

Exploring Mediating Role of Business Attraction in Destination Branding and Economic Upliftment: A Case of Jaunsar Bawar Region

Himanshu Chauhan

Research scholar, School of Liberal Arts and Management, DIT University Dehradun India. Email: himanshuchauhan19@gmail.com

Dr. Hemraj Verma

Associate professor, School of Liberal Arts and Management, DIT University Dehradun India. Email: hod.mba@dituniversity.edu.in

Dr. Vijay Kumar Jain

Assistant Professor, School of Liberal Arts and Management, DIT University Dehradun India. Email: vijay.jain@dituniversity.edu.in

ABSTRACT

Destination Branding helps in attracting various business opportunities to that particular area and that thing in turn helps in the economic upliftment of that region. This study talks about the mediating role played by business attraction between the destination branding and economic upliftment. This paper aims to develop and test a conceptual framework of exploring the mediating role of business attraction in destination branding and economic upliftment relations of a region, which integrates the concepts of destination branding & its use in the economic betterment, especially of a rural tribal area. The study suggests that destination branding has several verticals and each vertical plays an important role in the economy of a particular area. Jaunsar Bawar was selected as the destination in this study, and the smart PLS method was applied to analyse 442 surveys and around 20 expert interviews collected from the natives & residents of Jaunsar Bawar. The findings provide a range of academic and practical implications.

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1. Introduction

Branding is an important tool that helps the destinations in creating a particular desired image, and influence tourists to visit the destination on the basis of that desired image (Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Guido, 2001; Crask & Henry, 1990; Morgan & Pritchard, 2002; Triplett, 1994). Therefore, destination branding is becoming a highly sought-out topic nowadays. The successful destination branding relies on better images of a destination; thus, researchers have linked it with destination image (Pike, 2005). Changes in the global environment, advancement in technology, improvement in standards of living, and income level, and stressful lives have motivated people to travel countries worldwide. Therefore, there is a need for the destinations to switch from destination marketing to destination branding (Ryan & Gu, 2008).

The ever-increasing competitive nature of the

tourism industry and the global economic scenario has made countries aware of the importance of destination branding which is to differentiate themselves from their competitors (Pike & Ryan, 2004; Blain, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005). These days, places are using various branding techniques to develop their brand. Branding is a method that helps a particular destination to create a distinguished and desired image, and therefore destination branding is becoming an essential topic for the tourism industry. Destination branding represents and distinguishes a particular place amongst several competing places and tries to create a positive image of that place in the minds of the potential customers and help them in recall (Pike and Page, 2014).

Although the concept of destination branding has been applied extensively to tourism destinations, seeing destination branding on a wider scale which includes tourism, agriculture, handicrafts,

food of a particular region which could help in their overall & economic development is a relatively recent phenomenon (Herget et al., 2015). Although destination branding has been used in various parts of India but it has been majorly used in the tourism aspect while ignoring other important things like handicrafts, agriculture, food, culture etc. and hence we haven't moved towards the complete economic upliftment & sustainable development using destination branding as a tool (Manhas, 2016). Therefore, this study is planned to explore the mediating role of business attraction for destination branding and economic development relationship. Consequently, the current study will answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How destination branding can be used as a tool for economic development of a tribal region – Jaunsar Bawar of Uttarakhand, a Himalayan state of India.

RQ2: To study the mediating role of business attraction on destination branding and economic development relationship.

The paper has been planned in the eight sections. Destination branding and its role in economic development has been discussed in first section whereas theoretical background with literature has been discussed in second section. The third section explains methodology adopted in the paper. The fourth section provides data analysis. Results, discussion, conclusion and implications have been provided in fifth, sixth and seventh sections respectively. Limitations along with future directions are discussed in last section.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Destination Branding and Economic Upliftment

Destination branding is a way of emerging a particular identity or personality for a tourist (Investment) destination, and using a name, a tagline, a symbol, a design or a grouping of these to create a constructive image in the mind of visitors or investors (Nafees et al., 2010). While a destination brand affects its tourism industry, the

brand also has powerful impact on the value and volume of the region's product exports to different regions within the country or outside the country and investment in the region from within the country as well as abroad, which have a direct impact on GDP of the region as well as the country (Cleave et al, 2016). Positive perceptions of a nation lead to commerce in a variety of forms. (David J Reibstien, 2016). Thus, it can be very well said that a properly and well-defined destination of a region could do wonders for the local economy as the positive image gives it a positive perception and that perception will attract several businesses to the region and those business will generate local direct & indirect employment and thus giving impetus to the economic upliftment of the local area. Based on the above literature, we propose the hypothesis that:

H1: Destination branding helps in enhancing economic upliftment of region.

