

Determinants of Hotel Brand Image: A Unified Model of Customer-Based Brand Equity

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to find the factors affecting the brand image of hotels applying a unified model of customer-based brand equity. Additionally, it tests the moderating effect of tourism management in the relationship between the determining factors and brand image of hotels. Responses were gathered from the customers of some selected Bangladeshi hotels in four and five-star category using a multi-stage sampling procedure. The partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the hypotheses of this study. Corporate social responsibility was found to be the most significant, followed by brand superiority, brand association, brand awareness, and brand resonance. It was found that the relationship between brand superiority and brand image was moderated by tourism management; the relationship between brand resonance and brand image was also found to be moderated by tourism management. The findings of this study bear implications both in theoretical and practical aspects.

KEYWORDS

Brand Image, Customer-Based Brand Equity, Hotel, Tourism Industry

1. INTRODUCTION

Building a strong brand image has been a vital matter for hotel managers. A strong brand image is an asset for hotels that strive for attracting tourists from home and abroad. A favorable brand image can help hotels differentiate their offerings from those of their competitors. Favorable brand image can be built only when the brands can satisfy customers' need in a better way. Each strong brand in the world has a special meaning to their target customers, and it has been possible for their continuous efforts to build and maintain a good brand image. Consequently, the brand image and the overall positive brand experience obtained from a brand is considered to be the most important asset for a hotel business. A great brand image begets lots of benefits for the organization as it helps build a strong base of loyal customers. There is a fierce competition among the hotels with a strong brand image for occupying the loyal customers since the market becomes increasingly saturated. Hence, it is imperative not to identify only the factors influencing brand image but also to construct a brand image model in the hotel industry (Erkmen & Hancer, 2019; Song et al., 2019). However, the lack of supporting empirical evidences in the hospitality literature makes it difficult to pave the ways for establishing a brand image for the hotels.

On the other hand, having inadequate research in this industry in Bangladesh hinders the managers from understanding how customers evaluate hotel brands. Thus, hotels presently hold a misconception about customers. At the same time, customers also hold a misconception about hotels.

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As a result, hotels cannot offer appropriate services to their customers, and customers cannot get a level of satisfaction from hotels (Iglesias et al., 2019). From that ground, this study tries to present a fine-tuned framework for understanding the factors affecting hotel brand image.

Hotels are inseparable parts of the tourism industry of a nation that is a hub of international tourists. Hence hotels can contribute a lot to the economic development of the countries. Bangladesh tourism industry has a great prospect due to the fact that the country has attractive scenic beauty and a rich cultural heritage. The country has lots of attractive tourism destinations, including Cox's Bazar, the longest beach in Bangladesh and the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest. If the country's tourism sector has a strong image all over the world, it might be another sector to earn dollars after garment sector (Emerging hospitality in Bangladesh, 2012). The pre-condition for a vibrant tourism sector includes better hotels and resorts with safe and modern amenities, which the tourists value. So it is necessary to explore the issues tourists consider for choosing hotels. However, reviewing the marketing and branding research regarding the tourism sector, researchers conclude that there are few sketchy and inconclusive research in customer-based brand equity (Yun et al., 2020), specifically in the hotel industry. Although the Bangladesh hospitality sector is highly likely to attract international tourists, this sector has not achieved a favourable image among the foreigners due to poor infrastructure and government policy and other issues. Moreover, the image branding mechanism of hotel industry is not up to the mark and no systematic researches have been conducted on how to increase the brand image of the hotels in Bangladesh (El-Said, 2020) though such researches are being conducted in developed countries (Guillet, 2020; Yun et al., 2020). Thus the present study applied the theoretical framework of Aaker's Customer-Based Brand Equity Framework-1996, Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Pyramid-2003 and Baker's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Model-2001, with respect to hotel industry and suggested a unified model and this model might be both conceptually and statistically meaningful in building strong brand image of tourism industry. Hence the main objectives of this study are;

- i) To investigate the influence of brand awareness, brand association, brand superiority, brand affection, brand resonance and corporate social responsibility in building brand image.
- ii) To investigate the moderating effect of tourism management in the relationship between brand awareness, brand association, brand superiority, brand affection, brand resonance, corporate social responsibility and brand image.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand image, an important building block in customer-based brand equity, is defined as "perceptions about a brand which is reflected by the brand associations apprehended in customer's memory" (Khan et al., 2019). Strong brand image depends on so many factors. Brand awareness, brand association, brand superiority, brand affection, brand resonance and corporate social responsibility are treated as stimulation of brand image (Saleem & Raja, 2014). The next section discusses these variables concerning the brand image.

2.1 Brand Awareness

Keller (2008) thinks that brand awareness is intertwined with brand recognition and brand recall performance. Both are essential elements in building and maintaining strong brand image. Due to recognition and recall, a customer becomes aware of a brand, and strong awareness about a brand increases brand image. Thus, brand awareness drives customers to create a brand image in their minds (Song, 2013; Khan et al., 2019). Brand awareness is a formation of brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition and recall are comprised of brand attributes. With the help of brand attributes, customers become aware of the brand. Thus, strong brand attributes influence brand

awareness and strong brand awareness influences brand image (Wasib Latif, 2017). Therefore, this study hypothesized that;

H1: Brand awareness has significant positive effect on brand image

2.2 Brand Association

Brand association is used for differentiating, positioning, and extending brands, building and creating favorable attitudes and feelings towards brands, and recommending for purchasing or using a particular brand (Severi & Ling, 2013). Brand association plays a great role in creating customer value and this is because it is important to the marketers (Koll & Von Wallpach, 2014). A customer's value may depend on the customer's perceptions. Atilgan et al., (2005) have identified that solid brand association might enhance the brand image to a greater extent. Similarly, Severi & Ling (2013) clarified that brand association could be created by benefits. These benefits create a position in the target customers' minds. Thus, brand image can be created by brand association (Chi, 2016). Therefore, it is hypothesized in this paper that;

H2: Brand association has significant positive effect on brand image.

