




# “Destination brand love and evangelism among international tourists in Vietnam: Roles of corrective engagement, empowerment, and authenticity”

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# DESTINATION BRAND LOVE AND EVANGELISM AMONG INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS IN VIETNAM: ROLES OF CORRECTIVE ENGAGEMENT, EMPOWERMENT, AND AUTHENTICITY

## Abstract

Recent tourism studies increasingly emphasize tourists' active roles in destination experiences, prompting closer examination of how different forms of participation relate to destination brand outcomes. This study examines how corrective engagement, empowerment experience, and perceived authenticity influence destination brand love and, in turn, destination brand evangelism among international tourists in Vietnam. Data were collected from 257 international tourists and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings indicate that destination brand love is a strong predictor of destination brand evangelism. Empowerment experience and perceived authenticity show positive effects on destination brand love, highlighting the roles of perceived autonomy and culturally genuine experiences in strengthening tourists' emotional attachment. Corrective engagement exhibits a dual effect: it positively affects destination brand love but negatively affects destination brand evangelism, suggesting that improvement-oriented participation may coincide with a temporary reluctance to advocate for the destination. These results indicate that participatory behaviors do not translate uniformly into destination brand advocacy and reinforce the importance of distinguishing emotional attachment from advocacy-oriented outcomes in destination branding research. In addition, empowerment experience shows a significant positive influence on both destination brand love and destination brand evangelism, suggesting that tourists who perceive greater autonomy and participation are more inclined to advocate for the destination. Perceived authenticity also demonstrates a positive but weaker direct effect on brand evangelism, indicating that authentic experiences primarily strengthen emotional attachment that subsequently encourages advocacy behavior.

## Keywords

corrective engagement, empowerment experience, perceived authenticity, destination brand love, brand evangelism

## JEL Classification

Z31, M31

## INTRODUCTION

Tourists' interactions with destinations increasingly extend beyond service consumption to include participation in shaping their experiences, particularly through personalized activities, social connection, and meaning-making during travel (Sun & Guo, 2022). Prior work shows that visitors are drawn to destinations that enable genuine communication with local communities, supporting value co-creation through two-way interaction (Eletxigerra et al., 2023; Li et al., 2024; Cheung et al., 2023). This view aligns with the argument that destinations function as brand ecosystems in which visitors can contribute to the formation and diffusion of brand value (Mandagi & Centeno,



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2025; Xu et al., 2020). Relatedly, tourists have been described as seeking opportunities to participate, voice opinions, and influence aspects of destination organization in pursuit of more personalized experiences (Blut et al., 2023).

Building on this stream, research has paid particular attention to empowerment and corrective engagement as two salient forms of tourist participation. Empowerment experience refers to visitors' perceived autonomy, interactive competence, and ability to influence their travel experiences (Aghazamani & Hunt, 2017). Corrective engagement captures tourists' proactive feedback and suggestions aimed at improving destination service quality (Taheri et al., 2019). Together, these constructs extend the study of tourist participation and support theorizing tourists as co-creators of destination value (Zhang & Xu, 2024).

However, the implications of such participation for destination branding outcomes remain theoretically unsettled. Constructive feedback, even when well-intended, may be interpreted negatively and harm destination image and brand perceptions (Katsifaraki & Theodosiou, 2020). In contrast, recent studies suggest that empowerment and corrective engagement can enhance relationship-based outcomes such as brand love and brand evangelism (Rasool, 2021; Tang et al., 2023). This divergence indicates a possible paradox in which participation strengthens emotional attachment but does not necessarily translate into advocacy. From a managerial standpoint, destination management organizations may treat tourist feedback as a reputational threat rather than as an opportunity for co-creation (Taheri et al., 2019), whereas destinations that incorporate feedback into actions may improve experiences and encourage brand advocacy (Zhang & Xu, 2024).

Empirical evidence from emerging tourism settings remains limited, despite their relevance to destination branding. Vietnam offers a suitable context, with international arrivals exceeding 12.6 million in 2023 and international visitors reporting strong interest in interactive, culturally grounded experiences with local communities (VNAT, 2024; UNWTO, 2023). Yet Vietnamese destinations are often described as prioritizing traditional service provision, with fewer structured mechanisms to encourage feedback or empower tourists in experience co-creation (VNA, 2025). These conditions make Vietnam a useful setting to examine how participatory behaviors and authenticity perceptions connect to tourists' emotional attachment and advocacy-related outcomes.

