CAN CUSTOMER BASED BRAND EQUITY HELP DESTINATIONS TO STAY IN RACE? AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF KASHMIR VALLEY

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Abstract

Purpose – Current study focus on measuring the customer based brand equity of a tourist destination (CBBETD) named Kashmir valley (India).

Design – A structured questionnaire was prepared, using Man (2010) consisting of 21 items. Single stage cluster sampling and systematic simple random techniques were used to collect final responses of 290 responses with a response rate of 87%.

Findings – Findings of the study revealed a high destination based brand equity for select destination. Analysis also revealed lowest mean for perceived service quality dimension for Kashmir which needs to be relooked into by policy makers. Age and length of stay were found to have associated with each other. Also, length of stay was found to have an impact on CBBETD.

Originality – Originality and core beneficence of the current study lies in the fact that brand equity measurement of Kashmir valley (mini Switzerland of the world) as a destination brand has been taken for the first time with an empirical evidence supporting the findings. It is evident from the study that Kashmir as a destination is very popular among travelers and destination image dimension for Kashmir has a strong and affirmative influence on the overall development of the destination equity.

Keywords customer-based brand equity, CBBETD, destination branding, destination image, Kashmir, Tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

As per 2016 UNWTO report, there has been 4% increase in the number of global tourist arrivals during the last decade with a record 1.2 billion tourist arrivals in 2015. This has increased inter-destination competition and had prompted destination planners to differentiate their destinations with strong unique selling propositions (Gartner, 2014). The concept of destination branding is not new and holds too much importance for destination planners It has been widely established that destinations which are successful in establishing / differentiating themselves have a strong destination image and increased tourist inflow (Chigora & Zvavahera, 2015). The essence of destination branding also lies in forming overall moving service experiences for customers and influencing them in such a way that they revisit the destination over and over again (White, 2013). Developing destinations also helps in generating stronger and unique competitive advantage and destination repositioning (Hemmonsbey & Knott, 2016; Same & Vasquez, 2014).

Unlike products destination branding is quite compound as there are so many attributes to a destination for that can be branded at once by considering various socio economic , cultural and technological issues that are related with destinations and give them a clue of products (Anholt, 2004; Kerr, 2006). A continuous effort has been observed from time to time by researchers, where they have come up with efforts and faced various challenges while applying the concept of brand theory to destinations. (Gartner & Ruzzier, 2011) and concluded that to brand destination is more complex and difficult then to brand products and properly manage and market them as there is a very little and limited involvement of the destination marketers and various related agencies in the process (Same & Vasquez, 2014).

Despite various challenges for investigating destination brands, it has found wide application through various available literatures (Pike & Bianchi, 2016; Pike et al., 2010, Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2002). It is very important for destination planners to implement useful strategies for branding destinations strategies, so as to stand differently in recall of potential and loyal tourists as a viable choice of destination (Atadil, Turk & Altintas, 2015). Pike and Bianchi (2016) also argued in favor of destination branding for creating destinations with high customer based brand equity (Mar, Carmen & Arturo, 2015) causing high destination awareness and positive tourist associations (Pike & Bianchi, 2016). The concept has been tested for many destinations by various researchers. For example, Boo, Busser, and Baloglu (2009), Ford and Purwanegara (2013) and Far (2014) measured the customer based brand equity for tourist destinations (CBBETD hereafter) for Las Vegas and Atlantic, Indonesia, and Kish Islands respectively and all argued in favour of treating destinations as brands for unique differentiation (Pike & Bianchi, 2016; Mar, Carmen & Arturo 2015).

India is one among the famous tourist destination offering multiple destinations that has successfully established her on global tourism map after launching the 'incredible India campaign'. Kashmir valley which lies in the northernmost region of India is one popular tourist destination famous for its tourist circuits such as Pahalgam, Gulmargh, Sonmargh, Srinagar and many others. This destination has also been nicknamed as "mini Switzerland" or "heaven on earth" based on tourist attractions that it offers. Kashmir valley as a tourist destination has been successful in attracting 8.77 lakh tourists (both national and international) in 2015 because of unparallel potential it enjoys in terms of tourism (JKTDC, 2015). Despite its global popularity, very negligible research has been carried out to evaluate the CBBETD for Kashmir valley as a tourist destination.

