



What's Love Got to Do with It? Place Brand Love and Viral Videos

Journal:	<i>Internet Research</i>
Manuscript ID	IntR-07-2018-0311.R4
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	Place brand love, Self-brand congruity, Self-expressiveness, Word-of-mouth, Message sharing, Social media

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

What's Love Got to do with it?

Place Brand Love and Viral Videos

Abstract

Purpose – The aim is to explore the role of brand love in place brand communication by incorporating potential antecedents and behavioral outcomes of place brand love in a social media setting.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were gathered from 281 residents and visitors of a place through an online survey focusing on a place brand video. Structural equation modelling was employed to examine the research model.

Findings – Results show that place brand love has a strong direct relationship with positive word-of-mouth, and an indirect effect on intention to share the place brand message. Self-expressiveness of the place brand message also seems to influence place brand love as well as intention to share the message.

Research limitations/implications – The role of self-related concepts and brand love to a place has theoretical implications for research in place branding and eWOM. The study has limitations to its generalizability in terms of cultural aspects and sample representativeness.

Practical implications – Place marketers need to successfully reflect the self-concept of key stakeholders in communication messages in order to increase the probability that recipients will engage in positive word-of-mouth and share the message.

Originality/value – Research on place brand love is scarce and previous studies have focused solely on brand love in connection to tourists. The main contribution of the current study is the exploration of the role of brand love in connection to residents, who are vital co-creators of the place brand.

Keywords Place brand love, Identity theory, Social identity theory, Self-congruity theory, Self-brand congruity, Self-expressiveness, Word-of-mouth, Message sharing, Intention to forward, Social media, Viral marketing

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Place branding, which concerns place identity creation and place image management (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013), is a relatively new and growing field of research. Competition for tourists, investors, companies, residents, and qualified workforce has increased over time (Braun *et al.*, 2014). Places therefore need to differentiate themselves from each other externally to attract resources and achieve various economic, political, or socio-psychological objectives (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008). However, since branding concerns identity as well as power, places also need to instill a sense of belonging into their residents and communicate a clear self-concept internally (van Ham, 2008). Place brands encompass “a network of associations in the consumers’ mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioral expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place’s stakeholders and the overall place design” (Zenker and Braun, 2010, p. 3). Thus, place branding is a means to create or influence a place image in the minds of target audiences (Rainisto, 2003). Since places are so complex and multifaceted, involving many different stakeholders with highly varying needs and objectives, place branding comes with unique challenges compared to the branding of goods and services (Demirbag Kaplan *et al.*, 2010; Vuignier, 2017).

While the majority of research in place branding has focused on an external visitor (tourism) perspective (e.g., Usakli and Baloglu, 2011), the internal perspective of place residents has more recently gained attention (Balakrishnan, 2009). Extant research suggests that residents are vital in the formation and communication of place brands (e.g., Braun *et al.*, 2013; Kavaratzis, 2012; Zenker *et al.*, 2017; Zenker and Erfgen, 2014), and have a pivotal role to play as online place ambassadors (Uchinaka *et al.*, 2019). In their role as internal stakeholders, residents are considered the “first customers” of a place. As such, they internalize and deliver the corporate brand values (Sartori *et al.*, 2012), and they personally reflect the core values and influence the experience of a place (O’Leary and Deegan, 2003). Local residents have detailed first-hand knowledge of a place (Zenker *et al.*, 2017) and are naturally considered to be

1
2
3 informal, authentic, and the most believable insider sources of information about the place. This makes
4 them not only important ambassadors but also co-creators of the place brand communication and brand
5 experience (Braun *et al.*, 2013; Kavartzis, 2012). Hence, there is a need to understand why residents
6 become brand ambassadors and engage in word-of-mouth communication (Braun *et al.*, 2013; Sartori
7 *et al.*, 2012). The commitment of residents is considered crucial for tourism to be sustainable, especially
8 for small communities and medium-sized, non-capital cities that are dependent on tourism for their
9 economic viability (Uchinaka *et al.*, 2019).

10
11 Research shows that both cognitive and affective place image factors have a positive effect on word-of-
12 mouth intentions for residents and tourists alike. However, affective image tends to have a more
13 enduring effect (Papadimitriou *et al.*, 2018). While emotional dimensions of people's feelings toward a
14 place have been studied in the form of place attachment (e.g., Chen *et al.*, 2018; Zenker and Rütter,
15 2014), the concept of brand love has only very recently been addressed within the area of place branding,
16 and not yet investigated in relation to residents. The brand love construct helps explain and predict
17 variation in desirable post-consumption behaviors among satisfied consumers (Carroll and Ahuvia,
18 2006). In product branding contexts, it is proposed to have a positive effect on co-creation (Kaufmann
19 *et al.*, 2016), and has been shown to positively influence word-of-mouth (Albert and Merunka, 2013;
20 Ismail and Spinelli, 2012). From a destination perspective, Swanson (2017) found that tourists who had
21 developed feelings of love for destinations and their brands tended to maintain those relationships and
22 displayed increased loyalty and visitation intentions. A recent study also indicated that domestic tourists'
23 destination brand love had emotional as well as behavioral effects, including attitudinal and behavioral
24 loyalty and positive word-of-mouth (Aro *et al.*, 2018).

25
26 While conventional, "offline", word-of-mouth naturally becomes limited to people one already is
27 acquainted with, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) makes it possible for the message to quickly reach
28 a large number of people; known as well as unknown (Camarero and San José, 2011). Hence, in the
29 context of place branding, social media provide great opportunities for residents to easily transmit
30 messages, contribute to discussions, and reinforce or reject messages about their place (Braun *et al.*,
31 2013). When a message reaches a wider audience, spreads at a greater speed, and receives a more
32 positive response amongst individuals, it is considered to be "viral" (Camarero and San José, 2011;
33 Vilpponen *et al.*, 2006). As this also means that consumers assume the cost or effort of spreading the
34 message (Camarero and San José, 2011; Hinz *et al.*, 2011), achieving such positive organic eWOM is
35 of huge interest to businesses and organizations.

36
37 Although many studies in place branding have focused on various indicators of motivations and
38 activities of social media users, to the best of the authors' knowledge, none have studied brand love in
39 relation to place brand communication. Research suggests that messages are more likely to be forwarded
40 and become viral when they evoke emotion (Dobele *et al.*, 2007); thus, brand love could potentially play
41 an important role in the marketing of places. Against this background, the purpose of this study is to
42 explore the role of brand love in place brand communication by incorporating potential antecedents as
43 well as behavioral outcomes of place brand love in a social media setting. In doing so, we address
44 traditional word-of-mouth as well as eWOM. The study focuses on consumers who are already familiar
45 with the place, which involves perspectives of residents, former residents, and frequent visitors. The
46 theoretical scope of the study is delineated in the conceptual framework (Figure 1). All concepts are
47 described and explained in the following section.

48
49
50
51
52 *[INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]*

53 54 **2. Theoretical background and hypotheses**

55 56 *2.1 Place brand communication and consumers' place identity*

57 The communication of a place brand can be divided into three different aspects. Primary communication
58 concerns the **place's physics and actions** (including that of residents), while secondary communication
59 is the formal promotional communication of the place, and tertiary communication refers to
60

1
2
3 communication not controlled by the place's marketers (Kavaratzis, 2004). As Braun *et al.* (2013) state,
4 residents are a vital part of forming the place brand by negotiating and communicating the brand identity
5 and offer, as well as by constituting a part of the brand experience. In essence, the place image and place
6 experience **are** thus co-created prior to, during, and after actual exchange(s) and use(s).
7

8
9 People's role identities, as well as their social identities, influence their perceptions, emotions, and
10 behavior (Stets and Burke, 2000). Places are considered tightly connected to the self-concept and
11 identity and constitutes a part of forming in-groups (such as residents) and out-groups (non-residents)
12 (Stets and Burke, 2000). The community place identity helps the individual to position the self in the
13 social environment in terms of belonging and attachment vs. differentiation, as well as in terms of
14 interpretation and expression of the self, partly in order to enhance their self-esteem (Hummon, 1990).
15 This dual nature of identity – affiliating and differentiating – enables goals of identity and identification
16 (Hummon, 1990). In this way, there is both an internal and an external dimension to the use of place in
17 individuals' formation and communication of identity. Similarly, there is an internal and external
18 dimension in the participatory process of residents co-creating a place. The current study thus rests on
19 the tenets of three inter-related theories: identity theory (Sirgy, 1982), social identity theory (Abrams
20 and Hogg, 1990), and self-congruity theory (Sirgy *et al.*, 1997). The theoretical foundation captures both
21 the perceived image match between the individual's self-identity and the image of residents, and the
22 perceived ability of **an** online advertisement to express the personal identity of an individual to others.
23 **This self-expressiveness fulfils** inner needs of self-esteem and self-consistency, as well as social needs
24 of feeling and communicating in-group belonging. In turn, this is dependent on a self-congruity
25 evaluation as well as an evaluation of how the individual wants to be perceived by others.
26

27 28 *2.2 Place brand love*

29 Brand love is a relatively recent concept (Fetscherin and Heinrich, 2015), with roots in the research by
30 Belk (1988) on the internalization of possessions into the extended self, and by Fournier (1998) on the
31 intimate relationships that consumers may form with brands. First defined by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006),
32 the brand love construct concerns the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer
33 has for a particular brand. Hence, brand love is much more intense than simply liking a brand. The
34 construct is considered to involve an integration or assimilation of the brand into the individual's sense
35 of identity (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Beyond self-brand integration, brand love also comprises a
36 component of positive emotional connection or attachment to the brand, and passion-driven behaviors
37 such as the willingness to invest resources in a brand (Batra *et al.*, 2012). A person cannot feel love
38 toward a brand if it is not liked and valued highly (Batra *et al.*, 2012). It is thus purely a measure of
39 positive affect and excludes negative brand feelings (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Not only does brand
40 love involve an integration of the brand into the self, but identification with the brand also has a positive
41 influence on brand love (Albert and Merunka, 2013). The more a brand reflects a consumer's inner and
42 social self, the stronger the brand love (Huber *et al.*, 2015).
43

