is famous for its citrus trees and strawberries (www.whatson-northcyprus.com). Guzelyurt is one of the places in North Cyprus, which has been less touched by tourism industry and left pristine. During the first two weeks of June there is an orange festival as well. The most important historical site of Guzelyurt is St.Mamas Monastery.



Figure 6. St Mamas Church and Icon Museum

2.3.5 Karpaz

It is one of the regions in Cyprus which has remained pristine and unspoiled during years and has lots of beautiful beaches like Golden beach. Most of the Greek Cypriots in North Cyprus live in a village named Dikarpaz. Karpaz might not have the luxurious hotels of Kyrenia, however, it is famous for its wild donkeys, picturosome beaches and wild nature. One of the main historical sites in Dipkarpaz is the ruins of “Ayios Philon”.



Figure 7. Ayios Philon (Karpaz)

2.3.6 Iskele (Trikomo)

It has been situated within the road from Famagusta to Karpaz. Its complete name is “Yeni Iskele”. There are a couple of attractions in Iskele like Church of St James and Iskele Icon museum. In the region of Iskele there is a place, called “Bogaz“ ,in which hotels have been constructed along with couple of sea food restaurants. (North Cyprus tourist guide, 2010) One of the most historical and touristic places in Iskele is “Kantara Castle”.



Figure 8. Kantara Castle in Iskele

2.4 Tourism in North Cyprus

Altinay et al (2002) stated that political issues have dramatically affected the economy and all other industries in North part of Cyprus. With lots of archaeological and historical sites and ruins, medieval castles, hotels and beautiful beaches and typical Mediterranean climate, tourism is considered as the dominant in the economy of Northern Cyprus (www.northerncyprus.cc). Summers stretch from May to October and winters from November to March. Population of this island enjoy almost 300 days of sunshine and unpolluted sea (www.northcyprus.org).

Since the government of North Cyprus has declared tourism as an engine of economic growth and development. North Cyprus declared in the mid1980s that the tourism sector was a leading section in seeking economic development. Since then, the hotel industry in Northern Cyprus has grown steadily. According to Yasarta and Altinay in North side of the island 850 tourism and hospitality commerce are situated which most of them are managed by families.

2.5 Facts and Statistics about North Cyprus

2.5.1 Tourist Arrivals

According to the ministry of tourism, environment and culture of North Cyprus, the number of tourist arrivals has 14% increased from almost 1 million in 2011 to more than 1,150 million in 2012. According to the ministry of tourism and culture website, September is the most crowded month in North Cyprus in which more tourist arrival has been observed (www.tckb.gov.ct.tr). According to the last statistics published on the

ministry of tourism and culture website, in the first month of 2013 a 0.2% of decrease has been seen in the number of arrivals comparing to the same time in 2012.

Table 1. Tourist Arrival 2013

AYLAR	TC			YABANCI			TOPLAM YOLCU		
	2012	2013	%	2012	2013	%	2012	2013	%
OCAK	57.453	55.494	-3,4	8.257	10.055	21,8	65.710	65.549	-0,2
TOPLAM	57.453	55.494	-3,4	8.257	10.055	21,8	65.710	65.549	-0,2

According to the statistics published in the website of Ministry of tourism and culture, of total 1 million tourists attracted to North Cyprus, 80% of them have Turkish nationality, and the rest which is almost 20% of the whole tourists have other nationalities. According to the web site of ministry of tourism and culture, tourist from various countries visited North Cyprus in both 2011 and 2012. In table 2, top five foreign tourist arrivals during 2011 and 2012 have been given. As it can be noticed, British tourists with more than 50 thousands tourists in 2011, which is about 22% of the entire foreign tourist obtain the more portion. However, this figure has decreased to 47 thousands in 2012 .Iranians, Russians, Germans and Dutch tourists stand in the next places respectively. Another highlight of this table is the 80% of increase in the number of Dutch tourist from 2011 to 2012. In Table3 tourism income of Northern Cyprus from 2002-2011 has been depicted.

Table 2. Tourist Arrival in North Cyprus

Foreign Arrivals	2011	2012	Change (%)
Britain	50.846	47.594	-6.4
Iran	18.897	22.014	16.5
Germany	18.079	24.754	36,9
Russia	12,150	13.108	7,9
Netherlands	10.256	18.686	82,2

Table 3. Tourism Income

<i>YILLAR (YEARS)</i>	<i>NET TURİZM GELİRİ (MİLYON USD) (Net tourism income)</i>	<i>DIŞ TİCARET AÇIĞINI KARŞILAMA ORANI (%) (The ratio of net tourism income to the trade balance)</i>
<i>2002</i>	<i>114,1</i>	<i>43,2</i>
<i>2003</i>	<i>178,8</i>	<i>41,9</i>
<i>2004</i>	<i>288,3</i>	<i>36,4</i>
<i>2005</i>	<i>328,8</i>	<i>28,0</i>
<i>2006</i>	<i>303,2</i>	<i>23,2</i>
<i>2007</i>	<i>381,0</i>	<i>26,2</i>
<i>2008</i>	<i>383,7</i>	<i>24,0</i>
<i>2009</i>	<i>390,7</i>	<i>31,1</i>
<i>2010*</i>	<i>405,8</i>	<i>26,9</i>
<i>2011**</i>		

Adopted from www.northcyprus.cc

In North Cyprus as a tourist destination, there are many hotels and inns for tourist accommodation which are ranging from 1,2,3,4 to 5 star hotels. According to the North Cyprus hoteliers association, there are around 91 hotels and casinos in North Cyprus. Amongst them, there are twelve 5 star hotels. There are eight 5 star hotels in Kyrenia, 2

in Iskele, 1 in Famagusta and 1 in Nicosia. As Kyrenia is the most attractive place for tourists, most of the hotels and inns are located in this picturesque city.

According to the website of the ministry of tourism, environment and culture, the number of beds in North Cyprus in December 2011 was around 19,162. This figure is around 19,867 at the same time in 2012.

Chapter 3

LIRERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Destination Branding

Since the emerging of branding in 1940s, expansive number of studies has been done regarding the branding for organizations in the market. (Keller 2003 & Kotler et al , 2007). Pike (2005) claimed that, in the competitive market when most of the destinations offer similar options, being different is a huge advantage by using the concept of destination branding. However, the first researches regarding destination branding were published in late 90s (e.g., Dosen, Vranesevic, & Prebezac, 1998).

First, it is useful to mention a brief definition of brand. The most common definition of brand has been suggested by Aaker(1991). In Aaker's perception, brand is considered as a logo or any trademark which can make distinguish between a tangible or non-tangible production with its competitors.

According to Dosen, Vransevic and Prrebezac (1998), and Pritchard and Morgan (1998), destination branding as a field of tourism, has been under study after 1998. Since that date, several number of studies have been carried out in related topics such as destination brand strategies (e.g., Pritchard & Morgan, 1998), destination brand identity

(e.g., Konek & Go, 2008), and destination brand equity (e.g., Boo, Busser & Baloglu, 2009).

Regarding destination branding, it should be noted that few definitions have been proposed for this concept. However, the most applicable and sophisticated one has been given by, Blain, Levy and Ritchie (2005) defined it as number of activities in the area of marketing.

3.1.2 Brand Equity

Brand equity is a key concept in the area of marketing. However, the literature used in this domain is dispersed. It is an increasingly important factor in order to make the market more competitive and is meaningful for differentiating marketing strategy (Pike, SD et al., 2013). Bailey and Ball (2006), Chang and Liu (2009) and Hsu and Hsieh (2011) followed the same guideline.

Numerous definitions have been suggested for brand equity. Most of them, from a consumer perspective are based on the premise that the power of brands lies in the minds of consumers (Leone et al., 2006). The first definition of brand equity was given by Farquhar (1989). Aaker (1991) has given another definition for brand equity. Aaker considers brand equity as an asset or any factor which can add or deduct value to a specific brand. In a similar study, Yoon and Donthu (2001) show that brand equity scale is reliable, valid and can be widespread across brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand image.

Keller (2003) has given the similar idea about brand equity. According to Keller (2003), the main values of brand equity can be classified in three categories such as its ability of value addition to the brand, brand assessment and value reflection of a brand. Thus, estimation of the incremental value generated by a brand and its marketing implications rely consequently on how to measure brand equity. Many scholars such as Bailey and Ball (2006) defined brand equity as, the overall value created by a brand.

According to Kayaman and Arasli (2007), strong brand equity leads to more profitability, however, weak brand equity will cause a loss in cash flow. Moreover, the positive equity can lead to more advantages as the customer tend to accept overtly the extended version of the brand, they will be less *price-sensitive*, and more loyal to the brand when they are faced with different options. According to Hsu, Oh & Assaf (2011), the negative brand equity can cause the consumer not to be interested in the marketing activities of that brand.

Brand equity has been investigated from three different aspects .Financial, Marketing and customer-based perspective. The last aspect will be the area of this study. In customer-based the consumer response to a brand name is evaluated (Keller, 1993; Shocker et al., 1994; Lassar, Mittar & Sharma, 1995).

According to Keller (2003), customer-based brand equity (CBBE) is “the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand”. CBBE correspond to consumer’s sensitivity, perceptions and positions toward a brand.

Perceptions commonly referred to in the tourism literature as destination images (Gartner, 1993; Bianchi & Pike, 2011).

CBBE has been studied in several areas such as hotel brand equity (Jin-Sun & Kim, 2008 et al). While , regarding the tourism and hospitality marketing literature few studies have been conducted in the area of brand equity. Konecnik and Gartner (2007), Pike (2007), and Boo (2009) are couple of publications regarding using brand equity in the area of tourism marketing.

3.1.3 Customer Based Brand Equity Models

As it has been discussed before, brand equity is one of the recent subjects in the field of tourism and hospitality. It has both importance for researchers and practitioners and managers as well. Since this concept can definitely bring about competitive advantage for resorts, hotels and any business related to tourism.