Accordingly, this study examines how corrective engagement, empowerment experience, and perceived authenticity influence destination brand love and, in turn, destination brand evangelism among international tourists in Vietnam.

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## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Recent tourism marketing research indicates a growing interest in examining international tourist behaviors through complex concepts such as corrective engagement, empowerment experience, destination authenticity, and brand relationship outcomes like brand love and brand evangelism (Nkoulou et al., 2022). Although differences exist in subjects, objects, and research contexts, most studies in this field reference classic theoretical systems such as: Customer Engagement Theory

(Brodie et al., 2011), Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and the system of customer-brand relationship theories in the tourism industry (Prayag et al., 2017). Therefore, this study develops its research model based on these three theoretical systems to clarify the influence of corrective engagement, empowerment experience, and authenticity perception in forming destination brand love and brand evangelism behavior among international tourists visiting Vietnam.

Destination brand love is understood as a state of deep, stable, and passionate emotional attachment, where tourists are not only satisfied with the experience but also develop value congruence and a

sense of belonging to the destination (Haq et al., 2024). As Aro and Tähtinen (2025) argued, when brand love is formed, tourists often perceive the destination as part of their personal identity, leading to a desire to maintain a long-term relationship, revisit in the future, and prioritize that destination over alternatives. Bhandari et al. (2024) demonstrated that tourists with a high level of brand love tend to increase their commitment, spend more time exploring the destination, and willingly share positive experiences through online channels such as social media or through direct word-of-mouth in daily life.

Destination Brand Evangelism is considered the highest level of brand advocacy behavior, in which tourists are not just satisfied or fond of the destination, but actively persuade others to visit, defend the destination against negative reviews, and express strong belief in the destination's value (Basri et al., 2025). Mishra et al. (2021) consider brand evangelism the highest form of positive word-of-mouth because it stems from voluntary motivation and is not driven by material factors or marketing activities. Empirical studies in the tourism sector also consistently affirm that destination brand love serves as the most direct, strong, and consistent antecedent driving evangelism behavior. This is because deep affection is the intrinsic motivation that makes tourists want to share, recommend, and protect the destination within the community (Kumarasinghe & Hendeniya, 2025).

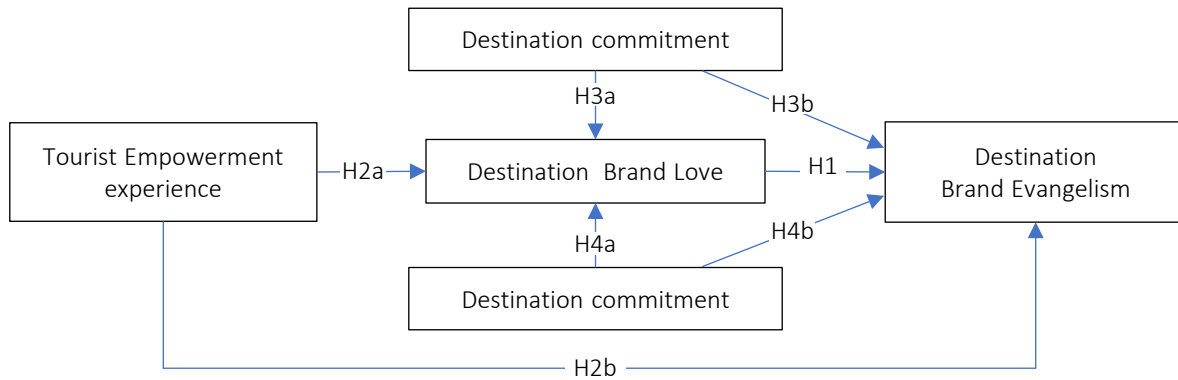
Taheri et al. (2019) and Van Doorn et al. (2010) define corrective engagement as the "constructive feedback behavior of tourists aimed at improving the experience or service quality at the destination, typically manifested through offering opinions, suggestions, and supportive feedback". Approached from the perspective of brand usage (Harrigan et al., 2018), corrective engagement behavior can be viewed as a positive manifestation of tourists' dedication to the destination, as they invest effort, time, and emotion into contributing their opinions for its benefit. Rasool (2021) who argues that the proactive act of providing suggestions for improvement demonstrates a role in active value co-creation and subsequently fosters positive feelings and perceptions towards the destination brand, supports this view. Conversely, Marques et al. (2020) suggest that negative tourist

feedback reduces advocacy behavior in the short term because the tourist may be in a partially hurt state due to their experience, leading to restrictions on advocacy.

