The impact of marketing on internal stakeholders in destination branding: The case of a musical city

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Abstract
The city and destination branding literatures stress the importance of brand image, with an emphasis on achieving differential and competitive positioning. However, an important part of building a successful branding strategy for a city or region is examining the needs of internal stakeholders. This research examines the impact that the marketing of a city or region’s brand has on internal stakeholders, specifically its residents. It seeks to address how selected elements of the marketing mix impact destination branding and how such marketing activity leads to residents eventually becoming committed to the destination’s branding efforts. Once committed and loyal to the brand, it proposes that residents may feel such a strong connection to the branding efforts of the destination, that the brand becomes aligned with their self-concept, and that they begin to serve as “evangelists” for the brand, actively promoting the destination via word of mouth. As a result, a civic consciousness is created that helps to strengthen the destination’s brand management system, especially as it is introduced to external constituents, such as potential tourists.

Keywords
brand commitment, destination branding, marketing, residents, stakeholders

Introduction
Cities and regions frequently employ catchy tag lines in their efforts to position and establish brand image. The city and destination branding literatures stress the importance of brand image, with an emphasis on achieving differential and competitive positioning (Hosany et al., 2006; Merrilees et al., 2009; Nickerson and Molsey, 1999). Subsequently, some destinations have ideas and images with which consumers strongly identify—romance (Paris and San Francisco), culture (Venice and Kyoto), and nightlife (Rio de Janeiro and New Orleans). In many instances, marketing efforts have capitalized on the unique characteristics of these locales in the form of destination branding (Holcomb, 1999; Peirce and Ritchie, 2007).

Destination branding is the practice of applying branding strategy and other marketing techniques to the economic, political, and cultural development of cities, regions, and countries (Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2009; Bosnjak, 2010). Destinations must compete with each other for a place in the consideration set of their targeted visitors, and visitors’ perceptions of a destination can have a major impact on their decision processes (Tasci and Kozak, 2006). Destination branding is essential in positioning and differentiating a location or region. It

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communicates and assures a memorable and unique experience that is associated with the destination (Blain et al., 2005). This can enhance a destination’s image, which improves the effectiveness of marketing efforts to potential visitors.

Community history, heritage, and culture are important components of destination branding, and research has provided historical accounts of how cities and regions have marketed themselves (Lynch, 1960; Ward, 1998). However, developing a unique selling proposition for a city or region can present challenges (Hall, 2008). A critical component of destination branding is stakeholder management (Morgan et al., 2003; Ryan and Silvanto, 2010). An important part of building a successful branding strategy for a city or region is examining the needs of internal stakeholders such as local businesses, government, and residents. By starting first with an inward focus, municipalities can ensure that their aspirations are in harmony with local community needs and expectations (Pike, 2005; Trueman et al., 2004). Furthermore, when brands are introduced to external constituents, there may be greater synergy in the marketing strategy (Simeon, 2006).

This research examines the impact that the marketing of a city or region’s brand has on internal stakeholders, specifically its residents. It shifts focus from the tourist or nonresident to the resident stakeholder in assessing the brand building and management system of a place. Specifically, the present research seeks to address how selected elements of the marketing mix impact destination branding and how such marketing activity leads residents to buy into the branding efforts of a city or region and eventually become committed to the destination’s branding efforts. Once committed and loyal to the brand, proponents suggest that residents may feel such a strong connection to the branding efforts of the destination and that the brand plays a role in defining their self-concept. Furthermore, residents that are committed to the brand may come to serve as “evangelists” for the brand and actively promote the brand via word of mouth. As a result, a civic consciousness is created that helps to strengthen the destination’s brand management system, especially as it is introduced to external constituents, such as potential travelers.

A conceptual model with a theoretical basis in the marketing and branding literature is developed to illuminate the role of marketing on resident brand commitment and how such commitment can lead to self-brand connections and word-of-mouth activity. The model is then tested on a sample of residents from an American city that has taken a cultural/entertainment approach to its branding efforts, Austin, Texas. Finally, this research discusses the findings and implications for developing effective brand management systems that appeal to local residents.