The very first model proposed for CBBE was related to Aaker (1991). Aaker's model summarizes all components of brand equity in to limited number of dimensions. According to this model brand equity has five different dimensions. This dimensions are (1) "Brand loyalty", (2) "Brand awareness", (3) "Perceived quality", (4) "Brand associations" , and (5) Other proprietary assets.

Keller (1998) proposed another model for CBBE. According to his model there are six dimensions namely are (1) "Brand salience", (2) "Brand performance" , (3) "Brand

imagery” , (4) “Consumer judgments”, (5) “Consumer feelings” , and (6) “Brand resonance” .

Another model suggested for CBBE is related to Berry (2000). According to Berry’s model, CBBE has two main components: Brand Awareness (Brand Salience) and Brand meaning. In this model Brand meaning has stronger impact rather than Brand awareness on brand equity. Brand meaning refers to the effect a company or service absorbs from both its customer’s experience and external brand communication.

3.1.4 Brand Equity Components

In terms of the dimensions of “brand equity”, “brand image”, “perceived quality”, and “brand loyalty” have often been used in prior studies (Aaker, 1991; Konec, N., & Gartner, 2007). Keller (2003) states that, there are four steps in forming the brand equity, which leads to formation of brand equity components:

3.1.4.1 Brand Salience (Awareness)

In the first step the marketer should find out how the customers detect their ideal brand, which is called “Brand Salience (Awareness)”. Based on a study done by Aaker (1996) this component refers to the degree to which a customer remember a brand and how strong it has been presented in the mind of consumer. Brand salience is the basis of the CBBE hierarchy (Keller, 2003). According to researchers (e.g. Goodall 1993; Woodside & Lysonski 1989; Howard & Sheth 1969), there are four levels in awareness. The first step is dominant, second one is top of mind, thirds is familiarity and last one is knowledge. Based on Gratner and Konecnik (2011), by occurring the dominant

awareness does not guarantee the perfect brand equity. Some of the world's famous places (e.g., Afghanistan) are not considered by tourists as touristic regions to visit. According to a study done by Hsu, Oh and Assaf (2011), brand salience can lead to strong brand image and more strong commitment to the brand.

3.1.4.2 Brand Image

The 2nd step in brand equity formation which has gained the most attention and over 140 papers have been published in its domain is “brand image”, formerly known as brand association. “Brand image” is a set of associations usually organized in some meaningful way in consumer memory and represents perceptions that may or may not reflect objective reality (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). According to Gartner and Konecnik(2010) image is defined as features that a touristic place should have. “Brand image” is a widely accepted term in the tourism and hospitality industry, however, it has been stated that no clear scale regarding this concept has been proposed so far.

3.1.4.3 Brand Quality

Keller (2003), in his study considered brand quality as another core concept of brand equity. It is actually known as the customer perceived quality. Perceived quality is defined as the “Perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service relative to relevant alternatives and with respect to its intended purpose” (Keller, 2003). The most common definition of perceived quality integrates consumer experience of the service and perceptions of the firm providing the service (González et al., 2007). The concept summarizes the attitudes, both cognitive and emotional, that the customer holds toward the brand (Hsu, Oh & Assaf, 2011). In other word, brand quality reflects the perception a customer has toward a destination. According to studies done by (Buhalis ,

2000 & Boo ,2009), components of brand quality like infrastructure of a destination positively affect brand loyalty.

3.1.4.4 Brand Value (Perceived Value)

Another core component of brand equity is destination brand value. In the very first studies regarding this concept, Zeithmal (1988) has defined brand value as “Consumers overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given”. Overall, it tends to make comparison between what a consumer pay and what he/she gets in return.

According to McDougall and Leveque (2000), the perceived value of a service pertains to the benefits customers believe they receive relative to the costs associated with its consumption. In tourism industry according to a study by Mechinda et al (2009), it has been proved that destination attitudinal loyalty is driven by perceived value. Other scholars such as Chitty et al. 2007 and Boo et al (2009) have reached to the same result. Regarding the relation between distance and brand value, Bianchi and Pike (2011) in their study on Chilean traveler to Australia, have proved that a positive relation exists between brand value and distance.

3.1.4.5 Brand Loyalty

Finally, brand loyalty is the last and most important part of brand equity. According to Aaker(1991) brand loyalty is the attachment that a customer has to a brand. Loyalty is “a deeply held commitment to repurchase or reorganize preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand set

purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior” (Olivier, 1999, pg.34).

Oppermann (2000) reminds that the concept of brand loyalty has conventionally been overlooked in the tourism and hospitality literature. Based on several studies done by Chen and Gursoy (2001), Chitty, Ward and Chua (2007), Li and Petrick (2008) and Mechinda, Serirat and Guild (2009) since buying a tourism product is rare during a life-time, it is complicated to measure the destination loyalty in long-distance markets. As a result for long-haul travelers, it is recommended to measure the attitudinal loyalty.

According to previous studies done by (Jones & Taylor, 2007; Li & Petrick, 2008) there are two dimensions in loyalty: Behavioral loyalty and attitudinal loyalty. Behavioral loyalty is considered as the purchase repetition of a same brand. However, attitudinal loyalty is contemplated as commitment of a passenger or buyer toward a brand. Attitudinal loyalty has two major dimensions: 1- Intent to visit, 2- Positive word-of-mouth.

Behavioral loyalty has two aspects. The one which is related to free choice and is bound to the past experiences and travels and traditions as well. And the one which is opposite the free choice and is categorized under business travels, in which the traveler does not have his/her, choice and travels to the place where his/her customers located. In this thesis, it has been focused to employ the attitudinal loyalty to measure the future travel options. In addition, as Gil et al (2007) emphasizes, brand loyalty is determining and constructing factor in customer based brand equity (CBBE).

3.1.5 Destination Brand Equity

Brand equity is not a concept which can be only used in the area of production. In recent years brand equity has been applied in many service industries such as tourism and hospitality. According to many scholars like Ritchie and Ritche (1998), Williams, Gill and Chura (2004) and Pike and Gartner (2010), this shifting from product to service industry such as tourism, can be useful for tourism destination markets.

3.2 Destination Image Definitions

Researches show that destination image is one of the key components which tourists take in to consideration in procedure of selecting a destination. There are several definitions for destination image. In fact, Gallarza et al. (2002) suggest there are approximately many definitions for this concept. In tourism researches, destination image has been conceptualized using other terms such as “impression”, “perception” or “mental representation of a tourist destination”. (Del Bosque & San Martin, 2008, pg. 557).

One of the first and most prevalent definitions stated by Lawson and Baud-Bovy in 1977, defined destination image as an expression of knowledge, impressions, prejudices, imaginations and emotional thoughts an individual has of a specific place. Several scholars, like Crompton (1979), Gartner and Hunt (1987), Pritchard(1998), Kim and Richardson (2003) in their studies, offer the same definition for destination image, as Kotler (1993) has defined destination image as overall feeling that individuals have regarding to a touristic place which comprises of all attractive features like natural and historical attractions.

Another definition conceptualized by Tapachai and Waryszak (2000) defined destination image as perceptions or impressions of a destination held by tourists with respect to the expected benefit or consumption values. Other scholars such as Alcaniz, Garcia and Blas use the same term (perception) in order to define the destination image.

One of the most recent and completed definitions of destination image has been suggested by Gartner and Cavusgil (2007) articulated destination image as a structure of all senses and imaginations that a tourist have regarding a destination. In this definition the importance of three image components on tourist destination choice has been notified as well.

In destination branding literature, destination image, or people's "perception about the place as reflected by the associations held in tourist memory" (Cai, 2002), is known as part of tourists' destination brand knowledge (Li, Petrick & Zhou, 2008).

3.2.1 Importance of Destination Image

Destination image is one of the topics in the field of tourism, which has gained the most attention. The first studies regarding image were in the domain of social and behavioral sciences in 1930s. However, it was in 1970s that this concept was introduced in the field of tourism and hospitality by Hunt (1971, 1975), Mayo (1973), and Gunn (1972). It has now grown into one of the most pervasive areas in tourism studies (Pike, 2002). Pike in his studies in 2002 insists that destination image has been applicable for both travelers and tourism practitioners and managers.

(Lai & Li ,2012 ; Yonghu Hyon & Ok'eef, 2011;Greaves & Skinner 2010; Lin & Huang, 2009 ;San Martin & DelBoaque, 2008 ; Choi et al ,2007; Stepchenkova & Morrision, 2006; Gonzalez,2005; Beerli & Martin, 2004; & Gallarza, 2002) are only a few of studies carried out in the area of destination image.

There are two debates over the structure of destination image. Some scholars (e.g., Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Gartner, 1993) stated that destination image has internal structure. Whilst, some other researchers such as Crompton (1979) and Reilly (1990) believe that there is no clear structure for destination image.

Three main functionalities of destination image can be mentioned here as it can control existing image, repair a damaged image of a destination and improve desirable image of a destination. As Hsu et al (2004) reconfirmed the fact that image of a touristic place is a deterministic criteria in for tourist reputation measurement.

The importance of destination can be analyzed in two points of view such as Literature and managerial implication. From the point of managerial, Bigné, Sánchez, & Sánchez (2001) stated that the assessment of destination image can help managers and practitioners by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of their destination, increased their predictability of travelers behavioral intentions and word of mouth and providing essential knowledge for managing and developing tourist destinations. Chen and Uysal (2004) , added that realizing individual's image of a place can help figure out the weak

point and power of a destination. Leisen (2001) in his study considers destination image as a factor which can promote a touristic place more proficiently in the market.

From the literature perspective, images perceived by potential tourists are generally recognized because such images play a crucial role in the actual travel decision-making process (Yang, J. & He Jiaxon et al, 2012).

3.2.2 Destination Image and Tourist Satisfaction

Destinations compete principally through their image, since the image that tourists have of them before visiting is a determining factor in their purchase decision (Buhalis, 2000). In another word, the image of a destination is an essential factor in influencing tourist satisfaction and choices (Castro et al., 2007). Many scholars like, Kozak (2003), Petrick (2004) and Castro (2007) have noticed the relation between destination image and satisfaction.