Empowerment experience reflects the degree to which tourists perceive being empowered in their choice of desired travel experiences, as well as their self-determination, social interaction, and participation in local community activities (Strzelecka et al., 2017; Liutikas, 2017). Babolian Hendijani and Jaszus (2024) apply Self-Determination Theory to explain the empowerment experience, asserting that when tourists feel a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, they form a stronger intrinsic motivation, consequently generating positive emotional reactions during the travel experience. Research by Movono and Dahles (2017) showed that being empowered gives tourists a higher "sense of belonging" to the destination, thereby enhancing emotional attachment and forming destination brand love. Simultaneously, empowerment also motivates tourists to engage in evangelism behaviors, as they feel a deeper social responsibility and personal connection with the destination (Timothy, 2025; Park et al., 2024).

Destination authenticity perception is understood as the degree to which tourists feel their experience at the destination truthfully reflects the local cultural identity, is not overly commercialized or staged, and thus provides a sense of genuineness in interactions and the enjoyment of the travel experience (Fang & Liu, 2024). According to Fan et al. (2024), recent studies suggest that Destination Authenticity Perception is a core factor creating experiential value for tourism activities and plays a crucial role in forming emotional affinity for the destination as well as driving tourists' word-of-mouth behavior. Furthermore, Yin and Dai (2021) argue that Destination Authenticity Perception is one of the most important and strongest factors influencing brand love, because authenticity helps tourists feel that the destination has "identity" and reflects values they cherish (Yeh et al., 2025).

In summary, existing research consistently identifies emotional attachment in the form of brand love as a central antecedent of advocacy-oriented behaviors such as brand evangelism. At the same time, prior studies have examined empowerment,



**Figure 1.** Proposed research model

corrective engagement, and authenticity largely in isolation, offering limited understanding of how these participatory and experiential factors jointly shape both emotional attachment and advocacy outcomes. While empowerment and perceived authenticity are generally associated with favorable brand-related responses, the role of corrective engagement remains theoretically ambiguous, as improvement-oriented feedback may simultaneously reflect involvement and signal dissatisfaction. Related research in negative brand relationships further suggests that contributory feedback may signal latent dissatisfaction and lead to restrained supportive behaviors, even when emotional bonds with the brand persist (H. Nguyen & T. Nguyen, 2021). This potential tension suggests that different forms of tourist participation may exert non-uniform, and even conflicting, effects on destination brand love and destination brand evangelism. Moreover, much of the existing empirical evidence has been generated in mature tourism markets, leaving emerging destinations where brand images are still evolving and advocacy relies heavily on tourists' voluntary support relatively underexplored. Consequently, the mechanisms through which empowerment experience, corrective engagement, and authenticity perceptions translate into destination brand love and subsequent destination brand evangelism remain insufficiently understood, particularly in emerging tourism contexts.

This study aims to examine how corrective engagement, empowerment experience, and perceived authenticity influence destination brand love and, in turn, destination brand evangelism among international tourists in Vietnam. Based on this literature synthesis, the following hypotheses are formulated and presented in the conceptual model (Figure 1):

- H1: International tourists' destination brand love positively influences destination brand evangelism.*
- H2a: International tourists' corrective engagement positively influences destination brand love.*
- H2b: International tourists' corrective engagement negatively influences destination brand evangelism.*
- H3a: International tourists' empowerment experience positively influences destination brand love.*
- H3b: International tourists' empowerment experience positively influences destination brand evangelism.*
- H4a: International tourists' authenticity perception positively influences destination brand love.*
- H4b: International tourists' authenticity perception positively influences destination brand evangelism.*

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research method to test the theoretical model and hypotheses concerning the influence of corrective engagement, empowerment experience, and destination authenticity perception on destination brand love and destination brand evangelism among international tourists in Vietnam. The PLS-SEM

model (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling) was chosen as the primary analytical technique due to its suitability for prediction objectives, its ability to handle complex models with multiple reflective constructs, and its less stringent requirements regarding data distribution normality. This approach allows for the simultaneous estimation of direct and indirect effects, which is crucial for evaluating the hypothesized mediating role of destination brand love within the proposed structural model.

