

Brand coolness, a trigger for brand associations, brand beliefs, and brand advocacy

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Abstract

Purpose – The concept of brand coolness has recently gained researchers' attention. Researchers and practitioners are keen to understand its consequences. Hence, this study aims to identify whether brand coolness can impact brand association, brand beliefs and brand advocacy. Drawing on the stimulus organism response (SOR) model, this study also explores how brand association and beliefs transmit brand coolness's effect on brand advocacy.

Design/methodology/approach – The study used a quantitative approach, considering a usable sample of 402 tourists. Data were analyzed using SmartPLS version 4.0.8.5.

Findings – The results revealed that brand coolness positively impacts brand association, beliefs, and advocacy. Further, brand association and beliefs were significant mediators between brand coolness and brand advocacy.

Originality/value – This study contributes to the literature by investigating the new consequences of brand coolness in the context of tourist places. At the same time, it provides new antecedents of brand advocacy. Further, the study has explored the mediating effects of brand association and brand beliefs between brand coolness and brand advocacy, which were yet to be considered. Such findings are important to strengthen the brand coolness literature and have implications for researchers and practice.

Keywords Brand coolness, Brand advocacy, Brand association, Brand beliefs, Tourism, PLS-SEM, SOR model

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Brand coolness is an autonomous, subjective, and socially constructed positive trait that makes consumers differentiate, make or break a brand (Warren *et al.*, 2019). Brand coolness helps create differentiation and break the homogeneity of offerings, whether products, services, or places (Zhang *et al.*, 2024). The concept of brand coolness is nascent and intricate, which is why researchers and practitioners are focusing on this research area. Researchers have argued the relationship of brand coolness with passionate desire (Loureiro *et al.*, 2020), brand love (Tiwari *et al.*, 2021), intention to revisit (Kock, 2021; Loureiro and Blanco, 2023), delight, and customer psychological wellbeing (Attiq *et al.*, 2022), brand loyalty (Jiménez-Barreto *et al.*, 2022), intention to use, word of mouth (Bagozzi and Khoshnevis, 2022), willingness to co-create (Zhang *et al.*, 2024) and brand equity (Alanadoly and Salem, 2024; Napalai and Khamwon, 2023) in different industries. These industries include technology (Attiq *et al.*, 2022; Tiwari *et al.*, 2021), fashion and luxury (Loureiro *et al.*, 2020; Napalai and Khamwon, 2023), museum and destination (Kock, 2021; Loureiro and Blanco, 2023), restaurants and music festivals (Escobar *et al.*, 2025; Jiménez-Barreto *et al.*, 2022), and branded product categories (Bagozzi and

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Khoshnevis, 2022; Guerreiro *et al.*, 2023; Koskie and Locander, 2023). As suggested by literature, one of the branding focus is tourism and the impact of brand coolness in the tourism sector is limited which is the context of this study.

Research gaps in the literature further motivate researchers to explore the consequences of brand coolness. Hence, Bagozzi and Khoshnevis (2022) and Tiwari *et al.* (2021) suggested considering the role of brand coolness, for example, as a predictor of different constructs to strengthen the literature on this area. Accordingly, it is imperative to understand the beneficial outcomes of brand coolness (Khoi and Le, 2022). Once it comes to brands, attitudes can be considered as beneficial outcomes. Though few studies have argued (see Aleem *et al.*, 2022), that brand coolness' relationship with consumers' attitudes and behaviors, however, whether the attitudes like brand association, brand beliefs and behavior like brand advocacy are the possible outcomes of brand coolness needs consideration. Hence, this study aims to investigate brand association, beliefs, and advocacy as possible outcomes of brand coolness. Further, to elaborate on the mechanism through which brand coolness may transmit the effect via brand association and brand beliefs on brand advocacy, which are yet to be considered. Accordingly, this study argues the role and the mechanism through which brand coolness may shape brand advocacy.

Brand advocacy is an important behavioral outcome for a number of reasons. One, a greater majority, 92% of customers trust recommendations from references, including friends and family, instead of organizational advertisement (Choi *et al.*, 2021). Two, brand advocacy is considered the most genuine and reliable communication of a brand's efforts as it comes from external customers who are keen to influence the decisions of potential customers (Wilk *et al.*, 2021).

