MASTER THESIS

CUSTOMER-BASED BRAND EQUITY MODEL (CBBE) FOR MEASUREMENT OF MICE DESTINATIONS BRAND PERFORMANCE

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List of Abbreviations

AW: awareness (MICE destination brand equity dimension)
BCN: Barcelona sample
CBBE: Customer-Based Brand Equity
CBBETD: Customer-Based Brand Equity Evaluation of a Tourism Destination
CFA: Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CVB: Convention and Visitor Bureau
DMO: Destination Management Organization
EFA: Exploratory Factor Analysis
IAPCO: International Association of Professional Congress Organizers
ICCA: International Congress and Convention Association
IM: image (MICE destination brand equity dimension)
L: loyalty (MICE destination brand equity dimension)
MA: MICE assets (MICE destination brand equity dimension)
MICE: Meetings, Incentives, Conferences/Conventions and Exhibitions/Events
MPI: Meetings Professionals International
pax: persons
Q: quality (MICE destination brand equity dimension)
SEM: Structural Equation Modeling
SITE Spain: Association of Spanish Destination Management Companies (DMCs Spain)
SPB: St Petersburg sample
UIA: Union of International Associations
UNWTO: World Tourism Organization

1 INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector of meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (shortly abbreviated as MICE, with the last letter "E" in some instances standing for events and the "C" standing for to conventions) or simply the meetings industry is widely recognized as the fastest growing segment and most lucrative sector of the travel and tourism industry (UNWTO, 2014). Due to numerous benefits that MICE tourism brings to destinations (high direct and indirect revenue, greater foreign exchange, employment opportunities, positive impact on the destination image and low seasonality) (ibid), the number of the destinations pursuing this market is constantly increasing and they are competing for holding the higher number of events. In many instances the factor that would differentiate similar destinations and may largely influence the decision-making process of site selection for both meeting planners and attendees is the destination brand. Thus, it is crucial to understand the effectiveness of destination brands in order to plan for successful long-term destination management.

As a latent construct the destination brand cannot be measured directly, but its measurement can be inferred through the relationships of a set of observed (measured) variables. There are different approaches to destination brand performance monitoring and measurement in the tourism studies. Unfortunately, to date there is no universally agreed set of metrics. Furthermore, the destination brand studies were mainly focused on leisure tourism, while other tourism contexts were not explored.

The present study aims at developing a valid and reliable model for measurement of MICE destinations brands from a customer perspective based on the concept of consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) building on the previous research (e.g. Boo, Busser & Baloglu, 2009; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). The consumer is identified as a frequent MICE event attendee (at least once per year, while only the attendance of events outside the permanent residence area is taken into account) and who has already experienced the destination in question. The developed model seeks to empirically test the structural relationships among the proposed brand equity dimensions.

To test the developed model two MICE destinations were selected. The selection was based on objective and subjective criteria. The two destinations are in the same category within their corresponding national MICE market and are accessible for the author of the study in order to collect data: Barcelona (Spain) and St Petersburg (Russia). Barcelona and St Petersburg along with capital cities of their countries are major venues for national and international events and business travel in their corresponding MICE markets. International attendees of various MICE events in the above-mentioned destinations are asked to rate brand equity dimensions. The collected data allow testing the proposed baseline model.

1. 1 Rationale

Within the tourism destination studies the measurement of destination brands is one of the most complex challenges for tourism professionals. Building on the CBBE models adapted for tourism destinations, the present research develops a structural model to assess the performance of MICE destinations brands from the business tourist perspective. In particular the proposed model (focused on MICE tourism destinations) is tested from the perspective of international attendees of MICE events held in Barcelona and St Petersburg. The testing of the model on two samples is supposed to guarantee the higher reliability and validity of the analysis results.

1. 2 Research Question

The research posits the following research questions:

How can a CBBE model be adapted for MICE destinations?

What are the structural relations between the brand dimensions of MICE destinations brand equity?

The theoretically developed and empirically tested model complements previous research findings on perception of the destination's brand by its end consumers and contributes to the further conceptualization and operationalization of such a latent construct as a destination brand in the context of MICE tourism.

The analysis of the collected data is expected to allow exploring the structural relationships among the dimensions of MICE destination brand awareness (AW), MICE destination brand quality (Q), MICE destination brand image (IM) and MICE destination brand assets (MA), and links them with the intention to re-visit and recommend included as variables into the MICE brand destination loyalty (L). The main objective of this study is to gain insight into the MICE destination brand equity structure and the way its dimensions interact with each other. The study does not aim at generalizing its results to the population.

1. 3 Structure of the Dissertation

The master thesis follows the standard structure. The first chapter introduces the research topic and posits the research questions. Then the study highlights the earlier research on tourism destination brands, application of CBBE model in the tourism destination context and MICE destinations in particular, along with the research into the MICE tourism (Chapter 2). The literature review helps identifying the dimensions of MICE destinations brand equity, selecting the most suitable metrics for each variable in relation to the dimensions and hypothesize the path relationship among brand equity dimensions.

The literature review is followed by the chapter on the conceptual framework (Chapter 3), where using the findings of the literature review the theoretical framework is outlined and the proposed CBBE model for MICE destinations is introduced. Furthermore, several

hypotheses are made that will help investigate the structural relationships between the brand equity dimensions in the MICE tourism context.

The next chapter is devoted to the cases (Chapter 4). The cases of Barcelona (Spain) and St Petersburg (Russia) as MICE destinations are presented. The background information on the destinations, tourism statistics and MICE tourism statistics are introduced. Chapter 5 introduces the research paradigm and describes the methodology for the primary data collection process and data analysis. The research tests the hypotheses in the following analysis section (Chapter 6) in order to give answers to the research questions posited in the Chapter 1. Conclusions and summary of the main findings follow as the final chapter of the dissertation (Chapter 7).

The study also includes the list of references and a few appendices.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2. 1 Conceptualization of a Brand for Tourism Destinations

A brand is generally understood as a name, term, sign, symbol, or other marker that serves as a powerful means of differentiation for a product (Aaker, 1991; Kapferer, 1997; Keller, 2003; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Kotler, 1988; Pappu, Quester, & Cooksey, 2005; Tasci et al, 2007).

The first discussions and analyses of destination branding emerged during the 1990s (see Dosen, Vransevic & Prebezac, 1998; Pritchard & Morgan, 1998) and ever since destination branding has been attracting vast academic interest. A comprehensive review of the research progress into tourism destination branding (Pike, 2007) tabled 74 publications by 102 authors published between 1998 and 2007. In the tourism destinations context definitions of are rooted in marketing theory brands (Blain, Levy & Ritchie, 2005; Cai, 2002). Thus, in tourism studies it is assumed that tourists see a destination as a product and the concept of brand can be applied not only to tangible, but also to intangible elements (Aaker, 1991; Murphy, 1998; Ward, Light, & Goldstein, 1999). The destination as any other product has certain attributes that are evaluated through both cognitive and affective processes by the consumers (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). A unique destination identity is considered to be created by an unparalleled combination of brand elements (functional, symbolic, and experiential) (Dredge & Jenkins, 2003), hence the importance of the destination brand in the customer's destination selection process (Jago et al., 2003; Morgan, Pritchard, Piggott, 2002; Ooi, 2004). Yet, to date there is still no unanimously accepted definition of the destination branding (see Blain et al, 2005, Tasci & Kozak, 2006). The following definition is considered by academics as the most comprehensive to date (Kladou & Kehagias, 2014, Pike, 2013):

> "The marketing activities (1) that support the creation of a name, symbol,
> logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates a

destination; (2) that convey the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; (3) that serve to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience, all with the intent purpose of creating an image that influences consumers' decisions to visit the destination in question, as opposed to an alternative one" (Blain et al, 2005, p. 331-332).

Furthermore, it is accepted that the brand is comprised of various elements (dimensions) that intermingle to form the overall destination attractiveness. Yet, there is no conclusive understanding about what elements comprise a brand and a destination brand in particular (Blain et al., 2005; Pike, 2004). The progress in research into brand dimensions is presented in the corresponding subchapter of the literature review.

The research into a destination's brand poses many challenges to a researcher, since it is intangible and cannot be observed directly. Overall the literature lacks a commonly accepted framework within the destination brand studies (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). The low level of destination's brand operationalization is reflected in the fact that the major part of the research into destination branding is conducted in the form of case studies and is undertaken at the conceptual or exploratory level rather than explanatory level (Cai, 2002; Ooi, 2004; Pritchard & Morgan, 2001; Williams, Gill & Chura, 2004). In many papers the destination brands are understood within the framework of destination image theory (Cai, 2002; Hall, Robertson, & Shaw, 2001; Hankinson, 2005; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002; Pritchard & Morgan, 2001; Tasci, Gartner & Cavusgil, 2007). Indeed, in the general marketing literature, a brand is seen as an extension of its image (Keller, 2003). However, Cai (2002) noted that ''image formation is not branding, albeit the former constitutes the core of the latter'' (p. 722).

It is considered of importance to regularly evaluate and monitor how effective the destination branding strategies are (Morgan & Pritchard, 2002; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1998). The main focus of the research stayed within tourism destination image and destination attributes (Ekinci, Hosany & Uysal, 2006; Hankinson, 2005; Konecnik, 2004), or on specific aspects of brand communication (Lee & Back, 2008; Pike, 2004). Furthermore, there were limited studies comprehensively assessing the destination branding strategies and their performance (Cai, 2002; Pike, 2007). This research gap regarding destination brands performance has been attempted to be filled by studies on brand equity.

Aaker (1991, p. 15) conceptualizes brand equity as "a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name, and symbol, which add to or subtract from the value provided by a producer, by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers". When referring to products within corporate and product branding, the measurement of brand equity is done by way of a 'balance sheet asset' (Pike, 2010, p.128), which includes future potential financial performance (Kim, Kim, & An, 2003) and their market share (Mackay, 2001). This approach refers to the organizational perspective on the brand equity and it is hard to transfer it to the tourism destinations. The concept of consumer-

based brand equity (CBBE) proposed by Aaker (1991, 1996) and Keller (1993, 2003) provides destination marketers a tool to measure how successfully the brand identity (i.e. the aspirational self-image planned and created by the DMO) has been positioned in the market in the minds of consumers (Pike, Bianchi, Kerr & Patti, 2010). Keller (1993) further delineated the concept of CBBE, putting it as ''the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand'' (p. 8). Later Keller (2003) develops his approach and suggests seeing the CBBE model as a hierarchical structure (which can visualized as the pyramid) that comprises six brand building blocks which correspond to four stages of brand development (establishment of the brand identity, brand meaning creation, response and resonance. Studies on the CBBE model for tourism destinations are reviewed in the following subchapter.

2. 2 Customer-Based Brand Equity Model for Tourism Destinations

The CBBE methodology originally applied for product brands (as well as for services and organizations brands) was for the first time applied to destinations in 2006 (see Konecnik, 2006; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007) and since then various studies were testing the potential of CBBE for destinations (Bianchi, Pike, Lings, 2014; Boo, et al, 2009; Ferns & Walls, 2012; Gartner & Konecnik Ruzzier, 2011; Kladou & Kehagias, 2013; Pike, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2013; Pike et al, 2010, etc.). It was recognized that destination brand equity reflects what perceptions and attitudes are held by consumers and that it is possible to measure destination brand equity by measuring the brand dimensions it comprises from the perspective of the tourist generating markets. Thus, CBBE is seen as a tool to get a more comprehensive understanding on the brand equity that goes beyond the tangible assets (Pike, 2007).

As it was mentioned above, Konecnik and Gartner (2007) were the first to offer a theoretical conceptualization of customer-based brand equity evaluation of a tourism destination (CBBETD) and identified the following brand dimensions: awareness, image, quality, and loyalty. The model was tested on one tourism destination (Slovenia) from the perspective of German and Croatian tourists. The brand was analyzed within the destination image studies framework. In the end no monetary value of the destination brand was determined. It was empirically proved that the tourists from different markets value the brand dimensions of a destination differently.

Similarly Pike (2007) tested a CBBE model by measuring brand equity of three South American countries (Chile, Brazil and Argentina) from the perspective of Australian tourists. Then, the CBBE model was applied to measure the brand performance over time (Pike, 2007, 2009, 2013, Pike, Bianchi, Kerr & Patti, 2010) in order to see if there are any fluctuations in the market perceptions of destination brand. The conclusion was that the brand perception changes at a very slow pace over time.

The CBBE model was also applied to multiple destinations (Boo, Busser & Baloglu, 2009). The research adapted the model to the casino gaming destinations brands evaluation and the model was empirically verified from the perspective of domestic

tourists who have visited Las Vegas and Atlantic City. The data analysis allowed concluding that since the destination was already experienced, it is valid to merge brand image and destination brand quality dimensions into a destination brand experience dimension. The study also explored the path relationship among destination brand awareness, destination brand experience, destination brand value, and destination brand loyalty. This research created much interest and spurred further attempts to test the model developed by Boo et al (2009). For instance, Chekalina and Fuchs (2009) compared ten selected tourism destination performance models and the CBBE model proposed and verified by Boo et al. (2009). The conclusion was that selected studies vary not only by number of items and choice of model dimensions, but also by the ratio between attribute and holistic items used to measure different constructs (Chekalina & Fuchs, 2009). Thus, the parsimonious model is still to be developed. Yet, it should be noted that brand equity and brand performance are not entirely overlapping constructs, so the results of the impressive meta-comparison require further validation.

Furthermore, the CBBE model was applied to research structural relationships among destination brand equity dimensions and other latent constructs. For instance, the study by Ferns and Walls (2012) investigated relationship among destination brand equity and enduring travel involvement and visit intentions during pretrip information search. Kim et al (2009) looked into the relationship among destination brand equity, involvement, satisfaction and destination visit intentions. As Chekalina and Fuchs (2009) have concluded in their meta-comparison analysis of the research conducted before 2009 into causal relationships between various constructs of the CBBE model and the pathway relation of CBBE and other constructs, 'there is a lack of homogeneity among studies examining the structural relationships' (p.130). They differ in what constructs are selected, how theoretical models are designed and which measurement scales are chosen.

There were also limited attempts to adapt the CBBE model to specific research interests within tourism destination studies. Sartori, Mottironi and Corigliano (2012) adapted the CBBE model for measuring the internal equity of destination brands at a regional level, where the local people are seen as the 'first customers' of the brand. Kladou and Kehagias (2014) adapted the CBBE model to measure the brand of a cultural destination by adding an extra dimension of cultural brand assets. Bianchi, Pike and Lings (2014) tested a CBBE model adapted for Argentina, Brazil and Chile among a sample of Australian long-haul travelers and their study demonstrated significant and positive relationships between destination brand salience, brand association, brand value (but not brand quality), and destination brand attitudinal loyalty.

2. 3 Brand Dimensions

In the general marketing literature brand equity measures are classified into five dimensions: awareness, associations/image, perceived quality, loyalty and brand assets (Aaker, 1991). In the destination brand equity context, usually the last dimension is excluded from the brand equity models, except in a few instances, like the inclusion of

the cultural brand assets by Kladou & Kehagias (2014). Unique assets are considered to influence familiarity (e.g. Horng, Liu, Chou, & Tsai, 2011, Kladou & Kehagias, 2014) and also contribute to consumers' ability to recall and recognize the brand (Ferns & Walls, 2012). Consequently, unique assets are believed to have an impact on awareness (Kladou & Kehagias, 2014).

As for the aforementioned four core dimensions there are also some variations in the destination branding research. Brand awareness is widely considered to be the key attribute of a brand (de Chernatony & McDonald, 2003; Motameni & Shahrokhi, 1998) and corresponds to the cognitive component of destination image (Gartner, 1993). In line with the destination image studies, the affective component of destination image is influenced mostly by the dimensions of image and quality when attitudes and feelings toward what is known (awareness) are assessed (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). Loyalty (both behavioral and attitudinal) corresponds to the conative component (ibid). In some instances the classic CBBE model was considerably modified, like in the study by Kim et al (2009) brand equity was operationalized as comprising brand awareness, preference, perceived value, uniqueness, popularity and price premium. It is admitted that the CBBE model may include many more dimensions and subdimensions (for instance, Lee & Back, 2008; Kim et al, 2009).

Table 1 summarizes the brand dimensions used in the CBBE models in various studies into the CBBE model implication for tourism destinations that were found most relevant to this study. Furthermore, below a more detailed overview of the research into four dimensions within tourism studies is presented.

Table 1.

Summary of the brand dimensions used in CBBE models and terms of their measurement

Aaker (1991)	Konecnik & Gartner (2007) – case of Slovenia / German and Croatian tourists	Pike (2007) – case of Chile, Brazil and Argentina / from the perspective of Australian tourists	Lee & Back (2008) – case of a branded conference CHRIE / conference attendees	Boo, Busser, & Baloglu (2009) – case of casino gaming destinations of Las Vegas and Atlantic City / tourist who visited destinations	Kladou & Kehagias (2014) – case of Rome as a cultural tourism destination / international tourists
Brand awareness • awareness measures	*Brand awareness* • name • characteristics	*Brand salience* • top of mind associations and decision set	*Brand awareness* • name • characteristics	*Brand awareness* • name and reputation • characteristics • specialization • popularity	*Brand awareness* • name and reputation • characteristics • specialization • strong link to specialization
Brand quality/leadership • perceived quality • leadership/popularity	*Brand quality* • accommodation • infrastructure • cleanliness • personal safety • cuisine	*Brand resonance* • previous visitation • intent to visit	*Brand satisfaction* • overall satisfaction • overall happiness with the previous experience	*Brand quality (as part of brand experience)* • consistent quality offerings • quality experiences • expectation of superior performance • superiority towards similar destinations	*Brand quality* • reliance on a good atmosphere • quality of cultural experiences • level of organization of the city's cultural aspects • educational benefits

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Aaker (1991)	Konecnik & Gartner (2007)	Pike (2007)	Lee & Back (2008)	Boo, Busser, & Baloglu (2009)	Kladou & Kehagias (2014)
Brand associations/Differentiation • perceived value • brand personality • organizational associations	*Brand image/associations* destination attributes relevant for the given travel context	*Brand associations* • cognitive perception • affective perception	*Brand associations* • professional education • social networking • site selection • staff service • self-image congruence • brand awareness	*Brand image (as part of brand experience)* • this destination fits my personality • my friends would think highly of me if i visited this destination • the image of this destination is consistent with my own self-image • visiting reflects who i am	*Brand associations* • culture • peers approval, self image • self-congruence • exotic atmosphere • hospitable locals
Brand loyalty • price premium • satisfaction/loyalty	*Brand loyalty* • number of previous visitations • time of last visitation • strong preference • perceived high number of benefits • intention to visit more • recommendation	*Brand loyalty* • repeat visitation • word of mouth referral	*Attitudinal brand loyalty* • intention to revisit more • commitment	*Brand loyalty* • continuous enjoyment of the destination • commitment • recommendation	*Brand loyalty* • continuous enjoyment of the destination • strong preference • satisfaction • recommendation
Market behavior • market share • market price and distribution coverage			*Brand trust* • trust • reliance • integrity *Updated expectation of brand value*	*Brand value* affordability ration of prices in regards to received benefits	*Brand cultural assets* • entertainment/nightlife options • cultural festivals, traditions, events • street culture • monuments/heritage sites • cuisine • art centers, museums • contribution to world heritage

2.3.1 Destination Brand Awareness

Brand awareness represents "the strength of the brand's presence in the mind of the target audience along a continuum" (Aaker, 1996, p.10). In tourism studies awareness is understood as "what someone knows or thinks they know about a destination" (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007, p. 403). Awareness refers to destination name and characteristics and it entails that an image of the destination does exist in the minds of potential destination visitors (Gartner, 1993), hence limiting the perceived opportunity set for travel to the destinations that the potential tourist is aware of (Gartner, 1993; Goodall, 1993). Thus, awareness dimension is an integral part of the brand equity and it is seen as a main component of a brand in hospitality and tourism (Kim & Kim, 2005; Lee & Back, 2008; Oh, 2000).

When measuring the level of awareness in destination branding, the research mostly addresses it from the perspective of the destination selection process (Boo et al., 2009; Goodall, 1993; Kwun & Oh, 2004; Motameni & Shahrokhi, 1998; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989; Yoo & Donthu, 2001).

Brand awareness as a dimension of the brand equity has been measured in many instances through previous visitation or direct experience that a tourist has had with a place (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007).