The study’s target population comprises international tourists who were visiting or had recently visited tourism destinations in Vietnam. Selected participants had to meet the criteria of having stayed for a minimum of two nights and participated in at least one experiential tourism activity or cultural interaction with the local community, thereby ensuring that respondents had sufficient interaction for co-creation assessment. The fieldwork was conducted directly in areas attracting a large number of international tourists, specifically Hanoi, Hoi An, Da Nang, and Ho Chi Minh City, during September 2025. Investigators were positioned in public areas (attraction sites, tour-

ist streets, domestic airports, and train stations) to invite tourists meeting the inclusion criteria to participate in the survey.

300 questionnaires were collected; after discarding incomplete responses, 257 valid questionnaires were included in the final analysis. This sample size is confirmed to be adequate for PLS-SEM analysis, satisfying the “10 times rule” for the most complex relationship paths in the structural model. Given the prediction-oriented use of PLS-SEM, the results are interpreted as context-specific evidence consistent with the proposed relationships rather than as broad population-level generalizations. The demographic characteristics of the final sample are detailed in Table 1, confirming a relevant distribution across gender, age, region of origin, and visit purpose, aligning with general international tourist statistics for Vietnam.

All variables in the research model were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Each construct was measured by four reflective observed variables, which were primarily adapted from highly cited studies to ensure scale reliability and content validity.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of the sample (n = 257)

Demographic variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	132	51.4
	Female	118	45.9
	Other/prefer not to say	7	2.7
Age	Under 25	41	15.9
	25-34	86	33.5
	35-44	67	26.1
	45-54	39	15.2
	55 and above	24	9.3
Region of origin	Asia	74	28.8
	Europe	96	37.4
	North America	47	18.3
	Australia and New Zealand	19	7.4
Primary purpose of visit	Other regions	21	8.2
	Leisure and tourism	203	79.0
	Business combined with leisure	31	12.1
	Visiting friends or relatives	17	6.6
Number of visits to Vietnam	Other purposes	6	2.3
	First-time visit	196	76.3
	Second visit	52	20.2
Length of stay	Third visit or more	9	3.5
	2-3 nights	66	25.7
	4-6 nights	112	43.6
	7-10 nights	51	19.8
	More than 10 nights	28	10.9

- The Corrective Engagement scale was adapted from studies by Mgoduka et al. (2025), Shahid Satar et al. (2025), reflecting the degree to which tourists proactively offer suggestions and support the destination in improving services.
- The Empowerment Experience scale was developed based on research into empowerment in tourism and smart services (Babolian Hendijani & Jaszus, 2024; Roy et al., 2019; Bouchriha et al., 2023), evaluating the tourists' perception of autonomy, competence, and ability to participate in the experience co-creation process.
- The Destination Authenticity Perception scale, adapted from studies on cultural authenticity (Zhang & Xu, 2024; Zhao et al., 2024; Leong et al., 2024), measures the extent to which tourists feel the destination experience reflects indigenous values and is minimally commercialized.
- The Destination Brand Love scale assesses the depth of tourists' emotional attachment, including passion, identification, and desire to revisit (Hussain et al., 2021; Mujahid & Khandai, 2025).
- The Destination Brand Evangelism scale measures the tourists' willingness to recommend, share, and defend the destination's image (Nkoulou Mvondo et al., 2022; Rather et al., 2022).

To mitigate the risk of common method bias (CMB) during data collection, the study simultaneously applied procedural precautions and statistical testing techniques as recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2024). Procedurally, the questionnaire was designed with a randomized question structure and ensured absolute anonymity for respondents. Furthermore, information regarding the research purpose and commitment to confidentiality was clearly presented to minimize social desirability bias. For statistical validation, the study performed the Harman's single-factor test, which revealed that the single extracted factor accounted for less than 50% of the total variance, suggesting that no single factor dominated the entire dataset.

Additionally, all Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) were below the warning threshold of 3.3, confirming that the data were not severely affected by CMB. All participants provided informed consent prior to participating. The research design and methodology were reviewed and approved by the relevant institutional research ethics committee, ensuring that the principles of voluntary participation, anonymity, and data confidentiality were strictly upheld throughout the process.

