Influence of trust on destination loyalty – An empirical analysis –
The discussion of the research approach

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Influence of trust on destination loyalty – An empirical analysis - The discussion of the research approach

Paper type: Case study – Work in Progress

Abstract:

Purpose – The idea of trusting a destination is a relatively new one and the academic investigation of such a process is still in its infancy. In the ever more competitive tourism marketplace, destinations are increasingly adopting branding techniques to craft an identity which emphasizes the uniqueness of their product. A key component of this trust building process is the thorough management of service delivery with particular attention to trust-related factors. Destination trust can be regarded as an attitudinal construct and it can be clearly argued that our loyalty towards a destination is affected by the trust we form towards that destination. Although a conceptual model exists in an academic study, no apparent effort has been made to empirically investigate the relationship between destination trust and destination loyalty in a particular tourism context. The aim of this paper is to present a thorough discussion of the work in progress of the empirical study at hand namely the influence of the Mauritian brand-related factors especially brand trust on loyalty in a tourism context.

Design/methodology/approach – A deductive approach is employed in this study. It starts with thorough review of existing literatures and expose the approaches to empirically test the hypotheses.

Findings – The synthesized research gaps were presented. The validity of the application of existing brand trust and loyalty scales in the field of tourism was elaborated and the application of deductive and triangulation research methodologies to the field of tourism was presented. Last but not least, a model for empirically testing the relationship of the independent and the variables was exposed.

Originality/value – To our knowledge, to date, no effort has been made to empirically investigate the impact of destination trust on destination loyalty using the existing brand trust and loyalty scales.

Keywords: Destination Trust, Destination Loyalty, Branding, Tourism
Introduction

The topic of branding gained increased attention and importance over the past few decades. Many researchers have followed its evolution and there is well-grounded belief that brand-related factors are powerful tool to build enduring loyalty and manage the ever-increasing churn rates. Literature review revealed that strong emphasis was given to destination personality as a predictor of tourists buying behaviours (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006). However, no apparent effort was made to empirically test the influence of brand trust on loyalty towards a tourist destination despite the fact that many researchers have confirmed the influence of trust on enduring loyalty in other fields.

The purpose of this paper is to review on the research gap identified by many researchers and explains how the authors will respond to this gap by empirically testing the impact of brand trust on destination loyalty. It also discusses how the existing empirically tested measurement scales will be used to assess the alleged effects of destination trust on loyalty towards Mauritius, a tourist destination. This paper serves as the starting point for a study whose aim is to confirm the influence of brand trust on loyalty towards a destination.

The research context: Branding and the Mauritian tourism industry

In the ever more competitive tourism marketplace, destinations are increasingly adopting branding techniques to craft an identity which emphasises the uniqueness of their product. Those marketing travel destinations, just like those marketing other consumer products, have had to turn to branding to distinguish their ‘product’ and to convey a positive message that will motivate the consumer. However, evidence to support the successful implementation of destination branding has been mixed (Ekinci, 2003).

Given the choice of destinations available to consumers is increasing, using destination trust as a strategy to build and sustain loyalty towards a destination has become necessary. A key component of this trust building process is the thorough management of service delivery and trust-related factors.

Trust is basically an evaluative (e.g. ‘high/low’, ‘more /less’) and multi-dimensional construct. Therefore, the attributes of trust can be grouped according to various components. Destination trust can be regarded as an attitudinal construct and it can be clearly argued that our
loyalty towards a destination is affected by the trust we form towards that destination. We can argue that these two items are related.

Destination trust is more cognitive and involves subjective knowledge of a destination (e.g. reliability, guarantee, and assurance) and, therefore, its evaluation may vary from one person to another. For example, some tourists may consider an island to be a trustworthy holiday destination while others may form different opinions. In fact, the degree of trust, a person has of a tourist destination is a function of various points of references. Its root may go back to our early school years when we studied the moral and ethical beliefs held in a country. Information obtained from friends, relatives or media sources also contributes to our final picture (Ekinci, 2003). In addition, of course, our trust towards a destination is shaped through any of our own tourist experiences.

