

Influence of Brand Equity on Intentions to Visit Tourist Destinations: The Case of United Arab Emirates Outbound Travellers

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Understanding the factors influencing the tourist visiting destination is very important for policy-makers to ensure the tourism sector grows and attracts particular groups of tourists. This study empirically tests the influence of brand equity, for example perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association and brand loyalty to determine tourists' intentions to visit destinations. This study is conducted on the United Arab Emirates (UAE) outbound travellers because as rich tourists they are the target customers for many tourist countries. This study collected primary data in Sep-Nov 2019 based on a questionnaire survey among 286 usable respondents and utilised Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with PLS software. The findings display a vivid demographic profile of UAE tourists and their destination visit intention which is found to be statistically significant with all of the four tested dimensions of brand equity. The findings will help tourism agencies and the industry to develop tourism packages, especially when targeting UAE tourists. This study will also help policy-makers to improve the tourism sector by understanding the nature and interests of UAE tourists.

Key words: *Brand Equity, Tourist Destination, Brand Awareness, UAE Tourist, Brand Loyalty, Perceived Quality, Brand Association*

1. Introduction

Tourism is a significant sector of the economy for many countries and understanding the factors influencing the tourists' destination is very important for policy-makers so that vacation places, tourist packages and developing the overall tourism sector can be continually developed. Different governments and tourism service providers try to utilise the concept of developing brand in the context of tourism destination. Although brand equity consists of a diverse range of dimensions and paradigms, many studies found some common explicit or implicit features for the city or a country which as a tourist destination helps a certain brand. A destination becomes the brand naturally and is backed up by many other factors. For example, due to globalisation and fierce competition, new destinations are arising in the tourism marketplace (Alkawsaneh & Alfandi, 2013). It is vital to ensure brand equity for tourist destinations. Several studies applied the concept of brand equity since early the 2000s (e.g. Konecnik et al., 2007; Boo et al., 2009; Pike et al., 2010; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Manthiou, Kang, & Schrier, 2014; Shafaei & Mohamed, 2014; Kashif, Samsi, & Sarifuddin, 2015; Torres, Augusto & Lisboa, 2015; Alkawaldeh, Salleh, & Halim, 2016; Das & Mukherjee, 2016; Tassaven & Ardahanlioglu 2017; Chow et al., 2017; Yousaf & Amin, 2017; Vinh, Nga, & Nguyen, 2017; Kim & Lee, 2018; Roy, Mukherjee & Bhattacharya, 2018).

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is one of the world's major tourist destination country brands and it attracts mostly the rich cluster of world tourists. Through the proper implementation of a diverse strategic approach, hosting all kinds of events, conventions, expos, etc., such as business, culture and sports has assisted the country to build a strong brand image as a destination (Sutton, 2016). Undeniably, the country is now an attractive destination in the context of inbound tourism as well as local tourists. However, the increasing globalisation of nations' economies has changed the tourism industry internationally as people are now increasingly international and cosmopolitan in their outlook. Ultimately, tourism has become the underlying driver of socio-economic progress for many countries that rely on the tourist dollar (Pindzo & Radulovic, 2017). It makes sense that as Emiratis become interested in visiting other world-class places and events, this will elevate their degree of global exposure and travel to international destinations more frequently than ever before.

It could be one of the reasons why tourism globalisation has made possible the convergence of tourism productivity and outbound travel. In other words, globalisation of the tourism industry increases the incomes of UAE people and in turn encourages Emirati people to visit other places (Narayan, 2006; Song, Li & Cao, 2017). Thus far, the data appears to indicate that these observations are especially relevant to the UAE (Table 1). The UAE outbound travellers have steadily increased their international and regional travels and spending habits. The expenditure of the Emirati citizen for long regional tourism trips rose from 18.3 thousand

AED (5 thousand USD) to 38 thousand AED (10.4 thousand USD) for foreign travels in 2018 alone (Table 1).

