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EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DESTINATION LOYALTY AND MARKETING IN TOURISM: INSIGHTS FROM STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING

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Abstract: The goal of this study is to conduct a systematic literature review on tourism, including how to reach loyal tourists and develop marketing activities. The analysis used only articles from the Scopus database (2010-2024) and was conducted following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. Appropriate criteria were set for the final analysis, and 38 publications (only articles) were selected based on them. According to the results, during the given period, the number of articles related to the field was up to 5 published annually, except for 8 articles published in 2020. The journal "Tourism Management" received 606 citations for its only article, making it the most influential journal in this field. This work contains valuable information on the directions for future research in analysing the main factors influencing destination loyalty. Also, several keywords such as "destination loyalty", "tourist satisfaction", "destination image", "marketing" and "structural equation modeling" are popular and used with a wide range of keywords.

Keywords: digital marketing, tourism, destination loyalty, destination image, tourist satisfaction, electronic word-of-mouth

1. Introduction

Destination loyalty is crucial for tourism development, increasing the competitiveness of a destination, and achieving its long-term goals [1; 2]. Also, since many marketers spend a lot of time and money on attracting new customers, having loyal customers, especially in the tourism industry, effectively reduces marketing costs and enhances competitiveness [3; 4]. Therefore, destination marketers and managers should understand what factors are important in increasing destination loyalty. According to previous studies, measuring destination loyalty requires behavioural and attitudinal loyalty assessments [5; 6; 7]. While behavioural loyalty refers to customer's repurchasing a product, particularly in the tourism industry, tourists' repeated visits to the same destination, attitudinal loyalty refers to customer's recommendation of a product to others, particularly in the tourism industry, tourists' willingness to recommend a destination to their friends or other people [5; 6; 8]. In today's digital era, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WoM), where tourists share their experiences and recommendations, is increasingly important in influencing other tourists' decisions to visit a destination. As for e-WoM,

most tourists use social media to share their experiences or find information about a destination to plan their trips. In particular, according to the statistics of 2024, two out of three tourists chose social media to search for information when planning their trips. Remarkably, social media information has caused more than half of tourists who use it to change their travel plans [9]. Since an increase in the number of loyal tourists reduces the marketing costs associated with attracting new tourists, the marketing literature has given loyalty a lot of attention for a long time [10; 11].

Therefore, this study conducts a systematic literature review to comprehensively examine recent research topics in the field and develop recommendations for hotel and destination marketing managers. A Scopus search is conducted using the keywords "marketing", "advertising", "tourism", "hospitality", "hotel", "Structural Equation Modeling", "SEM", "destination loyalty" and "tourist loyalty" to find and review the literature in the field. The purpose of this study is to (1) analyze the antecedents of destination loyalty, (2) identify ways to implement successful marketing activities in a tourism destination, and (3) determine directions for future research by examining publications in the field. A systematic literature review methodology was used to achieve these goals.

In the study, five research questions (RQ) were developed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the existing scientific research in the field under analysis:

RQ1: What is the tendency in the number of publications in the field in recent years?

RQ2: Which scholars, journals, and publications are contributing most actively to research in the field?

RQ3: What is the analysis of the most common keywords related to the field?

RQ4: What are the most studied factors (variables) influencing destination loyalty in the articles analyzed in this study?

RQ5: What are the future research directions in this field?

Conducting a literature review, this study consists of (1) Introduction, (2) Methodology, (3) Results and Discussions, (4) Implications and Limitations, and (5) Conclusions.

The introduction reviews the literature on the topic, highlights the importance of destination loyalty in marketing, and explains the research objectives. The second chapter introduces the methodology used in this work. The third chapter presents and discusses the results obtained during the study. The next chapter highlights the theoretical and practical implications and limitations of this work. The fifth chapter presents the research conclusion.

2. Methodology

This study examined documents from the Scopus database up to 2025. Since Scopus is the largest database of publications covering a wide range of topics, including books,

articles, and conference proceedings [12] and is used by many researchers to write systematic literature reviews [13; 14], this database was used to search for literature.