Further, researchers have argued brand association and brand beliefs as mediators (Rizvi and Oney, 2018). However, none of the studies have yet considered these constructs as mediators between brand coolness and brand advocacy. Therefore, this study considers brand association as a probable consequence and mediator in the study, along with brand belief. Furthermore, a recent meta-analytic study on brand advocacy (see Bhati and Verma, 2020) argued to consider new possible antecedents of brand advocacy. This study tends to fill the aforementioned gap by considering brand coolness, brand association, and brand beliefs as antecedents to brand advocacy. These proposed linkages can be justified with the SOR model (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974).

The SOR model is well documented in the marketing literature. In the proposed research framework of the study (shown in Figure 1), brand coolness may act as a stimulator on the organism(O) brand association and brand belief to shape response(R) in terms of brand advocacy. This study aims to test the linkages and mechanisms between brand coolness and brand advocacy by considering brand association and brand belief as mediators in the tourism industry. In the next section, a review of the literature is presented, followed by methodology and results. In addition, the discussions, conclusion, implications, and limitations are also discussed.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) model

The study draws on the Stimulus Organism Response model developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). The SOR model states that any external activity or trigger acts as a stimulus (S). Stimulus brings a change in the organism (O) through a change in the mental state, both affective and cognitive. The organism then causes a response (R) by accepting or rejecting the stimulus. Hence, at first, the environmental stimuli impact the consumer physically and psychologically (Kumar *et al.*, 2021), which can then lead to affective and cognitive changes in the organism that can further lead to the specific behavior (Irimia-Diéguez *et al.*, 2023).

The SOR model has provided flexible theoretical support and an overarching framework for many tourism, hospitality, and consumer behavior studies (see Ng *et al.*, 2022; Yadav *et al.*,

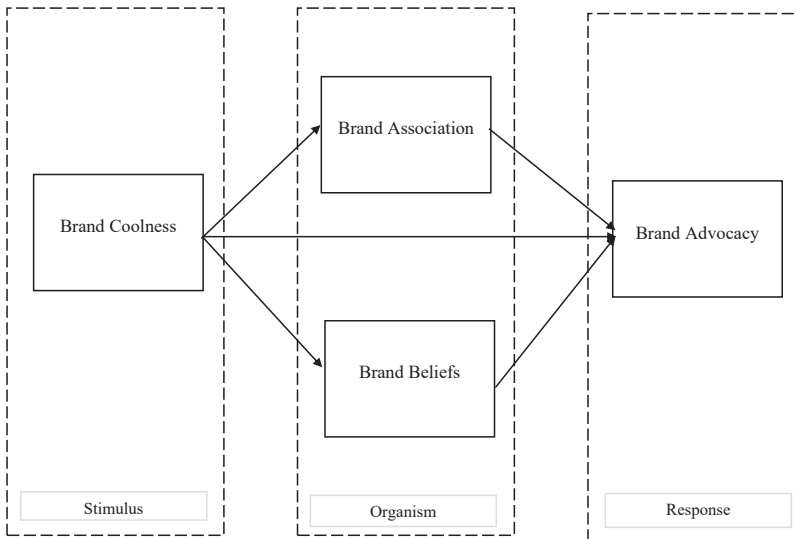


Figure 1. The research framework. Source: Authors' own work

2022). Further, the SOR model shows a process according to which, upon the act of a stimulus, consumers change their internal selves and act accordingly. Furthermore, literature argues that brand coolness is based on its characteristics that stimulate emotions (Koskie *et al.*, 2024). Hence, SOR is argued as the right model that provides the theoretical foundation for this current study. In line with the SOR model, the current model assumes brand coolness (S) is the stimulus that may bring a change in the internal processes of customers in the form of brand association (O) and brand beliefs (O) to elicit a response in the form of brand advocacy (R). Figure 1 shows the research model.

3. Literature review

3.1 Brand coolness

Brand coolness is defined as an autonomous, positive, and dynamic concept (Warren *et al.*, 2019). Since the coining of the concept of coolness, over 70 different ways exist to define it. However, when it is applied to brands, it is defined based on the attractive characteristics of brands (Guerreiro *et al.*, 2023). Warren *et al.* (2019) have explained brand coolness based on its ten characteristics. These are extraordinary, authentic, aesthetically appealing, energetic, original, rebellious, popular, high-status, subcultural, and iconic. In this study, brand coolness is defined as a dynamic place that tourists find authentic, aesthetically appealing, extraordinary, subcultural, original, rebellious, iconic, popular, and high-status. Brand coolness is subjective, so it allows tourists to feel anyway they want to about the place, one or all defined characteristics. In recent years, the marketing research focus has shifted to identifying the outcomes of brand coolness (Koskie and Locander, 2023). Therefore, this study aims to identify the consequences of brand coolness in the tourism sector.