It can, therefore, be argued that successful destination branding involves establishing a mutual trust between destinations and tourists by satisfying tourists’ emotional (‘assurance’, ‘reliable’) and basic needs (e.g. relaxation, affiliation). One of the important determinants of branding is the brand trust – this emphasises the reliability side of the brand. In practical terms, brand trust gives assurance to tourists opting for a particular destination (e.g. hassle free, risk free, reliable and transparent). It can also be argued that a destination that inculcates trust in tourists’ minds can be easily branded. By the same token, brand trust enhances the destination reliability.

In a similar vein, it can be argued that a tourist’s trust towards a destination also includes an element of strong emotional attachment (e.g. experience, peer influence, nostalgia). So, bearing in mind that, on many occasions, the evaluation of destination trust includes some element of emotional attachment, the question arises as to what extent the overall view of a destination trust is emotional.

The process of destination trust begins, in reality, when the evaluation of destination image includes a strong emotional attachment. These two concepts share some common ground but destination trust represents the emotional component of the destination. Only branded destinations would establish an instant emotional link with their customers (Ekinci, 2003). Therefore, it can be argued that building trust towards a destination is the vital stage of building loyalty towards a destination.
It can be argued that branded destinations will be trusted when they display three essential trustworthy features: (1) consistency (2) reliability and (3) meeting expectations at all time.

The focus of the proposed empirical research that comprises this study is on a single market, i.e. Mauritius.

For many years, common perceptions of Mauritius have revolved around its idyllic tropical beaches and Indian Ocean seascape – a sanctuary in the sun, a place to escape for a luxury holiday. This image has worked well in the past, but now it is imperative to convey a richer set of messages that create recognition for the broader characteristics that define our people and country because it is claimed that the image of a tourist destination comes from more than just the tourism product itself. Image is more than tourism. Tourism is not just sun, sea and sand but also package tours, study abroad, backpackers, MICE, sporting events, nature excursions, hiking and diving, climbing and trekking, cultural tourism, even relocation etc.

Moreover, it is said “the next decade will mark the emergence of tourism destinations as a fashion accessory. The choice of holiday destination will help define the identity of the traveller and, in an increasingly homogeneous world, set him apart from the hordes of other tourist” (World Tourism Organisation 2003). To benefit these trends, a clear image for a tourist destination needs to be defined.

Much is said and written about destination branding. But how often it is possible to have a clear image for a tourist destination?

Interestingly, at the launch of a new destination brand the presenter included the comments “Having no brand image is like someone with no personality”

Singapore has worked hard to offer a reliable, safe and consistent product. However, many countries have failed in this challenging endeavour. For instance, looking at somewhere like Fiji, it is a bit like a Volvo. For many residents in Britain it is a desirable tropical island destination. But for many Australians it is more like Malta for the British; close to home, speak the same language, nothing exotic.
Mauritius has similar concerns. To many it is almost the archetypal ‘dream’ destination. The branding relies heavily on the images of an Indian Ocean jewel, but beyond this, the proposition and point of differentiation is not distinctive. According to Percy S Mistry (2006), Chairman of Oxford International Group, at present when you mention ‘Mauritius’ to anyone in the outside world, the immediate reaction/impression you evoke is that of a sylvan heavenly island where one goes to do nothing. But changing such a brand image is not an easy job.

During the Competitiveness Foresight organised in September 2004, it was highlighted that Mauritius is not adequately visible in the international arena: ‘There is a need to have focused group(s) to work on the strategy for branding Mauritius as a source and not as a specific product/ service supplier. Mauritius is not adequately visible in the international arena (i.e it does not have the same generic brand image appeal as Singapore, Hong Kong and Dubai as yet) due to the sectoral mindset that so far has led institutions to promote their specific products, namely freeport, tourism, EPZ, financial services etc instead of selling the Mauritian label as representing excellence, whatever be the field.’

