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Stronger Together? Tourists' Behavioral Responses
to Joint Brand Advertising
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Abstract

Drawing on collaboration theory, this research investigates the effect of joint vs. single brand
advertising on tourists' behavioral responses with two experiments. Study 1 employs a field
experiment to examine the effect of joint brand advertising on the tourist's actual information
search behavior. Study 2 uses a laboratory experiment to investigate the effect of joint brand
advertising on tourists' intention to visit a destination and measures whether this relationship
is mediated by product interest. Study 1 suggests that, compared to single brand advertising,
joint brand advertising increases tourists' search behavior. Study 2 shows that joint brand
advertising stimulates product interest, which in turn, increases tourists' intention to visit.
The mediating role of product interest disappears when a destination brand forms a
partnership with a lesser-reputed travel intermediary brand. The research provides
implications for theory development in the area of tourism advertising, whilst also identifying
best practices for advertisers on how to optimize the effectiveness of their campaigns.

Keywords: Collaboration, joint brand advertising, product interest, brand reputation,
behavioral response, field experiment

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INTRODUCTION

Firms in the service sector enter into collaborative marketing with the purpose of leveraging scarce resources and accomplishing common goals. Joint brand advertising, a form of brand alliance, has become one of the most popular collaborative marketing tools. It refers to where two brands deliberately feature together in an advertisement (Samu, Krishnan and Smith 1999; Lee and Shen 2009). This phenomenon is becoming more popular, particularly for multi-actor service ecosystems, such as tourism. For instance, Brand USA (thebrandusa.com) works in close partnership with its partner organizations, such as TripAdvisor or Expedia, to promote the United States as a premium travel destination (Zavattaro and Fay 2019).

Destination advertising effectiveness is increasingly critical to improve the competitiveness of destinations (de Souza, Mendes-Fihlo, Buhalis, 2020). Different tourism supply stakeholders enter into marketing collaborations to develop better tourism products, attract more interest, and enhance tourism experiences (Kozak and Buhalis 2019; Buhalis and Leung 2018; Mariani et al. 2014). When a destination promotional offer contains a branded premium, consumers respond favorably to its brand name (Wang, Japutra, and Molinillo 2020; Molinillo, Liébana-Cabanillas, Anaya-Sánchez, & Buhalis, 2018). Joint brand advertising is a common practice in tourism, with the industry operating as a collaboration of different entities within an ecosystem (Mistilis, Buhalis, and Gretzel 2014; Inversini and Buhalis 2009). Typically, tour operators advertise jointly with National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) (i.e. VisitBritain), whilst hotels jointly advertise with Destination

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Management Organizations (DMOs) (i.e. public and private tourist offices) or Destination

Management Companies (DMCs) (i.e. Convention and Visitor Bureaus) (Buhalis 2000;

Buhalis and Crotts 2000). Within this context, for example, TUI, as Europe's largest tour

operator and the Greek Tourist Board, promoting Greece as a tourism destination brand, have

been collaborating to lure potential tourists (Bastakis, Buhalis, Butler 2004).

Wang et al. (2013) argue that collaborative marketing between public organizations and

private brands offers a number of benefits for both parties, such as cost savings, access to

target markets, achieving targets and higher brand awareness. Since most DMOs cannot reach

a vast number of potential visitors through their own promotion campaigns, they search for

collaborative marketing opportunities (i.e., brand alliances) with private sector partners

(Middleton et al. 2009). In collaborative tourism marketing, DMOs and travel intermediaries,

such as Tour Operators (TOs) and Travel Agencies (TAs), support joint brand advertising

campaigns as part of the tourism distribution channel (Buhalis and Laws 2001). In a typical

joint brand advertising campaign, DMOs contribute up to 50% of the total advertising cost

and various promotional tools, such as free holidays or draws for tourism events and/or tours.

As this type of marketing collaboration is typically sourced by taxpayers' money, joint brand

advertising must deliver good value for money.

Despite the popularity of marketing collaboration and brand alliances in tourism, there is a

dearth of studies assessing the effect of joint brand advertising on tourists' behavioral

responses (Zapata and Hall 2012; Newmeyer et al. 2018). Measuring the impact of joint

brand advertising on tourists' behavioral responses is critical, because presenting an

additional brand in an advertisement may stimulate the tourist's interest in tourism products

and intention to purchase (Benur and Bramwell 2015). For DMOs, whether or not the

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reputation of a brand partner has an influence on tourists' behavioral responses is an unanswered research question as yet. This research is the first investigation aimed at examining the underlying psychological mechanism behind the effect of joint brand advertising (vs. single brand advertising) on tourists' behavioral responses. The aim is to provide marketing professionals with a coherent analysis of the potential benefits of joint advertising.