Tourism is crucially important for economic growth in low and middle-income countries too (Arshad *et al.*, 2018). Hence, tourism planners are adopting marketing strategies for the places and destinations (Ahn and Back, 2020). Marketing strategies are important for branding destination to gain competitive advantage (Hanna *et al.*, 2021). Destination branding is a crucial concept to create differentiation (Rather *et al.*, 2021). Cool destinations are the better choices for younger generation as even employees and students want to work around cool

places (Kock, 2021). Further, marketers have focused on the cool trends as customers are looking for coolness in market places (Koskie and Locander, 2023). This also holds true for tourism marketers as tourists want cool products and experiences (Kock, 2021; Loureiro and Blanco, 2023). Hence, it is important to understand consumer behavior in terms of brand advocacy, whether it is shaped by brand coolness via brand association and brand belief.

3.2 Brand association

Brand association is defined by Aaker (1991) as any linkage of a brand in the memory of a consumer. Brand associations are intangible and are the consumer's mental representation of a brand (Jeon and Baeck, 2016) and are the reflection of a brand's image that affects customers' lifestyles, habits, and approaches (Valencia *et al.*, 2020). Brand associations create an emotional connection between consumers and brands (Castro-González *et al.*, 2024). This connection helps in differentiating a brand from other competing brands in the market (Kim and Chao, 2019; Rios Romero *et al.*, 2023), which helps to gain a competitive advantage (Rai and Nayak, 2019). In this study, any positive memory of the place in the tourist's mind is considered a brand association.

Karagiorgos *et al.* (2023) highlighted the importance of brand associations in the tourism industry. Foroudi *et al.* (2018) argued that association is triggered through brand activities, which can be verbal or visual (Santos *et al.*, 2025). Therefore, the coolness of a destination may influence attitudes, and we may consider that brand coolness can stimulate associations. Further, according to the SOR mode, an external stimulus impacts the internal processing and brings a change in the organism. Brand coolness has already been argued as an external stimulus by Attiq *et al.* (2022) and Pratminingsih *et al.* (2025), and brand associations are characterized as organisms by KR and Venkatesan (2020). Therefore, based on these arguments, this study proposes brand coolness as an antecedent to brand association and hypothesizes.

H1. Brand coolness positively impacts brand association.

3.3 Brand belief

Brand belief is the perception of how the brand will perform and come up to a consumer's expectations (Lutz, 1975). Chung and Byrom (2020) defined brand beliefs as the beliefs of a customer particular to a concerning brand. These perceptions or beliefs are created in the minds of customers once they interact with the brand at any level. These interactions can range from direct interaction to knowing through promotional activities done by the brand. The beliefs can be positive or negative (Rizvi and Oney, 2018), and positive beliefs increase positive behaviors toward the brand (Chung and Byrom, 2020). Accordingly, in this study, brand beliefs are operationalized as the tourists' perceptual expectations of a destination.

Brands may take advantage of the brand beliefs developed or modified based on the marketing efforts (Rodríguez-López *et al.*, 2020) as customers look out for coolness in the marketplace, which can be important for their relationship with the brand (Koskie and Locander, 2023). Further, this study employs the SOR framework to argue the relationship between brand coolness and brand belief. According to the framework, people tend to provide meaning to external stimuli. Beliefs have been argued as an organism of the SOR model in literature (see Kim *et al.*, 2020; Yang *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, once tourists identify a place as cool, it can stimulate their cognition to form a belief about the place. Therefore, it can be argued that brand coolness may act as a stimulus for brand belief. Hence,

H2. Brand coolness positively impacts brand belief.

3.4 Brand advocacy

Brand advocacy is instigated by the consumer due to the difference in their attitudes about the brand (Bhati and Verma, 2020) when they promote and defend the brand (Ahmadi and Ataei, 2024).

Brand advocacy is a distinct positive (Sweeney *et al.*, 2020) and passionate communication about the brand (Khamwon and Masri, 2020), intention to recommend it, and defend it against raised negativity. This study considers brand advocacy of a tourist as positive recommendations of a place and shunning negative communication about it. Researchers (Goswami and Balasubramanian, 2022; Kumgliang and Khamwon, 2022) argued to further explore the antecedents of brand advocacy. The tourism sector relies on brand advocacy to seize opportunities to increase tourism. Since the literature considers the importance of recommendation intention as an important outcome of tourist destinations (Bigne *et al.*, 2024), new strategies for increasing brand advocacy amongst tourists are important.