**Conceptual framework**

Branding is an essential tool in marketing strategy. It attracts and maintains customers by promoting value, image, prestige, and lifestyle for a product (Rooney, 2004). Brands can encompass physical as well as sociopsychological attributes. Just as goods and services are branded, cities and regions have developed branding strategies (Bosnjak, 2010; Puczko et al., 2007). Places have dominant and distinctive features, which may include their heritage, culture, art, or natural resources. These destinations may promote themselves by using striking logos and slogans in advertising campaigns.

There are, however, differences between branding a product and a place, which may present challenges to stakeholders (Jensen, 2005; Tasci and Kozak, 2006). Jensen (2005) proposed four contrasting distinctions. First, in branding destinations as opposed to products, there are differences in the number of stakeholders involved and their related interests. Second, when developing a branding strategy for a place, a local value base with local participation should be negotiated. Third, branding for a location should align with existing historical identities associated with the place. Finally, consumers of a destination brand are often more diverse than the consumers of a product since destination branding serves diverse groups, including potential investors, residents, and tourists.

Underscoring Jensen’s (2005) proposition that various stakeholders are involved in the brand-building process for a destination, this research explores the impact of marketing in garnering support and buy-in from a location’s residents. Theories from the marketing and branding literature are delineated to illustrate how employing such elements can achieve buy-in from residents and create a local value base.

**Marketing mix elements**

Marketing decisions and activities have a profound effect on the brand-building process. Strategic marketing elements under the market’s control, which aid in the development of brands,
are embodied in the marketing mix. Also known as the 4P’s (promotion, place or distribution, price, and product), the marketing mix comprises the parameters that the marketing manager can use to create value in a brand as well as elicit positive responses from the target market (Borden, 1953; Culliton, 1948; McCarthy, 1960).

The marketing teams of destinations should target the local community as well as external constituents (Hall, 1999). The elements of the marketing mix, including promotion (advertising), distribution (number of outlets), and pricing perceptions, are discussed next in the context of destination branding and internal constituent involvement. Hypotheses are also presented for the proposed brand-building model (see Figure 1).

**Advertising intensity.** Brand communications, including advertising, can build trust through consistency of execution (Goodman, 2006; Yoo et al., 2000). Spending on advertising creates brand awareness as well as increases the likelihood that a brand will be considered in a consumer’s consideration set. Advertising also helps to reinforce attitudes toward the brand. Brand attitudes, a consumer’s overall evaluations of a brand, can form the basis for purchase intentions as well as actual behavior.

Destination brand communications and advertising must first be directed internally. The ability of residents to understand and internalize the values embodied in a location’s brand identity is necessary if it is to be transmitted correctly to external stakeholders (Knox and Bickerton, 2003; Morgan et al., 2003). To this end, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There is a positive relationship between the advertising intensity of a destination’s branding efforts and the residents’ attitude toward the destination’s brand.

Advertising can also be an important extrinsic cue denoting product quality (Milgram and Roberts, 1986). Frequent advertising signals that firms are investing in the brand, which may communicate quality (Aaker and Jacobson, 1994; Kirmani and Wright, 1989). Perceived quality is the consumer’s subjective assessment about a product’s overall excellence in reference to other competitive offerings (Aaker, 1996; Zeithaml, 1988). A number of factors can influence a consumer’s assessment of quality, including personal product experience, special needs, and consumption (Yoo et al., 2000). High perceived quality will motivate a consumer to choose a brand over competing products (Dodds et al., 1991; Netemeyer et al., 2004).

In the context of destination branding, perceived quality of the brand can encompass the beliefs of the residents that branding efforts imbue what is truly a signature and positive attribute of a location. For example, when New Yorkers see the *I Love New York* slogan on merchandise or in print ads, they associate this

![Figure 1. Destination brand building for internal constituents.](image-url)
with pride for the city, as well as opportunities to promote the tourism industry. If the residents are convinced that the branding efforts uniquely reflect a core competency of their city or region, which can be achieved in part through effective advertising, this can lead to favorable attitudes about the branding efforts of the destination. As a result, the following is predicted:

**H2:** There is a positive relationship between the advertising intensity of a destination’s branding efforts and perceived quality of the destination brand.

**H3:** There is a positive relationship between perceived quality of the destination brand and the residents’ attitude toward the destination’s brand.