2.3 Brand Superiority

Brand superiority measures the customer's overall cognitive evaluation of the brand and other competing brands (Keller's, 2003a & 2003b). Previous studies (Moslehpour & Yumnu, 2014) suggest that intangible quality of a brand assists customers for cognitive evaluation. On the basis of cognitive evaluation, customers differentiate their brand and hold superiority and create positive image in their minds (Cai et al., 2015). According to Nam et al., (2011) customer's superiority made by differentiation and uniqueness of the brand leads to brand image. Hence, it can be hypothesized that;

H3: Brand superiority has significant positive effect on brand image.

2.4 Brand Affection

Brand affection encompasses strong emotion that influences customer response to a particular brand. Therefore, brand affection has a significant influence on building a strong brand image. In this sense, customer's affective reaction to advertisements, consumption of goods, use of services, and customer satisfaction have been examined comprehensively by past research works (Kumar et al., 2015). Previous studies revealed that how customers react is greatly influenced by emotions and consumers' emotions got an important position in consumer behaviour literature (Wasib Latif, 2017). Malär et al., (2011) state that brand affection is a formulation of emotional attachment that strongly influences brand image. Thus, it is hypothesized in this study that;

H4: Brand affection has significant positive effect on brand image.

2.5 Brand Resonance

When customers think they have a deep and active loyalty with a brand, then it is called a brand resonance (Song, 2013). Brian (2010) stated that brand resonance comprised active engagement to a brand. In this sense, customers make good relationship with a brand. Thus, brand resonance implies to build brand image. Empirical studies (Brodie et al., 2011) examined that active brand loyalty occurs through brand resonance. This is the reason, brand resonance is the key factor for increasing brand

image (Song, 2013), which is justified by a number of studies (Phillip, 2013; Huang & Cai, 2015). Thus, it is hypothesized that;

H5: Brand resonance has significant positive impact on brand image.

2.6 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Hoeffler and Keller (2002) stated that through corporate social responsibility, companies create brand image in the minds of customers. Simultaneously, Wood (2010) argued that implication of corporate social responsibility in society insists customers to hold a positive image about a brand. Moreover, competitive advantage may be achieved by CSR initiatives and can create a positive image in the minds of consumers (Melo & Galan, 2011). According to Maneet and Sudhir (2011), with the help of corporate social responsibility a company and its brands could be able to make position in the customers' minds. In an empirical study (Mohammed & Rashid, 2018) the researcher found that corporate social responsibility can lead to brand image. Researcher found that there is positive relationship with corporate social responsibility and brand image (Manyange, 2013). Jung (2012) denoted corporate social responsibility has a good relationship with brand image. Ahmad et al., (2016) also found corporate social responsibility to influence the brand image. Thus, it is hypothesized that;

H6: Corporate Social Responsibility significantly influences the brand image.