According to Bigne', Sa' nchez, and Sa' nchez (2001), destination image can positively effect on the loyalty to a destination and increase the level of loyalty among tourists. It is evident that, nowadays as tourism industry is facing with a dramatic increase and prosperity, additionally new facilitation in transportation systems, has given the tourists and customer lots of choice to select. Among all these options on the table, those destinations will be successful which have knowledge about this competitive atmosphere and offer their customers with unique options. In other words, each destination should be positioned well in the mind of customers. A key component of this positioning process is

the creation and management of a distinctive and appealing perception, or image, of the destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003).

The more a destination has better previous and actual image, the more it will be successful in attracting more tourists. It should be added that destinations mainly compete based on their perceived images relative to competitors in the marketplace (Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001). Moreover, destination image is related with other evaluative concepts such as perceived value and service quality.

3.2.3 Destination Image Components

There are two debates over the structure of destination image. Some scholars (e.g., Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Gartner, 1993) stated that destination image has internal structure. Whilst, some other researchers such as Crompton (1979), and Reilly (1990) believed that there is no clear structure for destination image. In order to go deeper through the destination image, there are three different terms by which this concept is explained. Cognitive (perceptual), affective and cognitive (Unique) are components of destination image.

In the tourism literature, it is widely acknowledged that overall image of a destination is influenced by cognitive and affective evaluations (Qu, Kim & Im et al, 2010).

In the past studies, the focus was mainly on cognitive components of destination image, however, recent studies have shifted their concentration on cognitive-affective components of destination image. Qu, Kim and Im (2010) emphasize the importance of both cognitive and affective aspects of destination and their necessity in order to

construct a sophisticated destination branding model. Fishbein was the first scholar who introduced these three components in 1967. Unique component is the most recent part in destination branding.

Generally, cognition is the combination of what is known and familiar about a destination, which may be crude and natural or induced. Cognitive image is referred to the knowledge and belief that a consumer or tourist has about a destination.” In other words, this is awareness, knowledge, or beliefs, which may or may not have been derived from a previous visit.” (Pike & Ryan, 2004, pg.334). Factors such as “natural environment”, “cultural heritage”, “tourist infrastructures” or “atmosphere” comprise cognitive structure of destination image. By contrast, destination affective image represents the ‘feelings’ or ‘emotional responses’ people hold about a destination (Pike & Ryan, 2004). Frias in 2007 refers to affective image as the feeling of a destination.

The first studies on affective image, have been done in the early 1980s by Russel, Ward, and Pratt. In their research, 1981, they analyzed 105 adjectives in order to describe affect toward a place. The result of their analysis heralds in formation of a grid with eight different adjectives.

Using the scales proposed by Russel, Ward and Pratt, number of scholars like, Baloglu and Brinberg (1997), Baloglu and McCleary (1999) and Baloglu and Mangalolu (2001) demonstrated how the affective response model could apply to perceptions of destinations. The combination of these two images, will give an overall image of that destination. Moreover, as Echtner and Ritchie determined in 1993 that, a destination

image consists of two parts, the first one individual attributes like climate or attractions, while the latter is, more holistic, including feeling and mental perspective of a destination.

The third component of destination is conative (Unique) image. Gartner (1993), Pike and Ryan (2004) and White (2004) were among the first researchers who concentrated on the concept of cognitive image. This concept explains the reaction of the travelers toward a destination based on the cognition and affection they have about it.

“Conation reflects a likelihood of destination selection, or brand purchase, and can be interpreted as a propensity to visit a destination within a certain time frame” (Pike & Ryan, 2004, pg.334). Stepchenkova and Morrision (2007) confirmed the definition proposed by Pike.

3.2.4 Destination Image Formation

According to Baloglu and McCleary (1999), the first image formation process which takes place exactly before the act of travel, is considered as the most critical stage in destination selection process. Dolnicar and Grun (2012) followed the same guideline in their study.

Image formation is defined as a construction of a mental representation of a destination on the basis of information cues delivered by the image formation agents and selected by a person (Alhemoud & Armstrong 1996; Bramwell & Rawding 1996; Court & Lupton 1997; Gartner 1993; Gunn 1972, & Young 1999). There are three particular agents in image formation: (1) supply-side or destination, (2) independent or autonomous, and (3)

demand-side or image receivers. According to several studies, done by Bramwell and Rawding (1996); Court and Lupton (1997); Day, Skidmore, and Koller (2002); Human (1999); Iwashita (2003); MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997); MacKay and Fesenmaier (2000); Young (1999), destination marketers do several promotional activities to create a positive image of a destination.

With regard to the formation, the need for more knowledge on destination image formation has recently been recognized (Gallarza, Gil & Caldero' n, 2002). According to a model proposed by Stern and Krakover (1993), there are two factors in image formation. On one hand, there are various sources from which information obtained (Sources of information). Based on a study done by Frias, Rodriguez and Castaneda (2007), Internet and travel agencies have been selected as two main information sources which affect the pre-visit image of a destination. On the other hand, they are the characteristics of individuals.

Baloglu and McCleary (1999) determined almost the same factors, incentive factors (sources of information and last visits), known as image forming agents , and personal factors (social and psychological variables) have been defined as core parts in image formation process.

Regarding the previous experience, it is also known as familiarity. It influences destination perceptions and attractiveness and represents a key marketing variable in segmenting and targeting potential visitors (Baloglu, 2001; Frias, Rodriguez & Castaneda, 2007). The third and final model proposed by Beerli and Martin (2004)

contains both primary and secondary information sources and stimuli influencing the forming of pre-visit perceptions and post-visit evaluation. (Frias, Rodriguez & Castaneda, 2007). However, theoretical and empirical research on the influence of psychological factors on destination image has been limited. (San Martin, Ignacio and del Bosque, 2007).

Additionally, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) defined two approaches in destination image formation process. The first one is static approach which emphasizes the relationship between image and tourist behavior such as satisfaction (Chon, 1990) and destination choice (Hunt, 1975). The latter, is the interest in the structure and formation of tourism destination image itself (Gartner, 1996).

3.3 Destination Attributes

3.3.1 Introduction

According to (Mat Som, 2011), in order to be a leader in destination marketing, managers and practitioners should consider more the concept of motivation. Motivation has gained importance over last decade .The first studies in this area are carried out by Crompton (1979), Hudman (1980), Dann (1981), and Fodness (1994). Dann (1977), first identified push and pull factors as two major motivational components in tourism industry. The idea was authenticated by Crompton in 1979. In 1980, Hudman identified push and pull motives based on the Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

As one of the important factors in tourism industry is the people needs, it is necessary to examine the reason of travel and the enjoyable options in the destination. In psychology

and sociology, the definition of motivation is directed toward emotional and cognitive motives (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977) or internal and external motives (Gnoth, 1997).

Another highlight regarding tourist motivation is its multi dimensional facets. Mc Cabe (2000) argues that, as tourists are not attracted to an individual quality of a destination, and they can be interested in several dimensions of a place, so tourist motivation can be considered as a multi dimensional concept.

In tourism industry, the motivation concept is classified in to two groups. According to Prayag & Ryan (2011) in tourism and hospitality the concept of motivation has been introduced, using push and pull factors. The concept of push-pull factor in tourism industry, means decomposing the tourist's destination in to two different factors; internal and external. In another word, the concept of motivation in tourism, is defined using push and pull factors.

According to several scholars (e.g., Kim et al., (2010) & Lam & Hsu, 2006), when an individual make his/her decision to take a trip, they should be definitely pushed by internal factors and pulled by motives exist in the selected destination. The push-pull framework provides a simple and intuitive approach for explaining the motivations underlying tourist behavior (Dann 1977; Klensoky, 2002).

Moreover, according to a research done by Ross and Iso Ahola in 1991, even post-experience satisfaction of a destination is related to the motivations by which the tourist intends to travel. Motivation and satisfaction are two concepts widely studied in tourism

literature; the relevance of these constructs being derived from their impact on tourist behavior (Laguna & Palacios, 2009).

3.3.2 Push Factors

Tourists are pushed and pulled by some internal and external forces respectively. In other words, push factors are referred to the desire of tourists. Yoon and Uysal (2005) believe that push factors are highly related to sensual and feeling affair. Travel is a need and a traveler might have various motivations for their trip. People may intend to take a trip to fulfill their physiological (food, climate and health) and psychological (adventure and relaxation) needs (Mayo & Jarvis, 1981, & Girish Prayag, 2012). As a result, it can be mentioned that needs and motivation are interrelated and the existence of one depends on another. In the very first study regarding this concept, Crompton (1979) contends that people can have various drives.

There are also other motivations in order to make a trip. For instance, based on the Maslow's hierarchy of needs the motivation for a leisure trip is not psychological. It could have other reasons like, new friendship or pretend of being prestigious. According to another study done on National Parks by Kim-et al (2003) four different factors have been suggested as push factors namely as being with family and relatives, to find better place for study, enjoy natural attractions and getting relaxed, get rid from daily and exhausting life and finally looking for adventurous life.

“Push factors are origin-related and refer to the intangible, intrinsic desires of the individual traveler, e.g. the desire for escape, rest and relaxation, adventure, health or

prestige” (Kozak, 2000, pg. 222). In other words, push factors are motivations in the place of residence which make people travel to a destination. According to many scholars such as (Crompton , Dann , Iso-Ahola , Pearce , Uysal) push factors have been defined as motivational features or needs that happen owing to the lack of balance or stress and nervousness in the motivational organism. According to a research done by Iso Ahola (1982- 1989), two basic factors have been considered as the main travel behavior; escaping and seeking. For example, a traveler intends to escape from his /her personal problems and challenges in the environment. Additionally, he /she seek a psychological solution. The most common push factors based on the studies done by many scholars like Botha, Crompton, Uysal and Jurowski are ‘escape from everyday environment’, ‘novelty’ , ‘social interaction’, and ‘prestige’.

Crompton has determined seven different push factors. The push motives were the escape from perceived mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships, and facilitation of social interaction (Bogar, Crowther & Marr, 2004).