Table 1: Recent data on UAE outbound travellers

Year	Total spending (AED billion)	Average spending (AED thousand)		Outbound trips (million)
		Regional trips	International trips	
2015	64	15.8	32	3.4
2016	59	16.1	29	3.2
2017	67	17.5	34	3.4
2018	71	18.3	38	3.5

Source: World Tourism Organisations, 2018

Moreover, among worldwide tourists, Emiratis are now the biggest spenders, much more than all the other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Other tourist destination countries are also highly interested in UAE tourists. However, only a few studies have been conducted on the opinions and perceptions of outbound travellers from the UAE such as Michael et al., (2011). They showed that UAE nationals mostly travel with family groups and it is the mother who makes the decision. Prayag & Hosany (2014) investigated young Emirati tourists and concluded that Paris is the most popular destination. The present study investigates the intention to visit a destination based on brand equity among UAE travellers. More specifically, the purpose is to ascertain the extent to which, if at all, the four dimensions that constitute brand equity exert significant influences on Destination Visit Intention (DVI) for UAE outbound travellers. This study will be highly beneficial for tourist agencies working in UAE and other countries to design better tourist packages for UAE customers. This study will also help policy-makers to refine and update the tourism sector based on the nature and interests of UAE tourists when they go to other countries.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Dimensions of Brand Equity

Brand equity indicates that customers have a high perception of a product's quality and they can identify the brand compared to its competitors (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). Keller (1991) defined brand equity as a differentiated effect of brand knowledge on customer responses represented in the preferences, perception and behaviour of consumers with reference to brand marketing activities. In financial terms, Axelrod (1993) considered brand equity as the increase in the money paid by a specific client to obtain a specific brand without choosing

similar substitutes. Park (2001) defined brand equity as the present value of all future benefits resulting from the presence of a brand compared to the absence of a brand.

For destination, branding has a key importance in developing marketing strategies for tourist destinations in order to generate strong positive emotional values arising from tourists' relationships with certain destinations (Kashif, Samsi & Sarifuddin, 2015). Pike and Bianchi (2016) supported the creation of destinations as strong brands and claimed there is a close relationship between consumer-based brand equity and tourist destination brands. This can be established through various accessible sources as well as participation of different stakeholders (Amin, Yousaf & Gupta, 2016). Konecnik (2005) investigated the concept of destination-based brand-equity to determine the concept of tourist's brand equity in Slovenia. He used four dimensions: brand perceived quality, image, awareness and loyalty and utilised the principals and concept of the product brand equity to tourist destinations. Hyunjung Im et al. (2012) focused on Malaysian tourists and their perceptions of brand equity for South Korea as a destination. Their study considers four dimensions, these being brand awareness, brand image, brand associations, and brand loyalty.

In fact, brand equity studies consist of two broad categories: firstly, the measurement of customer perceptions of brand; and secondly, the study of customer behaviour in tourist destination brands. For the first category, researchers recommend incorporating important elements such as brand image, brand awareness and brand associations when measuring the brand equity of a particular destination brand. For the second category, researchers recommend including customer attitudes toward a specific brand, such as loyalty (Baker & Cameron, 2008). The various dimensions explored by recent studies to measure brand equity for tourist destinations are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Visitor-based brand equity (VBBE) dimensions

Authors	Dimensions
Alkhalwaldeh, Salleh, and Halim (2016)	Party brand trust, Party brand image, Party brand awareness and Party brand quality
Kashif, Samsi, and Sarifuddin (2015)	Brand association, Awareness, Equity, Image and Loyalty
Das and Mukherjee (2016)	Awareness, Trustworthiness, Perceived quality, Performance, Loyalty, and Image, Value, Trust and Attachment
Tassaven and Ardahanlioglu (2017)	Cultural assets, Perceived quality, Brand association, Awareness and Loyalty
Yousaf and Amin (2017)	Tourism destination awareness, Tourism destination image, Tourism destination perceived quality, Tourism destination brand awareness and Tourism destination loyalty
Vinh Nga and	