2.2 Destination Branding and Business Attraction

Place branding is an attempt by local bodies & governments, through policy intervention, to compete with the other local and international markets by actively improvising & shaping how their locale is perceived by the potential consumers. As Pasquinelli (2010) describes, places 'need to construct their own viable advantage in order to place themselves in a "market of geographies", an open territorial competition space where new development opportunities might spill out'. Place branding is, therefore, an attempt by governments to develop and promote a specifically designed place identity through policy-making (Ashworth, 2010; Kavaratzis, 2005; Turok, 2009). Destination branding improves business attraction of a particular region (Chauhan, 2020). Destination branding has the potential to be 'high-road' policy given its utility in business attraction (Evan et al., 2016). Destination branding creates an image of the region among tourists, thereby making it more attractive for business (Pereira et al., 2012). The

above literature is enough to deduce the hypothesis that:

H2a: Destination branding leads to Business Attraction of a region

2.3 Business Attraction and Economic Upliftment

Business attraction is a holistic approach to the management of strategic approaches, processes and activities aiming towards attracting inward investment activity. Business attraction is sometimes considered the most well understood of economic development strategies. Economic development attraction is the process of inventorying the community and translating the findings into a plan to attract companies that will diversify and build the local/regional economy. Business attraction is important to attract resources for addressing societal challenges of a location or to increase the attractiveness of the location, as in the case of investments in hotels, amusement parks, sports facilities or urban regeneration projects (Ziakas and Costa, 2011). Business attraction contributes towards economic development of a region by creating direct and indirect jobs, cluster development, increasing demand for local raw material, components and services (Pike, 2005). It also helps in addressing societal challenges of a region (Oliveira, 2015). The above literature is sufficient enough to draw the hypothesis that:

H2b: Business Attraction leads to economic upliftment of region.

H2: The relationship of destination branding and economic upliftment is mediated by business attraction.

3. Research Methodology

A survey was carried out in Jaunsar Bawar region of Dehradun district to test the propounded hypothesis. Jaunsar Bawar is a tribal area which has a rich heritage of culture and history. The region has huge potential opportunities for tourism (Reference). The sample was collected from the Jaunsar Bawar region. Systematic Random sampling was done to sample the respondent. A structured questionnaire was

framed to take respondents opinions about destination branding and its subsequent effect on economic upliftment. A total of 500 respondents were approached for data collection in the month of June and July, 2020. Out of 500 responses, 442 questionnaires were finally used in data analysis as 58 questionnaires were removed due to inconsistency and incompleteness. Data has been analysed using SMART PLS 3.0.

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1 The Instrument

The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first section is about sample characteristics and second section contains questions on three constructs namely: destination branding, business attraction and economic upliftment. Destination branding has been measured using 12 items whereas business attraction and economic upliftment has been measured using 5 and 14 items respectively. Scales were developed to measure three constructs using literature review and experts' opinions. In the first phase, extensive literature review was carried to develop the items for constructs. In the second phase, experts' interviews were conducted to discover insights regarding tourism. These experts were eminent professors, members of tourism boards and successful tourism entrepreneurs from Uttarakhand who had good understanding on tourism domain. The scales were subjected to reliability and validity checks. Pilot survey of 50 respondents was conducted to test the reliability of constructs. The Cronbach alpha which is a measure of reliability for all three constructs was more than recommended value 0.7 (Sekaran, 2003). The content validity was tested by taking opinion of experts. Since scales developed to measure these constructs have shown good reliability and validity, they were considered deemed fit for analysis. Constructs were measured with help of Likert scale where 5 indicates strongly agree and 1 indicates strongly disagree. Three items measuring destination branding were removed due to poor factor loading (less than 0.4).