This research provides a number of theoretical and practical contributions. First, it evaluates the effect of joint brand versus single brand advertising on tourists' information search behavior. Previous studies (e.g., McKinney, Hazeldine, and Chawla 2009) have advocated the benefits of joint brand advertising, but there has been no empirical investigation examining this effect through actual behavioral response in tourism. Second, the study contributes to the live debate in advertising best practice (see Nguyen et al. 2018, 2020). We investigate whether partnering with a lesser or highly-reputed travel intermediary brand evokes product interest and if so, whether this has a favorable influence on the tourist's intention to visit behavior directly or through product interest. Hence, this research provides new insights into brand partner selection and regarding the effectiveness of the brand partnership advertising strategy (Aujla and Kaur 2017). It also provides understanding that decision makers could utilize when handling advertising budgets and when making decisions regarding strategic branding alliances.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Collaboration theory derives from the seminal work of Gray (1989, p. 5), who defines collaboration as "a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can

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constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible". Gray and Wood (1991) and then Palmer and Bejou (1995) identify several perspectives to explain business collaboration. They find that entities collaborate to share resources and relations along with cutting overall costs. Since acting individually may prove difficult due to the growing complexity and fragmentation of markets, collaborative arrangements are a valuable solution (Fyall and Garrod 2005). The term collaboration originates from the Latin word collaborare "to work with", from com - "with" (if it precedes begins with 'l,' 'com' it becomes 'col') + laborare "to work". The converse is working alone.

A key element of marketing collaboration and brand alliances is the efficiency of working together with partners to achieve a mutually desirable goal (Buhalis and Crotts 2000). Brands require a positive reputation, which is articulated with the aggregate perception of outsiders on the salient characteristics of companies and associations. Brand reputation is something that organizations earn over time and refers to how various audiences evaluate the brand (Veloutsou and Moutinho 2009). Fetscherin et al. (2019) explore the latest research on brand relationships, in particular on the key consumer–brand relationship terms. Their work discusses brand love, brand like, brand hate, brand dislike and brand indifference. Brands emerge as strategic assets that generate value for multiple actors and stakeholders through brand co-creation (Veloutsou and Guzman 2017). Osuna Ramírez, Veloutsou, and Morgan-Thomas (2019) contend that parties co-create value, as the brand community has constant exchanges that form their identities. The evolution of brand management over the past 25 years demonstrates that brands have evolved from transactional tools managed from within companies to entities co-created with others (Fetscherin et al. 2019; Fernandes and Moreira 2019).

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Brand alliance is a marketing arrangement, where multiple brand names are used for a specific good, service or advertisement (Chang 2009). As one of the most popular types of collaboration, a brand alliance involves the pairing of two brands to create a single proposition (Cornelis 2010). It helps to signal the quality of the brand and creates awareness for lesser-reputed brands (Rao and Ruekert 1994; Helmig, Huber, and Leeflang 2008). Baumgarth (2004) shows that alliances have a positive influence on each of the partnering brands. Romaniuk (2013) argues that the presence of a second brand in one advertisement creates more competition for consumer attention, and runs the risk of stealing the brand's spotlight, leaving a lingering question on the true effectiveness of the brand alliance.

Joint brand advertising is one form of brand alliance that deliberately brings together at least two brands in the same advertisement to share advertising cost and promote products. In tourism, DMOs and travel intermediaries collaborate on promotional activities. A typical joint brand advertising visual in tourism can include two brand logos, brand proposition or brand slogan, and/or brand information. Despite joint brand advertising having been used as a collaborative marketing tool since the mid-1990s, Table 1 shows that only a limited number of studies have investigated its application in tourism (i.e., McKinney et al. 2009; Park and Nicolau 2015; Pisierra, McKinney, and Chawla et al. 1999). The effects of joint branding on tourist behavior and whether these effects change according to the brand's reputation are under-researched. For this study, product interest is proposed as a potential mediator to explain the relationship between joint brand advertising and the intention of tourists to visit. There is also examination as to whether or not the influence of joint brand advertising differs according to the partner brand's reputation.

Table 1. Research on joint (versus single) brand advertising in the tourism advertising literature.

Authors	Partners	Term(s) Used	Methodology	Country (Sample Size)	Findings
Pisierra, McKinney, and Chawla 1999	Towns and business entities	Cooperative; collaborative	Mixed methods (statistical analysis system)	United States (172)	Cooperative advertising results in positive benefits for areas concentrating on historical, cultural, and/or recreational activities, despite size or location of cities/towns.
McKinney, Hazeldine, and Chawla 2009	Cities/towns and business entities	Cooperative	Lab experiment	United States (212)	Cooperative advertising results in higher likelihood of visiting for small cities/towns, especially for historical and average-type areas. Visitor preferences increase in situations where consumers perceive advertisements having low levels of effectiveness.
Park and Nicolau 2015	A hotel and a restaurant	Joint and cooperative	Random coefficient multinomial logit model	United States (11,278)	Joint advertising has a positive influence on intention to visit.
Own study	A destination and a travel intermediary	Joint brand	Field experiment + lab experiment	United Kingdom (121,304; 180)	Joint brand advertising (compared to single brand advertising) has a positive impact on tourists' behavioral response. This effect is explained by an enhanced product interest which takes effect when joining a highly reputed brand.