The overall aim is, in fact, to start the thinking process likely to create the adequate synergy, to go beyond the narrow focus of sectors when dealing on the international market, to identify and bring out those multiple elements that make the unique flavour of Mauritius. It is about creating the necessary dynamism and adherence, at different levels, to a consistent national message and image. It is about improving the way we engage with the outside world, how we position ourselves in the global value chain, the way we communicate to tourists and develop our competitive edge.

Till now Mauritian branding has happened by accident, whereas serious policy assessment and planning with a coherent and integrated strategy are needed. As Mauritius is a complex society and has a complex identity - which makes it still more difficult to bring out that unique brand - it is particularly important that the country takes care over its image and reputation. Care must be taken to avoid any gap between the perception of the people and the branded image.

Though more and more countries are developing their brand identities, it has to be pointed out that the art of positioning countries is not very sophisticated yet. It will take time and determination but Mauritius has to go through the process and to go from the unfocused to the focused. The challenge is to unify the whole country behind something strong - to go hunting for
the Mauritian imagery, to bring out a comprehensive lexicon so as to release the true Mauritian identity and outline the national brand. ‘Make sure your point of difference is not trivial’, warns David Ogilvy, world-renowned expert in advertising. Our competitiveness will largely depend on how we garner favourable perceptions and how we make ourselves attractive to the outside world. The challenge is to work out the right competitiveness statement for Mauritius.

Tourism, being the third pillar of the Mauritian economy after the E.P.Z. manufacturing sector and Agriculture, contributes significantly to economic growth and has been a key factor in the overall development of Mauritius. In 2009, tourism receipts amounted to Rs 38.2 billion rupees. Coupled to it, Mauritius, a nation of 1.3 million people, aims to more than double visitor numbers to 2 million in the next five years (Source: Reuters) At this crossroad of our economy, we need to think innovatively on how to convert threats into opportunities and enhance all the experience and expertise we have acquired over the years.

Given that tourism destinations are becoming more substitutable due to increasing competition in global tourism markets and it seems that brand loyalty will be even more difficult to gain in future. Hence, the aim of this paper is to present a thorough discussion of the work in progress of the study at hand namely the influence of the mauritian brand-related factors especially brand trust on loyalty.

Discussion of research gap
The idea of trusting a destination is a relatively new one and the academic investigation of such a process is still in its infancy. Although the words ‘brand’, ‘branding’ and ‘destination image’ have already appeared in many academic studies and industry conferences, no apparent effort has been made to empirically investigate the relationship between destination trust and destination loyalty. The only ones that do exist have only proposed a conceptual model. The current researches have up to now fail to test this area.

The empirical implications of destination trust have, thus, not yet been explored. Although consumers seem to have much difficulty in trusting a particular brand, the empirical “proof” underpinning destination trust is evasive and inexistent. While conducting an exploratory study in 2009, Hsu and Cai invited academics to explore this exciting concept by engaging in empirical research.
In a similar vein, David C. Arnott, in his article entitled “Trust-current thinking and future research” in 2007 observed that despite the wide spectrum of conceptual and empirical trust-related articles in a number of areas namely psychology, sociology, information systems, e-commerce, operations (supply chain) management, organizational behaviour, general management, franchising, distribution channel management, sales management, industrial (B2B) marketing, online marketing, and marketing in general and the range of areas investigated in the 55 articles, the application of the trust concept in the tourism context still appear to be under researched or overlooked. In the past, research on trust focused primarily on a number of fields except tourism.

To date, in almost all articles trust is treated as a simple dyadic between either individuals or a concatenation of individuals’ responses to look at person-to-group or group-to-group trust (Arnott, 2007). In 2007, Arnott found that although trust is a major element in the relationship that exists between a tourism service provider and its customers, yet surprisingly, there has been no collected research into trust in a tourism context. He provided sufficient facts clearly showing that the trust concept has not yet been explored in the field of tourism despite its alleged relevance. An empirical investigation is long overdue to assist decision makers in the field. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) also suggested that brand trust also has implications to other relevant areas such as brand loyalty and brand equity.

