




# The effect and prioritization of international branding components of the tourism industry in tourism marketing in Tehran

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The purpose of this research was the influence and prioritization of the international branding components of the tourism industry on tourism marketing in Tehran.

**Method:** This study was a descriptive survey in terms of implementation methods. The statistical population included all technical officials and managers of the Institute of International Tourist Companies and tourist tour guides of Tehran province in 2022, numbering 8499 people. Using the table of Krejcie and Morgan and the available method, 367 people were selected as the sample size. The data collection tool was the international tourism branding questionnaires made by the researcher based on Jalalian's research (2019) and Sangabi's tourism marketing (2014). The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) and inferential statistics (Kolmogorov Smirnov, t-test and regression) using SPSS-26 software.

**Results:** The results showed that the international branding components of the tourism industry affect tourism marketing in Tehran. Also, the results showed that brand image, awareness, perceived quality, and loyalty are the most important components of the tourism industry's international branding in Tehran's tourism marketing.

**Conclusion:** One of the reasons for the importance of the concept of special brand value is that city managers and company owners can gain a competitive advantage with the help of brands with high special value. The more positive the tourists' evaluation of each of the specific brand value dimensions, the higher the brand of that destination has a higher specific value among tourists.

**Keywords:** *Tourism marketing, international branding, tourism industry.*

## 1 Introduction

International branding is a process in which the brand name becomes meaningful for the audience and is an effort to achieve fame and popularity. These cases can be for a business or for a person whose reputation and credibility

are considered (Feng et al., 2021). Branding has been considered a research field in response to the increase in competition to attract tourists and capital and to help cities, regions and countries with marketing and branding strategies (Zenker, Braun, & Petersen, 2017). In fact, the tourism destination brand provides information to the tourist before

the trip to identify and identify the destination and differentiate it from its competitors, and shape the tourist's expectations from the upcoming trip. Therefore, it is said that branding for tourist destinations is one of the key aspects of brand management of tourist destinations, and it has many advantages for tourist destinations (Jalalian, Saidi, & Waysian, 2019). In recent years, the tourism industry has become one of the main economic sources of countries to the extent that it is also called "invisible exports". In a report, the World Tourism Organization presented the statistics of 1.6 billion tourists for 2020, which is about 5 billion dollars in monetary turnover per day, and this figure will be several times the oil income of OPEC member countries. On the other hand, according to the announcement of UNESCO, Iran is among the top ten countries in terms of historical assets and cultural heritage and among the first three countries in the world regarding natural gifts and climatic diversity. However, Iran's share of world tourism income is very small (Faramarz Pour et al., 2020; Feng et al., 2021).

The most widespread and used practice in branding is the investigation of the role of branding in the marketing of tourism destinations. This procedure was investigated since the decision-makers of the tourism industry realized that destinations are visited because of the initial images they create in people's minds (Hashim et al., 2019). This procedure provides many theories in the branding of spaces. Today, the brand is defined by the tourist's perception and the subjective image of the destination, appropriate service and variety of identification, function and identity of the destination. The importance of having a brand is because the brand and branding increase the level of trust and loyalty of the traveler to the tourist destination. The brand can be considered one of the most important issues for attracting tourists. A tourist destination must introduce itself to the world with a specific characteristic over some time so that tourists can decide their destination based on that characteristic. (Jafari, Najjarzadeh, & Feizabadi, 2017).

Pourang, Behboodi and Galin Seyedi (2021) showed that all four elements of brand value have a positive relationship with brand attitude. All three variables directly affect tourists' intention to visit. Brand attitude mediates the relationship between the four elements of brand value and tourist visit intention, and brand performance moderates the relationship between brand attitude and tourist visit intention (Pourang, Behboodi, & Galin Seyedi, 2021). Feizi, Heydari and Rostaei (2021) showed that destination branding has a positive and significant effect on urban tourism development and its dimensions (perceived value and benefits, support

and participation, and sustainability of tourism development) in Tabriz metropolis (Feizi, Heydari, & Rostaei, 2021). Also, the results indicated that the branding of urban tourism destinations in metropolises can increase the support of tourism stakeholders for its development and contribute to its sustainability by increasing the perceived value and benefits (Feizi, Heydari, & Rostaei, 2021).