According to Lee and Back (2008), brand awareness along with brand associations forms the brand knowledge. In their study they refer to Keller (1993) who suggested that positive brand knowledge makes customer perceptions, preference and behavior more positive towards the marketing mix, thereby leading, to the overall general positive brand attitude, brand choice, and brand loyalty. The latter create a desired ''differential effect'' in the definition of customer-based brand equity (Lee & Back, 2008). Building on Keller's (1993) model, their research looked into the conference brand knowledge through brand awareness and associations based on the previous experiences of conference attendees: professional education, social networking, site selection, staff service, and self-image congruence (Lee & Back, 2008). Ultimately, brand knowledge formed from strong brand awareness along with positive brand associations is recognized as the antecedent to the overall positive brand attitude, brand choice, and loyalty (Keller, 1993).

The strength of the tourism destination awareness in the mind of an individual when he or she is selecting a destination is often conceptualized as a destination brand salience (Bianchi et al, 2014; Pike, 2007). The objective of brand salience is that the brand is remembered for the reasons intended (Aaker, 1996; Bianchi et al, 2014). The general awareness is important, but it is simply the "ticket" for a destination to enter the market (Pike, 2007, p.53). It is important to note that usually the attitude towards a destination depends a lot on the type of travel occasion (Crompton, 1992) and that is why it is important that a destination is not only known, but comes to mind easily when thinking about certain travel purpose. Brand salience refers to unaided top of mind awareness for a

consumer (Pike, 2007). There are a number of studies suggesting that deciding where to travel a consumer thinks about from two to six destinations only (Pike, 2007).

2.3.2 Destination Brand Image

Brand image has generally been seen as both objective (reasoned) and subjective (emotional) perceptions consumers attach to specific brands (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Keller, 2003).

As it was already stressed above, much research has been done on destination brand images specifically in the area of leisure tourism marketing (Hankinson, 2005; Walmsley and Young, 1998). A considerable amount of studies focus on attributes forming destination images (either common for many destinations or specific to one destination) and image formation process.

In tourism studies brand image dimension has been considered the main dimension of the tourism destination brand equity (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Kim & Kim, 2005).

In measuring the brand image there have been various approached. For instance, Lassar, Mittal and Sharma (1995) offered a scale for measuring consumer-based brand equity, in which they referred to the dimension of the brand image as the social image. The latter was understood as the consumer's perception of the esteem in which the consumer's social group holds the brand. In tourism studies measurement of destination brand image was operationalized through measuring how the respondents rate attributes deemed determinant for the destination in question, often in form of brand associations that are representative of destination image, and correspond to anything linked in memory (following classical definition of brand associations by Aaker from 1991) to the destination that influences evaluation towards the brand (Pike, 2007; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014). Aaker (1992) offered to group the brand associations in regards to their meaning and suggested that brand associations ultimately define the brand's positioning. In most models within marketing studies the brand associations are put into two groups. The first group is formed from the tangible features of a product or service, i.e. functional attributes; and the second group is formed from the intangible features which meet consumer needs for social approval, personal expression or self-esteem, i.e. the emotional or symbolic attributes (Keller, 1993; Hankinson, 2005). Keller (1993) and Park et al. (1986) add a category of experiential attributes, i.e. the way it feels like to use the product or service and to which extent the needs for stimulation and variety are satisfied (Park et al., 1986). Furthermore, Keller (1993) adds a category of brand attributes or brand attitudes that define a consumer's overall esteem of a brand (see Hankinson, 2005). The brand attitudes are closely interconnected with the overall perceived quality of a brand (ibid).

The framework proposed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993) became the basis for the general approach to destination image measurement. They offered to use of a comprehensive set of components including attribute-based, holistic, functional, psychological, unique and common characteristics of destination image. This method was further developed by

Gallarza, Saura and Garcia (2002) offering conceptual framework of destination image measurement through the attribute-based image metrics. Gallarza et al (2002) identify twenty most frequently researched attributes used in tourism destination image studies. They put these attributes along tangible (i.e. a functional) and intangible (i.e. psychological) axis. Far-reaching reviews (see Chon, 1990; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Gallarza et al., 2002) have demonstrated that structured surveys are the most popular measurement approach and the most popular scale is the one referring to cognitive attributes and affective benefits (Pike, 2007). In the study by Gallarza el al (2002) the most frequently found attributes were "residents' receptiveness", "landscape and/or surroundings", "cultural attractions", "sport facilities" and "price, value, cost" (Gallarza et al., 2002).

Despite much attention, there remains no commonly accepted measure for the destination brand image. Lee and Back (2008) built on Aaker's (1991) and Keller's (1993) classification of brand associations into several types and see attributes as a function from the benefits desired by a customer. They measure brand associations by estimating conference brand attributes and corresponding benefits in regards to the perceived quality by conference attendees (Lee & Back, 2008). Boo et al. (2009) limit the brand image to the social image and self-image of brand personality.

2.3.3 Destination Brand Quality

Brand quality represents one of main dimensions of brand equity (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2003; Lassar et al., 1995). In many studies brand quality has long been used similarly to the concept of the perceived quality by customers, the latter being defined as a "customer's perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service with respect to its intended purpose, relative to alternatives" (Aaker, 1991).

In the general tourism studies, perceived quality is often operationalized as popularity (Lee & Back, 2008). Boo et al (2009) based on Keller's CBBE model (2003) operationalized destination brand quality as brand performance, since it is related to the approach the destination to meet tourists' functional needs. Boo et al (ibid) stresses following Keller (2003) that quality is one of the most important constructs of the CBBE model for tourism destinations. Brand quality dimension is also included to the CBBE model in the studies by Bigne et al. (2001), Chen and Tsai (2007) and Hutchinson et al. (2009).

In some studies the brand quality dimension is not introduced, yet, the items used to operationalize the quality dimension are used to measure other constructs. For instance, there is a considerable overlap in items with the attribute satisfaction construct introduced by Chi and Qu (2008) and the disconfirmation construct introduced by del Bosque and Martin (2008). The latter was understood as resultant perception held by consumer after the comparison of actual performance and beliefs prior to the visit. Hutchinson et al. (2009) differentiate between quality and equity. While the quality was defined by measuring various aspects of services provided by the personnel (five items), the equity

was operationalized with the tourist's feeling of being treated fairly, justly and honestly (two items) (ibid).

In some research the quality dimension is also operationalized through the customers expectation of the quality considering the expenses. For instance, in the studies by Chen and Tsai (2007) and by Chi and Qu (2008) quality metrics and attribute satisfaction respectively are measured in regards to the extent the price is reasonable for some services (i.e. prices of activities, accommodations, dining, sightseeing and merchandise). The importance of price in the mind of consumer has been discussed in many studies (e.g. Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). Bianchi et al (2014) operationalized destination brand quality as perceptions of quality of the following attributes: destination infrastructure, accommodation, cleanliness and safety.

2.3.4 Destination Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty, as a brand equity dimension, has been defined as "the attachment a customer has to a brand" (Aaker, 1991, p.39). The loyalty level reflects the likelihood a consumer will switch to another brand, especially in case when the price or product features are different (ibid). Lassar et al. (1995) noted that ''brand equity stems from the greater confidence that consumers place in a brand than they do in its competitors. This confidence translates into consumers' loyalty and their willingness to pay a premium price for the brand'' (p. 11).

In tourism and hospitality, loyalty is commonly investigated in terms of behavioral loyalty (repeat visits) and attitudinal loyalty (positive feelings towards a destination leading to recommendation) (Bigne, Sanchez & Sanchez, 2001; Boo et al., 2009; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Lee et al., 2007; Pike, 2007). Attitudinal loyalty takes into account a person's attitude towards destination's attributes (i.e. affective image component) (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). It is believed that while a person him- or herself might not be visiting the destination again due to various circumstances and reasons, he or she may stay loyal in attitude, i.e. provide a positive word-of-mouth review. Loyalty is viewed as a key driver of performance in today's competitive environment (Bianchi et al, 2014). Loyalty is sometimes differentiated as short-, mid-, and long-term intention to revisit in regards to the time period since the prior visit (Jang & Feng, 2007).

Due to the importance of loyalty for sustainable tourism development, there is a considerably high number of studies looking into selected causal relationships between loyalty and its antecedents. It is generally considered that loyalty is dependent on the following constructs: pull and push motivation, novelty seeking, awareness, image, expectations, quality, experience, equity, value, disconfirmation, positive and negative emotions and satisfaction (Back and Parks, 2003; Bigne et al., 2001; Boo et al., 2009; Chen and Tsai, 2007; Chi and Qu, 2008; Faullant, Matzler & Füller, 2008; Hutchinson, Lai & Wang, 2009; Jang and Feng, 2007; Lee et al., 2007; Yoon and Uysal, 2005). Overall to date there is no commonly accepted view on the constructs that are most

relevant antecedents for loyalty and their labels vary a lot. For instance, quality as an antecedent to loyalty is seen as quality per se (Bigne et al., 2001), trip quality (Chen and Tsai, 2007) or service quality (Hutchinson et al., 2009). Some authors also specify first-order constructs at a more detailed level than others, like satisfaction may be specified as 'attribute satisfaction' and 'overall satisfaction' (Chi and Qu, 2008), value as 'emotional value', 'functional value' and 'overall value' (Lee et al., 2007).

2.3.5 Causal Relations of Brand Dimensions with Other Constructs

The research into causal relations of destination brand dimensions and other latent constructs can be summarized as follows:

- Brand associations positively influence brand satisfaction (Lee & Back, 2008, 2010);
- Brand awareness shows a negative relationship with brand satisfaction (Lee & Back, 2008, 2010);
- Brand satisfaction positively affects both updated expectation of brand value and brand trust (Lee & Back, 2008);
- Updated expectation of brand value positively influences brand trust (Lee & Back, 2008);
- Brand trust positively relates to attitudinal brand loyalty (Lee & Back, 2008);
- Enduring travel involvement leads in varying degrees to travelers' awareness of a destination, familiarity with a destination's image, and strong interest in a destination (Ferns & Walls, 2012)
- Travel involvement has a significant linkage with destination brand experience, followed by brand awareness and brand loyalty (Ferns & Walls, 2012)
- Destination brand experience, brand awareness and brand loyalty have a positive impact in forming one's visit intentions (Ferns & Walls, 2012)

2. 4 Research in MICE Tourism

The research devoted or related to meeting, incentives, conferences, conventions, exhibitions and events is multidisciplinary by nature and has long been conducted within several disciplines, like anthropology, geography or economics of events. The term 'event studies' itself has not been used until 2000 (Getz, 2007). The issue of the event studies, event tourism studies in particular and event management status as scientific disciplines or fields has been raised by D. Getz (Getz, 1998, 1999, 2002). Then, Getz (2008) concluded that event tourism is not a separate field of studies, since it is a side research field of tourism and event studies.

A few publications provide an insight into the overall progress of MICE tourism research (Getz, 2008; Yoo & Weber, 2005). In 2005 Yoo and Weber concluded that the most frequently researched area in the MICE tourism across all journals throughout the period of assessment was marketing. Other areas like service quality, loyalty, customer satisfaction, site selection issues, and market research received much attention in the

academia as well. Content analysis of the publications also determined that many articles were focusing exclusively on the meeting planners' perspective (e.g., Baloglu & Love, 2001; Clark & McCleary, 1995; Crouch & Ritchie, 1998; Lee & Hiemstra, 2001; Oppermann, 1996; Renaghan & Kay, 1987; Strick, Montgomery, & Gant, 1993; Var, Cesario, & Mauser, 1985), while the consumer perspective was neglected. With that many unresolved issues were found regarding event attendees behaviour, and it was concluded that destination marketing oriented towards consumer is likely to remain the important topic in the MICE tourism (Yoo & Weber, 2005). Similarly to the review done by Yoo and Weber in 2005, a comprehensive study into 'event tourism' as both professional practice and a field of academic study was done by D.Getz (2008) where it was concluded that the research into event tourism is still at its initial stage and there is much topics and issues to tackle. The review stressed that event tourism should be considered from both demand and supply sides (ibid). Furthermore, D.Getz (ibid) classified events as cultural celebrations, political and state events, events in arts and entertainment, sport competitions, and private events, and within MICE tourism distinguishing between business and trade-related events (meetings, conventions, consumer and trade shows, fairs, markets) and educational and scientific events (conferences, seminars, clinics).

While the academics have not focused on the MICE industry until recently, the boom that the industry experienced as early as in 1980s has led to the formalization of the terminology for the practitioners. There is a commonly accepted Meetings Industry Terminology Directory, or simply a Dictionary of the Meetings Industry (first published as early as in 1987) published by IAPCO (the International Association of Professional Congress Organizers), currently available online. These are the definitions as put out by IAPCO:

- Meeting – general term indicating the coming together of a number of people in one place, to confer or carry out a particular activity. Frequency: can be on an ad hoc basis or according to a set pattern, as for instance annual general meetings, commitee meetings, etc.
- Incentive – meeting event as part of a programme which is offered to its participants to reward a previous performance.
- Conference – participatory meeting designed for discussion, fact-finding, problem solving and consultation. As compared with a congress, a conference is normally smaller in scale and more select in character - features which tend to facilitate the exchange of information. The term "conference" carries no special connotation as to frequency. Though not inherently limited in time, conferences are usually of limited duration with specific objectives.
- Exhibition – Events at which products and services are displayed.

(IAPCO, n.d.)

Lately, there has been a developing trend to not use the "MICE tourism market" label and instead to refer to this market as "The Meetings Industry" which encompasses all the above-mentioned types of events.

A destination is understood as an 'experience supplier' by Ryan (1991, 1997), and referred to as "a brand name of a place that binds the different products and services provided by a destination together" (Jin, Weber & Bauer, 2009). Swarbrooke and Horner (2001) define a MICE destination as 'a place where events take place'. When deciding on a MICE destination to attend, business visitors are considered to be attracted by the offered venues, attractions, facilities, services and infrastructures (Rogers, 2003; Page, 2003).

Numerous studies have investigated specific destination variables that influence the selection of a destination for holding business events and its competitiveness (Chon & Weber, 2002; Crouch & Ritchie, 1998; Oppermann, 1996; Baloglu & Love, 2001; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Kim & Kim, 2003). For instance, Crouch and Ritchie (1998) identified 36 destination attributes and grouped them based on their meaning into eight primary categories. As a result the following categories were identified as most important in the site selection process:

- accessibility (cost, time, frequency, convenience, and barrier attributes);
- local support (local chapter, convention and visitors' bureau/convention center, and subsidies attributes);
- extra conference opportunity (entertainment, shopping, sightseeing, recreation, and professional opportunities);
- accommodation facilities (capacity, cost, service, security and availability),
- meeting facilities (capacity, layout, cost, ambiance, security, availability and experience attributes);
- information (reputation and marketing attributes);
- site environment (including climate, setting, and infrastructure attributes);
- and other criteria (such as risks, profitability, association promotion and novelty attributes) (ibid).

Many studies focus on the importance of one attribute over another. Rogers (2003) states that it is the destination, i.e. the "location" per se that is the most important, while other attributes like price, type of venue, quality of services and accessibility to tourist attractions are less related to the site selection. In some studies the attributes are not compared in importance to the site selection process, but their ideal combination is analyzed. For instance, Swarbrooke and Horner (2001) emphasize that a destination should have at its disposal the following facilities and services: sufficient accommodations, attractions, an appropriate venue and a good transport system. Overall there was no generally accepted list for MICE destination attributes.

Chon and Weber (2002) add to the list of the the MICE destination attributes the MICE destination image. Davidson (2003) concludes that image is the most relevant factor. This

opinion is also shared by Girod (2009). He states that many destinations have very good facilities, attractions, etc., so it is the image that differentiates destinations. And, as it is widely accepted, it is the destination brand that creates an image in the mind of the consumer (Pike, 2004).

2. 5 Destination Brands in MICE Tourism

As it was already mentioned before, the studies into destination brands were mainly conducted from the perspective of the leisure tourist, while the business tourist perspective (i.e. the perspective of the people visiting destinations for business meetings, incentive events, conferences and exhibitions) has been neglected and the research is still in the beginning. In general similar to studies in leisure tourism, studies in business tourism have been focusing on the marketing aspect, destination image and destination image formation in particular. For instance, Chiu and Ananzeh (2012) examined the role of MICE destination attributes on the formation of the touristic image of Jordan from the perspective of local and international MICE event participants. It was concluded that local attendees rated MICE destination attributes higher than international attendees, and the origin of the respondents influenced the priority the attributes were given, e.g. local attendees considered affordability as the most important attribute, while international attendees were concerned with local attractions and accountability of a tourism destination (ibid).

Within MICE tourism studies to date convention destination images and their relevance to destination selection have been analyzed mostly from the point of view of meeting planners (Oppermann, 1996), and not from the perspective of the actual conference participants (and non-participants) who are the ultimate customers for which MICE destinations are competing. From the perspective of consumer behaviors (i.e. event attendees) the research largely focuses on the site selection process (Go & Govers, 1999; Hu & Hiemstra, 1996) and the meeting participation process (Oppermann, 1995; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Price, 1993; Um & Crompton, 1992). The studies mentioned above identified which criteria and factors of site selection are most influential for the decision-making process and they also looked into the motivators, facilitators, and inhibitors to convention attendance (Lee & Back, 2008).

When it comes to studies of MICE destination brands per se, the main research flow, again, was into the brand image dimension rather than applying the holistic approach. For instance, Hankinson (2005) has studied the destination brand image from the perspective of business tourists and its relationship with perceived quality and commercial criteria. To that end he collected data on the brand image attributes associated with 15 UK destinations. The destinations selected for the analysis were promoting themselves as business tourism centres and the research was limited to a number of organisations that frequently use business tourism facilities. It was concluded that the attributes related to the destination's physical environment (both tangible in the form of built environment and intangible in the form of history the place has) were referred most frequently (ibid).

Other attributes elicited in the repertory grid analysis mainly belonged to the following groups: a destination's perceived principal economic activity, its business tourism facilities and its accessibility. When comparing the research results to the previous findings within the tourism studies it was concluded that the attributes relating to the physical environment, the role of people, the culture of the resident population, the character of the visitor market and accessibility are equally relevant for both leisure and business tourism images, while the rating in the consumer's mind of the destination's functional attributes – to be more context-related (ibid). It is generally agreed that place branding should take into account the differentiation of the place and, yet, consistently target it to specific audiences addressing their particular needs and preferences.

Lately the major role of a destination brand concept for the destinations performance has attracted much interest within the meetings industry (Lee & Back, 2010). For practitioners the brand relevance became more obvious, since many meeting planners and organizers became aware that branding helps improving return on investment, as Ilsley has stated (as cited in Lee & Back, 2010). The recognition of the importance of a destination brand perception by a consumer led to the understanding, that destination marketing is of prime necessity to create a unique identity and destination image that can become a major competitive advantage (Rogers, 2003). The responsibility for branding and promoting the city as a MICE destination (Rogers, 2003) as well as for coordinating the events organization (Lennon et al., 2006) was delegated to the Convention Bureaus (CVBs). Accepted Practices Exchange glossary defines a CVB as "not-for-profit organizations representing a specific destination and promoting the economic development of communities through travel and tourism" (APEX, 2011). CVBs provide necessary information and services to the meeting planners, and also advertise local historic, cultural and recreational sites to the business travelers and visitors alike.

There were only very limited attempts to measure MICE destination brand equity from the perspective of the conference attendees. Lee and Back (2008) measured the perceived quality of one branded conference (CHRIE) in regards to four brand associations: professional education, social networking, staff service, and site selection (geographic area) and later (2010) re-examined it by additionally sampling regional CHRIE conferences (RCs) and comparing the data with I-CHRIE's annual conference (IC).

In 2009 Jin, Weber and Bauer presented their explorative study analyzing from the perspectives of exhibition organizers, exhibitors and visitors which features of a destination in general and a venue in particular attract and retain large scale exhibitions in China's. They operationalized the definition of an exhibition brand given by Sasserath, Wenhart and Daly (2005) as "a three element structure (the event itself, operator who organizes fairs and events at various locations, and the exhibition center)" and concluded that a specific venue choice is not as important as the destination choice in attracting and retaining exhibitions, although the primary decision-making factor is the exhibiting and visiting activities destination features. Thus, exhibition theme, concept and program are

more fundamental for exhibition brands than both venue and destination. Yet, their study stressed the importance of the general MICE destination promotion, which does influence the destination selection to a certain extent.

The research gap into MICE destinations brands and branding is surprising and requires immediate attention. As the latest report by the UNWTO (2014) says: "Destinations must become a brand for business sources within the meetings world. <…> The key challenge is not to become a commodity"

As a possible way for increasing destination competitiveness, it is recommended to benchmark destinations (Dorsch and Yasin, 1998). As Lennon et al. (2006) conclude benchmarking can be a very powerful tool for destinations to improve their performance, since they learn from their competitors and can adapt the successful strategies of the competitors to their own destination. Indeed, as Kozak (2004, p.184) states, destinations allows to find "performance gaps and take action for improvement", i.e. to learn from the best practices. UNWTO (2014) reports about the usefulness of ratings for cities to measure their performance against other MICE destinations. Main rankings for MICE destinations are issued by the Union of International Associations (UIA) and International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA). While the 'economic' value argument is still one of the strongest (UNWTO, 2014), it is important that destinations highlight the added value in order to position themselves.