**Distribution intensity.** In marketing, distribution is intensive when products are available in a large number of retail outlets to serve the marketplace. Consumers will typically be more satisfied when a product is available in greater numbers of stores because they will be offered the product when and where they want it (Ferris et al., 1989; Yoo et al., 2000). Intensive distribution provides convenience to the consumer by reducing the time consumers spend in the search process for products. As distribution increases, consumers share more time and place utility and perceive greater value for the product.

When the idea or concept being promoted in a destination brand is physically manifested throughout a destination (e.g. if Arlington, Texas, is the bowling capital of the world, there should be a number of bowling outlets in the city), residents are more likely to have favorable attitudes toward the branding efforts of the destination. Additionally, if there are a number of physical outlets or venues that are a manifestation of the branding efforts (e.g. bowling alleys in Arlington, Texas), the likelihood of residents involving themselves in or patronizing venues related to the brand is greater. Hence, the following hypotheses are offered:

**H4:** There is a positive relationship between distribution intensity and the residents’ attitude toward the destination’s brand.

**H5:** There is a positive relationship between distribution intensity and destination brand patronage.

**Pricing perceptions.** Consumers use price as an extrinsic cue and indicator of product quality as well as value. Marketers try to maximize the value brands and products deliver. Since value is often correlated with price, prices that are considered “reasonable” by the consumer can provide transactional utility (Yoo et al., 2000).

As regions encourage residents to become “tourists in their own towns,” the pricing of these activities should be given special consideration. These residents may be receptive to the idea of patronizing events in their own cities and regions if value is apparent. A component of this value may be related to pricing perceptions and how “reasonable” residents feel the prices are to activities that embody the branding efforts of the city. Thus, the pricing perceptions of residents are proposed to be related to both residents’ attitudes and patronage behavior.

**H6:** There is a positive relationship between perceptions of pricing and attitude toward the destination’s brand.

**H7:** There is a positive relationship between perceptions of pricing and destination brand patronage.

Finally, in the behavioral literature, an individual’s attitude, or the extent to which an individual has a favorable or unfavorable appraisal about an object or behavior, can form the basis for behavioral intentions and eventually actions (Ajzen, 1991). Residents who have favorable attitudes about the branding efforts of a destination may be more likely to patronage events and activities that imbue the essence of the brand.

**H8:** There is a positive relationship between attitude toward the destination’s brand and destination brand patronage.

**Brand commitment**

Ultimately, a firm hopes to stimulate brand patronage through its marketing efforts. Furthermore, when the consumer perceives high quality in a brand and consistently purchases a brand, brand commitment may develop. Brand commitment is an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship (Beatty and Kahle, 1988; Lacy, 2007; Moorman et al., 1992). It refers to the economic, emotional, and psychological attachments that the consumer may have toward a brand (Evanschitzky et al., 2006). Committed consumers are often willing to stay in an exchange relationship as well as put forth effort to maintain the relationship (Rutherford et al., 2008).
The marketing efforts of destinations can help to create a valued relationship between the resident and the brand, so much so that residents develop strong loyalty and commitment to the brand. Gursoy and Rutherford (2004) found that residents who expressed high levels of attachment to their communities were more likely to perceive the efforts of tourism as an economic and social benefit. Other research has linked attachment-related dimensions such as quality of life and length of residency to attitudes toward tourism (Andereck and Nyaupane, 2011; Hao et al., 2011). Such attachment and commitment may occur when the residents feel that the destination branding efforts encompass what is truly a positive and valued attribute of the city or region and when residents consistently patronize events and activities that are a part of the brand. In accordance, the following is proposed:

H9: There is a positive relationship between destination brand patronage and brand commitment.

H10: There is a positive relationship between perceived quality of the destination brand and commitment to the destination brand.

Self-brand connection. When consumers become committed to a brand, sometimes the brand can imbue so much meaning to the consumer that they use the brand to create and represent a desired self-image or self-concept (Escalas, 2004; Escalas and Bettman, 2003). This phenomenon takes place when consumers engage in a matching or pairing process where they select products that are congruent with their self-images (Bosnjak, 2010; Chaplin and John, 2005). Brand associations as well as the meaning ascribed to these brands help consumers to construct, cultivate, and express their identities (Belk, 1988). As a result, a self-brand connection may develop, which can be used to satisfy psychological needs, reinforce identity, and allow an individual to connect to others (Escalas and Bettman, 2004; Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988).

