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Building brand credibility: The role of involvement, identification, reputation and attachment

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A B S T R A C T

The aim of this study is to propose a conceptual framework for building destination brand credibility. This research proposes a novel framework to explore the antecedents of destination brand credibility based on four constructs: enduring culture involvement, destination brand identification, destination brand reputation and destination brand attachment. The data used to assess the proposed research model was collected through in-person-administered surveys conducted in Indonesia and Spain. The study shows that destination brand credibility is influenced by enduring cultural involvement, destination brand identification and destination brand reputation. In addition, destination brand attachment partially mediates the relationship between destination credibility and the three antecedents. The findings contribute to the relevant literature by improving the knowledge of the antecedents of destination brand attachment and destination brand credibility.

1. Introduction

Branding helps destinations to build and communicate a unique identification to differentiate themselves from their competitors in order to appeal tourists and engender their loyalty (Morgan and Pritchard, 2004; Soltani et al., 2018). Brand credibility is especially important in environments where consumer uncertainty arises due to the asymmetry of information available as the organizations or firms have more information to value their products than consumers (Rieh and Danielson, 2007). In that environment, according to signalling theory, brands play a crucial role in how the consumer evaluates the product information (e. g., attributes) and makes his/her choice (Erdem et al., 2002). Likewise, the destination brand is influenced by its perceived credibility as the extent to which the destination brand is able and willing to deliver its promises (Erdem and Swait, 2004).

Recently, the concept of brand credibility has been applied in the tourism domain (e.g., Loureiro, 2017; Rather et al., 2020; Veasna et al., 2013). Previous research showed that destination brand credibility can predict destination image (Kani et al., 2017), destination brand equity (Del Barrio-García and Prados-Peña, 2019), tourists' attachment (Reitsamer and Brunner-Sperdin, 2021), and tourists' intention to visit and willingness to recommend the destination (Can et al., 2021;

Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2020).

Despite these critical outcomes, there is a lack of research regarding the antecedents of destination brand credibility. Several empirical studies from different contexts in the branding literature show that brand credibility is influenced by diverse antecedents, such as brand experience and image consistency (e.g., Khan and Fatma, 2017; Nayeem et al., 2019), but as of now, only a few recent studies have addressed the drivers of destination brand credibility. In this regard, researchers have shown that destination brand experience (Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2020) and the creation of joint advertisements with a well-known tourist brand (Can et al., 2021) can have a positive influence on destination brand credibility. Further research is therefore necessary in order to understand the factors that influence the visitor's perception of the destination brand credibility and, consequently, their choice. In this vein, based on the consumer-brand relationship theory (Fournier, 1998), this research is intended to contribute improving the understanding of the impact of the four possible antecedents of destination brand credibility: enduring culture involvement, brand identification, brand reputation and brand attachment.

In the literature on consumer behaviour, involvement is considered to be a key indicator of consumers' motivational states regarding a product that determines how they process the information received and,

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therefore, the brand credibility (Baek and King, 2011). Similarly, it has been proven that, in destination management, tourist involvement influences the perception of the destination image (Molinillo et al., 2018). The tourism literature has also shown that brand identification has an influence on destination brand trust (Kumar and Kaushik, 2018), which is a fundamental element of credibility (Erdem and Swait, 2004). Likewise, the literature on consumer behaviour has established that brand credibility is also affected by brand reputation (Herbig and Milewicz, 1995) and brand attachment (Dwivedi et al., 2019), although there are no prior studies that evaluate these relationships in the context of tourist destinations. This gives rise to a research question: can enduring culture involvement, brand identification, brand reputation, and brand attachment help to explain destination brand credibility?

Thus, this study aims to offer an original conceptual framework of building destination brand credibility. To this end, three variables are proposed as the antecedents of destination brand credibility, which are enduring culture involvement, destination brand identification and destination brand reputation. Besides, this study also examines the mediating role of destination brand attachment.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge in destination branding. First, this study offers a novel framework for building destination brand credibility. Four critical factors are proposed as the antecedents of destination brand credibility. Second, this study examines the mediating role of brand attachment. Through this, this study also contributes to the tourism literature on how to develop a strong brand attachment. Third, this study validates the research model in two countries that have different cultures and socioeconomic development: Indonesia and Spain. Moreover, this study also has important implications for destination brand management. Our results show that destination marketers could increase brand credibility to attract tourist flows through activities that improve the destination's reputation, increase visitor involvement in the destination culture and visitors' identification with the destination brand.