2.7 Tourism Management as Moderator

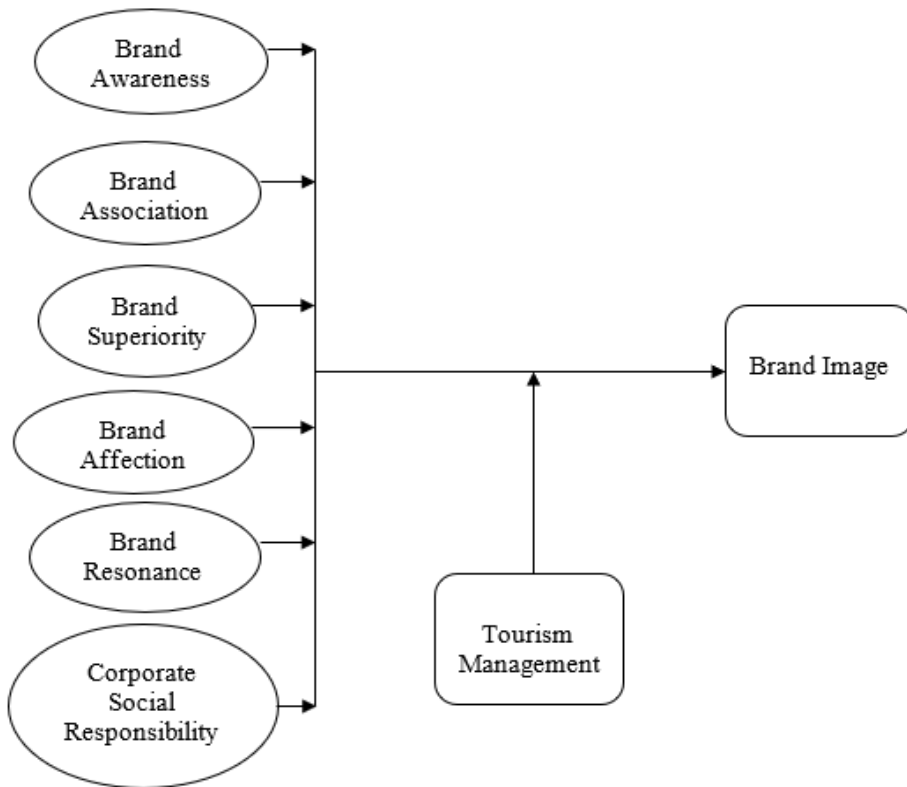
Tourism management is associated with biodiversity and ecosystems that make a better space for customers (tourists). Therefore, tourism product management system is an important part of biodiversity and ecosystem which can build positive image about tourism product (Gössling et al., 2011). Moreover, healthy as well as wealthy tourism could be viewed as the great and increasingly rising industry of modern business arena. The task of tourism management is to flourish destination brand for tourists based on awareness programs and build positive image in the tourists (customers) minds (Pike et al., 2010). Tourism management contributes more for developing tourism 'product' from host residents (Lee, 2014). In this case, host residents are responsible for creating image about tourism brand based on destinations, facilities and hotels in the domestic and foreign tourists (customers) minds where awareness insists them (Lee, 2013). Coghlan (2012) underlies tourism 'product' is an amalgamation of destination, accommodation and transportation. Positive, favorable, and unique associations of a brand are essential for building strong brand image (Bauer et al., 2008). Moreover, Phillip (2013) emphasizes that strong brand formulates benefits such as associations. According to Alamu (2016) management always incorporates tourism 'product' for tourists (customers). This incorporation process accelerates by tourism management. As a result, tourism management makes a platform for tourism 'product' that insists tourists (customers) about destination attractions with other facilities based on affection within tourism industry (Kumar et al., 2015). Brand affection measures brand love, brand attachment and emotional attachment (Albert et al., 2013a,b). Empirical study (Waligo et al., 2013) stated that stakeholders are strongly associated with tourism management. According to Song (2013), brand resonance patronizes customers' feelings and purchase intention; and the extent to which a brand resonance will contribute to lead to create a brand image may differ by the degree of tourism management. It always focuses on protecting the natural environment, cultural heritage and social ambience of a tourism spot. So it is clear that tourism management incorporates corporate social responsibility and how effective the CSR governance is to build a positive image in a customer's mind (Ahmad et al., 2016). Hence it can be assumed that tourism management in association with brand awareness, brand association, brand superiority, brand affection, brand resonance and corporate social responsibility can help build strong brand image for the industry; and following hypotheses are proposed:

- H7: The relationship between brand awareness and brand image can be moderated by tourism management.
- H8: The tourism management positively moderates the relationship between brand association and brand image.
- H9: The tourism management positively moderates the relationship between brand superiority and brand image.
- H10: Tourism management positively moderates the relationship between brand affection and brand image.
- H11: Tourism management positively moderates the relationship between brand resonance and brand image.
- H12: Tourism management positively moderates the relationship between corporate social responsibility and brand image.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The proposed research model includes brand awareness, brand association, brand superiority, brand affection, brand resonance and corporate social responsibility as the influencing factors of brand image in the tourism industry.

Figure 1. Proposed research model



3.1 Proposed Research Model

And the tourism management is proposed as the moderator in the relationships between the influencing factors and brand image.

3.2 Population and Sampling Procedure and Data Collection

The information required to carry out this empirical study is collected through structured questionnaire survey. Questionnaires were distributed to 5-star and 4-star hotels' customers in Dhaka city and Cox's Bazar seaside town of Bangladesh among 600 respondents. In Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, the 4-star hotels are Hotel Sarina and Royal Park Residence Hotel and also 5-star hotels are Radisson Water Garden Hotel Dhaka, Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka Hotel, The Westin Dhaka and Dhaka Regency. On the other hand, in Cox's Bazar seaside town, the 4-star hotels are Long Beach Hotel Ltd. and Hotel the Cox Today and also 5-star hotels are Hotel Sea Palace Limited and Seagull Hotel Cox's bazar. This study followed Simple Random Sampling (SRS) method for the selection of 600 respondents from 4-star and 5-star hotel brands in Dhaka city and Cox's Bazar seaside town. Under simple random sampling method, the customers (samples) are selected from customer database of each hotel. Serial numbers of the customers are used from which individual serial numbers are put in a box and picked blindly and are set aside as samples so that the repetition can be avoided. In this way, from Dhaka city we have got 360 respondents; 60 respondents from each hotel (total 6 hotels). From Cox's Bazar seaside town we have got 240 respondents; 60 from each hotel (total 4 hotels). As a result, the accumulated respondents are 600 from 4-star and 5-star hotel brands from Dhaka city and from Cox's Bazar seaside town of Bangladesh. Furthermore, discrimination has not been allowed in terms of background, ethnicity and social status. Out of 600 distributed questionnaires, 322 were filled in and returned by the respondents giving a response rate of 53.67%. On the other hand, 23 sets of returned questionnaire were rejected, because some of them were incomplete, i.e., there were missing data in most of the cases; and outliers were detected in some of the returned sets of questionnaire. Finally, a total of 299 filled in questionnaire made up the valid responses for this study and the response rate was 49.83%. All the responses were gathered on five point likert scale.