There are various sources advising on how to market or to approach place branding. Yet, so far there is no systematic approach to the measurement of the consumer perception of the brand.

3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Theoretical Framework

This study aims at analyzing the customer-based brand equity models used in the previous research for tourism destinations and on this basis to develop and empirically validate the customer-based brand equity model for MICE destinations.

This study is based on the academic and scholarly theories tackling the CBBE concept in general (Aaker, 1991) and CBBE concept for tourism destinations in particular (Boo, Busser & Baloglu, 2009, Ferns & Walls, 2012, Konecnik & Gartner, 2007, Lee & Back, 2008, 2010, Pike, 2007, 2009, 2013, Pike, Bianchi, Kerr & Patti, 2010).

In general the study is rested on the theory that has justified implication of the CBBE methodology to the tourism destinations context:

> Among four proposed dimensions, awareness, image, quality, loyalty, exists a
> relationship and all dimensions are important in destination evaluation and can be

expressed through the concept of consumer-based brand equity for a tourism destination (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007).

To construct a valid and reliable model for assessing the evaluation of MICE destination brands by consumers the following approach was undertaken. First, in order to identify the dimensions of MICE destination brand equity, an exhaustive review of the literature was performed. Then, the most appropriate dimensions and variables to measure them were selected. This study is largely based on the model suggested by Boo et al. (2009). The CBBE model was tested for two destinations (Las Vegas and Atlantic City) in the same product category (i.e. casino gambling). Only people who already have had experience of travelling to those destinations were targeted. The initially selected set of model dimensions included five first-order constructs: awareness, image, quality, value and loyalty. Then, it was concluded that previous visitation experience dominates over the brand image dimension, while the importance of the brand value on loyalty dimension increases. As a result, an alternative model was offered which empirically supported the existence of four first-order constructs for destinations previously experienced by the consumer, namely (1) awareness, (2) experience, (3) value and (4) loyalty (ibid). The resultant model is presented below (Fig. 1).
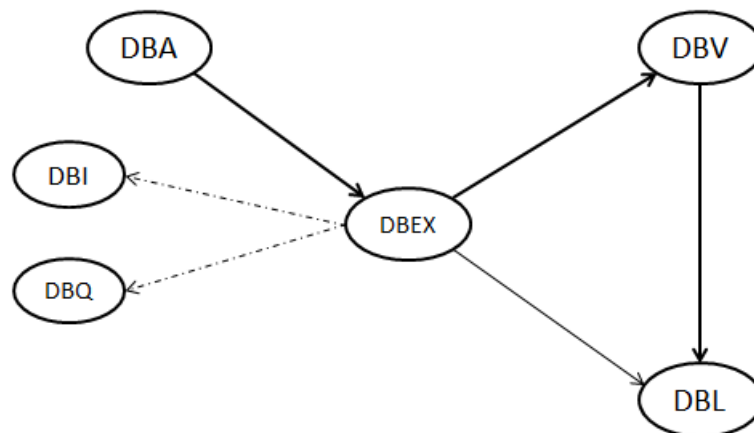
Figure 1. The four-dimension CCBE model offered by Boo et al (2009) for destinations that a traveler has experienced.

Note: DBA (destination brand awareness), DBI (destination brand image), DBQ (destination brand quality), DBV (destination brand value), DBL (destination brand loyalty), DBEX (destination brand experience).

The pathway relation of dimensions is as follows:

- destination brand awareness has a significant effect on destination brand experience;
- destination brand experience positively affects destination brand value;

- destination brand value has a statistically significant effect on destination brand loyalty;
- destination brand experience does not have a statistically significant relationship with destination brand loyalty (Boo et al, 2009).

Another important study for the research is by Kladou and Kehagias (2014) which offered a CBBE model for cultural urban destinations. The model includes five dimensions: awareness, associations (image), quality, loyalty and cultural brand assets. The latter was incorporated, as specific cultural representations are potential cultural brand assets, since they are the reason why tourists perceive a destination as unique (ibid). The assets were identified through the literature review and include monuments/heritage sites, events, street culture, cuisine, traditions, contribution to world heritage, entertainment/nightlife options, cultural festivals, museums, art centers (ibid). The model was tested from the perspective of international tourists visiting Rome.
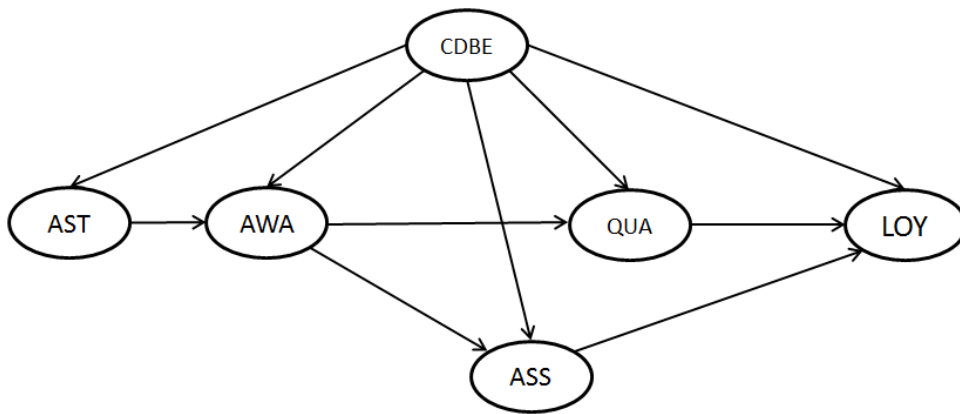
Figure 2. The five-dimension model offered by Kladou and Kehagias (2014) for cultural destinations.

Note: CDBE – Cultural Destination Brand Equity, AST – assets, AWA – awareness, ASS – associations, QUA – quality, LOY – loyalty

Upon the analysis the model was respecified and the final model is presented below (Fig. 3).
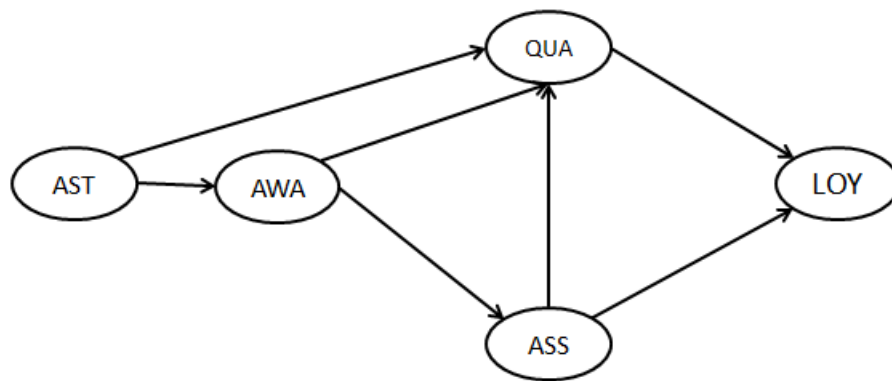
Figure 3. The final path relation offered by Kladou and Kehagias (2014) for cultural destinations.

Note: AST – assets, AWA – awareness, ASS – associations, QUA – quality, LOY – loyalty

The pathway structural relations between proposed dimensions were all found to be positive and statistically significant (through correlation) and are as follows:

- cultural brand assets dimension affects awareness;
- awareness dimension affects quality and associations;
- the antecedents of loyalty are quality and association;
- significant regression paths from assets to quality and from associations to quality (added to the final model, though not proposed from the beginning) (Kladou & Kehagias, 2014).

On the basis of the literature review into both CBBE implications in the tourism context and MICE destination branding the following dimensions to include in the CBBE model for MICE destinations were selected:

- MICE destination brand awareness (AW);
- MICE destination brand quality (Q);
- MICE destination brand image (IM);
- MICE destination brand assets (MA);
- MICE destination brand loyalty (L).

As it was noted by many researchers, each construct in the destination brand model requires scale items that are context-specific and are adapted to the nature of the destination (for instance, see Boo et al, 2009). The appropriate metrics were specifically selected in relation to MICE destinations, the unique MICE destinations attributes forming the MICE destination brand assets dimension. The selection of the MICE-related attributes the following studies impacted the most: Chiu and Ananzeh (2012), Kim, Yoon

& Kim (2011), Lee and Back (2006, 2008). As a result multiple items were identified to measure each dimension (please refer to the methodology section to review them).

The following model is proposed:
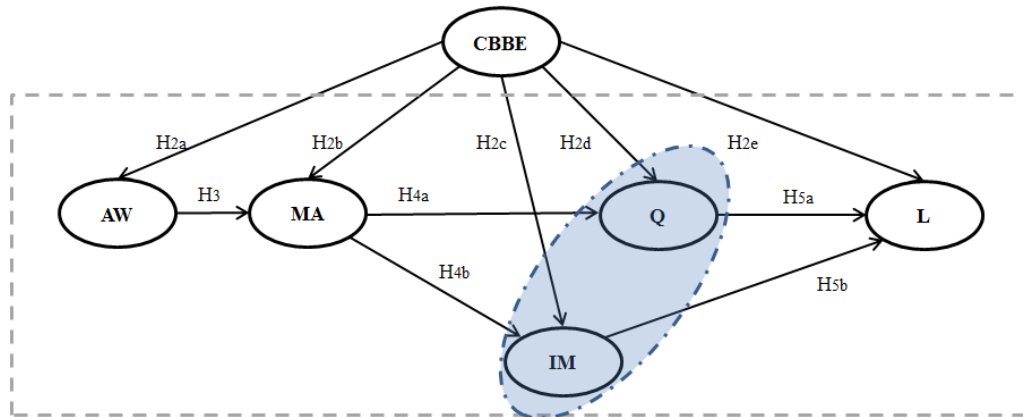
Figure 4. The five-dimension CCBE model proposed for MICE destinations.

Note: CBBE – MICE destination brand equity; AW – MICE destination brand awareness; Q – MICE destination brand quality; IM – MICE destination brand image; MA – MICE destination brand assets; L – MICE destination brand loyalty.

The model in Figure 4 depicts a second-order MICE destination brand equity model with its five dimensions. The encircled area shows the two dimensions that can theoretically form a MICE destination brand experience dimension, following the study by Boo et al (2009). In the box the path relationships developed between the five brand equity dimensions are presented, the proposed pathways are visualized in the single-headed arrows.

3.2 Hypotheses

The hypotheses are derived in relation to the main research questions (How can a CBBE model be adapted for MICE destinations? and What are the structural relations between the brand dimensions of MICE destinations brand equity?) and are as follows:

H_1: There is a positive and significant relationship among the proposed dimensions of the MICE destination brand equity: MICE destination brand awareness (AW); MICE destination brand quality (Q); MICE destination brand image (IM); MICE destination brand assets (MA); MICE destination brand loyalty (L) (Boo et al, 2009; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014).

H_2: The relationships between the proposed dimensions demonstrate the presence of the second-order general factor, i.e. brand equity (CBBE) that has a statistically significant effect on the proposed brand dimensions (Kladou & Kehagias, 2014).

H_3: MICE destination brand awareness (AW) dimension has a statistically

significant effect on MICE assets (MA) dimension.

H$_4$: MICE destination brand MICE assets (MA) have a statistically significant effect on quality (Q) and image (IM).

H$_5$: MICE destination brand quality (Q) and image (IM) have a statistically significant effect on loyalty (L).

H$_6$: The CBBE model has a better fit if the quality (Q) and image (IM) dimension are combined into the MICE destination brand experience dimension (EX)

The hypotheses will be tested in Chapter 5 and the Chapter 4 will introduce the cases. Some of the hypotheses are visualized in Fig.4.

3.3 Survey Design

In combining all the above-mentioned sources a preliminary draft set of items per each selected dimension was derived and peer reviewed to assure the integrity of the questionnaire. Feedback led to minor rewording of some of the items to the end that all questions are clear. The final scale consists of four variables for MICE destination brand awareness dimension, six variables for MICE destination brand associations, seven variables for quality, five – for loyalty, and eight variables for MICE destination brand assets, making it 29 variables in total. The variables are measured on a bipolar 5-point semantic differential Likert type scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. All scales include a neutral attitude to the statement, when the respondent neither agrees, nor disagrees. The use of semantic type scales is quite common approach to measurement in the social sciences, since it allows using ordinal-level data to be treated as interval-level data which can then be exposed to higher order analytical techniques. All proposed variables for each of the investigated dimension are shown in Table 2 along with the studies supporting the inclusion of these variables into the survey.

Table 2.

The proposed dimensions and variables for the CBBE model

Brand equity dimension		Label
MICE destination brand awareness		**AW**
1. This destination has a good name & reputation as a venue for international events	(Boo et al., 2009; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007)	AW1
2. I have heard about meetings, incentives, conferences and/or exhibitions held there	(Boo et al., 2009; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Lee & Back, 2008)	AW2
3. The characteristics of this destination come to my mind quickly	(Boo et al., 2009; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Lee& Back, 2006)	AW3

4. When I am thinking about meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions, this destination comes to my mind immediately	(Boo et al., 2009)	AW4

MICE destination brand quality		**Q**
1. This destination holds meetings, incentives, conferences and/or exhibitions of consistent quality	(Boo et al., 2009)	Q1
2. When choosing between similar conferences, exhibitions or events, I will choose to attend an event in this city	(Boo et al., 2009)	Q2
3. The business tourism facilities are of high quality	(Chiu & Ananzeh, 2012; Lee & Back, 2008; Kim, Yoon & Kim, 2011)	Q3
4. Accommodation and hospitality services are of high quality	(Kim, Yoon & Kim, 2011)	Q4
5. In general the physical environment is clean/unpolluted	(Konecnik & Gartner, 2007)	Q5
6. In general the destination is safe and secure	(Chiu & Ananzeh, 2012; Kim, Yoon & Kim, 2011; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007)	Q6

MICE destination brand image		**IM**
1. My colleagues would think highly of me if I visited this destination for professional reasons	(Boo et al., 2009)	IM1
2. Attending an event in this destination will help me develop professionally and personally (it offers opportunities for professional education and social networking)	(Lee & Back, 2008)	IM2
3. Considering the expenses related to visiting this destination, the benefits I receive are much more significant	(Kim, Yoon & Kim, 2011; Klagou & Kahegias, 2014)	IM3
4. I am excited to travel to this destination for business purposes	(Lee & Back, 2008)	IM4
5. I expect the staff to be professional	(Lee & Back, 2008)	IM5
6. I expect the locals to be hospitable	(Chiu & Ananzeh, 2012; Kim, Yoon & Kim, 2011)	IM6

MICE destination brand assets		**MA**
1. The price for accommodation and services is competitive as compared to other MICE destinations	(Chiu & Ananzeh, 2012)	MA1
2. The destination is accessible for me	(Chiu & Ananzeh, 2012)	MA2
3. I do not foresee visa problems to go to this destination	(Lee & Back, 2008)	MA3
4. The local transportation is developed	(Chiu & Ananzeh, 2012)	MA4
5. The climate of the destination is pleasant	(Chiu & Ananzeh, 2012; Kim,	MA5

	Yoon & Kim, 2011)	
6. I do not foresee problems with communication due to language and/or cultural barriers	(Lee & Back, 2008)	MA6
7. There are exciting attractions to see in the city	(Chiu & Ananzeh, 2012; Kim, Yoon & Kim, 2011)	MA7
8. There are exciting extracurricular activities to do	(Chiu & Ananzeh, 2012)	MA8
MICE destination brand loyalty		**L**
1. The city is one of the preferred destinations where I would want to attend an event	(Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Konecnik and Gartner, 2007)	L1
2. The city provides more benefits than other similar European destinations	(Konecnik and Gartner, 2007)	L2
3. Overall I am satisfied with my trip to this destination when I visit it	(Kladou & Kehagias, 2014)	L3
4. I intend to recommend this city as a business destination to my colleagues	(Boo et al., 2009; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Konecnik and Gartner, 2007; Pike, 2007)	L4
5. I intend to continue attending events held in this city in the future	(Boo et al., 2009; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Konecnik and Gartner, 2007; Pike, 2007)	L5

When designing a survey in the social sciences, it is important to note that there is an unlimited number of possible measures and they are likely to overlap for some constructs. The lack of delineation among the constructs metrics remains a huge challenge in developing survey-based analysis of brand perception by its consumers due to variance present in interpretation of item measures, and lack of homogeneity in theoretical frameworks dealing with consumer behavior (for instance, see Lehman, Keller & Farley, 2008). For instance, the literature review revealed that the brand image dimension can be measured via functional attributes (i.e. the tangible features of a MICE destination, like climate and accessibility), emotional or symbolic attributes (i.e. the intangible features of the destination brand that meet consumer needs for social approval, personal expression or self-esteem; please refer to items IM1, IM2), experiential attributes (i.e. the way it feels like to "use" the destination, please refer to items IM3, IM4), and brand attitudes (i.e. consumer's overall evaluation/expectation of a brand, please refer to items IM5, IM6). In this study the functional attributes are seen as the unique assets of a MICE destination and are included in the MA dimension, while there are contradictory views in the literature on this issue. In general the MA dimension is understood as specific MICE destination representations that are the reason why tourists perceive a destination positively within the meetings industry.

The study targets frequent business travelers who have already attended some MICE events in the destinations selected to test the proposed model. In order to exclude non-

frequent travelers, only those who travel at least once a year with business purposes could fill out the survey. Furthermore, local residents were not eligible.

Frequent business travelers who still have not attended a MICE event in the selected destinations and were not local citizens of the destinations in question were asked to provide the reasons for not doing so. There was a set of options to choose from (multiple answers possible) or respondents could also give an open answer. It is important to note that all respondents were asked about the attendance of events in both destinations. While there were only rare instances when respondents have attended events in both destinations, the idea for the follow-up question on the other destination allowed collecting the data on why they never visited another destination in question, and those answers provided a platform for a more comprehensive understanding of the destination brand equity in the mind of the end-consumers. The answers given are further manually classified in relation to the brand dimensions or as not-related to the brand equity and coded accordingly (see Table 3).

Table 3.

Classification and coding of the answers explaining no previous experience of the MICE destination

Answer	Relation to the CBBE
There are no meetings, conferences, exhibitions or events that would be of interest to me	MICE destination brand awareness (AWneg1)
I do not know if there are meetings, conferences, exhibitions or event that would be of interest to me	MICE destination brand awareness (AWneg2)
I believe the destination provides low quality for services	MICE destination brand quality (Qneg)
I have a bad image of this destination	MICE destination brand image (IMneg)
Internal reasons within organization (lack of funds, position not high enough, etc)	REASONS NOT RELATED TO BRAND EQUITY (MISC)
Visa issues	MICE destination brand assets (MAneg1)
Low accessibility by transport / Long distance	MICE destination brand assets (MAneg2)
Other	These answers will be analysed on a case-by-case basis

The respondents were also asked about the number of previous visits to a destination in question and time of last visitation to the destination, along with the general demographic questions (age, gender, citizenship, education, current occupation) and the questions concerning the way the business-related travel is organized (how the destination for a trip

is selected and the trips are financed). The complete survey template is presented in Appendix A.

4 BARCELONA AND ST PETERSBURG AS MICE DESTINATIONS

4. 1 Meetings Industry

Long time ago Aristotle stated in his work "Politics" that "Man is by nature a social animal". The latter explains why people have always been getting together on a regular basis for various meetings. Over the centuries meetings have been an integral part and one of the major forces for the progress in science and technology, globalization and expanding growth of international cooperation, and even more so in the end of the 20th and in the 21st century when the progress has accelerated and is happening at an unprecedented pace.