44
45 As stated, place is an important part of human identity (Proshansky *et al.*, 1983), and important places
46 may become vital to our self-definition (Stedman, 2002). Emotional bonds to a place may develop
47 independently of residence time and has been found to exist for both residents and visitors of the place
48 (Cheng and Kuo, 2015; Lewicka, 2011). While emotions and attachment seem to be overlapping in the
49 marketing literature, environmental psychology and tourism research has identified emotions in relation
50 to places as a construct distinct from place attachment (Hidalgo and Hernández, 2001; Hosany *et al.*,
51 2015). So far, brand love for a place has only been addressed in three studies, all of which focus on the
52 place as a tourist destination: Lee and Hyun (2016), Swanson (2017, expanding preliminary results
53 reported in Swanson, 2015), and Aro *et al.* (2018). Swanson (2015) describes the love that consumers
54 experience in relation to places as “a complex mix of love for the place itself and love for the brand
55 values associated with the place” (pp. 144-145). Similar to Aro *et al.* (2018), this study views the place
56 brand as an entity to which the place and its associated characteristics are essentially related. Thus, the
57 concept does not distinguish between love for the place itself and love for the brand values, as these are
58 seen as intertwined.
59
60

2.3 Self-brand congruity

According to identity theory, an individual has a personal identity, or self-image, and the level of congruence between the personal identity and an evaluated other identity defines the perceived identity fit or congruence (Abrams and Hogg, 1990). Social identity theory posits that individuals can bolster their own self-perception through identification with social groups or categories (Abrams and Hogg, 1990). Furthermore, self-congruity theory postulates that consumers who use brands for their symbolic benefits (i.e., not only for utilitarian value) tend to use and prefer brands with an image congruent with their self-image (Sirgy *et al.*, 1997). Previous studies indicate that customer and brand identification may cause consumers to fall in love with a brand (e.g., Albert and Merunka, 2013; Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010). A positive relation between self-brand congruity and brand love has been found, making consumers more likely to love brands which express their own self-identity (Bıçakcıoğlu *et al.*, 2016). Studies on self-brand congruity in place branding have so far mainly focused on tourists. A range of different units of brand image congruence have been employed, such as the image of the brand or place itself (Matzler *et al.*, 2016), the image of the place branding (Kemp *et al.*, 2012), the affective place image (Kastenholz, 2004), the image of the place personality (Kumar and Kaushik, 2017; Stokburger-Sauer, 2011; Usakli and Baloglu, 2011), the type of vacation (Hung and Petrick, 2011), and the image of the tourists of a place (Ahn *et al.*, 2013; Beerli *et al.*, 2007).

Residents are stated to be crucial in the place branding process as they themselves, their characteristics and their values constitute a core part of the place brand in the minds of place consumers (Braun *et al.*, 2013), and they play a vital role as online place-ambassadors (Uchinaka *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, they are critical for the legitimization of place branding in their role as citizens and voters (Braun *et al.*, 2013). However, as far as the authors can discern, no studies in place branding have investigated the self-brand congruity of stakeholders based on the image of residents. Studies point to brand identity and sense of community, i.e., the affiliation a customer feels with other people associated with the brand, as antecedents of brand love (Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010). Similarly, Aro *et al.* (2018) found that people associated with the destination, and associations with people at a destination, are important in the formation of brand love. Consumers' feelings of community with other users of the brand are thus positively related to stronger feelings of brand love. In this study, self-brand congruity is conceptualized as congruence between the individual's self-image and the image of place residents. Based on the above discussion, we hypothesize:

H1: Self-brand congruity positively influences brand love for a place

2.4 Self-expressiveness

Consumers prefer brands whose image is congruent with their own self-image (Sirgy, 1982) based on self-identity motives such as self-consistency and self-esteem (Sirgy *et al.*, 1997). They also tend to like brands that allow them to enhance their social identity in social exchanges online (Wallace *et al.*, 2014). For a brand to achieve a favorable image that resonates with its recipients, promotional efforts need to be designed to enhance positive images towards the most receptive target markets (Leisen, 2001). Because of their symbolic role, brands can assist individuals in defining, enhancing, and communicating their self-concepts to themselves and others (Aaker, 1996; Batra *et al.*, 2012; Matzler *et al.*, 2016). The higher perceived fit between self- and brand image in marketing communication, the more it resonates with the consumer's self-image, and the better it will be able to express the consumer's identity. Based on identity theory, self-expressiveness can be seen as the consumer's perception of a given product's or service's ability to express personal identity dimensions (Thorbjørnsen *et al.*, 2007). By associating with a prototypical brand user, consumers verify their self-image and distinguish themselves from users of other brands (Karjaluoto *et al.*, 2016). In the context of sharing online advertising, research has shown a positive effect of self-brand congruity on self-expressiveness (Taylor *et al.*, 2012). For the purpose of this study, we adopt Taylor *et al.*'s (2012) definition of self-expressiveness as the extent to which consumers perceive that a place brand message supports and enacts their self-concept and will be recognized publicly as such. The following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: Self-brand congruity positively influences self-expressiveness of a place brand message

A place can be seen as a vehicle that allows its users to reinforce and express their actual or preferred identity. Therefore, it must correctly capture and convey a symbolic meaning that fits with the

individual's desires, dreams and aspirations (Tsai, 2012). To achieve this, marketers need to translate the symbolic meaning of the place into an image and representations of that image that resonates with its users (Tsai, 2012). Self-expressive brands reflect the consumer's inner self and enhance his/her social self (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Research shows that brands which enable consumers to express themselves are the most likely to be loved (e.g., Albert and Merunka, 2013; Huber *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, brand love towards self-expressive brands is stronger than the love directed towards brands that do not fit the user's self-identity (Aro *et al.*, 2018; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Karjaluoto *et al.* (2016) as well as Wallace *et al.* (2014) also found a direct and positive relationship between brand self-expressiveness and brand love. Therefore, we propose that:

H3: Self-expressiveness of a place brand message positively influences brand love for the place

2.5 Positive word-of-mouth

Strong emotional attachment to brands motivates consumers to engage and actively invest their own time, energy, and resources in the brand to maintain their brand relationship (Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010; Park *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, brands to which consumers are emotionally attached are not only in harmony with the consumers' perceived self, but also inspire consumers to communicate those perceptions to others (Wallace *et al.*, 2014). This finding holds true also for residents of a place (Zenker *et al.*, 2017). In doing so, they engage in word-of-mouth (WOM), which is defined by Harrison-Walker (2001) as "informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived noncommercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization, or a service" (p. 63). While WOM may be negative as well as positive, the focus in this study is on positive WOM as an outcome of brand love. Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) conceptualized positive word-of-mouth as the degree to which the consumer praises the brand to others. These authors found brand love to significantly influence positive WOM in the context of consumer-packaged goods. Using similar conceptualizations, later studies have confirmed the link between brand love and positive offline WOM for other consumer brands (Albert and Merunka, 2013; Ismail and Spinelli, 2012; Karjaluoto *et al.*, 2016). Based on a qualitative study, Aro *et al.* (2018) suggest that positive WOM is a consequence of destination brand love. We therefore expect that:

H4: Brand love for a place positively influences positive word-of-mouth

2.6 Message-sharing behavior

Online (electronic) word-of-mouth behavior – eWOM – differs from offline WOM in some important aspects. While offline WOM is mostly spoken and generally occurs on a one-to-one basis, eWOM mostly involves written or visual communication and may be addressed to many people simultaneously (Karjaluoto *et al.*, 2016). A specific form of eWOM is the transmission of advertising messages, such as website links or videos (Taylor *et al.*, 2012). Following the rapid growth of streaming video technology and the popularity of sites such as YouTube, videos are increasingly used as tools for viral marketing (Hsieh *et al.*, 2012). The term viral marketing describes "the phenomenon by which consumers mutually share and spread marketing-relevant information, initially sent out deliberately by marketers to stimulate and capitalize on word-of-mouth (WOM) behavior" (Hinz *et al.*, 2011, p. 55). As this approach completely relies on consumers' forwarding behavior (Hsieh *et al.*, 2012), practitioners as well as academics are seeking to identify factors that motivate consumers to share online commercial messages (Taylor *et al.*, 2012). In the context of place brands, studies suggest that social media have major potential to change city branding by facilitating and promoting interaction between users as well as generation of content (Priporas *et al.*, 2019).

