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Identity and destination branding among residents: How does brand self-congruity influence brand attitude and ambassadorial behavior?

An Empirical Research Article Submitted to

International Journal of Tourism Research

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Abstract: Residents of a particular destination are potentially the largest and most powerful stakeholders of destination brands. However, the basis of residents' attitudes towards destination branding is unclear. In this study, we propose that self-congruity (the degree of match between the perceived identity and perceived brand identity) is an antecedent of these attitudes. We empirically demonstrate that brand self-congruity may be an indicator of destination brand attitude and that subsequent ambassadorial behavior among residents is possible. Implications for practitioners and future research opportunities are suggested.

Keywords: residents; self-congruity; brand identity; brand attitude; brand ambassador

1. Introduction

Destination branding is often used by tourism-oriented groups and authorities to market tourist sites (Papadopoulos, 2004). Although it is related to product and service branding, about which much is known, destination branding remains a challenge. For example, Tasci and Kozak (2006) claim that few destination brands can be regarded as truly successful.

Scholars have mostly drawn on corporate branding theory to build their understanding of destination branding (Knox & Bickerton, 2003), but corporate branding (i.e., how an organization should represent itself) does not provide a solution to many of the problems that surround tourist destination branding. A persistent issue is that destination brands not only represent intangible goods and services but also places, people, and ideologies (Hankinson, 2004).

Corporations pay their employees to act based on their established brand identity, whereas residents of a destination are not paid to align with whatever core brand values might have been engineered for them (Hospers, 2010; Mitchell, 2002). Intrinsically, the relationship of residents with a destination brand is not regulated by contracts but by brand communication (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). Therefore, destination managers must not only assess the brand perceptions not only of tourists, but also of other stakeholders (Campelo, Aitken, Thyne, & Gnoth, 2013; Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017; Sartori, Mottironi, & Corigliano, 2012). The largest and most fruitful of these stakeholders is commonly believed to be the residents of a destination (Kavaratzis, 2004) due to their potential brand engagement (e.g. Kalandides, 2012; Merrilees, Miller, Herington and Smith, 2007; Pike & Scott, 2009), participation (e.g. Propst & Jeong, 2012), enhancement (e.g. Dinnie & Fola, 2009; Freire, 2009), rejuvenation (Wagner, Peters, & Schuckert, 2009), and a range of other positive brand related behavior (e.g. Chen & Dwyer, 2010; Choo & Park, 2009; Konečnik Ruzzier & Petek, 2012). However, the motivation driving residents to support a destination brand remains unclear (Braun, Kavaratzis, & Zenker, 2013; Zenker, Braun, & Petersen, 2017).

The perceived identity of residents within a brand representation is a critical issue (Konečnik Ruzzier & Petek, 2012). Destination brands project both the place and its inhabitants to the outside world and because of this, they can influence associated perceptions such as stereotypes (Eshuis & Edwards, 2012; Kalandides, 2012). Thus, a perceived match between personal and brand identity may result in positive attitudes and behavior toward a brand (Sirgy, Johar, Samli, & Clayborne, 1991). This construct, known as self-congruity

theory is widely applied in consumer marketing, but has not been used in the study of residents' attitudes to destination brands.

The present study uses self-congruity theory in three ways: (1) to conceptualize the relationship between residents and destination brands; (2) to test the relationship between brand self-congruity and brand attitude among residents; and (3) to test the relationship between brand self-congruity and brand ambassadorial behavior (BAB) among residents. An improved understanding of brand identity congruity among residents may enable the limiting public resistance to branding campaigns, avoid damaging resident counter-branding activities (Eshuis & Edwards, 2012), and increase the support of residents for brand development and promotion (Konečnik Ruzzier & Petek, 2012).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Residents and Destination Brands

Previous studies on tourism destination residents have tended to focus on their perceived tourism-related impact and subsequent behavior (Akis, Peristanis, & Warner, 1996; Ap & Crompton, 1993; Davis, Allen, & Cosenza, 1988; Lindberg & Johnson, 1997; Pizam, 1978). Although some authors have discussed the possibility of involving residents proactively in tourism planning (Lankford & Howard, 1993; Witter, 1985), impact and attitudes have been the key concerns throughout tourism to date (Merrilees et al., 2007).