According to another research done on Australian visitors to US National Parks done by Uysal , Mc Donald and Martin (1994) , five specific domain have been defined for push factors as , relaxation/ hobbies’, ‘novelty’, ‘enhancement of kinship relationship’, escape, ‘prestige’. Loker and Morphy in 1996 determined a motivational –based fragmentation. Based on their study there are four different clusters in this classification including, achievers, self-developers, social excitement-seekers and escapers / relaxers.

The characteristics of the destination can inspire and strengthen inherent push factors, given that, the activity provided or characteristics of the destination can create particular intrinsic rewards; for instance, picturesque surroundings can intensify the feeling of escape from daily life (Karyopouli, S. & Koutra, C.2012).

3.3.3 Pull Factors

On the other hand, there are pull factors which affect traveler from a destination to travel over that place. For example, some touristic areas are famous for their sunny and beautiful sea shores. Those mentioned factors are considered as pull factors. Pull factors are considered as tangible features, attributes or attractions in a destination. Pull factors could be classified among historical places, beaches, natural resources. Various options have been suggested for pull factors. Pull factor are attributes and attractions of a destination. In fact, tourists are attracted to a destination by pull factors. According to Yoon and Uysal (2005) pull motives are related to situational factors of a destination.

Several scholars defined different factors as pull factors. For instance , Fakeye and Crompton in 1991, determined six pull factors , which are 'social opportunities and attractions', 'natural and cultural amenities', 'accommodations and transportation', 'infrastructure, foods, and friendly people'. Several scholars (e.g. Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Hu & Ritchie, 1993; Kim et al., 2003, & Prayrag & Ryan, 2011) confirmed other similar pull motives such as 'Social and cultural attractions, Natural beauties or Off-door and night life'' as critical determinants which have effect on individual destination selection. Their findings have been confirmed by other researchers like Prayrag and Ryan (2003).

In a research done by Turnbull and Uysal in 1995, other options have been defined as pull motives, such as ‘cultural attractions, ‘city enclave’, ‘being relaxed, ‘beach resort’, ‘outdoor activities (Sport or night life)’ and ‘rural and inexpensive’ as other existing pull factors . All the proposed factors depend on travel purposes and to what extent an individual is familiar with that destination. Moreover, destination factors are different from a destination to another one.

3.4 Distance Decay Theory

Isaac Newton believed that the distance between two objects plays a role in the amount of attraction between the two objects (Kent, Leiter & Curtis, 2006). One of the main factors which have a crucial effect on intention of tourists, who desires to visit a place, is the concept of distance. Not only it plays an important function in tourism industry, but also its effective role can be seen in the distribution of ideas, technology, population and time.

As two scholars, Nicolau and Mas (2006) emphasized that the distance between the typical place of dwelling of a tourist and the destination is a particularly vital assessment, due to the clearly inherent spatial aspect of tourist destination choice. Distance has also impact on the share of visitors and tourist behavior. According to Eldridge & Jones (1991), the concept of distance and proximity is considered as rule of thumb in geography science. Distance influences travelers motivation to visit, however, it does not mean that it is purely based on distance. But it means that it could have an important role in choosing a destination. As McKercher, Chan and Lam have concluded in their study on 2008 that, 80% of all international trips come about within a distance of

1000 KM from the place of residence. According to Mckercher (2008), a balance should be noted between the cost and time of travel and the interesting activities in that destination. Moreover, McKercher (1998) discussed that as the distance between origin and destination increases, the possibility to take a multi-destination trip increases. Based on a study done by Paul and Rimmawi (1992), there is an opposite relation between, time distance and total trip. The more tourists have time, the further destinations they choose and vice versa.

Travelling needs investing time, money and endeavor. As the distance between origin place and destination increases the combination of time and money will go up consequently. As the travelers do not have infinite resources, they should all take in to consideration the distance between their origin place and their desired destination. The theory of distance decay indicates travelers will make their decision to travel to a destination according to distance with moderating factors affecting this decision (Mohan & Thomas, 2012).

This theory was first used in academic research for geographers since late 1960s and has been utilized to investigate actions in several areas such as shopping, transportation and entertainment as well as several scholars like Rimmawi (1992); Hanink and White (1999); Kerkvliet and Zhang et al. (1999) claimed in their studies. It was used and popular in tourism industry between 1960s and 1970s.

This theory has been used less in tourism industry lately, however, it as McKercher and Lew (2003) introduce it as a type of proxy for forecasting. The theory argues that

demand for tourism varies inversely with the distance traveled (Bull, 1991; Zillinger, 2005). By increasing the distance the demand will decrease exponentially.

According to Nickerson and Bosak (2009), the theory of distance decay envisages that demand will reach to the top at a proximate nearly close to a source market and then goes down exponentially when the distance increases. According to McKercher and Lew (2003), this theory has crucial role in the allocation of thoughts, innovation, financial resource and distance. That is why that it has been recognized as a core concept in Geography. According to Mckercher (2008) distance is one of the most critical factors, which determines the choice of travelers.

Based on the findings from Greer and Wall (1979) and study carried out by Bull (1991), a lognormal curve regarding the effect of distance decay has been proposed which determines functions for tourist travel, and signifies a peak demand before travel demand diminishes exponentially. Original distance decay curve shows exponential demand decrease after a peak, but McKercher (1998) identified *plateauing* distance decay curve, in which a high demand was maintained for a longer period of time. Lee, Guillet, Law and Leung (2012) confirmed the similar findings of McKercher (1998) in their study. The *plateauing* number was caused by numerous reasons like restricted number of destination options and the effect of market access as well. Mckercher and Lew (2003) introduced another distance decay curve in which a demand peak before the exponential decrease occurs, however, there is no demand exists for a certain distance before another demand appeared.

Additionally, it can be mentioned that if there are a few intermediate opportunities exist the decaying effect will be faster, and it will be slower if there are relatively more number of nearby destinations exist.

Figure.9 indicates the conventional diagram of distance decay curve (Bull, 1991), in which the demand increases and then falls down immediately as the cost and distance of the travel increases. This curve is normally used for activities such as shopping, crime and commuting.

In the case of tourism, tourists must balance the time of their trip and the time they want to spend in the final destination, it depends on how the travelers value the act of travelling.

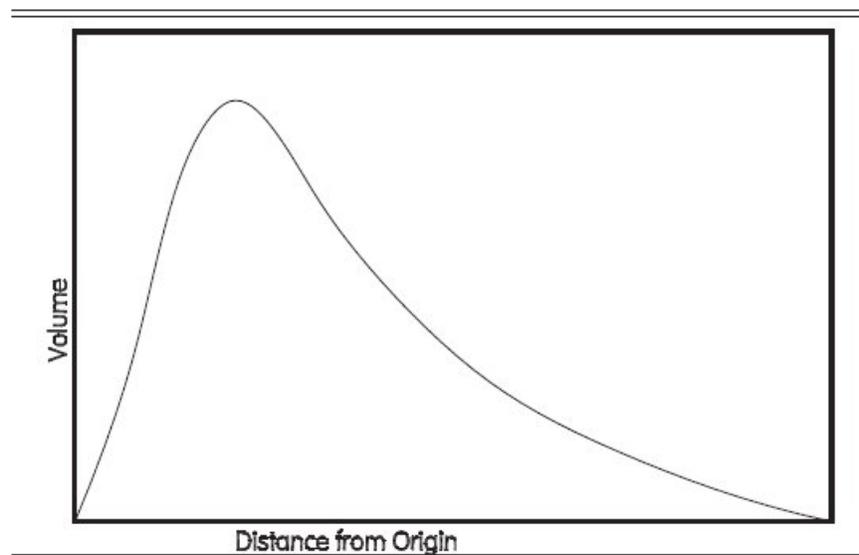


Figure 9. Conventional Distance Decay Curve

Based on Walsh, Sanders and McKean (1990) travel is regarded as a service or production that a passenger needs financial resources to get to a specific place. The individuals who regard travel like this will surely try to decrease the time of their trip. However, based on Chavas, Stoll and Sellar (1989) taking trip and the duration of the trip itself can have other values. In this way, the traveling will be considered as an interesting affair and passengers tend to spend more of their time during the travel rather than getting stuck in the final destination. In other words, in this case they prefer to enjoy the length of their trip rather than their final destination.

However, the distance decay in tourism is getting somehow intricate with the existence of the impression of market access. Regarding McKercher and Lew (2003), the idea of accessing the market for comprises of hurdles to travel and occasion which present the same options. According to Pearce (1989), destinations nearer to market access have competitive advantage over places which are farther from market access. It should be also noted that, distance decay is a relative concept; as Eldridge and Jones (1991) discuss, a specific and same distance can bring about different effects in different zones and areas.

In Figure.10, the distance decay curve for tourism industry has been depicted. As transportation system plays an important role in this industry, for passenger travelling by plane, the peak demand is longer; however, for those who travel by car it is shorter.

In addition to distance, there are other factors which affect the travel behavior. According to Haninke and White (1999), these can comprise of security problem and being unfamiliar with the place can affect the experience of travelers.

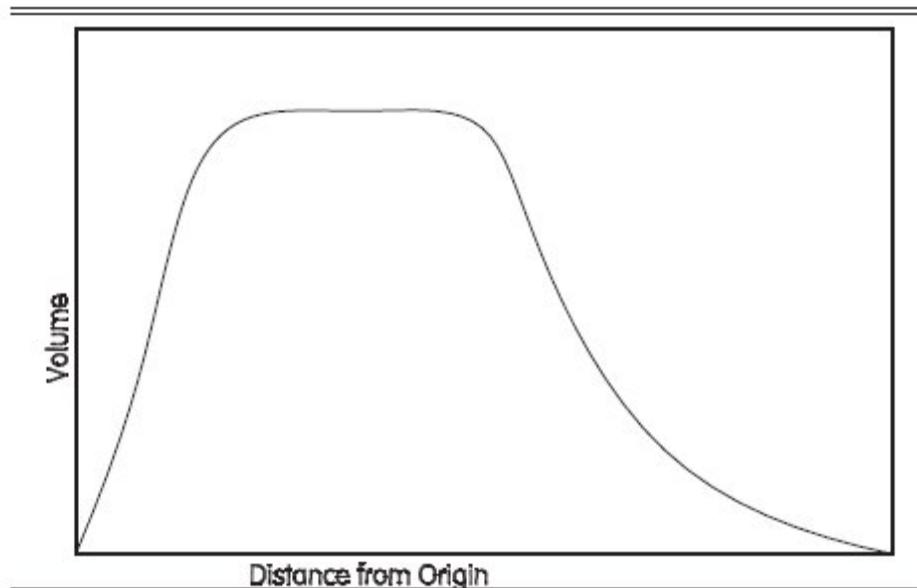


Figure 10. Theoretical Distance Decay Curve

McKercher and Lew (2003) identify a third and new condition with regard to concept of theory of distance decay. They notify places where few touristic activities take place that is applicable to the source market while demand is focused on definite locations with the high number of tourists (Peak Level). These places are called effective tourism exclusion zones (ETEZ). In this case, ETEZ brings about a distorting effect on the main distance decay theory curve. In Figure 11 this effect has been depicted.