2. Hypothesis development

Destination brand has been defined as the representation of symbolic elements (i.e., name, symbol, logo, and slogan) that identifies and differentiates the destination, conveys the promise of a memorable experience and reinforces its recall (Blain et al., 2005). This study suggests that, based on consumer-brand relationship theory (Fournier, 1998), tourists' interaction with the destination brand leads to a relationship in which tourists anthropomorphize the brand in order to articulate their own vision of the relationships, in this case, through destination brand credibility. We therefore focus on certain aspects of the relationship with the brand (see Fournier, 1998) that have not been widely studied within the context of destinations, such as: commitment (i.e., involvement), self-connection (i.e., brand identification), brand partner quality (i.e., brand reputation), and love and passion for the brand (i.e., brand attachment).

Brand credibility refers to the extent to which an individual believes in the trustworthiness and expertise of a brand (Erdem and Swait, 2004). This construct is very important to the consumer's selection process since, according to signalling theory, it is used as an indication or information to reduce uncertainty (Loureiro, 2017). Brand credibility is influenced by actions and strategies developed by organizations (Loureiro and Panchapakesan, 2016). In this research, destination brand credibility refers to the experienced credibility, understood as the level of trust in a destination brand that a tourist has gained after visiting it (Tham et al., 2013). That is, the credibility that the tourist perceives from the destination brand once he has visited it and can contrast the information he/she received previously with his/her perceptions after an actual experience. Hilligoss and Rieh (2008) suggest that experienced credibility is essential because it significantly influences the future individual's behaviour, for example, re-purchasing or recommending the product. In fact, a tourist recommendation or word-of-mouth based on

his/her own experience strongly influences the choice behaviour of other tourists (Litvin et al., 2008). The destination reputation perceived by tourists in their experience will affect the destination brand credibility. This study proposes that destination brand credibility is influenced by four antecedents: enduring culture involvement, destination brand identification, destination brand reputation and destination brand attachment.

The relationship between consumer and brand produced sensations, feelings and cognitions that influence the development of an emotional bond or attachment towards the brand (Madadi et al., 2021; Thomson et al., 2005). This "brand attachment reflects the bond that connects a consumer with a specific brand and involves feelings towards the brand" (Malär et al., 2011, 36). Therefore, brand attachment involves the cognitive and affective connection between the brand and the self, as well as positive feelings and memories about the brand (Park et al., 2010). Tourists can develop an emotional attachment towards a destination brand (Huang et al., 2017; Japutra et al., 2020). This study argues that destination brand attachment mediates the effect of enduring cultural involvement, destination brand identification and destination brand reputation on destination brand credibility.

Involvement is defined as "a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests" (Zaichkowsky, 1985, 342). Involvement has been also associated with customer engagement (Bilro et al., 2019). Enduring culture involvement refers to the long-term importance a culture has to an individual (Hou et al., 2005). The more involved tourists evaluate the experience more positively (Mowen et al., 1998) and perceived higher destination brand equity (Shafaei, 2017). Highly involved cultural tourists are more likely to enjoy cognitive, affective (Whang et al., 2016) and symbolic destination attributes (McCain and Ray, 2003). Therefore, this study posits that tourists who are more involved in the destination culture became more satisfied with the experience and develop stronger brand attachment. Previous studies have empirically shown that enduring involvement with destination attributes influences positively on destination attachment (Brown et al., 2016; Hou et al., 2005; Prayag and Ryan, 2012). Moreover, a tourist highly involved in a product category will be more willing to apply more cognitive resources to gather and processing information to assess brand strengths and weaknesses (Krishnamurthy and Kumar 2018) and credibility (Schuler and Christmann, 2011). The more involved consumer is, the more important the brand is for him/her (Zaichkowsky, 1985). If a consumer has an enduring involvement with a brand that he/she consumes, in that case, it is expected that the consumption experience reinforces the perception of the brand, which will positively influence the attitude toward the brand (Gill et al., 1988). Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1. Enduring culture involvement positively affects destination brand attachment.

H2. Enduring culture involvement positively affects destination brand credibility.

Brand identification is a symbolic or self-expressive consumption of the brand that consumers use to express their social identity (Aaker, 1997). The social identity theory postulates that individuals define and enhance their identity through the belonging to social groups from which they incorporate positive characteristics of said groups within their social identity (Tajfel, 1974). Brands help consumers feel part of a certain social group and different from other groups (Wolter et al., 2016). Consumers use brands to define their social identities based on the brand symbolic value (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). Thus, "tourists express their social identity and sense of belonging to a social group through identification with a tourism destination brand" (Ekinci et al., 2013, 714).