Data analysis procedures were conducted using the PLS-SEM model via SmartPLS 4.0.1 software. This approach is appropriate given the characteristics of data not adhering to normal distribution and a complex, multi-variable research model. Before hypothesis testing, the measurement model was evaluated through outer loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), rho\_A, Cronbach's Alpha, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to ensure the convergent validity of the scales. Once the measurement criteria were met, the structural model was estimated to test the relationships between variables and assess the model's explanatory power and predictive capabilities.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1. Measurement model assessment

According to the recommendations of Hair et al. (2021), observed variables in reflective scales should achieve a minimum outer loading of 0.708 to ensure sufficient variance explanation for the latent construct. Except for one observed variable in the Destination Authenticity Perception (DAP) scale DAP3 which failed to meet the requirement and was removed during preliminary screening, all remaining variables maintained outer loadings from 0.706 to 0.905, indicating a stable fit between the indicators and the measured concepts. Furthermore, the reliability assessment showed that all scales possessed Cronbach's Alpha values from 0.790 to 0.911 and Composite Reliability (CR) from 0.864 to 0.938, exceeding the 0.70 threshold, thereby confirming the internal consistency of the indicators. Simultaneously, the rho\_A values, ranging from 0.796 to 0.920, further substantiated the stability of the reflective constructs. Concurrently, all AVE values exceed-

**Table 2.** Reliability and convergent validity of measurement scales

Construct	Item	Measurement statement	Loadings	CA	rho_A	CR	AVE
Corrective Engagement	CE1	I actively shared constructive suggestions to help improve services at this destination.	0.901	0.911	0.920	0.938	0.790
	CE2	I provided feedback when I noticed something that could be improved during my visit.	0.905				
	CE3	I felt responsible for offering helpful comments to enhance the visitor experience.	0.905				
	CE4	I openly communicated service issues to assist the destination in making improvements.	0.842				
Tourist's Empowerment Experience	TEE1	I felt free to make my own choices regarding activities during my trip.	0.860	0.887	0.888	0.922	0.748
	TEE2	I had opportunities to interact and participate in local experiences.	0.889				
	TEE3	I felt capable of influencing how my travel experience unfolded.	0.884				
	TEE4	I was encouraged to engage actively with the destination and its community.	0.825				
Destination Authenticity Perception	DAP1	My experiences here felt genuinely connected to local culture and traditions.	0.853	0.805	0.823	0.884	0.719
	DAP2	The destination appeared authentic rather than commercial or staged.	0.884				
	DAP4	The activities I participated in reflected the true identity of the local community.	0.804				
Destination Brand Love	DBL1	I feel emotionally attached to this destination.	0.864	0.807	0.828	0.874	0.635
	DBL2	This destination represents values that resonate strongly with me.	0.826				
	DBL3	I feel a strong sense of affection when thinking about this destination.	0.782				
	DBL4	I feel a strong desire to revisit this destination in the future.	0.705				
Destination Brand Evangelism	DBE1	I enthusiastically recommend this destination to others.	0.779	0.790	0.796	0.864	0.615
	DBE2	I actively share my positive experiences about this destination online or offline.	0.706				
	DBE3	I encourage people around me to visit this destination.	0.815				
	DBE4	I defend this destination when I hear unfair or negative comments.	0.831				

**Table 3.** Discriminant validity test using HTMT

	BE	CE	DAP	DBL	TEE
BE					
CE	0.388				
DAP	0.415	0.100			
DBL	0.443	0.349	0.694		
TEE	0.412	0.439	0.220	0.407	

ed the 0.50 threshold (0.615 - 0.790), indicating that the scales achieved convergent validity and the observed variables explained a large portion of the variance of the latent concepts. These results affirm that the scales function consistently and accurately reflect the content of each construct, as summarized in Table 2.

After confirming reliability and convergent validity, the study proceeded to evaluate discriminant validity among the constructs through

the HTMT index (Rasoolimanesh, 2022). The analysis showed that all pairs of constructs had HTMT values < 0.85, reflecting that the constructs in the model were not overlapping and maintained adequate conceptual boundaries. Thus, the measurement model fully satisfies the three core requirements of PLS-SEM analysis: internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, providing a foundation for the subsequent structural model analysis.