The literature relating to residents and destination branding is similarly limited (Braun, Kavaratzis & Zenker, 2013; Choo, Park, & Petrick, 2011; Pike & Scott, 2009), and no empirical investigation has been conducted in the field (Eshuis & Edwards, 2012; Merrilees et al., 2007). Morgan et al. (2003) note a poor understanding of the collective aspect of destination branding, and especially of the way it is regarded by residents and smaller trade operators. Braun, Kavaratzis, and Zenker (2013) regard residents as the main unresolved problem within destination branding in both theory and in practice.

Schroeder (1996) looked beyond the mainstream of destination resident studies by relating local support for tourism development to the possibility of residents acting as ambassadors for their home destination (North Dakota). Unfortunately, the study is more concerned with the destination image than with the brand as a deliberate construct; thus, its practical implications for destination marketing organizations (DMOs) are rather unclear. A more tangible result is provided by Henderson (2000) in a study of residents' and tourists' awareness of the Singaporean "New Asia" destination brand. The results emphasized the importance of consulting and involving residents in the destination branding process, which has been commended by other contemporary scholars (Holcomb, 1999). However, no empirical follow-up has been conducted in the literature to date.

The goal of successful destination branding as laid out by these and other authors is to enlist residents' support so that they respond positively to the destination brand (Braun, Kavaratzis & Zenker, 2013; Bennett & Savani, 2003). The reasons for this are two-fold. First, counter-branding campaigns, which are remarkably counterproductive for the goals of a DMO, can be avoided. Second, residents who show a positive attitude toward a brand are more likely to feel a personal connection to it (Eshuis & Edwards, 2012) and to exhibit brand-supportive behavior (Braun, Kavaratzis & Zenker, 2013; Konečnik Ruzzier & Petek, 2012). Thus, despite the limited literature, several authors have suggested that developing a

supportive attitude and subsequent ambassadorial behavior in residents should be the key goals of destination branding (Kemp, Childers, & Williams, 2012; Kemp, Williams, & Bordelon, 2012; Merrilees et al., 2007; Simpson & Siguaw, 2008).

Brand attitude, which is commonly conceptualized as a one-dimensional mental stance, is believed to be directly linked to behavioral intention (Spears & Singh, 2004). Consequently, the ambassadorship of residents is believed to be strongly influenced by their brand-related values and emotions (Eshuis & Edwards, 2012; Konečnik Ruzzier & Petek, 2012). If residents fail to accept the destination brand as an appropriate representation of their home and, ultimately, of themselves, then they may refuse to help in the maintenance or further development of the brand (Konečnik Ruzzier & Petek, 2012). However, obtaining such positive action from residents is often difficult because of the large amount of time, creativity, emotion, and effort that may be needed to maintain and develop a destination brand (Bogoviyeva, 2011). The goal of DMOs is to gain a positive resident attitude toward a destination brand (Eshuis & Edwards, 2012; Zenker & Petersen, 2010) and to ultimately transform the residents into destination brand ambassadors (Braun, Kavaratzis & Zenker, 2013; Chen & Dwyer, 2010; Choo et al., 2011; Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017; Kavaratzis, 2004).

Kavaratzis (2004) notes that a destination brand can be communicated in three ways. Primary ways include the physical aspects of a place such as architecture. Secondary ways include direct marketing and PR, controlled by DMOs. Tertiary ways include indirectly controllable ways of communication, such as word of mouth. Residents are critical in these branding activities because they are important receptors of the brand and are simultaneously the most important marketers of the destination (Kavaratzis, 2004). Their marketing, whether intentional or unintentional, is likely to be the most cost-effective and reach targets better than traditional advertisements; moreover, such marketing ultimately becomes the least biased and most authentic underpinning of the brand (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008; Andersson & Ekman, 2009; Braun, Kavaratzis & Zenker, 2013; Kemp et al., 2012).