The following query was applied to the title, abstract, and keywords: "(TITLE-ABS-KEY (marketing OR advertis*) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (tourism OR hospitality OR hotel) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Structural Equation Modeling" OR sem) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("destination loyalty" OR "tourist loyalty")) AND PUBYEAR > 2009 AND PUBYEAR < 2025 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "SOCI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "ECON")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE , "final"))".
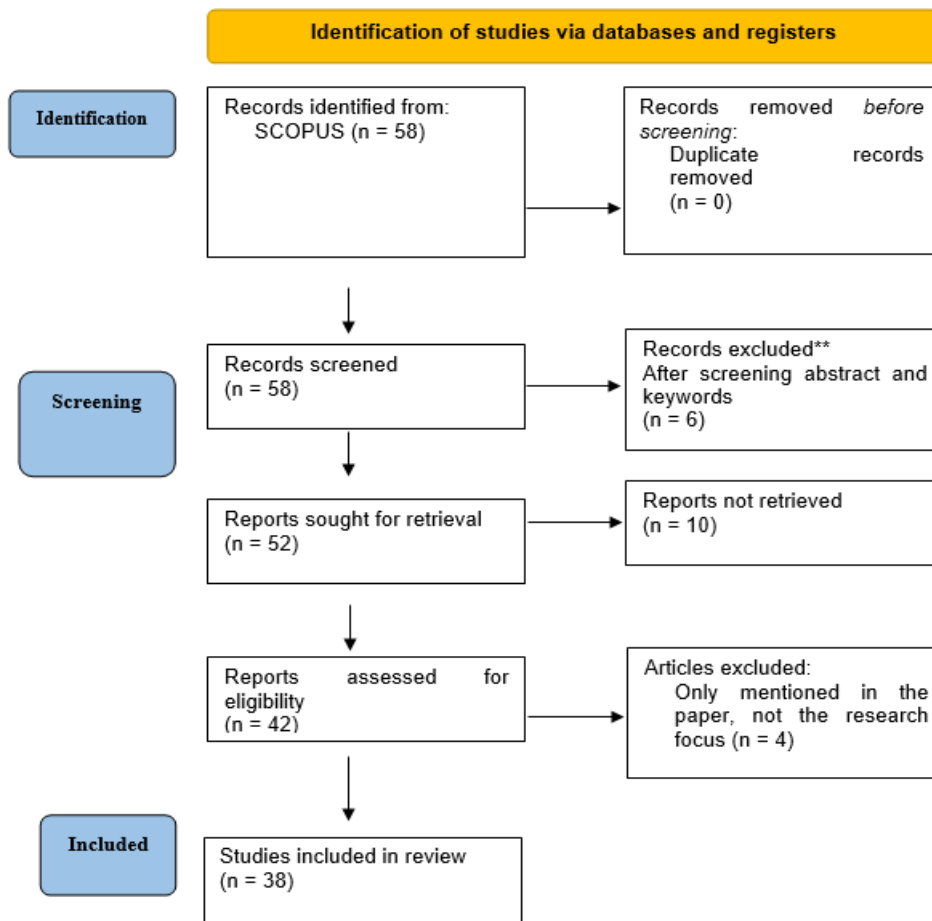
**Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram.**
Source: author's development.

In this work, filters were used based on certain criteria in the process of finding and selecting documents related to the topic. In particular, considering that 2025 has not yet ended, documents published by the end of 2024 were selected. As for fields, only documents related to "Business, Management and Accounting", "Economics, Econometrics and Finance" and "Social Sciences" were selected. There were no reviews or book chapters among the results, only articles, even though we didn't filter for them. Also, only the final stage was selected by the publication stage. According to the results, all the documents

were in English. According to the final results, 58 articles published in English between 2010 and 2024 were identified.

The document selection process is illustrated in the PRISMA diagram (Figure 1), in which there are no duplicate documents since the literature search was carried out only in one database (Scopus). In the next step of the process, abstracts and keywords were screened, and 6 documents were found to be irrelevant. After that, 10 documents were excluded because they could not be retrieved. The remaining 42 articles were reviewed in the eligibility process, and 4 documents were found to be irrelevant and excluded from the analysis. Because at this stage, the article is read in full and checked to see whether it is suitable for the aims of this study or not. Therefore, articles were excluded from the analysis because the keywords used in the search were present in the abstract or the keywords of the document, but were not the main focus of the article. According to the final results of the process, 38 articles were accepted for the final analysis.