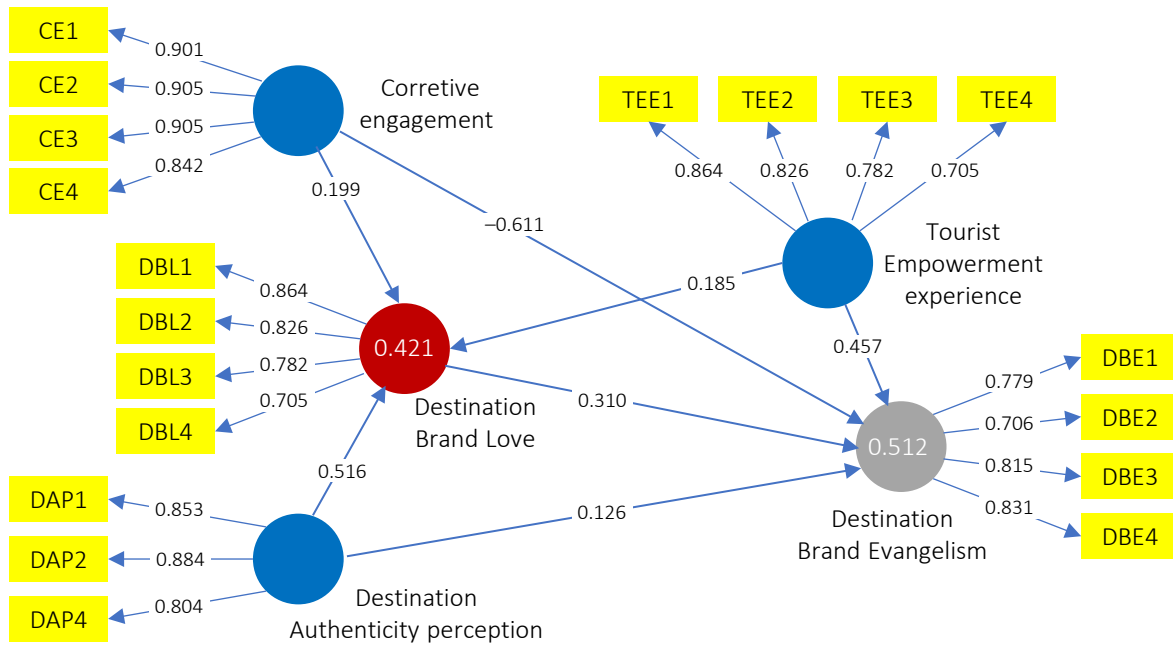


Figure 2. Measurement model assessment results

### 3.2. Structural model evaluation and hypotheses testing

Once the measurement model was confirmed to be reliable and valid, the study proceeded to evaluate the structural model in order to examine its explanatory power, predictive relevance, and overall model fit for the hypothesized relationships. Following Hair et al. (2021), structural model assessment in PLS-SEM typically involves examining collinearity diagnostics (VIF), path coefficients and their significance, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), effect sizes ( $f^2$ ), predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ), and global fit measures such as the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), to ensure that the estimated relationships adequately represent tourist behavior within the study context.

The analysis of the Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ) suggests the model’s explanatory power is moderate to good. Specifically, Destination Brand Love (DBL) achieved, indicating that the three independent variables (corrective engagement, empowerment experience, and authenticity perception) explained approximately 42% of the variation in tourists’ brand love for the destination. This value is consistent with research on tourist psychology, which often contends with the complex and unpredictable nature

of emotional variation. For Destination Brand Evangelism (DBE), the model achieved, reflecting that more than half of tourists’ brand evangelism tendency is predicted through DBL, along with the other three perceptual and behavioral characteristics, indicating that the model explains a substantial proportion of variance in destination brand evangelism. Furthermore, the model’s overall fit value, the SRMR, was 0.070, which is below the 0.08 threshold proposed by Hu and Bentler (1999), suggesting a good fit with the market data. Concurrently, the  $d_{ULS}$ ,  $d_G$ , and NFI indices were all within acceptable ranges, implying minimal discrepancy between the assumed model and the observed matrix. To evaluate out-of-sample predictive power, the study used the Stone-Geisser index ( $Q^2$ ), with the endogenous variables DBE ( $Q^2 = 0.310$ ) and DBL ( $Q^2 = 0.260$ ) both exceeding the 0.25 threshold, signifying a moderate to strong predictive capability (Hair et al., 2021). This confirms that the model not only explains the in-sample data well but also has a stable ability to predict out-of-sample behavior.