Konečnik Ruzzier and Petek (2012) consider brand residents' ambassadorship role to consist of "constituting and living" the brand. (p. 469). Wassler and Hung (2017, p. 10) define brand ambassadorship behavior (BAB) as "planned or spontaneous … promotion-related or development-related." This embodies the idea that residents can enhance the equity of a destination brand through a positive brand-related behavior. BAB may occur spontaneously (e.g., by unorganized communication) or in a planned way (e.g., by ambassadorial networks). A further distinction is made between promotional (e.g., communicating the brand to tourists and using promotional items) and/or development-related BAB (e.g., suggestions for brand improvement to the responsible authorities). This definition is adopted for the present research, in which BAB is considered to be potentially promotional and/or development related, whereas residents can use official networks for communication (e.g., online platforms), while also functioning as brand ambassadors by traditional offline communication.

Andersson and Ekman (2009) comment that many DMOs have recognized this potential for flexibility and that several organized ambassador platforms and networks are available to enable residents to contribute to a destination brand. Braun, Kavaratzis, and Zenker (2013) mention the "Be Berlin" branding campaign as a successful example, in which residents expressed their feelings of connection to the city, some of which were used in the brand promotional campaign. Cai (2002) suggests that BAB is an effective tool for building

a strong destination brand identity. Subsequent studies suggested that tourists increasingly want to establish an emotional contact with local residents and their culture, rather than merely sightseeing (Paskaleva-Shapira, 2007). Similarly, according to Gowreesunkar, Cooper, and Durbarry (2009), residents deliver the brand promise made by the DMOs by their behavior when they actually encounter outside visitors.

2.2. Perceived Identity of Residents and Self-Congruity Theory

Unlike the brands of products and services, destination brands include aspects of a place, including cultures and people, that transcend its physical features, (Hankinson, 2004). This sets residents at the core of brand identity, thereby underlining the necessity for a DMO to focus on how residents are represented within the destination brand (Braun, Kavaratzis and Zenker, 2010).

Residents' possible sensitivity about their representation within a destination brand is a persistent issue. The core of a destination brand identity is believed to be a function of a "materially unchanging" place and the people who inhabit it. Several scholars have discussed the issues inherent in representing such an identity amidst continuous globalization. For instance, Hospers (2010) point out the importance of representing citizens as inhabitants of Amsterdam rather than merely as being Dutch, due to their distinct identity within the country.

This issue has been identified in several other situations (Hospers, 2010). Konečnik and Go (2008) note that resident representation within a brand is increasingly an emotional factor because of increasing global cultural homogeneity. Especially in smaller countries like Slovenia, cultural solidarity is crucial in perceptions of place identity (Konečnik Ruzzier & Petek, 2012). Where residents may feel that the destination brand represents them in terms of a tourist's stereotype, great care should be given to presenting community values in a way that coincides with residents' self-concept and sense of pride (van't Klooster, Go, & van Baalen, 2004; Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott, 2003; Wheeler, Frost, & Weiler, 2011; Zenker & Petersen, 2010), as well as their local identity and self-esteem (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009). If these issues are addressed and residents feel properly represented, they are more likely to have a positive attitude toward the destination brand (Zenker & Petersen, 2010). In traditional consumer branding, self-congruity theory has been used to understand analogous relationships.

Self-congruity theory proposes that consumers select products based on their functional benefits and the symbolic values that express consumer identity (Aaker, 1997; Chon, 1992). Thus, the selection of tourism destinations should be contingent on the assessment of functional benefits and on the need for a certain type of experience (Gartner & Konečnik Ruzzier, 2011). Self-congruity theory can be applied to residents in the context of destination brands, because identification with the place and the cultural aspects of the brand is broadly equivalent for both residents and tourists (Choo & Park, 2009; Choo et al., 2011; Aaker, 1997). The theory proposes that self-congruity is achieved when personal characteristics (e.g., of a consumer or resident) match the characteristics of the product that are projected by the brand (Aaker, 1997; Caldwell & Freire, 2004). For example, consumers may prefer the Apple iPhone over a less expensive smartphone because the former has identity-beneficial traits (e.g., young and hip) that the latter is perceived not to possess. In other words, congruity between the branded image and the consumer's personality creates a

favorable product evaluation, which in turn, induce a favorable response to the brand (Aaker, 1997; Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy & Su, 2000). In other words, the greater the congruity, the more favorable the response.

