

Abstract

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Title: TRAVELLERS' PERCEPTION ON SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION BRANDING	

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Sustainability is becoming increasingly important in tourism. The tourism industry is at a crossroads that needs to find the balance between economic growth and sustainable practices. It is crucial to understand how sustainable practices influence brand perception and value. In the area of destination branding, the question of how travellers perceive sustainable destination branding and, subsequently, the extent to which destinations can benefit from integrating sustainable practices into their brand identity will be addressed.

For this objective, the theoretical-conceptual construct of travel perception is derived from the existing literature on destination branding and sustainability. Perception is integrated with a consumer-based brand equity model to increase empirical measurability, taking into account the specific characteristics of the destinations. Based on a systematic literature analysis in two steps, the perception on sustainable destination branding as well as their potential influencing factors are derived as research hypotheses. For empirical investigation, an explanatory online survey is conducted in which 411 guests from the destination of Osttirol participated.

The regression and correlation analyses illustrate the significant influence of sustainability on customer-based brand equity in the tourism sector. Travellers tend to perceive a destination's as more valuable if they see sustainable branding practices being implemented effectively. The integration of sustainable practices into brand identity has significantly improved the components of perceived brand quality and brand value in particular. Brand quality benefits significantly from sustainability efforts, as travellers increasingly associate sustainability with high-quality experiences. Brand awareness and brand loyalty also show positive correlations with sustainability measures, although the impact is less pronounced. The study shows that ethical responsibility has the strongest influence on these components. However, the combination of economic, social and environmental responsibility is essential and lays the foundation for success. The results emphasise the relevance of integrating sustainable practices into destination branding. Based on the results, practical recommendations are formulated for the objective to effectively positioning the , in this study examined, destination of Osttirol as a sustainable destination and boosting its competitive advantage in the market.

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