INVESTIGATING THE INFLUENCE OF DESTINATION FASCINATION ON DESTINATION BRAND LOYALTY FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: *Destination brand loyalty is considered to be as one of the most influential factors on the economic growth of destinations or countries in tourism market. Thus, it is important for destination managers or governments to know the drivers of destination brand loyalty. In the tourism literature, there are numerous studies that explore the antecedents of destination brand loyalty. However, "destination fascination" as a multidimensional framework is relatively novel in the tourism literature and studies on the application of destination fascination model to destinations appear to be somewhat limited in the literature. The framework developed by Liu et al. (2017) is the pioneering model which conceptualized destination fascination as a multidimensional model first.*

The aim of this study is to investigate the influence of destination fascination dimensions (fitness, friendliness, uniqueness, attractiveness, mystique and richness) on destination brand loyalty for a destination called Uludağ that is famous for its natural and recreational features. Uludağ has great tourism potential especially for nature and winter tourism. In spite of these strengths, Uludağ has a relatively limited tourism market share both in terms of domestic and international tourists. This study intends to address this dilemma and helps destination managers develop more effective tourism strategies.

The research sample consists of domestic tourists who went to Uludağ destination in the last six months. Data were collected in the months of December of 2017 and January of 2018.

A total of 478 survey responses from participants, were collected. Based on the initial screening of the collected questionnaires, 48 of them were excluded as they were inappropriate. PLS-Sem method was used to test the research model. The scale of Liu et al. (2017) was used for the dimensions of destination fascination.

The findings of the research showed that all of the dimensions except mystique were found to have statistically significant influence on destination brand loyalty. In addition, attractiveness and richness dimensions had the highest influence on destination brand loyalty. According to the modelling results several tourism strategies were proposed. This study helps draw relevant and useful implications for both academics and practitioners in tourism. It is important for destination managers, local authorities and other practitioners to analyze the influence of destination fascination on destination brand loyalty in order to develop efficient tourism strategies.

Key words: *Destination fascination, destination brand loyalty, tourism, PLS-Sem*

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