3. Results and discussions

This section presents the results of the analysis that help answer each research question.
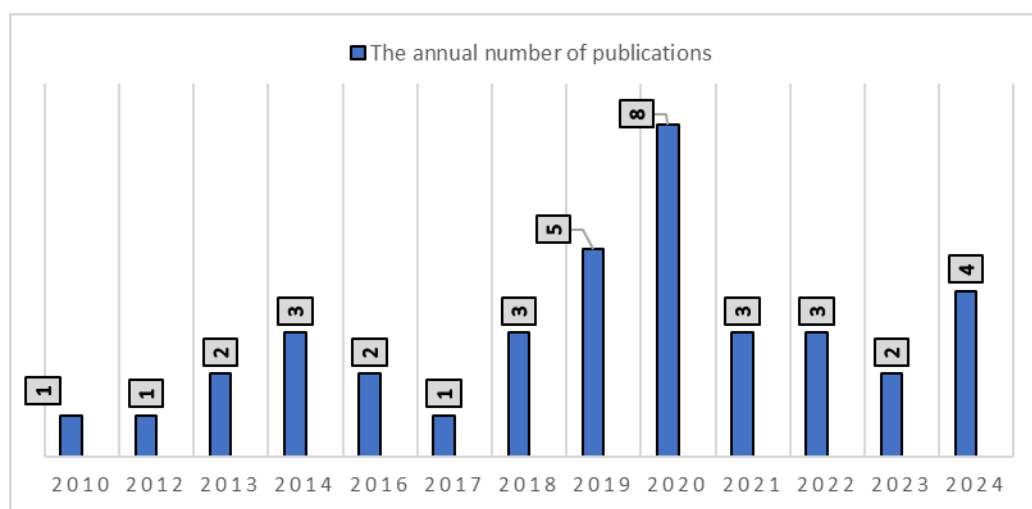
Figure 2. The distribution of publications by year.
Source: author's development.

Figure 2 shows the annual number of publications published between 2010 and 2024 and selected for this analysis. The annual number of publications fluctuated between 1 and 5 from 2010 until reaching its peak in 2020 (8 publications). After that, the figure decreased significantly, showing the same result (3 publications) every year for the next two years. After another decrease of 1 in 2023, the figure increased towards the end of the period, showing a result of 4 publications. Also, the total number of articles showed an overall growth trend over the given period, eventually reaching 38 publications. This result answers RQ1 and indicates that this field has received growing attention from scholars recently.

Table 1. List of top 10 publications by the number of citations

Authors	Topic	Published year	Journal	Total citations
Kolar T.; Zabkar V. [15]	A consumer-based model of authenticity: An oxymoron or the foundation of cultural heritage marketing?	2010	Tourism Management	606
Lee J.; Kyle G.; Scott D. [16]	The Mediating Effect of Place Attachment on the Relationship between Festival Satisfaction and Loyalty to the Festival Hosting Destination	2012	Journal of Travel Research	353
Jeong Y.; Kim S. [4]	A study of event quality, destination image, perceived value, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty among sport tourists	2020	Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics	193
Eusébio C.; Vieira A.L. [17]	Destination Attributes' Evaluation, Satisfaction and Behavioural Intentions: A Structural modeling Approach	2013	International Journal of Tourism Research	191
Lee S.W.; Xue K. [18]	A model of destination loyalty: integrating destination image and sustainable tourism	2020	Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	133
Wu C.-W. [19]	Destination loyalty modeling of the global tourism	2016	Journal of Business Research	119
Lalicic L.; Weismayer C. [20]	A model of tourists' loyalty: the case of Airbnb	2018	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology	94
Song Z.; Su X.; Liaoning Li [6]	The Indirect Effects of Destination Image on Destination Loyalty Intention Through Tourist Satisfaction and Perceived Value: The Bootstrap Approach	2013	Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing	93
Teng H.-Y.; Chen C.-Y. [5]	Enhancing celebrity fan-destination relationship in film-induced tourism: The effect of authenticity	2020	Tourism Management Perspectives	82
Hallak R.;	Re-examining the	2018	Journal of	81

Assaker G.; El-Haddad R. [21]	relationships among perceived quality, value, satisfaction, and destination loyalty: A higher-order structural model		Vacation Marketing	

Source: own elaboration.

