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## Assessing the Components of Destination Brand from the Perspective of Domestic Tourists by CFA Method: A Study in Vietnam

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### **Abstract:**

*The tourist image is a complex of ideas about a certain country as a tourist destination, formed and fixed in the minds of the foreign public (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002). Therefore, when it comes to destination brands, people often think of a country's brand, and destination branding is often aimed at foreign tourists. However, the outbreak of Covid-19 since the end of 2019 has changed the world tourism situation. Many countries are not yet able to open their doors to international tourists, but are working to improve tourism from domestic tourists. Therefore, this paper develops a destination brand for domestic tourists with components evaluated by the CFA method carefully with 300 observed samples collected. This study provides a measure of destination brand for domestic tourists and find out the importance of each destination brand component through the multivariable regression equation in order to better develop the tourism industry in the new situation.*

**Keywords:** Destination brand, domestic tourist, destination brand personality

### **1. Introduction**

Many countries in the world, tourism has become one of the spearhead economic. Some parts of the world have a very high contribution of tourism GDP to the economy such as Macau with 50.2%, Maldives with 32.5%, and Aruba with 32% (Slock, 2020). Tourism not only brings great income to the economy, creates jobs, develops service industries and infrastructure, but also promotes peace and cultural exchange (Tuan, 2009). Recognizing the importance of tourism, many countries around the world find all forms to promote their images to tourists. Consumers are often offered a wide choice of destinations that offer similar characteristics such as quality accommodation, scenic beauty or safety, etc, so in the aggregate of tourists' suggestions about The destination needs to be unique and different for the selection to be final (Qu et al., 2010). In the face of bad signals from the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on the number of international visitors to Vietnam, there are some signs that when the domestic epidemic is better controlled The number of domestic tourists is the lifeline for Vietnam's tourism industry.

According to data from Google Destination Insights (data collected by week), the demand for information about domestic tourism has increased sharply again in the first half of 2021. Especially after Vietnam has well-controlled the COVID-19 epidemic, tourism service activities are reopening in a new normal state in most provinces and cities nationwide. In the period from mid-February 2021 onwards, the demand for searching information about tourism of domestic tourists increased sharply compared to the beginning of the year, sometimes even higher than the same period last year. In particular, at the end of February, there was a time when the demand for searching information about tourism increased by 30% compared to the same period in 2020. This reflects the fact that people's travel demand is still very high and is being pent-up by the impact of the epidemic, ready to travel again when the epidemic is under control. Along with that, the demand for information about accommodation facilities tends to increase again from mid-February 2021, sometimes higher than in the same period in 2020, especially during the New Year and the last time. February after the epidemic was brought under control. These are positive signals reflecting the recovery of domestic tourism demand, which is likely to continue to increase sharply soon when the epidemic is well-controlled.

From the positive signals of Vietnam's tourism industry from domestic tourists, it shows that the source of domestic tourists also needs to be concerned and understand their tourism needs to promote Vietnam tourism development much more through the increasing number of domestic tourists. Thus, the destination brand is not only to create a competitive position of Vietnam in the international market but also needs to invest in building a position in the

hearts of domestic tourists to have a balanced development for the tourism industry, especially in the current COVID-19 epidemic situation. Thereby, Vietnam's destination brand can gradually become familiar and win the hearts of domestic tourists.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Destination Brand

For effective business operations, service providers as well as service businesses must have a reputation, that is, a strong brand name to attract many potential customers and retain traditional customers (Dung, 2017). In reality, countries, tour groups and hotels in the tourism business in the world, with famous brands have dominated most of the tourist market in the region and in the world. For example, travel agencies with strong brands such as: Tomac Cook, Pikfords Travel, etc, (UK); TUI, NUR, etc, (Germany); Club Mediterranee, Trastour, etc, (France); American Express Company (USA), Japan Travel Bureau (Japan), etc (according to Overview of Service Trade Liberalization Issues, 2005), have acquired from 50-75% of international travel programs in each country as well as in the region. For example: TUI travel agency in Germany conducts 2.5 million international travel programs per year, or Club Mediterranee (France) travel agency annually attracts 2.3-2.5 million tourists (Vietnam Statistical Publishing House).