In the present study, an effort has been made by the researchers to fill this gap by measuring the CBBETD of Kashmir valley. The purpose is to extend and measure the concept of CBBETD for Kashmir valley which is considered among the most preferred tourist destination in North India. This will help to explore the impact that Kashmir as a destination has for creating memorable experiences for tourists to further build up the CBBETD of this destination (Im, Kim, Elliot, & Han, 2012).

In the following section, a thorough review of literature has been done for better understanding of the concept of CBBETD which is followed by explaining research design, data analysis and interpretation of findings. In the last, limitations of the study

were discussed and directions for future research were suggested by the researchers for more contribution to literature.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Brand Equity and CBBETD

Keller (2008) define brand equity as "the bundle of possessions, obligations and values that have been added to a particular brand associated with identity of a specific product or service's name and signifying a particular logo and symbol, which differentiates it from other competitors in the market". The key is that consumers must be in a state to perceive disparity amongst the brands (i.e., positioning); because a brand perceived distinct, unique and appealing is difficult to get replaced by other brands (Keller, 2001) and it is more significant to comprehend what associations of a brand are beneficial over competitors (i.e. points of disparity) helping customers to optimistically assess the brand and get attached to it (Keller, 2008).

For destinations the concept of brand-equity highlights the importance of branding in developing marketing strategies for destinations to generate positive emotional values arising from tourist's relationship with the destination (Kashif, Samsi, & Sarifuddin, 2014). Pike et al. (2016) also argued in favor of creating destinations as strong brands and argued a close connection between customer based brand equity and destination brands. To establish a strong destination brand it is very necessary that complete information about destinations should be floated through various available sources and participation of various stakeholders should be confirmed (Amin, Yousaf & Gupta, 2016). The successful circulation of the destination brand only takes place when it is accepted by people and eventually becomes popular.

McIntosh et al. (2000) define destination brands as "specific names, representation, sign, word mark or other explicit feature that both identifies and differentiates the destination, in addition, it conveys the guarantee of a unforgettable travel experience that is exceptionally related with the destination, it also serves to merge and strengthen the recall of pleasing memories of the destination experience". For creating strong CBBETD, it is important to study and measure it from the perspective of tourists and their perception about destination visited (Yuwo, Ford & Purwanegara, 2014; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Konecnik, 2010; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007).

Table 1: **Previous Researches on CBBETD**

Author / Year	Study	Dimension / construct
Konecnik (2005)	Customer-Based Brand Equity for Tourism Destination: Conceptual Model and Its Empirical Verification	Awareness, Image, Perceived quality, Loyalty
Konecnik & Gartner (2007)	Customer-Based Brand Equity for a Destination: Case of Slovenia / German and Croatian tourists.	Awareness, Quality, Image /associations, Loyalty
Pike (2007)	Customer-based brand equity for destinations. Practical DMO performance measures. The case of Chile, Brazil, and Argentina from the perspective of Australian tourists.	Salience, Resonance, Associations, Loyalty
Boo, Busser & Baloglu (2009)	A Model of Customer-Based Brand Equity And Its Application To Multiple Destinations.	Awareness, Quality, Image, Loyalty, Value
Konecnik (2010)	Extending the Tourism Destination Image Concept Into Customer-Based Brand Equity for A Tourism Destination.	Awareness, Image, Perceived quality, Loyalty
Mok Kim Man (2010)	Developing a Brand for the Sabah State in Malaysia: Empirical Research Among its Tourists.	Awareness, Image, Perceived quality, Loyalty
Kladou & Kehagias (2014)	Assessing destination brand equity: An Integrated Approach	Awareness, Quality Associations, Loyalty, Cultural Assets

