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# CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	FORECASTING OF ELECTRICITY DEMAND USING SARIMA AND FEED FORWARD NEURAL NETWORK MODELS CHANDRABHUSHAN KESAVABHOTLA, DR. V. V. HARAGOPAL & DR. A. VINAY BABU	1
2.	FINANCIAL LITERACY FOR SUSTAINABILITY: A STUDY ON RURAL INDIANS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KARNATAKA ANAND.M.B & DR. SREENIVAS D L	7
3.	EMPLOYEES PERCEPTION TOWARDS COMPETENCY MAPPING PRACTICES IN INSURANCE SECTOR : AN EMPIRICAL STUDY DR. D. S. CHAUBEY, NIDHI MAITHEL & VISHAL GUPTA	12
4.	SIMULATION BASED PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS OF TCP VARIANTS HITESH N. PARVADIYA, KETAN B. SHETH & RAHUL D. MEHTA	19
5.	PERSONALIZED TERRITORIES ARE APPARENT COPING AGENT FOR STRESS AMONG CORPORATE EMPLOYEES: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF CORPORATE WORKSTATIONS WITH REGIONAL CONTEXT L.SAIKALA & A.SELVARANI	23
6.	WORLD TOURISM SCENARIO AND CONTRIBUTION OF TOP 15 COUNTRIES IN INDIA'S FTA DR. JASBIR SINGH	28
7.	COLOR IMAGE SEGMENTATION USING IMPROVED HISTOGRAM BASED CLUSTERING AND QUADTREE DECOMPOSITION TECHNIQUE SANGEETHA T.S, JAYALAKSHMI N & RAJKUMAR NALLAMUTHU	39
8.	EVALUATING SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH INDUSTRIAL ESTATES OF DIFFERENT DISTRICTS AND DIVISIONS OF BANGLADESH ABDUL LATIF & KHANDAKER DAHIRUL ISLAM	42
9.	A STUDY ON CONSEQUENCES OF CRM IN PRIVATE BANKS N.RAJASEKARAN & DR. T. VANNIARAJAN	47
10.	REDRESSAL AND SETTLEMENT OF EMPLOYEES GRIEVANCES - A STUDY OF SELECTED INDUSTRIAL UNITS DR. SUPRIYA CHOUDHARY	53
11.	STRESS AMONG FACULTY IN ENGINEERING AND ARTS COLLEGES IN NAMAKKAL DISTRICT -EMPIRICAL STUDY DR. S. RAJARAJESWARI	58
12.	AN EMBEDDED CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY MATRIX: A WAY AHEAD FOR SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE BENEFIT FOR THE FIRM AND THE SOCIETY M JOTHI & DR. S P MATHIRAJ	62
13.	AN APPROACH TOWARDS RELATIONAL WEB MINING WITH CORRESPONDENCE OF LINK BREAKDOWN STRUCTURE SM SARAVANAKUMAR & R SHANMUGAVADIVU	69
14.	A STUDY ON FACTORS AFFECTING THE RISK PERCEPTION OF MUTUAL FUND INVESTORS DR. NIDHI WALIA & RAVINDER KUMAR	75
15.	PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICES AND INSTRUCTORS' CHARACTERISTICS IN TEACHING AT UNIVERSITIES DR. BIRHANU MOGES ALEMU	79
16.	A STUDY ON EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM IN INFO SCIENCE LTD. AKKUPALLI ANJANAIAH	87
17.	CALENDAR ANOMALY IN CNX-AUTO, BANK AND FMCG INDEX FOR THE PERIOD OF JANUARY 2004 TO MARCH 2013 SHAILAJA P. YADAV	100
18.	EMPLOYEES' AWARENESS TOWARDS TNSTC LIMITED, VILLUPURAM REGION DR. M. RAJARAJAN & S.ANANDARAJAN	109
19.	THE CHANGING FACE OF RISK MANAGEMENT IN INDIAN COMMERCIAL BANKS ASHA SINGH & DR. POONAM GUPTA	113
20.	ESTIMATION OF ENERGY CONSUMPTION IN GRID BASED WIRELESS SENSOR NETWORKS REECHA SOOD	117
21.	EXPERIMENTAL INVESTIGATION ABOUT INFLUENCES OF PROCESSING PARAMETERS IN PLASTIC EXTRUSION PROCESS SISAY G. WOLDEAREGAY, ACHAMYELEH A. KASSIE, M. NARASIMHA & R. REJI KUMAR	121
22.	A STUDY ON CUSTOMERS PERCEPTION TOWARDS DTH SERVICES R. SRIKANTH & V. PANNAGA	129
23.	CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND ELECTRONIC BANKING SERVICE ON SOME SELECTED BANKS OF ETHIOPIA PHILIPPOS LAMORE BAMBORE	133
24.	INTERNET SURFING AMONG THE STUDENTS OF ASSAM UNIVERSITY, SILCHAR DR. CHONGTHAM BEDA DEVI	139
25.	AN ASCERTAINMENT OF EMPIRICAL AND THEORETICAL SACREDNESS OF SOCIAL SAFETY AND SECURITY OF READYMADE GARMENT WORKERS IN BANGLADESH: A THRIVING COUNTRY NOUMENON ABU ZAFAR AHMED MUKUL, MOHAMMAD TANJIMUL ISLAM & ABDULLAH ISHAK KHAN	146
26.	BRAND SALIENCE AND BRAND ASSOCIATION, A TOOL TO GAIN TOURIST DESTINATION REVISITATION: DMO's PERSPECTIVE ASHAQ HUSSAIN NAJAR & PRIYA SINGH	154
27.	ROLE OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP ON INTERNET BUSINESS MODELS OF RELIANCE LIFE INSURANCE IN INDIA SUBHRANSU SEKHAR JENA	157
28.	THE PRACTICE OF TEACHERS PEDAGOGICAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AT ADAMA SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY FEKADU CHERINET ABIE	163
29.	THE IMPACT OF FIVE FACTOR MODEL OF PERSONALITY ON ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR OF NON-MANAGERIAL EMPLOYEES IN THE BANKING SECTOR IN SRI LANKA U.W.M.R. SAMPATH KAPPAGODA	168
30.	CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN BANKING INSTITUTIONS IN RELATION TO CLIENT SATISFACTION AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE: A CASE OF COMMERCIAL BANKS IN CHUKA LENITY KANANU M., RAEI MWIRIGI & JOHN NJOROGI	174
	<b>REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK</b>	182