When the brand enhances and enriches the consumer's self, an emotional bond is developed (Park et al., 2010). Previous studies in the marketing (Albert et al., 2013; Rather et al., 2018; Zhou et al., 2012) and

tourism destination fields (Zenker et al., 2017) have shown that brand identification positively impacts brand attachment. Brand identification also has an effect on brand trust. The consumer identified with a brand believes that their consumption reinforces their self-congruence, so they will trust it (Han and Hyun, 2013); likewise, the positive emotional bonds that are generated in the identification process will positively affect brand trust (Dunn and Schweitzer, 2005) and the consumer-brand relationship (Le, 2021). Previous research in hospitality and tourism environment have found that brand identification has a positive effect on brand trust (Kumar and Kaushik, 2018; Rather, 2018; So et al., 2013). Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3. Destination brand identification positively affects destination brand attachment.

H4. Destination brand identification positively affects destination brand credibility.

Reputation refers to the aggregate perception of outsiders on the salient characteristics of brands. Reputation positively influences satisfaction, perceived quality and loyalty (Loureiro and Kastenholz, 2011). Developing brand reputation means more than keeping consumers satisfied; it is something a company earns over time and refers to how various audiences evaluate the brand (Veloutsou and Moutinho, 2009). The brand's concept and the brand image, and as a consequence its reputation will be managed over the brand's life, via the selection of brand expression, its introduction in the market and its further expansion, defence and enforcement over time (Park et al., 1986). Therefore, destination brand reputation can be understood as a set of destination descriptive features (e.g., physical environment, facilities, accessibility, accommodation, attractions, culture), benefits (functional, experiential and symbolic), and attitudes (overall evaluations of the brand) held in tourist memory.

Previous studies have shown that the perceived destination attractiveness (Cheng et al., 2013; Hou et al., 2005), and perceived destination ability to satisfy tourists (Lee and Hyun, 2016) positively affect destination brand attachment. This study posits that those tourists who perceive a favourable reputation of the destination brand tend to develop positive emotional attachment towards the destination brand through the perceived attractions and satisfaction from experiences. Moreover, destination brand reputation also influences destination brand credibility through the ability shown by the destination to fulfil its promises so that tourists have confidence in its reliability and integrity. Brand reputation is one of the primary contributors to the perceived quality of the products carrying the brand name since the brand's current reputation will influence the prediction for its actions (Veloutsou and Moutinho, 2009). These authors argue that customers anticipate a brand will meet their expectations based on its existing reputation. Customers will perceive a brand as unreliable and untrustworthy when it does not deliver what it promises (Herbig and Milewicz, 1993). Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5. Destination brand reputation positively affects destination brand attachment.

H6. Destination brand reputation positively affects destination brand credibility.

Lastly, brand attachment has a positive impact on brand credibility. As noted above, trustworthiness and expertise are two brand credibility dimensions (Erdem and Swait, 2004; Sweeney and Swait, 2008). Trust has both a cognitive and an affective component in service relationships (Johnson and Grayson, 2005). Attachment refers to the emotional bonds formed between human beings, but also between humans and animals, objects, destinations (Loureiro, 2014), and even brands (Loureiro and Sarmento, 2019). Brand attachment is associated with strong emotions such as affection, passion and connection (Thomson et al., 2005). Intense emotions shape customers' beliefs towards brands such as trust (Yim et al., 2008). Even, strong attachment could intensify negative

affective state directed towards the brand (Japutra et al., 2021).

When consumers develop strong emotional bonds with a brand, they are more likely to rely on the brand (Kang et al., 2017). Brand attachment reinforces brand credibility by enhancing its affective component (Belaid and Behi, 2011). Previous studies have empirically shown the direct and indirect positive effect of brand attachment on brand trust (Belaid and Behi, 2011; Kang et al., 2017) and brand credibility (Dwivedi et al., 2019). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H7. Destination brand attachment positively affects destination brand credibility.

Fig. 1 shows the research model that guides this study.

3. A validation study from two countries: Indonesia and Spain

3.1. Measures

All of the measurements of the constructs included in the questionnaire were adapted from previous studies. Enduring culture involvement was assessed using three items adapted from Whang et al. (2016). Destination brand identification was assessed using three items adapted from Yuksel et al. (2010). Destination brand reputation was assessed using three items adapted from Chen and Tsai (2007). Destination brand attachment was measured using three items adapted from Thomson et al. (2005). Destination brand credibility was measured using five items adapted from Veasna et al. (2013). All the construct were operationalized using a seven-point Likert-type scale, from "1 = strongly disagree" to "7 = strongly agree." Using a balanced formulation of scale categories (i.e., seven-point Likert scales) reduces the possibility of measurement errors (Fotiadis and Stylos, 2017).

Details on the measurement can be seen in Appendix 1. A questionnaire was developed in English. Since the respondents were not using English as their first language, a back-translation method was used. The questionnaire was translated into Indonesian and back-translated to English. The back-translation method was used to ensure that the translation of the items would have the same meaning as the original items. Similarly, with Spanish respondents, a back-translation method was used. The translation was conducted from English to Spanish and back to English. Pre-tests were conducted to ensure that there is no issue with the questionnaire.