The Effect of Joint Brand Advertising on Tourists' Behavioral Response

Brands are symbolically represented through their name and logo (Foroudi 2019). When these appear in the advertisement, they tend to have a higher effect on consumer choice than advertisements not having these features (Baker, Honea, and Russell 2004). Kraus and Gierl (2017) demonstrate that the use of a logo results in a more favorable perception of brand cooperation and higher perceptions of product quality in the brand alliance. Using specific brand elements in advertisements, such as the brand logo and name, helps consumers to identify with the brand (Riaz and Ahmed 2016) and to receive the advertising message better (Kohli, Suri, and Thakor 2002; Rossiter and Percy 2017). A well-designed advertisement (e.g., featuring an additional brand) influences consumers' cognitive responses (Shaouf 2018), including their information processing behavior (Gurrea, Orus, and Flavian 2013; Gursoy and McCleary 2004). The name or the logo of a DMO signals information about the tourism product and offers an official seal of approval for the destination quality. Including the logo of a travel intermediary in an advertisement can provide additional cues and stimulate information search behavior for tourism destinations. Thus, displaying both the DMO and travel intermediary brands in an advert may stimulate the actual behavioral

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responses of potential tourists (i.e., clicking on the online advert to get more information about the advertised product). McKinney et al. (2009) argue that joint brand advertising influences the traveler's propensity to visit cities that have historical, cultural heritage and recreational facilities. According to Park and Nicolau (2015), joint brand advertising has a positive influence on tourists' intention to visit a tourism destination.

We postulate that displaying both partnering brands in an advertisement presents a much higher favorable association with a destination than presenting a single one. The appearance of a travel intermediary brand in a joint brand advertisement is expected to trigger tourists' information search behavior for the destination. When tourists aspire to take a holiday towards a particular destination, they can attain this goal through clicking on the advert and, as a result, they learn more about the advertised product or the offer. Hence, we propose that:

H1: Compared to single brand advertising, joint brand advertising increases tourists' behavioral responses (i.e., information search and intention to visit a destination).

The Mediating Role of Product Interest

Product interest refers to "consumers' interest in specific attributes of the product" (Kulkarni, Kannan, and Moe 2002, p. 605). Effective marketing communications enhance consumers' interest in the product (Scheinbaum, Hampel, and Kang 2017). Joint brand advertising can stimulate consumers' interest in the advertised products for a variety of reasons, including i) curiosity about the two independent brands appearing in the same advertisement (Litman 2007) and ii) signaling quality for the alliance product (Kraus and Gierl 2017). Brand associations are the meaningful brand attributes that come to the mind (Jeon and Baeck 2016; del Rio, Vazquez, and Iglesias 2001). They assist consumers in processing and retrieving brand related information as well as building a positive response

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towards a brand, thereby influencing purchasing behavior (Vriens, Chen, and Schomaker 2019). Consumers may associate brands with specific brand features, past experiences, or a logo (John et al. 2006).

The strength of the brand association depends on the consumer's processing of the quality and quantity of the brand information. That is, the stronger the brand association, the deeper consumers process the brand information and the higher the interest in the advertised product. Also, consumers' information processing differs in relation to such adverts due to brand reputation. Exposure to an advertisement elicits emotional arousal (Bakalash and Riemer 2013), which activates curiosity-related exploratory behaviors (Sung et al. 2016), such as information seeking (cognitive curiosity) (Litman 2007). Hence, a highly reputed brand logo may stimulate high interest in the advertised product and motivate consumers to search for more information pertaining to the product (Bloch 1986). A favorable brand association can result in the success of a marketing program (Vriens et al. 2019). The stronger (weaker) the association consumers have with a brand as a result of joint brand advertising, the higher (lower) the interest toward the product advertised.

Compared to single brand advertising, featuring of an additional travel intermediary brand should attract product interest. This could be due to increased synergy or the combined effect of joint branding (Chen et al. 2020). It is proposed here that the appearance of a travel intermediary brand in the same advertisement helps to increase the tourist's interest in the destination. The higher the interest in the product, the better the advertising performance (Hoch and Deighton 1989). Furthermore, we posit that increased consumer interest in the destination depends on the travel intermediary brand's reputation. Joint brand advertising is expected to have a stronger interest in the tourism destination-oriented product, when the partnership is formed with a highly-reputed travel intermediary brand. According to Rogers

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(2003), interest towards a product is a key determinant of behavioral responses to that

product. Within the tourism context, we expect that product interest predicts tourists'

intentions to visit behavior. Stated formally,

> **H2:** The effect of joint advertising on product interest and tourists' intention to visit is
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> contingent on the partner brands' reputation: Product interest mediates the relationship
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> between joint brand advertising and tourists' intention to visit more when a partnership
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> is established with a highly-reputed travel intermediary brand than with a lesser-reputed
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> one.

The Conceptual Model

Acting on these theoretical backdrops, Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework for this

study.