López-Rodríguez et al. (2022) showed the trend and influence of published literature to date and established and emerging research groups. In addition, they recognized that research procedures related to brand communities, co-branding, brand architecture, positioning and brand research in the tourism sector should be strengthened (López-Rodríguez, Mora-Forero, & León-Gómez, 2022). Feng et al. (2021) showed that the increase in the number of international tourists in the multinational company's country of origin significantly increased the company's brand equity. This finding indicates a significant impact of international tourism on MNE brand equity, even after controlling for other key brand drivers, Such as advertising, research and development, and the dynamic tendency of brand equity. Also, the results showed that international tourism is a very effective tool for improving companies' brand equity and is 2.5 times more effective than advertising (Feng et al., 2021). Hashim et al., (2019) showed that the positioning and branding of destinations for global competition focuses on using the destination brand and content marketing for better tourism management strategies (Hashim et al., 2019). de Oliveira Santos and Giraldo (2017) showed that brand attribution to a product affects not only the perception of consumers about the product but also the brand name. The interaction effect of the product on its brand can be positive or negative. Destinations that lead to a more positive attitude than average can strengthen a national tourism brand (de Oliveira Santos & Giraldo, 2017).

One of the gaps in the tourism industry is the lack of attention to branding. International branding in international markets will have more problems than domestic branding. Therefore, the current research's main problem is to investigate whether the components of international branding of the tourism industry affect tourism marketing in Tehran and how it is prioritized.

## 2 Methods and Materials

### 2.1 Study design and Participant

This study was a descriptive survey in terms of implementation methods. The statistical population included

all technical officials and managers of the Institute of International Tourist Companies and tourist tour guides of Tehran province in 2022, numbering 8499 people. Using the table of Krejcie and Morgan and the available method, 367 people were selected as the sample size.

2.2 Measures

The data collection tool was the international tourism branding questionnaires made by the researcher based on Jalalian's research (2018) and Sangabi's tourism marketing (2014).

2.2.1 International Tourism Branding

The researcher designed the tourism industry international branding questionnaire based on Jalalian's research (2019) (Jalalian, Saidi, & Waysian, 2019). This questionnaire contains 25 closed-ended items based on a five-point Likert scale and measures the four dimensions of brand image, brand awareness, perceived quality, and loyalty. The validity of this questionnaire was confirmed by using the content validity method and with the opinion of the advisors and consultants as well as a few experts in the field of tourism after applying limited modifications. To measure the reliability of the tool, before the final implementation, 20 questionnaires were implemented through a preliminary design and randomly among the experts in the field of tourism and were evaluated by calculating Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha was calculated as 0.90, showing the test has relatively high reliability.

2.2.2 Tourism Marketing

The tourism marketing questionnaire was designed and validated by Sengabi (2014) based on theoretical texts and empirical background. This questionnaire measures the seven dimensions of the product: price, advertising, location, people, the process of selling the product or providing services, evidence and physical facilities (Jafari, Najjarzadeh, & Feizabadi, 2017; Pourang, Behboodi, & Galin Seyedi, 2021). The researcher has validated the questionnaire during the research process, the validity and reliability were confirmed and the reliability was obtained based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89%.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) and inferential statistics (Kolmogorov Smirnov, t-test and regression) using SPSS-26 software.

3 Findings and Results

In this study, 57% of respondents were men and 43% were women. Also, 33.8% less than 30 years old, 42.8% between 30 and 45 years old and 23.4% more than 45 years old made up the respondents. The level of literacy was also examined, and 11.4% had a diploma, 22.3% had an associate degree, 53.4% had a bachelor's degree, and 12.8% had a master's degree or higher.

Table 1

Univariate analysis results in multivariate regression model

Model	Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficients	t	p	Rank
	B	SE	Beta			
Constant	131.810	3.556	-	-	-	-
Brand image	0.612	0.130	0.516	4.719	0.000	1
Perceived quality	0.261	0.185	0.182	2.411	0.016	3
Brand awareness	0.596	0.129	0.461	4.621	0.000	2
Loyalty	0.297	0.133	0.126	2.225	0.027	4

According to the Table 1, at the confidence level of 95%, the international branding components of the tourism industry have an effect on tourism marketing in Tehran. Also, at the 95% confidence level ( $\alpha=0.05$ ), brand image,

brand awareness, perceived quality, and loyalty are among the most important components of international branding of the tourism industry on tourism marketing in Tehran.