The last fifty years the number of meetings has grown at an unprecedented speed. The International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), the most global association within the meetings industry, regularly issues Statistics Reports based on the ICCA Association Database that allow to monitor the growth of the meetings industry. The statistics cover meetings organised by international associations which fulfill three conditions: they take place on a regular basis, rotate between a minimum of three countries, and have at least 50 participants (ICCA, 2013). Figure 5 represents 5-year aggregated data of the last 50 years. The data show that since 1963 the number of meetings in the ICCA Association Database has grown exponentially by approximately 10% each year, with that increasing by two times every 10 years (ICCA, 2013).
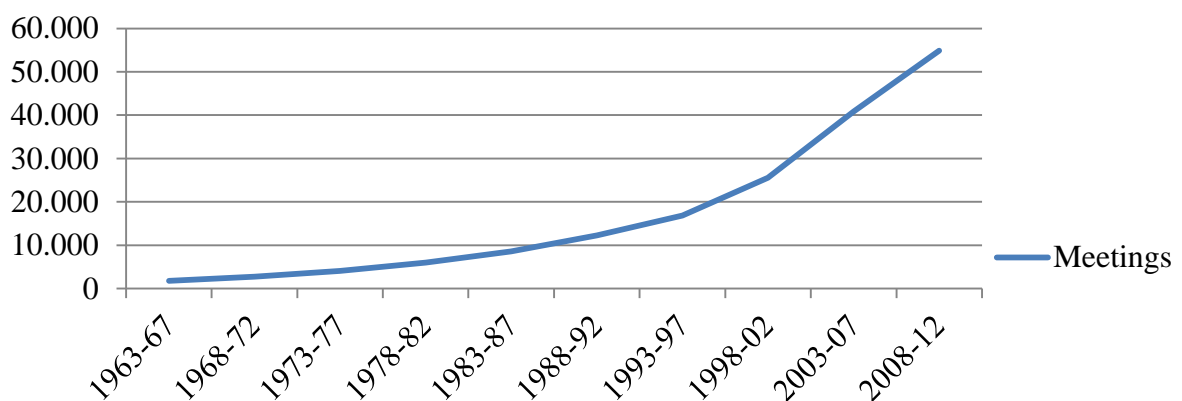

Figure 5. Growth in the number of meetings 1963-2012, 5-year aggregated data.

Source: ICCA, 2013

In total the ICCA Association Database number of meetings amounts to 173,432 from 1963 till 2012. 1,795 (1%) of these meetings took place in the period 1963-1967, while the major number of the meetings, 54,844 (31.6%), took place in the period 2008-2012. What is remarkable is that the financial crisis in the recent years did not slow down this exponential growth pattern (ICCA, 2013). The ICCA statistics data show that the highest number of meetings in the last 50 years was consistently held in Europe. Yet, Europe's market share has shrunk significantly from 72.3% in 1963-1967 to 54.0% in 2008-2012 giving it up for Asia/Middle East. Conversely, Latin America's market share has grown from 4.2 to 10.0% in the same period. North America keeps its position of the major meetings holder with its third place. Africa's and Oceania's market share are inconsistent, but Africa's market share shows growth in the last 25 years (ICCA, 2013). Country-wise, over fifty years there were fluctuations in the top 20 countries with the USA followed by Germany and Spain representing the top three destinations for meetings in 2008-2012. Remarkable destinations in this top 20 ranking that have gained much popularity in the recent years are: Brazil, China-P.R., Republic of Korea, Turkey and Portugal (ICCA, 2013). At a city level the fluctuations were even more pronounced. The top twenty destinations in regards to the number of meetings over 50 years included Paris, Vienna, Barcelona, Berlin, Singapore, London, Amsterdam, Madrid, Istanbul, Beijing, Lisbon, Copenhagen, Prague, Seoul, Brussels, Stockholm, Budapest, Buenos, Aires, Rome, Hong Kong (ICCA, 2013).

As for the latest data, in 2013 the top three countries that held the highest number of meetings are the U.S.A. (829 meetings), Germany (722 meetings), Spain (562 meetings (ICCA, 2014) and the top three cities are Paris with 204 meetings held, Madrid (186 meetings) and Vienna (182 meetings) (ibid).

An interesting trend observed in the meetings industry is that international association meetings are getting smaller. To be exact, the average number of participants has decreased from 1,253 in the period of 1963-1967 to 424 in the period of 2008-2012 (ICCA, 2013). The latter does not undermine the growth of the industry, since the growth in the number of meeting is still considerably higher than the decrease in the number of attendees. When referring to total number of participants, it has increased from 2 million in the period 1963-1968 to almost 22 million in 2008-2012 (ibid).

The Table 4 presents the top ten destinations in the number of meetings over fifty years.

Table 4.

Overview of the estimated total number of participants per MICE destination since 1983 (top ten destinations, pax)

	1983-87	1988-92	1993-97	1998-2002	2003-07	2008-12
Barcelona	32 662	87 754	133 883	280 458	360 417	519 159
Vienna	95 100	129 080	170 460	227 984	424 864	516 581
Berlin	79 254	106 492	175 320	243 849	328 891	470 076

Paris	115 555	189 717	216 540	272 430	473 649	448 881
Amsterdam	89 988	154 300	165 056	239 368	219 880	396 072
Istanbul	13 481	19 731	75 642	84 644	201 511	357 476
Singapore	60 170	85 860	88 188	143 547	257 922	331 588
Stockholm	64 923	108 929	129 255	190 140	175 151	324 100
London	108 959	90 589	119 820	147 402	196 834	292 477
Buenos Aires	53 256	65 307	84 597	163 064	198 017	290 188

From the table above one can see consistent growth in the number of participants, and can also estimate the volatile performance of the MICE destinations.

Furthermore, not only are the meetings smaller with respect to the number of participants, they also rotate within a smaller number of destinations. The percentage of meetings rotating worldwide has dropped over the past 50 years from 76,5% in the first 5 years to 45,2% in the last five years. The meetings tend to have regional rotation now, and the biggest number of meetings with the regional rotation in Europe, though lately the European market does lose in the absolute number of meetings to other markets (ibid).

The high number of events has drawn attention of researchers to the meetings industry. Yet, for a while the main focus was on the economic benefits the industry brings, e.g. the UNWTO report "Measuring the Economic Importance of the Meetings Industry: Developing a Tourism Satellite Account Extension" (UNWTO, 2006). This report reviews the current measurement system of the global Meetings Industry and identifies the inherent gaps in it. One of the gaps identified is the lack of the commonly accepted definition for meetings. The report also summarizes the demand and supply data that should be collected for the proper evaluation of the Meetings Industry. The report mainly stays within the use of the Tourism Satellite Account as a measurement framework (ibid). The non-monetary value that the business events bring to a destination tends to be out of sight (ICCA, 2013). Of course, the latter is largely explained by the lack of tools to measure the benefits from the holistic point of view. The monetary benefits can easily be calculated with the use of techniques like Return on Investment, but is very difficult to quantify non-monetary value for the host destination from holding business events, like the capacity building and investment benefits (ICCA, 2013).

The meetings industry lies in the juxtaposition of tourism and other broader economic sectors. The latter is particularly important to understand the role of the international events in being the platforms for exchanging information in the knowledge-based economies. Many destinations have been putting great effort into positioning themselves as attractive MICE destinations, for instance, Vienna, Barcelona, Vancouver and Singapore (UNWTO, 2014) and became key drivers for the local economy. The increased awareness about the benefits the meetings industry led to the rise of the destination marketing oriented organizations, like DMOs/CVBs (Destination Marketing Organizations / Convention Bureaus) and destination marketing strategies created with the aim of attracting the maximum number of meetings and delegates. The overall

recognition of the MICE sector has resulted in an unprecedented amount of investment in core infrastructure (airports, roads, trains), meetings infrastructure (convention centers), meetings marketplaces (IMEX, EIBTM etc.) and sector associations growth (PCMA, ICCA, MPI, SITE etc.) (UNWTO, 2014).

The newly published Global Report on the Meetings Industry (UNWTO, 2014), provides a solid ground for analyzing the contemporary meetings industry and its future prospects. The report stresses hyper competition among MICE destinations, the dependence of the industry on economic cycles, the shift in culture, and the urgency to adopt new technologies in order to attract new generations (ibid). Yet, by far one of the most pressing issues identified by the UNWTO is that the strategies are not client-centric. Furthermore, the UNWTO report stresses the necessity of branding the destination (ibid) and the importance of knowing the target group.

Some research distinguishes within Western Europe the two Spanish urban destinations of Barcelona and Bilbao for successfully redirecting local economy by developing the tourism strategies (Pamies, 1994; Rogerson, 2002; Swarbrooke, 1999). Both destinations are considered exemplary in regards to the successful implementation of coordinated strategies towards the stimulation of a meetings industry which have improved the overall economic performance of the destinations. The research also highlights the newer MICE destination rivals such as St Petersburg, Stockholm or Tallinn (Rogerson, 2002).

The end consumers of the meetings industry are event attendees and this study aims at developing a model that would allow one to measure and monitor their perception of MICE destination brands. In order to test the model on multiple destinations, two destinations were selected. As Crimmins (2000) stated, brand equity can be measured in comparison to other brand equities in the same brand category. Barcelona and St Petersburg belong to the same brand category in their national markets. As the literature suggests, national and regional capital city status sets them apart from other MICE destinations, as it gives 'additional kudos' to a destination (Haven-Tang, Jones, & Webb, 2007; Smith, 2005). Berg et al. (as cited in Lennon and Seaton, 1998) identify only 19 best-selling European cities, and only four cities (Barcelona, Florence, St Petersburg and Venice) on this list are regional rather than national capital cities. Considering all the above Barcelona and St Petersburg were found to be valid MICE destinations brands to test the CBBE model.

Figure 6 shows the ranking of Barcelona and St Petersburg over a decade, according to the "Country and City Ranking 2013" published by the ICCA. The capitals were included in the Figure 6 as closest competitors for the selected destinations in the corresponding national MICE markets.
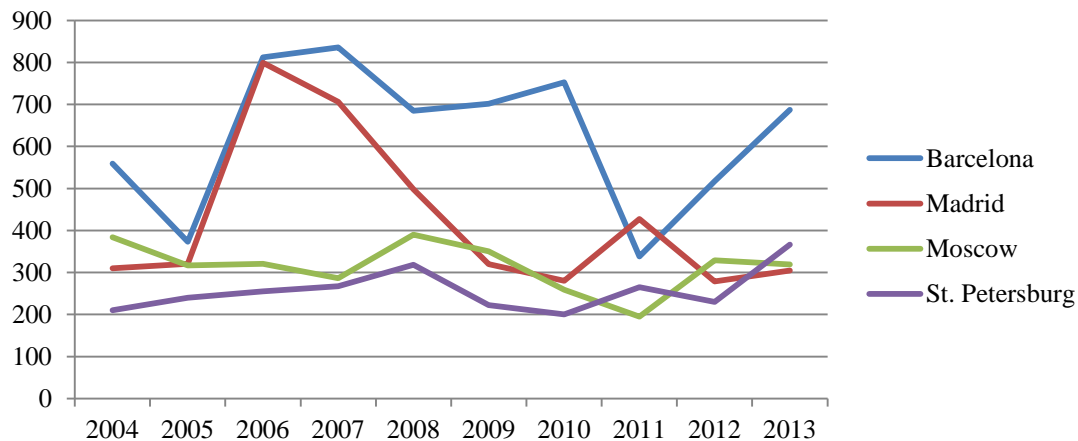
Figure 6. A comparative graphic for number of meetings per year in Barcelona, Madrid, Moscow and St Petersburg (Source: ICCA, 2014).

The subchapters below provide a deeper understanding of Barcelona and St Petersburg as MICE destinations by presenting statistics on attributes considered important for a MICE destination.

4. 2 Barcelona

Over the decade Barcelona is one of the most attractive MICE destinations with slightly fluctuating results, but never lower than 5th place in regards to the number of meetings held per year and the estimated number of participants a year (ICCA, 2013, 2014). In 2013 Barcelona gets 4th position with 179 meetings in 2013 in both worldwide and European rankings by ICCA covering in total over 900 cities (ICCA, 2014) and sixth position in the UIA ranking (UIA, 2013).

Barcelona is regarded as a 'success story' having a long history of holding prominent conferences and business events including the 1888 Exposicion Universal de Barcelona, the 1929 Barcelona International Exposition (Expo 1929), the 2004 Universal Forum of Cultures, and the 2004 World Urban Forum (Marvell, 2013). An example of a large scale business event is the GSMA Mobile World Congress that attracts over 60,000 delegates from 200 countries. In 2011 Barcelona successfully bid for the title as the Mobile World Capital making the city a host to the GSMA Mobile World Congress from 2012 to 2018. The city competed with 29 other major MICE destinations including Milan, Munich and Paris (Turisme de Barcelona, 2011).

Main characteristics of Barcelona as a MICE destination are presented in Table 5.

Table 5.

Profile of Barcelona as a MICE destination

Location	North East of Spain, on the shores of the Mediterranean sea
Status within the country	Capital city of the autonomous community of Catalonia
Area: • city • region	101.4 km^2 803 km^2
Population • city • region	1.611.822 pax 4.788.422 pax
Ranking in the country (by size)	2nd
Accessibility by air	Barcelona-El Prat Airport, about 17 km from the centre of Barcelona. Girona-Costa Brava Airport, about 90 km to the north. Reus Airport, 77 km (48 mi) to the south. Lleida-Alguaire Airport, about 150 km to the west.
Tourists coming by plane	76,1% (2013)
Accessibility by high-speed train	RENFE AVE (310 km/h) Madrid–Barcelona. RENFE-SNCF Paris-Barcelona
Tourists coming by train	9,5% (2013)
Accessibility by water	Sea port
Convention bureau	Turisme de Barcelona Professional
Main venues	Fira Barcelona, CBBI, Palau de Congressos de Catalunya
Number of hotels (total) • five star • four star • three star	394 31 169 118
Number of tourists	7.571.766 pax (2013)
Number of business tourists	3.096.852 pax (2013)
Tourists by country of origin	Spain – 20%, 1.517.378 Europe – 53,1%, 4.014.199 Other countries – 26,9%, 2.040.189
Tourists according to gender (%)	58,3% - Male; 41,7% - Female
Number of total overnights in hotels	16.485.074 (2013)
Number of meetings	2.039 (2013)
Number of trade fairs	55 (2013)
Museums and exhibition spaces	68 (2013)
UNESCO World Heritage Sites	Works of Antoni Gaudí; Palau de la Música Catalana and Hospital de Sant Pau.
UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list	Human towers; Mediterranean Diet
Certification	Biosphere World Class Destination (2011)
Climate	Mediterranean
Total length of beaches	4,58 km
Gardens and urban parks	85

| Official language | Spanish, Catalan |

Note: Data is compiled from Barcelona Turisme (2013)

4. 3 St Petersburg

According to the "Country and City Ranking 2013, covering over 900 cities worldwide, St Petersburg is listed 79th with 32 meetings in the worldwide ranking and 41st in the European ranking (sharing this place with Bordeaux, Manchester and Riga) (ICCA, 2014).

St Petersburg is holding a number of world class international events on a regular basis, e.g. St. Petersburg International Economic Forum and provides a platform for political discussion (Summit G8, Summit G20, etc.)

Main characteristics of St Petersburg as a MICE destination are presented in Table 6.

Table 6.

Profile of St Petersburg as a MICE destination

Location	North East of Spain, on the shores of the Mediterranean sea
Status within the country	Federal subject (city), administrative capital of the North-Western Federal Region
Ranking in the country (by size)	2nd
Area	1,439 km2
Population	4,879,566
Accessibility by plane	Pulkovo Airport
Accessibility by high-speed train	Sapsan Moscow-St Petersburg Allegro Helsinki-St Petersburg
Accessibility by water	Sea port
Main venues	Lenexpo, the National Congress Palace state complex
Number of hotels (total) • five star • four star • three star	637 12 32 51
Number of tourists	6,3 mln pax (2013)
Number of business tourists	Business travels in the general flow take 30%, 60% of the total tourist industry turnover.
Business travelers profile	average age males (35-44 years) or older middle-aged man (45-54 years), occupying the position of middle manager or top manager
Museums	182
Parks	30
Theatres	62
Water resources	40 rivers and canals with a total length of more than 200 km
UNESCO World Heritage Sites	Historic Centre of Saint Petersburg and Related Groups of Monuments (UNESCO, n.d.)

	36 historical architectural complexes and around 4000 outstanding individual monuments
Climate	a humid continental climate with medium low temperatures
Official language	Russian

Note: Data is compiled from MCD Partner (2010) and Federal State Statistics Service (n.d.).

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Adopted Paradigm

This study is heavily grounded in the postpositivistic research paradigm. Postpositivism, similar to positivism, is rooted in the natural sciences (Cartesian paradigm by Rene Descartes and Newtonian physics paradigm by Isaac Newton) (Jennings, 2010) and emerged as an alternative to positivism. Postpositivist paradigm explains the natural and social world with laws, and understands it as stable and patterned closed system, so its behaviour and events can be statistically predicted. Scientific inquiry is seen as objective and value neutral and mainly refers to the use of a quantitative methodology. Yet, unlike positivism, postpositivism admits fallible truths produced by social and historical circumstances. Furthermore, the possibility of researcher bias is acknowledged.

A postpositivistic paradigm adopts a deductive approach. The deductive approach assumes that the conclusion necessarily follows from the reasons (i.e., that the conclusion is valid), while the reasons must be true (i.e., agree with the real world). Thus the validity criterion in the deductive research approach is identified as follows: "A deduction is valid if it is impossible for the conclusion to be false if the premises are true" (Blumberg et al., 2008, p. 26).

The postpositivistic paradigm is commonly used to study consumer behavior and consumer perceptions. In accordance with the postpositivism, this study suggests a model to describe the causal relationship between the MICE destination brand dimensions, as perceived by the end consumers, i.e. event attendees. Then, the hypotheses are derived on the basis of the literature review and tested on the basis of the collected statistical data. The collection and analysis of primary quantitative data is considered of utmost importance, in order to prove in a scientific way the validity of the hypotheses and highlight the existence of an objective reality, concerning the topic of choice (Guba, 1990).

5.2 Research Methods

The study is conducted mainly with the use of quantitative methodology associated with the postpositivistic paradigm and generally the research has a deductive approach. The first step of the research required the use of an inductive approach in order to identify the research gap and establish the research question (Blumberg et al., 2008). The research question is focused on the validation of the proposed measurement model and testing the

significance of the hypothesized causal relations between the constructs of the CBBE model for MICE tourism destinations. Upon establishment of the research question, an exhaustive literature review and adoption of a theoretical framework, the central research methods were determined for each stage of the research (data collection and data analysis).

5.2.1 Methods for Data Collection

In order to test a proposed CBBE model for MICE destinations, it was necessary to collect the primary data via a structured survey. The survey design was derived from the previous research and was based on the proposed theoretical framework. The survey was distributed via various channels.

First of all, the survey was distributed by the author during various events in the selected MICE destinations. The travel itinerary of the author made it possible to select three international events in the two destinations for data collection on site (see Table 7). The author was collecting answers from non-local participants outside the event venues offering a small reward (chocolates) for the completion of the survey.

Table 7.

Summary of the events where the data were collected on site

Event name and dates	Venue	Comments
BARCELONA		
1) 24th European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases , 10–13 May 2014	Centre de Convencions Internacional de Barcelona (CCIB)	15 full answers collected
2) International Logistics & Material Handling Exhibition, 3 -5 June 2014	Fira de Barcelona, Montjuic Exhibition Hall	15 full answers collected
3) Solutions for Business Owners and Entrepreneurs. Professional BIZ Barcelona, 4 - 5 June 2014	Fira de Barcelona, Montjuic Exhibition Hall	13 full answers collected

(Continued on the next page)

ST PETERSBURG		
1) Russian International Energy Forum, 17 - 20 June, 2014	Lenexpo Exhibition Complex	5 full answers collected
2) International Forum "Nuclear Power for Sustainable Development" –	Lenexpo Exhibition Complex	7 full answers collected

NDExpo, 17—19 June

| 3) 22nd International Symposium NANOSTRUCTURES: Physics and Technology | St Petersburg Academic University, Aquamarine Hotel | 13 full answers collected |

Second of all, the survey was distributed online. The survey was designed on the basis of the Google platform (Google forms). The Google Forms platform allows a basic branching/conditional logic system that allows directing respondents to a different page depending upon their answer to a certain question. The use of the logic system made it possible to distribute the survey to the wider audience, while still targeting only frequent business travelers and those who attended a MICE event in Barcelona and/or St Petersburg in particular.

The online version of the survey was available following this link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1g1zK34Q43XVfmOjf6qbBbz3KHspeP4EPaNkZWGra AGA/viewform?usp=send_form

The data collected on site was also manually introduced into an online survey form for further data analysis.

Furthermore, the survey was sent by e-mail to the known attendees of events in Barcelona and/or St Petersburg. The author's professional experience lies within the MICE tourism sector in the selected destinations (Barcelona and St Petersburg) allowing for easy access to the audience targeted for the research. The attendees of the following events were contacted:

- SITC 2014 Barcelona Tourism Fair (Barcelona, 4 – 6 April, 2014)
- European Incentive & Business Travel Meeting Exhibition (EIBTM) (Barcelona, 19-21 November 2013)
- 6th Nanowire Growth Workshop (St Petersburg, June 4-6, 2012)
- International Nano-Optoelectronics Workshop, (St Petersburg, July 24 – August 6, 2011)
- 18th International Symposium NANOSTRUCTURES: Physics and Technology, (St Petersburg, June 21-26, 2010)

The survey was designed to be anonymous, so the response rate via the e-mail send-out could not be calculated.