Table 4. Model Coefficients of Determination

Constructs	R-square	R-square adjusted	$Q^2$	SRMR
DBE	0.512	0.507	0.310	0.070
DBL	0.421	0.417	0.26	

**Table 5.** Path coefficient, effect size (f2), and hypotheses testing conclusion

Path	$\beta$ (O)	t-statistics	p-values	f <sup>2</sup>	Conclusion
DBL → DBE	0.310	6.848	0.000	0.114	H1: Supported
CE → DBL	0.199	5.180	0.000	0.058	H2a: Supported
CE → DBE	-0.611	16.872	0.000	0.612	H2b: Supported
TEE → DBL	0.185	4.748	0.000	0.049	H3a: Supported
TEE → DBE	0.457	10.807	0.000	0.336	H3b: Supported
DAP → DBL	0.516	10.762	0.000	0.445	H4a: Supported
DAP → DBE	0.126	2.990	0.003	0.022	H4b: Supported

The analysis of effect size (f2) indicates that the independent variables contribute differently to the two endogenous variables in the model. Corrective engagement demonstrated the strongest effect size on destination brand evangelism, with  $f^2 = 0.612$ , implying that tourists' corrective feedback, although motivated by service improvement, exerts a significant influence on brand advocacy behavior. Conversely, destination authenticity perception was prominent in forming destination brand love ( $f^2 = 0.445$ ) but had only a small effect on DBE ( $f^2 = 0.022$ ), suggesting that authenticity primarily reinforces the emotional foundation rather than directly boosting positive advocacy behavior. Meanwhile, empowerment experience, although subjective, generated a noticeable impact on both dependent variables, as reflected by  $f^2 = 0.049$  for DBL and 0.336 for DBE, which shows that the empowerment experience not only enhances positive emotional states but also has the potential to translate into brand diffusion behavior. These results align with the path coefficient analysis, where all hypothesized relationships were found to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ): corrective engagement exerted a strong negative effect on DBE ( $\beta = -0.611$ ) but simultaneously reinforced Brand Love ( $\beta = 0.199$ ); perceived authenticity most strongly fostered DBL ( $\beta = 0.516$ ); empowerment created a positive influence on both DBL ( $\beta = 0.185$ ) and DBE ( $\beta = 0.457$ ); and DBL had a significant impact on DBE ( $\beta = 0.310$ ), demonstrating that tourists' accumulated emotional state is a crucial bridge that transforms their perceptions and experiences into brand advocacy behavior.

## 4. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings both align with and depart from prior work when examined in the context of international tourists in Vietnam. Destination brand love

emerges as a key precursor of brand evangelism, supporting the argument that emotional attachment provides an intrinsic basis for tourists' willingness to recommend and defend a destination (Kumarasinghe & Hendeniya, 2025). This result is consistent with recent evidence from Vietnam indicating that emotionally grounded experiences constitute a critical psychological pathway through which tourists translate favorable experiences into advocacy-oriented behaviors (Pham et al., 2026). This pattern suggests that when tourists experience value congruence and a sense of belonging, they are more likely to engage in advocacy-oriented behaviors rather than limiting their responses to satisfaction or favorable evaluations alone.

Perceived authenticity also shows a strong positive relationship with brand love, consistent with earlier evidence that culturally genuine experiences help cultivate emotional attachment to destinations (Yin & Dai, 2021). At the same time, perceived authenticity appears to have a comparatively weaker direct association with evangelism, implying that perceived authenticity functions primarily by strengthening emotional bonds that later underpin advocacy. In this sense, perceived authenticity may be better interpreted as an antecedent of attachment rather than as an immediate behavioral trigger, with brand love providing the more proximal pathway through which authentic experiences translate into evangelism.

The positive effects of empowerment experience on both brand love and brand evangelism are in line with research emphasizing the motivational value of autonomy and participatory agency in tourism experiences (Movono & Dahles, 2017). Notably, the empowerment-evangelism relationship is particularly pronounced in this setting, which may reflect that international tourists in developing destinations place high value on opportunities

to interact with local communities and to shape their own experiences, making them more willing to actively advocate when they perceive genuine agency. The clearest divergence from some prior studies concerns corrective engagement. While corrective engagement strengthens brand love, it reduces evangelism, contradicting findings that portray corrective engagement as uniformly beneficial for advocacy (Tang et al., 2023). This finding echoes prior evidence showing that feedback-oriented or grievance-driven customer behaviors often coexist with emotional attachment while simultaneously constraining advocacy and supportive actions, particularly when improvement expectations remain unmet (H. Nguyen & T. Nguyen, 2021).