According to Mckercher et al (2008) passengers are not interested in traveling to place which are called ETEZ. These places can be counted as deserts, oceans or locations with out any one living there for instance.

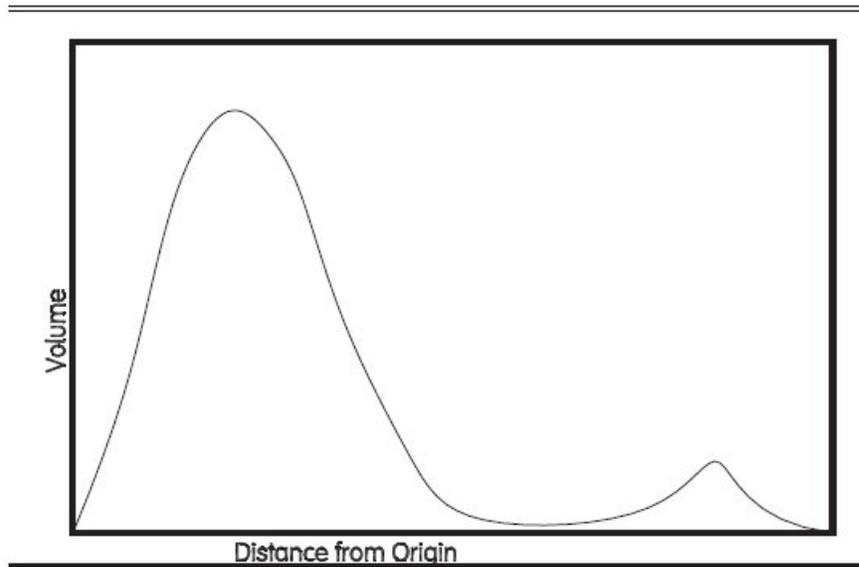


Figure 11. Distance Decay Curve for ETEZ Destinations

As it can be seen in the Figure.11, demand peaks close to the place of origin and will decline by getting further from there. However, the secondary peak happens at the greater distance from the place of origin, where exceptional attractions surmount the travel frictions.

Another aspect of the theory is to take in to consideration the tourist behavior with regard to the distance. According to a study done by Nyaupane and Graefe (2003), there is a positive relation between distance and age, destination expenditure and place attachment.

There is one other case to discuss regarding distance. Based on this concept, there are two types of travelers: Long-haul and short-haul travelers. In terms of visitation intent, consumers from short haul destinations might consider different factors when deciding about a destination preference compared to long haul travelers which consider mostly airfare costs and travel time (McKercher, 2008, & McKercher, Chan, & Lam, 2008). In this case, it can be deducted that short-haul travelers might visit their preferred place more than once comparing to long-haul passengers. Additionally, according to Bao and McKercher (2008) and Ho & McKercher (2012), long-haul and short-haul travelers have different levels regarding behavior, income level and their requests and demands. Moreover, these researches suggest that younger travelers with lower income prefer to visit short-haul destinations.

3.4.1 Cultural Distance

One of the critical issues which determines tourist behavior and choice of destination is the concept of culture. As Yang and Wong (2012) discussed these issues and considers the issue of culture as one of the deterministic factors in all demand models. Tourist behavior can be influenced by the traveler cultural and background and cultural distance of the traveler and the host as well.

According to numerous past studies, cultural distance could influence tourists' pre-visit decision as well. (e.g. Basala & Klenosky, 2001, Ng, Lee, & Soutar, 2007, San Martin & Rodriguez del Bosque, 2008) .The degree of cultural similarity between origin and destination will also influence movements (Hanink & White, 1999, & Smith & XIE, 2003). In fact, the tourism spot with similar cultural back ground as in the place of origin

can attract more visitors. Since language, custom and religion are regarded as barriers to travel. According to Basala and Klenosk (2001), passengers are interested in visiting place in which they are culturally different.

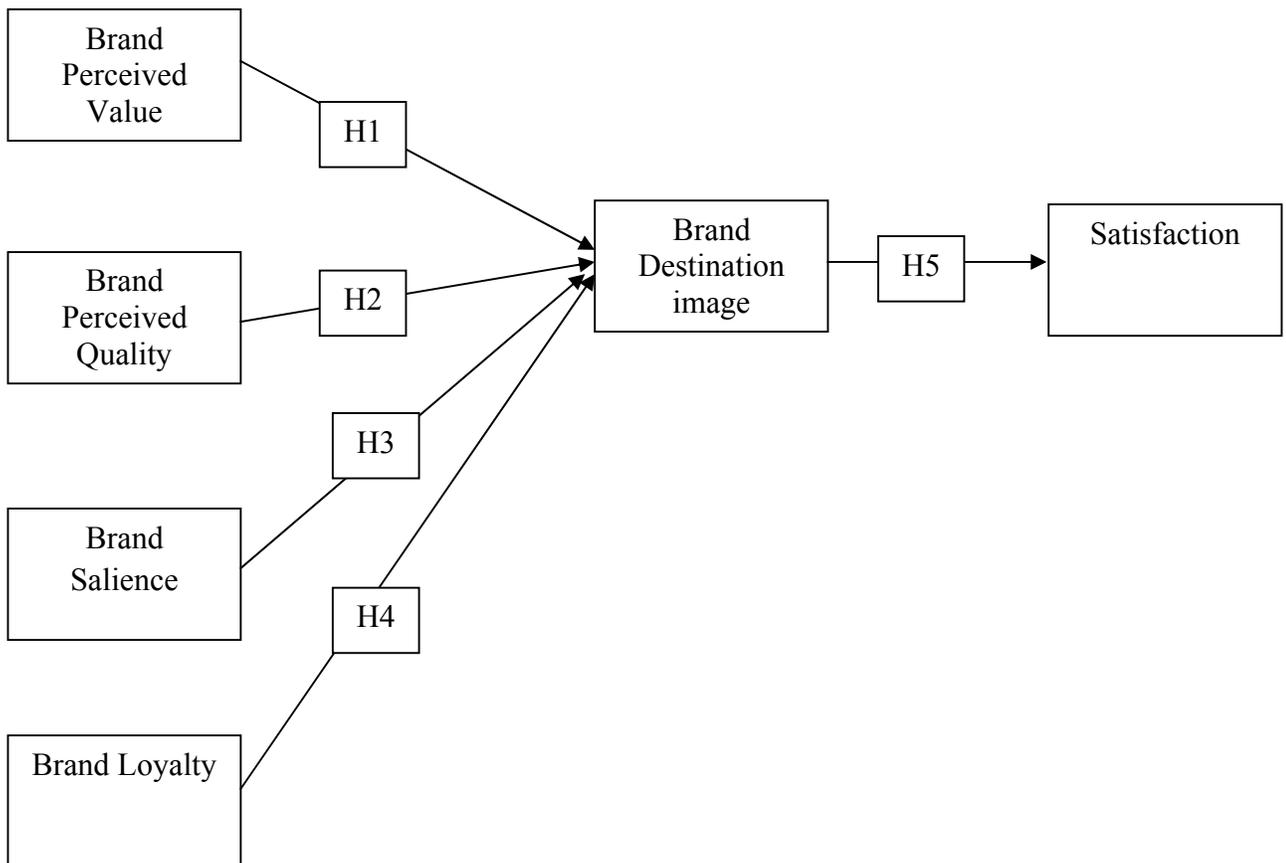
Mcintosh et al (1994) defined cultural distance as the difference between the traditions of place of residence and the touristic place where the passenger visit. In previous studies it has been proved that, cultural distance may influence participation in international cultural tourism.

Tourists residing in more culturally distant places are more likely to travel for cultural reasons. It means that tourists normally tend to visit places where have different cultures from their place of origin. Whereas, tourists residing in proximate cultural distance are less interested in cultural tourism and prefer to do superficial and entertainment oriented experiences (Du cros, & Mc Kercher, 2003). Normally, the greater the cultural distance, the more it can be felt that a destination is rich in cultural heritages. It means that, in destinations with more cultural distance, there exist more cultural attractions for tourists. Based on a study done by Reisinger (2009), cultural distance can be regarded from two aspects. On one hand is large cultural distance, which is considered as a friction between foreign tourists and hosts. On the other hand, small cultural distance diminishes the cultural conflict and can lead to positive experience.

Chapter 4

HYPOTHESIS AND MODEL

In this chapter the conceptual model and related hypothesis will be discussed. Based on what is explained in Literature review, the following model is proposed:



H1: Brand perceived value is positively related to Brand Destination image.

H2: Brand Perceived Quality is positively related to Brand Destination image.

H3: Brand Salience is positively related to Brand destination image.

H4: Brand loyalty is positively related to Brand destination image.

H5: Brand Destination image is positively related to tourist satisfaction.

4.1 Brand Perceived Value

According to McDougall and Levesque (2000), brand perceived value refers to the benefits customers believe they receive relative to the costs associated with its consumption. In another word brand value explains that, a customer's perception of receiving a service at what price. Although no specific definition has been proposed for brand value concept, the most popular definition has been a price-based definition (Sweeny, Soutar, & Johnson, 1999, & Tsai, 2005). According to Lasser et al (1995), when a consumer chooses a brand, this selection depends on the balance between the price paid for this brand and the degree to which it is useful (its utility).