Since citations are considered an indicator of the impact of an article or journal on the field, a high number of citations indicates that the effect of the article or journal is strong. In this regard, Table 1 shows the list of the top 10 articles among the articles studied. According to it, the article "A consumer-based model of authenticity: An oxymoron or the foundation of cultural heritage marketing?" by Kolar & Zabkar [15] was found to be the most influential article with 606 citations. The journal "Tourism Management", in which it was published, was the most influential (Table 2). The article "The Mediating Effect of Place Attachment on the Relationship between Festival Satisfaction and Loyalty to the Festival Hosting Destination" by Lee et al. [16] took second place in the list with 353 citations. "Journal of Travel Research", in which it was published, also takes second place in Table 2. The third place was taken by the article "A study of event quality, destination image, perceived value, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty among sport tourists" by Jeong & Kim [4] with 193 citations. However, "Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics", where this article was published, ranked fourth, not third, with 193 citations, as "International Journal of Tourism Research" ranked third with 2 articles and 233 citations. In terms of the published years of 10 articles in Table 1, there was only one article per year in 2010, 2012, and 2016 (3 articles in total), two articles per year in 2013 and 2018 (4 articles in total), and three articles in 2020 alone.

Table 2. List of most cited journals (>= 10 citations)

Journal	Total citations	Total publications
Tourism Management	606	1
Journal of Travel Research	353	1
International Journal of Tourism Research	233	2
Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics	193	1
Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	175	2
Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing	164	2
Tourism Management Perspectives	130	2
Journal of Business Research	119	1
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology	94	1
Journal of Vacation Marketing	81	1
Current Issues in Tourism	59	1
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights	57	1
Ecological Economics	47	1
Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality and	37	2

Tourism		
British Food Journal	32	1
Journal of Islamic Marketing	28	1
Journal of Sport and Tourism	18	1
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	17	1
Sustainability (Switzerland)	16	2
International Journal of Tourism Cities	15	1
Journal of Eastern European and Central Asian Research	14	1
International Journal of Tourism Policy	11	1
Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism	10	1

Source: own elaboration.

Also, if we analyze the articles with more than 100 citations, there are 6 of them in total, and the total number of citations related to them is 1595, which is 82.0% of the total 1945 citations related to the 10 articles listed in Table 1, and 63.0% of the total 2533 citations related to the 38 articles analyzed in this article. As for the journals with more than 100 citations, there are 8 of them in total, the number of articles related to them is 12, and they have a total of 1973 citations, which is 77.9% of the total 2533 citations related to the 38 articles analyzed in this article. These results indicate the strength of the influence of the listed journals, articles, and their authors on the field and answer RQ2.
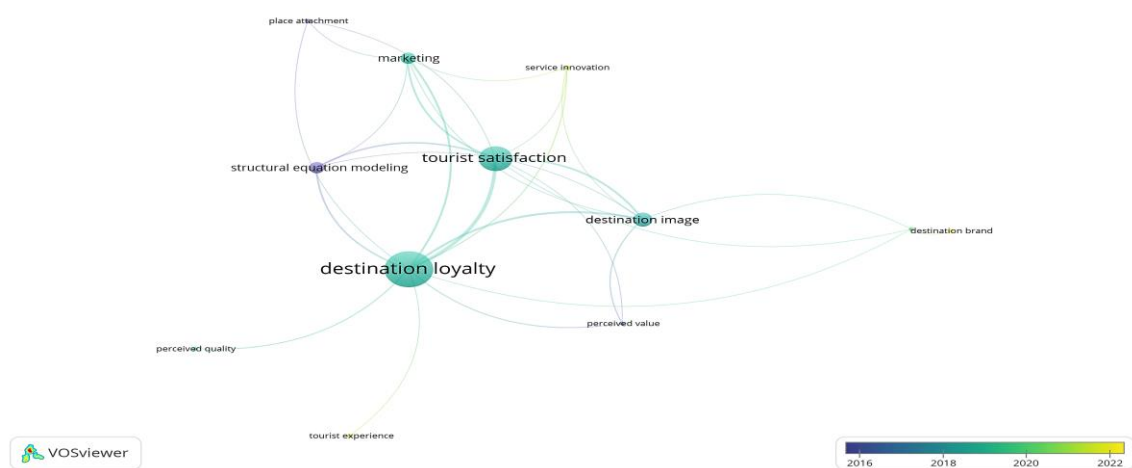
Figure 3. Snapshot of authors' keywords (>=2 occurrences)
Source: own elaboration.