This research proposes that just as self-brand connections are formed with consumer products, they can develop with destinations and their residents. A brand connection such as this can help foster greater civic awareness and consciousness.

H11: There is a positive relationship between commitment to the destination brand and self-brand connection.

Word-of-mouth communications. Word-of-mouth communication accelerates new product acceptance and adoption (Keller, 2007). It can be the most influential source of information for the purchase of some products because it is perceived as originating from a less biased source (Herr et al., 1991; Kim et al., 2001). Often consumers use word-of-mouth referrals as tools to reduce the amount of information to be processed and to lessen anxiety (Hung and Li, 2007). When a consumer becomes committed to a brand, this commitment can lead to the spread of positive word of mouth about the brand. In the context of destination brand building, local residents that become committed and loyal to the branding efforts of a city or region can become “evangelists” for the brand and promote the brand to others—spurring brand adoption. To this end, the following is proposed:

H12: There is a positive relationship between commitment to the destination brand and word-of-mouth communications.

Austin’s tourism industry

Residents from Austin, Texas, were used as the sample to test predicted hypotheses in this research. As reported by the Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau (ACVB), the Austin tourism industry receives nearly 20 million visitors each year with an economic impact of US$4 billion in the Austin-Round Rock Metropolitan Statistical Area. Downtown Austin is equipped with 6000 hotel rooms and 120 restaurants while the Austin-Round Rock metropolitan statistical area comprises over 30,000 hotel rooms and hundreds of restaurants, and ample meeting space. This destination is complete with attractions for leisure tourists and the meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions (MICE.) segment. Tourism and hospitality are one of the four major industries supporting the Austin economy (ACVB, 2010).

Austin, Texas, has taken a branding approach that draws on its cultural/entertainment attributes. Austin is a musical city whose musical heritage traces back to the frontier days. The city boasts approximately 200 live music venues and nearly 1900 recording artists reside in the area (Austin Music Office, 2010). City officials found that Austin has more live music venues per capita than other cities known for music like Nashville, New Orleans, Memphis, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and New York City. Music contributes US$616 million in economic impact and US$11 million in tax revenue to the Austin economy.

Research methodology

Study participants

Research participants included 499 residents of the Greater Austin area. They were administered a survey via the Internet. Data were obtained through convenience sampling. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 78 (Mage = 40). Fifty-three percent of the respondents were female and 47% were male. Seventy-five percent of the participants were European American, 14% were Latino, 4% were African American, 4% were Asian American, and 2% listed themselves as “Other.” Mean income was US$63,086.

Measures

The constructs in this study were measured using both existing scales adapted for this study and scales developed specifically for this research (see Appendix 1). Scales that were taken from existing literature and adapted for this study included advertising intensity, perceived quality, destination brand commitment, self-brand connection, and word-of-mouth communication. Advertising intensity was measured using two items adapted from Yoo et al. (2000), which reflect the frequency in which advertisements appear about Austin’s branding efforts (e.g. “Ad campaigns for Austin’s musical branding are seen frequently”). Perceived quality (e.g. “Austin music events are of high quality”) was measured using three items adapted from Dodds et al. (1991). Furthermore, destination brand commitment was assessed using items developed by Beatty and Kahle (1988), which were updated and modified for the present research (e.g. “I would support Austin music events over other music events”). Five items were used to measure destination brand commitment. Self-brand connection was measured using the Escalas and Bettman’s (2003) self-brand connection scale, which included seven items (e.g. “Austin’s music events reflect who I am”). Finally, word-of-mouth communication was assessed using an existing scale from Kim et al. (2001) that was adapted for the present research. It consisted of three items (“I suggest to others that they should attend Austin music events”). All items were measured using a 7-point scale.