Furthermore, given that brand trust is conceptualized as” the confident expectations of the brand’s reliability and intentions in situations entailing risk to the consumer” (Andaleeb, 1992; Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Morgan and Hunt, 1994), this topic is highly relevant in the field of tourism due to the high level of variability and risk of deception. It can, therefore, be argued that brand trust enables the formation of an emotional bond between tourists and brands which may imply that the more tourists trust the brand, the more the inherent risk will be reduced.

Only recently Hsu and Cai (2009) proposed a conceptual model incorporating brand trust and brand loyalty in the tourism context but they affirmed that empirical applications are recommended to test its viability. In fact, they affirmed that although there are existing measurements for the individual concepts included in the model proposed, pilot and experimental studies are required to generate or refine measurements holistically for the model and its constructs. They insisted that case studies of destinations will help to judge the practicality of the model.
Hsu and Cai (2009) further highlighted that destination branding especially trust affords tourism researchers a fertile field to engage in productive and rigorous academic inquiries, not only to accumulate a much needed knowledge on destination branding but also to guide the practice of it and its applicability.

Given that scholarly research has not empirically examined the trust concept in the tourism domain, the present research is executed with the spirit of providing a empirical examination and a descriptive measurement of this concept. More specifically, it sought to address this void by applying the brand trust and brand loyalty scales proposed by E Elena Delgado-Ballester (2004) and Quester and Lim (2003)

In sum, to date, empirical investigation on the influence of brand trust on loyalty towards a destination is inexistent. The research gap is, therefore, justified and the chosen measurement scales have not yet been applied in a tourism context.

**Research design and methodology**

Echtner and Ritchie (1991) argued that a combination of structured and unstructured methodologies is necessary to accurately measure the research phenomenon. Thus, following Echtner and Ritchie (1991) principle, both the structured and unstructured approaches will be used in this study. To investigate and analyse the research problem, the methods used included both primary and secondary methods. The latter included the analysis of the literature on branding and destinations of related studies and also measurement of brand trust factors that affect the loyalty of tourists towards a destination. As mentioned earlier, previous literature on the relationship of brand trust and destination loyalty is very limited. Therefore, only little ‘benchmark research’ was available (c.f. Albarran 2006). In order to gain new insights, a descriptive and exploratory research strategy was chosen: Furthermore, a deductive approach was chosen to complement the exploratory research design of the study. The exploration started with general investigations and proceeded to more specific (as cited in Hanna-Kaisa Ellonen, 2007). The principle of triangulation was, thus, applied in this study.

Triangulation reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the research phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln 2000). Eskola & Suoranta (1998) see its value in situations in which it is very difficult to get an extensive understanding of the phenomenon by using a single
method. Thus, theoretical triangulation refers to the use of multiple perspectives in interpretation. Thus, several streams of research are combined and the research phenomenon is interpreted using multiple lenses to produce complementary insights. It refers to using multiple methods in one study, which meant using different types of qualitative and quantitative methods in the data collection and analysis. This study comprises an intensive literature review which included a conceptual/theoretical analysis of prior research; exploratory study which included a series of personal in-depth interviews conducted with knowledgeable persons in the field with the purpose of enriching the main ideas derived from the literature review (Delgado-Ballester 2004); data collection will be carried out by means of structured interviews - This will involve the implementation of a number of predetermined questions using thoroughly tested brand trust and brand loyalty scales. Snow & Thomas (1994) consider interviews an important method in theory building, and thus would support the exploratory research design of this study - case study analysis will take the case of Mauritius. According to Yin (2003), the objective of a case study is to understand a phenomenon in its natural context. Eriksson & Koistinen (2005) emphasize the importance of describing and understanding the context, as it makes the case understandable and partly explains it.

Data triangulation, which refers to using a variety of data sources, was also applied in this study (Hanna-Kaisa Ellonen, 2007). Prior academic research was reviewed and analyzed as well as secondary data from the Tourism industry. Thus, following some fruitful discussions with some knowledgeable persons in the industry and selected academics, the research scope was narrowed to more precisely affirm the author’s contribution to the body of knowledge.