3.2. Data collection

Data from Indonesian and Spanish tourists was collected to assess the conceptual model. Samples were collected from two countries with different cultures in order to establish the external validity of the research model. A marketing research company distributed the questionnaire in each country through a face-to-face structured interview conducted by professional interviewers. The interviewers were trained in the subject, objectives and context of the study.

The questionnaire was distributed in the five regions of Jakarta (Indonesia), Malaga and Madrid (Spain) in several public locations (e.g., parks and open spaces, shopping malls, transport stations), on different days in a two-week period in order to gather data from different profiles of participants. Although the sampling method was non-probabilistic in order to minimize the selection bias, we created a list of possible locations and then used a simple random sample method to select the places for data collection. Participants at each location were approached using a systematic procedure after choosing a random number. All participants were approached under the same conditions and the nature and purpose of the research study were disclosed to participants in order to minimize coverage error (Fotiadis and Stylos, 2017). Participation was voluntary. Screening questions were used to qualify participants. The respondents were asked to think about holiday destinations and then enter the name of one they previously visited as spontaneous recall. Then, they were asked to answer a series of questions regarding the
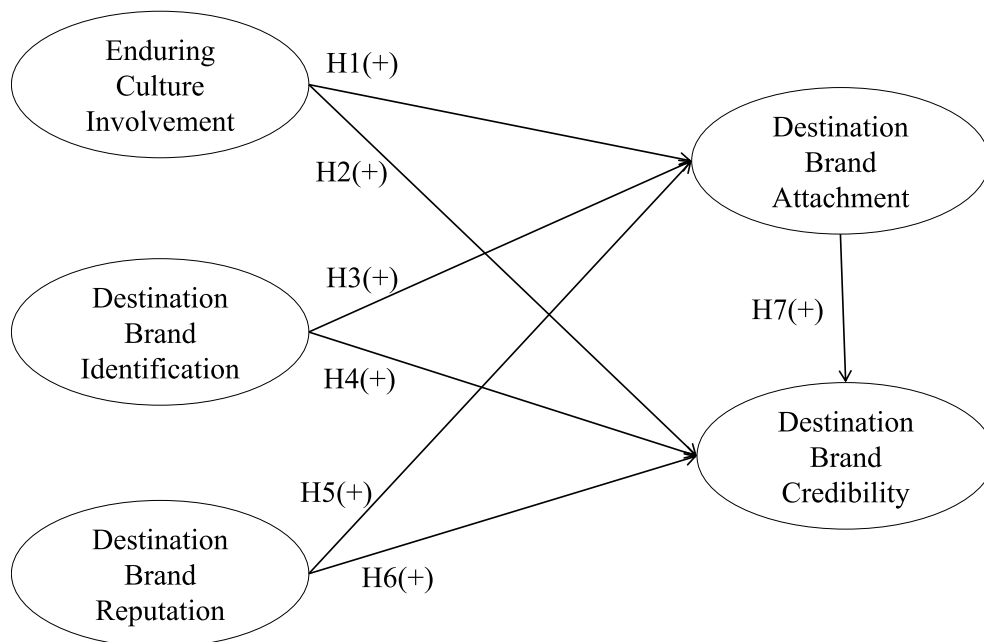
Fig. 1. Research model.

chosen holiday destination as a destination brand. The questionnaire ended with several demographic questions.

In total, 501 participants responded to the survey (350 Indonesian and 151 Spanish). For the study conducted in Indonesia, 57.7% were female, 51.1% were above 25 years old, 72.6% had obtained an undergraduate degree and 42.9% earned above 500 euros annually. For the study conducted in Spain, 56.3% were male, 40.4% were above 25 years old, 51% had obtained an undergraduate degree and 42.4% earned above 5000 euros annually. The characteristics of the sample approximately reproduce the population distribution of each country by gender and age. The research model was assessed through structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis using AMOS 21 (Hair et al., 2018).

4. Study 1: Indonesia

4.1. Validity and reliability of the measures

A measurement model was created to assess the validity and reliability of the measures. Before constructing the measurement model, the univariate normality of the items was checked. The normality was checked based on the absolute value of the skewness and kurtosis. The absolute value of skewness and kurtosis less than 2 should be considered to reflect a reasonably normal distribution (Kline, 1998). Since the absolute values of the skewness and kurtosis of the items are around $\pm$ 2, normality is achieved. The KMO statistics value is 0.91, indicating that the sample size is adequate.