The notion of the relationship between brand coolness and brand advocacy can be argued for a few reasons. One, literature argues the relationship between brand coolness and behaviors like word of mouth and loyalty (Bagozzi and Khoshnevis, 2022). Two, Script theory by Tomkins (1978) may support the linkage between brand coolness and brand advocacy. According to this theory, exciting and enjoyable scenes are responded to with rapid and increased energy. Further, this theory argues that good and bad scenes can be magnified or biased from positive to negative or in the opposite direction, which is parallel to the definition of brand advocacy. Hence, it can be argued that brand coolness can influence a tourist's brand advocacy. Thus, it is hypothesized that,

H3. Brand coolness positively influences brand advocacy.

3.5 Brand association and brand advocacy

Favorable brand associations can prompt positive consumer responses (Tian *et al.*, 2022). Consumers are willing to pay premium prices (Budzanowski, 2017) for brands with positive associations. Bhati and Verma (2020) mention that brand associations can support brand advocacy. However, the literature is scarce in considering the linkage between brand association and brand advocacy. This effort is consistent with researchers' call on the identification of antecedents of brand advocacy (Bhati and Verma, 2020; Choi *et al.*, 2021). By considering the SOR model, the linkage between brand association and brand advocacy can be argued in this study. Consistent with the notion of the SOR model, brand association of tourists in the shape of a positive memory of the place in the tourist's mind can be translated into a response in the shape of brand advocacy. Accordingly,

H4. Brand association will positively influence brand advocacy.

3.6 Brand beliefs and brand advocacy

Brand beliefs' impact on emotions and decision-making has been argued (Sukhu *et al.*, 2019). Similarly, Hasan *et al.* (2024) revealed that the beliefs of tourists play a role in forming their behaviors. For example, Ahmadi and Ataei (2024) and Perez Benegas and Zanfardini (2023) have argued the possible impact of emotional attachment on brand advocacy. The literature on brand advocacy lacks brand beliefs as an antecedent (Bhati and Verma, 2020). However, Badrinarayanan and Laverie (2011) considered the brand beliefs of the consumers as a controlled construct in their study related to brand advocacy, suggesting that brand beliefs can have an impact on brand advocacy. Further, according to the SOR model arguments, brand beliefs in the shape of tourists' perceptive expectations of a destination can be translated into behavior in the shape of brand advocacy. Hence,

H5. Brand beliefs will positively influence brand advocacy.

3.7 Mediating role of brand association and brand beliefs

The literature states that brand association can be a potent mediator once it stimulates a response (Rahman *et al.*, 2022). In the prior literature, brand association and brand beliefs both have been significant facilitators of transferring the impact (Tian *et al.*, 2022) on different

behaviors. Hence, the current study also considers brand association and brand beliefs as mediators between brand coolness and brand advocacy. Since there is a lack in the literature, to consider the mediating role of brand association and brand belief, the current study draws on the SOR model and argues that brand coolness impact can also be transmitted to brand advocacy via brand association and brand beliefs. Hence, the study hypothesizes that.

H6. Brand association mediates the relationship between brand coolness and brand advocacy

H7. Brand beliefs mediate the relationship between brand coolness and brand advocacy.

4. Methodology and methods

A questionnaire was designed with various sections to collect the data. The first section was related to the inclusion criteria and asked if the respondent had a preferred cool place. If the answer were no, the questionnaire would end with a note of thanks. The instruments were mainly adapted. The scale for brand coolness was adapted from [Warren et al. \(2019\)](#) and had 37 items, which considered all the dimensions that made the instrument comprehensive. The brand advocacy instrument with 12 items was adapted from [Sweeney et al. \(2020\)](#). The brand association and brand beliefs scale was adapted from [Foroudi \(2019\)](#), both scales had four items each. The scale was adapted to fit the questionnaire with the study's objectives by replacing the word "brand" with "this place". A Google form was used to conduct an online survey.

The unit of analysis for this study was individual tourists who had already traveled at least once. The Northern areas of Pakistan are well-known tourist destinations in the world; the tourist operators take tourists to these eye-catching, sensational places. Accordingly, tourist operators were approached for suggestions on the data collection of visitors. Tourist operators agreed to share an online link with the visitors in case the visitors were willing to offer their responses.