Finally, the survey was also published in the groups related to business travel, specific conferences and trade shows and in the relevant discussion threads of online platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, Internations and Vkontakte. The distribution through sharing it via respondents' connections on the corresponding platforms was inspired.

5.2.2 Methods for Data Analysis

The significance of the hypothesized pathway relations between the constructs of the CBBE model for MICE tourism destinations is tested using a linear structural equation modelling (SEM) approach. Structural equation modeling is family of analyses used to test measurement models (i.e., relations among indicators and latent variables) and also to examine the pathway relationships among latent variables (Harrington, 2009).

The proposed CBBE model for MICE destinations is first validated by testing construct reliability and discriminant validity, using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Brown, 2006). One of the major advantages of CFA is the ability to examine the equivalence of the measurement and structural models across multiple groups (ibid), so the model will be tested for the Barcelona and St Petersburg samples simultaneously. The CFA verifies the preconceived factor structure of a set of 29 observed variables. The CFA focuses on the relationships between the indicators and latent variables (AW, Q, IM, MA, L, CBBE), whereas a subsequent SEM includes structural or causal paths between latent variables in order to test the hypotheses.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) is suggested for the analysis of the data as it has its origin in the social sciences and allows performing the chosen research methods. SPSS® v.22 is chosen. For the CFA and SEM analyses IBM® SPSS® Amos™ v. 22 is used.

5.2.3 Limitations

The present research has certain limitations that should be considered when evaluating how it was conducted and its main contributions.

In general the study is done following a number of assumptions, since it researches a latent construct that is intangible and non-monetary. Main assumptions include:

(1) a MICE destination brand can be measured by employing the concept of customer-based brand equity;

(2) MICE destination brands should be evaluated by comparison with other competitive destination(s) in the same destination brand category;

(3) tourists must have experienced the destinations as MICE event attendees.

Additionally, the research is heavily dependent on the previous research assumptions regarding the model design. This study proposes to test the model designed on the previous research. Yet, since the model is applied in a different context the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) could be used to analyze at the exploratory level the possible underlying factor structure of a set of observed variables without imposing a preconceived model structure on the outcome (Child, 1990). The EFA would have allowed concluding if the theoretical assumptions in regards to the model correspond to the actual EFA results. Unfortunately, the EFA could not be run, since the EFA requirements include that the minimal number of cases for reliable results should be more

than 100 observations and 5 times the number of items (Child, 1990). In this study the number of observations was not high enough in order to perform the EFA, and that is why it had to be skipped.

The decision to skip EFA was possible on the basis of the following:

> If a new measure is being developed with a very strong theoretical framework, then it may be possible to skip the initial EFA step and go directly to the CFA (Harrington, 2009).

Moreover, it is assumed that proposed factors are correlated and dependent on each other (Costello & Osborne, 2005).

The sample size issue is resultant from the main research limitation related to the time constraints. A certain timetable is set to conduct the research. Following the research timetable the distribution of the survey was limited to two months and a half (end of April – beginning of July, 2014). While this time frame was not limiting possibilities for online distribution via various platforms, it has limited the opportunities for on-site questioning of attendees. Every MICE destination has its seasonality and the number of international events where the survey could be distributed was in the end limited to three per destination due to the necessity to be physically present in the destination (the author was in Barcelona until June 7, 2014 and then travelled to St Petersburg to collect data there). The final number of collected responses amounts to 194, including 75 answers from business travelers who have attended at least one MICE event in Barcelona and 69 answers from business travelers who have attended at least one MICE event in St Petersburg.

Overall it is important to stress that this study aims at examining the relationships rather than identifying population parameters and the data analysis results can be generalized to a population only with caution.

6 ANALYSIS (RESULTS AND DISCUSSION)

6.1 Sample Description

Overall 194 responses were collected. 185 responses (95%) were found to be valid, as those respondents were eligible to fill out the survey, since they were determined as frequent business travelers and there were no missing data in their responses. Only 5% of the total number of respondents has never attended a business meeting, incentive, conference and/or exhibition held outside their permanent city of residence and could not continue filling out the survey and were therefore excluded from the sample.

The distribution of frequency of attendance was normal. Twenty three percent of respondents attend a MICE event once a year, 30% - twice a year, 26% - three to five times a year and 16% - more than six times per year. Overall representatives of 39 countries have filled out the survey, providing a very diverse insight into the perception

of the selected for analysis destination brands. The following figure provides an overview of the respondents' profile in regards to the respondents' age, gender, citizenship and education level.
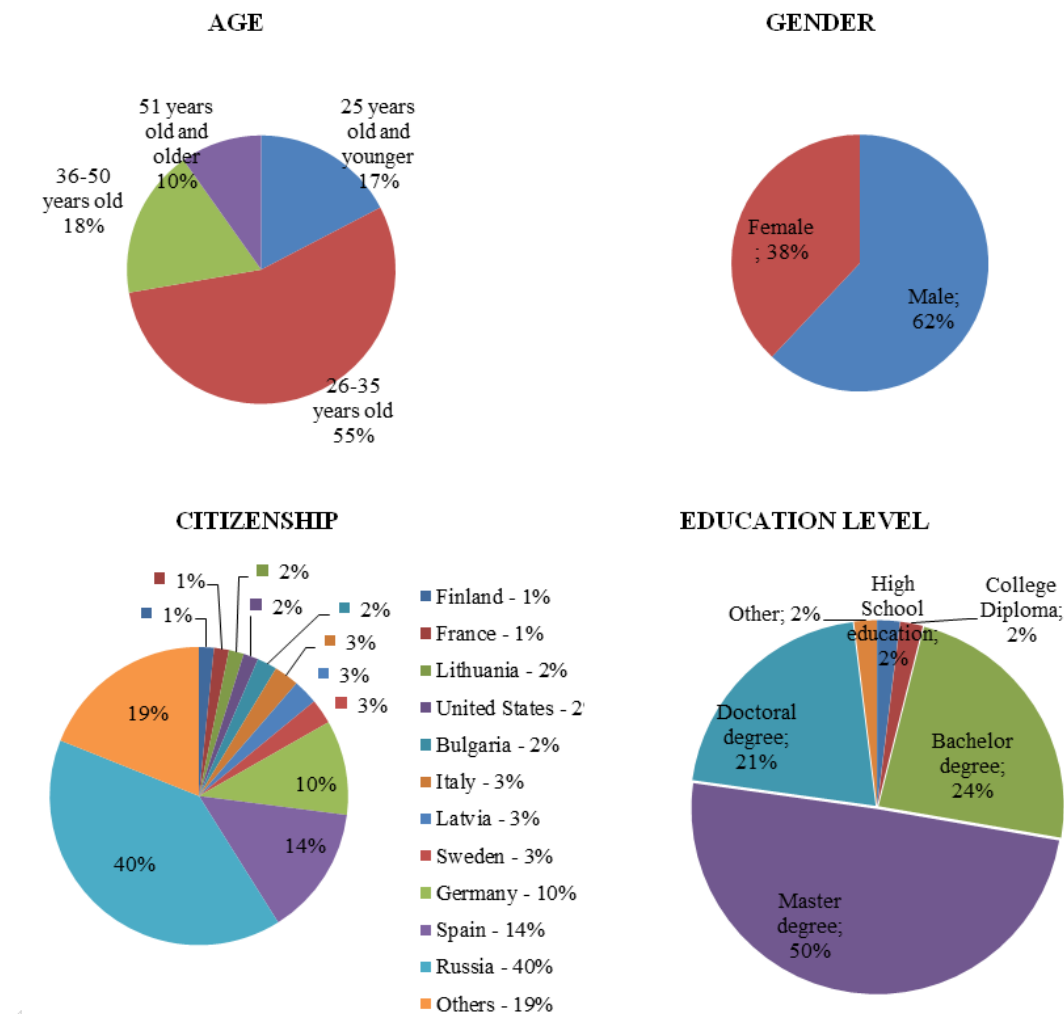
Figure 7. Sample description

Occupation-wise, the majority of respondents were researchers (33%) and professionals (31%). Twenty per cent of the respondents were students, and 14% - management level, executives. Only 2% of the respondents were entrepreneurs.

In regards to the way the MICE trips are usually organized, 46% of respondents stated that they chose an event to attend themselves, 28% similarly chose themselves but their choice had to be approved by the organization. Twenty four percent stated that it is their organization that decides for them which events they attend. A small percentage answered that they were invited by the organizers.

Regarding the expenses, more than a half of the respondents (56%) stated that their organization covers all the MICE travel related costs. Twenty per cent of the respondents stated that their expenses are only partially covered by their organization. Nineteen

percent pay themselves, and 4% had other financial sources (the expenses are covered by the organizers, sponsors, etc.).

Forty one percent of the respondents (75 people) have attended at least once a MICE event in Barcelona and 37% (69 people) have attended at least once a MICE event in St Petersburg. Their answers were used to test the CBBE model. The profiles of respondents from Barcelona and St Petersburg samples were similar (see Appendix B). The majority of survey respondents in both samples have attended an event in the corresponding destination only once this year. In the Barcelona sample, the age groups had an almost even distribution, while in St Petersburg the majority of respondents (52%) belonged to the age group 26-35 years old. In both samples there was an overrepresentation of men (65% in Barcelona and 71% in St Petersburg), but this fits the population description, as the literature suggests that men travel more for business purposes than women. The majority of the respondents in both samples had a Master degree, though overall education level was higher in the St Petersburg sample with 35% of respondents holding a doctoral degree. This difference of samples is attributed to the choice of events where the data were collected and it is mirrored in the main occupation of the respondents. In the Barcelona sample the majority of respondents identified themselves as professionals (43%) and in the St Petersburg sample as researchers/scientists (51%), while the percentage of respondents belonging to the top management or executive level was rather similar.

In regards to the way the MICE trips are usually organized, the overall sample results indicated the majority of attendees were the major decision-makers for which event they attend. The latter allows one to conclude that the MICE destination brand perception is of utmost importance for the success of the destination. Regarding expenses, in both samples the majority stated that their organization covers all the MICE travel related costs, though the percentage of respondents who pay themselves for MICE travel-related cost was much higher in the Barcelona sample.

6.2 CBBE Model Analysis

The data were loaded into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and divided into four groups:

- Barcelona (75 answers from business travelers who have experienced the destination);
- St Petersburg (69 answers from business travelers who have experienced the destination);
- Barcelona "NO" (107 answers from business travelers who have not experienced the destination);
- St Petersburg "NO" (85 answers from business travelers who have not experienced the destination).

Data screening procedures were conducted for all groups. There were no missing data in the completed responses.

The model was tested on the first two groups of answers that belong to the respondent who have experienced the corresponding destination and had access to the extended version of the survey. The second two groups of answers were analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics; the results of this analysis are complementary to the main research questions.

6.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics summary is presented in Appendix C. A preliminary analysis of the collected data included testing for normality. Standard deviations did not reveal high variation. Following Kline's (2011) suggestion that only variables with skew index absolute values greater than 3 and kurtosis index absolute values greater than 10 are of concern and greater than 20 are problematic, none of the variables in this analysis has problematic levels of skewness or kurtosis, and only for MA5 in the Barcelona sample and MA8 in the St Petersburg sample, the kurtosis level maybe considered of concern, though not problematic, since it is only slightly higher than the 10 absolute value threshold (12 and 10.6 respectively). Therefore, overall the data in both samples appear to be sufficiently univariate normally distributed for the purposes of the analysis. In fact, it is important to note that the Likert scale was used, and the natural scale of ordered categorical items prevents extreme outliers and limits extreme skew, so it is not considered appropriate for this study to perform logarithmic transformation of individual items that do not have normal distribution before the factor analysis (for instance, see Brown, 2006; Hair et al., 1998). Furthermore, according to Tabachinick and Fidell (2001), it should be decided case by case if the outlier should be retained or omitted and the decision depends on the research background, its context, the sample size, and the importance of each case to the research conclusions. In this study it was decided not to modify the raw data.

Since the five-item Likert scale is used, it allows the collected data to be considered as continuous parameters (Harrington, 2009) for the purposes of the analysis.

Interestingly enough the descriptive statistics showed that in both samples the variables belonging to the MA dimension were rated most highly, see Table 8.

Table 8.

Mean statistics for the MA dimension

	Question	BCN	SPB
MA1	The price for accommodation and services is competitive as compared to other MICE destinations	3.3	4.1

MA2	The destination is accessible for me	4.4	3.1
MA3	I do not foresee visa problems to go to this destination	4.5	4.0
MA4	The local transportation is developed	4.3	4.1
MA5	The climate of the destination is pleasant	4.8	4.2
MA6	I do not foresee problems with communication due to language and/or cultural barriers	4.0	3.7
MA7	There are exciting attractions to see in the city	4.8	4.0
MA8	There are exciting extracurricular activities to do	4.6	4.6

Note: BCN refers to the Barcelona sample (75 answers), SPB – St Petersburg sample (69 answers).

These ratings allow concluding that the attributes found highly relevant for any MICE destination by previous research were estimated the highest by the business tourists who experienced Barcelona and/or St Petersburg.

6.2.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

When a model is tested for multiple groups, it is generally recommended to test the CFA model separately in each group (Brown, 2006) and only in the final stage to test the measurement invariance. IBM® SPSS® Amos™ v. 22 allows conducting the simultaneous test of equal form (identical factor structure) while using two separate data sets, so the Barcelona sample and the St Petersburg sample are tested simultaneously.

6.2.2.1 Construct reliability

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are used to estimate the reliability of multi-item scales for each construct. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability measure the degree to which responses are consistent across the items within a measure, i.e. internal consistency reliability (Brown, 2006). The calculated Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values are listed in the table below for both samples:

Table 9.

Initial reliability test for two samples

Barcelona			
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items	Composite reliability

AW	,626	,650	4	0.65
Q	,788	,797	6	0.80
IM	,762	,762	6	0.77
MA	,708	,731	8	0.70
L	,881	,881	5	0.88
St Petersburg				
AW	,696	,698	4	0.68
Q	,848	,847	6	0.85
IM	,701	,716	6	0.71
MA	,836	,840	8	0.79
L	,800	,810	5	0.81

Note: AW – MICE destination brand awareness; Q – MICE destination brand quality; IM – MICE destination brand image; MA – MICE destination brand assets; L – MICE destination brand loyalty.

Most research recommends a value of .70 and higher (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) or at least .60 and higher (Cortina, 1993, Fornell & Larker, 1981). For the four dimensions the alpha coefficients and composite reliability values were above .7 in both samples, indicating a good level of reliability for each construct. The alpha coefficients and composite reliability values that belong to the $0.6 \leq \alpha/CR < 0.7$ group are highlighted (they belong to AW dimension in both samples). The values lower than .7, but higher than .6 are considered acceptable for the CFE and SME analysis (Cortina, 1993). However, for the construct with $0.6 \leq \alpha/CR < 0.7$ values it is recommended to check if the construct reliability can be improved. That is why the reliability analysis in SPSS was run again, this item choosing an option "Descriptives for scale if item deleted" that demonstrates the change in the reliability if an item is deleted from the construct. The results in both samples showed that the deletion of an item (AW1, AW2, AW3 or AW4) is not going to improve significantly the construct reliability for the AW dimensions, so in line with the guidelines all the items are kept in the AW dimension. Overall the construct reliability is assessed as adequate.

6.2.2.2 Construct validity

Convergent validity and discriminant validity are used to estimate the validity of multi-item scales for each construct. The convergent validity tests if the measures of constructs that in theory should be interrelated, are, in fact, observed to be interrelated, and the discriminant validity tests if measures of constructs that in theory should not be related to each other are, indeed, empirically proved to not be related to each other (that is, one can discriminate between dissimilar constructs) (Fornell, Tellis, & Zinkhan, 1982).

Convergent validity is judged to be adequate when average variance extracted (AVE) equals or exceeds 0.50 and composite reliability (CR) is higher than AVE (Fornell & Larker, 1981). The AVE is computed by adding the squared factor loadings divided by number of factors of the underlying construct. Discriminant validity is present when the variance shared between a construct and any other construct in the model is less than the variance that construct shares with its indicators (Fornell, Tellis, & Zinkhan, 1982). Average shared variance was calculated for each construct by adding the squared correlations that a construct has with other constructs.

Table 10.

Validity for the measurement model

	CR		AVE		ASV	
	BCN	**SPB**	**BCN**	**SPB**	**BCN**	**SPB**
AW	0.65	0.68	0.49	0.50	0.3	0.5
Q	0.80	0.85	0.56	0.64	0.6	0.6
IM	0.77	0.71	0.51	0.45	0.5	0.7
MA	0.66	0.79	0.40	0.55	0.4	0.6
L	0.88	0.81	0.75	0.61	0.4	0.6

Note: CR – Composite Reliability, AVE – Average Variance Extracted, ASV –Average Shared Variance; AW – MICE destination brand awareness; Q – MICE destination brand quality; IM – MICE destination brand image; MA – MICE destination brand assets; L – MICE destination brand loyalty; BCN – Barcelona sample; SPB – St Petersburg sample.

Guidelines for convergent validity are as follows:

CR > .6, CR > AVE, AVE > .5 (Fornell & Larker, 1981).

In general the convergent validity is adequate, apart from the MA dimension in the Barcelona sample and the IM dimension in the St Petersburg sample.

Guidelines for discriminant validity are as follows:

ASV < AVE (Fornell, Tellis, & Zinkhan, 1982)

Discriminant validity appears satisfactory at the construct level in the case of most constructs. Yet, there are concerns over the discriminant validity for Q dimension in the Barcelona sample, and IM and MA dimensions in the St Petersburg sample.

It is possible to conclude that the measures of constructs that theoretically should be interrelated are empirically proved to be related to each other. Yet, it is not possible to discriminate between dissimilar constructs with certainty. The latter can be explained by the above-mentioned problem in the theoretical framework related to the challenges in

attributing the variables/items to a specific construct. While this issue is observed to a lesser extent in the Barcelona sample, in the St Petersburg sample it is observed that items belonging to the IM and MA dimensions are also related to the items outside of their corresponding dimensions.

Overall, the proposed scale of the destination brand equity model is considered to be valid with caution due to discrepancies identified when comparing results for two samples.

6.2.2.3 First-order CFA

The model testing begins with the analysis of the five factor structure of the CBBE with 29 items to which participants responded. The first-order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is conducted in AMOS to test relationships between the indicators and latent variables, and among latent variables. The factors are assumed to relate to each other, and the model includes correlations among the latent variables. Each latent variable is scaled, with the path coefficient for one observed variable being set to "1" for each latent variable.

The model output is presented in Figure 8 for the Barcelona sample and Figure 9 for the St Petersburg sample. The labels correspond to the brand equity dimensions and variables, as outlined in the Chapter 3.

Please note that in the following figures the double headed arrows show correlations estimates among brand dimensions and the single headed arrows show standardized regression weights (factor loadings) from the unobserved latent constructs (oval shape) to the observed variables (rectangular shape). The direction from the latent to the observed variable indicates the expectation that the underlying construct (e.g., AW) causes the observed variables (e.g., AW1, AW2, AW3, AW4). "e" corresponds to the measurement error for each observed variable.
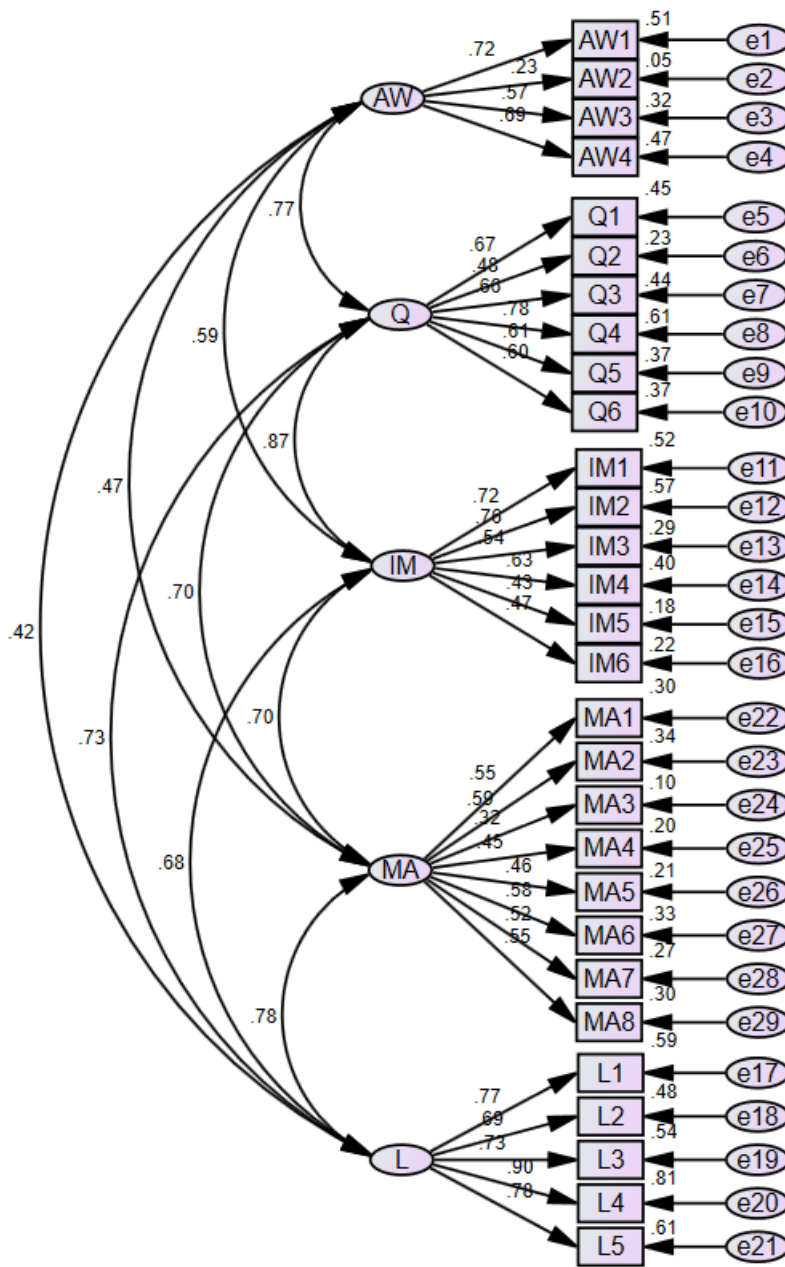
Figure 8. The baseline model tested for dimensions relation. Barcelona sample

Note: the coding of the variables and constructs is explained in the Chapter 3.