Source: Compiled by Authors through literature Review

Destination brands compete principally through their image in order to stay in the competition and establish themselves as prominent and successful brands. Qu (2011) suggested identification and differentiation as the two functions that destination brands serve. Identification helps in destination recall whereas differentiation helps visitors to draw a comparison between groups of competing destinations on various well-defined characteristics. Three main factors were also identified by Hadrikurnia (2011) that can help in branding destinations. These three elements were classified as: (i) physical components of destinations, (ii) individual components of the destination, and (iii) organizational elements of the destination. The physical components of destination include all the buildings, infrastructures, etc. which are visible to the tourists and can create a direct impression on tourist's mind. The individual components of the city include people, citizen, and tourists which can create different values, beliefs, and social/personal factors. The third important element involves organizational elements consisting of individuals (s) or group (s) sharing the same beliefs or interests.

Customer-based brand equity measures two wide aspects of a destination from visitor's point of view. Firstly the measurement of tourist's perceptions of brand image, brand awareness, and brand associations. Secondly, it investigates tourist behavior which considers loyalty aspect for the destination in question (Baker & Cameron, 2008). Keller (1998) was the one who conceptualized the concept of customer-based brand equity and defines it as "the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand".

The concept of destination based brand-equity was first put forth by Konecnik (2005) to measure the concept of brand equity for tourists in Slovenia using four dimensions: awareness, image, perceived quality and loyalty and argued that the concept and principals of the product can be transferred and applied to destinations as well. A decade has passed since then and the concept has only grown more popular and has found its acceptability among destination brands giving rise to the concept of CBBETD defined by different researchers in a different way (please refer Table 1).

Pike (2007) introduced the concept of CBBETD to measure the efficacy of a destination brand based on the brand values to the consumer, thus, bridging the gap between past marketing efforts and future sales performance conceptualizing CBBE for a destination as the hierarchy of brand salience, brand associations, brand resonance and brand loyalty. Pike (2007) described brand salience as more than customers' general awareness of a brand. It affects how customers build their decision set. Pike (2007) also explained brand associations (brand image), cognitive and affective perceptions, as the memories of the destination. Pike (2007) described brand resonance as a willingness to engage with the destination and brand loyalty represented by repeat visitation and word of mouth recommendations as the highest level of the hierarchy. Through the study, it was concluded that the prospect of brand resonance and loyalty can be enlarged by high levels of brand awareness (salience) and brand image (associations).

The concept of CBBETD was further elevated by Konecnik & Gartner (2007) who called awareness, image, quality and loyalty dimensions of destination as antecedents to CBBETD arguing that tourists from different backgrounds perceive various dimensions of destination differently. Konecnik (2010) found the dimension of brand quality as the most important component of CBBETD in terms of customer preference of a travel destination and define quality dimension as "tourists' perception of quality related to the overall environment surrounding the destination (e.g., the quality of the accommodations, food, atmosphere, personal safety, services and value for money)". Kladou and Kehagias (2014) recently included a new dimension named cultural assets in CBBETD which is considered to influence familiarity and also consumer's ability to recall and recognize a destination.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Instrument Designing

The CBBETD for the select destination was measured using the scale developed by Man (2010) and was defined as consisting of destination brand awareness (3 items), destination brand image (11 items), destination perceived quality (7 items), and destination brand loyalty (3 items).

Destination brand awareness is the strength of the brand's presence in tourist mind (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Boo et al., 2009). Destination brand image was defined as tourist's mental depiction of knowledge (beliefs), feelings, and overall thought about an object or destination (Myagmarsuren & Chen, 2011). It is important that destination

brand image should be an included experience, i.e., a brand image will be outstanding once the relations are well planned and the uniqueness is clear to destination brand marketers prior to being passed on to visitors (Qu et al., 2011). Destination perceived quality is seen as tourist's perceptions about quality of a destination's overall development (Pike et al., 2010) and it is the key constituent of customer-based brand equity when applied to a destination (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). Destination brand loyalty has been defined as "the connection that a tourist has towards a destination" (Aaker, 1991). In tourism, attitudinal loyalty refers to a tourist's intention to return the destination and referring it to others (Pike & Bianchi, 2013) attitudinal loyalty can also be regarded as cognitive attitudes toward a specific destination brand (Back & Parks, 2003).