According to Taylor *et al.* (2012), consumers share advertisements to express their sense of identity, especially when the ads are perceived as consistent with their self-concept. Subsequently, the social process of engaging in eWOM may offer symbolic value and serve self-expressive needs. These authors also found empirical support for a positive link between self-expressiveness of an online promotional message (a viral video) and the likelihood to share the message online (Taylor *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, self-expressiveness of a brand has been found to influence positive eWOM on Facebook (Wallace *et al.*, 2014). In a similar vein, place branding studies have shown that place brand identification has a positive effect on place brand advocacy and promotion (Hultman *et al.*, 2015; Stokburger-Sauer, 2011). Thus, we hypothesize:

1
2
3 *H5: Self-expressiveness of a place brand message positively influences intention to forward the*
4 *message*
5

6 Messages are more likely to be forwarded when they evoke emotion (Dobele *et al.*, 2007; Rimé *et al.*,
7 2014). Brand love has been shown to increase positive eWOM both in a specific social media context
8 such as Facebook (Wallace *et al.*, 2014) and in a more general online environment (Karjaluoto *et al.*,
9 2016). The latter study included eWOM as well as offline WOM and found that both were positively
10 influenced by brand love (Karjaluoto *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, brand love is argued to be directed towards
11 objects that require investments of time and energy (Ahuvia, 2005), as is the case of places. A qualitative
12 study of tourists indicated that positive WOM is an outcome of destination brand love, and those that
13 talked positively about the place had also liked, shared, or commented on postings of the destination
14 (Aro *et al.*, 2018). Based on this background, we hypothesize that:

15 *H6: Brand love for a place positively influences intention to forward place brand messages*

16 *H7: Positive word-of-mouth positively influences intention to forward place brand messages*
17
18

19 The hypotheses formulated in the preceding sections are illustrated in the research model below (Figure
20 2).
21

22 *[INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]*
23

24 **3. Research methodology**

25 *3.1 Data collection and sample*

26 The study was conducted in collaboration with a Swedish municipality's destination management
27 organization (DMO) which had successfully launched a series of short promotional videos that had been
28 shared virally, **largely** by residents in the area. The place promoted is the county capital with 70-80
29 thousand inhabitants, corresponding to a medium-sized Swedish city. It is mainly visited by people from
30 the region for shopping purposes and by more distant visitors for its nature and climate. Internet
31 penetration of the Swedish population (age 12 or above) was 98% in 2018, with a majority reporting
32 daily use of Internet (90%) and social media (63%) (Davidsson *et al.*, 2018).
33
34

35 According to the DMO, the first two videos together reached almost 700,000 views within a few months
36 on their website, Facebook, and YouTube (VL, 2016). To test the proposed research model, **one of these**
37 **promotional videos was incorporated into** an online survey **constructed** in the web-based tool Qualtrics.
38 In consultation with the DMO, the chosen video was the first one in the series as this was the most
39 successful one in terms of number of views, and because it shows various aspects of the place across
40 different seasons, with an emphasis on experiencing the nature. The video, which is about 1½ minute
41 long, was integrated into the online questionnaire so that it was mandatory for survey participants to
42 watch it in order to be able to continue answering the questions.
43
44

45 General recommendations for survey research methodology (Evans and Mathur, 2018) were closely
46 followed. Before launching the survey, we conducted a qualitative pre-test on a small sample of
47 consumers, researchers, and place branding practitioners, which resulted in minor adjustments of
48 wording in some of the items. The survey was distributed through three different channels: (1) At the
49 DMO's Facebook page, which is followed by current and former residents as well as visitors of the
50 place. (2) Via e-mail invitations to students at the city's university, using a systematic random sampling
51 approach. Students constitute an interesting group in this context, as many of them had moved fairly
52 recently to the municipality from other places in Sweden. Moreover, this sampling frame included some
53 students **from** one of the university's external campuses in other cities, and some studying in distance-
54 based programs, which means that they could reside anywhere in Sweden but would generally be at the
55 main campus for a few weeks each semester. (3) To men and women, 16-75 years, who were members
56 of an online consumer panel in the county; i.e. they were residing within the same larger geographical
57 region as the focused place. By combining these methods of distribution, we could effectively reach
58 some main target groups engaged in spreading positive WOM and sharing content online. These
59 included current and former local residents, previous visitors following the destination on Facebook,
60

visitors in the form of residents in other places within the same larger geographical region, and visitors in the form of students living in other places but with experience of staying in the studied city.

When closing the survey, 289 responses had been gathered. Four responses were removed due to missing values exceeding 15% (cf. Hair *et al.*, 2010). Additionally, four respondents were removed as they had never visited the place and thus did not belong to any of the intended target groups. Hence, the remaining 281 responses were used in the analysis. Of these, 117 responses were collected from the DMO's Facebook page, 53 resulted from the e-mail invitations to students, and 111 came from the online consumer panel. In total, 59 percent of the respondents were female, and the median age category of the sample was 35-44 years. Among all respondents, 43 percent were working, 32 percent were students, and 18 percent retired. Slightly more than half (54%) of the responses came from people who were currently residents (i.e., lived in the studied municipality). Consequently, the remaining respondents were classified as visitors, or "non-residents". Within this category, almost half (47%) had previously lived in the municipality at some point, while 23 percent indicated that they were frequent or regular visitors. Thus, the sample consisted of people with extensive first-hand experience of the place brand.

3.2 Measures

The questionnaire was constructed based on existing scales adapted from previous research to fit the context of place and place brand communication. Scales were chosen by first specifying the domain of each construct, then generating a sample of items for each construct, which were carefully assessed by the researchers in order to find those that were most suitable to the study context (cf. Churchill Jr., 1979). In order to avoid a too lengthy questionnaire, shorter scales were preferred over more extensive ones. Among the constructs, self-expressiveness and intention to forward were related to the video (i.e., place brand communication), self-brand congruity was related to residents of the place, while brand love and positive WOM focused on the place itself, as depicted in the framework in Figure 1. All constructs were measured using multiple items on seven-point Likert-type scales, anchored by "Strongly Disagree" (1) and "Strongly Agree" (7). Items are listed in the Appendix and comprise the following: self-brand congruity (adapted from Taylor *et al.*, 2012), self-expressiveness (adapted from Taylor *et al.*, 2012), place brand love (adapted from Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Rodrigues and Costa, 2017), positive word-of-mouth (adapted from Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006), and intention to forward (Hsieh *et al.*, 2012).

3.3 Procedural remedies for common method bias

As in all self-report surveys where the same respondents answer questions related to independent as well as dependent constructs, there was a risk of common method variance (CMV) influencing relationships between independent and dependent variables (e.g., Podsakoff and Organ, 1986; Ul Islam *et al.*, 2018). CMV leads to bias in the results when the method itself causes significant and nontrivial divergence between true and observed relationships (Fuller *et al.*, 2016). To limit this risk, the researchers applied techniques recommended by Podsakoff *et al.* (2003). A cover letter was formulated and posted together with the survey, providing the purpose of the study, the approximate time it would take to answer, and researcher's contact information in case of questions. In the beginning of the survey, respondents were again informed of the purpose and the estimated time, as well as assured of the anonymity of their answers. To the extent it was possible without disturbing the logical flow, measurements of predictor and criterion variables were proximally and temporally separated. Scale items were adapted to make them as comprehensible as possible, and pre-tested as earlier described. Negatively worded items were removed or kept to a minimum. Moreover, as **neither the framework nor the model was disclosed** in any way, respondents did not know which questions referred to independent and dependent variables, respectively. This further reduces the risk of common method bias (Glanfield *et al.*, 2018). Ex-post statistical tests were also used to control for common method bias. These tests are described in the Measurement validation section (4.1).

3.4 Data analysis

The research model and the related hypotheses were tested by means of structural equation modeling (SEM) with maximum likelihood estimation. The software used was IBM SPSS Amos 24. It should be noted that the overall aim of this analysis method is to assess functional relationships and influences among constructs, rather than trying to test strictly causal hypotheses (cf. Bagozzi and Yi, 2012).

1
2
3 Structural equation models can perform well also with smaller samples (even as small as 100), provided
4 that the model does not have too many constructs, data are normally distributed (particularly concerning
5 kurtosis), item communalities are high, measures are reliable, and there are at least three items per
6 construct (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Iacobucci, 2010). The model tested in this study meet these criteria; hence,
7 the sample size of 281 could be regarded adequate to perform the desired analysis.
8

9 **4. Results**

10 *4.1 Measurement validation*

11 After removal of the four respondents with missing data exceeding 15%, very few missing values
12 remained. Little's MCAR test showed that these could be classified as missing completely at random (χ^2
13 116.02, $p=0.968$). However, since SEM estimation requires complete data to obtain certain output (e.g.,
14 modification indices), we used the Expectation–Maximization method (EM) to replace all missing data
15 in the quantitative variables. According to Hair *et al.* (2010), the EM approach introduces the least
16 amount of bias into structural equation models. Furthermore, assessment of normality – univariate as
17 well as multivariate – showed that the distribution was **acceptable** in all variables, with skewness and
18 kurtosis values within recommended ranges (Hair *et al.*, 2010).
19

20
21 Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was run to evaluate and refine the scales (Gerbing and Anderson,
22 1988). Based on assessments of model fit indices, factor loadings, standardized residuals, and
23 modification indices, one item was dropped from place brand love and one from self-brand congruity,
24 as indicated in the Appendix. Fit indexes of the final measurement model suggested acceptable fit
25 between the model and the data, with a χ^2 of 258.725 at 125 degrees of freedom ($\chi^2/df=2.070$), CFI=.980,
26 and RMSEA=.062 (cf. Hair *et al.*, 2010).
27

28
29 Discriminant and convergent validity among constructs was assessed by examining whether (1) all
30 standardized factor loadings were significant and higher than .50; (2) the **correlation** between each pair
31 of constructs **was** less than the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct;
32 and (3) the **AVE** was higher than .50 **for all constructs** (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair *et al.*, 2010).
33 All of these criteria were met. Internal consistency of the scales was evaluated by calculating composite
34 reliability and Cronbach's alpha. These values well exceeded the commonly suggested threshold of .70
35 for all five constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2010).
36