Based on a study by Woo Gon Kim et al (2008), all brand equity components have positive impact on brand value, however, the most effective one is brand perceived quality. Additionally based on the study of Baloglu & Mc Cleary (1999), Brand value of a destination such as good value for money or good climate is related to the image of a destination. **H1: Brand value is positively related to destination brand image**

4.2 Brand Quality

Brand quality is another main component of brand equity. Based on Keller (2003) seven different categories should be taken in to consideration in brand perceived quality: performance; features; conformation quality; reliability; durability; serviceability; and style and design. Among these factors, brand performance has the most usage in tourism and hospitality industry mentioned that in destination branding factors such as environment and service infrastructure should be notified as brand quality (Buhalis, 2000; Murphy et al., 2000, & Williams et al., 2004). Moreover, according to (Low & Lamb, 2000, & Deslandes 2003), brand quality is the antecedent of brand value. It can be said that strong and high quality brand can lead to valuable brand. According to a research done by Baloglu and Mc Cleary (1999), quality of experience such as Hygiene and Cleanness, safety is related to destination image construct.

H2: Brand quality is positively related to Brand image.

4.3 Brand Awareness (Salience)

Brand awareness is considered a main component of a brand's effect in hospitality and tourism (Kim & Kim, 2005; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003; Lee & Back, 2008; Oh, 2000). The first component of brand equity is brand salience (Brand awareness). According to Keller (2003), brand salience is considered as the fundamental component of customer based brand equity (CBBE). Tourists have many options to visit on their table, in this case, brand salience can be defined as the strength of awareness of that place in the mind of a tourist. Many studies like those done by (Thompson & Cooper, 1979; Woodside & Sherrell, 1977) all the customers have 2-6 options in their mind. Brand salience is

measured by unaided awareness or aided brand call (Pike & Bianchi, 2011). Two scholars (Hoyer & Brown, 1990; Franzen & Bouwman, 2001) had the same view about brand salience and conceptualized brand awareness as the ability to recognize or recall a brand.

The majority of empirical image studies have found a positive relationship between familiarity and image (Baloglu, 2001). Based on an early research by Milman and Pizam (1995) if a destination place wants to be successful, first it should gain customer awareness and then positive image comes. According to a study done by Hsu, Oh and Assaf (2011), brand salience can lead to strong brand image and more strong commitment to the brand.

H3: Brand Awareness is positively related to Destination image.

4.4 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is the most important component of brand equity. According to Aaker (1991) brand loyalty signifies the attachment of a customer to a brand. There are two types of loyalty: 1- Behavioral, 2- Attitudinal, which have been explained in Literature Review. In several studies (e.g., Kumar, Pozza & Ganesh, 2013 ; Severi & Choon Ling, 2013; Thakur & PSingh, 2012 ;Aurier & Gilles, 2009) the relation between brand loyalty and destination image have been scrutinized. **H4: Brand Loyalty is related to Brand image.**

4.5 Destination Image

Destination image is one of the most discussed concepts in the field of tourism. However, due to the complexity and difficulty of this concept, no unique model has been suggested for destination image. One of the first definitions has been given by Crompton (1979), state that destination image constitutes the beliefs, ideas, and impressions a person holds about a certain destination. Destination image has three main components: Cognitive, affective and Cognitive, which have been explained thoroughly in the chapter 3 (Literature Review).

According to (Castro et al., 2007; Han, 1990; Joppe, Martin, & Waalen, 2001) the image of a destination is an essential factor in tourist satisfaction. Many scholars like, Kozak (2003), Petrick (2004), Castro (2007) and Lee (2009) have noticed the relation between destination image and satisfaction. **H5: Destination image is positively related to Tourist satisfaction.**

4.6 Tourist Satisfaction

As Machleit and Mantel discussed, customer satisfaction is considered as the core concept or what is named as the heart of any activities in the area of marketing in any firm. Since this concept signifies that whether a firm or a destination reaches its objectives and strategies and moreover a satisfied customer will definitely buy more. In the context of tourism destinations, satisfied customers would be inclined to return to that destination (Assaker & Hallak, 2013). According to Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann (1994), customer satisfaction can appear in other forms like customer loyalty, reduce prices or costs of failure reduction.

In the first definition of tourist satisfaction, Tse and Wilton (1988) defined satisfaction as “the consumer’s response to the evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between prior expectations and the actual performance of the product as perceived after its consumption”.

4.7 Distance Decay

Distance is one of the main factors which have essential impact in choosing a destination. However, it is not the whole point in choosing a destination, but it is considered as a motivating component. Based on Mckercher & Lew (2003), distance plays a critical role in tourism demands. Traveling needs money and time. In a congruent study done by Pike and Bianchi (2011) on Chilean travelers to Australia, cost of travel from one point to another is major indicator. It means that, regarding to the cost a traveler pays for his/her trip and the benefits they catch with regard to the concept of distance, a trip can be considered as cheap or expensive. Those above-mentioned studies indicate the effect of distance decay on Brand Value. In the mentioned studies (Mckercher & Lew, 2003; Pike & Bianchi, 2011) the effect of distance on brand value have been notified.

Chapter 5

METHODOLOGY

5.1 Overview

This research was performed in order to find out the effect of distance decay theory on the destination image of Northern Cyprus. The pros and cons as well as the reliability of the tool used, were part of the objective as well. In order to answer these research goals and test the proposed model and hypothesis, the researcher decided to gain the view of foreign and multicultural (EU, Iranian, Turkish and Other) tourists in line with this topic. Explicitly, a total of 400 respondents from different tourist spots, such as hotels, museums and historical places within Northern Cyprus (Famagusta, Kyrenia, Nicosia) were randomly selected to make up the sample. Selected participants answered a survey questionnaire structure in Likert format.

Data gathered from this research instrument were then computed for interpretation using SPSS 19. Along with primary data, the researcher also made use of secondary resources in the form of published articles and literatures to support the survey results. In order to find out the scale of the questionnaire, the model and scale used in Pike and Bianchi (2011) is used.

5.2 Deductive Approach

Deductive reasoning starts from the more general to the more specific details. This approach sometimes is informally called a "top-down" approach. It normally begins with a theory about our topic of interest. It then narrows that down into more specific hypotheses based on the concepts and literatures related to the theory. By collecting data the researcher aims to address the proposed hypotheses based on the model. This ultimately leads us to be able to test the hypotheses with specific data collected in the data collection procedure. In the final step the proposed hypothesis will be accepted or refused based on gathered data. In Figure a graphic schematic of deductive approach has been given.

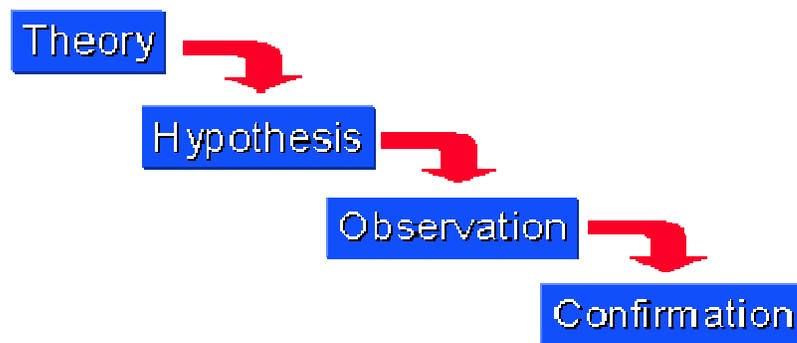


Figure 12. Deductive Approach Sample

5.3 Research Design

Quantitative data gathering techniques are based on the counting the relationships among variables. By using data-collection tools the variable measurement will be possible. When these methods are used, the researcher might not do anything in the study and the last result is free of framework. Numbers, measuring and mathematical

analysis are the key terms in quantitative data collection. Using these tools, the data gathering process and all the related numbers and formulas should be described briefly. The aim of this approach is to generalize the collected data using questionnaires and give a brief explanation regarding the overall procedure.

One of the main pros of quantitative approach is that, it prevents researcher from manipulating in collecting and presenting data collected in the data collection phase. This method is useful when a researcher aims to find a relation between two variables. One is dependent and the latter is independent. In this approach the researcher is trying to get rid of being subjectivity and aims to be more objective.

Approaches used in quantitative tend to destruct all the limitation caused by qualitative approaches as they are subjective somehow. In this case, all the section of the study from introduction to conclusion is more objective and all the variables are determined clearly. In addition, through quantitative approaches following actions of respondent can be followed up.

5.4 Sampling Method

There are two sampling methods: Probability and non-probability. In probability sampling method, each sample of the population has non-zero chance of being chosen. Probability sampling has been classified in to three parts: Random sampling, systematic sampling and stratified sampling. On the other hand, there are non-probability sampling methods, which are categorized as convenience sampling, judgment sampling, quota sampling and snowball sampling. Probability sampling methods have one advantage

over non-probability methods. In probability sampling, sampling error can be calculated, however, in non-probability methods, this amount will be unknown. In this study, convenience sampling of multi-cultural tourist of North Cyprus has been used. Convenience sampling is a sampling method in which, the subjects are chosen because they are accessible and proximate to the data collector.

5.5 Instrument Development

The survey questionnaire developed by Pike and Bianchi (2011) for CBBE (customer based brand equity) was used as the main data-gathering tool for this study. The questionnaire comprised of two main sections: a profile and the survey proper. The profile contains socio-demographic attributes of the respondents such as age, gender, civil status, education level, annual income status, their destination preferences, their duration of stay in Northern Cyprus and their previous visit of Northern Cyprus if they have. The second part which contains three different sections, includes questions about the brand equity and destination brand image and overall satisfaction of tourists of Northern Cyprus.

In order to test the brand awareness, brand image, brand value and brand quality and brand loyalty, several items were used. The questionnaire contains 17 items to measure the brand equity and 24 items to measure the destination image. The questions were structure using the five point Likert format. There was a question about the travelers overall satisfaction of Northern Cyprus in 5 scales Likert.