Distribution intensity, pricing perceptions, attitude toward the destination brand, and destination brand patronage were all developed for the present study (see Appendix 1 for specific scales items). Similar to the scales that were taken from the existing literature and adapted, all items created for the study were measured using a 7-point scale. In order to assess the psychometric properties of the scales used in the study, standard statistical techniques including performing exploratory factor analysis and examining item-to-total correlations and internal consistency were used. One scale item (see Appendix 1) in attitude toward the destination brand (“My overall attitude toward Austin’s musical branding efforts are: good/bad”) was removed due to a low item-to-total correlation. The validity of the scales was ultimately established in a confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement model. In the confirmatory factor analysis, the measurement model was assessed for construct and discriminant validity as well as reliability. The results of the measurement model are presented in the findings.

Findings

The data were subjected to structural equation analysis in AMOS 17.0 using the maximum likelihood estimation method. Structural equation modeling (SEM) and analysis is an extension of the general linear model and is a more powerful alternative to multiple regression (Byrne, 2001). SEM allows for the estimation of multiple and interrelated-dependent relationships simultaneously, corrects for measurement error in the estimation process, and is a confirmatory statistical technique in defining a model and its validity (Hair et al., 2006).

As recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) in structural equation analysis, a two-step procedure was used to first assess the measurement model for construct and discriminant validity (see Table 1) and then to test hypotheses in the structural model (see Table 2).

Measurement model

The measurement model exhibited good fit according to Hu and Bentler (1999) and Hair et al. (1998): \( \chi^2 (1394.48), df = 428, p \text{ value} (0.00), \text{CFI} (0.95), \text{IFI} (0.95), \text{TFI} (0.94), \text{and RMSEA} (0.06) \). To test for construct validity,
factor loadings along with the average variance extracted were calculated for each latent variable. Standardized factor loadings exceeded the 0.6 threshold as recommended by Hair et al. (2006). Additionally, as shown in Table 1, the average variance extracted for each construct exceeded the recommended rule of thumb of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2006), which is an indication that the variance captured by the construct is greater than the variance due to measurement error.

In order to assess discriminant validity, the Fornell–Larcker test (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) was performed. Discriminant validity is demonstrated when the average variance extracted for a construct is greater than the squared correlations between that construct and other constructs in the model. The average variance extracted between each construct was greater than the squared multiple correlations for each construct pairing. Reliabilities were also assessed for each construct to ensure that each exhibited internal consistency (see Table 1). All measures exemplified acceptable reliability by exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). The results from the structural model follow.

### Table 1. Means, standard deviation, reliability, average variance extracted (in bold) and squared correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
<th>AI</th>
<th>PQ</th>
<th>DI</th>
<th>PP</th>
<th>ATB</th>
<th>BP</th>
<th>BC</th>
<th>SBC</th>
<th>WOM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AI</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PQ</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>DI</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATB</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>BP</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>WOM</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AI: advertising intensity; PQ: perceived quality; DI: distribution intensity; PP: pricing perception; ATB: attitude toward brand; BP: brand patronage; BC: brand commitment; SBC: self-brand connection; WOM: word of mouth; SD: standard deviation.

### Table 2. Test of Hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Unstandardized coefficient</th>
<th>Standardized coefficient</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>Critical ratio</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1 Adverting intensity → attitude toward the brand</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2 Adverting intensity → perceived quality</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3 Perceived quality → attitude toward the brand</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4 Distribution intensity → attitude toward the brand</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>p &gt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5 Distribution intensity → brand patronage</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>p &lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6 Pricing perceptions → attitude toward the brand</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7 Pricing perceptions → brand patronage</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8 Attitude toward the brand → brand patronage</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H9 Brand patronage → brand commitment</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>15.08</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H10 Perceived quality → brand commitment</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>16.74</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H11 Brand commitment → self-brand connection</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>15.19</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H12 Brand commitment → word of mouth</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Structural model

The structural model and hypotheses were evaluated after attaining a validated measurement model. The model (see Figure 1) exhibited adequate model fit (Hair et al., 1998): $\chi^2 (1839.15)$, 449, p value (0.00), CFI (0.93), IFI (0.93), TLI (0.92), and RMSEA (0.07).

H1–H8 predicted direct effects between the marketing mix elements and attitude toward the destination brand and brand patronage. All hypotheses except for H4, which predicted that there would be a positive relationship between distribution intensity and attitude toward the destination brand, were supported (see Table 2).