The nature of tourism branding is the intentional transmission a particular identity become an image in the tourist's mind. The brand is the main link between tourists and domestic businesses and other tourism organizations (Tuan, 2009).

In destination marketing, in order to affirm the competitive position of a country in the world, a very important task to establish the tourism image of the country to international tourists is the construction and promotion of tourism promote the brand. There are many ways to approach the destination branding model. According to Gilmore (2002), destination branding can be considered synonymous with positioning. And Curtis (2001) & (Cai, 2002) say that destination branding is about building an image. The basis for destinations to exist in the global competitive market is to create a destination image that is different from other destinations, when destinations compete fiercely with each other (Qu et al., 2010). To simplify the information chain to tourists, building a strong, unique image to position the destination, distinguishing it from other destinations is an effective way and makes the destination image easy to travel penetrate consumers' minds more quickly (Botha et al., 1999, Buhalis, 2000, Calantone et al., 1989, Chon et al., 1991, Mykletun et al., 2001, Fan, 2006). Morgan et al., (2004) argue that the key to building a destination brand is to develop an emotional connection with tourists (Morgan & Pritchard, 2004), which agrees with the views of Morrison and Anderson (2002), who argues that branding is 'the process used to develop a unique identity and personality that sets it apart from all other competing destinations' (Morrison & Anderson, 2002).

### 2.2. Destination Brand Personality

In the context of branding, the term personality is used in a variety of ways such as user attributes, price, benefits or image; in the context of human curvature such as physical and behavioral characteristics (Pereira et al., 2012). Brand personality is personified as human characteristics and personality such as color, lightness, youth... (J. L. Aaker & Fournier, 1995, Plummer, 1985). Aaker (1997) gave 5 dimension of Destination brand personality: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and certainty. These aspects are derived from the 15 personality dimensions of the brand and can be further deciphered into 42 personality traits (Fig.1). The personality aspects of sincerity, concern, and competence represent an innate part of the human personality, subtlety and inevitably related to those aspects that an individual desires (J. L. Aaker, 1997).

Sincerity	Excitement	Competence	Sophistication	Ruggedness
Down to earth	Daring	Reliable	Upper class	Outdoorsy
Honest	Spirited	Intelligent	Charming	Tough
Wholesome	Imaginative	Successful		
Cherrful	Up-to-date			
Family-oriented	Trendy	Hard-working	Glamorous	Masculine
Small-town	Exciting	Secure	Good-looking	Western
Sincere	Cool	Technical	Feminine	Rugged
Real	Young	Corporate	Smooth	
Original	Unique	Leader		
Sentimental	Independent	Confident		
Friendly	Contemporary			

Table 1: Brand Personality Dimensions and Traits of Aaker 1997

Source: Aaker, 1997 Quoted Rosaria Et Al, 2012

In explaining the relationships between brands and people in later studies, the definition of brand personality has worked well. People tend to choose and trust brands with different personality traits in order to highlight some of the consumer's own personality traits (J. L. Aaker, 1999). When studying brand personality in Spain and Japan, Aaker et al., (2001) emphasized that brands are consistently organized in five dimensions like human personality. More recent studies by Aaker et al., (2004) on the relationship between brands and people show that brand personality is built and formed,

maintaining the relationship between brand and owner. It can directly affect the brand personality. As implied by the brand personality definition, relationships with brands are more sincere over time, while consumer relationships with interesting brands grow shorter over time (J. L. Aaker et al., 2004). Consumers rely on this relationship to establish a response to certain products (Solomon, 1983). As a result, consumers may express a desire to build deep relationships with brands that express the personality they are most comfortable with (D. A. Aaker, 1996, Phau & Lau, 2001).