As per the authors’ initial insights and thinking process instead of investigating the influence of several brand related variables, the focus is now solely on brand trust. Thorough literature review on brand trust revealed that till date no one has investigated on the influence of brand trust on tourism destination loyalty. To be more precise, no tourism/destination empirical study currently focuses on trust as a determinant of loyalty. Based on its newness and originality, the author has found it wise to focus on same.

The authors, thus, reviewed what had been written about the relationship between brand trust and loyalty. Then, its relevance in the field of tourism was unveiled.

Model development and hypotheses
Following the review of the research scope, the research model and study hypotheses were formulated as follows:

Based on a review of the literature, a model linking two brand trust related factors namely brand reliability and brand intentions to tourism destination loyalty was developed. The model examines the main effects of each of the two independent variables on tourism destination loyalty. The model was used to redefine and refine the study hypotheses:

**Take in Figure 1 about here**

Figure 1: Proposed Model illustrating the hypothesized influence of Two Brand Trust Related Factors on Tourism Destination Loyalty

In line with previous research carried out by Delgado-Ballester (2004), the following hypotheses were formulated:

**H1.** The higher the brand reliability, the more loyal, tourists will be to a destination.

**H2.** The better the brand intentions, the more loyal, tourists will be to a destination

**Research instrument and scales used**

As mentioned earlier, Delgado-Ballester (2004) developed and validated a reliable, valid and generalizable scale to measure trust in a brand setting and in this study, destination trust will be measured using the brand trust scale developed by Delgado-Ballester (2004). They have strong face validity as measures of brand trust and are statistically reliable (Cronbach’s alpha ¼ 0.954 for both brand reliability and brand intentions). Similarly, destination loyalty will be measured using the brand loyalty scales (adapted from Quester and Lim, 2003). They have strong face validity as measures of brand loyalty and are statistically reliable (Cronbach’s alpha ¼ 0.893 for attitudinal brand loyalty and 0.875 for behavioural brand loyalty). Reliability of the factors was assessed using the SPSS version of the Cronbach Alpha Reliability Measure (Bebko, 1993)

Through literature review, the author came across the only existing brand trust and brand loyalty scales. The measure of brand trust was based on Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman’s (2005) research and included eight items, while that of brand loyalty consisted of nine items. Six items was adapted from Quester and Lim (2003) to measure attitudinal and behavioural
aspects of brand loyalty and another three from Zeithaml et al., (1996) measured the attitudinal aspects

Measurement invariance of brand trust and loyalty scales across types of product was assessed and gained support that the brand trust and loyalty scales can be used in the field of tourism (Horn and McArdle, 1992, p. 117, Berry, 1980) as cited in Elena Delgado-Ballester (2004). The fact that the brand trust and loyalty scales proposed accomplishes with different kinds of invariance (e.g. configural, metric and error variance) suggests that managers can feel confident in using the brand trust and loyalty scales because the brand trust and brand loyalty concept has the same meaning in different products;

Despite the drain on time and resources, many researchers develop their own questionnaires. This is a mixed blessing while it can cause problems when attempting to compare studies, standardized instruments need to be used cautiously for research objectives and context may differ. However, Mc Iver (1991) argues that, if possible, where similar objectives exist researchers should use existing questionnaires, with perhaps slight modification, and thus build on examples of good practice. Standardised research tools have been developed by other researchers, these have been checked for reliability because they have been used in other studies. These arguments justified the use of the scales in this study.

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software will be used to code and analyse the data. The summated scales will be formulated by means of exploratory factor analysis. The multicollinearity of the summated scales will be assessed by examining the tolerances given that the scales existed already: all the tolerance values should over 0.265, which will indicate that there is no problems with multicollinearity. (Marianne Horppu et al., 2008)

Brand trust and loyalty items will be scored on a five-point scale ranging from completely disagree (= 1) to completely agree (= 5).

Take in Figure 1 about here

Table I: Brand Trust and Loyalty Scales

Sample design
Hair et al., (1995) contended that, for samples in excess of 200 to 300 respondents, “the researcher should examine all significance due to the increased statistical power from the sample size” (Hair et al., 1995, p.22). Hoetter (1983) defined the critical size of a sample to be approximately 200.