Nguyen (2017)	Destination brand loyalty, Destination perceived quality and Destination brand Image
Kim and Lee (2018)	Brand perceived quality, Brand awareness and Brand image
Shafaei and Mohamed (2014)	Awareness, Quality, Image, Value, Loyalty
Kladou and Kehagias (2014)	Awareness, Association, Loyalty, Quality
Pike, Bianchi, Kerr and Patti (2010)	Brand Image, Loyalty, Perception of quality, Brand salience
Chow, Ling, Yen and Hwang (2017)	Brand association, Awareness, Perceived quality and loyalty
Manthiou, Kang, and Schrier (2014)	Brand awareness, Image, Quality, Perceived value and Loyalty
Roy, Mukherjee, and Bhattacharya (2018)	Brand association, Awareness, Perceived quality and loyalty
Torres, Augusto, and Lisboa (2015)	Brand awareness, Perceived quality and loyalty

Based on the majority of the literature, this study considers visitor-based brand equity (VBBE) to be a construct with four dimensions: perceived quality, brand awareness, association, and loyalty. These four dimensions accurately depict brand equity and explain the mutual influence exerted by each unit of analysis on the other.

2.2 Perceived Quality of a Brand

Perceived quality is one of the main and significant components in the model of brand equity measurement which may be an important reason for customers to buy the product or good or service (Aaker, 1991; Aaker, 1996). Moreover, perceived quality can influence which brands should be included or excluded from the list of choice. Shafi & Madhavaiah (2013) reported that perceived quality is a vital part of evaluating brand equity. Also, Shahrohki (1998): Yoo, Donthu & Lee (2000) mentioned that perceived quality is significantly related to brand equity. Aaker (1991) also stated that perceived quality enables the business to charge extra premium at the time of pricing the product. Lee, Kumar & Kim (2010) also confirmed that customers are more likely to buy the specific brand among a range of competing brands where despite its higher price, the brand has the best quality. Based on these statements the following hypothesis is empirically tested:

Hypothesis 1: Perceived quality exerts a significant influence on Destination Visit Intention

2.3 Brand Awareness

Aaker (1991) claimed that brand awareness is a mix of whether a specific brand is stored in the customer's memory and their ability to memorise a brand within a product category. Moreover, brand awareness measures the level to which customers are aware of the branding elements and it refers to the extent to which customers can recall. Brand awareness plays a key role in the choice of a tourist destination (Chon, 1992). For example, before visiting any tourist destination, awareness set could lead tourists to developing a consideration set that will assist and help them in selecting a destination brand. Once consumers receive more information about the brands, only a very few brands will end up forming a choice set (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993).

Brand awareness is the awareness shown by consumers and potential customers about products and services (Wang, Wei, & Yu, 2006). Through brand awareness consumers are able to recognise and differentiate products and services. Individual consumers can remember the logo of the specific brand having the intimacy and acquaintance which may lead to purchasing more products from that brand (Kim & Lee, 2018). In terms of visiting destination and brand awareness, visitors recall a certain destination out of several and identify the difference through a variety of functional attributes and activities (Roy, Battacharya, & Mukherjee, 2018). Increased brand familiarity due to a stronger association and repetitive positive acquaintance between consumers and brands may encourage revisiting intention (Tran et al., 2019). Consequently, brand awareness leads to a revisit intention for a certain destination. Based on this perspective this study considers the following hypothesis for empirical testing:

Hypothesis 2: Brand awareness exerts a significant influence on Destination Visit Intention