Most of the previous research literature on brand personality is based on Aaker's scale, and the word 'personality' represents the unique characteristics of the brand described by human personality traits, so which detracts from the uniqueness of the brand image (since personality is only one aspect). Despite the increasing literature on destination branding, there is not much empirical evidence that visitors can associate brand personality traits with their destination of choice, and it is difficult for them to themselves can distinguish destinations based on perceived brand identity and personality (Pereira et al., 2012). Because as stated above, a destination is a set of tangible and intangible features that are associated with destination, historical, and event values. The lack of research related to the measurement of destination brands may reveal the intrication linked in understanding how tourists perceive destination brands (Pereira et al., 2012).

In fact, Aaker's brand personality scale (1997) has been used for surveying, however some components of the scale were found to be inconsistent suitable for all destinations. For example, Henderson (2000) identified a different set of characteristics (international, youthful, vibrant, modern Asian, reliability and comfort) as he integrated the branding process Asia-Singapore. Douglas & Mills (2006) find only a few characteristics that match two aspects of Aaker: excitement and ruggedness when evaluating destinations in the Middle East and North Africa. Back & Lee (2003) find four dimensions (sincerity, competence, excitement and sophistication). In the study of Hosany & Ekinci (2003), it was not possible to reproduce the five dimensions because they found only three valid characteristics (competence, extroversion, and interest) and they did not provide evidence that proves tourists can distinguish destinations based on the destination's personality. From previous studies, there is little empirical evidence from the literature regarding destination branding that can be applied at the national level to cover tourist destinations in the region.

### 2.3. Tourist Behavior

Researchers believe that the overall image of the destination has a significant influence on the destination selection process and tourist behavior (Ashworth & Goodall, 1988, Cooper et al., 1993, Mansfeld, 1992, Bigné et al., 2001). Return intention and positive word-of-mouth are among the many important behavioral consequences of studies on destination image and post-consumption behavior (Qu et al., 2010). Return intention has been studied extensively in travel research as a signal of customer loyalty. The concept of customer retention has become popular in the marketing field because attracting new customers is more difficult and costly than retaining existing customers (Rosenberg & Czepiel, 1984). Previous studies have suggested that the elicitation of tourists' intention to return to a particular destination is highly dependent on the overall image of that destination (Bigné et al., 2001, Rosenberg & Czepiel, 1984, Alcaniz et al., 2005).

According to Harrison-Walker (2001, p. 63), word of mouth (WOM) is 'informal, direct communication between a non-commercial communicator and a recipient about a brand, product, organization, or service'. Due to the intangible nature of the product/service, the consumer's purchasing decision often carries a higher level of risk than the purchase of the manufactured product (Murray, 1991). Accordingly, it is considered to be an important source of information influencing customers' destination choice (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000, Oppermann, 2000, Weaver & Lawton, 2002, Yvette & Turner, 2002). Bigné et al. (2001) suggest that tourists with a good image of a destination are more likely to recommend scores. Therefore, the researchers expect that tourists who perceive a positive overall image, as well as an overall impression of perceptual, emotional and unique images, will be more likely to return to the destination come and recommend to others. It's mean, the overall image will mediate the relationship between the brand image of the destination and the behavior of tourists in choosing the destination (Qu et al., 2010). Combining the above theoretical overview, inherited from the authors' own previous article (Thu Ha et al., 2021), the authors proposes a destination brand (DB) model as perceived by domestic Vietnamese tourists as Sincerity (SI), Sophistication (SO), Excitement (EX), Competence (CO), Brand Awareness (BA), Destination Attributes (DA) and Brand Loyalty (BL) (Fig.2).