Despite the availability of a standardized scale changes were made in the scale regarding 'linguistic equivalence' for making it more meaningful for the select destination. This helped the researchers to customize the language of the questions that were, later on, asked to the respondents. A qualitative study was conducted with a small focus group of seven travellers to identify relevant manifestations for the four sub-dimensions associated with CBBETD (awareness, image, quality and loyalty).

Based on the information acquired from the qualitative study, a structured questionnaire was prepared to consist of 24 items. The questionnaire was divided into two sections consisting of demographic information (*section A*) and destination based brand equity items (*section B*). The developed questionnaire was shown to four Professors of tourism marketing of a state university to ensure content validity The questionnaire was then pre-tested with a small sample of ten respondents to explore for any language and/or typing error. Once it was found satisfactory the final data collection process was initiated.

3.2. Sampling Technique & Sample size

Units for the current study were defined as "tourists available in the select destination". Single stage cluster sampling technique was used by dividing the selected geographical area into different clusters such as Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Sonmargh, Srinagar, Shalimar and Nishat Gardens, and Boulevard road (near famous Dal Lake). For finding the final sample, systematic simple random sampling technique was used and every fifth tourist was handed over the questionnaire. A total of 290 tourists across the famous tourist circuits of Kashmir received the questionnaire. After removing outliers and non-filled questionnaires 250 were kept for further data analysis with an approximate response rate of 87%. Responses from respondents were entered into IBM SPSS 21 software for data analysis.

3.3. Reliability Check

Before proceeding ahead for data analysis, it was subjected to reliability checks. Reliability indicates "the permanence and uniformity with which the tool measures the concepts and helps to gauge the goodness of a measure (Sekaran, 2003). Cronbach alpha value for all the variables of the scale was calculated as: 0.88 (3 items) for destination awareness, 0.77 for destination image 0.77 (11 items), 0.76 (7 items) for

destination perceived quality and 0.75 for destination loyalty (3 items) which was well above the required cut-off value of 0.70 indicating that the scale was reliable and can be exposed further to appropriate statistical analysis (refer Table 2 for cronbach alpha values).

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The data was collected from the respondents for making sure that it remains balanced and represent the population across different demographic variables. Demographic analysis revealed that the sample (N=250) comprised of 53 % males and 47% females. Out of total respondents, 44% were married and 56 % were unmarried, As per the occupation of tourists it was found that 23% were businessman, 16% were doctors, 10% were engineers , 11% were govt employees, 11 % were housewives, 10% lawyer and professor and 18 % were students. As per the age group 43% tourists were in the age group of 20-30 years, 29% were in the age group of 30- 40 years, 11% of the respondents were in the age group of below 20 years, 10% of the respondents were in the age group of 40- 50 years and 7% of the respondents were above 50. Education qualification related analysis revealed that 54% were graduates, 28% had higher education, 15% of the respondents had a qualification of higher secondary and 3% of the respondents had any other qualification. Income analysis revealed 52% tourists having an annual income in the range of 4-6 Lakhs, 22% having in the range of 7-10 Lakhs, 22 % having below 3 Lakhs and 5% tourists were having annual income above 10 Lakhs. When asked about the purpose of visiting Kashmir, 87% were there for leisure, 6% for pilgrimage, 5% for visiting friends and relatives followed by 2% were on business trips. As per the length of stay 53% stayed for a period of 7–12 days, 39 % of the respondents stayed for a period of 1-6 days followed by 8% who stayed for a period of 13- 18 days. When asked about the source of awareness about the destination, 48% of the respondents said that they have heard about the destination from their family and friends, 46% of the respondents know the destination from media source, 3 % of the respondents are aware of the destination from internet, again 3% of the respondents know about the destination from television and print media. Please refer Table 2 for demographic analysis of tourists.