By comprehensively examining the co-occurrence of keywords in selected articles via VOS viewer software (version 1.6.20), this work could find an answer to RQ3. Figure 3 shows keywords colour-coded by publication period. Both the size of the keywords and the size of the circles that correspond to them indicate how attractive the keywords are. The results in Table 3 also help us understand the data in Figure 3. For instance, the word "destination loyalty" is at the top of the list by having the highest amount in terms of both

total link strength (45) and occurrences (29). Therefore, in Figure 3, its size is written in larger letters, and the circle's size is also larger than the circles representing the other words. As for the colours, the colour of the circles representing the words indicates the period in which they were used most. For example, "destination loyalty" is represented in emerald colour, which is used most between 2018 and 2020. The second most popular keyword in Table 3, "tourist satisfaction", also showed high scores (37 total link strength and 18 occurrences), and the colour of the circle representing it is the same as "destination loyalty". Likewise, the keywords "destination image" and "marketing" are also in the same colour as "destination loyalty", indicating that they were used more frequently between 2018 and 2020. Moreover, the keywords "service innovation" and "tourist experience", coloured green, gained popularity between 2020 and 2021, while the word "destination brand", expressed in yellow, received more attention from scholars in 2022.

Table 3. Top authors' keywords (>=2 total link strength)

Keyword	Occurrences	Total link strength
Destination loyalty	29	45
Tourist satisfaction	18	37
Destination image	9	21
Marketing	7	15
Structural equation modelling	7	11
Perceived value	2	5
Service innovation	2	5
Tourism	2	4
Place attachment	2	3
Perceived quality	2	2

Source: own elaboration.

The results of keyword co-occurrence shown in Figure 3 were obtained using VOSviewer software with the minimum number of keyword co-occurrences set to 2, and 10 out of 128 keywords fell within this range. This methodology is valuable in highlighting the main findings of this analysis and assessing thematic trends in the analysis of destination loyalty antecedents and their relationship to marketing. It should be noted that the frequency with which keywords co-occur indicates how closely related they are to each other [22]. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 3, which describes the 10 keywords that meet the analysis criteria in terms of their total link strength and shows their frequency of co-occurrence. In particular, "destination loyalty" tops the list with 29 occurrences and 45 total link strengths, while "tourist satisfaction" with 18 occurrences and 37 total link strengths and "destination image" with 9 occurrences and 21 total link strengths are in second and third place, respectively. Also, "marketing" with 7 occurrences

and 15 total link strengths continues the list, followed by "structural equation modeling" with 7 occurrences and 11 total link strengths. The other keywords, such as "perceived value", "service innovation", "tourism", "place attachment" and "perceived quality" showed the same occurrences (2) but different amounts of total link strength (5, 5, 4, 3 and 2 respectively). The 5 keywords, which have total link strength scores above 10, are strongly associated with a wide range of keywords related to the topic being analyzed.

Table 4. List of variables examined by the top 10 most cited articles among the selected articles in this study.

Article	Variables	How "destination loyalty" appears in the model
Kolar & Zabkar (2010)	• Cultural motivation • Object-based authenticity • Existential authenticity	Loyalty
Lee et al. (2012)	• Festival satisfaction • Place attachment	Destination loyalty (dimensions: 1. Revisit intention; 2. WOM; 3. Destination preference)
Jeong & Kim (2020)	• Event quality • Destination image • Perceived value • Tourist satisfaction	Destination loyalty
Eusebio & Vieira (2011)	• Evaluation of destinations' attributes • Overall satisfaction	Destination loyalty (dimensions: 1. Likelihood of recommendation 2. Likelihood of future visits)
Lee & Xue (2020)	• Cultural image • Environmental image • Socioeconomic image • Tourist satisfaction	Destination loyalty
Wu (2015)	• Destination image • Consumer experience • Satisfaction	Destination loyalty

Lalicic & Weismayer (2018)	• Service quality • Hospitality hosting behaviour • Perceived risk reduction • Economic appeal • Social authentic appeal	Loyalty
Song et al. (2013)	• Destination image • Perceived value • Tourist satisfaction	Destination loyalty intention
Teng & Chen (2020)	• Constructivist authenticity • Existential authenticity • Celebrity attachment	Destination loyalty
Hallak et al. (2017)	• Natural and well-known attractions • Variety of tourist services • Quality of general tourist atmosphere • Entertainment and recreation • General environment • Accessibility • Perceived quality • Perceived value • Satisfaction	Loyalty

Source: own elaboration.