The experiments revolve around two studies. Study 1 investigates whether the type of

advertisement (joint versus single brand advertising) predicts tourists' actual behavior, in the

form of information search behavior (H1), through a field experiment. Study 2 is a lab

experiment that examines whether product interest mediates the effect of joint brand

advertising on tourists' intention to visit a destination. It investigates whether the positive

impact of joint advertising holds at different levels of brand reputation (H2). As discussed by

Viglia and Dolnicar (2020), a two-stage complementary experimental research design is

essential for probing the theory and establishing external validity of the results. The field

experiment (Study 1) examines tourists' behavioral responses to joint brand advertising

through actual information search behavior in a real-life setting, whilst the lab experiment

(Study 2) investigates the psychosocial process behind tourists' intention to visit through

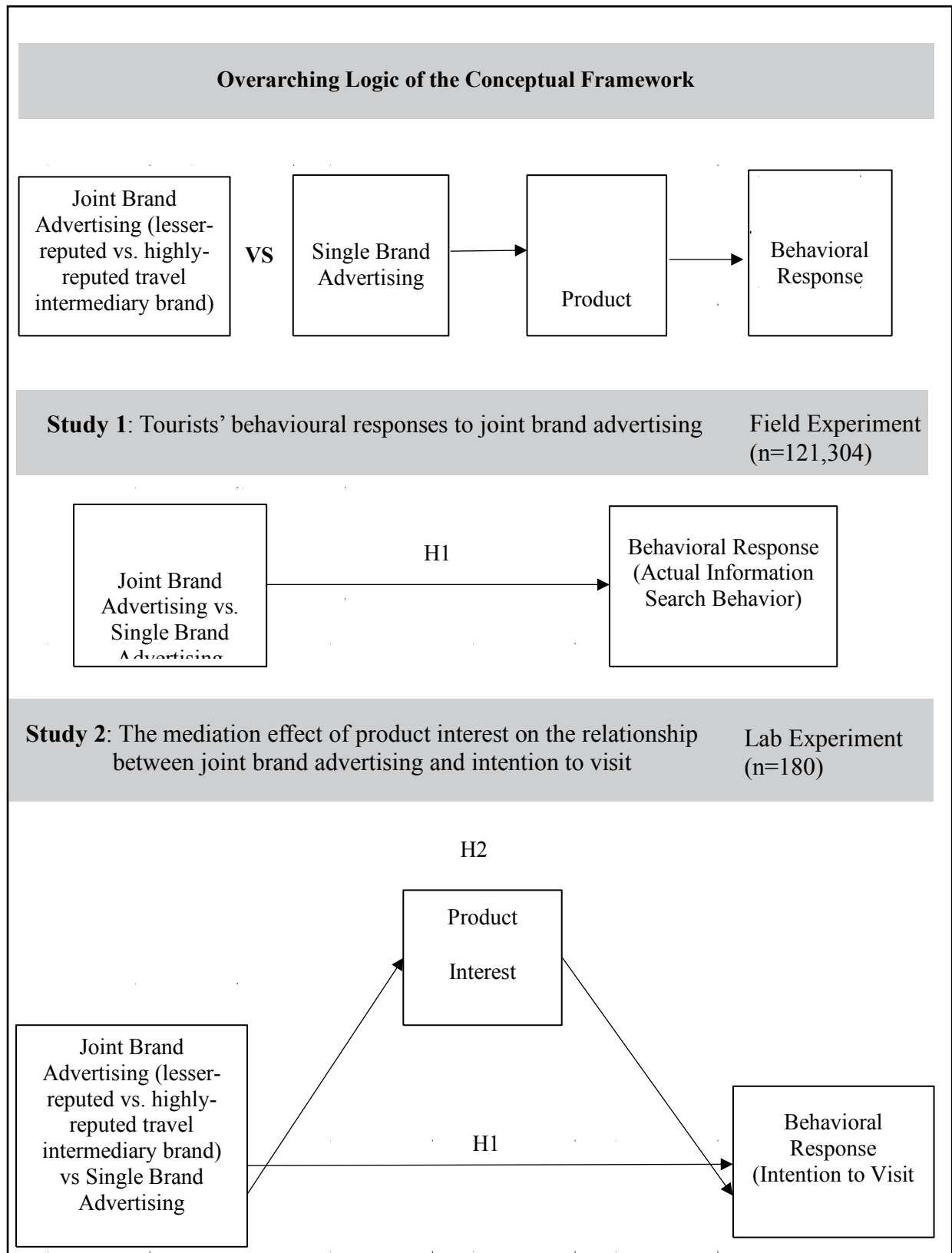product interest and partner brand reputation.

Overarching Logic of the Conceptual Framework

Joint Brand Advertising (lesser-reputed vs. highly-reputed travel intermediary brand) **VS** Single Brand Advertising → Product → Behavioral Response

Study 1: Tourists' behavioural responses to joint brand advertising   Field Experiment (n=121,304)

Joint Brand Advertising vs. Single Brand Advertising → H1 → Behavioral Response (Actual Information Search Behavior)

Study 2: The mediation effect of product interest on the relationship between joint brand advertising and intention to visit   Lab Experiment (n=180)

H2

Product Interest

Joint Brand Advertising (lesser-reputed vs. highly-reputed travel intermediary brand) vs Single Brand Advertising → H1 → Behavioral Response (Intention to Visit

FIG. 1. The conceptual framework

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STUDY 1: Field Experiment

Method

The purpose of Study 1 is to examine tourists' actual behavioral responses to joint brand advertising in a natural environment. For the field experiment, we used display banner advertisements utilized by the Google Display Network. As the goal of the first experiment was to test the effect of joint brand advertising compared to single brand advertising on information search behavior, two types of advertisement banners were created as stimuli. For the single advertisement, we used a logo of the DMO (Turkey Home) and for the joint brand one the same DMO and the travel intermediary (Gulet Holidays) were deployed, as shown in Figure 2. To avoid any confounding effect, the advertising banners did not contain any additional information (i.e., prices, slogans, messages etc.).