Todd (2001) cites American psychologist William James as the founding father of modern notions of the self-concept. This not only relates to a person's physical self, but also includes all of the consumer products, services, and people with whom the individual associates. In other words, the self is all that people call their own and all with whom they share an identity (Sirgy & Su, 2000). For this reason, the self-concept is supposedly strongly linked to attitudes and to behaviors driven by these attitudes (Jamal & Goode, 2001).

For destination residents, the relationship between self-congruity and brand attitude is important because residents form part of the brand promise and, therefore, a part of the branded product (Braun, Kavaratzis & Zenker, 2013; Hankinson, 2004). Representation of residents within a destination brand is a highly sensitive issue because residents' attitudes depend upon their perceptions of the way the brand represents them (Eshuis & Edwards, 2012; Kalandides, 2012). Choo and Park (2009) and Choo et al. (2011) suggest that behavioral intentions are directly linked to one's identification with a brand. In relation to this, Konečnik Ruzzier and Petek (2012), and Kemp and Childers et al. (2012) have proposed that the self-congruity might be directly linked to destination brand ambassadorship.

Based on the above discussion, the hypotheses to be tested are as follows: (H1) Brand self-congruity is likely to influence brand attitude positively, (H2) Brand self-congruity is likely to influence BAB positively, and (H3) Brand attitude is likely to influence BAB positively (H3). Figure 1 shows the proposed model.

*******Please insert Figure 1 here*******

3. Methodology

First, it is necessary to highlight why the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) and its destination brand have been chosen as the context of study. First, residents of a destination should be sufficiently aware of their own brand in order to investigate their congruity, attitude and BAB. In the case of "Hong Kong – Asia's World City", the local branding authorities have significantly involved the local community in the branding process (Fleishman-Hillard Hong Kong Ltd. & Taylor Nelson Sofres, 2010). It is therefore assumed that the residents of Hong Kong should be sufficiently aware of the brand. Next, in order for residents to effectively be able to show BAB, the branding authorities have to provide the possibility for them to participate in the branding process. In the case of "Hong Kong – Asia's World City", the branding authorities did not only provide several platforms for residents' participation, but also encouraged BAB for future development of the brand and offered a wide range of items for brand promotional use (BrandHK, 2012).

Next, the study population has to be defined. The population surveyed for this study consisted of permanent residents of the Hong Kong SAR (HKPRs). Hong Kong basic law stipulates that HKPRs must be born in Hong Kong or have resided there for at least seven years. Thus, for the purposes of this study, HKPs could be easily identified and could

reasonably be assumed to have assimilated the local culture and gained familiarity with the destination brand. The study adopted a quota sampling design and an online panel for the survey. Quota sampling, which establishes a quota of respondent segments prior to data collection, is a widely used and effective approach for online surveys. In the present study, HKPRs were sampled by age and gender based on the demographics of the entire Hong Kong population. Respondents were stratified by gender and then within the gender groups by age, and by their geographical distribution within Hong Kong (Table 1).

*******Please insert Table 1 here*******

BAB, self-congruity, and brand attitude constructs were measured using adaptations of previously used scales. A qualitative pre-study, followed by an expert panel with seven academic specialists, as recommended by Churchill Jr. (1979), was used to validate the measurement items and their application. A pilot test was conducted prior to testing the model.

The list of measurements developed from the literature (BAB: Kim, Han, & Park, 2001; Kemp, Childers et al., 2012; Konečnik Ruzzier & Petek, 2012; Lin, 2006; Okazaki, Rubio, & Campo, 2013; Taylor & Todd, 1995; Verhoef, Frances, & Hoekstra, 2002; Vijayasarathy, 2004; Brand attitude: Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004; Hohenstein, Sirgy, Herrmann, & Heitmann, 2007; Self-congruity: Hohenstein, et al., 2007) was amended and recompiled based on the findings and the subsequent review of the panel of experts.

The applicability of the proposed model was confirmed by a qualitative pre-study with HKPRs, chosen on a convenience sampling basis until saturation of information was achieved, which produced 16 interviews. On the basis of these interviews, the original questionnaire items were amended and discussed with a panel of seven research experts in the fields of destination branding, marketing, and community involvement. On their advice, 11 items of the BAB scale were rephrased, and 1 item each was added to the brand attitude and self-congruity scales.