The sample size for the questionnaire survey will be 300 tourists. Using two different samples, the study will be conducted at five different locations: four sea resorts mainly in the Northern, Eastern, Western and Southern part of Mauritius (Sample 1) and at Plaisance Airport (Sample 2). Although the tourists are all attending the same destination, they may have quite different experiences of it. For the first sample, the retrieval hypothesis (Solomon, Bamossy and Askegaard, 1999) will be used to capture destination trust and loyalty. Respondents will be instructed to recall their experiences during their visit in Mauritius in the previous six months. To participate in the survey, respondents will be approached randomly on beaches, and around shopping malls. It is expected that participants will be responsive and willing to participate and refusal rates predominantly low. For the second sample, data will be collected in the departure lounge of Plaisance Airport, tourists waiting for their flights to return to their respective countries after a vacation/holiday in Mauritius, will be approached randomly to complete a questionnaire. Prior arrangements will be done with Airports of Mauritius Ltd and the Ministry of Tourism. Unlike the first sample, these respondents will be evaluated on destination trust only a few hours after the holiday experience. In both cases, whenever a respondent will refuse to participate the researcher will move to the next random available one. A total of 300 questionnaires will be administered across both samples (Sample 1: N = 150 – Sample 2: n = 150).

The criterion for the significance of factor loadings will be set at 0.45; based on the guidelines suggested by Hair et al., (1998) for a sample of 150. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Barlett’s test of sphericity will be computed to assess the appropriateness of factor analyses to the data. Exploratory factor analysis will be used to assess the dimensionality of the scale (Brand et al., 1997). Evaluation will be done following the results of the test to verify whether both results demonstrate the factorability of the matrices being considered (Hair et al., 1998). Principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation will be used to identify the underlying dimensions. Items exhibiting low factor loadings (< 0.45), high cross loadings (> 0.40) or low communalities (< 0.30) will be candidates for elimination. (Hair et al., 1998)
Predictive validity which is defined as the ability of a measuring instrument to estimate some criterion behaviour that is external to the measuring instrument itself (Nunally and Bernstein, 1994) will also be assessed. Convergent validity will be used to determine whether each indicator's estimated maximum likelihood loading on the underlying dimension is significant (Anderson and Cerbing, 1998). Discriminant validity will be tested by means of Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criteria, whereby the explained variance for a construct indicator is compared with the shared variance between the construct and the other variables (Brady et al., 2001).

**Sampling bias**
Group of tourists may be systematically and intentionally be excluded from a sample, including those under a certain age or those who are visitors from a very short time, such as two or three days cases, whose views will therefore not be sought. Dixon and Carr-Hill (1989) suggested that researchers should address the issue of whether very short stay tourists have different views from long stay tourists. Bias can also occur if AML staff act as gatekeepers in tourists studies, deciding which tourists are suitable for the administration of a questionnaire (Batchelor et al., 1994).

**The pre-test process**
The first version of the questionnaire was tested in a pilot study involving 20 respondents. As a result of the feedback received from the pretesting, the phrasing of some items was clarified in order to increase the validity of the survey instrument. (Marianne Horppu et al., 2008)

**Data analysis**
In order to test the identified hypotheses and examine the relative importance of two independent variables in predicting of loyalty, regression analysis will be used (Brand et al., 1997). Hierarchical linear regression models will be used to test the hypotheses concerning the linkage between destination trust and loyalty as done in some previous studies to identify the relationship between the dependent variable and set of independent variables. However, caution will be taken to ensure that the error term in a regression equation would not be heteroscedastic and would be normally distributed if the dependent variable were discrete (Chan, 1991). Thus, coefficient estimates would be efficient, the conventional measure of goodness-of-fit, R2, meaningful, estimated standard errors consistent, and the usual statistical test of significance appropriate (Nerlove and Press, 1973). In addition, predicated values of the dependent variable may lie outside the range defined for the variable (Goldberger, 1994). To avoid these difficulties, an efficient non-linear method of estimation, such as logit analysis, has to be devised (Sin, 1997).
Conceptual and theoretical problems and difficulties