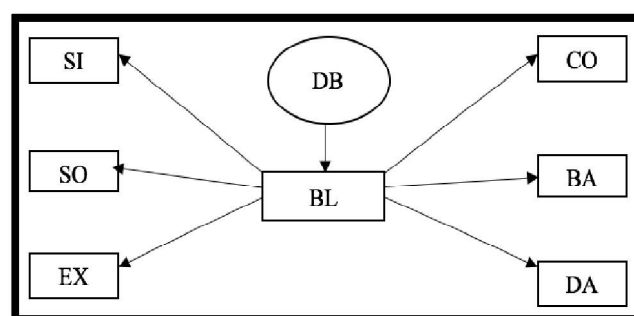


Figure 1: Destination Brand Model through Domestic Tourists' Perspective  
Source: by Authors

### 3. Research Method

*Confirmatory Factor Analysis\_CFA method:* this is a type of linear structural model that focuses on measurement models, specifically the relationship between observed variables or indicators and latent variables (factors). The CFA method allows to evaluate the model fit, convergent validity and discriminant validity of the theoretical structure. CFA gives more accurate assessment results than EFA method (Exploratory Factor Analysis). SPSS 22 software and AMOS 24 used in this research.

*Multivariable regression equation:* Linear regression analysis will help us know the magnitude of the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable. To conduct multiple linear regression analysis, the variables are included in the model by the Enter method. The test standard is a standard built into the method of testing the F-statistical value and determining the corresponding probability of the F-statistic, testing the concordance between the sample and the population through the coefficient of determination Adjusted  $R^2$ . The diagnostic tool that helps detect the existence of collinearity in the data is assessed for the degree of collinearity to degrade the estimation parameter, which is the variance inflation factor (VIF). When VIF exceeds 10, it is a sign of multicollinearity (Trong & Ngoc, 2005).

*Research sample:* The survey with 5-level Likert scale is used in this research. Self-answered questionnaire by domestic tourists was used to collect necessary information for the study, the convenience sampling method was used in this study. Determining the sample size is a rather complicated job because there are so many different opinions. If ML (Maximum Likelihood) estimation method is used, the minimum sample size should be from 100 to 150 samples (Hair et al., 1998), or at least 200 samples (Hoelter, 1983). In this study, the authors used a study of 10 samples for one variable. So the total sample of the study is 290 samples, however, the number of collected votes has 300 satisfactory votes to be included in the analysis.

### 4. Research Results

#### 4.1. Confirmatory Factor Annalysis\_CFA Results

Before conducting CFA test, Cronbach's alpha and EFA method tests (EFA method is conducted with Principal Axis Factoring data extraction method, Promax rotation and Factor loading  $\geq 0.5$  for all sample sizes) are performed for 29 variables. These variables satisfy the condition that Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the factors are  $> 0.6$ , KMO = 0.760  $> 0.5$ , Barlett's test is 279,098, sig. = 0.000  $< 0.05$ , and Total variance explained = 51.911% (Appendix 1). However, in the Pattern Matrix, BL3, BL4, CO1 all have Factor loading less than 0.5, so they will be excluded from the model (Appendix 2). Sau khi loại bỏ 3 biến trên, chạy lại EFA ta thu được bảng Pattern Matraix mới, tuy nhiên xuất hiện biến CO3 có Factor loading  $< 0.5$ , tiếp tục loại bỏ CO3. The Pattern Matrix table is obtained from the EFA method including 7 components and 25 component indexes (after removing 4 variables: BL3, BL4, CO1, CO3) is used to conduct the CFA test (Appendix 3). CFA analysis show that the Model fit indexes are quite suitable: Chi-square/df (cmin/df)=1.977 $\leq 3$  is good, CFI=0.903 $\geq 0.9$  is good, RMSEA=0.057 $< 0.06$  is good, PCLOSE=0.055 $> 0.05$  is good (Bentler & Hu, 1999). Particularly, the GFI index of the given model is 0.879 $< 0.9$  according to the standards of Hu & Bentler (1999) which is the model that has not reached the appropriate level, but according to Baumgartner & Homburg (1996), and Doll et al., (1994), GFI = 0.8 is still accepted because of the limited sample size in some studies, so the GFI value is difficult to reach 0.9. However, in Model validity measures, the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) values of the components DA, SI, EX, BA are all less than 0.5 and AMOS software continues to suggest to remove the variables DA2, SI3, BA3 and EX1. At this point, running the CFA again, we get the Model fit results (Fig.3) and the Convergent validity, Discriminant validity and Reliability tests are all suitable (Table 1). The CFA method has stricter fitting conditions of the model than the EFA method, so when running CFA analysis, the number of observed variables removed from the model is relatively large. After completing the CFA analysis, the number of components in the model remained 7 components, the number of observed variables decreased from 29 variables to 21 variables (Fig.3). The results of Fig.3 show that: Model fit index is relatively suitable: Chi-square/df = 1.844 $\leq 3$ , CFI=0.936, TLI= 0.921, RMSEA=0.053, PCLOSE=0.280 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