2.4 Brand Association

Brand association is adequate in creating value among the firms and their consumers (Aaker, 1991). It also helps consumers process or retrieve key information, make a reason to purchase, generate positive emotions or attitudes, offer a basis for extension, distinguish between brands, and learn to shape information in customers' minds (George, Low & Lamb, 2000; Martensen & Gronholdt, 2003). Conversely, brand associations measure the characteristics of a destination that enters the customer's mind once he/she explored the brand (Qu, Kim & Im, 2011), and can influence a consumer's intention to visit a place, produce references of the place to others, and create their willingness to pay more (Agarwal & Rao, 1996). Brand association refers to the link with other brands by a particular brand and how it operates (French & Smith, 2013). Brand association helps the consumer to recall remember what helps in purchasing decision-making processes (Tassaven & Ardahanlioglu,

2017). Simply, brand association eases consumers' buying decisions when they encounter a brand name.

Brand loyalty explains the consumers' devotion to purchasing certain products and goods/services from a brand again and again (Torres, Augusto & Lisboa, 2015). Perceived quality refers to consumers trust in the products and services based on perceived quality (Chow, Ling, Yen, & Hwang, 2017). It is more a psychological assessment about the products that might include intrinsic and extrinsic needs. Through perceived quality, consumers compare the products and services with competitor brands normally. It is simply the consumers' judgment about products and how they put one brand ahead of another (Chow, Ling, Yen, & Hwang, 2017; Kim & Lee, 2018). If a consumer has a positive perception about the destination over others, he/she might revisit the destination again (Vinh, Nga & Nguyen, 2017). Consequently, a brand's perceived quality might facilitate repeated purchasing intentions. Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is posited for empirical testing:

Hypothesis 3: Brand association exerts a significant influence on Destination Visit Intention.

2.5 Brand Loyalty

The various definitions of brand loyalty are usually described in the literature. Brand loyalty is considered as the strength of preference for a specific brand compared to similar alternative brands (Wong & Yahyah, 2008). As stated by Aaker (1991), brand loyalty elicits a significant value for a brand because it provides a set of typical purchases for a long period of time. In addition, having loyal customers is important in reducing the cost for appealing new customers (Rowley, 2005). Brand loyalty is considered a behaviour or attitude, where behavioural loyalty is based on the purchase of a particular brand over time, while the attitudinal perspective considers that a positive attitude towards a brand is associated with consistency of buying a brand that may guarantee new purchases (Amine, 1998; Schoell & Guiltinan, 1990). Day (1969) confirmed that consumers showed true brand loyalty when they frequently bought a specific brand and at the same time have a positive attitude towards it.

The branding literature has existed since the 1940s, but most research on branding of tourism destinations has only been published since the late 1990s. Some debate still exists on measuring the effectiveness of destination branding. For an example, Kashif, Samsi & Sarifuddin (2015) investigated the destination brand equity of Lahore Fort by employing the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model. Their results reveal that brand associations and brand image contribute positively to brand loyalty and this significantly contributes towards overall brand equity. Elsewhere, Tran et al., (2019) studied the relationships among the different components of brand equity and examined the effects of these components on overall destination brand equity for the location of Hoi An in Vietnam. Their results indicated that brand awareness has significant positive effects on perceived quality and brand image;



brand image exerts positive influences on brand loyalty and perceived quality, while perceived quality has significant positive impacts on destination brand loyalty.

Moreover, Das & Mukherjee (2016) developed a scale for measuring CBBE for medical tourism destinations as a consolidation of four dimensions whereas the first three elements, i.e., brand loyalty, awareness and perceived quality, are the same as previous CBBE studies. However, the study put forth five new attributes as contributing factors, based on predictive validity: reliability; soft issues such as friendliness and ease of process; value for money; quality of residents; and trust. While working on Kashmir Valley in India, Yousaf & Amin (2017) measured the customer-based brand equity of tourist destination (CBBETD), and their findings revealed that Kashmir is very popular among travellers and its image exerts a strongly positive influence on the destination equity.