Data for the pilot study (n = 199) that corresponded to the quotes already discussed were collected with the help of the online survey agency Toluna. The pilot study focused on pre-testing the research tools to check that the instruments and methods fit the overall study and identify any major shortcomings in the questionnaire design (Oppenheim, 1992).

Exploratory factor analysis was used to identify the underlying structure of the variables (Hair Jr. et al., 2010) and items loading lower than 0.5, or on more than one factor with a score equal or greater than 0.5, were eliminated (Wong and Lau, 2001). The KMO estimate was 0.964. According to Hutcheson and Sofroniu (1999), values above 0.9 can be considered highly fitting. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 5720$, $p < 0.001$), thereby suggesting an appropriate level of correlation among the variables. Finally, 28 items, grouped into 5 factors, was retained.

For the main survey, a total of 651 additional data items were collected by an online panel, drawn randomly from the Hong Kong database based on the quotas discussed above. Prior to providing their consent to complete the survey, respondents were briefly introduced to the researcher's background and the nature of the study in English and Chinese. At this point, the respondents could decide whether they wanted to continue to participate in the study.

4. Results

4.1. Reliability and Validity

Confirmatory factor analysis was performed using AMOS 20.0 software to verify construct validity (John & Reve, 1982. p. 520). Table 2 shows the items as used in the main survey, together with the results of this analysis. Construct validity was measured by three criteria, namely, reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The composite reliability of all the variables ranged between 0.954 and 0.969, thereby indicating adequate reliability.

*******Please insert Table 2 here*******

As shown in Table 2, all factor loadings and AVE values were greater than 0.5, thereby indicating acceptable convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010). In Table 3, inter-construct correlations between any two random variables were below 0.85, thereby indicating acceptable discriminant validity (Kline, 2005). In addition, correlation coefficients were below 0.75, further confirming the absence of multicollinearity problems among the independent variables (Tsui et al., 1995).

*******Please insert Table 3 here*******

4.2. Model Fit and Testing of Hypothesized Relationships

The model fit indices used in the present study included the ratio of the chi-square (χ^2) to the degree of freedom (*df*), comparative fit index (CFI), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted GFI (AGFI), normed fit index (NFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). A model is generally considered acceptable if the values of CFI, NFI, and GFI are greater than 0.9. The present study showed AGFI > 0.8, RMSEA < 0.08, and $\chi^2/df < 5$ (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2010). Table 4 presents the standardized path coefficients, which indicate that the proposed model reasonably fit the data ($\chi^2/df = 4.003$; GFI = 0.907; AGFI = 0.878; NFI = 0.957; CFI = 0.967; RMSEA = 0.068). The proposed relationship between self-brand congruity and brand attitude (H1) was supported by the corresponding estimate of 0.678 ($t = 18.369$, $p < 0.001$). The standardized path coefficient from self-brand congruity upon BAB (H2) was 0.602 ($t = 16.610$, $p < 0.001$). These findings indicated that self-brand congruity is a significant predictor of both brand attitudes (H1) and BAB (H2). The proposed positive correlation between brand attitude and BAB (H3) was supported by a smaller, but still statistically significant estimate of 0.314 ($t = 10.172$, $p < 0.001$).

*******Please insert Table 4 here*******

5. Discussion

The available literature indicates that residents' attitudes are a very important contributor to destination brand equity. In particular, positive brand-related behavior, i.e., BAB of residents, is identified as a potentially cost-effective and efficient method of brand promotion (Andersson & Ekman, 2009; Kavaratzis, 2004; Litvin et al., 2008). Brand self-congruity and brand attitude are thought to be significant antecedents of resident BAB. Self-

congruity has been extensively studied in the marketing of products and services but not in that for tourist destinations (Boksberger, Dolnicar, Laesser, & Randle, 2011; Litvin & Goh, 2002). However, the subject is thought to be just as important in the context of residents and destination brands.