During the data collection phase, respondents might not be aware of the terminology or detail of the topic of research and they might be reluctant to ask (Ghauri, P. and Gronhaug, K., 2002). They could have under-reported or misreported their experience related information (Abdullah et al., 2004). A common problem relates to the fact that tourists may have little motivation to reply or may simply be irritated by the whole process if it is difficult to understand or too complex. Respondents may lie or try to please an interviewer and causality can never be proved (Swetnam, 2000). Despite the pretest, the conceptual problems might affect the willingness of participants to provide correct answers to the questionnaires, so that appropriate and simple language should be used.

Conclusion

In this paper, a thorough discussion of the work in progress of the empirical study at hand was presented. The authors highlighted the research gaps and proposed a detailed research model to test the hypotheses. The model illustrates the hypothesized influence of destination trust related factors on tourist loyalty towards a destination. The methodology of how the model will be tested is explored and exposed. The empirical confirmation of the influence of brand trust related factors on loyalty will undoubtedly aid the different actors and decision makers within the tourism industry to guide the practice of it and its applicability.

The authors’ contribution is the form of the application of the brand trust scale developed by Delgado-Ballester (2004) in the field of tourism to address the limitations of the work of Delgado-Ballester (2004) in fact, reviewers had suggested that to analyse the robustness of the dimensionality of brand trust, future research needs to test the scale with products sufficiently different in terms of functional and emotional brand attributes. (Delgado-Ballester 2004). Thus, application in the tourism sector is a good application to overcome the limitation of this study. The author also applied the deductive and triangulation methodologies to the field of tourism. Last but not least, the author proposed to empirical test the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables.

Limitations and directions for future research

The sample size is relatively small and biased towards tourists staying in Mauritius only. A larger sample may be needed to further increase the validity of the study. The results of the study will be influenced by specific structural characteristics of the country under scrutiny. Increased
confidence and further insights would undoubtedly be gained if additional analyses of the same kind are to be undertaken for a broad range of countries sharing similar characteristics. This study will focus on literate visitors with at least a command of the English Language. It may be important to develop ways of measuring/investigating the influence of brand trust on loyalty in different languages. Repetitive studies with the same industry should be conducted to examine the stability of findings among international tourists visiting Mauritius (Prayag, 2007). Longitudinal studies are, therefore, recommended to enhance the usefulness of the data collected during this study. The methodology and measurement scales used in this study can be tested in other competing tourists’ destination.
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Le Meridien Hotel, Mauritius, 24-27 August 2010
Figure 1: Proposed Model illustrating the hypothesized influence of Two Brand Trust Related Factors on Tourism Destination Loyalty

Table I: Brand Trust and Loyalty Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand trust - Cronbach’s alpha 0.954 - Adapted from Delgado-Ballester and Munuera Alema´ (2005)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The brand guarantees satisfaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mauritius is a brand that meets my expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel confidence in the Mauritian brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius is a brand that never disappoints me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that . . .</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Mauritian brand would be honest and sincere in addressing my concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could rely on the Maurius brand</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Mauritian brand would make every effort to satisfy me</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Mauritian brand would compensate me in some way if I had a problem with the stay</td>
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<tr>
<th>Attitudinal brand loyalty Cronbach’s alpha 0.893 - Adapted from Quester and Lim (2003)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am committed to the Mauritian brand I pay more attention to this particular brand of Mauritius than to other brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am more interested in this particular brand of Mauritius than in other brands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adapted from Zeithaml et al. (1996)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I say positive things about the Mauritian brand to other people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I recommend the Mauritian brand to anyone who seeks my advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I encourage relatives and friends to read and buy the Mauritian brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural brand loyalty Cronbach’s alpha 0.875 - Adapted from Quester and Lim (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is very important for me to visit this particular brand of Mauritius, a tourist destination, rather than another brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always visit the same Mauritian tourist destination because I really like this brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am going to visit Mauritius in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am going to remain loyal to Mauritius, as tourist destination in the future</td>
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About the authors

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