Kim & Lee (2017) studied the impact of branding among the inbound overseas tourists to South Korea and showed that price and word-of-mouth can benefit perceived quality, publicity, and brand awareness; and advertisements are also good for brand image. They also found that perceived quality and brand awareness do impacts on brand image, which is linked with brand loyalty. Choi (2008) worked on Japanese tourists visiting South Korea and found that brand loyalty is affected by brand image and brand awareness. The study by Chi, Huang & Nguyen (2020) on foreign tourists visiting in Vietnam found that brand equity has significant positive influence on travel intentions and destination familiarity wields positive moderating effects on destination awareness and perceived quality of travel intentions.

Pike (2010) tested the effectiveness of a model of CBBE and showed Australia is not a convincing destination brand for tourists from Chile. Roy, Battacharya & Mukherjee (2018) worked on a consolidated and unified CBBE scale for medical tourism in India based on six dimensions and proposed a new dimension of the CBBE scale for medical tourism.

Mechinda et al., (2010) investigated the impact of competitiveness factors and destination equity on tourists' loyalty to Koh Chang islands of Thailand and indicated that attitudinal loyalty was driven by destination awareness and image. The most important competitiveness factor was targeting the type of customer. For instance, quality of service, natural resources and location are important for domestic tourists, while natural resources are the most critical for international tourists. Camarero, Garrido & Vicente (2010) explored determinants of brand equity for cultural activities with reference to internal and external visitors and found that brand value is most important for internal visitors but brand image is the most important matter to the external visitor. Based on these arguments, empirically test will be done on the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Brand loyalty exerts a significant influence on Destination Visit Intention

These four dimensions of brand equity represent a more complex reality. As such, the Visitor-Based Brand Equity (VBBE) model is employed to understand Emirati travellers' intentions to visit certain places (Figure 1).

3. Methodology

This study considers VBBE to be a multi-dimensional construct. To define brand equity, four dimensions that frequently appear in the literature are as follows: perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association, and brand loyalty. This is an open system in which variables and sub-variables show both linear and mutual reinforcing feedback loops.

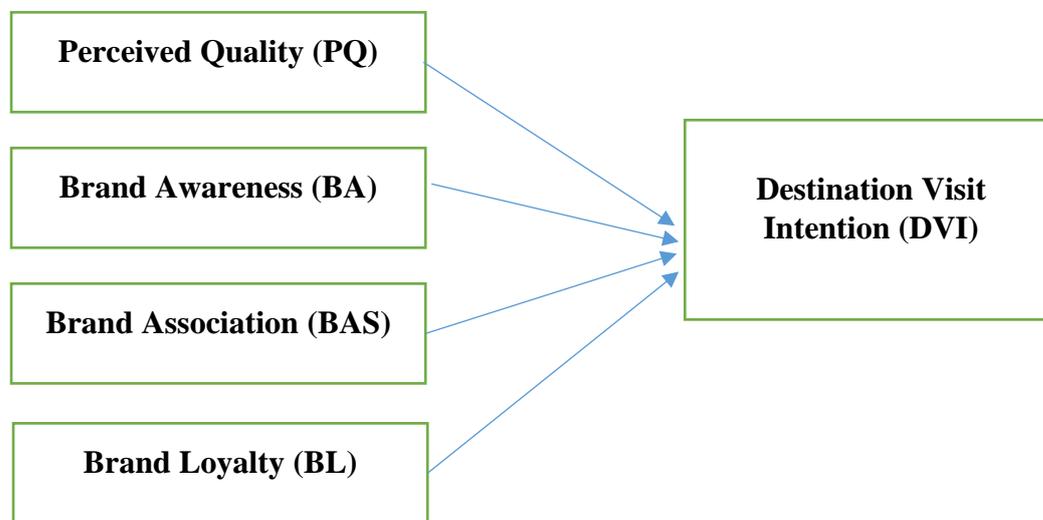


Figure 1: Visitor-based brand equity (VBBE) to determine destination visit intention

To test the effects of VBBE including sub-dimensions of brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, and perceived quality on destination visit intention, a survey questionnaire was developed. Since travelling characteristics of Emiratis differ from other Middle East travellers, the questionnaire was designed to suit the attributes of Emirati society. Before the final distribution of the questionnaire, it was sent to academic experts (university academics) for their feedback and recommendations. Survey participants were asked to complete twenty six questions based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Five questions measured perceived quality, brand association, brand loyalty, and destination visiting intention; while brand awareness was measured through six dimensions.