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## BRAND SALIENCE AND BRAND ASSOCIATION, A TOOL TO GAIN TOURIST DESTINATION REVISITATION: DMO's PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

*Revisitation is the dream of every stakeholder as it does not only provide the business from the revisitors but also add new tourist arrivals, it has been seen that due to the positive word of mouth (WoM) from the existing tourists there is tremendous flow of new tourists as well as existing at a destination. There are number of other factors or reasons for attracting the new tourist flow, branding is one among them which is further influenced by brand salience, brand association, equity, and awareness and brand resonance. Destination Management Organisations (DMO's) seek to attract tourists by differentiating and marketing the products and services offered to them. This study puts an emphasis on role of brand salience in attracting the different types of tourists like recreational, diversionary, experimental, experimental and existential for revisitation through DMO's perspective. For conducting the research the 5- point Check list of GACVB (2005) is used to get implemented and secondary data from sources like published journals, books and electronic print media is used in order to get the motive of revisitation. The research findings illustrate that brand salience of destination and products have enough effect on the revisitation of existing tourists as it made them to ToMA (Top of Mind Awareness) thinking about the destination.*

### KEYWORDS

Branding, revisitation, brand salience, brand association, Destination Management Organisation.

### INTRODUCTION

#### BRANDING AND ITS SALIENCE

Careful brand management seeks to make the product or services relevant to the target audience. Brands should be seen as more than the difference between the actual cost of a product and its selling price - they represent the sum of all valuable qualities of a product to the consumer. When the brand is retrieved, the customer also gets some sense of how much they know about the brand. This provides a sense of assurance that the brand will be appropriate for the situation.

But on the other hand the brand salience provides a further benefit by then making the brand, once thought of, more likely to be chosen. It is the foundation of the hierarchy and represents the strength of the destination's presence in the mind of the target for a given travel situation. It is suggested salience is best operationalized through unaided top of mind awareness (ToMA), rather than through recall by prompting. The proposition that ToMA is an indicator of purchase preference (Axelrod, 1968), was supported in the 2003 study (Pike, 2006).

This benefit is, however, secondary to the influence of the brand being thought of in the first instance, as without that initial step, positive evaluations will have no effect on buyer behaviour (e.g. Holden and Lutz, 1992). This concept of brand salience is distinct from the concept of brand attitude, where the focus is on evaluation of the brand rather than the quantity and quality of the memory structures. It provides a different perspective and explanation for the fact that buyers buy different brands in different circumstances and situations (and even in the same situations). The particular interest to destination marketers is in understanding how travellers select a holiday destination from so many places offering the same benefits. The theory of consumer decision sets offers, introduced by Howard (1963) and Howard and Sheth (1969), is helpful in this regard. Many tourism studies have supported the assertion that the number of destinations a traveller will actually consider in the purchase process is limited to four plus or minus two (see, e.g., Crompton, 1992; Thompson & Cooper, 1979). These destinations form the decision set, which provides a measure of brand salience relative to competitors. This CBBE (consumer-based brand equity) dimension relates to the destination's first brand objective: To increase awareness of the destination. Brand associations are anything linked in memory to the destination. Mayo and Jarvis (1981) suggested destination attractiveness is a function of the specific benefits sought by travellers and the ability of the destination to provide them. From this perspective it is important to gain an understanding of what decision criteria will be used by the consumer-traveller when making differentiating destinations under consideration. Reviews of the extensive destination image literature (see Chon, 1990; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Gallarza, Saura, & Garcia, 2002; Pike, 2002, 2007; Tasci, Gartner, & Cavusgil, 2007) indicate there is no commonly agreed conceptualization of the construct. Not surprisingly therefore, no accepted destination image scale has been developed.

Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993) highlighted the way in which minds simplify the process of destination image formation: "Images represent a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with the place. They are the product of the mind trying to process and essentialize huge amounts of data about a place" (p. 141).

Mayo and Jarvis proposed an individual would make a brand selection based on what is "important and relevant to them" (p. 68), and so associations need to be measured in terms of attributes deemed determinant for a given travel situation. That is, the researcher needs to elicit from the respondent, from a selection of salient attributes, those that determine destination selection for a given travel situation. Although most popular measurement approach is structured surveys using scales of cognitive attributes and affective benefits, the issue of travel situation salience and determinance has been neglected in the destination image literature. This CBBE dimension relates to the destination's third objective: to educate the market about things to do.

**Brand resonance** represents willingness to engage with the brand, or level of identification a consumer has with a brand. It is suggested that for destinations, resonance can be measured behaviourally, such as in previous visitation, and also attitudinally through stated intent to visit. This CBBE dimension is related to the destination's second objective: To stimulate interest in, and visitation to, the destination. This objective is also related to the highest level of the hierarchy, *brand loyalty*, which has received little attention in the destination marketing literature. Loyalty can be measured by repeat visitation and word of mouth recommendations. In this way the CBBE hierarchy incorporates perceptual and behavioural measures. There has been criticism in the marketing literature of what has been failure in market research to link attitudinal data with measures of actual behaviour. Certainly, there has been a lack of longitudinal tourism studies investigating the relationship between attitude and behaviour (Pike, 2006), such as stated preferences and actual travel.

**TRAVEL EXPERIENCE**

Cohen (1979) describes the first mode as the 'recreational' in which individuals step outside the ordinary in search of entertainment. In this mode a person will prefer to the place which is having high level of prominence or resilience in terms of security and safety. Resilience here may vary from the last visits experience and feelings. In the 'diversionary' mode, a person takes a short break from the stresses of everyday life, here a person who wishes to take break from the day to day busy routine in order to get rid of from stress, for this a tourist would prefer to go to spa destination like in India Goa, Utrakhand are the places which possess the word of mouth about their peculiarity in terms of spa or sauna bath. The third mode is called the 'experiential' mode, which proceeds from the belief that ordinary life lacks richness and those more authentic experiences of social life, culture and nature must be sought elsewhere. In the 'experimental' mode, alienation deeply affects the individual, who is in danger of losing her- or himself in everyday life and who makes the effort to rediscover her- or himself in another, foreign context, be it natural or social. India is vast in terms of diversity in culture and heritage that is the Stake holders should take a corrective and attractive step to attract these experiential and experimental mode tourists. The fifth and final mode is the 'existential'. Here, individuals feel they are living in the wrong place and/or at the wrong time. This estrangement from ordinary life is so strong that a better world is sought elsewhere, at the tourist location and, if possible, on a permanent basis. In all the above modes the brand resilience and brand resonance and association plays a paramount role in attracting heavy influx of tourists.

