



## Article Title

### **Can Customer Based Brand Equity Help Destinations to Stay in Race? An Empirical Study of Kashmir Valley**

## Citation

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Current study focus on measuring the customer based brand equity of a tourist destination (CBBETD) named Kashmir valley (India).

**Design** – A structured questionnaire was prepared, using Man (2010) consisting of 21 items. Single stage cluster sampling and systematic simple random techniques were used to collect final responses of 290 responses with a response rate of 87%.

**Findings** – Findings of the study revealed a high destination based brand equity for select destination. Analysis also revealed lowest mean for perceived service quality dimension for Kashmir which needs to be relooked into by policy makers. Age and length of stay were found to have associated with each other. Also, length of stay was found to have an impact on CBBETD.

**Originality** – Originality and core beneficence of the current study lies in the fact that brand equity measurement of Kashmir valley (mini Switzerland of the world) as a destination brand has been taken for the first time with an empirical evidence supporting the findings. It is evident from the study that Kashmir as a destination is very popular among travelers and destination image dimension for Kashmir has a strong and affirmative influence on the overall development of the destination equity.

## Summary

Kashmir as a destination is famous for its tourist circuits globally but CBBETD instrument has not been applied till date to measure its brand equity from the perspective of tourists actually visiting the destination. The major contribution of the present research lies in the fact that a brand equity measurement of Kashmir valley as a destination brand has been conducted for the first time with an empirical evidence supporting the findings. It is evident from the study that Kashmir as a destination is very popular among travelers and destination image dimension for Kashmir has a strong and positive influence on the overall development of the destination equity suggesting that Kashmir enjoys a good brand image among visiting tourists.

Despite global brand image and high destination awareness there are certain loopholes that needs to be timely taken care of to establish Kashmir valley as a global destination brand. Results revealed that the perceived quality of the destination needs to be overlooked in every aspect so as to ensure strong brand equity of Kashmir valley. The destination, further, needs to enhance in terms of the shopping facilities, by providing the tourists with a range where they can look for something that suits their purpose apart from the traditional souvenirs. It has been further observed that the destination lacks in terms of cultural and historical attractions. This has implications for policy makers and various tourism development agencies as well. They need to understand that there is a need where various DMO'S can address the need by exploring destination that are rich in cultural heritage and upgrading the overall infrastructure at the existing ones. Destination planner needs to focus on such dimensions that are critical in the overall positioning of the Kashmir as a brand. Also, different tourism agencies and involved stakeholders of Kashmir need to focus on how they can make it more popular and spread more awareness by integrating different promotional techniques like digital marketing, social media, and other platforms. Developing Kashmir valley as a strong destination brand can only help it to attain a sustainable place in the market and survive longer.