Next, we checked on the results of the confirmatory factor analysis. The fit statistics of the measurement model produced a reasonably good fit: $\chi^2(80) = 191.46$, $\chi2/df = 2.39$, GFI = 0.93, NFI = 0.95, CFI = 0.97, and RMSEA = 0.06. The adequacy of the measures was assessed by evaluating the validity and the reliability of the constructs. Convergent validity was assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE), whereas discriminant validity was assessed through comparing the AVE from each construct with its squared correlations with the other constructs (cf. Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Table 1 also displays the means and standard deviations.

As indicated in Table 1, all AVE scores were above the threshold of 0.50, indicating convergent validity was achieved. The AVE scores were also greater than all of the squared correlations, indicating discriminant validity was achieved. Cronbach's alpha scores of the constructs exceed

Table 1
Correlations and discriminant validity of measures – study 1.

	Mean	SD	CA	1	2	3	4	5
1. Enduring culture involvement	4.90	1.38	0.91	**.77**				
2. Destination brand identification	5.22	1.15	0.88	.57	**.71**			
3. Destination brand reputation	5.66	1.03	0.82	.51	.62	**.61**		
4. Destination brand attachment	5.87	1.07	0.91	.50	.75	.67	**.79**	
5. Destination brand credibility	5.08	1.16	0.89	.54	.63	.74	.65	**.74**

Note. SD: Standard deviation; CA: Cronbach's alpha. The diagonal values in bold indicate the average variances extracted (AVE). The scores in the lower diagonal indicate inter-construct correlations (IC).

0.60; indicating reliability was achieved (Malhotra, 2010).

4.2. Hypothesis testing

In order to test the hypotheses, a structural model was created. The proposed research hypotheses were examined from the standardized path coefficient and t-value, as shown in Table 2. Before testing the hypotheses, we checked for potential common method bias (CMB) issues. As suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003), we used Harman's one

Table 2
Result of structural equation analyses – study 1.

	Relationships	SPC	t-value
H1	Enduring culture involvement → D. brand attachment	.03	0.58[ns]
H2	Enduring culture involvement → D. brand credibility	.14	2.60**
H3	Destination brand identification → D. brand attachment	.53	8.23***
H4	Destination brand identification → D. brand credibility	.15	1.97*
H5	Destination brand reputation → D. brand attachment	.33	5.36***
H6	Destination brand reputation → D. brand credibility	.49	6.60***
H7	Destination brand attachment → D. brand credibility	.14	1.80*
Variance explained (R^2)			
Destination brand attachment		.63	
Destination brand credibility		.62	

Note. SPC: Standardized Path Coefficient; ***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$.

factor test. The results show that the first factor explains 52.55% of the variance. Although this is a bit over 50%, there are three factors with eigenvalues over 1. These results indicate that CMB does not pose a serious threat.

The model explained 63% of the variance in destination brand attachment and 62% of the variance in destination brand credibility. The results do not support H1 (SPC = 0.03, t = 0.58, p > .001), enduring culture involvement does not predict destination brand attachment. However, the results support H2 (SPC = 0.14, t = 2.60, p < .01), which state that enduring culture involvement positively affects destination brand credibility. The results support H3 (SPC = 0.53, t = 8.23, p < .001), which state that destination brand identification positively affects destination brand attachment. The results also support H4 (SPC = 0.15, t = 1.97, p < .05), destination brand identification positively affects destination brand credibility. H5 (SPC = 0.33, t = 5.36, p < .001) and H6 (SPC = 0.49, t = 6.60, p < .001) are supported; destination brand reputation positively affects destination brand attachment and destination brand credibility. Finally, the results also support H7 (SPC = 0.14, t = 1.80, p < .05), which states that destination brand attachment positively affects brand credibility.

4.3. Further analysis

Although we did not hypothesize the mediation of destination brand attachment, we checked for mediating effects by creating a composite score for each variable and then performed mediation analysis based on Hayes. We performed a bootstrapping method of 5000 sub samples through Hayes Model 4. The other independent variables were set as covariates. The results show that the indirect effect of enduring culture involvement on destination brand credibility through destination brand attachment is significant (Beta = 0.0169, 95% CI: 0.0012, 0.0427). Since the direct effect of enduring culture involvement on destination brand credibility is significant (Beta = 0.1211, p < .01), destination brand attachment partially mediates the relationship. The results also show that the indirect effect of destination brand identification on destination brand credibility through destination brand attachment is significant (Beta = 0.0865, 95% CI: 0.0159, 0.1633). Since the direct effect is also significant (Beta = 0.1816, p < .001), the mediation is partial mediation. Similarly, the indirect effect of destination brand reputation is also significant (Beta = 0.0548, 95% CI: 0.0117, 0.1000). The direct effect is significant (Beta = 0.4428, p < .001), thus, the mediation is partial mediation.