The present study has empirically demonstrated these important relationships. SEM showed self-congruity to be an even stronger direct predictor of BAB (standardized path coefficient = 0.602) than brand attitude (standardized path coefficient = 0.314). Moreover, congruity with the destination brand was also found to strongly influence brand attitude (standardized path coefficient = 0.678). The pathway from attitude to behavioral intention/behavior has been extensively studied (Ajzen, 1985; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Olson & Zanna, 1993) and brand attitude is the most widely cited possible antecedent of BAB in the literature (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Chen & Dwyer, 2010; Kemp & Childers et al., 2012; Simpson & Siguaw, 2008). The findings of the present study indicate that the suppositions in the literature are correct.

Hankinson (2004) claims that residents are part of a branded product and that the representation of their identity is a significantly sensitive issue. In view of the strong positive relationship found, the connection between self-congruity among residents and destination brand should be seriously considered by DMOs, particularly when working on the core values of a destination brand. The findings of the present study also suggest that DMOs should always obtain residents' support for brand development and implementation, because this is more likely to transform residents into valuable assets as brand ambassadors. In particular, the issue of identity representation should be considered given the strong influence of self-congruity on attitude and behavioral intention.

However, whether this result implies that brand developers should base their destination brand identity around residents' or tourists' ideal representations of place and culture remains to be discussed. According to Kladou, Kavaratzis, Rigopoulou, and Salonika (2017), tourists' visit intentions are only marginally influenced by the destination brand name, logo and tagline; hence, they suggested prioritizing other aspects of branding, such as promoting traits and characteristics of the destination. By contrast, residents' identification with a destination brand is a strong catalyst for different types of brand advocacy (Palmer, Koenig-Lewis, & Jones, 2013; Zenker et al., 2017; Zenker & Petersen, 2014). As such, the branding of a destination for tourists should be designed in a way that simultaneously appeals to residents (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Stylidis, Sit, & Biran, 2016).

Our findings have several practical implications. The present study explains the relationship between the needs and desires of residents as regards their destination brand, especially emphasizing the need for perceived self-congruity. According to Anholt (2011), the identified needs and desires can be incorporated into the destination branding strategy by substance (e.g., economic, legal, political, social, cultural, and educational activities) and by symbolic actions (e.g., innovations, structures, legislation, reforms, investments, institutions, or policies).

In other words, if DMOs understand the motivation of residents toward a destination brand, they can act to emphasize these aspects in the branding strategy; for example, funds can be allocated to enhance these factors. Thus, the branding strategy can lead to a "residents' buy-in" to the brand and inspire a treatment of tourists in a manner that reflects the brand

values (Anholt, 2011). Stylidis et al. (2016) also note that local authorities can use residents' input in re-branding and subsequently rejuvenating a destination for potential tourists.

The present study has added to the understanding of self-congruity in the context of the destination branding process. Although self-congruity is a reasonably well-established concept in tourism studies, relatively few researchers have previously connected it to the residents' stake in a brand (Choo & Park, 2009; Choo et al., 2011). Although the congruity concept has been shown to influence the brand-related attitude and behavior of tourists (Chon, 1992; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011), the current study provides the first empirical evidence that such is also the case for resident stakeholders. In addition to demonstrating this relationship, this study also proved that self-congruity is the strongest antecedent of brand attitude and BAB. This result allows for an entirely new application of congruity in the field of tourism, thereby emphasizing a high level of importance for internal stakeholders in the destination branding process.

Finally, the present study has demonstrated that positive brand attitude can influence BAB. The extant literature has well documented that tourism development renders tremendous impacts upon the host community in terms of economy, social-culture, and environment; some changes are positive and others are negative (Lee, 2013). The sustainable development of a tourism destination is closely contingent on participation and support from residents, which is helpful in maximizing the positive benefits of tourism development (Gursoy, Chi, & Dyer, 2010). In turn, the generation of these positive benefits concerning the tourism industry will enhance residents' support for tourism development (Stylidis, Biran, Sit, & Szivas, 2014). Many past studies have focused on the negative consequences of negative brand attitude among residents (e.g., counter-branding and public indignation), instead of the positive behaviors of residents—whether planned or spontaneous.