37 Factor loadings, composite reliabilities, and Cronbach's alphas are shown in Table 1, while **AVE** and
38 correlations between the constructs are displayed in Table 2.
39

40 *[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]*
41 *[INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]*
42

43
44 After passing the checks for validity and reliability, the measurement model was tested to uncover
45 whether common method variance (**CMV**) existed at biasing levels. First, as collinearity tests could
46 provide an indication of common method bias (Kock and Lynn, 2012), we ran a linear regression on the
47 criterion variable Intention to forward using the other four variables (Self-brand congruity, Self-
48 expressiveness, Place brand love, and Positive WOM) as predictors. The **variance inflation factors**
49 for these four constructs ranged from 1.387 to 4.503; i.e. below the most common thresholds of 10 (Hair *et*
50 *al.*, 2010) or 5 (Kline, 1998).
51

52 Then, the unmeasured latent factor method was applied to the measurement model in order to check
53 whether **CMV** might cause bias in relationships. With this method, questionnaire items are allowed to
54 load on their theoretical constructs and on a latent CMV factor simultaneously, thereby detecting the
55 variance common among all observed indicators (Chang *et al.*, 2010; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). The
56 indicator loadings on the unmeasured latent factor are constrained to be equal to each other (Lowry *et*
57 *al.*, 2012). Then, factor loadings are compared between the models with and without the unmeasured
58 latent factor (hereafter referred to as CMV-corrected model and baseline model, respectively). Results
59 of this test showed that all loadings were still high and significant after adding the latent factor, but that
60

they overall had decreased. On average, factor loadings in the CMV-corrected model were 21 percent lower than in the baseline model, with the largest differences found in the Self-brand congruity and Place brand love constructs. According to Fuller *et al.* (2016), who used simulations to measure biasing levels of CMV, actual values of CMV cannot be determined in real data. However, by comparing the χ^2 of the two models, it is possible to get an indication of whether the CMV is large enough to be likely to cause bias (cf. Schaller *et al.*, 2015). The χ^2 of the baseline model was 258.725 at 125 degrees of freedom, while the χ^2 of the CMV-corrected model was 250.423 at 124 degrees of freedom. This difference ($\Delta\chi^2=8.302$) exceeds the critical value of 3.84 at $\Delta df=1$ and the 5% level (Schaller *et al.*, 2015), which suggests that common method bias might be a concern. Therefore, we took a conservative approach and retained the unmeasured latent factor in the structural model, which means that the influence of common method bias on model results could be effectively controlled (Lowry *et al.*, 2012; Schaller *et al.*, 2015).

4.2 Structural model of place brand love

To test the structural model and the stated hypotheses, we ran the CMV-corrected model in Amos 24 using maximum likelihood estimation. The fit measures indicate that the model fitted the sample data well ($\chi^2=257.901$ at 127 degrees of freedom, $\chi^2/df=2.031$, CFI=.980, and RMSEA=.061). The squared multiple correlations of the dependent variables (analogous to R^2) show that the model explains 8 percent of the variance in self-expressiveness, 30 percent of place brand love, 67 percent of positive WOM, and, ultimately, 51 percent of the intention to forward a place brand message.

Standardized path estimates and levels of significance provide support for five of the seven hypothesized relationships. H1 is rejected as self-brand congruity did not have any significant influence on place brand love ($\beta=.02$, $p=.83$). However, the path coefficient from self-brand congruity to self-expressiveness showed a moderately strong and significant relationship between these two constructs ($\beta=.28$, $p<.01$), as hypothesized in H2. The relationships between self-expressiveness and place brand love ($\beta=.54$, $p<.001$), and from self-expressiveness to intention to forward ($\beta=.43$, $p<.001$), were also positive and significant, providing support for H3 and H5. As hypothesized in H4, place brand love was strongly connected to positive word-of-mouth ($\beta=.82$, $p<.001$). In turn, tendency to speak positively about the place (positive word-of-mouth) also increased the intention to forward a place brand message ($\beta=.37$, $p<.001$), thus confirming H7. Surprisingly, however, brand love for a place did not affect the intention to forward the message ($\beta=.05$, $p=.61$); thus, H6 is rejected.

An overview of the path results is provided in Figure 3. Overall, the extent to which respondents perceived that the promotional video reflected who they are (self-expressiveness) increases the likelihood that they would share the video with others. The intention to forward the video is also amplified by their general tendency to talk positively about the place shown in the video. Four of the five significant path coefficients between the independent and dependent variables were in the range of moderate to substantial, while place brand love had a very strong influence on positive word-of-mouth (cf. de Vaus, 2002).

[INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

4.3 Comparison between residents and non-residents

In order to compare the results between residents of the place and people who did not reside there, a multigroup analysis was performed in Amos. As previously described, 54 percent of the sample ($n=153$) was constituted of residents (i.e., people who lived in the studied municipality). The rest of the sample ($n=128$) was classified as “non-residents”, since this group included both visitors and people who had previously lived in the municipality at some point.

Before proceeding to multigroup analysis of the structural model, we tested for measurement invariance between the two groups. Overall model assessment of the two-group model showed satisfactory fit ($\chi^2/df=1.805$, CFI=.970, and RMSEA=.054), and no significant differences in factor loadings ($p=.194$) nor in structural covariances ($p=.146$) were found. Thus, the structural model was considered sufficiently invariant to allow for comparisons across the two groups (Byrne, 2004; Hair *et al.*, 2010). Then, the model was tested with each path coefficient constrained to be equal in both groups (i.e. at one

1
2
3 degree of freedom). As indicated in Table 3, the results showed no significant differences between
4 residents and non-residents; possibly because of the relatively large **proportion** of former residents in
5 the non-residents group.
6

7 *[INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]*
8
9

10 **5. Conclusions and implications**

11 *5.1 Discussion*

12 While brand love has been studied in different branding contexts, it has so far very rarely been addressed
13 within the field of place branding. Understanding the antecedents and outcomes of stakeholders'
14 emotional connections to a place is of utmost importance in place branding, as this has the potential to
15 increase the possibility of a brand message becoming viral.
16

17
18 Two antecedents to place brand love were included in the study: self-brand congruity, conceptualized
19 as the congruence between the individual's self-image and the image of place residents, and self-
20 expressiveness, conceptualized as the extent to which consumers perceive that a place brand message
21 supports and enacts their self-concept and will be recognized publicly as such. Results indicate that
22 while self-brand congruity with residents of the place does not exert any direct influence on place brand
23 love, it is connected to self-expressiveness of the place brand message. That is, in line with identity,
24 social identity, and self-congruity theory, if an individual perceives that he or she is similar to people
25 living in a particular place, it is more likely that this person also will feel that a video communicating
26 the place brand reflects who he or she is. Since this self-expressiveness in turn is quite strongly related
27 to emotions for the place in terms of brand love, it is likely that self-brand congruity plays at least an
28 indirect role in explaining place brand love.
29

30
31 Behavioral outcomes of place brand love were studied in terms of positive word-of-mouth about the
32 place in general and the intention to forward a **specific** place brand message. In this case, the message
33 was a streaming video that was available online. Findings suggest that residents and non-residents with
34 feelings of brand love for a place are much more likely to recommend and talk positively about the place
35 to others. Those who engage in positive WOM then also seem more inclined to forward commercial
36 place brand messages, which can be seen as a particular form of eWOM. While model results showed a
37 positive and significant relationship between WOM and intention to forward, the correlation was only
38 moderately strong, which implies that a person's general tendency to speak well about a place does not
39 necessarily mean that he or she will actively spread promotional videos online. However, as supported
40 by identity, social identity, and self-congruity theory, the chance that the individual chooses to do so
41 increases if he or she feels that the message (video) communicating the place brand to some extent is an
42 expression of his/her self. This behavior is fueled by a need for self-consistency, self-esteem, and a sense
43 of belonging. On the other hand, the feeling of love for a place has no direct influence on the intention
44 to share such messages. It seems that while place brand love is a very strong predictor of positive word-
45 of-mouth, it only has an indirect influence on message-sharing behavior when it comes to commercial
46 place brand messages.
47

48
49 Within the context and boundaries of this study, there were no significant differences between residents
50 and non-residents in the measured relationships. This might be attributed to the fact that a relatively
51 large number of respondents in the non-residents group previously had lived in the studied municipality
52 at some point, and that many of the other non-residents were very frequent or regular visitors. Hence,
53 the results should not be interpreted as representative of "tourists", but rather as indications of the role
54 brand love could play in the communication of a place brand among people with extensive first-hand
55 experience of the place. These are key target groups for any city or destination that want to achieve
56 positive **WOM** and viral spread of place brand messages (Uchinaka *et al.*, 2019), as personal sources
57 such as residents, former residents, and frequent visitors are seen as highly knowledgeable and credible
58 information sources (Zenker *et al.*, 2017).
59
60

5.2 Theoretical implications

This study contributes to extant research by addressing a topic understudied in place branding, namely brand love. While place attachment has received much attention, brand love towards places has not (Aro *et al.*, 2018). Earlier research has identified emotions in relation to places as a construct distinct from place attachment (Aro *et al.*, 2018; Hidalgo and Hernández, 2001; Hosany *et al.*, 2015), but brand love has so far only been addressed from a tourist destination perspective. The results of this study add to the understanding of place brand love by evidencing and assessing the construct in the context of residents (current as well as former) and frequent visitors of a place.