The sample size was determined by using the G*Power calculator. The power and effect size were set at 0.90 and 0.05, respectively ([Muhammad and Gul-E-Rana, 2020](#)), and the maximum arrows pointing towards a construct was 3. The resultant sample size was 288. However, 411 responses were collected, whereas 402 of the responses were used for the analysis. SmartPLS version 4.0.8.5 software was considered for the analysis. PLS-SEM is a second-generation statistical tool that considers both the measurement and structural models. It goes lenient on the data distribution as well ([Cachón-Rodríguez et al., 2024](#)). PLS-SEM allows for dealing with the complex model once the impact on the latent construct is unknown ([Hair et al., 2019](#)). Therefore, PLS-SEM was considered an appropriate technique for this research. Further, currently, it is also considered a leading technique of data analysis in marketing and management ([Cai et al., 2023](#)).

5. Results

5.1 Respondent profile

[Table 1](#) presents the respondent profile. 55% of respondents were less than 25 years of age, whereas 33% were between the ages of 26 and 35. According to the Bureau of Statistics of Pakistan Report 2017; ([PBS, 2017](#)), 32% of the population is below the age of 24, while 26.5% fall between the ages of 25 and 29. Hence, 88% of the country's population falls under the age of 35 years. Hence, this might be the reason that youngsters comprise a higher proportion of participants in this study.

5.2 Common method bias

Common method bias can put the validity of the survey at risk ([Podsakoff et al., 2012](#)). Hence, the VIF method suggested by [Kock \(2015\)](#) was employed to look for the common method bias.

Table 1. Respondent profile

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	240	60
Female	162	40
<i>Education</i>		
Bachelors	221	55
Post Grad	57	14
PhD	21	5
Masters	103	26
<i>Age in years</i>		
18–25	220	55
26–35	133	33
35–45	41	10
45 and above	8	2
<i>Type of tourism</i>		
Cultural	58	14
Adventure	256	64
Religious	36	9
Others	52	13

Source(s): Authors' own work

The results in [Table 2](#) show that all the VIF values for the inner model are under 3.3. If the values are under 3.3, the validity of the survey is ascertained.

5.3 Measurement model

The measurement model was assessed for reliability and validity. Brand coolness is a higher-order construct; therefore, a two-step approach was used. [Hair et al. \(2017\)](#) recommended this widely used approach.

To analyze the reliability, the PLS algorithm was run. There were nine items with outer loadings less than the threshold level of 0.7 that were deleted. Further, two items, namely BA4 and BB4, were also eliminated due to high cross-loadings. Afterward, the model was reassessed. [Table 3](#) shows the results of reliability. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were considered for testing the reliability of the scale, as they show the internal consistency of the scale. These reliability tests show the consistency of responses of the construct; Cronbach's alpha is used explicitly for the multi-point items. It is suggested that the acceptable range of the reliability tests is above 0.70 ([Sekaran, 2016](#)). The values of Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.796 to 0.930, while the values for composite reliability ranged from 0.796 to 0.936, which are larger than the acceptable value of 0.70 ([Hair et al., 2019](#)).