5. Study 2: Spain

5.1. Validity and reliability of the measures

Another questionnaire was developed to collect data from Spanish. In total, 151 participants responded to the survey. The measures were the same as the survey that was developed for Indonesian. The KMO statistics value is 0.88, indicating that the sample size is adequate. The fit statistics of the measurement model show a good fit. The comparison of the fit statistics between the two studies can be seen in Table 3. The factor loading scores range from 0.69 to 0.94. The AVE scores range from 0.52 to 0.83, indicating convergent validity is achieved. The inter-construct correlations range from 0.39 to 0.71. There were no AVE scores below the squared inter-construct correlations, indicating discriminant validity is achieved. The Cronbach's alpha scores ranges from 0.77 to 0.94, indicating reliability is achieved. Details of the

correlations can be seen in Table 4.

5.2. Hypothesis testing

Before testing the hypotheses, we also checked for CMB issues. The results of Harman's one factor test show that the first factor explains 42.03% of the variance. The results also show that there are four factors with eigenvalues over 1. These results indicate that CMB is not an issue. The proposed research hypotheses were examined from the standardized path coefficient and t-value as shown on Table 5. The model explained 65% of the variance in destination brand attachment and 55% of the variance in destination brand credibility. The results support H1 (SPC = 0.32, t = 4.67, p < .001) and H2 (SPC = 0.31, t = 3.43, p < .001), which state that enduring culture involvement positively affects destination brand attachment and destination brand credibility. The results also support H3 (SPC = 0.51, t = 6.87, p < .001) and H4 (SPC = 0.19, t = 1.83, p < .05). Destination brand identification positively affects destination brand attachment and destination brand credibility. H5 (SPC = 0.20, t = 2.64, p < .01) and H6 (SPC = 0.15, t = 1.68, p < .05) are also supported. Destination brand reputation positively affects destination brand attachment and destination brand credibility. Finally, the results support H7 (SPC = 0.27, t = 2.15, p < .05). Destination brand attachment positively affects destination brand credibility.

5.3. Further analysis

Similar to Study 1, we checked for the mediating effects through a bootstrapping method (5000 sub samples) using Hayes Model 4. The results show that the indirect effect of enduring culture involvement on destination brand credibility through destination brand attachment is significant (Beta = 0.0679, 95% CI: 0.0064, 0.1404). Since the direct effect of enduring culture involvement on destination brand credibility is significant (Beta = 0.2460, p < .001), destination brand attachment partially mediates the relationship. The results also show that the indirect effect of destination brand identification on destination brand credibility through destination brand attachment is significant (Beta = 0.1128, 95% CI: 0.0122, 0.2102). Since the direct effect is also significant (Beta = 0.1617, p < .05), the mediation is partial mediation. Similarly, the indirect effect of destination brand reputation is also significant (Beta = 0.0647, 95% CI: 0.0001, 0.1410). The direct effect is not significant (Beta = 0.1475, p > .05), thus, the mediation is full mediation.

6. Discussion and conclusions

6.1. Theoretical contributions and managerial implications

This paper has attempted to investigate the antecedents of destination brand credibility. In particular, three critical constructs are

Table 4
Correlations and discriminant validity of measures – study 2.

	Mean	SD	CA	1	2	3	4	5
1. Enduring culture involvement	4.87	1.59	0.93	**.81**				
2. Destination brand identification	5.11	1.43	0.87	.39	**.71**			
3. Destination brand reputation	5.97	1.00	0.77	.39	.36	**.52**		
4. Destination brand attachment	5.52	1.42	0.94	.60	.71	.50	**.83**	
5. Destination brand credibility	5.05	1.32	0.85	.61	.56	.48	.67	**.66**

Note. SD: Standard deviation; CA: Cronbach's alpha. The diagonal values in bold indicate the average variances extracted (AVE). The scores in the lower diagonal indicate inter-construct correlations (IC).

Table 3
Fit statistics of study 1 and study 2.

	X^2	df	X^2/df	GFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Study 1	191.46	80	2.39	.93	.95	.97	.06
Study 2	121.01	80	1.51	.91	.93	.97	.06

Table 5
Result of structural equation analyses – study 2.

	Relationships	SPC	t-value
H1	Enduring culture involvement → D. brand attachment	.32	4.67***
H2	Enduring culture involvement → D. brand credibility	.31	3.43***
H3	Destination brand identification → D. brand attachment	.51	6.87***
H4	Destination brand identification → D. brand credibility	.19	1.83*
H5	Destination brand reputation → D. brand attachment	.20	2.64**
H6	Destination brand reputation → D. brand credibility	.15	1.68*
H7	Destination brand attachment → D. brand credibility	.27	2.15*
Variance explained (R^2)			
Destination brand attachment		.65	
Destination brand credibility		.55	

Note. SPC: Standardized Path Coefficient; ***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$.

proposed as the antecedents, which are: enduring culture involvement, destination brand identification and destination brand reputation. It proceeded to examine the mediating role of destination brand attachment between the relationships of the three constructs on destination brand credibility.