Table 2: **Demographic Analysis of Tourists**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	133	53
Female	117	47
Total	250	100
Marital Status		
Married	110	44
Unmarried	140	56
Total	250	100
Occupation		

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Businessman	60	23
Doctor	42	16
Engineer	22	10
Govt Employee	29	11
Housewife	25	11
Lawyer & Professor	25	10
Student	47	18
Total	250	100
Age (in Years)		
Below 20	28	11
20-30	108	43
30-40	72	29
40-50	24	10
Above 50	18	7
Total	250	100
Educational Qualification		
Higher Secondary	37	15
Graduate	136	54
Higher Education	70	28
Others	7	3
Total	250	100
Annual Household Income (in INR)		
Below 3 Lakhs	54	22
4-6 Lakh	129	52
7-10 Lakh	54	22
Above 10 Lakh	13	5
Total	250	100
Purpose of Visit		
Business	5	2
Leisure	218	87
Pilgrimage	14	6
Visiting Friends / Relatives	13	5
Total	250	100
Length of Stay		
1-6 days	96	39
7-12 days	133	53
13-18 days	21	8
Total	250	100
Source of Awareness		
Family and Friends	120	48
Internet	8	3
Media Source	114	46
Television & Print Media	8	3
Total	250	100

Source: Created by Authors using SPSS and MS Excel

4.2. Measuring CBBETD of Kashmir Destination & Exploring inter Variable Differences

Table 3(a) and 3(b), shows the descriptive statistics of various dimensions and sub-dimensions of CBBETD for Kashmir valley. Data analysis revealed that awareness dimension of CBBETD shows the highest overall mean of 5.88 (S.D = 0.88)It was found that the destination was quite attractive and known to respondents having the highest mean of 5.89 (S.D = 1.01) followed by the popularity of the destination (mean = 5.87, S.D = 1.21) and the top-of-mind recall (mean = 5.87, S.D = 1.43).

Table 3(a): **Descriptive Statistics and Reliability for CBBETD Dimensions**

Variables Used in the Study	N	Mean (Std. Dev)	Cronbach Alpha (no. of items)
Destination Awareness	250	5.88 (0.88)	0.85 (03)
Destination Image	250	5.79 (0.65)	0.77 (11)
Destination Perceived Quality	250	5.55 (0.78)	0.76 (07)
Destination Loyalty	250	5.76 (0.83)	0.75 (03)
Valid N (list wise)	250		

Source: Created by Authors

In the second dimension, respondents were asked questions about destination image which was having the second highest mean of 5.79 (S.D = 0.65).The highest mean in the sub-dimension was shown by the statement that "this destination has good and refreshing weather conditions" (mean = 6.36, S.D = 0.85) followed by statements, this destination has beautiful mountains (mean = 6.06, S.D= 1.07), this destination has lovely towns and cities (mean = 6.06, S.D = 1.07), this destination has modern looking resorts (mean = 6.06, S.D = 1.07) and this destination is safe and secure (mean = 6.06, S.D = 1.07). The respondents further said this destination provides good entertainment facility (mean = 6.04, S.D =1.08), followed by the statement where the respondents further said this destination has beautiful lakes (mean = 5.80, S.D = 1.16). The respondents further said the people of this destination are friendly and hospitable (mean = 5.61, S.D = 1.20), followed by the statement the destination has attractive cultural attractions (mean = 5.56, S.D = 1.30). The statement that the destination provides enough opportunities for recreation showed a mean of 5.12 (S. D= 1.51). Among all, the statement this destination has interesting historical attractions scored the least of mean 4.91(S.D = 1.47) in image dimension.