Table 4 illustrates the list of variables which are studied by the top 10 most cited articles and answers RQ4. According to Table 4, the variables used twice or more were: tourist satisfaction (used 7 times but appeared as tourist satisfaction, overall satisfaction, satisfaction and festival satisfaction), destination image (used 6 times but appeared as cultural image, environmental image, socioeconomic image and destination image), perceived value (used 3 times) and existential authenticity (used twice). The remaining

variables were used once. Therefore, the most studied variables that influence destination loyalty are tourist satisfaction, destination image, and perceived value.

This research tries to better explain the factors which influence destination loyalty by mentioning the models proposed in the top 3 most cited articles. In particular, Kolar & Zabkar [15] studied the relationship between two types of authentic experiences (object-based and existential authenticity) and found that object-based authenticity positively influences existential authenticity. In their model, the authors examined cultural motivation (as the antecedent of these two types of authenticity) and destination loyalty (as the consequence of these two types of authenticity), and found that there were significant relationships between them (Figure 4). In addition, the authors discussed the similarities between tourist satisfaction and authenticity and concluded that there are similarities between them, which is useful in understanding how tourists evaluate authenticity and how this affects destination loyalty in the context of cultural tourism. Therefore, destination managers and marketers need to consider how tourists perceive and evaluate object-based and existential authenticity to conduct successful marketing activities and achieve tourist loyalty. They believe that tourism service providers should focus more on the value that a product or service provides to tourists, rather than on their attributes, and try to convey more information about this to tourists. Therefore, marketers should try to improve tourists' perceptions of existential authenticity by using innovative approaches such as storytelling. It might be appropriate to mention that storytelling could encourage tourists to visit a destination by providing them with stories, which is important to achieve their loyalty to the destination [23; 24].
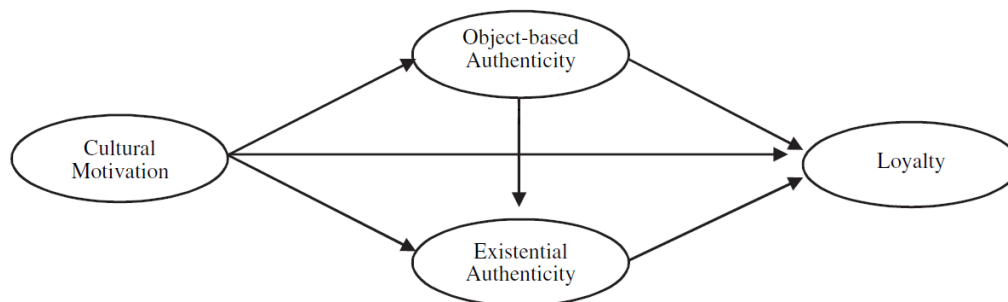
Figure 4. A proposed model by Kolar & Zabkar [15].
Source: Kolar & Zabkar [15].

Lee et al. [16] examined whether festival satisfaction influences destination loyalty directly and indirectly through the mediation of place attachment. The authors studied place attachment through its dimensions, such as place identity, social bonding and place dependence, and destination loyalty through its dimensions, such as WOM, place preference, and revisit intentions. It is concluded that place attachment mediates the relationship between festival satisfaction and destination loyalty (Figure 5). In particular, festival satisfaction has a positive effect on two dimensions of place attachment, such as place identity/social bonding and place dependence. In turn, the influence of the dimensions of place attachment on all dimensions of destination loyalty was not determined. For example, place identity/social bonding has a positive effect only on revisit intention, while place dependence has a strong positive effect on the other two dimensions

