

## **Abstract**

Even though general branding literature went through several facets, destination branding literature evolved bit later with the assistance of general branding literature. Individual good focus, value focus, relationship focus and stakeholder focus were the four facets that the branding went thorough and the stakeholder focus is considered as the new wave of branding literature. Since destination branding literature evolved later there is a lack of theoretical and empirical support for stakeholder focus in destination context. Also place branding, to be more specific, destination branding is different from the traditional product and service branding because of their unique characteristics such as co-production of the brand, co-creation of the brand, variability of the place product, legal definition of boundaries, administrative overlap and political accountability. Therefore stakeholder focus which is conceptualizing brand as a stakeholder co-created value is more rational in the destination branding. Thus study attempts to incorporate stakeholder perspective in destination branding context.

Destination branding literature focus on three literature streams called destination brand identity development, destination brand positioning and destination brand performance measurement and tracking. Even though all the three streams are in its infancy, study focused on destination brand performance measurement since Sri Lanka after 30 years of war, invested heavily in building Sri Lankan brand in global tourism industry and thus in need of sound brand performance measurements. As suggested by previous studies, therefore, study attempts to incorporate stakeholder perspective in destination brand performance measurements. CBBE model used as the conceptual model for brand performance measurements where major two components of the model destination image and destination loyalty. Since image building is shifted to identity based branding with the introduction of stakeholder perspective, destination image is considered as identity based destination image. Brand community association was added to represent the stakeholder perspective with functional associations, symbolic associations and experiential associations which constitute the identity based destination image as dimensions. Study intends to develop new scale for identity based destination image and attempt to measure the impact of identity based destination image on destination loyalty.

Methodology for scale development was adapted for the study. Basically, the research design was descriptive and the study was cross-sectional as well as it was conducted in a non-contrived setting. The unit of analysis was individual foreign consumer and the sample was drawn using convenience sampling technique. Data were collected from 203 foreign tourist individuals by both online and personal methods for scale validation. Identity based destination brand image scale was developed with the aid of prior theory and then measure the impact identity based destination image has on destination brand loyalty using 280 responses. Data collection instrument was a self-administered questionnaire. Further, the chapter discussed the validation of measurement properties and finally the procedure adapted for data analysis has been discussed.

Then study conducted an exploratory factor analysis using principal component analysis with promax rotation. After that, refined scale of identity based destination image was forwarded to confirmatory factor analysis. Then normality, linearity, multicollentary and homoscedasticity of the final data set were tested in order to make sure that data are appropriate for multivariate analysis. Then, scales were purified by evaluating first order measurement models and second order measurement model and all the items were selected for the final measurement model. GOF indices of the measurement model indicated a reasonable satisfactory model under absolute, parsimony and incremental measures. Thereafter, the structural model was developed to test hypotheses on direct effects. It was found that DI as well as IBDI has a significant positive impact on BL. Also the added dimension, brand community associations has increased the explanatory power of the model.

Study was undertaken to measure the impact of identity based destination image on destination loyalty; with special reference to Sri Lanka as a destination brand. Empirical evidence confirmed the theoretical addition of brand community associations and thus identity based destination image can be used as a strong predictor of destination evaluations. Managerially maintaining proper Sri Lankan brand communities is suggested for Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion bureau in order to maintain a sound image in the leisure travelers' minds about Sri Lanka. Further, other stakeholder associations can be tested in destination brand evaluations settings as future research.