Table 1- Description of Items

Construct	Item	Description		AVE	Cronbach Alpha	CR
Destination Branding	DB1	The destination has quality infrastructure.	0.629	0.667	0.909	0.944
	DB2	The destination has good accommodation facility.	0.77			
	DB3	The destination has good security measures for tourist.	0.58			
	DB5	The destination has a beautiful nature.	0.711			
	DB6	The people are friendly.	0.676			
	DB7	The destination rich cultural history.	0.718			
	DB8	I will visit the destination again.	0.67			
	DB12	I would recommend this destination to others.	0.75			
	DB13	This destination generates great value than other destinations.	0.52			
	DB14	I comes at the top of when I think of tourist destinations.	0.631			
	DB15	It increases my knowledge towards destinations.	0.807			
Economic Upliftment	EU3	Destination branding has reduced people reliance on government jobs.	0.745	0.512	0.91	0.911
	EU4	Destination branding has helped people to earn their livelihood.	0.618			
	EU5	Destination branding has helped people to become financially independent.	0.757			
	EU6	Destination branding has created seasonal jobs avenues for local people.	0.713			
	EU7	Destination branding has improved infrastructure in local region.	0.794			
	EU8	Many new hotels and resorts have come up in the local region in the recent years.	0.651			
	EU9	Government has taken initiative to strengthen and beautify the local infrastructure.	0.801			
	EU10	I intend to setup my own business in future.	0.67			
	EU11	Owning my own business is the best alternative for me.	0.861			
	EU12	I am enthusiastic about starting my own business.	0.667			

Business Attraction	BA1	Destination branding tries to create competitive advantage for local region through policy framework.	0.8	0.943	0.943	0.944
	BA2	Destination branding wants people to perceive locale in positive way.	0.969			
	BA3	Destination branding are helpful in creating business attraction.	0.886			
	BA4	Destination branding aims at improving local economy through business attraction.	0.926			
	BA5	Destination branding helps in facilitating business attraction.	0.8			

4.2 Sample Characteristics

The demographic profile of the respondent is shown in Table 2. A total of 442 respondents were surveyed to get sample data in Jaunsar region of Dehradun district. The proportion of male and female were almost equal. The highest number of

respondents was from the 20-30 age group followed by the 30-40 age group. Most of the respondents (47.51%) were post graduates. The high number of the respondents was placed in the income group 61,000-80,000 (38.46%) followed by 41,000-60,000 category.

Table 2: Demographics

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Response (%)
Gender	Male	225	50.90
	Female	217	49.10
Age	20-30 years	224	50.68
	30-40 years	100	22.62
	40-50 years	84	19.00
	50 above	34	7.69
Education	Graduate	180	40.72
	Post Graduate	210	47.51
	Others	52	11.76
Income	20,000-40,000	80	18.10
	41,000-60,000	120	27.15
	61,000-80,000	170	38.46
	81,000 Above	72	16.29

4.3 Reliability and Validity

Construct validity is an indicator of how well the derived results from the use of measures fit the theories on which the model is based on. Factor loadings have been shown in Table 1. It is used to evaluate the content validity of measurement model (Hair et.al, 2012). All items that are used to measure the construct, should load highly on that

construct. If any item is loaded on other constructs than the respective construct, then it is deemed fit for deletion (Hair et.al, 2012). It is visible from Table 3 that all loadings are greater than 0.6 which implies good fit between constructs and the items. This confirms the content validity. Few (Three) items were deleted as their loading was less than the threshold value (0.5).

Table 3: Factor Loading of Items

Variables	Business Attraction	Destination Branding	Economic Upliftment
BA1	0.800		
BA2	0.969		
BA3	0.886		
BA4	0.926		
BA5	0.800		
DB12		0.750	
DB13		0.520	
DB14		0.631	
DB15		0.807	
DB1		0.629	
DB2		0.770	
DB3		0.580	
DB5		0.711	
DB6		0.676	
DB7		0.718	
DB8		0.670	
EUT10			0.670
EUT11			0.861
EUT12			0.667
EUT3			0.745
EUT4			0.618
EUT5			0.757
EUT6			0.713
EUT7			0.794
EUT8			0.651
EUT9			0.801

Source: Author Calculation

The average variance extracted (AVE) is between 0.5 to 0.7 (Table 4). This is in the range of recommended values for AVE. The AVE for Destination Branding, Business attraction and

Economic Upliftment are 0.667, 0.77 and 0.512. Composite reliability and Cronbach alpha values are close to the suggested value which is more than 0.7. Any value of CR and Cronbach alpha

greater than 0.7 is considered good (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). The reliability of all three constructs is greater than 0.9 which indicate high internal consistency among all items of

constructs. In this study, both measures of reliability are good and more than recommend value (0.7).