As general rules of thumb, standardized regression weights above 0.71 are excellent, 0.63 very good, 0.55 good, 0.45 fair, and 0.32 poor (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

In the Barcelona sample model, eight indicators demonstrate excellent standardized regression weights, five – very good, seven – good, six – fair and three – poor and below. The indicators that showed the lowest weights should be revised when thinking about the improvement of the model. They are: AW2, MA3, IM5.
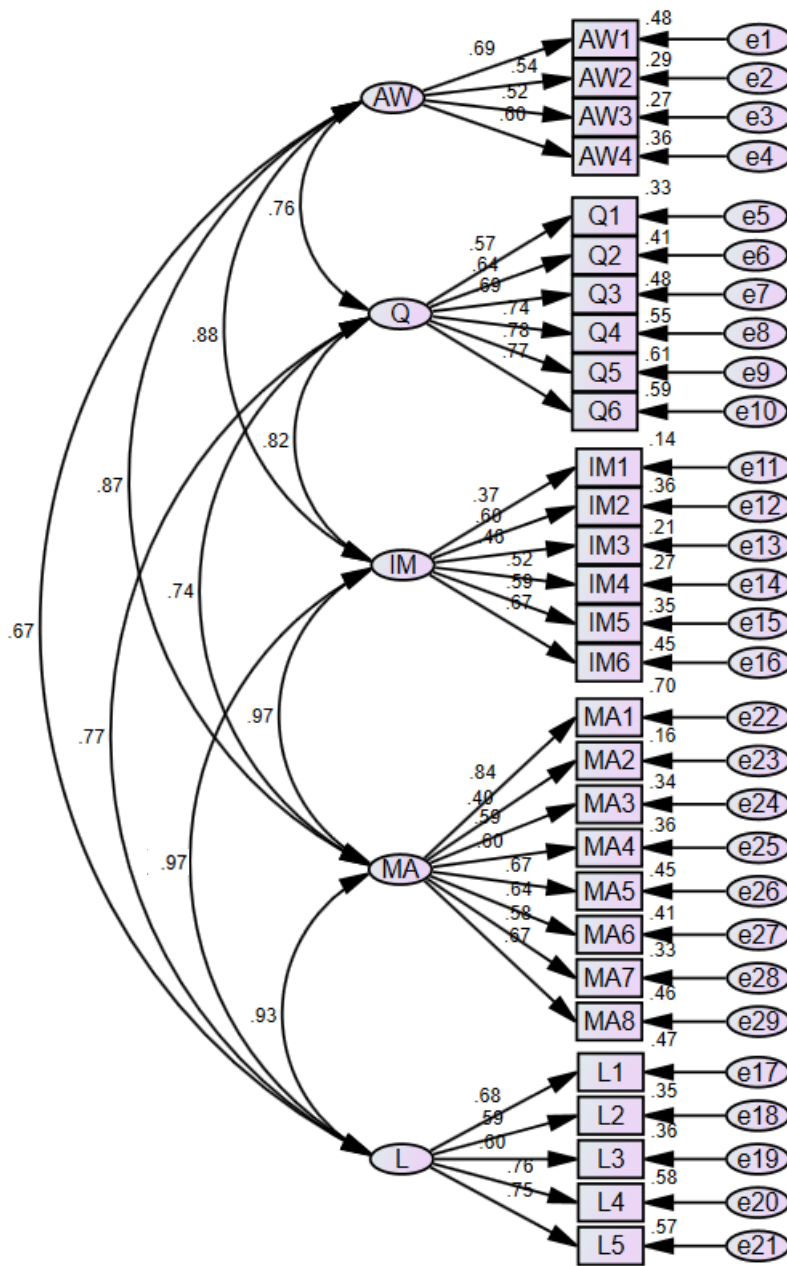
Figure 9. The baseline model tested for dimensions relation. St Petersburg sample

Note: the coding of the variables and constructs is explained in the Chapter 3.

In the St Petersburg sample six indicators demonstrate excellent standardized regression weights, eight – very good, nine – good, four – fair and two – poor. The indicators that showed the lowest weights should be revised when thinking about the improvement of the model. They are: IM1, MA2.

In both samples the first-order CFA reveals positive correlations among the brand equity dimensions. To be precise, for the Barcelona sample correlations ranged from .41 to .86

and were significant at the 99% statistical level and for the St Petersburg sample from .67 to 1.06 and were significant at the 99% statistical level (see Table 11).

Table 11.

Correlations among brand equity dimensions for two samples

	AW	Q	IM	MA	L
Barcelona					
AW	1				
Q	.767	1			
IM	.589	**.865**	1		
MA	.469	.700	.696	1	
L	.415	.727	.683	.783	1
St Petersburg					
AW	1,00				
Q	.757	1,00			
IM	**.881**	.824	1,00		
MA	**.865**	.736	**.966**	1,00	
L	.666	.769	**.97**	**.933**	1,00

Note: AW – MICE destination brand awareness; Q – MICE destination brand quality; IM – MICE destination brand image; MA – MICE destination brand assets; L – MICE destination brand loyalty.

Most correlations did not exceed the threshold of .85 (Kline, 2011), and they were not considered excessively high. Yet, there were excessively high correlations among Q-IM dimensions in the Barcelona sample and among AW-IM, AW-MA, MA-IM, MA-L in the St Petersburg sample. Overall correlations discovered when running the CFA indicate the presence of a second-order general factor (i.e. brand equity) in line with the previous research (see Boo et al., 2009; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014, Konecnik & Gartner, 2007, Lee & Back, 2008, 2010). Thus, Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

6.2.2.4 Second-order CFA
Second-order models can be applied when (a) the lower order factors are substantially correlated with each other, and (b) there is a higher order factor that is hypothesized to account for the relations among the lower order factors. Since both conditions are met, subsequent second-order CFA model is designed to see the connection between the brand equity and brand equity dimensions. Following the theoretical assumptions for the hierarchical models (Kline, 2011), brand equity construct as a second-order factor is not directly measured by any indicator. This exogenous second-order factor (i.e. CBBE) is presumed to have direct impact on the first-order factors (i.e. brand dimensions), which have indicators. The first-order constructs (brand dimensions) are endogenous and thus do

not have unanalyzed associations with each other. Thus, the second-order factor CFA allows explaining the covariance among the first-order factors by a second-order factor.

For estimation in second-order CFA identification of the model is required, so the path coefficient for one latent construct (brand dimension) to the CBBE has to be set to "1". This approach is called the marker strategy and the central issue facing this strategy is which first-order construct (i.e. which brand dimension) should be chosen as the marker variable. In this model all the first-order constructs are latent (so they do not have clear measurement), so the marker had to be arbitrarily designated. Since the construct reliability and validity was the highest for the loyalty dimension, this construct was chosen as a marker. The use of alternative markers was also explored and found no significant differences across solutions (they changed proportionately in regard to the chosen marker). With the first-order factor loadings the approach was the same as during the first-order CFA performed in the previous subchapter. Errors associated with each item were assumed to be uncorrelated.

The model design is presented in Figure 10. One can see the path coefficients assigned to constrain the model.
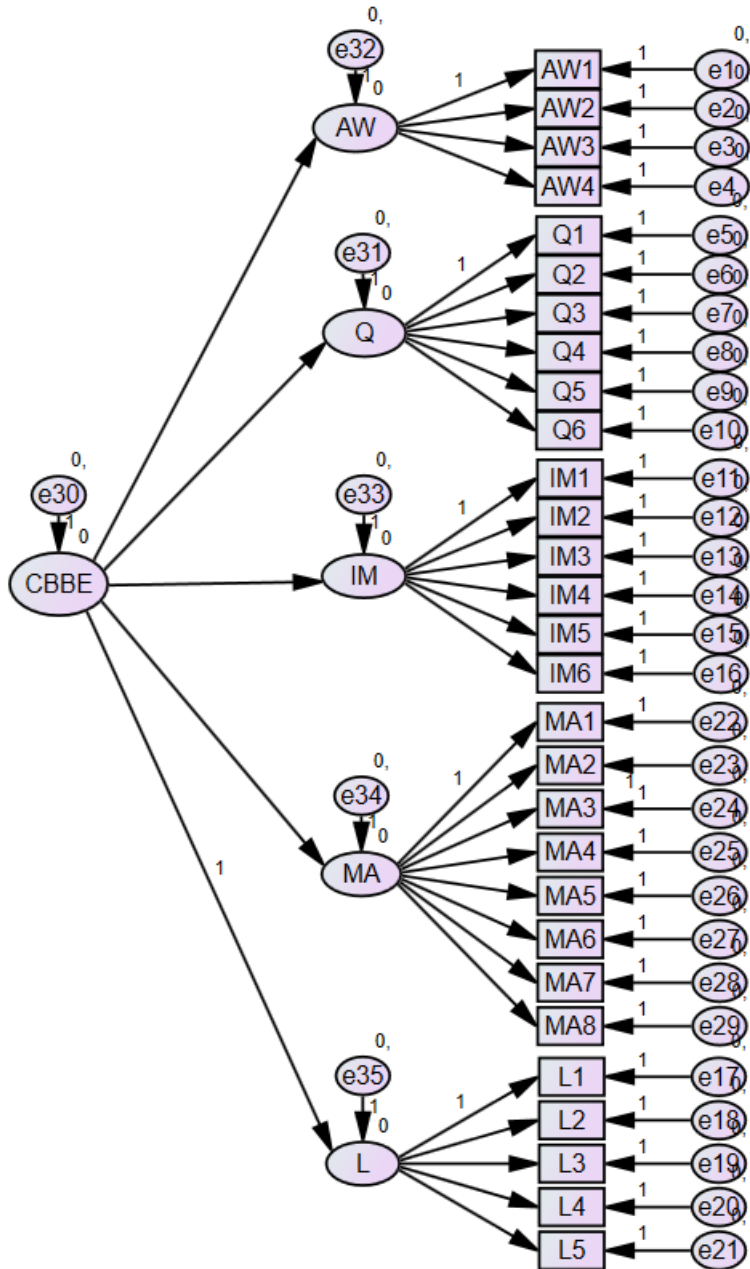
Figure 10. Second-order CBBE model design in Amos

The analysis was run for both samples and results reveal that all causal paths of the brand equity measure to the five brand equity dimensions utilized in the study were significant at the .001 probability level. Figures 11 and 12 depict the regression weights of each brand equity dimension to the second-order brand equity factor for the Barcelona and St Petersburg samples (for the values please refer to the single headed arrows from CBBE to the dimensions).
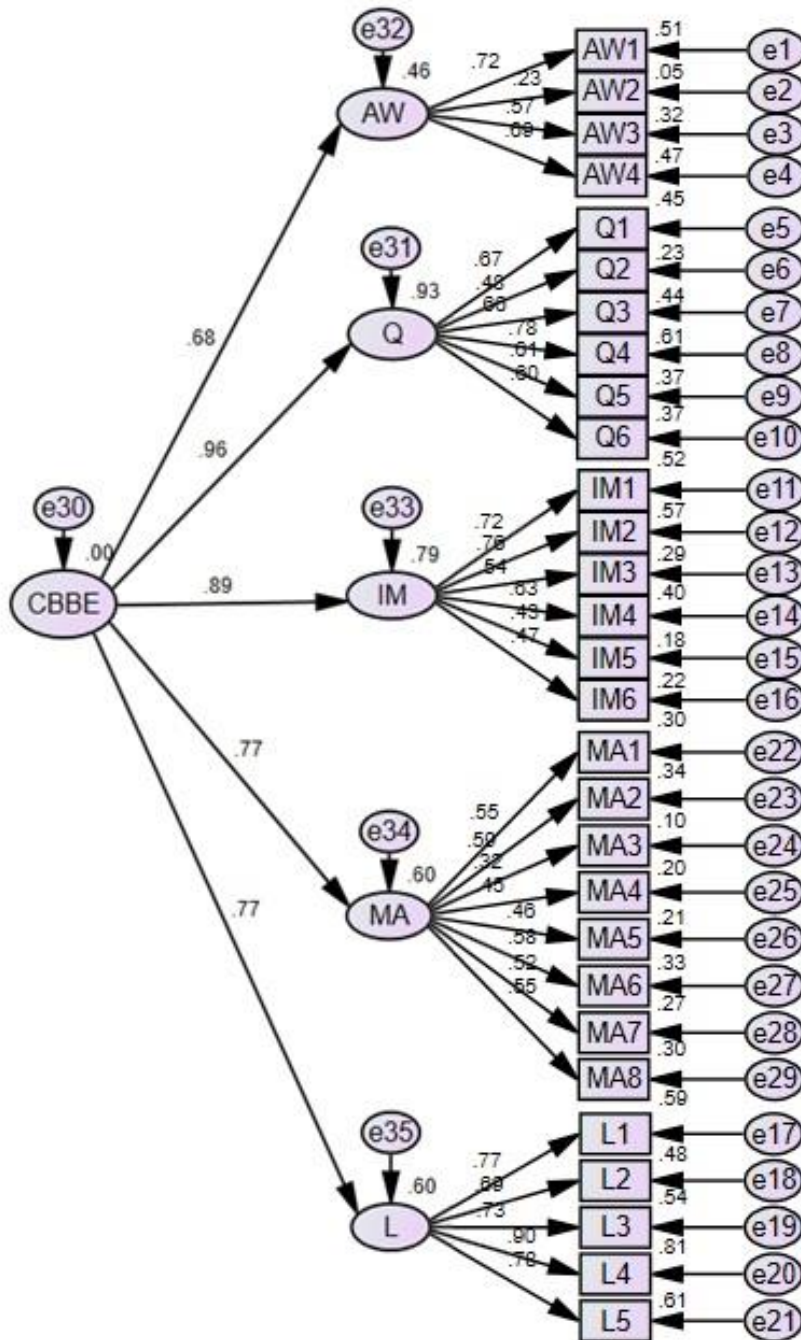
Figure 11. Second-order CFA output. Barcelona sample

In the Barcelona sample the analysis reveals high regression weights from the CBBE to all first-order factors.
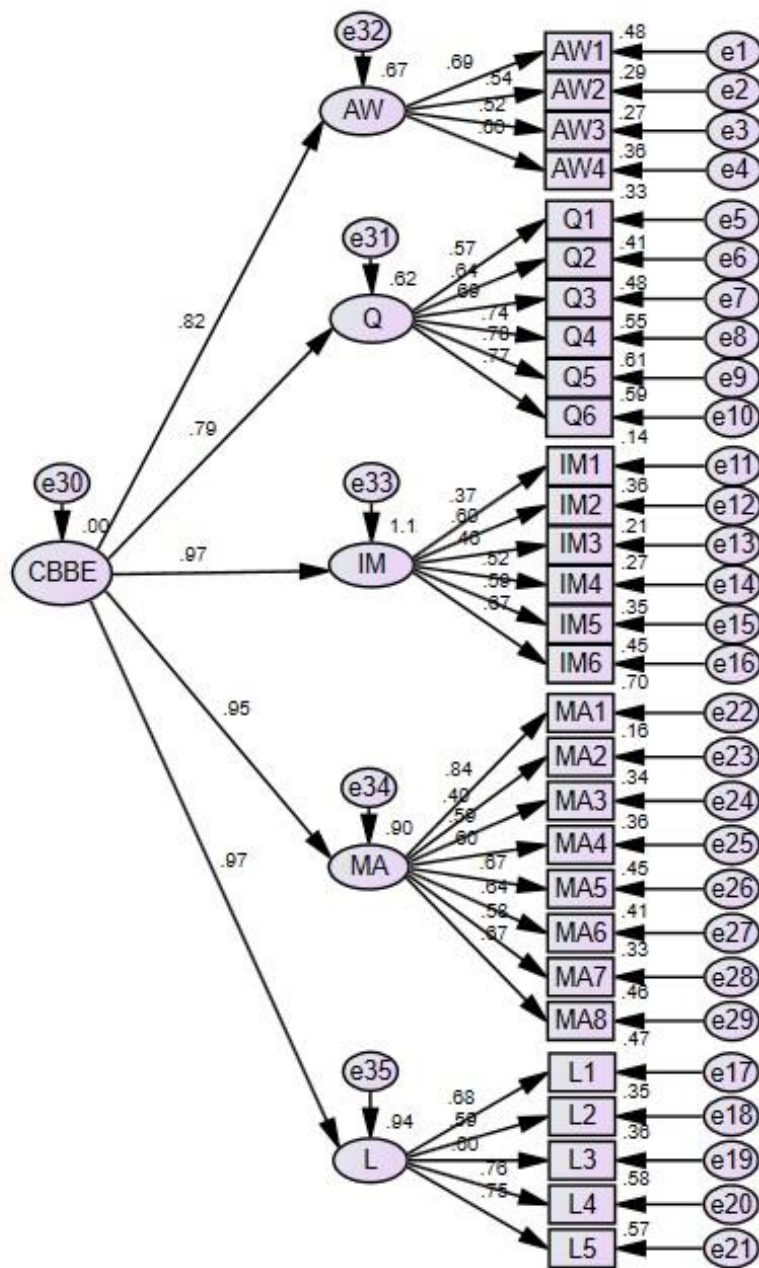
Figure 12. Second-order CFA output. St Petersburg sample

In the St Petersburg sample the analysis similarly reveals high regression weights from the CBBE to all first-order factors.

Thus, the brand equity has significant statistical effect on the brand dimensions in both samples proving Hypothesis 2 (in line with the previous research, for instance, Boo et al., 2009; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014, Konecnik & Gartner, 2007, Lee & Back, 2008, 2010).

6.2.2.5 Path relations test

Proceeding to the path analysis, a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach followed in order to put the conceptual path model of Figure 4 forward for testing.