(WOM and destination preference). In other words, visitors who are satisfied with a destination due to social interaction tend to revisit the destination, while visitors who are satisfied with a destination due to the possibility of fulfilling their desires prefer it over other places and spread positive WOM about it, but rarely revisit. It can be understood that destination attributes that match people's desires do not guarantee their return visit. Therefore, it is important for festival organizers to effectively arrange attributes that enhance shared experience in the destination to encourage visitors to revisit. Regarding the direct influence of festival satisfaction on destination loyalty, it was found that it only positively affects destination preference and does not affect the other dimensions. It is noteworthy that tourists prefer destinations over others due to spatial attributes rather than a satisfying experience at the festival. In general, festival satisfaction directly positively affects destination preference and indirectly affects the other two dimensions of destination loyalty through the mediation of the dimensions of place attachment.
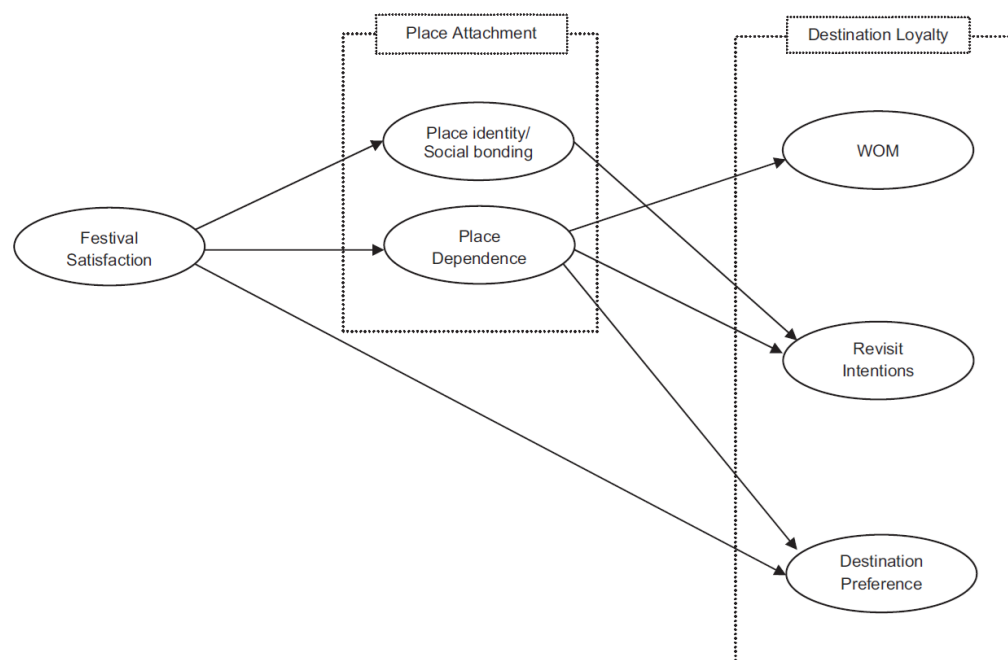

Figure 5. A proposed model by Lee et al. [16].
Source: Lee et al. [16].

Jeong & Kim [4] suggested that four latent dimensions of event quality, such as game quality, interaction quality, outcome quality and physical environment quality, should be considered in managing tourism destination image and organising events. According to their conclusion, event quality significantly influenced destination image, perceived value and tourist satisfaction, while destination image and perceived value significantly affected tourist satisfaction. As a main outcome, destination loyalty was influenced by destination image, perceived value and tourist satisfaction (Figure 6). Therefore, the authors suggest destination marketers support more sporting events financially to achieve tourist loyalty. They focused on the mediating effect of tourist satisfaction on the relationship between destination image and destination loyalty, and between perceived value and destination loyalty. Also, different marketing strategies, including small-scale and large-scale sporting events, were recommended to stimulate destination image, perceived value, tourist

satisfaction and destination loyalty by making sports tourists loyal and achieving a competitive advantage.
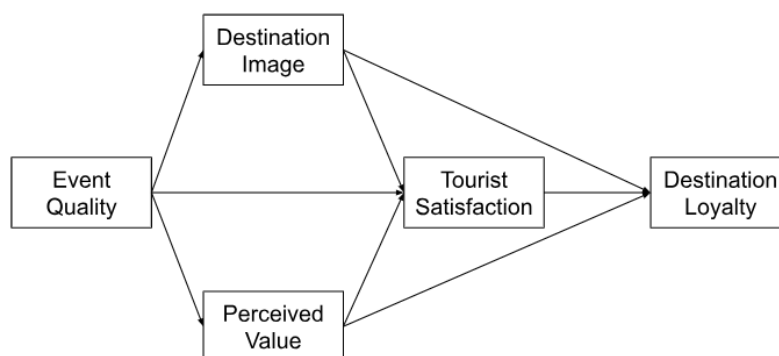

Figure 6. A proposed model by Jeong & Kim [4].
Source: Jeong & Kim [4].