The results presented here show the benefits of a positive brand attitude. A significant concept is added to existing theory, that is, residents are both an ethical responsibility and a possible source of support for destination brand efforts. The involvement of residents in the destination branding process was typically considered an exclusively socio-cultural issue in past research. When speaking about legitimacy related to destination branding, the literature is typically concerned with a call for democracy, legality, bottom-up participation, and transparency as a duty for DMOs (Eshuis & Edwards, 2012; Riezebos, 2007). Most previous studies have been highly concerned only with socio-cultural implications and often portray branding authorities as overbearing or hostile toward residents. By investigating the ways by which we can access the possible economic benefits of residents' destination BAB, the present study has linked the socio-cultural implications, such as ethical and moral responsibilities of marketers, to potential competitive advantages, such as contribution to destination brand equity. This situation helps to relate socio-cultural and economic implications, and hence, reduce the persistent divide between these two concepts in the literature. This contribution hopefully paves the way for further studies on the positive destination brand attitude and behavior of residents.

6. Conclusion

Despite our findings, we must acknowledge this study's several limitations. First, BAB was measured as destination BAB intention. Traditionally, behavioral intention has been linked to subsequent behavior (Ajzen, 1985), because it is assumed to precede effective action. However, researchers acknowledge that the road from intention to behavior may be complicated (Morowitz, Johnson, & Schmittlein, 1993). This situation might have biased the findings because residents' attitude toward the present brand was measured, but their behavioral intentions were directed towards the future. In response, the qualitative pre-study showed that HKPRs were not consistently aware of the possibility of showing effective behavior (e.g., online platforms and events) and thus "Given the chance" was added to the relevant items. This limitation could have resulted in biased answers. Hence, we must consider that BAB intention does not automatically lead to effective BAB and that this may have biased the study findings.

Next, the comparatively limited number or resident studies can be explained by the fact that residents are often a highly heterogeneous community and therefore realistic sampling of respondents is very difficult. This research has opted for a quota sampling, considering residents' age, gender, and area of residency, based on the relevant proportions of HKPRs (Hong Kong Census and Statistic Department, 2012). However, there is an inherent issue with the choice of online sampling. The study was conducted online and thus primarily targeted the habitual Internet users, thereby limiting the realistic representation of older generations and people without personal computers. The use of an online panel with financial remuneration may have limited the participation of high-income groups in the survey. Although Internet use in Hong Kong is considered high, with 80% of households owning a personal computer (Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2013), and we selected a quota of older respondents, every sub-stratum of the population might not have been accurately sampled.

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Tables

Table 1. Sampling proportion for Hong Kong residents

	Gender	
Age	**Male**	**Female**
18–24	7%	7%
25–34	13%	12%
35–44	14%	16%
45–54	13%	18%
		Area of residency
17%		Hong Kong Island
33%		Kowloon
50%		New territories and outlying islands

Table 2. Validity and reliability tests of the measurement models

Measurement items	**Factor loadings**	**AVE**	**Composite reliability**
Self-brand congruity		**0.8398**	**0.9692**
The "Hong Kong—Asia's World City" brand is a lot like me.	0.878		
The "Hong Kong—Asia's World City" brand reflects who I am.	0.933		
The "Hong Kong—Asia's World City" brand is how I see myself.	0.935		
If I would be a brand, I would be "Hong Kong—Asia's World City."	0.917		
The "Hong Kong—Asia's World City" image corresponds to my self-image in many respects.	0.930		
Through the "Hong Kong—Asia's World City" brand, I can express what I find important in life.	0.904		
Brand attitude		**0.8057**	**0.954**
I like the "Hong Kong—Asia's World City" brand.	0.905		
"Hong Kong—Asia's World City" is a good brand.	0.905		
I have a positive impression of the "Hong Kong—Asia's World City" brand.	0.889		
I find the "Hong Kong—Asia's World City" brand very likable.	0.921		
I like the "Hong Kong—Asia's World City" brand as a promotional tool for Hong Kong.	0.867		
BAB		**0.7608**	**0.9662**
Given the chance, I would write about "Hong Kong—Asia's World City" online so my internet-contacts would know this brand.	0.893		
Given the chance, I would pass information about the "Hong Kong—Asia's World City" brand to my friends online.	0.891		
Given the chance, I would maximize the diffusion of the "Hong Kong—Asia's World City" brand online to make sure my internet-contacts would know.	0.892		
I plan to participate in future "Hong Kong—Asia's World City" brand-related promotional events and activities (e.g., festivals and exhibitions).	0.823		
Given the chance, I would contribute to the development of the "Hong Kong—Asia's World City" brand (e.g., express related concerns and join related online activities).	0.876		
I plan to participate in future "Hong Kong—Asia's World City" brand development (e.g., express related concerns and join related online activities).	0.866		
Given the chance, I would use "Hong Kong—Asia's World City" promotional materials frequently.	0.871		
Given the chance, I would use "Hong Kong—Asia's World City" promotional materials whenever appropriate.	0.871		