Table 2. Common method bias

	BC	BAd	BA	BB
BC				
BAd		2.641	1	1
BA			2.694	
BB				2.744

Source(s): Authors' own work

Table 3. Reliability and validity of measures

Construct	Items		Outer Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
<i>Brand coolness</i>				0.894	0.913	0.528
Energetic	The feel of this place is energetic	En1	0.852			
	The feel of this place is outgoing	En2	0.842			
	The feel of this place is lively	En3	0.851			
	The feel of this place is vigorous	En4	0.786			
Extraordinary	This place is superb	Ex2	0.888			
	This place is fantastic	Ex3	0.903			
	This place is extraordinary	Ex4	0.870			
Appealing	The sceneries around this place look good	Ap1	0.848			
	The place is aesthetically appealing	Ap2	0.838			
	The place is attractive	Ap3	0.900			
	The place has a really nice appearance	Ap4	0.900			
Authentic	The place and surroundings are authentic	Au1	0.841			
	The place and its culture is true to its roots	Au2	0.790			
	The place doesn't seem artificial	Au3	0.804			
	The place has a feel that it doesn't try to be something it's not	Au4	0.810			
High cultural	The place is chic	Hs1	0.777			
	The place is glamorous	Hs2	0.775			
	The place is sophisticated	Hs3	0.756			
	The place is ritzy	Hs4	0.767			
Iconic	This place is a cultural symbol	IC1	0.803			
	This place is iconic	Ic2	0.928			
Original	The feel of this place is original	Or2	0.887			
	The place looks like if it does its own thing	Or3	0.884			
Popular	The place is liked by most people	Pop1	0.825			
	The place is in-style	Pop2	0.752			
	The place is popular	Pop3	0.860			
	The place is widely accepted	Pop4	0.881			
Rebellious	The place has a feel it is rebellious	R1	0.816			
	The place is defiant	R2	0.837			
	The place is not afraid to break rules	R3	0.837			
	The place is non-conformist	R4	0.837			
Subcultural	If I visit this place, it would make me stand apart from others	Sc2	0.886			
	Going on this place helps people who visit it stand apart from the crowd	Sc3	0.886			
	The people who go to this place are unique	Sc4	0.836			
Brand associations	I am proud to visit this place	BA2	0.911	0.796	0.907	0.830
	I can easily imagine the place in my mind	BA3	0.911			
Brand beliefs	I enjoy staying at this place	BB2	0.953	0.894	0.950	0.904
	I like the way this place looks	BB3	0.948			

(continued)

Table 3. Continued

Construct	Items		Outer Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand advocacy	When I recommend this place, I always do so strongly	BAd1	0.812	0.930	0.941	0.641
	I am enthusiastic in my recommendations of this place	BAd2	0.826			
	I have only good things to say about this place	BAd3	0.792			
	When discussing this place, I urge people to consider going there	BAd4	0.854			
	Whenever there is a conversation about places to visit, I usually strongly recommend this place, without being asked	BAd5	0.822			
	I would defend this place if people were to give negative comments about it directly to me	BAd6	0.742			
	I describe this place as the best of its kind	BAd7	0.833			
	I have told more people about my positive experience at this place than I have with most other places I have visited	BAd8	0.804			
	I take the initiative to actively promote this place (e.g. passing on details about this place)	BAd10	0.712			

Source(s): Authors' own work

Table 3 also shows the results of convergent validity using outer loadings of the items and the average variance extracted (AVE). Items' loadings were greater than 0.70 and ranged from 0.712 to 0.953. The AVE values were greater than the acceptable range of 0.50. Hence, the model exhibits satisfactory reliability and convergent validity (Hair *et al.*, 2019).

5.4 Discriminant validity

To evaluate discriminant validity, previously cross-loadings and the Fornell-Larcker criterion were considered. However, according to Henseler *et al.* (2015), the HTMT ratio criterion is more rigorous than both of the aforementioned criteria, and it is sufficient to report the HTMT ratio criterion to consider discriminant validity (Muhammad and Sarwar, 2021). Table 4 shows the values of the HTMT ratio criterion to establish discriminant validity. All the values are below the required value of 0.90 as proposed by Henseler *et al.* (2015). After the measurement model's satisfaction was ascertained, the structural model was assessed.

Table 4. Discriminant validity- HTMT ratios

	BC	BAd	BA	BB
BC				
BAd	0.815			
BA	0.828	0.839		
BB	0.773	0.809	0.884	

Source(s): Authors' own work

5.5 Structural model

The coefficient of determination R^2 , effect sizes f^2 , out sample prediction (Q^2 predict), and t values were assessed for the structural model. The 5,000 subsamples bootstrapping procedure was employed to assess the t -values. The explained variance R^2 for the endogenous constructs was above 0.538, indicating a good explanatory power of the model. The results for Q^2 were greater than 0.540 are shown in Table 5. The results in Table 5 show that brand coolness has a substantial impact on brand association ($\beta = 0.733$) and brand belief ($\beta = 0.739$). Also, the results endorse the positive impact of brand coolness on brand advocacy ($\beta = 0.368$). Findings have revealed a positive relationship between brand association and brand advocacy ($\beta = 0.238$), and brand belief and brand advocacy ($\beta = 0.299$), respectively.

Table 6 shows the results of the mediation analysis. According to Preacher and Hayes (2008), mediation is supported if there is no zero between the upper and lower limits of the confidence interval. Consequently, the mediation through brand association is established as ($\beta = 0.174$), and the confidence interval had no zero (CI = 0.133, 0.312). Similarly, brand belief also mediates between brand coolness and brand advocacy ($\beta = 0.221$) (CI = 0.080, 0.267).