The results of Table 1 show that: All CR values are greater than 0.7, the reliability of the scale is guaranteed. All AVE values are greater than 0.5, convergence is guaranteed. All MSV values are less than AVE, SQRTAVE values are greater than all Inter-Construct Correlations, discriminability is guaranteed (Hair, J. et al., 2010).

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR (H)	SI	DA	BA	EX	SO	CO	BL
SI	0.817	0.542	0.381	0.914	<b>0.736</b>						
DA	0.815	0.554	0.171	0.978	0.303	<b>0.745</b>					
BA	0.740	0.590	0.460	0.753	0.324	0.111	<b>0.700</b>				
EX	0.718	0.574	0.269	0.836	0.381	0.392	0.176	<b>0.689</b>			
SO	0.732	0.579	0.065	0.743	0.142	0.039	0.095	0.215	<b>0.692</b>		
CO	0.734	0.587	0.106	0.814	0.137	0.091	0.112	0.057	0.099	<b>0.766</b>	
BL	0.722	0.555	0.460	0.642	0.617	0.413	0.678	0.519	0.254	0.325	<b>0.674</b>

Table 2: Model Validity Measures Results  
Source: The authors calculate by AMOS 24

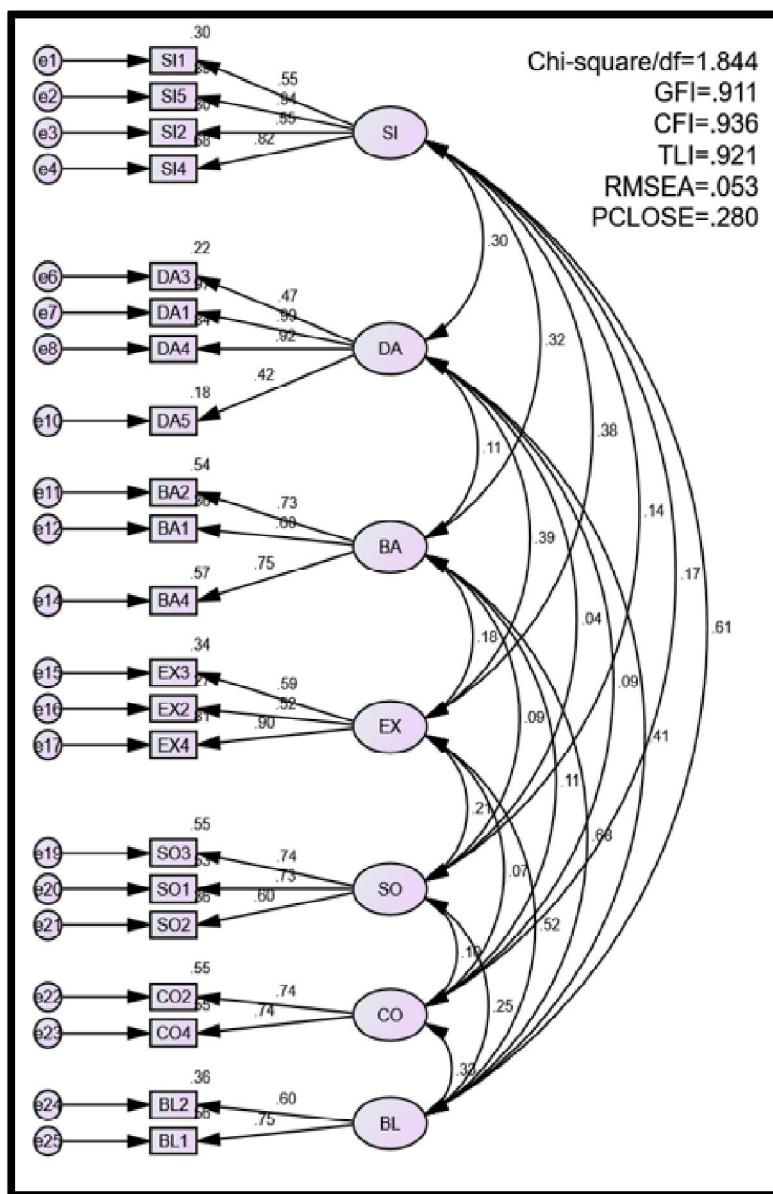


Figure 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis\_CFA results  
Source: The authors calculate by AMOS 24

4.2. Multivariable Regression Equation Results

From the results of CFA analysis in Section 4.1, newly formed factors including 6 independent variables (Sincerity, Sophistication, Excitement, Competence, Brand Awareness, Destination Attributes) and 1 dependent variable Brand Loyalty were included in the regression analysis.

We have the following general regression equation:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

Standardized regression equation:

$$Y = \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \epsilon \quad (2)$$

Here: Y: dependent variable (Brand Loyalty);  $X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, X_5$  and  $X_6$  are the independent variables of Destination Attributes, Sincerity, Brand Awareness, Competence, Sophistication and Excitement, respectively;  $\beta$ : coefficient of the independent variable;  $\epsilon$ : residuals.