This study collected primary data in Sep-Nov 2019, based on a self-administered online questionnaire by UAE citizens aged over 18 years age, via social media and emails. A total of 335 sample questionnaires were received, with 49 samples excluded because they were incomplete, leaving 286 usable questionnaires. The data were analysed based on Structural

Equation Modelling (SEM) with PLS software. Applying the PLS algorithm, data and model validity were confirmed.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Demographic Profiles of the Respondents

Demographic data of the respondents show that most of them are in the older age group (Table 3), and 55.4% were male and 44.6% female. Most respondents prefer to visit places in the GCC region for a period lasting 16-20 days. For accommodation the majority like apartments and they like to go once a year for a holiday, especially for outdoor recreations such as hunting, fishing, boating and camping.

Table 3: Respondents' demographic characteristics

Variables	Description	Percentage
Age	20 years and below	0.8%
	21-31 years	12.5%
	32-42 years	21.6%
	43-53 years	22.7%
	54 years and above	32.4%
Gender	Male	55.4%
	Female	44.6%
Tourist destinations	Asian markets	11.6%
	European markets	25.8%
	American markets	25.4%
	Arab markets	37.2%
Travel duration	5 days & less	6.6%
	6-10 days	15.2%
	11-15 days	19%
	16-20 days	25%
	17-25 days	24.2%
	26 days & more	10%
Accommodation types	Hotels	17.8%
	Resorts	15.5%
	Apartments	29.2%
	Homes/villas	10.7%
	Bed & Breakfast	3.2%
	Hostels	2.9%
	Boutique hotels	3.4%
	Aparthotels	17.3%
Number of holidays yearly	1 trip	32.4%
	2 trips	29.4%
	3 trips	19.3%

	4 trips	18.9%
Visiting purpose	Visiting friends & relatives	17.5%
	Conventions, seminars & meetings	12.3%
	Outdoor recreations, hunting, fishing, boating and camping	31.3%
	Entertainments, sightseeing, theatre, sports.	16.3%
	Personal, family, medical, funeral, weddings.	18.4%
	Others	4.2%

4.2 Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

In SEM the value of R^2 for DVI is 0.636 (Table 4). A 63.6% variance explained by the endogenous variables on exogenous variable DVI made a clear prediction of a good model (Chin, 1998). The Q^2 value for GPI of 0.437 was much higher than zero, meaning that the model shows a sufficient level of fit and substantial predictive relevance (Chin, 2010).

Table 4: Path direct effects of brand equity on destination visit intention

No.	Path	Coefficient	t-value	p-value	R^2	Q^2	F^2
H1	PQ → DVI	0.264*	4.210	0.000	0.636	0.437	0.382
H2	BA → DVI	0.290*	4.618	0.000			0.567
H3	BAS → DVI	0.142*	2.662	0.008			0.383
H4	BL → DVI	0.228*	4.272	0.000			0.132

* denotes significance at the 1% level

The SEM results showed that all four dimensions of brand equity - perceived quality, brand awareness, brand loyalty, and brand association – have statistically significant relationships with destination visit intention. This direct influence of brand equity with four dimensions (H1) perceived quality ($P < 0.001$), (H2) brand awareness ($P < 0.001$), (H3) brand association ($P < 0.05$), and (H4) brand loyalty ($P < 0.001$) on destination visit intention confirm that all above hypotheses are supported by the findings.