FIG. 2. Advertisement mock-ups for Study 1

The Google Display Network advertisements appeared on a number of websites in the United Kingdom between the 4th of October 2018 and the 19th of February 2019. Google randomly assigned viewers into control and treatment conditions. When they manifested their interest in the destination by clicking on the advert, they were directed to the Gulet Holidays' website (guletholidays.eu). We recorded the participants' online clicking behavior after seeing the display banner advertisement along with some socio-demographical variables: age, gender, and household income.

Results

A total of 121,304 people viewed the adverts. Of these, 60,651 accessed the control condition and 60,653 accessed the treatment one. 51.2% of the participants were females. In terms of age groups, 12.8% of participants were from 18-24 years, 18.2% from 25-34, 17.8% from 35-44, 17.6% from 45-54, 16.5% from 55-64 and 16.9% were from the 65 or older age group. The annual household income of participants across the three different conditions did not differ significantly [$\chi^2(12, n=180) = 12.377$, $p=0.570$].

We employed binary logistic regression analysis to investigate the effect of advertising type (joint vs single brand advertisement) on the respondents' information search behavior (dependent variable). Table 2 presents the main results.

TABLE 2.

The Impact of Joint Brand Advertising (vs. Single) on Tourists' Information Search Behavior

Predictor	β	*SE*	Wald's X^2	*df*	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for Exp(B) Lower	Upper

	β	S.E.	Wald	df	P	Exp(B)	1.049	2.093
Joint brand advertising vs. Single brand advertising	0.393	0.176	4.985	1	0.026	1.482	1.049	2.093
Constant	-7.023	0.136	2661.058	1	0.000	0.001		

Test	X²	df	P
Overall model evaluation			
Likelihood ratio test	2087.372	1	0.024
Goodness-of-fit test			
Hosmer and Lemeshow test	3.212	5	0.667

Binary logistic regression

Abbreviations: β: regression coefficient, S.E.: standard error, df: degree of freedom, Exp(B): odds ratio, CI: confidence interval.

As expected, the model's goodness-of-fit statistics (Hosmer and Lemeshow Test: X^2 (5) = 3.212) were statistically insignificant ($p>0.05$), suggesting that the model fits well with the data. Joint brand advertising has received 48.1% more clicks than the single brand one The logistic regression analysis findings indicate that, compared to single brand advertising, joint brand advertising is more effective in driving tourists' actual information search behavior (H1) ($\beta=0.393$, $p=0.026$).

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STUDY 2: Lab Experiment

Study 1 established the relevance of joint brand advertising with tourists' behavioral

responses through information search behavior. Study 2 provides further laboratory evidence

of the effect of joint brand advertising on tourists' behavioral responses through their

intentions to visit a destination. Additionally, this new study measures whether product

interest mediates this relationship and whether these results change based on the partner

brand's reputation.

Method

The stimuli consist of three types of holiday advertisements. The single brand

advertisement had only a DMO logo, whilst the two joint brand mock-up advertisements used

the same DMO brand logo as in Study 1, but with a different travel intermediary's logo: a

lesser-reputed and highly-reputed one. The lesser-reputed partner brand was 'Right

Holidays', which is a London based niche travel intermediary, whilst the highly-reputed

partner brand was an international tour operator, 'Thomas Cook'. At the time of the lab

experiment, Thomas Cook was a major tour operator with 20,000 employees

(travelweekly.co.uk), 34 aircraft (bbc.co.uk) and a solid presence in the international markets.

Unfortunately, Thomas Cook became an insolvent company just after the lab experiement

was completed; however, it's brand reputation persevered right up until this sad event. Figure

3 shows the stimulus.

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FIG. 3. Advertisement mock-ups for Study 2

A pre-test was carried out in April 2019 to check whether the brand reputation manipulation was successful using the scale introduced by Chaudhuri (2002). The manipulation test included a total of 36 respondents. Of these, 21 were assigned to the lesser-reputed brand condition and 15 to the highly-reputed one. An independent samples t-test confirmed that Right Holidays' brand reputation score (*Mean*=2.98, *SD*=0.42) was lower than that for Thomas Cook (*Mean*=3.80, *SD*=0.82) and the mean score difference was statistically significant ($t(34)= -3.871$, $p = <0.001$).

A multi-categorical experimental design to assess the impact of joint brand advertising (i.e., joint advertising with a lesser-reputed travel intermediary brand/ with a highly-reputed travel intermediary brand and single tourism destination brand) on the product interest (holiday abroad) and on intention to visit the destination. For the experiment, a between-subjects design was employed, with a total of 180 participants being recruited from an online

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consumer panel and 60 were randomly selected for each condition. The research sample

included individuals who were over 18 years old and residing in the United Kingdom.

    After seeing one of the advertisement conditions, participants responded to product

interest, intention to visit a destination and some brand related questions (see Appendix).

Product interest was assessed through five statements derived from the literature (Cheah et al.