Moreover, the important role of place brand love for positive WOM is highlighted. While findings confirm previous studies concerning the connection between brand love and traditional WOM for consumer brands (e.g., Albert and Merunka, 2013; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Ismail and Spinelli, 2012), the lack of a direct relationship to eWOM in terms of message-sharing behavior contradicts earlier research (Karjaluo *et al.*, 2016; Wallace *et al.*, 2014). Possibly, this is due to the particularity of the brand – that is, a place rather than a product – or of the message, as sharing or forwarding a video implies a more active effort than some other forms of eWOM, such as clicking “like”. Nevertheless, these results point to offline and online WOM as two separate concepts, which may have different functions and antecedents in models of consumer behavior.

Concerning antecedents, the concept of self-brand congruity in place branding has been measured using a range of different units as reference points for comparison with self, such as image of the place, place brand, place brand personality, and tourists’ image (see Ahn *et al.*, 2013; Hung and Petrick, 2011; Usakli and Baloglu, 2011). Another theoretical contribution of this study is thus the investigation of the congruence between individuals’ self and the perceived image of residents of the place. This seems to be a dimension of self-brand congruity that previously has received little, if any, attention. Results indicate that the perceived congruity with the image of residents of a place could have some indirect influence on brand love and intention to forward a place brand message, mediated by the self-expressiveness of this message, which is rather strongly related to both of these dependent constructs. Hence, as identity and social identity theory suggest, places are connected to people’s self-concept (Stets and Burke, 2000). In line with self-congruity theory, places congruent with stakeholders’ self-identity may help reinforce a feeling of self-consistency and a sense of belonging. Moreover, stakeholder engagement in WOM and message-sharing behavior may stem from motives of self-esteem and communicating social identity in social exchanges, and this has an important role in spreading the good word about places they feel strongly for.

As Uchinaka *et al.* (2019) point out, there is a need for a deeper understanding of the variety of residents’ roles since only a few studies have taken into account the different types of residents, especially with regard to the factors that motivate the behavior and actions of place-brand ambassadors. The current study finds that not only residents, but also previous residents, have an important role to play as online place ambassadors. Their deeper knowledge about the place leads potentially to a higher identification with the place and may add credibility to the tertiary communication (Zenker *et al.*, 2017).

5.3 Managerial implications

For managers of DMOs and tourism entrepreneurs, it is essential to know what drives consumer ambassadorship and advocacy in order to strengthen brand communication, instill positive brand associations, and differentiate the brand from others. Word-of-mouth is considered one of the most efficient and trustworthy types of communication; therefore, knowing how to encourage and leverage resident involvement in place brand communication may become a competitive advantage. Achieving positive WOM and virality of commercial messages online is important as this means lower advertising expenses in comparison to distribution through paid media channels. The outcomes of this study are therefore of direct relevance for place branding practitioners, especially in small and medium-sized cities, and in light of the growing importance of social media.

The main finding of the study is the significance of brand love for positive word of mouth, and in extension its influence on the intention to forward commercial messages. It is thus vital for place brand

1
2
3 managers to focus on fostering such feelings among its stakeholders. In order to instill these emotions,
4 marketers should strive to capture essential aspects of the place and its residents in their brand
5 communication. If key stakeholders of the place, such as residents, former residents, or frequent visitors,
6 think that the place brand message reflects who they are and expresses an image they want to display to
7 others, they are more likely to feel a stronger emotional connection to the place and to act as brand co-
8 creating ambassadors by sharing the message online. Former residents could be a group of particular
9 interest for those involved in managing and communicating the place brand. Their experience of the
10 place, and their emotional connections to it, makes them as likely as current residents to talk positively
11 about the place, which opens for possibilities to spread the word across a larger geographical area and
12 reach a wider audience. Thus, place brand managers could view former residents as a primary target
13 group when it comes to attracting not only visitors, **but also new potential residents**.

14
15
16 Moreover, the self-expressiveness of the message is stronger for consumers expressing a high **level of**
17 perceived fit between self-image and the image of residents. Therefore, it is not enough to consider only
18 utilitarian or functional place aspects in the communication of the place brand. **An** intimate
19 understanding of stakeholders' self-identity and how it fits with residents' image **is also required** in order
20 to design messages that resonate with recipients, **instilling** a sense of self-consistency and belonging.
21 Place marketers could for example use focus groups followed by surveys, or experiments testing
22 different prototypes of the commercial message, to identify key aspects of the residents' and the place
23 brand image. In the case used for this study, the video captured a variety of scenic spots, locations, and
24 activities that are very familiar and popular among many residents. Composing messages that **resonate**
25 with residents' image increases the authenticity and credibility of communication and may help build or
26 reinforce consumers' place identity. Thereby, they can be motivated **to participate not only** explicitly in
27 the co-creation of marketing communication but also implicitly by "living the brand", thus influencing
28 the place brand experience as well (as suggested by Zenker and Erfgen, 2014).

31 *5.4 Limitations and suggestions for future research*

32 As all research, this study has some limitations, which should be considered in light of the findings.
33 First, the study was conducted via the Internet in a social media setting which may have implications on
34 the sample representability. However, as the study concerns the forwarding of messages online, this was
35 considered inevitable.

36
37 Second, similar to many other studies in online contexts, the study relied on a non-random, purposive
38 sampling strategy, which raises issues of representativeness. About a third of the respondents were
39 students, and many of the "non-residents" in the sample were former residents. The relatively small size
40 of the groups "former residents" and "visitors" compared to the "residents" group meant that it was not
41 possible to test differences between these categories as three separate groups. At the same time, the
42 sampling frames were chosen based on the possibility to collect responses from people with high
43 awareness and experience of the studied place. The results should not be interpreted as representative of
44 tourists, but as a first step toward an understanding of the role of brand love in the communication of a
45 place brand, with residents as key stakeholders and co-creators of the brand. Further research could
46 strive to collect data from larger and more varied samples, including a **greater** number of occasional or
47 one-time visitors, in order to enable comparisons between **tourists**, residents, and previous residents.

48
49 Third, since the study used a cross-sectional design, functional relationships can only be inferred, not
50 causally proven. Besides watching the video in the survey, the intention to forward the place brand
51 message could be affected by a number of existing associations with the place, **which** the questionnaire
52 did not capture. Future studies investigating similar relationships would be advised to incorporate other
53 measures of place associations and **to** use a control group to isolate the effects of the actual message.
54 Moreover, while the measurement of positive WOM relied on previously validated scales, it cannot be
55 ruled out that some respondents also could have been thinking about recommending the place in social
56 media. However, considering that eWOM was measured as the intention to forward a specific place
57 brand message (video) online, and results indicated satisfactory discriminant validity, these two
58 constructs seem to capture different aspects of brand ambassador behavior.
59
60

1
2
3 Finally, since the constructs and measures used are tightly connected to self- and social identity, it is
4 important to consider the influence and limitations of culture. Consumers in different cultures may be
5 used to and prefer interpreting and expressing love in different ways (for an example of a Nordic
6 perspective of destination brand love, see Aro *et al.*, 2018). Self-expression values **have also been** found
7 to differ between cultures (Inglehart and Baker, 2000). Since place is an important part of human identity
8 and self-definition (Proshansky *et al.*, 1983; Stedman, 2002), and the identification with a place and
9 group is tightly connected to the self- and social identity (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996), these
10 constructs are inherently related to place and culture. The current study offers a contribution **through** a
11 Nordic perspective on the construct of brand love in a place-branding context, which is a limitation to
12 its generalizability, but also suggests a rich ground for future cross-cultural studies on the topic.
13

14
15 As **previous** research has shown that self-brand congruity with a place can stem from a number of
16 different sources, it would be of interest to take a more holistic approach to the concept. **This** could
17 **entail investigating** the influence of aspects such as the perceived image of residents, visitors, place
18 brand personality, and the actual place characteristics, on the self-brand congruity of different
19 stakeholders in place branding. **Moreover**, as this study could not demonstrate a significant direct
20 relationship between self-brand congruity and place brand love, it would be interesting to **investigate**
21 this connection and whether **there are differences depending on the** unit of measurement for congruity
22 comparison. Similarly, the nature of the mediating effect of self-expressiveness between self-brand
23 congruity and place brand love should be further **studied**.
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