4.3 Model Diagnostic Test

4.3.1 Convergent Validity

This measurement of the 5 first-order constructs (PQ, BA, BAS, BL, DVI) used a total of 26 items. Convergent validity was tested by the factor loadings for individual items, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). The factor has a strong influence on the particular variable as the loadings are high. Most of the items loaded above 0.70 apart from only one item of brand awareness (0.0651). More specifically, the standardised factor loadings ranged from 0.651 to 0.912 (Table 5).

Table 5: Constructs' validity and reliability

Variables	Items	Loadings	Composite reliability	AVE (Average Variance Extracted)
Perceived Quality (PQ)	PQ-1 The quality of services provided at this tourist destination are the best	0.889	0.947	0.78
	PQ-2 When I want to travel, I remember the quality of the tourist destination I visited	0.878		
	PQ-3 Competing tourist destinations do not provide services at the quality level of this destination	0.861		
	PQ-4 The money I paid to visit this destination equals the quality of the services provided to me	0.876		
	PQ-5 The expected quality of this tourist destination is equal to the actual quality	0.912		
Brand Awareness (BA)	BA-1 I know the brand of the tourist destination that I will visit	0.815	0.91	0.629
	BA-2 I can quickly identify the destination brand compared to competing destinations	0.829		
	BA-3 When I think about travel, this destination always comes to mind	0.83		
	BA-4 If you think about travelling, this tourist destination is my first choice	0.803		
	BA-5 The destination brand is well known	0.815		
	BA-6 The brand of this destination is well-known to many tourists	0.651		
Brand Association (BAS)	BAS-1 Destination brand has traits that differentiate it from competitors	0.809	0.918	0.692
	BAS-2 When the tourist destination brand comes to my	0.842		

	mind, I quickly remember its characteristics and features			
	BAS-3 I can distinguish the tourist destination brand through the shapes, colours, and symbols associated with <u>the mark</u>	0.855		
	BAS-4 I visit this tourist destination because it has been visited by a celebrity	0.831		
	BAS-5 If there is a brand for another tourist destination with the same characteristics, I would prefer to visit the same tourist destination that I visited	0.823		
Brand Loyalty (BL)	BL-1 I am obliged to repeat this destination again	0.833		
	BL-2 I would advise others to visit this tourist destination	0.847		
	BL-3 I will not visit another tourist destination if it is not available	0.865	0.905	0.657
	BL-4 I will visit this tourist destination even if it is more expensive than the competitors	0.781		
	BL-5 This tourist destination is more than just a brand to me	0.719		
Destination Visiting Intention (DVI)	DVI-1 I am satisfied with my experience visiting this tourist destination	0.815		
	DVI-2 I would advise others to visit this tourist destination	0.839		
	DVI-3 If I think about travelling again, I will visit the same tourist destination	0.853	0.922	0.702
	VDI-4 Many friends talk about their experiences visiting this tourist destination	0.875		
	DVI-5 Competitive offers will not change my perspective on this tourist destination	0.805		

In addition, the values of AVE for all constructs were between 0.629 and 0.780. AVE is more than the cut-off value of 0.50. The values of composite reliability for all constructs were

between 0.905 and 0.947; with these obtained values all being above the suggested value of 0.7 for all constructs (Hair et al., 2016). Thus, all the variables meet the criterion of convergent validity.

4.3.2 Discriminant Validity

The current study applied HTMT (Heterotrait and Monotrait) in order to confirm the discriminant validity for the model as described in Henseler (2015). Table 6 shows that all HTMT ratios for the constructs ranged between 0.622 and 0.803, which is lower than the 0.90. Consequently, every latent construct measurement was entirely discriminant against each other (Henseler et al., 2015).