2019; Sama 2019) using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1=strongly disagree to

5=strongly agree. Intention to visit the destination was measured through four statements

using a 7-point Likert scale, with (1) being extremely unlikely and (7) being extremely likely

(Byun and Jang 2015; Prayag et al. 2017). One brand familiarity question (How familiar you

are with this brand?) was included as a covariate in the model. Participants were asked to

report on a 5-point Likert type scale from (1) extremely unfamiliar to (5) extremely familiar.

    The Cronbach's alpha score for the product interest and the tourists' intention to visit were

0.89 and 0.91, respectively. Hence, the measurement instruments were reliable as they were

above the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al. 2014). Then, we applied exploratory

factor analysis for checking the validity of the measures, and whether the scales accurately

measured what they were supposed to. The results of the factor analysis confirmed construct

validity of the measures, because the scale items loaded on the nominated factors, with the

item loadings being high (> 0.50) and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) (Hair et al. 2017).

To test the research model and research hypotheses, we employed mediation analysis (Model

4) with the SPSS PROCESS macro (Hayes 2018). The research model proposed the causal

effect of joint brand advertising on intention to visit through product interest. The model

accounts for the impact of both the lesser- and highly-reputed travel intermediary brands,

with a multi-categorical coding for the independent variable being adopted.

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Results

   Before testing the research hypotheses, for the manipulation check, we performed an independent samples t-test. Similar to the brand reputation pre-test results, this revealed that the lesser-reputed travel intermediary brand's (Right Holidays) mean score (*Mean*=2.83, *SD*=0.44) was lower than that of the highly-reputed travel intermediary brand (Thomas Cook) (*Mean*=3.95, *SD*=0.63) and the mean difference was statistically significant (t (118) =-11.297, *p*=<0.001).

   Since Study 2 had three categories of advertising as the independent variable, we adopted multi-categorical coding. Hence, X1 captures the effect of joint brand advertising with a highly-reputed brand versus single brand advertising, whereas X2 captures the effect of joint brand advertising with a lesser-reputed travel intermediary brand versus single brand advertising. Figure 4 illustrates the results. It also presents the simple mediation model for the joint brand advertising effect on the intention to visit, where the single brand advertisement group is selected as a reference group.
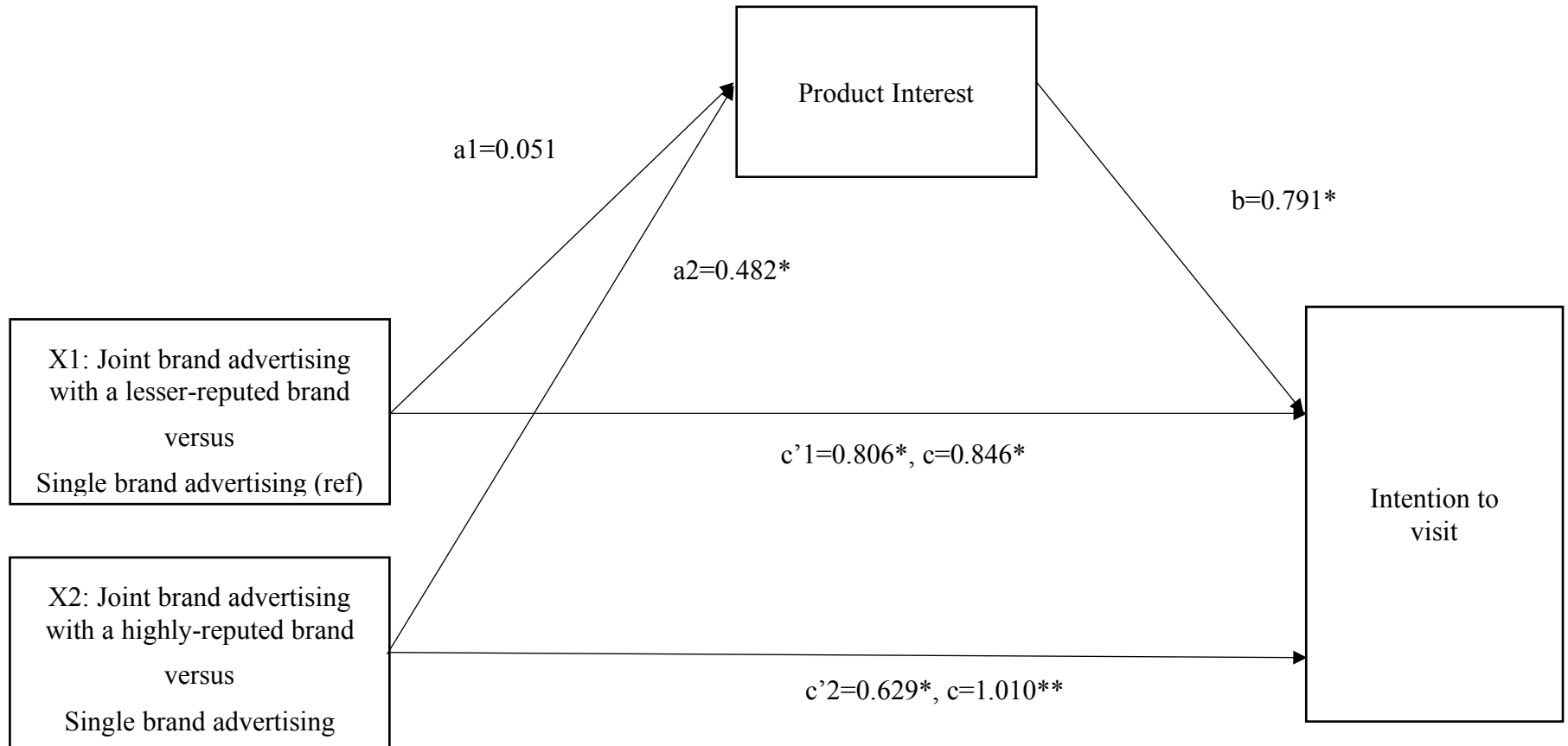
FIG. 4. Study 2: The impact of different brand advertising sources (multi-categorical coding) on intention to visit,