References

- Aaker, D. A. (1996), *Building Strong Brands: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*, The Free Press, New York, NY.
- Abrams, D. and Hogg, M. A. (1990), "An introduction to the social identity approach", in *Social identity theory: Constructive and critical advances*. Springer-Verlag, Berlin, pp. 1-9.
- Ahn, T., Ekinci, Y. and Li, G. (2013), "Self-congruence, functional congruence, and destination choice", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 66 No. 6, pp. 719-723.
- Ahuvia, A. C. (2005), "Beyond the Extended Self: Loved Objects and Consumers' Identity Narratives", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 32 No. 1, pp. 171-184.
- Albert, N. and Merunka, D. (2013), "The role of brand love in consumer-brand relationships", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 30 No. 3, pp. 258-266.
- Aro, K., Suomi, K. and Saraniemi, S. (2018), "Antecedents and consequences of destination brand love — A case study from Finnish Lapland", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 67, pp. 71-81.
- Bagozzi, R. P. and Yi, Y. (2012), "Specification, evaluation, and interpretation of structural equation models", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 40 No. 1, pp. 8-34.
- Balakrishnan, M. S. (2009), "Strategic branding of destinations: a framework", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 43 No. 5-6, pp. 611-629.
- Batra, R., Ahuvia, A. and Bagozzi, R. P. (2012), "Brand Love", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 76 No. 2, pp. 1-16.
- Beerli, A., Meneses, G. D. and Gil, S. M. (2007), "Self-congruity and destination choice", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 34 No. 3, pp. 571-587.
- Belk, R. W. (1988), "Possessions and the Extended Self", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 15 No. September, pp. 139-168.
- Bergkvist, L. and Bech-Larsen, T. (2010), "Two studies of consequences and actionable antecedents of brand love", *Journal of Brand Management*, Vol. 17 No. 7, pp. 504-518.
- Bıçakcıoğlu, N., İpek, İ. and Bayraktaroğlu, G. (2016), "Antecedents and outcomes of brand love: the mediating role of brand loyalty", *Journal of Marketing Communications*, pp. 1-15.
- Braun, E., Eshuis, J. and Klijn, E.-H. (2014), "The effectiveness of place brand communication", *Cities*, Vol. 41 No. Part A, pp. 64-70.
- Braun, E., Kavaratzis, M. and Zenker, S. (2013), "My city – my brand: the different roles of residents in place branding", *Journal of Place Management and Development*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 18-28.
- Byrne, B. M. (2004), "Testing for Multigroup Invariance Using AMOS Graphics: A Road Less Traveled", *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 272-300.
- Camarero, C. and San José, R. (2011), "Social and attitudinal determinants of viral marketing dynamics", *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol. 27 No. 6, pp. 2292-2300.
- Carroll, B. A. and Ahuvia, A. C. (2006), "Some antecedents and outcomes of brand love", *Marketing Letters*, Vol. 17, pp. 79-89.
- Chang, S.-J., van Witteloostuijn, A. and Eden, L. (2010), "From the Editors: Common method variance in international business research", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 41 No. 2, pp. 178-184.
- Chen, N., Dwyer, L. and Firth, T. (2018), "Residents' place attachment and word-of-mouth behaviours: A tale of two cities", *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, Vol. 36, pp. 1-11.
- Cheng, C.-K. and Kuo, H.-Y. (2015), "Bonding to a new place never visited: Exploring the relationship between landscape elements and place bonding", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 46, pp. 546-560.
- Churchill Jr., G. A. (1979), "A Paradigm for Developing Better Measures of Marketing Constructs", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 16 No. February, pp. 64-73.
- Davidsson, P., Palm, M. and Mandre, Å. M. (2018), "Svenskarna och internet 2018 [The Swedes and the Internet 2018]", Internetstiftelsen, Stockholm.
- de Vaus, D. A. (2002), *Analyzing Social Science Data: 50 Key Problems in Data Analysis*, Sage Publications, London.

- 1
2
3 Demirbag Kaplan, M., Yurt, O., Guneri, B. and Kurtulus, K. (2010), "Branding places: applying brand
4 personality concept to cities", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 44 No. 9/10, pp. 1286-
5 1304.
- 6 Dobele, A., Lindgreen, A., Beverland, M., Vanhamme, J. and van Wijk, R. (2007), "Why pass on viral
7 messages? Because they connect emotionally", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 50, pp. 291-304.
- 8 Evans, J. R. and Mathur, A. (2018), "The value of online surveys: a look back and a look ahead",
9 *Internet Research*, Vol. 28 No. 4, pp. 854-887.
- 10 Fetscherin, M. and Heinrich, D. (2015), "Consumer brand relationships research: A bibliometric
11 citation meta-analysis", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 68 No. 2, pp. 380-390.
- 12 Fornell, C. and Larcker, D. F. (1981), "Evaluating Structural Equation Models with Unobservable
13 Variables and Measurement Error", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 39-50.
- 14 Fournier, S. (1998), "Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer
15 Research", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 24 No. March, pp. 343-373.
- 16 Fuller, C. M., Simmering, M. J., Atinc, G., Atinc, Y. and Babin, B. J. (2016), "Common methods
17 variance detection in business research", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 69 No. 8, pp.
18 3192-3198.
- 19 Gerbing, D. W. and Anderson, J. C. (1988), "An Updated Paradigm for Scale Development
20 Incorporating Unidimensionality and Its Assessment", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol.
21 25 No. 2, pp. 186-192.
- 22 Glanfield, K., Ackfeldt, A.-L. and Melewar, T. (2018), "Corporate branding's influence on front-line
23 employee and consumer value co-creation in UK household consumer markets", *Journal of*
24 *General Management*, Vol. 43 No. 2, pp. 63-69.
- 25 Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J. and Anderson, R. E. (2010), *Multivariate data analysis: A global*
26 *perspective*, Pearson Education, Upper Saddle River, N.J.
- 27 Harrison-Walker, L. J. (2001), "The Measurement of Word-of-Mouth Communication and an
28 Investigation of Service Quality and Customer Commitment As Potential Antecedents",
29 *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 60-75.
- 30 Hidalgo, M. C. and Hernández, B. (2001), "Place attachment: Conceptual and empirical questions",
31 *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Vol. 21 No. 3, pp. 273-281.
- 32 Hinz, O., Skiera, B., Barrot, C. and Becker, J. U. (2011), "Seeding Strategies for Viral Marketing: An
33 Empirical Comparison", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 75 No. 6, pp. 55-71.
- 34 Hosany, S., Prayag, G., Deesilatham, S., Caušević, S. and Odeh, K. (2015), "Measuring Tourists'
35 Emotional Experiences: Further Validation of the Destination Emotion Scale", *Journal of*
36 *Travel Research*, Vol. 54 No. 4, pp. 482-495.
- 37 Hsieh, J.-K., Hsieh, Y.-C. and Tang, Y.-C. (2012), "Exploring the disseminating behaviors of eWOM
38 marketing: persuasion in online video", *Electronic Commerce Research*, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp.
39 201-224.
- 40 Huber, F., Meyer, F. and Schmid, D. A. (2015), "Brand love in progress – the interdependence of
41 brand love antecedents in consideration of relationship duration", *Journal of Product & Brand*
42 *Management*, Vol. 24 No. 6, pp. 567-579.
- 43 Hultman, M., Skarmeas, D., Oghazi, P. and Beheshti, H. M. (2015), "Achieving tourist loyalty through
44 destination personality, satisfaction, and identification", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 68
45 No. 11, pp. 2227-2231.
- 46 Hummon, D. M. (1990), *Commonplaces: Community ideology and identity in American culture*,
47 SUNY Press, Albany, N.Y.
- 48 Hung, K. and Petrick, J. F. (2011), "The Role of Self- and Functional Congruity in Cruising
49 Intentions", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 50 No. 1, pp. 100-112.
- 50 Iacobucci, D. (2010), "Structural equations modeling: Fit Indices, sample size, and advanced topics",
51 *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp. 90-98.
- 52 Inglehart, R. and Baker, W. E. (2000), "Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of
53 Traditional Values", *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 65 No. 1, pp. 19-51.
- 54 Ismail, A. R. and Spinelli, G. (2012), "Effects of brand love, personality and image on word of mouth:
55 The case of fashion brands among young consumers", *Journal of Fashion Marketing and*
56 *Management: An International Journal*, Vol. 16 No. 4, pp. 386-398.
- 57
58
59
60

- 1
2
3 Karjaluoto, H., Munnukka, J. and Kiuru, K. (2016), "Brand love and positive word of mouth: the
4 moderating effects of experience and price", *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol.
5 25 No. 6, pp. 527-537.
- 6 Kastenholz, E. (2004), "Assessment and Role of Destination-Self-Congruity", *Annals of Tourism*
7 *Research*, Vol. 31 No. 3, pp. 719-723.
- 8 Kaufmann, H. R., Loureiro, S. M. C. and Manarioti, A. (2016), "Exploring behavioural branding,
9 brand love and brand co-creation", *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol. 25 No. 6,
10 pp. 516-526.
- 11 Kavaratzis, M. (2004), "From city marketing to city branding: Towards a theoretical framework for
12 developing city brands", *Place Branding*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 58-73.
- 13 Kavaratzis, M. (2012), "From "necessary evil" to necessity: stakeholders' involvement in place
14 branding", *Journal of Place Management and Development*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 7-19.
- 15 Kavaratzis, M. and Ashworth, G. (2008), "Place marketing: how did we get here and where are we
16 going?", *Journal of Place Management and Development*, Vol. 1 No. 2, pp. 150-165.
- 17 Kavaratzis, M. and Hatch, M. J. (2013), "The dynamics of place brands: An identity-based approach to
18 place branding theory", *Marketing Theory*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 69-86.
- 19 Kemp, E., Childers, C. Y. and Williams, K. H. (2012), "Place branding: creating self-brand
20 connections and brand advocacy", *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol. 21 No. 7,
21 pp. 508-515.
- 22 Kline, R. B. (1998), *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling*, The Guilford Press, New
23 York, NY.
- 24 Kock, N. and Lynn, G. (2012), "Lateral collinearity and misleading results in variance-based SEM: An
25 illustration and recommendations", *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, Vol.
26 13 No. 7.
- 27 Kumar, V. and Kaushik, A. K. (2017), "Achieving destination advocacy and destination loyalty
28 through destination brand identification", *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 34
29 No. 9, pp. 1247-1260.
- 30 Lee, K.-H. and Hyun, S. S. (2016), "The Effects of Perceived Destination Ability and Destination
31 Brand Love on Tourists' Loyalty to Post-Disaster Tourism Destinations: The Case of Korean
32 Tourists to Japan", *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 33 No. 5, pp. 613-627.
- 33 Leisen, B. (2001), "Image segmentation: the case of a tourism destination", *Journal of Services*
34 *Marketing*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 49-66.
- 35 Lewicka, M. (2011), "Place attachment: How far have we come in the last 40 years?", *Journal of*
36 *Environmental Psychology*, Vol. 31 No. 3, pp. 207-230.
- 37 Lowry, P. B., Gaskin, J., Twyman, N., Hammer, B. and Roberts, T. (2012), "Taking 'Fun and Games'
38 Seriously: Proposing the Hedonic-Motivation System Adoption Model (HMSAM)", *Journal*
39 *of the Association for Information Systems*, Vol. 14 No. 11, pp. 617-671.
- 40 Matzler, K., Strobl, A., Stokburger-Sauer, N., Bobovnick, A. and Bauer, F. (2016), "Brand
41 personality and culture: The role of cultural differences on the impact of brand personality
42 perceptions on tourists' visit intentions", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 52, pp. 507-520.
- 43 O'Leary, S. and Deegan, J. (2003), "People, pace, place: Qualitative and quantitative images of Ireland
44 as a tourism destination in France", *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 213-226.
- 45 Papadimitriou, D., Kaplanidou, K. and Apostolopoulou, A. (2018), "Destination Image Components
46 and Word-of-Mouth Intentions in Urban Tourism: A Multigroup Approach", *Journal of*
47 *Hospitality & Tourism Research*, Vol. 42 No. 4, pp. 503-527.
- 48 Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., Priester, J., Eisingerich, A. B. and Iacobucci, D. (2010), "Brand
49 Attachment and Brand Attitude Strength: Conceptual and Empirical Differentiation of Two
50 Critical Brand Equity Drivers", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 74 No. 6, pp. 1-17.
- 51 Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y. and Podsakoff, N. P. (2003), "Common Method Biases
52 in Behavioral Research: A Critical Review of the Literature and Recommended Remedies",
53 *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 88 No. 5, pp. 879-903.
- 54 Podsakoff, P. M. and Organ, D. W. (1986), "Self-Reports in Organizational Research: Problems and
55 Prospects", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 531-544.
- 56
57
58
59
60