Table 3(b): **Detailed Descriptive Statistics**

Items Used in the Questionnaire	Variable Used	Mean	Std. Dev
This destination is very famous	*Destination Awareness*	5.87	1.21
Whenever i think of any tourist destination, this place comes to my mind at first.		5.87	1.43
This destination is quite attractive and known		5.89	1.01
This destination has beautiful mountains	*Destination image*	6.06	1.07
This destination has beautiful lakes		5.80	1.16
This destination has lovely towns & cities		6.06	1.07
This destination has modern looking resorts		6.06	1.07
This destination has interesting historical attractions		4.91	1.47
This destination provides good entertainment facilities		6.04	1.08
This destination provides enough opportunities for recreation		5.12	1.51
The people of this destination are friendly and hospitable		5.61	1.20
This destination has good and refreshing weather conditions		6.36	0.85
This destination has attractive cultural attractions		5.56	1.30
This destination is safe and secure		6.06	1.07
This destination has good shopping facilities	*Destination Perceived Quality*	5.03	1.33
This destination provides good value for money		6.52	1.31
This destination has exciting atmosphere		5.93	1.10
This destination has pleasant atmosphere		5.89	1.13
This destination has high quality accommodation facilities		5.03	1.33
This destination has high level of cleanliness		5.52	1.31
This destination has appealing food facilities		5.93	1.10
I would intent to visit This destination again	*Destination Loyalty*	6.22	1.04
I would talk of very high of destination in terms of services and facilities		5.61	1.09
I would like to recommend This destination to my friends and relatives		5.87	1.01
Valid N (list wise)	**250**		

Source: Created using SPSS software

The dimension of destination loyalty showed the third highest overall mean of 5.76 (S.D = 0.83). The highest mean of 6.22 (S.D = 1.04) was shown by the statement "I would intend to visit the destination again", followed by the statement "I would like to recommend this destination to my friends and relatives" (mean = 5.87, S.D = 1.09). The least mean in the dimension was scored by the statement "I would talk very high of destination in terms of services and facilities" (mean = 5.61, S .D = 1.09).

As per the results the dimension of destination perceived quality showed the least overall mean of 5.55 (S.D = 0.78). In this dimension the statement this destination provides good value for money showed the highest mean of 6.52 (S.D = 1.31), followed by the statement this destination has exciting atmosphere (mean = 5.93, S .D = 1.10) and this destination has appealing food facilities (mean = 5.93, S.D = 1.10). The third highest mean of 5.89 (S.D = 1.13) was shown by the statement this destination has a pleasant atmosphere, followed by the statement the destination has a high level of cleanliness (mean = 5. 52, S.D = 1.31). The least mean in the dimension was scored by the statements this destination has good shopping facilities (mean = 5.03, S.D = 1.33) and this destination has high-quality accommodation facilities respectively.

We also made an attempt to check the significant mean differences of CBBETD dimensions across various demographic variables (categorical) using One way ANOVA and found insignificant (p > 0.05) results for occupation, annual household Income and purpose of visit. On the contrary, however, when the same purpose was repeated for length of stay variable across CBBETD dimensions, the results were found statistically significant. Only, destination image and destination loyalty were found to have statistically significant mean differences across length of stay indicating that the length of stay has a significant impact on the destination image (p < 0.04) and destination loyalty (p < 0.03) dimension whereas the results for destination awareness and destination perceived quality were found to be statistically insignificant (p > 0.05 for both). Please refer Table 4(a).

Table 4(a): **Mean Comparison of Length of Stay across CBBETD dimensions**

	Length of Stay		
	1-6 days	*7-12 days*	*13-18 days*
	Mean (S.D)	*Mean (S.D)*	*Mean (S.D)*
Destination Awareness	5.99 (1.41)	5.84 (1.24)	5.60 (1.89)
Destination Image*	5.90* (1.84)	5.72* (1.21)	5.71* (1.93)
Destination Perceived Quality	5.51 (1.54)	5.58 (1.29)	5.55 (1.82)
Destination Loyalty*	5.91* (1.77)	5.64* (1.32)	5.87* (1.85)

*the mean difference is statistically significant at p<0.05 using ANOVA on SPSS
Source: Created by Authors using SPSS

Also, age of tourists (in years) was found to have a statistically significant impact on CBBETD dimensions of destination image (p < 0.02) and destination loyalty (0.04) indicating that destination image and destination loyalty are significantly impacted by the age of the tourists. On the other hand, age of the tourists was found to have insignificant impact on destination awareness and destination perceived quality dimensions (p > 0.08 for both). Please refer Table 4(b).