3.3 Measures and Data Analysis Technique

The items for each construct have been adapted from previous studies as those were found reliable and valid. Brand awareness is measured by 5 items which are adapted from studies by Yoo et al., (2000). Brand association is measured using 5 items which are adapted from studies by Ross, S.D., James & Vargas, (2006). Brand superiority is measured using 5 items which are adapted from study by Keller (2003a). Brand affection is measured using 5 items which are adapted from studies by Fuller et al., (2008). Brand resonance is measured using 5 items that are adapted from study by Keller (2003b). Corporate social responsibility is measured using 5 items which are adapted from study by Mowen (1987). Tourism Management is measured using 5 items that are adapted from study by Ahammed (2010). Brand image is measured by using five items which are adapted from studies by Kim et al., (2003). In this research, the collected data have been analyzed by Partial Least Squares- Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) technique using smart PLS M2.0 software.

3.4 Respondents' Profile

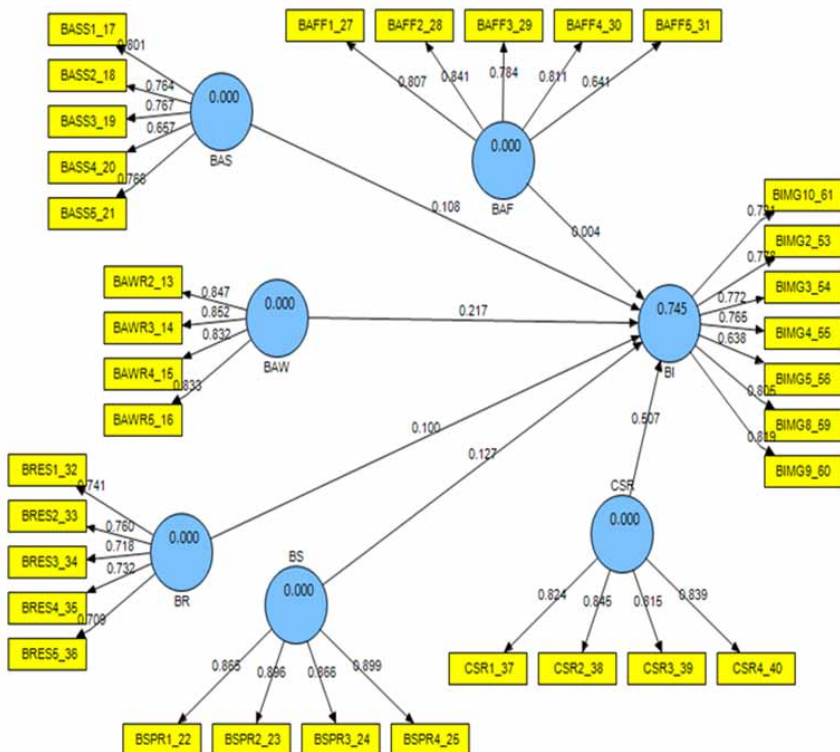
Most of the respondents, (271; 90.6%) are male and only 28 respondents (9.4%) are female. The majority of the participants (149; 49.8%) belong to the age range of 36-45; and 117 (39.1%) fall into the age range of 26-35, 23 (7.7%) represent the age of 46-55 while only 10 (3.3%) are above 56 years. Among the 299 respondents, 108 (36.1%) are Bangladeshi, and rest of them are foreigners (191; 63.9%). On the other hand, 8 (2.68%) respondents have diploma degree, 271 (90.63%) have bachelor degree (graduates), 19 (6.35%) have postgraduate education, and the remaining 1 (0.34%) has below diploma degree (others). Out of 299 respondents, 294 have monthly income of more than

TK. 100000 (USD. 1250/-); only 5 have monthly income less than TK. 100000 (less than USD. 1250/-). 94% (281) respondents spend more than TK. 80000 (USD. 1000/-) on accommodation and food while they are away from home; 3.3% (10) spend between Tk. 51000-80000 (USD. 640 – 1000/-); 2% (6) spend Tk. 20000-50000 (USD. 250-625/-) and the remaining 0.7% (2) spend less than Tk.20000 (USD. 250/-) on accommodation and food while they are away from home. Regarding the employment sector, 106 (35.45%) respondents are from government sector and the remaining 193 (64.55%) are involved in private sector. In terms of profession, 90 (30.1%) respondents are involved in technical (professional) jobs (doctors, engineers, pharmacists and etc.) and the remaining 209 (69.9%) are involved in non-technical (non-professional) jobs (businessmen, private and government officials and etc.). In addition to the demographic characteristics noted above, respondents are asked whether they stay in the branded hotel when they travel. In response to this query, 277 (92.6%) respondents have said yes and 22 (7.4%) said no. On the other hand, 257 (86%) respondents have replied that they stay in the same hotel when they travel, and only 14% (42) respondents have said that they sometimes change the hotels when they travel. Again 278 (93%) respondents have said yes in response to “Do you stay in more than one branded hotel when you travel”; while 21 (7%) said no.

3.5 PLS-SEM Analysis Results

The reliability and validity of collected data have been confirmed by the measurement model of PLS SEM analysis. The Figure 1 below shows the hypothesized model generated through smart PLS software version M2.0. The measurement model output is shown in table 1 and a detail description is given below.

Figure 2. PLS measurement model



3.5.1 Reliability Test and Convergent Validity

For testing the reliability of data, the Cronbach's alpha values of the constructs were observed. Table 1 shows that all the constructs have Cronbach alpha values higher than 0.70 which is within the acceptable range (Hair, J. F., Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., & Mena, J. A., 2012); while the composite reliability values of the variables (0.70 and above) are also within the acceptable range (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Thus the data of this study are reliable.