H9–H12 proposed that there would be direct relationships between brand patronage and brand commitment as well as brand commitment, perceived quality, self-brand connection, and word-of-mouth communications. All predictions were supported.

Discussion

Summary of findings

Stakeholder buy-in is important in the brand-building process. This research demonstrates that marketing programs can create positive attitudes in residents toward a destination’s brand and subsequently lead to residents that are committed to the branding efforts of a destination. As supported in H1 and H2, the advertising intensity of a destination’s branding efforts is positively related to the resident’s attitude toward the brand as well as perceived quality. Thus, advertising can engender positive attitudes toward a destination’s branding as well as serve as an external cue for quality. In turn, and as noted in H3, if perceptions of quality toward a brand are high, individuals will have more favorable attitudes toward that brand. When residents believe that the branding efforts of the city accurately capture the positive attributes of the city, they have favorable feelings toward the city’s branding efforts.

H4 predicted that distribution intensity would be positively related to attitude toward the brand; however, results did not yield a positive and significant relationship between distribution intensity and attitude toward the brand. The lack of significance in this relationship may be due to the importance of perceived quality rather than distribution intensity in positive attitude formation. H4 proposed that factors related to time and place utility would enhance attitudes toward the brand, but if quality plays a crucial role in attitude formation, as demonstrated in H3, “exclusive” market coverage might be a surrogate indicator for quality as opposed to “intensive” market coverage. Findings in H5 did, however, reveal that intensive distribution does positively and significantly influence intentions to patronize the brand. Therefore, the significance between distribution intensity and brand patronage intentions may signal that the availability of outlets related to the branding efforts of a destination plays a greater role in brand patronage than in attitude formation.

Pricing is an important element in a marketing program because it is directly tied to revenue and profit and is one of the greatest influences on purchase behavior. As indicated in H6 and H7, the value denoted in pricing was positively related to attitude toward the destination brand and brand patronage. Residents perceived the pricing of Austin’s musical events as equitable, which favorably impacted both their feelings toward the brand and behavioral intentions. As demonstrated in H8, favorable feelings or attitudes toward the brand are positively related to behavioral intentions, or intentions to patronize the brand.

The significant findings for H8–H12 indicate that consistent brand patronage and perceived quality are positively related to brand commitment, and brand commitment is positively associated with self-brand connection and word-of-mouth communication. Specifically, when residents are committed to a brand, a self-brand connection may manifest where the brand morphs with the individual’s self-concept. Additionally, residents that are committed to the destination brand are more willing to share their positive experiences via word-of-mouth communication.

Implications of findings

Understanding the elements that lead residents to feel support for tourism development is important for not only hospitality and tourism stakeholders, but also for the expanded host community, including local government and businesses. Local support can facilitate the production of tourism development while opposition can, in some cases, stop tourism development all together (Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004). When residents consider the costs and benefits of
tourism development, they are more likely to support the tourism industry when they feel involved in the exchange or benefit from the development. Additionally, tourism can generate the demand for cultural activities, creating venues, and other amenities that might improve residents’ quality of life.

To help foster support and overall engagement from residents, destination management organizations should be certain to design marketing programs with residents in mind as they embark on building a brand for a location. First, to ensure that a proposed brand imbues qualities that are unique and representative of a destination, residents might be solicited for their feedback through market research and inquiry. Once the branding has been established, ensuring that residents are aware of the promotion and advertising initiatives to build the brand—and even targeting promotions at residents will further aid in the buy-in process. Additionally, providing special discounts and premiums for residents to participate in activities that are representative of the branding efforts of the location as well as making these activities convenient for residents to partake in will enhance residents’ perceptions of the brand.

If residents become committed to the branding efforts of the destination, they can also become ambassadors for the destination, and ultimately assist in generating revenue from tourism. For example, Washington enlisted their residents’ assistance in promoting the state. Residents were asked to send email postcards to various tourist attractions throughout the state to their personal friends and associates. Officials estimated that approximately 21,000 additional jobs would be created if all households invited one out-of-state visitor for a single overnight visit (Hoang, 2011). Similarly, Florida residents were asked to “Share a Little Sunshine” by sending customized free video invitations or email postcards to friends and families (Morgan, 2010). Such efforts were intended to increase visitation to the state and raise needed sales tax dollars.