	BA	BAS	BL	DVI	PQ
BA					
BAS	0.753				
BL	0.672	0.622			
DVI	0.803	0.726	0.711		
PQ	0.853	0.788	0.642	0.789	

5. Findings and Discussion

This study contributes to the literature by generating new insights into UAE outbound travellers and their perceptions of a destination's brand equity. Descriptive statistics showed that the most popular tourist destinations for Emiratis travellers are other Arab countries (37.2%). Interestingly, Europe and the United States were basically at the same level in terms of hosting UAE tourists at 25.8% and 25.4%, respectively. Contrary to the facts, Asian destinations were not popular tourist destinations compared to Arabian, European and the Americas for UAE people. Almost half of Emirati tourists stayed between 16 and 25 nights, which could suggest an inclination towards non-business travel. Referring to accommodation types, travellers like to stay in apartments (29.2%) followed by hotels (17.8%) and resorts (15.5%). Most travellers travel for outdoor recreation pursuits such as hunting, fishing, etc. The second purpose of travelling to other countries for personal reasons includes family, medical reasons and weddings.

The preponderance of responses to the “number of travels per year” being 1 or 2 times suggests that non-business travelling is popular. Travelling to other destinations frequently was a sign that such visits were linked to business. Among the more interesting and unique characteristics of the UAE, the outbound traveller tends to stay in apartments when in foreign destinations. This suggests not only a rather high-income level but also the possibility of a small and growing trend for people to live in two or more countries at once. Further, the younger generations travel to other parts of the world less often. Older people are dominating

their decision-making and travelling for recreational and other activities. These findings are new valuable additions to the literature and extend the work of Michael et al., (2011) and Prayag & Hosany (2014).

The empirical findings again confirm the theory of brand equity and its dimensions such as perceived quality, brand awareness, brand loyalty, and brand association, has a statistically significant relationship with destination visit intention. This is in line with many other studies (Boo et al., 2009; Konecnik et al., 2007; Pike et al., 2010; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Manthiou, Kang, & Schrier, 2014; Shafaei & Mohamed, 2014; Kashif, Samsi, & Sarifuddin, 2015; Torres, Augusto & Lisboa, 2015; Alkhalaf, Salleh, & Halim, 2016; Das & Mukherjee, 2016; Tassaven & Ardahanlioglu 2017; Chow et al., 2017; Yousaf & Amin, 2017; Vinh, Nga, & Nguyen, 2017; Kim & Lee, 2018; Roy, Mukherjee & Bhattacharya, 2018).

The findings of this study have specific and unique practical implications. The descriptive results do not show a notable difference between regional and international travel trips. It may be argued that UAE travellers and others from elsewhere in the Arab world - and this can apply to non-Arab or Western travellers - tend to maintain a cognitive construct or dichotomy between regional and international, or between Arab or Muslim and non-Arab or non-Muslim destinations. It is not rigid in the context of travel. In other words, these results suggest that the UAE outbound travellers engage in similar decision-making processes for both regional and international travel. Such an effort, which can build on theory, has research merits and helps answer unresolved questions about tourists' perceptions. Finally, such an effort begins by recognising that the Emirati tourist retains unique local and national characteristics while also being part of larger processes, specifically those of regionalisation and globalisation.

6. Conclusion

This study describes a vivid demographic picture of UAE's outbound travellers and their destination choices. UAE people are mostly like to visit other Arab countries, followed by Europe and the Americas. Unfortunately, Emirati outbound travellers are less interested in visiting Asian countries. Since the destination visit intentions of UAE travellers are significantly related with the dimensions of brand equity, Asian countries may attract more UAE travellers when they provide better facilities that reflect perceived quality, brand awareness, brand loyalty, and brand association. More research should be done on this issue to obtain a more generalised picture. Future research may be undertaken to explain in detail the choices and expected facilities of UAE travellers, based on their purpose of visit and demographic characteristics. Finally, studies in the future should look at other nationalities' citizens to create a generalised picture about the dimensions of brand equity in the tourism industry.



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