Table 1. Measurement Model output for reliability and convergent validity test.

Construct	Item	loadings	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand Affection	BAFF1	0.806	0.608	0.885	0.836
	BAFF2	0.841			
	BAFF3	0.784			
	BAFF4	0.811			
	BAFF5	0.640			
Brand Association	BASS1	0.800	0.566	0.866	0.808
	BASS2	0.764			
	BASS3	0.766			
	BASS4	0.657			
	BASS5	0.766			
Brand Awareness	BAWR1	0.847	0.707	0.906	0.862
	BAWR2	0.852			
	BAWR3	0.831			
	BAWR4	0.832			
Brand Resonance	BRES1	0.740	0.536	0.852	0.784
	BRES2	0.759			
	BRES3	0.717			
	BRES4	0.732			
	BRES5	0.709			
Brand Superiority	BSPR1	0.864	0.777	0.933	0.904
	BSPR2	0.896			
	BSPR3	0.865			
	BSPR4	0.898			
Corporate Social Responsibility	CSR1	0.824	0.690	0.899	0.850
	CSR2	0.844			
	CSR3	0.815			
	CSR4	0.838			
Tourism Management	TMNG1	0.795	0.536	0.852	0.785
	TMNG2	0.739			
	TMNG3	0.680			
	TMNG4	0.729			
	TMNG5	0.711			
Brand Image	BIMG1	0.776	0.518	0.865	0.813
	BIMG2	0.772			
	BIMG3	0.766			
	BIMG4	0.640			
	BIMG5	0.803			
	BIMG6	0.819			
	BIMG7	0.721			

All the AVE values are above 0.50, i.e., the convergent validity of constructs of this study is confirmed (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The absolute standardized outer loadings of items are above 0.50 which is also acceptable (Chin, 1998). Based on the results (0.50 and above AVE values of the variables and; 0.60 and above values of item loading), it can be concluded that the data have convergent validity.

3.5.2 Discriminant Validity

For discriminant validity the first criterion to assess is the indicators' loadings against the correlations of all the constructs. In this study the items are well loaded on their constructs much higher than the cross loadings on other constructs that conform to the first assessment criterion of the measurement model's discriminant validity (Chin, 1998).

Table 2. Items loadings and cross loadings

	B. AFF	B.ASS	B.AWR	B. IMG	B. RES	B. SPR	CSR	T. MNG
BAFF1	0.806	0.190	0.405	0.329	0.196	0.040	0.312	0.186
BAFF2	0.841	0.215	0.451	0.367	0.125	0.046	0.337	0.170
BAFF3	0.784	0.166	0.393	0.312	0.478	0.044	0.285	0.181
BAFF4	0.811	0.200	0.437	0.357	0.468	0.036	0.322	0.171
BAFF5	0.640	0.099	0.366	0.364	0.271	0.116	0.319	0.066
BASS1	0.155	0.800	0.325	0.334	0.156	0.038	0.329	0.213
BASS2	0.172	0.764	0.301	0.308	0.203	0.027	0.268	0.212
BASS3	0.165	0.766	0.286	0.302	0.168	0.032	0.286	0.168
BASS4	0.199	0.657	0.184	0.251	0.207	0.039	0.187	0.223
BASS5	0.162	0.766	0.358	0.364	0.189	0.066	0.340	0.201
BAWR1	0.448	0.397	0.846	0.164	0.451	0.317	0.235	0.226
BAWR2	0.477	0.286	0.852	0.296	0.489	0.349	0.125	0.262
BAWR3	0.419	0.371	0.831	0.349	0.447	0.319	0.410	0.219
BAWR4	0.435	0.277	0.833	0.299	0.448	0.341	0.326	0.253
BIMG1	0.391	0.240	0.484	0.721	0.437	0.248	0.408	0.201
BIMG2	0.327	0.420	0.227	0.776	0.343	0.314	0.236	0.295
BIMG3	0.391	0.240	0.484	0.721	0.437	0.248	0.408	0.201
BIMG4	0.327	0.420	0.227	0.776	0.343	0.314	0.236	0.295
BIMG5	0.327	0.255	0.193	0.772	0.352	0.379	0.365	0.271
BIMG6	0.345	0.234	0.432	0.766	0.388	0.234	0.488	0.210
BIMG7	0.411	0.315	0.365	0.640	0.396	0.213	0.372	0.211
BIMG8	0.305	0.407	0.213	0.803	0.320	0.361	0.235	0.268
BIMG9	0.337	0.321	0.410	0.819	0.361	0.427	0.421	0.316
BRES1	0.253	0.189	0.359	0.290	0.740	0.033	0.294	0.082
BRES2	0.367	0.184	0.458	0.374	0.759	0.065	0.351	0.167
BRES3	0.245	0.176	0.383	0.320	0.717	0.028	0.285	0.181