As for identifying future research directions (RQ5), the suggestions made by the most recently published articles among the top 10 most cited articles have been considered. Jeong & Kim [4] suggested investigating other potential variables such as event image, perceived risks, destination familiarity and identification and novelty-seeking to better understand the factors that drive tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. Also, it is mentioned that place attachment should be investigated as a mediator in the relationship between destination image and destination loyalty and between perceived value and destination loyalty. Future research is recommended by Lee & Xue [18] to examine how residents' perceptions of the impact of tourism on their community or the destination they live in affect tourists' willingness to recommend or revisit the destination. The authors also suggest that future research could explore how residents' quality of life and tourists' motivation to participate in sustainable tourism activities affect tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. Examining the relationship between authenticity and destination loyalty by employing a longitudinal research design is suggested for future research by Teng & Chen [5]. According to them, how country image and cultural familiarity influence viewers' intention to visit film destinations could be investigated in future studies.

4. Implications and limitations

This article analyzes how to achieve tourism destination loyalty, identifies the factors that affect it, and develops marketing activities through it. In addition, it helps managers and marketers of tourist destinations to conduct successful marketing activities, how to solve the problems encountered in this regard and achieve the long-term goals of the destination by achieving tourist loyalty. In particular, this article provides important information for marketing managers by formulating a list of factors that affect destination loyalty. Regarding the theoretical contribution of this work, it enriches the relevant literature by analyzing the most cited literature in this field that has studied the factors that affect destination loyalty in the form of an SEM model. The conclusions of this study on the analysis of variables such as event image, perceived risks, destination familiarity,

novelty-seeking, tourist satisfaction, place attachment, destination image, perceived value, residents' perceptions of tourism, residents' quality of life, tourists' motivation, authenticity and cultural familiarity in conceptual models that analyze factors affecting destination loyalty in different roles (e.g., dependent variable, independent variable, moderator or mediator) contribute to identifying directions for future research in the field. It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, namely it (1) searched publications using only the Scopus database; (2) analyzed articles published only in English; (3) examined articles analyzed using only the structural equation modeling method; (4) focused on the destination loyalty variable in destination marketing activities. Therefore, analyzing studies published in other databases, studying articles published in languages other than English, studying articles using methodologies other than structural equation modeling, and analyzing the impact of variables other than destination loyalty on marketing activities can further improve the results of this study and help destination marketers make the right decisions.

5. Conclusions

It is recognized that destination loyalty is important for achieving the long-term goals of a destination and for conducting successful marketing activities. This study analyzed 38 articles, which were retrieved from the Scopus database, to examine the antecedents of destination loyalty and their contribution to improving destination marketing activities. The number of articles in this field was between 1 and 5 per year for the last 15 years (between 2010 and 2024), reaching its peak (8 articles) only in 2020. Moreover, the results showed that the most influential article in this field was the article by Kolar & Zabkar [15] on the topic "A consumer-based model of authenticity: An oxymoron or the foundation of cultural heritage marketing?", which has 606 citations. The journal "Tourism Management", where this article was published, was considered the most influential journal in terms of citations to this article. Keywords such as "destination loyalty", "tourist satisfaction", "destination image", "marketing" and "structural equation modeling", which have total link strengths scores above 10, are popular and strongly associated with a wide range of keywords in the field. According to the analysis of the articles selected based on the criteria entered in the Scopus database search, the variables tourist satisfaction, destination image, perceived value and existential authenticity are the most studied variables. From this result, it can be concluded that among the factors affecting destination loyalty, the influence of these factors is strong. In addition, destination loyalty significantly contributes to the dissemination of positive e-WoM about the destination. The development of information technologies affects the attitude of tourists to the destination, and it can be seen that tourists use information technologies at almost all stages of the trip (before the trip, during the trip and after the trip). In turn, tourists share their experiences on social networks during and after the trip, and their satisfaction with the trip and the destination image determine whether the e-WoM they disseminate is positive or negative. From the above, it can be concluded that tourist satisfaction and a positive destination image increase the number of loyal tourists, who spread positive e-WoM about the destination. In other words, marketing activities can be successful through both destination loyalty and e-WoM, which shows that traditional and

digital marketing activities should be carried out together and are important for the success of the destination.

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