In general, the results are consistent with the literature and demonstrate the validity of the proposed conceptual model. The model fit is good in both studies (e.g., SRMR <0.08 and NFI >0.90), the value of the explained variance is acceptable (>60%), supporting all of the hypotheses, except H1 in the Indonesian sample. It is important to note that the results of both studies show that the four proposed antecedents positively contribute to destination brand credibility (H2, H4, H6 and H7 are supported). These findings imply several theoretical contributions and practical implications that should be discussed.

Specifically, first, this study partially supports the idea that enduring culture involvement positively affects destination brand attachment, since H1 was acceptable for the Spanish sample, but not the Indonesian sample. This may be due to the fact that, according to data from the World Tourism Organization (2020), Spanish tourists travel more to national destinations than Indonesian tourists, or even the possibility that there could be an influence of the cultural distance with the countries they visit; that is, there may be other factors that moderate or mediate this relationship of which we are currently unaware. This could explain why culture involvement does not contribute to creating attachment in the Indonesian sample. Whang, Yong and Ko (2016) showed that involvement towards a pop culture would help in creating a stronger cognitive and affective image. This study extends their study in two ways. First, it is not limited to pop culture but any of the destination's culture. Second, this study displays that creating an enduring culture involvement will not only help in making the destination's brand favourable images but also in creating positive feelings and connections with the destination brand. This study, which supports H2, also suggests that destination brand identification positively affects destination brand attachment. Hwang, Lee and Chen (2005) found that place attachment positively affects tourists' involvement. Our study extends the contributions made by these authors by showing that relationships with a destination through enduring culture involvement will end up in stronger attachment towards the brand. Therefore, in accordance with other studies (e.g., Gill et al., 1988; Schuler and Christmann, 2011), this research demonstrates that the more tourists enjoy the destination culture, the more favourable their attitude is towards the brand and, consequently, the more credible it appears to them.

Second, the findings show that destination brand identification has a positive direct effect on both destination brand attachment and destination brand credibility, supporting H3 and H4. This is consistent with Albert and Merunka (2013) study that found that brand identification positively affects brand love. They argue that when a consumer identifies him/herself with a brand, he/she will develop positive feelings towards the brand that will influence the evaluation of the brand in a more favourable way. Similarly, the results support H4, destination brand identification leads tourists to see it as more credible. These

results are in line with previous studies that demonstrate that brand identification has a favourable impact on brand trust (e.g., Kumar and Kumar 2018; Rather, 2018), and highlights the key role of brand identification as a primary antecedent of brand credibility in this model. Nevertheless, some studies, such as one by Rather et al. (2020), also confirm the opposite of this hypothesis, suggesting the need to study this relationship further in-depth.

Third, the findings display that destination brand reputation positively affects destination brand attachment and destination brand credibility, supporting H5 and H6. This result confirms previous studies (e.g., Loureiro and Kastenhotz, 2011) that established that having a positive reputation fosters a stronger relationship between individuals and the brand. This study extends Veasna, Wu and Huang's (2013) conclusions that argued a more favourable destination image would lead to a stronger cognitive attachment to a given destination. This study found that more favourable destination reputation would also help in creating a stronger affective attachment. In a way, individuals develop feelings (e.g., love, passion) towards the destination as a result of the destination's favourable reputation. The results also support H6, which states that destination brand reputation plays an important role as an antecedent of brand credibility. Previous studies (e.g., Chen, 2010; Cretu and Brodie, 2007; Kim and Hyun, 2011) found that positive images (e.g., strong reputation) contribute to higher credibility (e.g., perceived quality, trust). This study follows these arguments and finds that destination brand reputation influences destination brand credibility. If the destination brand has a favourable reputation, the destination brand will be considered as credible. Nevertheless, it is highly recommended to study this relationship further since some studies in the context of corporate reputation have found a significant relationship in the opposite sense (e.g., Hur et al., 2014).

Finally, the findings of the study show that destination brand attachment predicts destination brand credibility, supporting H7, and mediates the effect of enduring culture involvement, brand identification and brand reputation. Previous studies argued that source credibility is a predictor of attachment (e.g., Veasna et al., 2013; Chung and Han, 2017). However, this study shows that having a strong brand attachment also helps in creating high credibility for the destination brands. This finding is because having a strong attachment will create a bias evaluation towards the brand (Schmalz and Orth, 2012). In particular, these authors show that strongly attached consumers tend to judge the brand, given a piece of negative information, to be less unethical. Similarly, Jahn et al. (2012) found that for younger consumers, stronger brand attachment leads to greater trust. Thus, if the destination brand inspires positive feelings in the individuals, they would be more likely to believe that the destination brand is able to deliver on its promises.