- 1
2
3 Priporas, C.-V., Stylos, N. and Kamenidou, I. (2019), "City image, city brand personality and
4 generation Z residents' life satisfaction under economic crisis: Predictors of city-related social
5 media engagement", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. In press.
- 6 Proshansky, H. M., Fabian, A. K. and Kaminoff, R. (1983), "Place-identity: Physical world
7 socialization of the self", *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 57-83.
- 8 Rainisto, S. K. (2003), "Success factors of place marketing: A study of place marketing practices in
9 Northern Europe and the United States", Doctoral dissertation, Helsinki University of
10 Technology, Helsinki.
- 11 Rimé, B., Corsini, S. and Herbette, G. (2014), "Emotion, verbal expression, and the social sharing of
12 emotion", in Fussell, S. R. (Ed.), *The verbal communication of emotions: Interdisciplinary
13 perspectives*. Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, pp. 185-208.
- 14 Rodrigues, P. and Costa, P. (2017), "The Effect of the Consumers Perception in Brand Love", paper
15 presented at 12th Global Brand Conference of the Academy of Marketing, April 26-28,
16 Kalmar, Sweden.
- 17 Sartori, A., Mottironi, C. and Corigliano, M. A. (2012), "Tourist destination brand equity and internal
18 stakeholders: An empirical research", *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, Vol. 18 No. 4, pp. 327-
19 340.
- 20 Schaller, T. K., Patil, A. and Malhotra, N. K. (2015), "Alternative Techniques for Assessing Common
21 Method Variance: An Analysis of the Theory of Planned Behavior Research", *Organizational
22 Research Methods*, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 177-206.
- 23 Sirgy, M. J. (1982), "Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior: A Critical Review", *Journal of Consumer
24 Research*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 287-300.
- 25 Sirgy, M. J., Grewal, D., Mangleburg, T. F., Park, J.-o., Chon, K.-S., Claiborne, C. B., Johar, J. S. and
26 Berkman, H. (1997), "Assessing the predictive validity of two methods of measuring self-
27 image congruence", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 25 No. 3, pp. 229.
- 28 Stedman, R. C. (2002), "Toward a Social Psychology of Place: Predicting Behavior from Place-Based
29 Cognitions, Attitude, and Identity", *Environment and Behavior*, Vol. 34 No. 5, pp. 561-581.
- 30 Stets, J. E. and Burke, P. J. (2000), "Identity theory and social identity theory", *Social Psychology
31 Quarterly*, Vol. 63 No. 3, pp. 224-237.
- 32 Stokburger-Sauer, N. E. (2011), "The relevance of visitors' nation brand embeddedness and
33 personality congruence for nation brand identification, visit intentions and advocacy", *Tourism
34 Management*, Vol. 32 No. 6, pp. 1282-1289.
- 35 Swanson, K. (2015), "Place brand love and marketing to place consumers as tourists", *Journal of
36 Place Management and Development*, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 142-146.
- 37 Swanson, K. (2017), "Destination brand love: managerial implications and applications to tourism
38 businesses", *Journal of Place Management and Development*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 88-97.
- 39 Taylor, D. G., Strutton, D. and Thompson, K. (2012), "Self-Enhancement as a Motivation for Sharing
40 Online Advertising", *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 13-28.
- 41 Thorbjørnsen, H., Pedersen, P. E. and Nysveen, H. (2007), "'This is who i am": Identity
42 expressiveness and the theory of planned behavior", *Psychology and Marketing*, Vol. 24 No.
43 9, pp. 763-785.
- 44 Tsai, S.-p. (2012), "Place Attachment and Tourism Marketing: Investigating International Tourists in
45 Singapore", *International Journal of Tourism Research*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pp. 139-152.
- 46 Twigger-Ross, C. L. and Uzzell, D. L. (1996), "Place and identity processes", *Journal of
47 Environmental Psychology*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 205-220.
- 48 Uchinaka, S., Yoganathan, V. and Osburg, V.-S. (2019), "Classifying residents' roles as online place-
49 ambassadors", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 71, pp. 137-150.
- 50 Ul Islam, J., Rahman, Z. and Hollebeek, L. D. (2018), "Consumer engagement in online brand
51 communities: a solicitation of congruity theory", *Internet Research*, Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 23-45.
- 52 Usakli, A. and Baloglu, S. (2011), "Brand personality of tourist destinations: An application of self-
53 congruity theory", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 32 No. 1, pp. 114-127.
- 54 Wallace, E., Buil, I. and de Chernatony, L. (2014), "Consumer engagement with self-expressive
55 brands: brand love and WOM outcomes", *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol. 23
56 No. 1, pp. 33-42.
- 57
58
59
60

- 1
2
3 van Ham, P. (2008), "Place Branding: The State of the Art", *The ANNALS of the American Academy of*
4 *Political and Social Science*, Vol. 616 No. 1, pp. 126-149.
- 5 Vilpponen, A., Winter, S. and Sundqvist, S. (2006), "Electronic Word-of-Mouth in Online
6 Environments", *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, Vol. 6 No. 2, pp. 8-77.
- 7 VL. (2016), "Succén fortsätter - ny The Luleå Way-film lanserad [The success continues - new The
8 Luleå Way film launched]", Visit Luleå, Luleå, November.
- 9 Vuignier, R. (2017), "Place branding & place marketing 1976–2016: A multidisciplinary literature
10 review", *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing*, pp. 1-27.
- 11 Zenker, S. and Braun, E. (2010), "The place brand centre – a conceptual approach for the brand
12 management of places", paper presented at 39th European Marketing Academy Conference,
13 June, Copenhagen, Denmark.
- 14 Zenker, S., Braun, E. and Petersen, S. (2017), "Branding the destination versus the place: The effects
15 of brand complexity and identification for residents and visitors", *Tourism Management*, Vol.
16 58, pp. 15-27.
- 17 Zenker, S. and Erfgen, C. (2014), "Let them do the work: a participatory place branding approach",
18 *Journal of Place Management and Development*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 225-234.
- 19 Zenker, S. and Rütter, N. (2014), "Is satisfaction the key? The role of citizen satisfaction, place
20 attachment and place brand attitude on positive citizenship behavior", *Cities*, Vol. 38, pp. 11-
21 17.
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Appendix

Self-Brand Congruity (Adapted from Taylor *et al.*, 2012)

1. People who live in [the place] are like me
2. I am very much like the typical person who lives in [the place]
3. The image of [the place] residents matches how I see myself
4. I can identify with people who live in [the place]*

Self-Expressiveness (Adapted from Taylor *et al.*, 2012)

1. Passing along this film would communicate who I am
2. This film is consistent with how I want to present myself to others
3. I can identify with this film
4. My reaction to this film would tell others something about me
5. This film reflects who I consider myself to be

Place Brand Love (Adapted from Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Rodrigues and Costa, 2017)

1. [The place] is a wonderful place
2. Being in [the place] makes me feel good
3. Being in [the place] makes me very happy
4. I have no particular feelings about [the place] (R)*
5. I love [the place]!

Positive Word-of-Mouth (Adapted from Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006)

1. I have recommended [the place] to lots of people
2. I “talk up” [the place] to my friends
3. I try to spread the good-word about [the place] in general

Intention to Forward (Hsieh *et al.*, 2012)

Measure: Seven-point Likert-type scale, anchored by “Strongly Disagree” - “Strongly Agree”

1. I think this film is worth sharing with others
2. I would consider recommending this film to others
3. I would consider sharing this film to my friends through Internet

*) Item removed during measurement validation (CFA and reliability tests).

(R) = Reverse-scored item.