6. Discussion and conclusion

This study proposed and empirically tested the impact of brand coolness on brand association, brand beliefs, and brand advocacy in the tourism industry, which had not been considered. The study also investigated the mediating role of association and beliefs between brand coolness and brand advocacy of a place by considering the SOR model. The positive results of the study have suggested that brand coolness is a crucial brand attribute that captures the essence of the brands across categories, i.e. fashion, technology, destinations etc. and the researcher and managers need to use and explore the proper usage of the attribute to improve their competitive advantage. Since, the study shows the positive impact on the emotional aspects of the tourists which means brand coolness can be used to create a significant relationships with consumers that can keep brands running in the competition better than the competitors.

Table 5. Hypotheses testing

Relationship	Hypotheses	β	SD	t -values	Decisions	f^2	R^2	Q^2 predict
BC $\rightarrow$ BA	H1	0.733	0.039	18.683	Accepted	1.164	0.538	0.54
BC $\rightarrow$ BB	H2	0.739	0.043	17.019	Accepted	1.204	0.546	0.549
BC $\rightarrow$ BAdv	H3	0.368	0.05	7.363	Accepted	0.16	0.679	0.585
BA $\rightarrow$ BAdv	H4	0.238	0.064	3.741	Accepted	0.065		
BB $\rightarrow$ BAdv	H5	0.299	0.059	5.088	Accepted	0.102		

Note(s): $p < 0.0001$

Source(s): Authors' own work

Table 6. Mediation analysis

Relationship	Hypotheses	β	SD	t -values	Confidence interval		Decision
BC $\rightarrow$ BA $\rightarrow$ BAd	H6	0.174	0.047	3.697	2.50%	97.50%	Accepted
BC $\rightarrow$ BB $\rightarrow$ BAd	H7	0.221	0.045	4.871	0.133	0.312	Accepted

Note(s): $p < 0.0001$

Source(s): Authors' own work

Further, the results agree with the existing literature and theoretical support and add to the depth of the literature for researchers and practitioners to follow for better future research and practice. Brand coolness has shown a positive influence on brand association which is consistent with the argument of [Xu and Ho \(2021\)](#) that meaningful, exciting, original experiences with the destination help create positive associations. Further, these results support the notion of the SOR model, that brand coolness as a stimulus impacts brand association. Brand coolness also positively influences brand beliefs. Brand beliefs are perceptive and emotional. These findings corroborate the argument made by [Hyun et al. \(2022\)](#) that coolness evokes emotions, i.e. brand coolness evokes emotions that may allow people to change their beliefs. Further, aligned with the SOR model, the external stimulus impacts people's cognition and brings a change according to their past experiences or frame of reference. Hence, this might be another reason for the positive influence of brand coolness on brand beliefs.

Results revealed a positive and significant relationship between brand coolness and brand advocacy. These findings are consistent with the Script theory of [Tomkins \(1978\)](#), which argues that exciting and enjoyable scenes are responded to with rapid and increased energy, and good and bad scenes can be magnified and biased from positive to negative or in the opposite direction. Hence, customers might be the reason for advocating positivity and shunning negativity. Another reason might parallel the argument that brand coolness can influence behaviors (see [Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2022](#); [Koskie and Locander, 2023](#)).

Results show that brand association and brand beliefs have positively influenced brand advocacy. These findings are consistent with the notion of the SOR model ([Zhu et al., 2020](#)) that cognition and affect can elicit a behavior. Brand association is the information in the memory, hence, when tourists think about a place later they are able to differentiate it from other places ([Rios Romero et al., 2023](#)), create associations and then tend to advocate it. Similarly, beliefs are emotional, meaning when tourists emotionally connect with a place, they tend to advocate for it, for example, talking about it and recommending others to visit it passionately.

According to the results, both mediation hypotheses have been supported. Both association and beliefs positively transmit the impact of brand coolness on brand advocacy. Through the lens of the SOR model, the brand coolness of a place has been a triggering point and a stimulus that has led to changes in the minds of visitors. Due to those changes, they have created certain associations with the place and have made certain beliefs about the brand in their minds respectively. Further, both those associations and beliefs regarding the place have led them to advocate for the place to others. Another reason might be the brand coolness might be triggering a psychological stimulus for the visitors. Hence, visitors might have created certain associations with the place and have put certain beliefs about the place in their minds, respectively, and subsequently shaped the brand advocacy of the tourists.