Instead, the pattern aligns more closely with the view that improvement-oriented feedback often co-occurs with suboptimal episodes, which can dampen tourists' willingness to publicly recommend the destination even when emotional attachment remains (Marques et al., 2020). This pattern may be particularly salient in Vietnam, where fragmented or non-transparent feedback processes can prevent corrective engagement from being experienced as genuine partnership and may leave tourists uncertain that their input will lead to visible improvements.

Theoretically, this study contributes to refining the understanding of the role of participatory behavior in the relationship between tourists and the destination brand. The contradictory, two-way effect of corrective engagement on brand love and evangelism suggests that engagement is not always linearly transformed into brand diffusion behavior. This challenges the traditional assumption within Customer Engagement Theory, which implicitly defaults, to engagement always being positive. By separating CE and empowerment into two distinct forms of participation, the research underscores the multidimensionality of engagement and confirms that tourist motivation is not always congruent with their behavioral outcomes. The findings also reinforce Self-Determination Theory, as empowerment demonstrates a consistent role in generating intrinsic motivation for both emotion and behavior. Nonetheless, the strong impact on evangelism in the Vietnamese context suggests that international tourists' need for autonomy and recognition may

play a larger role compared to established tourism contexts, thereby opening a path for additional cross-cultural comparative studies. Furthermore, perceived authenticity continues to demonstrate its strength in shaping brand love, affirming the central position of perceived authenticity within the theoretical framework of tourism experience, particularly in destinations rich in cultural identity.

Practically, in order to enhance brand evangelism behavior among international tourists, destinations in Vietnam must prioritize developing an experience ecosystem where emotional factors and active tourist participation are intentionally nurtured. Maintaining the perceived authenticity of the experience through cultural preservation, encouraging natural interactions between tourists and local communities, and limiting excessive commercialization will foster deep emotional attachment and create intrinsic motivation for tourists to share their experiences. This necessitates that destinations develop products based on local storytelling, enhance "living" cultural experiences, and coordinate with the community to ensure the consistency of the destination's identity.

Additionally, the empowerment experience must be designed as a continuous component throughout the tourist journey. Destinations can broaden tourists' choice and participation rights by creating activities where they can directly decide, customize, or contribute. Examples include participating in handicraft production, experiencing festivals, co-creating services, or engaging in social responsibility activities. When tourists perceive a proactive role in their journey, they tend to view the destination as a personalized experiential space, thereby boosting their motivation for brand diffusion. Regarding corrective engagement, destinations need to transform their approach to feedback by institutionalizing a transparent, timely, and clearly commitment-focused feedback process. Building a multi-channel feedback system, publicly announcing improvements based on tourist input, and ensuring feedback is returned with concrete action will help convert constructive feedback into a mechanism for value co-creation. When tourists recognize that their voice has a real influence, they will reduce hesitation and increase their likelihood of becoming voluntary brand advocates.

## CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study examined how corrective engagement, empowerment experience, and perceived authenticity influence destination brand love and destination brand evangelism among international tourists in Vietnam. The findings indicate that destination brand love plays a central role in linking tourists' participatory experiences to advocacy-oriented behavior. Perceived authenticity and empowerment experience contribute positively to the formation of brand love, while corrective engagement exhibits a dual pattern by strengthening emotional attachment but constraining destination brand evangelism. These results suggest that active tourist participation does not translate uniformly into advocacy and highlight the importance of distinguishing between emotional attachment and advocacy outcomes when designing destination branding strategies. From a managerial perspective, the results suggest that destinations should move beyond passive service provision and actively design participatory experiences that strengthen tourists' sense of autonomy and authenticity. By recognizing corrective engagement as both an opportunity for improvement and a potential constraint on advocacy, destination managers can develop transparent feedback mechanisms that transform tourists' participation into long-term brand support.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design captures tourist perceptions at a single point in time and cannot reflect how responses may evolve after destinations respond to tourists' feedback. Second, although the sample includes international tourists from multiple regions, the study does not examine potential differences across demographic groups such as age, region of origin, or travel purpose. Future research may apply longitudinal approaches and multi-group analysis to further explore the dynamic relationship between tourist participation, emotional attachment, and brand advocacy in emerging tourism destinations.

Future research could use longitudinal designs to track how the corrective engagement paradox evolves over time, apply multi-group analyses to identify subgroup differences, and incorporate qualitative evidence or additional contextual variables to better explain the mechanisms linking participation, attachment, and advocacy in emerging destinations.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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