Table 2 continued on next page

Table 2 continued

	B. AFF	B.ASS	B.AWR	B. IMG	B. RES	B. SPR	CSR	T. MNG
BRES4	0.137	0.225	0.431	0.373	0.732	0.023	0.323	0.178
BRES5	0.413	0.116	0.354	0.371	0.709	0.103	0.319	0.059
BSPR1	0.044	0.083	0.332	0.346	0.035	0.864	0.310	-0.129
BSPR2	0.104	0.030	0.381	0.405	0.097	0.896	0.387	-0.051
BSPR3	0.032	0.075	0.326	0.340	0.042	0.865	0.302	-0.138
BSPR4	0.072	0.015	0.350	0.395	0.070	0.899	0.370	-0.076
CSR1	0.334	0.401	0.325	0.390	0.350	0.316	0.823	0.205
CSR2	0.359	0.296	0.103	0.229	0.384	0.330	0.845	0.243
CSR3	0.328	0.328	0.301	0.428	0.344	0.346	0.814	0.156
CSR4	0.332	0.248	0.301	0.205	0.356	0.310	0.839	0.215
TMNG1	0.185	0.232	0.261	0.309	0.139	-0.036	0.216	0.795
TMNG2	0.102	0.178	0.174	0.246	0.085	-0.099	0.173	0.739
TMNG3	0.103	0.124	0.160	0.173	0.104	-0.118	0.120	0.680
TMNG4	0.176	0.214	0.232	0.251	0.191	-0.087	0.188	0.729
TMNG5	0.138	0.212	0.200	0.238	0.148	-0.083	0.191	0.711

Secondly, table 3 shows that the square root of the AVEs (table 3) exceeds the highest correlation between that construct and the other constructs which confirm the discriminant validity (Chin 1998; Fornell & Larcker, 1981) of the constructs in this study.

Table 3. Correlations matrix of constructs for discriminant validity assessment

Construct	B. AFF	B.ASS	B.AWR	B. IMG	B. RES	B. SPR	CSR	T. MNG
Brand Affection	0.779							
Brand Association	0.224	0.752						
Brand Awareness	0.530	0.394	0.840					
Brand Image	0.448	0.419	0.606	0.758				
Brand Resonance	0.380	0.243	0.546	0.477	0.732			
Brand Superiority	0.07	0.055	0.395	0.424	0.071	0.877		
CSR	0.407	0.382	0.569	0.530	0.432	0.391	0.830	
Tourism Management	0.197	0.269	0.286	0.340	0.184	-0.109	0.248	0.732

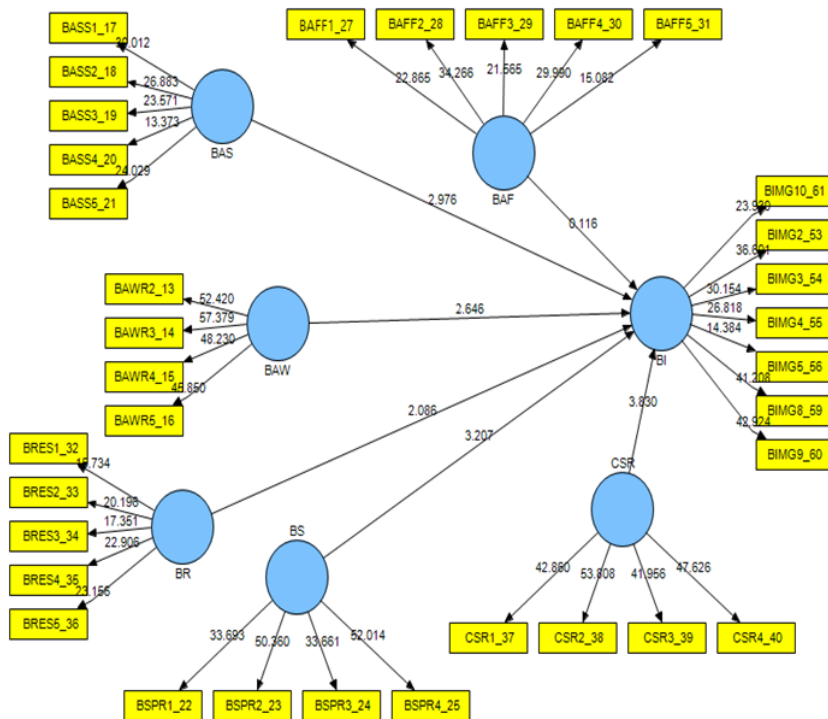
3.5.3 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

This study has got a R^2 value of 0.745, which is very close to substantial effect. So the six independent variables, namely brand awareness, brand association, brand affection, brand resonance, brand superiority and corporate social responsibility considered in this study have substantial effect on the brand image. It is found that brand image of hotels is influenced 74.50% by the six factors considered in this study.

3.6 Structural Model Assessment for Hypotheses Testing

In the PLS SEM analysis, hypotheses are tested in the structural model. Here the path coefficients, t statistics, p values and errors are considered. A hypothesis is usually accepted if it is significant at 5% level (t value > 1.96 or $p < 0.05$) (Henseler & Fassott, 2010).

Figure 3. The structural model



The findings of the hypotheses tests are demonstrated in Table 4. Figure 2 also shows the output of the PLS structural model.

Table 4. Hypotheses testing findings

Hypothesized Relationship	Path Coefficients (β)	Standard Errors	T Statistics	P Values
H1: Brand Awareness -> Brand Image	0.216	0.133	2.646***	0.004
H2: Brand Association -> Brand Image	0.107	0.033	2.976***	0.001
H3: Brand Superiority -> Brand Image	0.126	0.040	3.207***	0.000
H4: Brand Affection -> Brand Image	0.004	0.041	0.116	0.453
H5: Brand Resonance -> Brand Image	0.100	0.049	2.086**	0.018
H6: Corporate Social Responsibility -> Brand Image	0.506	0.137	3.830***	0.000

Note: **p<0.05 (significant at 5% level); ***p<0.01 (significant at 1% level).