The closure of state tourism offices may prompt additional locales to encourage their residents to become proponents of their cities and regions. Campaigns such as those used by Washington and Florida draw upon the belief that a personal invitation from a resident is a powerful and effective tool in promoting tourism. Thus, programs that target the resident of a destination and acknowledge the importance of internal stakeholders in the brand-building process are paramount.

**Limitations and future research**

Although this study makes important contributions in understanding how marketing programs can impact the brand-building process for cities, it has some inherent limitations. The results from this study are only reflective of one city that has branded itself based on cultural/entertainment attributes. Future research might examine the efforts of other cities that have branded themselves along different dimensions. Furthermore, these studies might also explore additional internal perceptions that the residents of these cities have about the general characteristics of their city. One approach might be to include an assessment of a city’s “personality” from the residents’ perspective. Research in the marketing literature suggests that consumers assign human traits or personalities to brands (Aaker, 1997). Cities innately have personalities. By doing this, destination management organizations can develop marketing campaigns that emphasize the distinctive personality of a place.

A significant relationship between distribution intensity and attitude toward the brand failed to be realized in this research. Additional studies might examine the relationship between the distribution or market coverage element with respect to destination branding. Efforts might be made to examine whether intensive, selective, or exclusive market coverage might be most effective in engendering favorable attitudes from residents about the branding initiatives of the city.

Factors that contribute to resident opinions about tourism are most often categorized as economic, sociocultural, and environmental (Jurowski and Gursoy, 2004). Many cities encourage tourism development as a mechanism for driving change and improving the quality of life for residents. This research found that marketing programs can engender positive attitudes in residents toward a destination’s brand and subsequently lead to residents that support and are committed to the branding efforts of a destination. When local residents support tourism development, the destination is more likely to succeed. Host community involvement and participation are paramount to building a destination brand and sustaining a successful tourism operation.
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Appendix 1

Scale items

Advertising intensity of the destination brand—adapted from Yoo et al. (2000)
7-point Likert scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree

Austin’s musical branding is intensely advertised.
The ad campaigns for Austin’s musical branding are seen frequently.

Perceived quality of the destination brand—Dodds et al. (1991). 7-point Likert scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree

Austin music events are of high quality.
The quality of Austin music events is extremely high.
Austin music events are of really good.

Distribution intensity of the destination brand. 7-point Likert scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree

There are a number of venues with live music in Austin.
Austin has many venues with live music.
Compared to other cities, there are a number of places with live music in Austin.

Pricing perceptions. 7-point Likert scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree

Prices for Austin musical events are reasonable.
Prices for Austin’s musical shows are fair.
The cost of Austin musical events is a good deal.

Attitude toward the destination brand. 7-point scale

My overall attitude toward Austin musical branding efforts are as follows:

Good/bad (item removed to improve fit)
Unfavorable/favorable
Like/dislike
Pleasant/unpleasant

Destination brand patronage. 7-point scale

How likely are you to attend Austin music events?

Unlikely/likely
Unprobable/probable

Destination brand commitment—adapted from Beatty and Kahle (1988). 7-point Likert scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree

Music events in Austin are my first choice when it comes to musical entertainment.
I would support Austin music events over other music events.
I am committed to Austin music events.
I will attend an Austin music event the next time I go out for entertainment.
I intend to keep supporting Austin music events.

Self-brand connection—adapted from Escalas and Bettman (2003). 7-point scale

Austin’s musical branding reflects who I am (not at all/extremely well).
I can identify with Austin’s musical branding ...
I feel a personal connection to Austin’s musical branding (not at all/very much so).
I can use Austin’s musical branding to communicate who I am to other people (not at all/extremely well).
I think Austin’s musical branding helps me become the type of person I want to be.
I consider Austin’s musical branding to be “me” (it reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others (not “me”/”me”).
Austin’s branding efforts suit me well (not at all/extremely well).
Word-of-mouth communications—adapted from Kim et al. (2001). 7-point Likert scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree

I recommend to other people they would support Austin music events.

I talk directly to other people about my experience with Austin music events.

I suggest to others that they should attend Austin music events.