The Likert assessment was the selected questionnaire type, as this type of survey makes it easier for respondents to participate. In addition, this research tool permits the researcher to carry out the quantitative approach more effectively with the use of statistics for data interpretation. In order to make sure about the validity of the questionnaire used for the study, the researcher tested the questionnaire to 25 respondents as the pilot study. These respondents as well as their answers were taken in to consideration in the actual study procedure and were only used for testing the questionnaires. After answering the questions, the researcher asked the respondents for any ideas or any necessary modifications to make the questionnaire more valid and reliable and easy to answer. The researcher modified the questionnaire based on the suggestion made by respondents. The researcher then omitted unrelated questions and changed unclear or complicated expressions into more straightforward ones in order to ensure better understanding for final data collection period.

5.6 Population and Samples

The questionnaires were distributed among foreign tourists over 18 years old who came to Northern Cyprus. The data was collected using convenience sampling. Data was gathered in the month of May in Northern Cyprus. Around 400 questionnaires were distributed among foreign tourists (EU, Iranian, Turkish and other nationalities). Around 18 questionnaires were excluded, since respondents did not provide sufficient answers. Around 382 questionnaires were used to for final analysis.

5.7 Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected from multi cultural tourists (Mostly European and English-Speaking), in different cities of Northern Cyprus. Some questionnaires were distributed in hotels. However, most of the data collection procedure was carried out in touristic places of Northern Cyprus. The questionnaires were distributed among 400 multi cultural tourists in North Cyprus.

5.8 Data Analysis

In this study brand equity items were measured using 17 questions with five points scales from 1(Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Brand image items were measured using 24 questions with five points Likert scale 1(Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Overall satisfaction of the tourists was measured using five points scale from 1 (Very dissatisfied) to 5 (Very satisfied). Six demographic questions and two questions for testing the distance decay theory were designated as well. In order to do the factor analysis rotation matrix was used. Regression analysis was done to test the hypotheses.

Chapter 6

RESULTS

6.1 Descriptive Analysis of the Sample

This study covers 191 of male respondents and 191 female respondents. More than 37 percent of the respondents are between 25-44. Almost 36 percent of the sample are 45-64. Most of the respondents (42.6) have university level of education. Most of the respondents (64%) reside in EU countries. Around 16 percent are Iranian tourists, 8 percent from Turkey, and the rest which makes around 11 percent of the whole respondents are from other nationalities, such as Azerbaijan, China, Jordan, USA, Canada and Malaysia. In Table4 all the mentioned details can be observed.

A third (Almost 32%) of the sample heard about Northern Cyprus from their friends and family. In addition, it can be observed that around 47percent of the whole sample intends to have another trip in the following 12 months. Only 2 percent of the whole population does not have intention to take another trip in the following year. Regarding the marital status, 55.5 percent of the sample is married. Regarding the income level of respondents, it can be observed that, a bigger proportion of the whole respondents (around 35%) have moderate income.

Table 4. Demographic Analysis (n=382)

AGE	Frequency	Percentage
18-24	37	9.7
25-44	141	36.9
45-64	139	36.4
65+	65	17
Gender		
Male	191	50
Female	191	50
Resident		
EU	245	64.1
IRAN	62	16.2
Turkey	33	8.6
Other	42	11
Marital Status		
Single	127	33.2
Married	212	55.5
Divorced/Widow	43	11.3
Education		
High School or Less	127	33.2
University	163	42.7
Master or PHD	92	24.1
Income		
Less than 30000 \$	132	34.6
30000-59999	75	19.6
60000-89999	109	28.5
90000-119999	27	7.1
120000 or More	28	7.3

Table 5. Cyprus Visit Experience

Previousvisit	Frequency	Percentage
Never	221	57.9
Once	56	14.7
Twice(More)	104	27.2
Missing	1	0.3
Total	382	100

According to Table 5, for almost 58 percent of the whole sample, it is their first visit to Northern Cyprus. For the rest of the population, it is their second or more visit to Northern Cyprus.

Table 6. Distance Decay Analysis

Preferred Destination	Country of Residence			
	EU	IRAN	TURKEY	OTHER
EU	137	26	9	15
TURKEY	16	3	12	4
North Cyprus	26	1	1	3
North America	28	29	7	8
Middle East	8	2	1	3
Other	29	1	2	8
Total	244	62	32	41

By crossing preferred destinations table and country of residence in SPSS, Table 6 is generated describing the preferences of tourists based on their country residence and distance they should go through. As it can be observed from Table.6, more than 73% of European tourists tend to visit either a European destination or Turkey or North Cyprus. By contrast only 14% of these travelers prefer to visit an American or Middle Eastern

destination. This shows that for European citizens, geographical distance is almost an important factor in their travel decision-making process that they prefer to visit a short-haul destination rather than a long-distance place.

Regarding Turkish tourists, it can be seen that almost 68% of Turkish tourists prefer to visit Europe, Turkey or North Cyprus which can be classified as short-haul destinations. However, regarding Iranian tourists, it is somehow different. More than 88% of Iranian tourists tend to visit places like Europe or North America which considered as a long-haul destination for Iranian passengers. It can be concluded that, political issues could have impact on the issue of distance. As North America and Europe are considered as long-distance places for Iranians, however, due to political issues and obstacles exist, North America is regarded as the top destination for Iranian, despite being farther.

Table 7. Brand Equity Questions

ITEM	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.Deviation
This destination has reasonable prices.	382	1	5	3,5209	1,08113
This destination is very famous.	381	1	5	3,0945	1,09135
I enjoy visiting this destination.	378	1	5	3,8677	1,01890
When I am thinking about international holiday this destination comes to my mind.	382	1	5	2,8403	1,17415
The characteristics of destination come to my mind quickly.	381	1	5	3,1181	1,05592
This destination has high quality of infrastructure.	382	1	5	2,8220	0,99063
This destination has high level of cleanness.	381	1	5	3,0945	1,05954
This destination has high level of safety.	382	1	5	3,6649	1,03370
This destination has high quality of accommodation.	379	1	5	3,3140	0,94230
This destination would be my preferred choice for vacation.	377	1	5	3,0053	1,07187
Visiting this destination is economical.	379	1	5	3,2850	1,04302
I would get much more than my money's worth.	379	1	5	3,2797	1,01881
The costs of visiting this destination are bargain.	382	1	5	3,2461	0,90038
This destination has a good name and reputation.	382	1	5	3,3115	0,91349
I intend visiting this destination in the future.	381	1	5	3,4541	1,12676
I would advise other people to visit here.	382	1	5	3,6675	1,13264
Visiting here is a good deal.	381	1	5	3,6509	1,04450

Table.7, describes destination brand equity components and the number of respondents to each question related to brand equity dimensions. Other details shown in this table are minimum and maximum score for each question which are 1 and 5 respectively and mean score as well.

Table 8. Destination Image Descriptive Analysis

ITEMS	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.Deviation
Natural attractions are beautiful	382	1	5	3,9791	0,89301
It has rich historical attractions.	382	1	5	3,9398	0,91877
Cultural attractions are diverse	379	1	5	3,6860	0,87232
Unpolluted environment is attractive	380	1	5	3,5447	0,95580
People's behavior was friendly.	382	1	5	4,0419	1,00631
Cleanness and hygiene standards are considered.	382	1	5	3,2618	1,02965
Destination can easily be reached.	381	1	5	3,3517	0,93400
Climate is mild and tolerable.	382	1	5	3,7461	0,81556
Cafes are at high level.	382	1	5	4,0969	0,91320
Quality of accommodation is at high level.	378	1	5	3,5681	0,92289
Safety and security of the place is good.	382	1	5	3,4392	0,84773
There are plenty of shopping facilities.	382	1	5	3,8141	1,03807
Casinos offer high quality services.	382	1	5	3,034	0,83458
Beaches are clean and beautiful.	380	1	5	3,2487	0,99308
Public transportation is organized.	382	1	5	3,4079	1,01516
Local tours are interesting.	382	1	5	2,7749	0,91502
Amusing night life and entertainment.	377	1	5	3,3508	0,89170
Sport facilities are highly available.	381	1	5	3,1034	0,88256
Delicious local cuisine	382	1	5	2,9948	0,96621
High availability of local festivals and fairs.	378	1	5	3,7277	0,85326
Museums are interesting and culturally rich.	378	1	5	3,1587	0,98963
The quality of service is perfect.	382	1	5	3,4418	0,94131
Cost/Value	382	1	5	3,4293	0,97894

In Table.8 destination image components and the number of respondents to each question, min and max scores as well as mean score have been shown.

6.2 Factor Analysis

In Table.9, factor analysis of brand equity components has been explained. As it is obvious from Table.9 three factors have been extracted with Eigen values bigger than one. The adequacy sampling from KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) tests is 0.923. Total variance in this phase was 60%.

The extracted three factors are Brand Value, Brand Quality and Brand Salience with Brand Loyalty on aggregate. In Table.10 factor analysis of destination image components has been scrutinized. As it can be seen from Table.10, six factors have been extracted with Eigen values bigger than one. The adequacy sampling from KMO tests is 0.913. Total variance in this part was 62%.