Table 4: Reliability and AVE

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Business Attraction	0.943	0.948	0.944	0.772
Destination Branding	0.909	0.910	0.905	0.667
Economic Upliftment	0.910	0.920	0.911	0.512

Discriminant validity tests how constructs are different from each other. For discriminant validity, the correlation between constructs must not be high (Hair et al., 2011). It is tested using cross loadings (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) criteria.

The outer loading of the respective item with its construct should be higher than loading of items with other constructs (Cross loading). Thus Table 5 which exhibits cross loading, proves discriminant validity.

Table 5: Cross Loadings

	Business Attraction	Destination Branding	Economic Upliftment
BA1	0.800	0.288	0.478
BA2	0.969	0.398	0.544
BA3	0.886	0.366	0.497
BA4	0.926	0.388	0.515
BA5	0.800	0.324	0.453
DB12	0.320	0.750	0.257
DB13	0.215	0.520	0.186
DB14	0.246	0.631	0.243
DB15	0.335	0.807	0.287
DB2	0.307	0.770	0.288
DB3	0.230	0.580	0.218
DB5	0.292	0.711	0.256
DB6	0.272	0.676	0.251
DB7	0.302	0.718	0.251
DB8	0.255	0.670	0.264
EUT10	0.367	0.283	0.670
EUT11	0.489	0.315	0.861

EUT12	0.273	0.147	0.467
EUT3	0.425	0.267	0.745
EUT4	0.362	0.193	0.618
EUT5	0.426	0.288	0.757
EUT6	0.415	0.231	0.713
EUT7	0.443	0.315	0.794
EUT8	0.354	0.283	0.651
EUT9	0.460	0.278	0.801
DB1	0.235	0.629	0.253

Table 3 further confirms discriminant validity. The square root of AVE of each construct is greater than their correlation coefficient with other constructs. Discriminant validity is substantiated if square root values of AVE is more than bivariate correlation coefficient (Ringle, Sarstedt,

& Straub, 2012). For example, the square root value of AVE for Business attraction is 0.879 which is greater than its correlation with destination branding (0.40) and economic upliftment (0.56).

Table 6. Fornell –Larker Discriminant Validity

	Business Attraction	Destination Branding	Economic Upliftment
Business Attraction	0.879		
Destination Branding	0.404	0.683	
Economic Upliftment	0.566	0.368	0.715

As above two measures have been considered as inadequate to measure discriminant validity, therefore, HTMT has been presented (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). HTMT ratio (Table 7) measures the correlation between constructs and is

an improvement over the previous one. According to this, if the HTMT ratio is less than 1, it implies uniqueness among constructs. The correlation coefficient between all constructs is less than 1 so this proves discriminant validity.

Table 7: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Business Attraction	Destination Branding	Economic Upliftment
Business Attraction			
Destination Branding	0.395		
Economic Upliftment	0.566	0.363	

4.4 Evaluation of Structural Model

Table 5 summarizes the result of the structural model using PLS SEM analysis. The structural model is shown in Figure 2. The R square value is 0.34 which means the model explains 34 percent variance in the dependent variable. The first condition says that the relationship between dependent and independent variables must be significant in the absence of mediating variables. Second, the predictor variable (DB) must affect the mediating variable (BA) significantly. Third, mediating variable (BA) must affect outcome variable (EUT) significantly, controlling the effect of predictor (BA) and last indirect effect via mediating variable (DB → BA → EUT) must be significant. Satisfaction of these four conditions confirm the presence of mediation in the relationship. All four propounded hypotheses (DB → EU, DB → BA, BA → EU, DB → BA → EU) have been found significant. Mediation has been carried out in two steps. First the direct effect of destination branding on economic

upliftment has been tested. Second, the indirect effect of destination branding on economic upliftment (via business attraction has been tested. Both direct and indirect effects are significant. The hypothesis that destination branding leads to economic upliftment is supported and significant ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.000$). The hypothesis 2 that business attraction mediate destination branding and economic upliftment relationship is also supported ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.000$) as an indirect path is significant.

The test of partial and full mediation is carried out by testing the effect of destination branding on economic upliftment without the mediating variable. The path coefficient without mediating variable was 0.372 which has significantly come down to 0.17 in the presence of the mediating variable. Therefore, it confirms the partial mediation as the path coefficient has come down in the presence of the mediation variable.