The results of the regression equation (2) show that the F-test to evaluate the hypothesis of fit of the regression model has the value sig.=0.00<0.05, so the regression model is suitable. Adjusted  $R^2=0.567$  shows that the independent variables included in the regression analysis affect 56.7% of the variation of the dependent variable, the remaining 43.3% are due to out-of-model variables and random errors. The Durbin-Watson value = 2,046 ranges from 1.5 to 2.5, so the results do not violate the assumption of first-order series autocorrelation (Qiao, 2011) (Appendix 4). In Table 2, the regression coefficients of the independent variables  $X_i$  with t-test all have sig.=0.00<0.05, that is, the regression coefficient of the variable  $X_i$  is statistically significant different from zero, the  $X_i$  has a significant effect positive effect on the independent variable through the standardized coefficient  $\beta$  has a positive sign. In addition, we are also interested in the variance magnification factor (VIF), with the VIF coefficients of the independent variables  $X_i < 2$ , so the data does not

violate multicollinearity, then  $VIF \geq 10$  will have strong multicollinearity (Hair, J. et al., 2010), according to Tho (2010),  $VIF > 2$  may have multicollinearity, causing biased regression estimates (Tho, 2010)).

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
X1	.258	.038	.258	6.767	.000	1.000	1.000
X2	.495	.038	.495	12.998	.000	1.000	1.000
X3	.293	.038	.293	7.687	.000	1.000	1.000
X4	.194	.038	.194	5.104	.000	1.000	1.000
X5	.160	.038	.160	4.203	.000	1.000	1.000
X6	.340	.038	.340	8.937	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Y

Table 3: Coefficients of Regression Model  
Source: The Authors Calculate by SPSS 22

From the regression coefficients, we have the standardized regression equation as follows:

$$Y = 0.258X_1 + 0.495X_2 + 0.293X_3 + 0.194X_4 + 0.160X_5 + 0.340X_6 + \varepsilon \quad (3)$$

From the regression equation (3), we see that  $X_i$  all have a positive effect on Y, the variable that has the most impact on Y is the variable  $X_2$ .