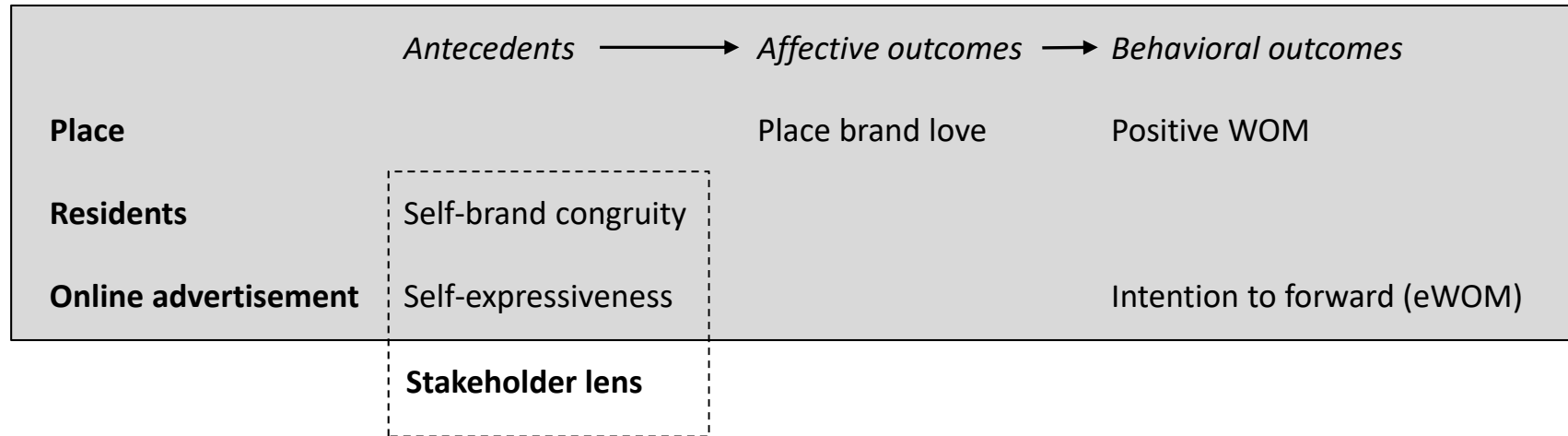


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

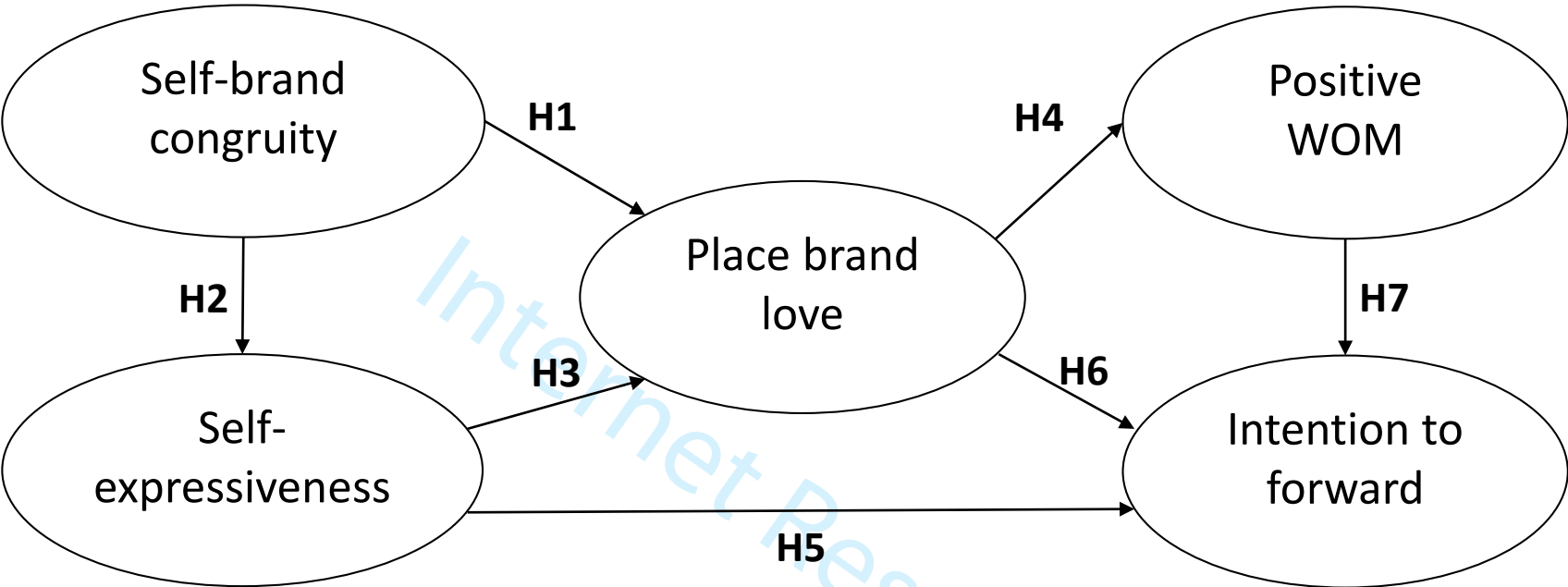


Figure 2. Research model

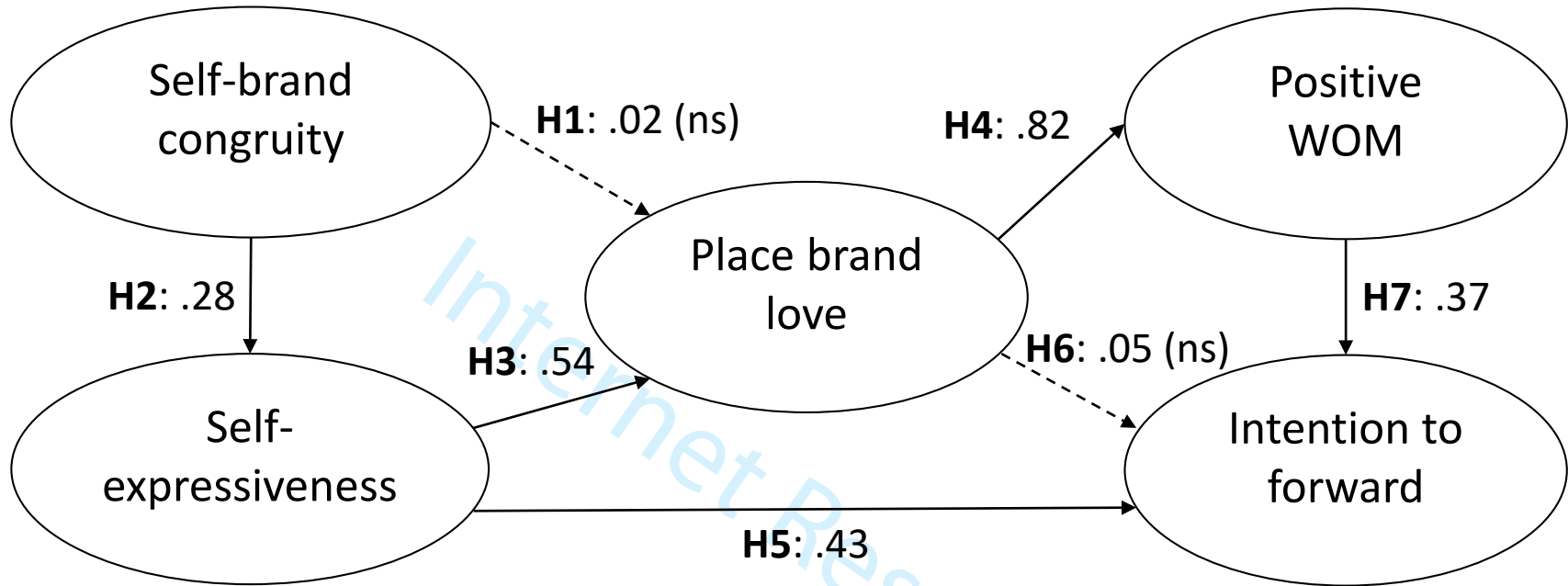


Figure 3. Structural model of place brand love (CMV-corrected)

Table 1. Factor loadings, composite reliabilities, and Cronbach's alphas

Construct	CR	Alpha	Item	Loading
Self-brand congruity	.950	.949	SBC1	.891
			SBC2	.940
			SBC3	.954
Self-expressiveness	.952	.952	SE1	.796
			SE2	.943
			SE3	.924
			SE4	.856
			SE5	.943
Place brand love	.962	.960	PBL1	.896
			PBL2	.963
			PBL3	.958
			PBL5	.898
Positive WOM	.952	.948	PWOM1	.875
			PWOM2	.965
			PWOM3	.952
Intention to forward	.963	.959	IF1	.960
			IF2	.974
			IF3	.904

Notes: CR=Composite reliability. All loadings significant at $p < .001$.

Table 2. Inter-construct correlation matrix

Construct	AVE	SBC	SE	PBL	PWOM	IF
Self-brand congruity (SBC)	.863	.929				
Self-expressiveness (SE)	.800	.498	.894			
Place brand love (PBL)	.864	.509	.676	.929		
Positive WOM (PWOM)	.868	.423	.614	.884	.932	
Intention to forward (IF)	.896	.348	.704	.688	.702	.946

Notes: Items on the diagonal represent the square roots of AVEs. All correlations significant at $p < .001$.

Table 3. Multigroup comparison: residents vs. non-residents

Path	Df	$\Delta\chi^2$	p
SBC \rightarrow PBL	1	.177	.674
SBC \rightarrow SE	1	.779	.377
SE \rightarrow PBL	1	1.303	.254
PBL \rightarrow PWOM	1	.870	.351
SE \rightarrow IF	1	2.559	.110
PBL \rightarrow IF	1	1.095	.295
PWOM \rightarrow IF	1	.030	.861