Figure 1: Structural Model in the Absence of Mediating Variable

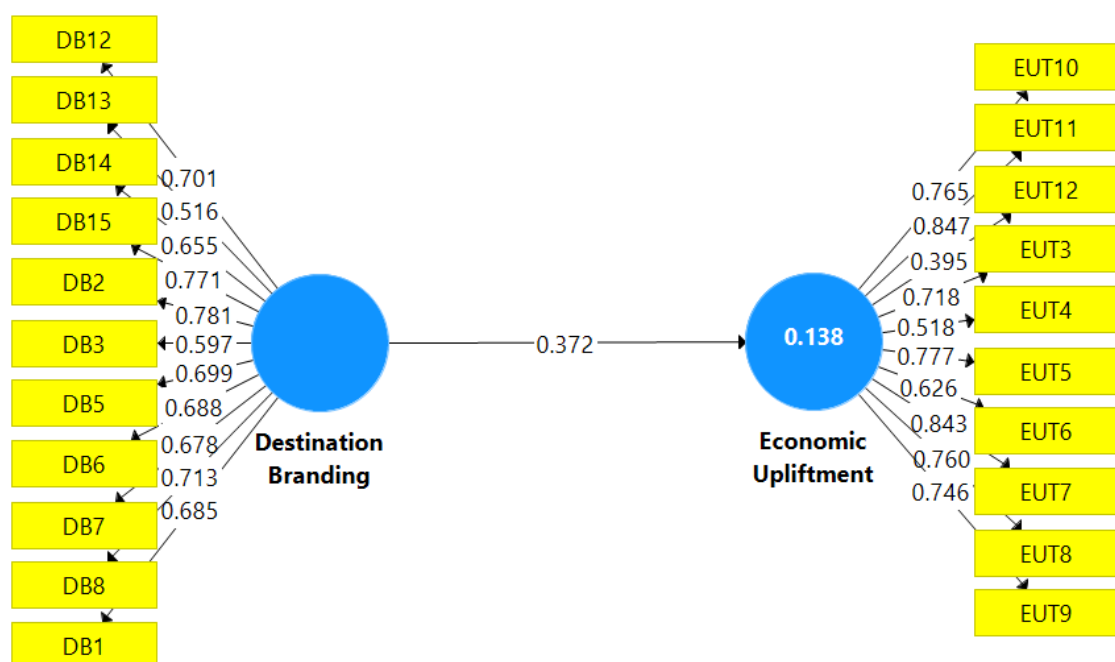


Figure 2: Initial Structural Model

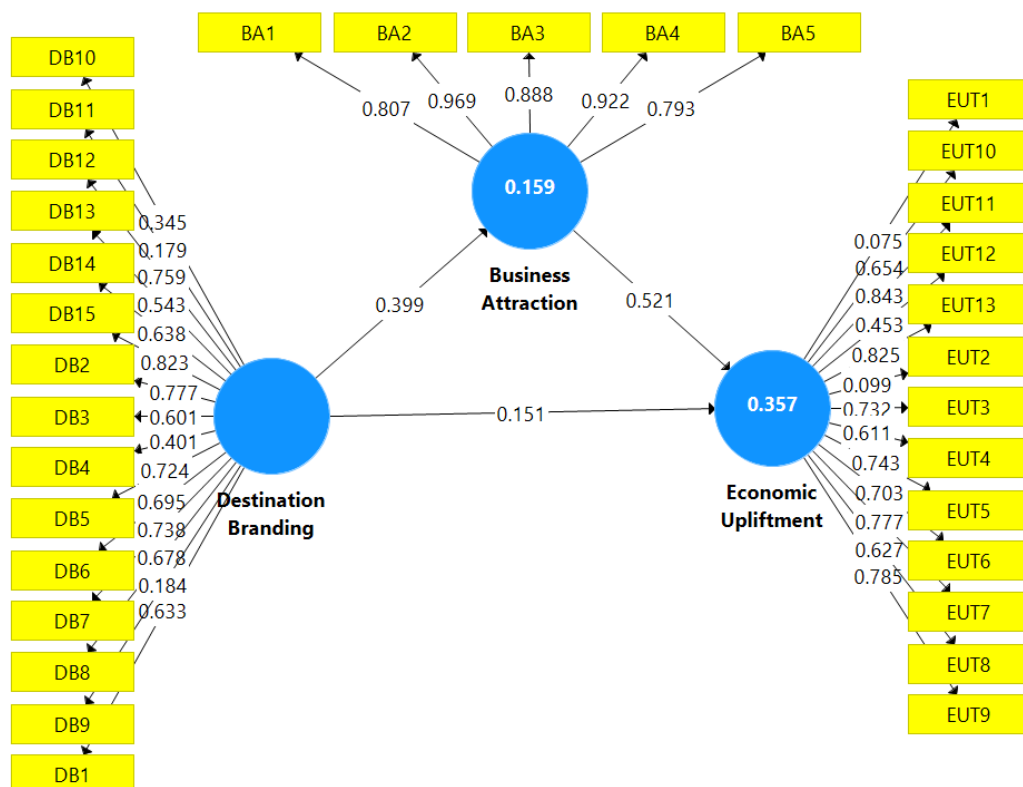


Figure 3: Final Structural Model

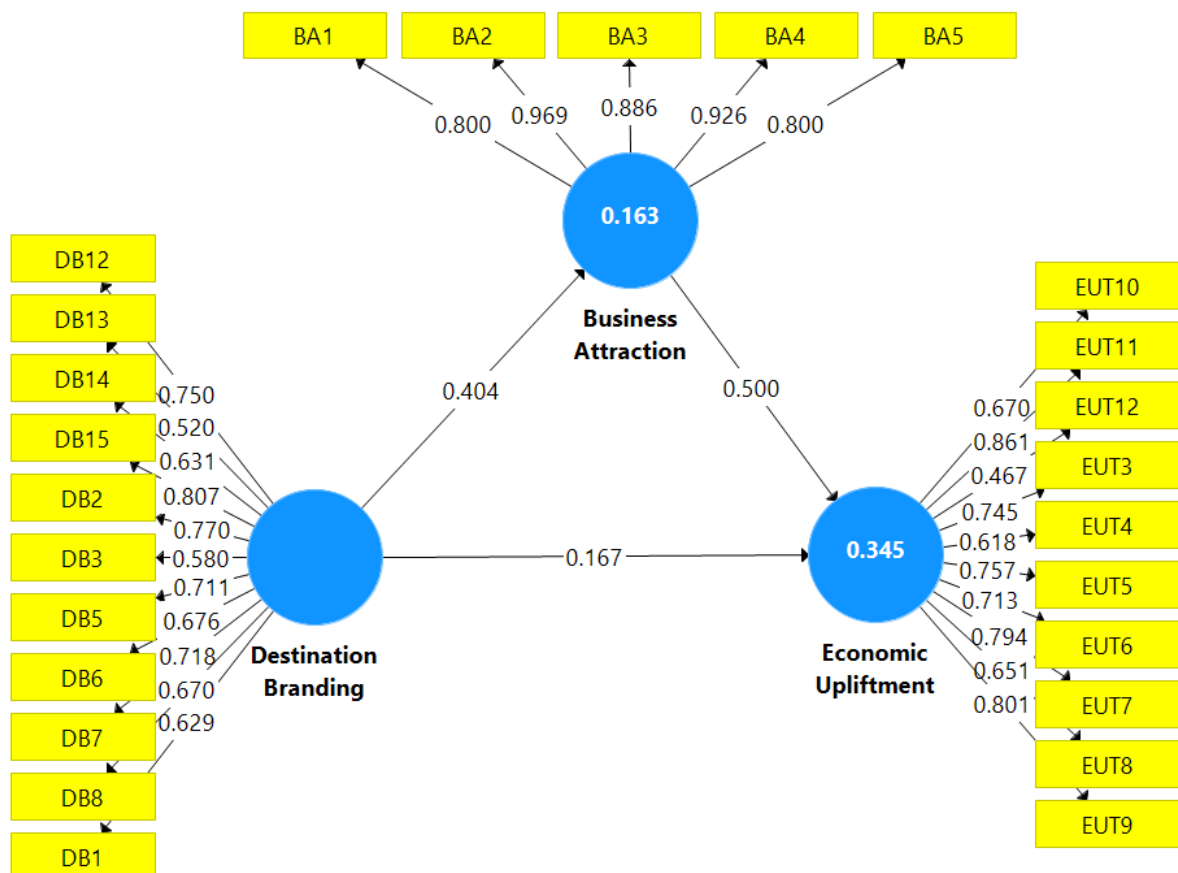


Figure 4: Final Structural Model After Removing Items with Low Loadings

Table 8. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses	Structural Relationships	β	Standard Error	T-value	P Values	Decision
Hypotheses 1(Direct effect)	DB--> EU	0.34	0.046	7.416	0.000	Supported
Hypotheses 2a	DB --> BA	0.37	0.052	7.255	0.000	Supported
Hypotheses 2b	BA--> EU	0.46	0.05	8.47	0.000	Supported
Hypotheses (Indirect effect) 2	DB -> BA -> EU	0.17	0.03	5.42	0.000	Supported