The model was designed as follows (please note that due to the layout of AMOS software the path is presented vertically rather than horizontally):
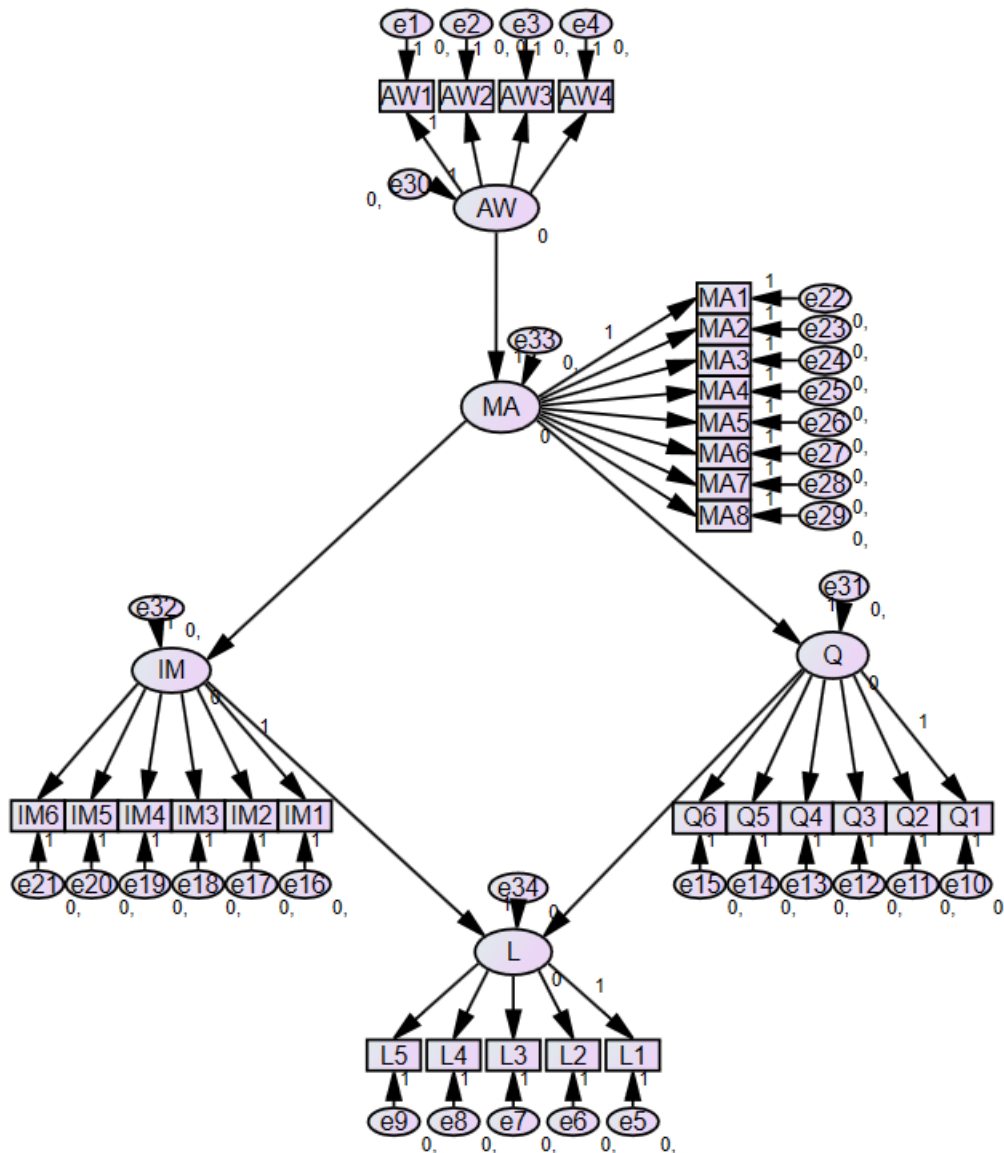
Figure 13. The AMOS design for the proposed model path relationship test

The table below summarizes the pathway relation analysis results. As general rules of thumb, standardized regression weights above 0.71 are considered excellent (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001) and proving the hypothesis.

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Table 12.

Standardized Regression Weights for the proposed path relation and hypotheses testing

			BCN	SPB	Hypothesis	Test results
AW	→	MA	0.168	0.429	H_3	H_3 rejected
MA	→	Q	0.865	0.753	H_{4a}	H_{4a} accepted
MA	→	IM	0.865	0.94	H_{4b}	H_{4b} accepted
IM	→	L	0.298	0.94	H_{5b}	Inconclusive results
Q	→	L	0.517	0.184	H_{5b}	Inconclusive results

Note: AW – MICE destination brand awareness; Q – MICE destination brand quality; IM – MICE destination brand image; MA – MICE destination brand assets; L – MICE destination brand loyalty

The Hypothesis 3 was based on the previous research, yet, not directly derived from it. Kladou and Kehagias (2014) suggested the opposite direction relation among cultural brand assets and awareness. However, since this study focuses on the travelers who have already experienced the destination it was decided to modify the hypothesis in line with the Boo et al (2009) baseline model. For the adaptation of the hypothesis to the new perspective the MA dimension was seen as a dimension that functions similarly to the image/associations dimensions, since it also comprises the destination attributes, though considered unique for the given travel context. The Hypothesis 3 is empirically rejected. Thus, further consideration of the possible operationalization of the MICE assets dimension is required.

The findings in relation to the Hypothesis 4 were congruent with the previous literature. MICE destination brand assets dimension does have a statistically significant on quality (Kladou & Kehagias, 2014). This finding is particularly interesting, as this path way relation of the brand assets dimension to the quality dimension has now been proven in the context of both cultural and MICE tourism. MICE destination brand assets dimension statistically significant effect on image is also confirmed.

The path relation test has revealed some findings that are not congruent with the previous research. For instance, quality is generally seen as an antecedent to loyalty (for instance, see Bigne et al, Chen and Tsai, 2007, Hutchinson et al., 2009). However, the hypothesized pathway relation demonstrating the statistically significant effect of MICE destination brand quality dimension on loyalty has not been confirmed empirically. In the Barcelona sample the effect falls into a "good" indicator category, following the classification of Tabachnick and Fidell (2001). Yet, in the St Petersburg sample the standardized regression weight from quality to loyalty is considered "poor". Overall, not only the standardized regression weights are inconsistent across the two samples, they are both below the hypothesis acceptance threshold. The same problem is identified with the hypothesized pathway relation from image to loyalty. While in case of the St Petersburg sample the regression weight value is high enough to accept the hypothesis, the results are

considered inconclusive, since in the Barcelona sample the revealed regression weights are much lower.

Then, the Modification Indices were checked to see if there are relations in the proposed CBBE model that are not taken into account and if the model can be improved.

Table 13.

Summary of modification indices for regression weights

			Barcelona	
			M.I.	Par Change
AW1	-	MA	14.47	0.679
AW1	-	IM	12.064	0.438
AW1	-	Q	19.943	0.768
AW1	-	L	6.791	0.27
AW2	-	Q	5.91	-0.625
AW3	-	IM	4.225	0.296
AW3	-	Q	5.322	0.453
AW4	-	L	16.863	0.628
AW4	-	MA	11.114	0.879
AW4	-	IM	8.641	0.548
AW4	-	Q	17.025	1.049
IM3	-	AW	5.502	2.965
Q2	-	L	4.139	0.266
			St Petersburg	
			M.I.	Par Change
AW1	-	MA	11.744	0.46
AW1	-	IM	9.209	0.706
AW1	-	Q	16.729	0.998
AW1	-	L	10.122	0.616
AW2	-	MA	7.188	-0.312
AW2	-	IM	6.302	-0.507
AW2	-	Q	14.335	-0.802
AW2	-	L	7.053	-0.446
AW3	-	Q	5.246	0.617
AW4	-	MA	11.506	0.598
AW4	-	IM	11.149	1.019
AW4	-	Q	14.095	1.202
AW4	-	L	11.758	0.871
IM4	-	AW	7.4	0.837
IM5	-	Q	4.096	0.458
Q4	-	AW	5.155	0.491
Q5	-	AW	4.342	-0.418

Note: the coding of the variables and dimensions is presented in Chapter 3. MI – modification index.

In both samples the modification indices suggest that MICE destination brand awareness dimension variables have significant relationship with all the rest of the dimensions. This is actually a relation supported by the previous literature. In studies where the path relation is tested among tourists who have not experienced the destination, the awareness dimension statistical significance is consistently recognized over the quality and image/associations dimension (e.g. see Kladou, 2014). In this study the path relation was drawn from awareness only to the MICE assets considering them the most relevant attributes for the business travelers who have already experienced the destination. This decision was largely influenced by Boo et al (2009), since this study similarly targeted the travelers who have already experienced the destination, and the pathway relation from the awareness dimension originally hypothesized to the value dimension was further respecified to the experience dimension comprising quality and image. Then, the author concluded from the research into the MICE destination branding that in the MICE context MA dimension will dominate over quality and image dimensions. Yet, the hypothesis that only MA dimension will be affected directly by awareness proved to be erroneous. The summary of modification indices allows suggesting that the awareness dimension has statistically significant effect on other brand equity dimensions for tourists who have already experienced the destination. Thus, if the model is tested again it is suggested to draw the additional pathway relation from awareness to quality and image dimensions.

6.2.2.6 Merging the quality and image dimensions into the experience dimension
In this study the business travelers who have already experienced the destination were targeted. Following Boo et al (2009) suggestion it is decided to see if the merging of two dimensions will give a better model fit. The AMOS output is presented below. For the visual simplification the observed variables are not presented for the dimensions. The standardized regression weights show that Brand experience dimension indeed has a significant effect over IM and Q dimensions. However, the important thing to check is the model fit in order to see if the model respecification is valid. The model fit for all the models tested so far is checked in subchapter below.
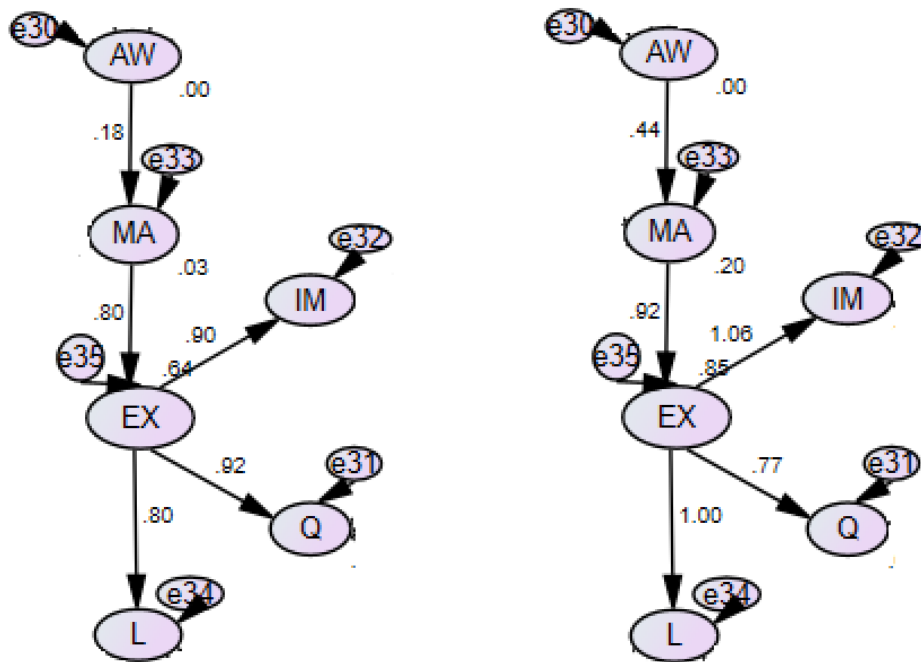
Figure 14. Path relation design for the CBBE with brand dimension experience

Note: Mode output for Barcelona sample is presented to the left from the model output for the St Petersburg sample.

6.2.3 Model Fit

6.2.3.1 Model fit

The model fit was checked through various indices, as it was recommended by Brown (2006) and Kline (2011) for the tree consecutive analysis (first-order CFA, second-order CFA, path test). It should be noted that AMOS software automatically calculates the model fit with two datasets. Brown (2006) identifies three categories of fit indices: (1) absolute fit indices, (2) parsimony correction indices, and (3) comparative fit indices.

The following indices provided by AMOS output will be analyzed:

- Chi-square ($\chi2$) – absolute fit index;
- Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) – incremental fit index;
- Bentler Comparative Fit Index (CFI) – incremental fit index;
- Steiger-Lind root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) – parsimonious fit index.

Yet another popular model fit index – Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), a statistic related to the correlation residuals – will not be analyzed in the current study, as it is not provided by AMOS output.

The Table below provides model fit summary showing the level of acceptable fit and the fit indices observed for the models tested in this study.

Table 14.

Model Fit Summary

Model fit indices	Values	Recommended guidelines	References
Model 1 (first-order CFA)			
χ2	1731.757, df=734 p <.0001	Non-significant χ2	Kline, 2011
χ2 /df (degree of freedom)	2.36	< 3	Kline, 2011; Marsh, Hau & Wen, 2004
TLI	.734	=> .90	Brown, 2006
		close to .95	Kline, 2011
CFI	.779	=> .90	Brown, 2006
		close to .95	Kline, 2011
RMSEA	.068	≤ .05	Brown, 2006
		close to .06	Kline, 2011
Model 2 (second-order CFA)			
χ2	1753.521, df= 744 p <.0001	Non-significant χ2	Kline, 2011
χ2 /df (degree of freedom)	2.35	< 3	Kline, 2011; Marsh, Hau & Wen, 2004
TLI	.735	=> .90	Brown, 2006
		close to .95	Kline, 2011
CFI	.774	=> .90	Brown, 2006
		close to .95	Kline, 2011
RMSEA	.068	≤ .05	Brown, 2006
		close to .06	Kline, 2011
Model 3 (Path relations test)			
χ2	1851.793, df= 746 p <.0001	Non-significant χ2	Kline, 2011
χ2 /df (degree of freedom)	2.48	< 3	Kline, 2011; Marsh, Hau & Wen, 2004
TLI	.735	=> .90	Brown, 2006
		close to .95	Kline, 2011
CFI	.774	=> .90	Brown, 2006
		close to .95	Kline, 2011

RMSEA	.068	≤ .05	Brown, 2006
		close to .06	Kline, 2011

Model 4 (Test for the brand experience dimension)

χ2	1835.668, df= 746 p <.0001	Non-significant χ2	Kline, 2011
χ2 /df (degree of freedom)	2.46	< 3	Kline, 2011; Marsh, Hau & Wen, 2004
TLI	.499	=> .90	Brown, 2006
		close to .95	Kline, 2011
CFI	.540	=> .90	Brown, 2006
		close to .95	Kline, 2011
RMSEA	.075	≤ .05	Brown, 2006
		close to .06	Kline, 2011

Analysing results of the model fit, it can be concluded that the model fit indices were similar for the various specifications of the model and they do not demonstrate an overly good fit in regards to the guidelines recommended by Kline (2011) and Brown (2006), as only two out of five showed indices fully correspond to their recommendations (χ2 /df and RMSEA).

However, Marsh, Hau and Wen (2004) urge not to disregard the model based simply on the model fit indices. They also stress that one should not be overly concerned with χ2, as it simply will not fit if the sample size is 50 or more (ibid), and in this study the sample is 75 and 69. Instead, they recommend checking if χ2/df is about 3 or under. The ratio of χ2/df is below three in all models tested, so it is within the interval demonstrating the overall model fit in regards to this index. However, the other model fit indices summary calls for the model revision and its respecification.

Finally, it can be also noted that the merging of quality and image dimensions into the experience dimension led to a poorer model fit, thus, rejecting Hypothesis 6.

6.2.3.2 Invariance test

As part of the model fit test, the invariance test is performed to test how well models generalize across groups (Brown, 2006). The equivalence or invariance of measurement can be tested by placing equality constraints on parameters in the groups. Equality constraints require parts of the model to be equivalent across groups (Harrington, 2009).

The simultaneous test of equal form models (identical factor structure designed for the second-order CFA, i.e. Model 2 and path relation test, Model 3) was performed in Amos via the function "Analyze-Manage groups-imposing equality constraints". Amos examines the pair of models in which one model of the pair can be obtained by constraining the parameters of the other and provides the comparison of fully constrained multiple-group CFA model and unconstrained model, as well as the gradual comparison

from least constrained to a fully constrained CFA model versus the unconstrained one. In the comparison the unconstrained model is assumed to be correct. The following constraints are enforced:

- equal factor loadings (measurement weights);
- equal intercept terms;
- equal structural weights;
- equal structural residuals;
- equal measurement residuals.

As an output, AMOS displays several statistics for comparing the two models and they are presented below.

Table 15.

AMOS models comparison

Model	DF	CMIN	P	NFI Delta-1	IFI Delta-2
Model 2 (second-order CFA)					
Measurement weights	24	18.225	.563	.012	.016
Measurement intercepts	53	174.008	.000	.118	.154
Structural weights	57	195.616	.000	.124	.162
Structural residuals	63	225.183	.000	.134	.175
Measurement residuals	92	412.658	.000	.193	.251
Model 3 (path relation test)					
Measurement weights	24	45.041	.006	.014	.019
Measurement intercepts	53	389.018	.000	.122	.160
Structural weights	58	413.000	.000	.130	.170
Structural residuals	63	439.749	.000	.138	.181
Measurement residuals	91	619.935	.000	.195	.255

Note: DF – degrees of freedom, CMIN – minimum value of the discrepancy between the models, P – probability, NFI Delta – the change in the Normed Fit Index, IFI Delta – the change in the Incremental Fit Index

The results from the Model 2 comparison (CMIN = 18.225 with 24 DF, p =.563) suggests that imposing the additional measurement weight restrictions of five equal factor loadings across the two samples did not lead to a statistically significant worsening of overall model fit. So, the brand dimensions relation to the CBBE is similarly understood across the two samples. The nested model comparison that assesses the worsening of overall fit due to imposing other restrictions on the original Model 2 and any restrictions on Model 3 shows a statistically significant chi-square value differences, resulting in low probability values. The fact that the two models are different from each other demonstrates that

constraining the parameters in the default model to obtain the equal loadings model leads to a substantial worsening of overall model fit. Therefore, the equal factor loadings models are rejected in favor of the original unconstrained models, and it can be concluded that in regards to the Model 2 the constructs perform differently across the two samples and in regards to the Model 3 the path relation is different across the two samples.

6.2.4 Model Respecification Suggestions

Going back to the model analysis, it is possible to suggest some changes in the model that might improve the model fit.

First of all, awareness dimension should be revised and possibly reworded. This dimension has demonstrated the lowest reliability values and not overly high validity values. Yet, the deletion of items was not found helpful for the validity and reliability improvement. There was discrepancy in some items performance across two samples. In the Barcelona sample item AW2 had low standardized regression weights with the AW dimension. AW2 represent the question: "I have heard about meetings, incentives, conferences and/or exhibitions held there". While it is hard to conclude with certainty what explains the low significance effect of the AW on AW2, one possible theory is that the wording is not clear enough. The latter conclusion is based on the on-site data collection experience in Barcelona, as some respondents asked for clarification if the question is related to the area of their professional expertise or the overall knowledge of the MICE events there. It can be assumed that respondents who were filling out online might have had similar problems in understanding the question.

Second of all, the dimensions of MICE assets, image and quality also need revision, concerning the following items: MA2, MA3, IM1, IM3, IM5, Q2, Q4, Q5. Overall in order to make the delineation of the latent constructs clearer it is suggested to limit the number of variables per each dimension to 4-5 items that will be more concise and specific.

The literature on the SEM principles (see Harrington, 2009) says that the model respecification should not be done on the data collected for the baseline model. The respecified model should be tested on the newly collected data to exclude any possible bias.

6.2.5 Analysis of CBBE Dimensions among Current Non-Consumers

Frequent business travelers who still have not ever been to the destinations chosen for the study we asked to give the main reasons for that. The analysis of their answers is presented in the table below and provides a better understanding on what dimensions are more important in the mind of the consumer in order to attract them for the first time. The survey allowed to choose an answer from a set of suggested reasons (as presented and coded in Chapter 3.3) or to give an open answer. The collected answers were divided in accordance with the CBBE dimension they are related to. The open answers were

classified manually and for the purposes of clarity they are added in brackets to the corresponding dimension.

Table 16.

Answers from respondents who have not been to Barcelona and/or St Petersburg

Brand dimension	Answer code	BCN	SPB
MICE destination brand awareness	AWneg1	26 (+1)	7 (+1)
	AWneg2	62	49 (+1)
MICE destination brand quality	Qneg	0	1
MICE destination brand image	IMneg	3	3 (+1)
MICE destination brand assets	MAneg1	4	13 (+3)
	MAneg2	0	4(+10)
Reasons not related to brand equity	MISC	27(+1)	14 (+4)
Other:			
I have never been there	AWneg1	1	2
I'm just starting my career	MISC	1	
Our company is only interested in Moscow at this moment	MISC		1
I have other priority	MISC		1
Lack of knowledge about MICE events in St Petersburg in my field	AWneg2		1
Large distance	MAneg		10
Disapproval of the government	IMneg		1
Expensive	MAneg		2
Language barrier	MAneg		2
I am considering to visit	MISC		1

Note: BCN – Barcelona sample, SPB – St Petersburg sample, for the coding explanation please refer to Chapter 3.

In line with the previous literature, the analysis shows that reasons related to the dimension of awareness explain why the destination has not been chosen for travel. The results confirm that general awareness is the entrance ticket for a destination to the

tourism market (Pike, 2007), and only destinations that the potential tourist has awareness of are included in the perceived opportunity set for travel (Gartner, 1993; Goodall, 1993). Furthermore, the brand awareness general importance in hospitality and tourism has been confirmed empirically in the number of studies (Kim & Kim, 2005; Lee & Back, 2008; Oh, 2000).