ref: reference category, *p=<0.05, **p=<0.001.

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Figure 5 shows line graph for mean differences of the intention to visit and product
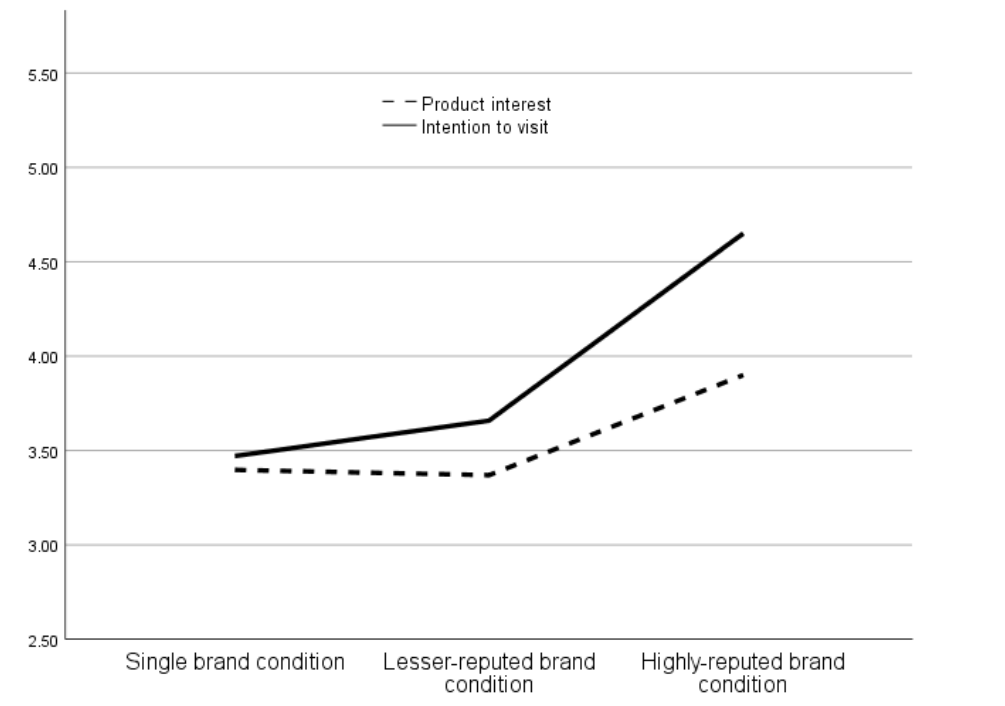
interest measures across the three conditions.

FIG. 5. Study 2: Mean scores of intention to visit and product interest based on advertisement

type (Single vs Joint brand advertising with a lesser and highly-reputed travel intermediary

brand)

The first hypothesis, which postulates that joint brand advertising leads to more positive

favorable behavioral response (i.e., intention to visit) compared to single brand advertising is

supported for the joint brand advertising with lesser- and highly-reputed brand conditions.

That is, the main effect of joint brand advertising on tourists' intention to visit is positive and

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statistically significant both for the lesser-reputed and highly-reputed travel intermediary brand ($p<0.05$ and $p<0.001$, respectively). This result is consistent with that of the field experiment (H1 supported).

The direct effect of joint brand advertising on tourists' intention to visit is still significant after controlling for the brand familiarity as a covariate (b=0.36, t(175)=2.95, $p<0.05$). With regard to the indirect effects through product interest, participants assigned to the lesser-reputed brand condition exhibited higher interest in the advertised product than those assigned to the single brand condition (a1=0.051). However, this difference was not statistically significant ($p=0.763$). In contrast, participants who were assigned to the highly-reputed brand condition had a higher product interest compared to those who were exposed to the single brand condition. As shown in Figure 4, this path (a2) was statistically significant ($p<0.001$). In turn, higher levels of product interest predicted a greater level of intention to visit (b=0.791, $p<0.001$). Consequently, H2, which predicted the impact of joint brand advertising on the tourist's intention to visit is mediated by product interest, is supported only when the joint brand advertising is undertaken with a high-reputed travel intermediary brand. The findings of Study 2 show that joint brand advertising, irrespective of whether it is with a lesser or highly-reputed travel intermediary brand, does have a significant effect on tourists' intention to visit.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research investigates the direct and indirect effects of joint brand advertising on tourists' behavioral responses through field and lab experiments. Study 1 examined tourists' actual behavioral responses through Google Display Network. The findings show a positive effect of joint brand advertising on information search behavior (H1). Providing new insights