The findings support Hypothesis 1 as the path coefficient value is 0.216 which is significant (t, 2.646; p<0.01). So it is accepted that brand awareness has a positive effect on brand image. Hypothesis 2 also is supported because the path coefficient (0.107) is significant (t, 2.976; p, <0.01). So it is accepted that brand association has a significant effect on brand image. The findings also support hypothesis 3 which indicates that brand superiority is significantly and positively correlated with brand image (path coefficient, 0.126; t, 3.207; p< 0.01). Findings do not support Hypothesis 4 because the path coefficient is insignificant (path coefficient, 0.004; t, 0.116; p>0.05). Hypothesis 5 is supported as the path coefficient (0.100) is significant (t, 2.086; p<0.05). So brand resonance is positively and significantly correlated with brand image. Finally the finding support Hypothesis 6 as the path coefficient value (0.506) is significant (t, 3.830; p<0.01). Hence the findings support that Corporate Social Responsibility is a strong predictor of brand image.

3.7 Moderating Effect of Tourism Management

The moderating effect of tourism management is examined on the basis of the relationship between the six IVs namely brand awareness, brand association, brand superiority, brand affection, brand resonance, corporate social responsibility and brand image. The findings of moderating effect test are documented in table 5. Figure 3 also shows the bootstrapping results for moderating effect test of tourism management.

Figure 4. Moderating effect of tourism management

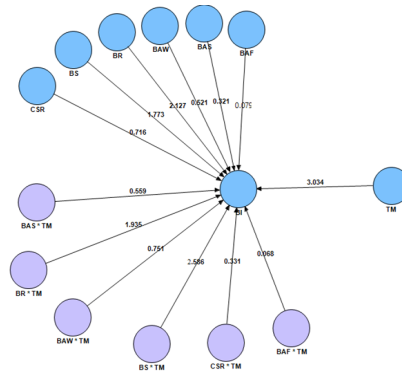


Table 5. Moderating effect test findings (tourism management)

Hypothesized Relationships	Path Coefficients (β)	T Statistics	P Values
H7: Brand awareness*Tourism management -> Brand Image	1.144	0.751	0.453
H8: Brand association*Tourism management-> Brand Image	-0.141	0.559	0.748
H9: Brand superiority*Tourism management-> Brand Image	0.944	2.586***	0.005
H10: Brand affection*Tourism management-> Brand Image	0.055	0.068	0.473
H11: Brand resonance*Tourism management-> Brand Image	1.591	1.995**	0.026
H12: CSR*Tourism management -> Brand Image	-0.455	0.331	0.370

Note: ** $p < 0.05$ (significant at 5% level); *** $p < 0.01$ (significant at 1% level).

H7 is not supported as the path coefficient of interaction effect is 1.114 (Table 5), which is insignificant (t ; 0.751; $p > 0.05$). This suggests that tourism management doesn't moderate the relationship between brand awareness and brand image. H8 is also not supported as the path coefficient (-0.141; t ; 0.559) is negative and the value is not significant ($p > 0.05$) also, this suggests that tourism management doesn't have any moderating effect in the relationship between brand association and brand image. H9 is supported as the path coefficient of the interaction effect of brand superiority and tourism management on brand image is 0.944 (t ; 2.586) and it is significant at 1% level (p ; 0.005). H10 is rejected as the path coefficient (0.055) of interaction term of brand affection * tourism management is insignificant (t ; 0.068; $p > 0.05$). Hypothesis 11 is supported because the path coefficient of interaction effect of brand resonance and tourism management on brand image is 1.591 and this value is significant at 5% level (t ; 1.995; p ; 0.026). The interaction term corporate social responsibility * tourism management has got a path coefficient value of -0.455 which is insignificant (t ; 0.331; $p > 0.05$); so H12 is not supported.

4. DISCUSSION

The empirical findings of this study reveal that brand awareness, brand association, brand superiority, brand resonance and corporate social responsibility are positively and significantly related to brand image of branded hotels in the context of Bangladesh. The first hypothesis of this study was associated to the relationship between brand awareness and brand image. It is also proved in this study that brand awareness is a strong predictor of brand image; and this finding is consistent with that of previous studies (Phillip, 2013; Bishop, 2014; Chi, 2016), who also found brand awareness as an essential determinant of brand image. Brand awareness makes a strong claim in marketing as well as branding literature as it is one of the most important factors marketers can utilize to promote their products. The attributes of a particular brand help customers become aware about that brand. Once customers become aware of the brand, the possibility of making lasting effect in the mind of customers regarding that brand becomes higher. The purchase decision of a particular product highly depends on the extent to which customers can recognize that brand.