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Research results confirm that Destination Brands from the perspective of domestic tourists in Vietnam have seven main components: (1) SI, (2) SO, (3) EX, (4) CO, (5) BA, (6) DA, and (7) BL. The results of the regression analysis show that Brand Loyalty depends on other components of the destination brand. From equation (3), it shows that sincerity has the highest  $\beta$  value, proving that Vietnamese domestic tourists always value the destination in terms of sincerity (sincerity from the people at the destination). to bring tourists a feeling of friendliness, fun, honest people...). Next is the excitement, brand awareness and attributes of the destination that are also quite interested by domestic tourists. Selectivity and sophistication have the least impact on BL. This shows that the spiritual value of the destination brings tourists more than the material value. Tourism managers need to pay attention to this finding to further improve their destination brand.

## 6. Research Limits

study provides a model with a low explanatory rate of the independent variables (56.7%), which shows that there are other potential explanatory variables that the author has not discovered and the error in the model is still high. Later studies can add new observed variables to make the model more efficient. The study carried out with the sample size is not high, leading to certain limitations in analysis and estimation, it is hoped that further studies can improve the above shortcomings

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### Appendix

#### *Cronbach's Alpha, KMO and Bartlett's Test*

Components	Cronbach's Alpha	Components	Cronbach's Alpha
Sincerity (SI)	0.823	Sophistication (SO)	0.728
Excitement (EX)	0.738	Brand Awareness (BA)	0.752
Competence (CO)	0.680	Destination Attributes (DA)	0.788
		Brand Loyalty (BL)	0.692

Table 4: Cronbach's Alpha test

<b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.760
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2791.098
	df	300
	Sig.	.000

Table 5: KMO and Bartlett's Test

<b>Pattern Matrix<sup>a</sup></b>									
	<b>Factor</b>								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
SI1	.804								
SI2	.692								
SI5	.671								
SI3	.621								
SI4	.590								
DA1		.714							
DA3		.713							
DA4		.635							
DA2		.554							
BA2			.736						
BA1			.650						
BA3			.626						
BA4			.600						
EX3				.708					
EX2				.669					
EX4				.636					
EX1				.581					
SO3					.729				
SO1					.674				
SO2					.662				
BL2						.637			
BL1						.604			
CO4							.747		
CO2							.596		
CO3								.656	
CO1									
BL4									
DA5									.687
BL3									
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization. a. Rotation converged in 10 iterations.									

Table 6: Pattern Matrix

Pattern Matrix <sup>a</sup>							
	Factor						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
SI1	.794						
SI5	.705						
SI2	.700						
SI4	.625						
SI3	.615						
DA3		.818					
DA1		.720					
DA4		.642					
DA2		.633					
DA5							
BA2			.744				
BA1			.650				
BA3			.614				
BA4			.579				
EX3				.703			
EX2				.652			
EX4				.625			
EX1				.589			
SO3					.762		
SO1					.715		
SO2					.600		
CO2						.868	
CO4						.612	
BL2							.636
BL1							.605
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization. <sup>a</sup> a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.							

Table 7: Final Pattern Matrix for CFA

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson	
1	.759 <sup>a</sup>	.576	.567	.6580851	2.046	
a. Predictors: X6, X5, X3, X2, X1, X4						
b. Dependent Variable: Y						
ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	172.109	6	28.685	66.235	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	126.891	293	.433		
	Total	299.000	299			
a. Dependent Variable: Y						
b. Predictors: X6, X5, X3, X2, X1, X4						

Table 8: Model Summary<sup>b</sup> & ANOVA<sup>a</sup>