Table 9. Destination brand equity factors

Factors	Total	Brand Value	Brand Quality	Brand Loyalty Brand Salience
Total Variances	60	24,905	21,032	14,029
This destination has reasonable prices.		0.762		
Visiting this destination is economical.		0.771		
I would get much more than my money's worth.		0.703		
The costs of visiting this destination are bargain.		0.731		
Visiting here is a good deal.		0.638		
This destination has high quality of infrastructure.			0.682	
This destination has high level of cleanness.			0.779	
This destination has high level of safety.			0.575	
This destination has high quality of accommodation.			0.425	
This destination would be my preferred choice for vacation.				0.702
This destination is very famous.				0.432
I enjoy visiting this destination.				0.692
When I am thinking about international holiday this destination comes to my mind.				0.704
This destination has a good name and reputation.				0.555
I intend visiting this destination in the future.				0.788
I would advise other people to visit here.				0.697
The characteristics of destination come to my mind				0.615

Table 10. Destination Image Factors

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
There are plenty of shopping facilities.	0.713					
Public transportation is organized.	0.682					
Cost/Value is affordable.	0.639					
The quality of service is perfect.	0.621					
Sport facilities are highly available.	0.614					
High availability of local festivals and fairs.	0.608					
Local tours are interesting.	0.593					
Museums are interesting and culturally rich.	0.573					
It has rich historical attractions.		0.816				
Natural attractions are beautiful		0.695				
Cultural attractions are diverse.		0.684				
Unpolluted environment is attractive.		0.478				
Quality of accommodation is at high level.			0.686			
Safety and security of the place is good.			0.640			
Cafes are at high level.			0.633			
Local cuisine is delicious.			0.452			
Casinos offer high quality services.				0.706		
Amusing night life and entertainment.				0.658		
Climate is mild and tolerable.					0.766	
Cleanness and hygiene standards are considered.						0.581
Destination can easily be reached.						0.623
People's behavior was friendly.						0.377

In Table.10 factor analysis of destination image components has been scrutinized. As it can be seen from Table.10, six factors have been extracted with Eigen values bigger than one. The adequacy sampling from KMO tests is 0.913. Total variance in this part was 62%.

6.3 Reliability

In order to check the reliability of the sample, Cronbach's Alpha test was run. Regarding destination brand equity and destination image components, this figure is around 0.922 and 0.911 respectively, which are completely acceptable as the rate more than 0.9 shows the excellence of internal consistency (reliability).

6.4 Regression Analysis

In order to find the relationship among variables this analysis is used normally in statistics. In this study this analysis was used to test the proposed hypotheses. In order to test the hypotheses, brand value, brand salience, brand quality and brand loyalty were taken as independent and destination image as dependent variable. As it can be seen in the Table.11 regarding regression analysis, Brand value (t=4,598) Brand loyalty (t=7,381) and Image (t=2,248) are significant. It can be mentioned that H1, H4 and H5 have been accepted. However, brand quality (t=0,937) and brand salience (0,271) are not significant as a result H2 and H3 are not supported. R Square: 0,472.

Table 11. Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig
Value	0,286	0,062	0,255	4,598	,000
Quality	0,058	0,061	0,045	0,937	,349
Loyalty	0,426	0,058	0,443	7,381	,000
Salience	0,017	0,064	0,015	0,271	,786
Value	0,241	0,065	0,215	3,701	,000
Quality	0,005	0,065	0,004	0,080	,937
Loyalty	0,401	0,059	0,417	6,845	,000
Salience	-0,019	0,065	-0,017	-0,297	,766
Image	0,252	0,112	0,144	2,248	,025

Regarding P value, it is observed in Table11 that brand value and brand loyalty are significantly related to destination image as $P < 0.05$. However, regarding brand quality and brand salience their P value are 0.349 and 0.786 respectively and are > 0.05 , as a result their relation with destination image are not supported.

Chapter 7

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this work was to test the effect of brand equity dimensions (Brand Salience, Brand Value, Brand Quality and Brand Loyalty) on destination image and tourist overall satisfaction in Northern Cyprus. In this thesis, the customer based brand equity model, based on Pike and Bianchi (2011) has been used as the scale. Another core point of this study was to examine the effect of distance decay on tourist behavior and preferences. Throughout this chapter, discussion of hypothesis, conclusion, useful implications for managers and practitioners and limitation of the study will be investigated.

7.1 Discussion

Based on the result of the study using SPSS 19, three of the proposed hypothesis which was (H1, H4 and H5) was supported. Hypothesis (H2 and H3) were rejected. The first hypothesis (H1) which says that “Brand value is positively related to destination image” was accepted. This result was totally consistent with Baloglu and Mcclary (1999), in which the effect of brand value on destination image has been proved.

Second hypothesis of this study (H2) which argues that “Brand quality is positively related to destination image” was rejected. Third Hypothesis which states that “Brand

Salience is positively related to destination image” was also refused based on the findings of the study.

The fourth hypothesis of the study was significantly supported based on the finding. The hypothesis argues that brand loyalty is positively related to destination image. As it was explained in chapter four, several researches have confirmed the positive relation between brand loyalty and destination image. (e.g., Kumar, Pozza & Ganesh, 2013; Severi & Choon Ling, 2013; Thakur & PSingh, 2012; Aurier & Gilles, 2009) are number of studies based on the positive relation between brand loyalty and destination image. As a result, this hypothesis confirmed the above-mentioned studies.

The fifth hypothesis of this study (H5), which argues that “Destination image is positively related to tourist overall satisfaction “, was significantly supported based on the findings of this research. This finding matches the studies done by Castro et al., (2007), Han (1990), Joppe, Martin, & Waalen (2001) which emphasize that the image of a destination is an essential factor in tourist satisfaction. Many other scholars like, Kozak (2003), Petrick (2004), Castro (2007) and Lee (2009) have reached to the same result.

7.2 Conclusion

This study had two main objectives. The first one was to investigate the effect of distance decay theory on destination brand equity, tourist behavior and the effect it has on their destination preferences. The second objective is to scrutinize the effect of various brand equity components (Brand Value, Brand Quality, Brand Loyalty and Brand Salience) on destination image and consequently, the effect of destination image

on tourist overall satisfaction. In order to find out the result, 400 questionnaires were distributed among multi cultural tourists.

Regarding the effect of distance decay theory, by forming cross table based on tourist preferences and their place of residence, two categories come up. According to results, most of European tourists prefer to take short-haul trips and select nearer places such as European countries or Turkey. Turkish passengers are also interested in closer destinations and tend to travel to short-haul destinations such as Turkey, North Cyprus or European countries which can be considered as short destinations for Turkish. These findings were totally consistent with previous studies done by McKercher and Lew (2008) and Pearce (1989). In the second category, Iranian tourists were taken in to consideration. In this case the results were quite interesting. Iranians tend to visit North America and European countries which considered as long-distance destinations for Iranians. It can be concluded that, political and geopolitical issues could have effect on the concept of distance and tourist selections. In a word, it is concluded that distance has effect on tourist choice of destination. Most of the tourist movements occur in short-haul destinations according to the result of this study. Only a small proportion takes place in long-haul destinations from source market.

Another aim of this work is to examine the effect of brand equity components on destination image and the effect of destination image on tourist satisfaction. Through hypothesis testing, it is proved that, brand value and brand loyalty is significantly related to destination image. In addition to brand equity, the significant relation between destination image and tourist overall satisfaction were proved.

To sum up, it is stated that this study was matched with its preceding works which justified the relation between brand equity components and destination image, as destination image and tourist satisfaction consequently. (e.g., Kumar, Pozza & Ganesh, 2013; Severi & Choon Ling, 2013; Thakur & PSingh, 2012; Aurier & Gilles, 2009)

7.3 Implications

Findings of this study recommend couple of implications and applicable suggestions for managers, practitioners and ministry of tourism and culture of Northern Cyprus. Regarding the concept of distance decay, it can be recommended to travel agencies and tourism marketers to consider more comprehensively the concept of distance in their tours packages and excursion, since traveling deals with time and cost. Running tours and excursions in closer proximities could attract more tourists. On the other hand, running tours in farther locations, with different cultural differences and distances could be more interesting. In order to do so, with regard to the concept distance decay, air transportation systems and airlines should find an economic way to decrease the ticket price, or more airlines with economy and cheap classes could be released to the market.

Secondly, as it was proved throughout the study, marketing managers of tourism sectors, such as ministry of tourism and culture and travel agencies should take in to consideration the concept of brand equity and its components as well more than the past. As brand equity can lead to competitive advantage in a destination, all the tourism managers in all hierarchical level should get more familiar with brand equity concept and put it more in practice.

Thirdly, destination managers should clarify all tourism sectors about the importance of brand equity. This can be carried out by giving theoretical and practical lectures. For instance, regarding the concept of brand quality, skillful and experienced civil engineers should be employed in order to improve the quality of destination infrastructure. Regarding brand salience, updated brochures and booklets should be prepared and advertised expansively through internet or other accredited sources, to make the customer more aware and familiar with the destination. Or regarding brand value, new innovation in the destination can increase the effect of brand value. As one of the purposes of using brand equity is to add a value to a destination and make it competitive among other destinations, managers should be more concerned about this concept in their schedule.

Fourthly, it should be mentioned that, managers and all the authorities in tourism sector, should realize the effect which destination image has on tourist satisfaction. Meaning, they should strengthen the destination overall image. For instance, more efforts should be undertaken in order to make the destination more proper, hygiene, clean and attractive. More sport facilities, public and affordable transportation, fascinating shopping facilities should be considered in touristic hot spots. All those measures can lead to more satisfaction among tourists.

Fifthly, regarding the effect of distance, if most of touristic destinations managers concentrate on short-distance source markets, they can gain more share of tourists especially if they focus more on neighbor countries.

Moreover, it is obvious that brand equity is a general concept which is divided in to sub-components. Using the result of this study, destination managers can examine the effect of brand equity on destination image more detailed and consider each component toward destination image.

7.4 Limitations and Future Studies

This study like any other research is not devoid of limitations and obstacles. First of all, it should be noted that, despite using multi cultural tourists in data collection procedure, due to the limited time constraint, the number of European tourists exceeded the Turkish and Iranian in Northern Cyprus, as in the month of May in which data collection was carried out, less tourists from Turkish, Iran or Middle east countries come to North Cyprus. So it is recommended that, in order to have more generalized data and more balance among nationality of tourists, more time should be spent on data collection and in the months in which the variety of tourists is more.

Secondly, as the instrument used for data collection was questionnaire, the answers of each respondent are merely fixed. In this case, it is suggested that in future research on this topic, besides using quantitative approach, couple of qualitative and descriptive questions regarding tourists' opinion could be taken in to consideration.

Thirdly, as the non-probability sampling method used in this study does not let the researcher check the probable errors and they will remain unknown, it is suggested in future studies one of probability sampling method will be examined.

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