The number of the consumers who are not aware of the MICE events or who think that there are no MICE events that might of interest to them in the selected MICE destination reflects the poor marketing of the MICE event organizers, DMOs and CVBs and the necessity to target specific groups. In case of the St Petersburg sample, many respondents have their concerns over such important attributes of a MICE destination as its accessibility and "easiness to consume" (absence of visa issues, language barriers, etc.). The importance of price in the mind of a consumer has been discussed in many studies (e.g. Echtner & Ritchie, 1993), and while within the MICE destination context is of less concern, since in many instances the expenses are covered for the attendees, the price still was quoted as the main reason for not going to the destination by a few respondents. While many concerns of the respondents explain their unwillingness to visit the destination reflect the unfortunate reality, there is still room for action to be taken by the marketers. For instance, in regards to St Petersburg, the long distance should not raise that much concern among the European respondents. In accordance with the previous research the "location" of the destination per se and its accessibility are crucial characteristics in the mind of consumer (Rogers, 2003). The marketers should highlight accessibility consistently. After all, once a business traveler is in the plane, an extra one or two hours to fly should not be a barrier to experience the destination. However, it is important that this message is consistently delivered by all stakeholders. The stakeholders concept comprises not only the organizers side, but also the local people and local government.

6.2.6 Test for the personal background influence on the CBBE

The personal background information of the respondents has been coded through assigning each category a numerical value (e.g. male – 1, female – 2). Then the correlation matrix was created and analyzed. The findings include that the higher the number of MICE events attended per year, the more events in the corresponding destination the responded has attended. This makes   common sense and does not have any specific scientific value. All the other demographic characteristics did not reveal any statistically significant event on the observed CBBE variables, which allows concluding that age and gender of the respondents do not affect the perception of the MICE destination brand directly.

7 CONCLUSION

Business tourism is a promising sector for any destination because of its off-seasonality, predictability, and orientation to customers with a high level of income. As the majority of respondents have stated, they are the main decision-makers in which MICE event to

attend and that is why it is important to measure and monitor MICE event attendees perception of the destination brand. This conclusion goes in line with the UNWTO (2014) call for MICE destinations to make their strategies client-centric by learning their clients' preferences, needs and expectations. The latter is the cornerstone of marketing mix success. With the mounting competition in the MICE market the destinations find themselves in need to differentiate themselves in order to keep the leading position and to attract and retain consumer's mind with strong marketing tools. Measuring of the brand equity allows tourism professionals and researchers assessing if the message was properly set in the minds of consumers and if they recognize the destination in question as unique, familiar and attractive for them.

Despite the benefits the meetings industry brings to the economy and other aspects of the sustainable development, so far there has been no universally recognized, valid and reliable model for the measurement of the customer-based brand equity for MICE destinations. This study has adapted for the first time a CBBE model to the MICE destination context building on the previous research and tested it across two samples (business visitors to Barcelona and St Petersburg). The main contribution of testing the model on two samples was the opportunity to examine the relationships among the brand dimensions more objectively by performing invariance test.

Overall the CBBE model was found to be adaptable for MICE destinations. However, unfortunately, when we speak about the measurement of latent constructs like a destination brand and brand dimensions, even the ideal model fit would not fully confirm the model. The model testing only allows concluding if the model is rejected or not, while there is always a possibility that a better model exists which just has not been tested. The model fit indices for the models tested showed not an overly good fit, however, it is not rejected. It is recommended to look into the possibility of a more parsimonious scale taking into account all the data analysis results.

As mentioned before, in this study the model was not meant to be generalized. In order to generalize sample results to the population and identify the population parameters, a much bigger sample would have been needed.

7.1 Summary of Main Findings

Answering the main research question, this study has adapted a CBBE model in the context of MICE destinations. The model design was largely based on the previous research. Five brand dimensions were suggested for the model focusing on a specific brand category (i.e. MICE destinations)

The items of the four dimensions (MICE destination brand awareness, quality, image and loyalty) derive from previous findings about the CBBE implications in a tourism destination context (e.g. Boo et al., 2009; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014, Konecnik & Gartner, 2007, Lee & Back, 2008, 2010) and have been adapted for the MICE destinations in this study. The items for the MICE destination brand assets dimension are

based on the attributes investigated in the larger theoretical framework, like Chiu and Ananzeh (2012), Kim, Yoon & Kim (2011), and from the studies into the CBBE application to the conference brands by Lee and Back (2006, 2008). The survey was distributed via multiple channels and the data collected allowed testing the proposed model for responses about two MICE destinations.

In regards to the second research question about the structural relations among the brand dimensions of MICE destinations brand equity, six hypotheses were tested.

The data analysis began with the first-order CFA, which found all correlations between the proposed dimensions to be positive and statistically significant, thus supporting the first hypothesis (H_1). The subsequent second-order CFA confirmed the second hypothesis (H_2) referring to brand equity having significant statistical effect on the proposed brand dimensions, as the second-order CFA revealed high standardized regression weights for all proposed dimensions in both samples.

The path relation test results revealed low standardized regression weight from the awareness dimension to the MICE assets dimension, thus rejecting the third hypothesis (H_3). This hypothesis was formed on the basis of the Kladou and Kehagias (2014) study, where the cultural brand assets dimension was incorporated into the CBBE model and was supposed to be antecedent to the cultural assets dimension and an assumption that awareness of the destination based on the previous visit experience has an effect on how the MICE assets are perceived. However, there was no significant relationship found among the chosen dimensions.

Hypothesis 4 about the MICE destination brand assets (MA) having a statistically significant effect on quality (Q) and image (IM) was accepted. MICE assets dimension is formed from the highly relevant MICE destination attributes, and the higher the respondents rated them, the higher they estimated the overall quality and image dimensions. This finding allows concluding that attributes unique for the destination context are most important for forming the overall positive brand perception.

In testing Hypothesis 5 inconclusive results were received. It was hypothesized that MICE destination brand quality (Q) and image (IM) considerably influence the loyalty (L) dimension. Yet, across the two samples the results were contradictory. Thus, based on the path relations test it is not possible to predict the main antecedents to loyalty. Further research is required for getting conclusive results about the dimensions that influence loyalty.

The last hypothesis referred to a possibility of combining the quality (Q) and image (IM) dimensions into the MICE destination brand experience dimension (EX), which should have resulted in a better model fit. To test this hypothesis another path relation test was performed. The test revealed that while it seems to be possible to explain the quality and image dimensions by a second-order factor (experience), the model fit worsens. Thus, the hypothesis is rejected.

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The multi-group approach allowed checking if the model performed invariantly across the two samples. Discrepancies across two samples were found. While the observed item – latent construct relation did not change much with constraining the model, and the model fit worsened, but not significantly, the constraining of the path relations across two groups significantly worsened the model fit. These path relation discrepancies were already revealed during the path relation test and mostly refer to the contradictory statistical effects of the quality and image dimensions on loyalty.

The model fit test revealed not an overly good fit of the model. Yet, there are also no grounds to completely reject the model. It is recommended to re-specify the model. The main suggestions made are to limit the number of observed variables to 4-5 per dimension and to make the questions more dimension-oriented, assuring the higher reliability and validity of the latent constructs. Advice about how to approach the CBBE measurement next time (which questions to reword or to exclude) was given.

7.2 Main Contribution

The developed model that was tested for the two MICE destinations (Barcelona and St Petersburg) complements previous research findings on a tourism destination's brand perception from the consumer perspective and contributes to the further conceptualization and operationalization of such a latent construct as a destination brand in the context of MICE tourism.

The analysis of the collected data allowed exploring the structural relationships among the dimensions of MICE destination brand awareness (AW), MICE destination brand quality (Q), MICE destination brand image (IM), MICE destination brand assets (MA), and MICE brand destination loyalty (L).

The study builds on both MICE tourism and destination branding literature. Commenting on the conceptual framework adopted, it can be safely argued that the SEM approach followed is rather novel in the tourism destinations field and provides a thorough examination of the brand dimensions relationships. The statistical analysis confirmed the five-dimensional structure of brand equity in the case of MICE destinations and also verified and enriched the path model. It was concluded that the awareness dimension has potentially statistically significant effect on other brand dimensions. Additionally, the role of the awareness dimension for attracting new business travelers has been recognized via complementary analysis into the responses of people who still have not been to the corresponding destination in question. Furthermore, the effect of the brand assets dimension over quality and image dimensions was recognized. Ultimately, suggestions for model re-specification are given.

The study also provides insights into the perception of two MICE destinations by its consumers. While the results cannot be generalized to the population at large, they should still be taken into account by the relevant stakeholders. As it was previously mentioned,

for instance, when positioning St Petersburg as a MICE destination, special attention should be paid to stressing its accessibility, etc.

7.3 Research Limitations & Further Research

The empirical part of the study started with the recognition of the research limitations on the evaluation of destination brands in general and the particular method adopted in this study. On the basis of the broad literature in this area some measurement assumptions were derived. It was possible to examine the structural relations among brand dimensions, the hypotheses were tested and some observations were made. Yet, the limitations of the research do not allow making conclusive and universally recognized judgments about the proposed model, since the model fit indices are not high enough. That is why all the analysis results should be considered with caution. Further model validation is required with a larger sample. A useful rule of thumb concerning the relationship between sample size and model complexity is 20:1 (Kline, 2011). With that it is recommended to limit the number of variables and distribute the survey among a broader audience. The research in the MICE destination context requires much thinking about how to reach the target group. In this study attending the MICE events and performing the data collection on site was found to be most helpful. However, in selecting the appropriate time for collecting the data, one should consider seasonality (which does exist in MICE tourism, but in another form than usually understood, as it is imposed by the event planners themselves). For a researcher deciding to tackle the issue of measuring MICE destinations brand performance (a researcher who is not limited by time constraints), the first thing to do is to check the CVB calendars as to when the big MICE events are held annually in the selected for research destination.

This study was limited to the investigation of the brand equity and its structure. For a more comprehensive understanding of the business travelers perspective it might be interesting to look at the relationship of the CBBE and tourists' interests, or involvement (similarly to Ferns & Walls, 2012), satisfaction and motives (for instance, see Blain et al., 2005; Lee & Back, 2010) in the MICE destination context.

It is important to continue analyzing the dimensions that make up the tourism destination brand equity and working on the development of a reliable model that can be used by the industry professionals. In the MICE destination context the insights into the relevance of the particular brand dimensions in the consumers mind will help tourism managers to increase their destination's brand saliency and loyalty for targeted business visitors. Furthermore, the operationalization of the CBBE model will enable tourism practitioners to estimate their brand position in the corresponding market and consider its uniqueness and superiority.

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Appendix A. Survey template

BARCELONA AND ST PETERSBURG AS DESTINATIONS FOR MEETINGS, INCENTIVES, CONFERENCES AND EXHIBITIONS/EVENTS

Dear respondent:

You are invited to participate in the survey that aims at investigating Barcelona (Spain) and St Petersburg (Russia) as destinations for business Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions/events (hereinafter abbreviated as MICE events). The survey is conducted within the MSc thesis research project (European Master in Tourism Management).

It will take 5-10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. It is completely anonymous; all data are treated confidentially and will be reported only in the aggregate.

If you have questions at any time about the survey or the procedures, you may contact Elena Sibireva at elenasibireva@gmail.com.

Thank you very much in advance for your time and support, every answer makes a significant contribution to the study.

How often do you attend business meeting, incentives, conferences and/or exhibitions held outside your permanent city of residence (times per year)?

- Once
- Twice
- 3-5 times
- More than 6 times
- Never

Note: If the answer is never, the respondents were not eligible to continue the survey.

PART 1 - BARCELONA AS A MICE DESTINATION	PART 2 – ST PETERSBURG AS A MICE DESTINATION
Have you ever attended a MICE event in Barcelona?	Have you ever attended a MICE event in St Petersburg?
⚪ Yes, I have and I am NOT from Barcelona.	⚪ Yes, I have and I am NOT from St Petersburg.
⚪ Yes, I have and I am from Barcelona.	⚪ Yes, I have and I am from St Petersburg.
⚪ No.	⚪ No.

Note: The respondents who are from the destinations in question were <u>not eligible</u> for the survey.
The respondents who answered the third option were forwarded to the section for people who have NOT attended events in the selected destinations.

PART 1 (BARCELONA) and PART 2 (ST PETERBURG)

Questions for respondents who have attended a MICE event there

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about BARCELONA as a MICE destination (1- strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3- neutral, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree)

- This destination has a good name & reputation as a venue for international events
- I have heard about meetings, incentives, conferences and/or exhibitions held there
- The characteristics of this destination come to my mind quickly
- When I am thinking about meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions, this destination comes to my mind immediately
- This destination holds meetings, incentives, conferences and/or exhibitions of consistent quality
- When choosing between similar conferences, exhibitions or events, I will choose to attend an event in this city

- The business tourism facilities are of high quality
- Accommodation and hospitality services are of high quality
- In general the physical environment is clean/unpolluted
- In general the destination is safe and secure
- My colleagues would think highly of me if I visited this destination for professional reasons
- Attending an event in this destination will help me develop professionally and personally
- I do not foresee problems with communication due to language and/or cultural barriers
- I am excited to travel to this destination for business purposes
- I expect the staff to be professional
- I expect the locals to be hospitable
- The price for accommodation and services is competitive as compared to other MICE destinations
- The destination is accessible for me
- I do not foresee visa problems to go to this destination
- The local transportation is developed
- There are exciting attractions to see in the city
- There are exciting extracurricular activities to do
- The climate of the destination is pleasant
- Considering the expenses related to visiting this destination, the benefits I receive are much more significant
- The city is one of the preferred destinations where I would want to attend an event
- The city provides more benefits than other similar European destinations
- Overall I am satisfied with my trip to this destination when I visit it
- I intend to recommend this city as a business destination to my colleagues
- I intend to continue attending events held in this city in the future

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PART 1 (BARCELONA) and PART 2 (ST PETERBURG)

Questions for respondents who have NOT attended a MICE event there

Why do you think you have never attended a MICE event in Barcelona / St Petersburg? *
Multiple answers possible.

☐ There are no meetings, conferences, exhibitions or events that would be of interest to me

☐ I do not know if there are meetings, conferences, exhibitions or events that would be of interest to me

☐ I believe the destination provides low quality of services

☐ I have a bad image of this destination

☐ Internal reasons within organization (lack of funds, position not high enough, etc)

☐ Visa issues

☐ Low accessibility by transport

☐ Other: _____

PART 3 - GENERAL PERSONAL INFORMATION

How old are you? *

○ 25 and younger

○ 26-35.

○ 36-50.

○ 51 and older

What is your gender? *

   ⃝   Male.

   ⃝   Female.

Which country are you from (your citizenship)? _____

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received. *

   ⃝   High School education

   ⃝   College Diploma

   ⃝   Bachelor degree

   ⃝   Master degree

   ⃝   Doctoral degree

   ⃝   Other: [＿＿＿＿＿]

What of the following describes your current occupation in a most correct way? *

   ⃝   Student

   ⃝   Professional

   ⃝   Researcher/Scientist

   ⃝   Management level, executive

   ⃝   Enterpreneur

   ⃝   Other: [＿＿＿＿＿]

How are your trips usually organized? *

   ⃝   I choose an event I want to attend myself.

   ⃝   My organization decides which events I attend.

   ⃝   I choose an event to attend and my organization approves it.

   ⃝   Other: [＿＿＿＿＿]

How are your trips usually financed? *

   ⃝   My company covers all the MICE travel related costs.

   ⃝   My company partially covers my travelling and participation costs.

   ⃝   I pay myself.

   ⃝   Other: [＿＿＿＿＿]

Appendix B. Barcelona and St Petersburg samples comparison

	Frequency of attendance (Times per year)				Attendance in the destination (total times)				Last visit			
	1	2	3-5	>6	1	2	3-5	>6	This year	Last year	2-5 y. ago	>6y .ago
BCN	24%	32%	31%	13%	61%	15%	19%	5%	57%	29%	11%	3%
SPB	12%	29%	33%	26%	46%	16%	28%	10%	45%	13%	39%	3%

	Age				Gender	
	<25	26-35	36-50	>51	Male	Female
BCN	23%	36%	23%	19%	65%	35%
SPB	13%	52%	22%	13%	71%	29%

	Education					
	High School education	College Diploma	Bachelor degree	Master degree	Doctoral degree	Other
BCN	4%	4%	28%	56%	8%	0%
SPB	4%	0%	12%	48%	35%	3%

	Occupation					
	Student	Professional	Researcher/ Scientist	Management level, executive	Enterpreneur	Other
BCN	25%	43%	17%	13%	1%	0%
SPB	7%	23%	51%	17%	1%	0%

	How are your trips usually organized?			
	I choose an event I want to attend myself.	My organization decides which events I attend.	I choose an event to attend and my organization approves it.	Other
BCN	49%	28%	19%	4%
SPB	48%	19%	33%	0%

	How are your trips usually financed?			
	My company covers all the MICE travel related costs.	My company partially covers my travelling and participation costs.	I pay myself.	Other
BCN	51%	19%	24%	7%
SPB	72%	19%	7%	1%

Note: BCN – Barcelona; SPB – St Petersburg.

Appendix C. Barcelona and St Petersburg samples descriptive statistics for variables

	Minimum		Maximum		Mean		Std. Deviation		Variance		Skewness		Kurtosis	
	BCN	SPB	BCN	SPB	BCN	SPB	BCN	SPB	BCN	SPB	BCN	SPB	BCN	SPB
AW1	2.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	4.427	4.058	.6404	.9056	.410	.820	-.987	-.973	1.3	0.9
AW2	1.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	3.973	3.942	1.039	.9531	1.080	.908	-.762	-1.036	-0.3	1.1
AW3	2.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	4.053	3.928	.7692	1.019	.592	1.039	-.275	-.624	-0.8	-0.4
AW4	1.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	3.320	2.870	.9609	1.124	.923	1.262	-.408	.264	-0.2	-0.6
Q1	2.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	3.973	3.623	.7161	.7689	.513	.591	-.641	-1.028	0.8	2.3
Q2	2.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	3.693	3.580	.9001	.9611	.810	.924	.082	-.387	-1.0	0.0
Q3	2.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	4.040	3.725	.7248	.8725	.525	.761	-.498	-.520	0.2	0.3
Q4	2.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	4.173	3.261	.7236	.9495	.524	.902	-.496	.085	-0.2	-0.1
Q5	2.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	3.813	3.638	.8494	.9389	.721	.882	-.580	-.742	-0.1	0.4
Q6	2.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	3.813	3.725	.9108	.9531	.830	.908	-.388	-.569	-0.6	0.3
IM1	2.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	3.613	3.406	.8837	1.034	.781	1.068	.128	-.728	-0.8	0.1
IM2	2.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	3.853	3.348	.9108	1.055	.830	1.113	-.473	-.282	-0.5	0.0
IM3	2.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	3.413	3.087	.7900	1.054	.624	1.110	-.044	-.022	-0.5	-0.7
IM4	1.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	4.213	4.072	.8103	1.129	.657	1.274	-1.039	-1.094	1.6	0.1
IM5	2.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	4.133	4.145	.6644	.9279	.441	.861	-.438	-1.321	0.3	2.0
IM6	2.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	4.160	3.957	.7541	.8302	.569	.689	-.470	-1.029	-0.5	1.6
L1	1.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	3.960	4.000	.9787	.8044	.958	.647	-.629	-.873	-0.3	1.6
L2	2.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	3.600	3.493	.8383	.9944	.703	.989	.028	-.395	-0.6	0.1
L3	2.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	4.187	2.986	.7832	.8992	.613	.809	-.864	-.346	0.5	-0.4
L4	1.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	4.000	4.188	.9444	.6919	.892	.479	-.989	-1.365	1.0	5.0
L5	1.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	4.240	3.768	.8674	.9571	.752	.916	-1.385	-.653	2.1	0.4
MA1	2.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	3.573	4.087	.7741	.9662	.599	.934	.197	-1.186	-0.5	1.3
MA2	3.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	4.413	3.087	.5717	.8868	.327	.786	-.319	-.695	-0.8	0.3
MA3	1.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	4.480	4.043	.8114	.8818	.658	.777	-1.727	-1.147	3.1	1.5
MA4	3.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	4.333	4.087	.6438	1.134	.414	1.286	-.439	-1.047	-0.7	0.0
MA5	2.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	4.800	4.232	.4932	.9873	.243	.975	-3.194	-1.431	**12.4**	1.7
MA6	1.0	1.0	5.0	5	3.960	3.72	1.202	.820	1.444	.673	-.881	-1.090	-0.5	2.1
MA7	3.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	4.827	3.957	.4150	.8983	.172	.807	-2.327	-.916	4.5	0.8
MA8	3.0	1.0	5.0	5.0	4.653	4.638	.6039	.7065	.365	.499	-1.564	-2.956	1.2	**10.6**

Note: BCN refers to the Barcelona sample (75 answers), SPB – St Petersburg sample (69 answers)