Significant at 0.05

Source: Author Calculation

Table 9: Goodness of fit Indices

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.104	0.104
d_ULS	3.768	3.768
sd_G	3.162	3.162
Chi-Square	5394.915	5394.915
NFI	0.547	0.547

5. Results and Discussions

The destination branding is responsible for conceiving different strategies to increase social and economic development, protection of natural resources and transformation of cultural heritage that can stimulate the sense of pride among local residents. Destination branding carve uniqueness, defines the purpose of destination and work for gaining competitive advantage and convey the image to tourists (Almeyda-Ibáñez, M., & George, 2017). The conceptual framework proposed in this study has been tested using SMART PLS.

The path theory has assumed two structural paths in this model. One path is DB--> EU and second path is DB -> BA -> EU. The significance of path DB -> BA -> EU confirms the mediation in the analysis. The indirect effect via DB -> BA -> EU has been found statistically significant. This confirms hypothesis 2 which states that the effect of hypothesis H1 will be mediated by Business Attraction. Further, Hypothesis 2a that destination branding leads to business attraction is significant ($\beta=0.37$; $p<0.001$). In addition to this, path BA--> EU is significant which confirms hypothesis 3 that Business Attraction leads to economic

upliftment. Study findings proved that there exists a positive relationship between dimensions of destination branding and economic upliftment, thereby supporting (H2) both in direct (H2a) and indirect effect (H2b) too. The direct path has also been found significant stating direct impact of destination branding on economic upliftment of region. The hypothesis (H1) which state that there is direct relationship between destination branding and economic upliftment has been found statistically significant ($\beta=0.34$, $P<0.05$). this finding confirms the findings of previous study which had also confirmed this relationship (Reference). Destination branding works towards creating positive image among tourist which promote tourism of region. The increase of tourism creates lot of job opportunities for local people and also strengthen the infrastructure of local region.

A prime example about mediating role of business attraction in Destination Branding & Economic Upliftment can be taken from the Cheese Village of Uttarakhand – **Rautu Ki Beli** near the famous hill station - Mussoorie, which has made its name in field of producing the purest cheese, whereby

every family of this village has been involved in producing cheese and selling it to the urban settlements of Uttarakhand, thus giving the local economy a big boost which was earlier primarily dependent on agriculture now is reaping the benefit of its destination image as people are making a beeline to visit the village for not only procuring cheese but also for tourism purpose as this new name has put this village on the go-to map of Uttarakhand, and thus this village is seeing an economic upliftment in a major way. This proves that business attraction could actually play a mediating role between destination branding & economic upliftment.

6. Conclusion

Even though the scale of the study is small but still this is the first time a study has been conducted in the field to explore the mediating role of business attraction in destination branding and economic upliftment that too related to a primitive tribal area of Himalayas. This study has given the positive outcome related to the mediating role of business attraction in destination branding and this will definitely help the local residents of the area of Jaunsar Bawar as well as the policy makers in government of Uttarakhand to understand the various aspects related to destination branding while formulating policies/plans related to employment generation in the area of Jaunsar Bawar. This study will also give the opportunities to other researchers to conduct the related study in other geographical areas and with that we might see some new valuable addition to the study and thus enhancing the literature part in the field of destination branding as well.

7. Implications

Uttarakhand being a hill state will have direct implications from the study. The destination branding can be used as a tool of economic upliftment for Jaunsar Banwar Region of Uttarakhand. The findings of the study will help policymakers and practitioners in developing policies and programme for connecting destination

branding to economic upliftment. Destination branding and economic upliftment relationship will open plethora of opportunities for locals in terms of creation of employment, livelihoods and infrastructure development. Business attraction must be focused upon in order to leverage the destination branding and economic upliftment relationship as it is found to be mediating the above said relationship.

8. Limitations & Direction for future Research

This study has been conducted in a small area of Uttarakhand which represents around 2% of the population of the state, also the survey was conducted on only 200 people which might be a small scale to extrapolate the finding to a much larger area like to whole of India, thus for more reliable outcomes it might be suggested to conduct the similar study in different regions on a much larger scale so that we can get much more reliable outcome which could be implemented on a much larger scale.

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