**BACKGROUND**

Any destinations tourism marketability may be evaluated according to their attraction for tourists and their tourism infrastructure which in turn depends upon Branding aspects like prominence of brand, association of brand and its resonance. Most tourism activities take place at a particular destination; therefore the destination itself forms a pillar of any modelling that is done for the tourism system (Pike 2004). Destination can be seen as an area that includes all services and goods a tourist consumes during his or her stay (Terzibasoglu 2004; Wot 2007). This destination appeal shape should transfer to a unique and competitive destination brand which expresses the reality of the destination and conveys the tourist perspective. According to Goeldner, Ritchie, and Mac-Intosh 2000; Kaplanidou and Vogt (2003) destination branding is defined as: selecting a consistent element mix to identify and distinguish it through positive image building, i.e. how consumers perceive the destination in their minds. Destination branding conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience. Recently brand salience has assumed a greater prominence in both branding and advertising literature. There have been calls for the consideration of building brand salience as an outcome of effective advertising (Bullmore, 1999; Ehrenberg et al., 2000a; Miller and Berry, 1998), as well as discussion of the role of brand salience from a brand management perspective (Ehrenberg et al., 1997; Keller and Davey, 2001; Romaniuk, 2002). Therefore it seems timely to re-examine what the concept of brand salience should mean in a marketing context and the implications for measurement. In this article, we explore how brand salience is relevant to brand buying. This concept of brand salience is distinct from the concept of brand attitude, where the focus is on evaluation of the brand rather than the quantity and quality of the memory structures. It provides a different perspective and explanation for the fact that buyers buy different brands in different circumstances and situations. Brand resonance represents willingness to engage with the brand, or level of identification a consumer has with a brand. It is suggested that for destinations, resonance can be measured behaviourally, such as in previous visitation, and also attitudinally through stated intent to visit.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- 1) To know about the role of Brand salience and resonance on revisitation.
- 2) To know the role of Destination Management Organisation's in re branding of destination.
- 3) To suggest the marketing strategies about the destination branding.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This paper is based on secondary data collected from published articles, journals books, government reports, websites and news papers.

**BRANDING OR MARKETING STRATEGIES (5-POINT CHECK LIST)**

As per the Georgia Association of Convention & visitors Bureaus (2005), the marketing agencies or stake holders should follow following in order to get the Brand salience about the destination.

**1) Conduct a visitor-demand study:**

- In this aspect the Marketer should know about their demographics, visitor segments, needs, interest, purpose of their visit, length of stay, size of travel party, service like shopping, sightseeing, business meetings etc.
- identify the travellers of your region, learn about them

**2) Go-through discreetly with already existing Resources:**

- Get awareness about their primary reason like type of visit e.g education, business, leisure, sports, pilgrimage etc
- What is already with you?

**3) Position Your Destination's attraction among competing destinations:**

- Do SWOT analysis of your existing onsite and offsite amenities.
- Prepare the strategies for the same.
- Try to implement the eco-friendly practices if you don't follow earlier.
- Improve your recognition/identification techniques like good signage, proper logo etc Educate the community as they are the basic source for information and authenticity.

**4) Develop & Implement Marketing Plan:**

- Identify the different segments of market you want to target, make the product or destination appealing for this entire target.
- Keep the availability of resources for every segment.
- Train the human resource as per the needs of tourists.

**5) Promote your destination as a reminiscent experienced destination:**

- Aware and educate the community involved in the day to day tourism activities within or near the destination as they play pivotal role in tourist satisfaction.
- People visit destination because of certain prominence and resonance, do high efforts to meet their expectations.

**ROLE OF DMO's IN BRANDING A DESTINATION**

Destination Management Organisations are the professional bodies responsible for the marketing and managing i.e. 'selling' the destinations as a whole in broader sense. The World Tourism Organisation in 2004 defines DMO's as organisations responsible for the management and marketing destinations e.g. NTA, STDC, local DMO's. (Presenza, Sheehan and Ritchie, 2004). Although the concept of branding has been applied extensively to products and services, today though the branding helps in many other aspects like creating identity, protection from competition, enhancing image, brand equity and creating and keeping brand loyal customers to repeat business. DMOs rely on demand-side approaches to evaluate the impact of activity of branding. According to Genc and Pirnar, (2010) brand management by destination management organisations are emphasizing the important point, due to this nature of customers, branding gains a special importance to Destination Organisation's since repeat tourists are target groups. It is understood that destination management is most effective when accomplished through organised destination management organisations which specialise in using updated management and marketing techniques like image management, bringing partners together, co-branding and brand in order to rebrand the destination.



**CONCLUSION**

Memorable travel experience acts as pull factor for a tourist to revisit the destination as there are number of tangible and intangible things associated with a tour, which a tourist remembers and due to those reminiscent experiences a person takes the decision regarding revisit. So in order to make the travel memorable and reminiscent the destination Management organisations play a pivotal role in attracting the business for a particular destination as these are the people who are well acquainted regarding the possessions, resources, level of service which they can render to the clients and which in turn create the image of any destination by their word of mouth to the others, branding and by providing best services during tourism cycle. The awareness which these organisation provide, helps to gain the destination brand equity by creating the market credibility and trust among the consumers as the marketing organisations are the basic source of information for the travellers these are the first hosts who come in contact with the tourists so it is very necessary for DMOs to create the brand of their organisation and destination too so that the people gains credibility and enhances their travel experience and revisitation as there are certain prominent factors like salience of courtesy, service or products which has lead positive effect on tourists memory. It has been found that the symbiotic relationship of Destination Management Organisations, stake holders and service providers will definitely lead the brand resonance of the destination and Top of Mind Awareness.

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