Table 4(b): **Mean Comparison of Age (in Years) across CBBETD dimensions**

	Age (in Years)				
	Below 20	*20-30*	*30-40*	*40-50*	*Above 50*
	Mean (S.D)	*Mean (S.D)*	*Mean (S.D)*	*Mean (S.D)*	*Mean (S.D)*
Destination Awareness	5.70 (1.22)	5.87 (.81)	5.91 (.87)	5.77 (.70)	6.19 (.92)
Destination Image*	5.87 (.72)*	5.63 (.65)*	5.96 (.58)*	5.88 (.68)*	5.79 (.59)*
Destination Perceived Quality	5.54 (.72)	5.45 (.78)	5.62 (.86)	5.96 (.58)	5.35 (.73)
Destination Loyalty*	5.77 (.77)*	5.56 (.84)*	5.97 (.76)*	6.27 (.68)*	5.44 (.82)*

*the mean difference is statistically significant at p<0.05 using ANOVA
Source: Created by Authors using SPSS

4.3. Measuring Association between Age and Length of Stay

In order to go further deeper into the analysis, we made an attempt to explore the association between various demographic variables used in the study and found that there exists no association between household income (categorical variable) and length of stay (categorical variable). The chi-square value of 5.31 (having df = 4) was found to be statistically insignificant (p > 0.504). The same statistically insignificant association was found for other demographic variables also (p > 0.05). Contrary to these insignificant associations, an interesting association was found between age of tourists (categorical) and their length of stay (categorical) in Kashmir. Chi-square test was used for checking the association between these two variables (assuming null hypothesis as no association existing). Results revealed chi-square value of 16.116 (df = 8) as statistically significant (p = 0.041). Please refer Table 5(a) and Table 5(b). This was interesting from the view that tourists in the age category of 20-30 years and 30-40 years visited Kashmir for more days than other age groups in the category of 1-6 days and 7-12 days respectively.

Table 5(a): **Age * Length of Stay Crosstabulation**
Count

		Length of Stay			Total
		1-6 days	7-12 days	13-18 days	
Age (in Years)	Below 20	9	10	0	19
	20-30	43	65	5	113
	30-40	41	41	8	90
	40-50	4	10	2	16
	Above 50	4	8	0	12
Total		101	134	15	250

Table 5(b): **Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.116	8	**.041**
Likelihood Ratio	18.628	8	.017
Linear-by-Linear Association	.384	1	.535
N of Valid Cases	250		

a. 5 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.05.
Source: Created by Authors using SPSS

4. CONCLUSION

Due to current global economic environment, competition between global destinations is increasing forcing policy makers and stakeholders to better understand the significance of destination's brand equity as an important predecessor of tourist's satisfaction, moreover, overseeing the factors linked with destination brand equity and addressing the destination brand equity in endorsement campaigns. By observing various brand equity dimensions and their inter-relationships is a vital activity that must be considered by destination management, practitioners, and even researchers, in applying appropriate strategies to catch the attention of tourists to a destination. In a number of studies (refer Table 1), the concept of CBBETD has been employed by various researchers to investigate into destinations brand-equity.

Kashmir as a destination is famous for its tourist circuits globally but CBBETD instrument has not been applied till date to measure its brand equity from the perspective of tourists actually visiting the destination. The major contribution of the present research lies in the fact that a brand equity measurement of Kashmir valley as a destination brand has been conducted for the first time with an empirical evidence supporting the findings. It is evident from the study that Kashmir as a destination is very popular among travelers and destination image dimension for Kashmir has a strong and positive influence on the overall development of the destination equity suggesting that Kashmir enjoys a good brand image among visiting tourists.