**Table 2**

*T-test results (Brand image)*

Variables	Mean	SD	Table t	Calculated t	df	p
Brand image - tourism marketing	103.58	12.388	3.291	160.183	366	0.000

The results of Table 2 show that at the confidence level of 99% ( $\alpha=0.01$ ), the data reject the null hypothesis (H0) and confirm the research hypothesis (H1). Also, the calculated t

is equal to 160.183 and the mean is equal to 103.58. So, it can be claimed that the brand image of the tourism industry has an effect on tourism marketing in Tehran.

**Table 3**

*T-test results (Perceived quality)*

Variables	Mean	SD	Table t	Calculated t	df	p
Perceived quality - tourism marketing	104.74	12.16	3.291	164.989	366	0.000

The results of Table 3 show that at the confidence level of 99% ( $\alpha=0.01$ ), the data reject the null hypothesis (H0) and confirm the research hypothesis (H1). Also, the calculated t is equal to 164.989 and the mean is equal to 104.74. So it can

be claimed that the perceived quality of the tourism industry has an effect on tourism marketing in Tehran.

**Table 4**

*T-test results (Brand Awareness)*

Variables	Mean	SD	Table t	Calculated t	df	p
Brand Awareness - Tourism Marketing	100.00	24.102	3.291	79.482	366	0.000

The results of Table 4 show that at the confidence level of 99% ( $\alpha=0.01$ ), the data reject the null hypothesis (H0) and confirm the research hypothesis (H1). Also, the calculated t is equal to 79.482 and the mean is equal to 100.00. So, it can

be claimed that awareness of the brand of the tourism industry has an effect on tourism marketing in Tehran.

**Table 5**

*T-test results (Loyalty)*

Variables	Mean	SD	Table t	Calculated t	df	p
Brand loyalty - tourism marketing	99.734	13.72	3.291	129.253	366	0.000

The results of Table 5 show that at the confidence level of 99% ( $\alpha=0.01$ ), the data reject the null hypothesis (H0) and confirm the research hypothesis (H1). Also, calculated t equal to 129.253 is greater than table t and mean is equal to 100.00, so it can be claimed that tourism industry brand loyalty has an effect on tourism marketing in Tehran.

tourism industry in tourism marketing in Tehran. The findings showed the main hypothesis. The components of international branding of the tourism industry affect tourism marketing in Tehran, and brand image, perceived quality, brand awareness, and loyalty are, respectively, the most important components of international branding of the tourism industry on tourism marketing in Tehran. The obtained result is in line with the results of previous studies (Faramarz Pour et al., 2020; Feizi, Heydari, & Rostaei, 2021; Feng et al., 2021; Hashim et al., 2019; Jafari, Najjarzadeh,

**4 Discussion and Conclusion**

The current research was conducted to influence and prioritize the international branding components of the

& Feizabadi, 2017; Pourang, Behboodi, & Galin Seyedi, 2021). In explaining the above result, it can be said that today, the tourism industry is known as a dynamic industry along with other activities and services. Meanwhile, cities have the ability and potential to attract tourists. The significant increase of tourists in recent decades has led to the prosperity of the tourism industry and has made this industry one of the most important economic, cultural and social activities worldwide. Considering the increasing importance of the tourism industry and its market becoming more competitive, it seems that tourist destinations, like other consumer products, need a brand as a unique identity to differentiate themselves from competitors. One of the reasons for the importance of the concept of brand equity is that city managers and company owners can gain a competitive advantage with the help of brands with high equity value. The more positive the tourists' evaluation of each of the dimensions of brand equity, the higher the brand of that destination has a higher equity value among tourists.

In examining hypothesis 1, the findings showed that the brand image of the tourism industry has an effect on tourism marketing in Tehran. The obtained result is consistent with the research results of previous studies (Jafari, Najjarzadeh, & Feizabadi, 2017; Jalalian, Saidi, & Waysian, 2019). In explaining the above result, it can be said that different brand image dimensions show different actions that managers take to create, maintain and ultimately expand their brand image. Brand image is an abstract concept that is deep in the customer's mind, apart from the fact that there are several definitions for it. Different researchers have mentioned different components for it; it is very important both in the study of consumer behavior and in the position and role that the brand plays in the market; And considering this importance, it still requires much work, both in terms of finding its constituent components and in terms of inventing and creating better, more accurate and effective methods for its measurement. In other words, it can be said that destination branding creates an image of the destination in the tourist's mind and is the main lever of the tourist's considerations and decision-making criteria. This action seems necessary especially in Iran and Tehran, which has a lot to say regarding tourist attractions in the world due to its special conditions. In fact, it can be said that Iran, as well as Tehran, is considered a vast and untouched market in the field of tourism, which can earn huge income by branding its tourist attractions. This market can attract many domestic and foreign tourists due to its proper performance.