6.1 Theoretical implications

This study has several theoretical implications. Firstly, the study tried to extend the scant literature on brand coolness by proposing and empirically testing the linkages between associations, beliefs, and advocacy as suggested ([Guerreiro et al., 2023](#); [Tiwari et al., 2021](#)). Further, most of the recent literature employs selective attributes of brand coolness, which makes the scale ambiguous. However, this study has used the full scale presented by ([Warren et al., 2019](#)), which enhances the utility of the scale and motivates more researchers to consider it. Brand coolness has shown a strong positive influence on all the study constructs, which validates the scale's usability and ability of brand coolness to influence attitudes and behaviors, extending the literature of all the constructs with a strong positive antecedent. Second, the study has enhanced brand advocacy literature by responding to the demand to identify new antecedents and has shown that both external stimuli and internal emotions can make tourists advocate a brand. Thirdly, to clarify the mechanism, this study has identified the

transmittal impact of brand coolness towards brand advocacy via brand association and brand belief, respectively, using the SOR model. Finally, as the tourism sector is getting competitive, this study has extended the budding tourism literature by identifying more brand relationships, particularly the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of tourists, which remains an important research aspect for researchers who work in the tourism sector.

6.2 Managerial implications

As the tourism industry continues to expand, destination marketers and planners are trying their best to stay relevant and promote their brands as the best. The findings of the study have revealed that brand coolness has shown a positive impact on brand association, brand beliefs, and brand advocacy. The current research has greater implications for managers who are interested in framing brand advocacy for cool destinations.

Most tourists frequently use their social media for online experiences (Wilk *et al.*, 2021) before visiting a place. To deal with such tourists, tourism managers need to use online tools like social media platforms and websites for their cool brands. To highlight the uniqueness and energetic vibe of a place, tourism managers need to arrange unique festivals and events and promote them on their social media pages to create awareness about the lively feeling of the place. Tourism managers can offer virtual tours of adventurous and rebellious places like mountains and activities like hiking, rowing, and surfing. Also, tourism planners can arrange annual or quarterly competitions based on the adventure side of the place, i.e. hiking if the area is mountainous, rowing or surfing if there are lakes and seas, etc. To highlight the aesthetically appealing places, it will be important for the managers to record the testimonials of the tourists advocating the place and use them to promote the places, as tourists in today's age trust the recommendations of other tourists rather than the service providers (Choi *et al.*, 2021).

Similarly, it is essential to maintain the originality of places that make them cool; tourism planners may plan annual cultural festivals to celebrate the authentic culture of the place. A festival is celebrated to highlight the originality and heritage of Mohenjodaro in Pakistan. The study's results suggested that tourism managers can focus on the true spirit of the place and the real vibe of the surroundings of the place while planning events. Further, tourism managers can plan certain activities that make tourists stand out and feel proud to visit the place. This can be done by organizing environmentally friendly events or exclusive activities for those tourists who revisit the place often and recommend it to others. Managers can strategize in a way to give the feel of exclusivity and glamor where tourists may be allowed to arrange their events. Such spaces, when used for recreational retreats, will fulfill the need for high status among tourists, and this will create an association with the place having a personal touch.

In terms of brand association, tourists associate themselves with the place and feel proud that they have visited it. Hence, tourism managers can offer them unique experiences by providing information about all the activities and the uniqueness of the place, which will make it easier for the tourist to rethink the place later. It is important for tourism managers and planners that the tourists advocate for the place that they have visited and spread the positive feelings they have experienced. Managers need to provide the best ambiance and experiences for the tourists, such that they recommend the place to others with full zeal. Tourists can reject negative remarks about the place from their peers. The managers need to keep in touch with the tourists and follow up with them about their visit. This can be done by using social media tools properly. Tourist providers can also share some souvenirs, offline and online postcards, with tourists to engage with them actively. In sum, this study elaborates on how managers can shape brand advocacy and increase brand associations and beliefs by highlighting the brand's coolness.

6.3 Limitations and future research

The study also acknowledges the limitations. First, the study identified only three consequences of brand coolness. In the future, the researchers can focus on identifying

more consequences, such as purchase behavior, brand resonance, and brand commitment. The study used cross-sectional data for the analysis, whereas future researchers can use longitudinal data or conduct experimental studies. Thirdly, to increase the generalizability of the study, research should be conducted in different service industries like banking and insurance. Further, for different generations and cultures, coolness may vary, for example, for Generation Z, a brand might be cool, but for the millennials, this might not be the case. Hence, studies might be considered for different generations to keep the coolness intact for the actual and potential customers.

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