Despite global brand image and high destination awareness there are certain loopholes that needs to be timely taken care of to establish Kashmir valley as a global destination brand. Results revealed that the perceived quality of the destination needs to be overlooked in every aspect so as to ensure strong brand equity of Kashmir valley. The destination, further, needs to enhance in terms of the shopping facilities, by providing the tourists with a range where they can look for something that suits their purpose apart from the traditional souvenirs. It has been further observed that the destination lacks in terms of cultural and historical attractions. This has implications for policy makers and various tourism development agencies as well. They need to understand that there is a need where various DMO'S can address the need by exploring destination that are rich in cultural heritage and upgrading the overall infrastructure at the existing ones. Destination planner needs to focus on such dimensions that are critical in the overall positioning of the Kashmir as a brand. Also, different tourism agencies and involved stakeholders of Kashmir need to focus on how they can make it more popular and spread more awareness by integrating different promotional techniques like digital marketing, social media, and other platforms. Developing Kashmir valley as a strong destination brand can only help it to attain a sustainable place in the market and survive longer.

To conclude with it was observed through data analysis that the dimension of destination awareness showed a highest mean of 5.88 (S.D = 0.88), depicting that the destination is well known and quite familiar to the tourists visiting Kashmir while as the dimension of perceived service quality showed a lowest mean of 5.55 (0.78), thus making it very imperative for various destination management originations and stakeholder to make an effort to comprehend the over service quality of the destination

through various tangible and intangibles clues. The further effort of the destination mangers should be to raise overall standard of services provided by them in terms of various facilities and overall infrastructure as well, so as to compete with other destinations in the same arena.

The researcher further moved ahead by exploring the association between various demographic profiles and CBBETD dimensions for tourist destinations. It was observed that there exists no association between household income (categorical variable) and length of stay (categorical variable). The same statistically insignificant association was found for other demographic variables also (p > 0.05). While as a strong association was found between age of tourists (categorical) and their length of stay (categorical) in Kashmir. Thus in context of the same destination mangers need to market their products as such that it can attract each and every segment.

5. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has certain limitations that need to be considered for future research. The first limitation being that the study was conducted only in a particular part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Thus, generalizations drawn from the findings of the study are limited. In order to enhance the study in the same context, future researchers may repeat a similar study focusing on different parts of the Jammu and Kashmir, considering the division of Jammu and Ladakh as well. While conducting the research, it came to light that international tourists were very less in number and tourists' were having different motivations for visiting the destination. Thus future research can explore nationality and motivational effect on CBBETD. The study was taken considering the tourist's point of view only, thus not taking care of all the stakeholders in forming the CBBETD. To comprehend the same, future research can work in the same direction that would add a holistic view of CBBETD to the literature. Another limitation of the current study was that the respondents (tourists) were mostly youth, thus, not taking into account all the age groups equally. Future research can be directed towards having a equal representation from each age group, thus widening the scope of the study to all age groups. The study further limits itself by not exploring nationality differences across the CBBETD dimensions. To overcome these short falling or limitations of the research, future studies can be directed towards the same direction where they can try to explore the new avenues where CBBETD can be looked into and empirically tested considering various dimensions.

Moving forward. Future studies also need to explore more practical issues. The results of the study showed dependence relation between perceived destination image and length of stay as well as between age and perceived destination image. In the current study, it was answered why this dependence exists and future studies can focus on answering these questions: Does perceived destination image improves with increase in length of stay and If so then why this is happening? Also, another question that future researchers need to address is does middle age people stay longer perhaps because they travel with the family or is it like that Kashmir as a destination is more appealing for family tourists and leisure travellers? This can be done by using an exploratory approach to explore these reasons to contribute to the literature.

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