Given the chance, I would use "Hong Kong—Asia's World City" promotional material in the near future.	0.865

Table 3. Correlation coefficients among the variables

	Mean	S.D.	Self-brand congruity	Brand attitude	BAB intention
Self-brand congruity	4.61	1.13	0.916		
Brand attitude	5.211	1.03	0.678	0.898	
BAB	4.81	0.99	0.833	0.749	0.872

Note: Inter-correlation coefficients are below the diagonal, and squared root of AVE estimates are presented on the diagonal.

Table 4. Structural parameter estimates and goodness-of-fit indices

Hypothesized path	Standardized path coefficients	*t*-Value	Results
H1 Self-brand congruity → Brand attitude	0.678	18.369	Supported
H2 Self-brand congruity → BAB	0.602	16.610	Supported
H3 Brand attitude→ BAB	0.314	10.172	Supported
Model fit indices $\chi 2/df = 4.003$; GFI = 0.907; AGFI = 0.878; NFI = 0.957; CFI = 0.967; RMSEA = 0.068			

Figures

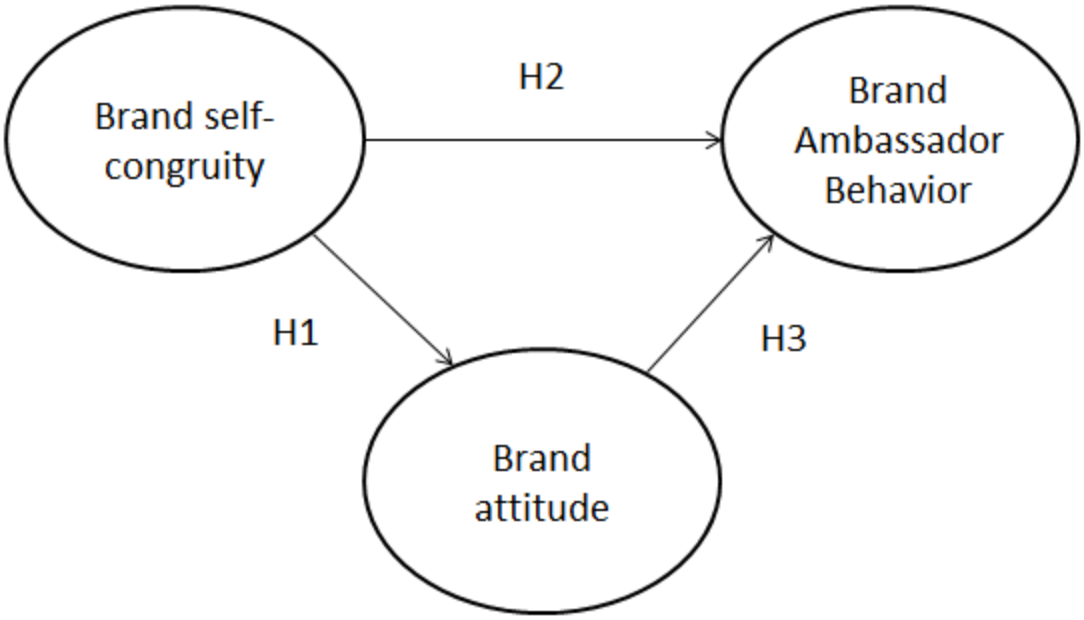

Figure 1: Conceptual model of this study