In examining hypothesis 2, the findings showed that the perceived quality of the tourism industry affects tourism marketing in Tehran. The obtained result is consistent with the results of previous studies (Jafari, Najjarzadeh, & Feizabadi, 2017; Jalalian, Saidi, & Waysian, 2019). In explaining the above result, it can be said that the quality of the perceived experience forms a positive mental image and strengthens the perceived value. Due to the wide range of facilities and programs provided by tourism centers, visitors have realized pleasant and enjoyable experiences. These pleasurable experiences encourage visitors to compare the value of the consumption experiences they received from the tourist centers with the costs they spent for it. In addition, pleasant experiences support the formation of a positive attitude of visitors towards the general level of service, which, as a result, provides a positive image of tourism centers. Therefore, managers of tourist attractions are advised to welcome feedback from visitors regarding their experiences with park facilities and programs and use this feedback to develop marketing strategies. For example, tourism center managers should identify the facilities and event programs that do not provide positive and memorable experiences and seek to change or upgrade them to avoid reducing the quality of positive experiences. Moreover, at the same time, actively seek to create popular features and events that reinforce and shape the quality of the positive experience.

In examining hypothesis 3, the findings showed that brand awareness of the tourism industry affects tourism marketing in Tehran. The obtained result is consistent with the results of previous studies (de Oliveira Santos & Giraldo, 2017; Jafari, Najjarzadeh, & Feizabadi, 2017; Jalalian, Saidi, & Waysian, 2019; Tabatabaei Nasab & Mah Avarpour, 2017). In explaining the above result, it can be said that nowadays, with a few simple clicks, tourists get information about tourist destinations, related details, and other people's opinions. Therefore, relying on the old and traditional ways and doing scattered and inconsistent actions will not work. Public and private organizations active in the field of tourism must know their customers (tourists) and be aware of their demands to remain in this industry's market competition. They should also be able to make these potential customers aware of their products and services. It should not be forgotten that any country that seeks to develop the tourism industry; And every tourist destination and every business that operates in this industry, needs a brand that can appropriately communicate with its target tourists. It requires printed, virtual, and multimedia texts and content to

attract new tourists; And it requires a level of service that meets the demand of tourists. One of the basic characteristics of successful countries in the tourism industry is the use of the knowledge and science of tourism specialists. Tourism managers and activists should use a suitable mix of strategies, tactics, and marketing tools to reach their potential tourists, and more importantly, potential tourists can also be aware of the capabilities, facilities, and facilities of the country's tourism.

In examining hypothesis 4, the findings showed that the tourism industry's brand loyalty affects tourism marketing in Tehran. The obtained result is consistent with the research results of previous studies (Jafari, Najjarzadeh, & Feizabadi, 2017; Jalalian, Saidi, & Waysian, 2019; Tabatabaei Nasab & Mah Avarpour, 2017). In explaining the above result, it can be said that a main part of any loyalty program is continuous and continuous communication with the customer. Today, many brands try to maintain their relationship with customers through various channels such as applications, email or SMS and turn the relationship from a limited business relationship into an emotional one. However, the most important point in communicating with the customer is choosing the right channel and content. For example, sending detailed travel information, such as the travel route or the entertainment places of the desired destination through the application and SMS can be a simple but successful way to increase customer engagement.

## 5 Suggestions

1. It is suggested that the destination management organization should use effective and creative advertising, hold exhibitions, provide brochures that introduce the

positive and competitive aspects of the city brand to tourists, provide the basis for more recognition of the destination brand and develop the concept of the city brand.

2. In terms of the image of the destination, it is suggested that the role of the desired items in forming the image of the destination can be made more prominent through the creation and revival of handicraft workshops as well as the holding of the local food festival.

3. In the dimension of perceived quality, it is suggested that through the construction of different accommodations in the form of hotels and guesthouses at reasonable prices, the problem of lack of quality accommodation centers can be solved.

4. In the dimension of brand awareness, it is suggested that the target should identify its powerful attractions, search for the nature that makes these attractions different and attractive for visitors, and continuously promote this nature through all communication and marketing behavior.

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## Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

## Ethics principles

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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