Earlier researchers (Chi, 2016; Ahmed, 2018) found that brand association is closely linked with building brand image. The present study also reveals that strong brand image can be formed by offering appealing benefits to the customers. In the hospitality industry, the brand associations of a hotel thus can be used as an important mechanism of building strong image. The present study also found brand superiority as an important factor influencing brand image for the branded hotels. In fact, brand superiority plays an important role for customers' cognitive evaluations. Due to brand superiority, customers use their judgment mechanism for assessing a brand and perceive positive impression about a brand. The statistical findings of this study reveal that brand affection is not a significant predictor of brand image in the context of hotel industry especially for branded hotels. The present study also gives evidence that hotels can build strong brand image with the help of brand resonance. This finding is similar to that of previous studies (Chi, 2016) where researchers found that brand resonance builds brand image. Brand resonance is a strong component of a brand that makes a lasting relationship between customers and a brand. The present study focused on the corporate social responsibility (CSR) in relation to the brand image. The findings reveal that branded hotels can enhance their image to a large extent by practicing CSR culture. Among other determinants of brand image, CSR was found to be the most significant factor affecting brand image in the hospitality industry especially for branded hotels.

4.1 Moderating Effect of Tourism Management

The present study used tourism management as the moderator on the relationship between the determining factors and brand image. The findings of this study also reveal that tourism management positively and significantly moderates the relationship between brand superiority and brand image. According to Nam et al. (2011) brand superiority made by differentiation and uniqueness of the brand leads to brand image. The respondents of this study agreed that proper tourism management along with the distinctive attributes of hotel brands contributes to the enhancement of brand image. Therefore, the relationship between brand superiority and brand image might be strengthened by tourism management. With better tourism management, brand superiority can enhance brand image a lot.

It is also found in this study that tourism management positively and significantly moderates the relationship between brand resonance and brand image. It implies that better tourism management strengthens the relationship between brand resonance and brand image. Better tourism management with maintaining relationship with customers might help organizations to create strong brand image. It is because of the fact that tourism management encompasses tourism 'products' that are comprised by destination brand. Therefore, it is the responsibility of a hospitality industry to make new spots, modernize the existing ones and ensure safe environment to give a favorable and convincing experience for the visitors. No moderating effect of tourism management was found in the relationship of brand awareness, brand association, brand affection and CSR with brand image. The statistical findings reveal

that brand image doesn't increase while tourism management is interacting with brand awareness, brand association, brand affection and CSR.

5. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This research is pioneer in nature as it has generated insightful findings on customer based brand equity model for the brand image of hotels. The implications of the study can be discussed from two perspectives; theoretical and practical which have been discussed below. The findings of this study have clarified the influences of brand awareness, brand association, brand superiority, brand affection, brand resonance and CSR in building brand image in the hospitality industry with reference to hotels. The present study develops a comprehensive understanding of favorable brand image and its determinants in relation to tourism experience. There is gap in the literature on the hotel branding concerning the lack of explanatory models and managerial approaches (Lien, et al., 2015). Based on the findings, this study presents a model which might enrich the marketing as well as branding literature demonstrating key drivers of strong brand image in the hospitality industry. This study advances the knowledge about how hospitality branding strategies especially for the hotels can be developed to achieve strong brand image in the minds of customers. From that ground, the present study extends the existing knowledge on brand image by evaluating the comments from a diverse group of customers within a tourism sector. Thus it supplements empirical evidence to address the research gaps and responds to the calls for examining the brand image of tourism products. In this way it adds some new insights into the customer based brand equity models as proposed by Aker's (1996), Keller's (2003) and Baker's (2001). Finally, the present study explored some new aspects of building and strengthening brand image which could embolden the existing customer-based brand equity model. Organizations are now doing CSR practices as part of their social obligation to build favorable image in the market which consequently builds their image. It is also proved in this study that CSR practices by the hotels influence their customers to develop favorable image. The influence of these CSR practices on consumer attitudes will be effective only when customers are aware of the fact that companies perform this type of initiatives.

Figure 5 represents the proposed model which implies that for building brand image, organizations have to provide distinctive products to the customers so that they can create brand superiority which helps customers to differentiate a particular brand from the competing ones. Then brand awareness can be formed by brand attributes which might influence brand image. Organizations can form brand associations by providing appealing benefits which create favorable image. Strong brand image can also be built through active brand attachment resulting from brand resonance. The present study also found that CSR practices by the hotels also play a critical role in creating favorable image in the minds of the customers which might help build strong brand image. The proposed model also suggests that better tourism management can be an important platform for building favorable brand image for the hospitality industry.

Figure 5. Conceptual model of determinants of hotels' brand image



This study presents some practical implications for management and policy makers of the hotel industry. From the findings of this study, marketers can know where they should emphasize for creating brand awareness in building strong brand image. From this study, the managers working in the hospitality industry might know how to develop their goods and services for creating favorable image in the market. Business tourism marketers, hotels in particular may find the outcome of this study applicable for their organizations to communicate a desired positioning for their organizations. The predictors of brand image may be usable by the researchers and practitioners for a comprehensive understanding about the tourists in the tourism industry. Through this study, hotel management might know how to ensure positive and multi-dimensional experiences for the tourists, which might result in positive perception in the target customers' mind. The framework developed in this study shows that favorable brand image for hotels are influenced by salient facets of a hotel brand. In addition, the model shows that when building strong brand image in the context of hotels, marketers need to pay attention to moderation elements that influence customers' decision-making process regarding a particular brand.

Though valuable implications are derived from the study, it is not free from criticisms. The samples for this study were recruited from the databases of the selected four and five star hotel brands of the country. Those that are not the customers of the selected hotels were excluded from the sample population. To address this criticism, future researchers may conduct studies taking data across the entire spectrum of the hotels across the country and compare their results with the present findings.

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