These findings also provide important implications for people who manage destination brands. They should notice the importance of building a strong attachment to their destination brands since it will lead to higher credibility of the brand and will mediate the effect of other antecedents. There are ways of building destination brand attachment, particularly this study offers three important drivers of it. Creating a favourable destination reputation should be one of the priorities. Thus, it is advisable for destination management organizations (DMO) to control the factors that can influence their reputation, such as: the quality of public services, modes of transportation, the safety and cleanliness of the area, the services and information provided to tourists, and even their relationships with travel agents and tour operators. DMOs could also try to attract reputable firms such as hotels restaurants and retailers. DMOs should also increase visitor involvement in the destination culture. They could create a communication and participation strategy for tourists through online media (i.e., social media, internet, mobile apps, etc.) in order to facilitate interaction, improve knowledge of a destination's attractions and access to said attractions, the co-creation of positive experiences, and emotional identification with the destination brand. Not only that, but they could also create a dedicated site that fosters a

sense of community towards the culture as well as the destination brand itself. Through this, the visitors could identify themselves with the destination brand.

6.2. Limitations and further research

Although this study contributes to the body of knowledge, it is not without its limitations. First, the data were cross-sectional. Hence, it is hard to establish causal relationships between variables since it is a correlational study. Moreover, the non-probabilistic sampling limits the generalizability of research findings. Further studies should test this study's research model using a probability sampling method or an experimental design.

This study backs a specific direction of the relationships between variables, but we are aware of the ongoing debate on the direction of several relationships (e.g., brand reputation and brand credibility). Does favourable reputation lead to higher credibility or does higher credibility lead to favourable reputation? Several studies have shown support for both directions (e.g., Veasna et al., 2013). The answer to this may lie in other variables that might influence the relationship between the two constructs. For example, an individual's level of awareness and knowledge about the destination. Walker and Kent (2013) argued that higher awareness leads to higher credibility. Future studies should include additional variables that could play a role in explaining the relationship.

The measure of attachment that is used in this study only reflects positive emotions towards the destination brand. Park et al. (2010) conceptualised attachment to include not only affective bonding but also cognitive bonding. Thus, future studies should consider measuring attachment that reflects both types of bonding. Apart from the measures, future study should consider individual differences that might influence individuals' behaviours. A recent study has shown that travellers' mindsets play an important role in predicting intention to revisit and recommend (Japutra et al., 2019). It would be an interesting research avenue to see how mindsets affect the relationships between the constructs of the research model.

Lastly, this study does not include an analysis of the possible moderating effects. Future studies could contribute to improving the findings with an analysis of the moderating effect of variables such as tourists' age, gender and frequency of travel, among others. Furthermore, each tourist responded to the survey regarding the tourist destination of their choice. Future studies could analyse whether there are significant differences in the relationships within the model depending on the cultural proximity of the destination with tourists' home countries.

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Appendix B. Supplementary data

Supplementary data related to this article can be found at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102819.

Appendix 1. Measurement instrument – Study 1

Constructs and items	*M*	SD	Skew	Kurt	Factor Loading
Enduring culture involvement					
I love and enjoy this destination's culture	5.28	1.48	-.60	-.30	.88
I am a fan of this destination's culture	4.92	1.49	-.35	-.44	.96
I am more concerned about this destination's culture	4.49	1.54	-.15	-.50	.79
Destination brand identification					
I feel this destination is a part of me	5.40	1.25	-.52	-.13	.89
I identify strongly with this destination	5.12	1.27	-.34	-.25	.83
Visiting this destination says a lot about who I am	5.13	1.33	-.34	-.48	.80
Destination brand reputation					
A good name and reputation	5.84	1.13	-.75	-.16	.82
Hospitable and friendly environment	5.63	1.21	-.70	.09	.78
A good general level of service	5.51	1.23	-.74	.42	.74
Destination brand attachment					
I feel that I love this destination brand	5.98	1.12	−1.16	1.53	.92
I feel that I have a personal bond with this destination brand	5.64	1.26	-.95	1.01	.80
I feel passionate about this destination brand	5.98	1.09	−1.22	1.93	.93
Destination brand credibility					
Over time, my experiences with this destination brand led me to expect it to keep its promises	4.93	1.28	-.11	-.26	.85
This destination brand is committed to delivering on its claims	5.00	1.27	-.09	-.32	.91
This destination brand has a name you can trust	5.31	1.28	-.39	-.34	.82

Note. *M*: mean; SD: standard deviation; Skew: skewness; Kurt: kurtosis.

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