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into the destination marketing literature, this result is consistent with some other research

findings in tourism and hospitality (McKinney et al. 2009; Park and Nicolau 2015; Pisierra et

al. 1999). Brand alliance has always been investigated between cities/town and business

entities (i.e., hotel/motels, airlines and recreation sites) (McKinney et al. 2009; Park and

Nicolau, 2015). Here we provide an understanding about the brand partnership between a

DMO and a travel intermediary. Consumers' apparent interest in online adverts suggest that

they need information for their purchasing decision (Chandrasekaran, Srinivasan, and Sihi

2018). Accordingly, they search for supplementary information by perusing the adverts.

Study 2, while supporting the effect of joint brand advertising on tourists' intention to visit

a destination, also highlights that joint brand advertising with a highly-reputed travel

intermediary brand triggers tourists' interest in the advertised product, which, in turn,

stimulates their intention to visit behavior (H2). This result supports the argument that brand

collaboration is an effective marketing tactic (Simonin and Ruth 1998). Park, Jun, and

Shocker (1996) contend that a collaboration strategy would be meaningful when two brands

complement each other. The current study corroborates the view that a combined synergy

between a DMO and other entities (i.e. travel intermediaries) influences tourists' intention to

visit a destination (Benur and Bramwell 2015). Thus, the study outcomes support joint brand

collaborations between different product suppliers and marketing organizations in tourism

(Czernek, Czakon, and Marszalek 2017; Henderson 2017).

The current study provides three theoretical contributions. First, the findings of the field

(Study 1) and lab experiment (Study 2) provide evidence for the superiority of joint brand

advertising over single brand advertising in terms of actual information search behavior and

tourists' intention to visit, respectively. This contrasts with Baltas (2003), Chandon,

Chtourou, and Fortin (2003) and Robinson, Wysocka, and Hand (2007), who argue that the

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appearance of brand names or brand logos in advertisements does not generate a favorable behavioral response (i.e., click through behavior).

Second, in the highly-reputed brand partnership condition, these findings demonstrate that product interest is an important psychological mechanism underpinning the causal relation between joint brand advertising and tourists' intention to visit. A possible explanation for this finding is that partnering with a travel intermediary brand can create a synergy. Brand associations (e.g., brand logo) can help in recognizing the brand's desirable attributes (e.g., quality) (Brexendorf and Keller 2017). Adding a highly-reputed brand logo may lead to an increase in the tourist's attention to product attributes and intention to purchase (Chi, Huang, and Nguyen 2020).

Aujla and Kaur (2017) state that multiple factors need to be considered for brand collaboration and brand alliance. Our study reveals that the reputation of a partner brand is a key factor, if brand alliance is aimed at increasing interest toward the product. However, irrespective on the level of reputation, brand alliance - compared to single brand advertising - increases tourists' intention to visit to the destination. Hence, the finding of this study is partly in line with novelty seeking behavior, whereby partnership with a new or unusual brand is considered to motivate customer behavior (Sung et al. 2016; Skavronskaya et al. 2019). Because it has emerged that both highly-reputed and lesser-reputed travel intermediary brands have the ability to create favorable intention to visit the destination, brand alliance seems to be a win-win strategy. The findings of this article challenge Romaniuk (2013) and Nguyen et al. (2018 and 2020), who find evidence that using two brands is irrelevant or creates information overload, respectively. The findings of the current research suggest that presenting a second brand in an advert does not steal the partnering brand's spotlight in the tourism context in terms of influencing intention to visit.

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Third, previous studies on the theory of collaboration mainly examined tourism marketing alliances between regions (Naipaul et al. 2009; Wang 2008; Wang et al. 2013; Wang and Fesenmaier 2007), inter-governmental (Henderson 2017) organizations or cross-borders (Kozak and Buhalis 2019). These studies have also highlighted the importance of marketing collaborations and brand alliances in tourism (Naipaul, Wang, and Okumus 2009). DMOs and collaborating partners should undertake joint activities and share values for effective destination marketing (d'Angela and Go 2009; Khalilzadeh and Wang 2018). The current study illustrates clearly that the reputation of the partner brand is also crucial for engendering product interest. De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) argue that brands should build more interest in their products. We extend this literature by examining the collaboration theory between DMOs and travel intermediaries, as well as determining product interest as a potential intermediate outcome of this collaboration in tourism.

Marketers in tourism are often having to deal with difficult advertising decisions due to limited budgets and pressure from industry partners (Fyall and Garrod 2020). This is particularly the case for Ministries of Tourism and NTOs that manage national tourism brands with limited funds for promoting their countries in different markets and supporting intermediaries (Buhalis 2000; Mistilis et al. 2014, de Souza, Mendes-Fihlo, Buhalis2020). From a practice/industry perspective this research provides two actionable levers.

First, DMOs and travel intermediaries should use joint brand advertising as a strategic tool for promoting tourism products, developing destination brand image and influencing tourists' behavioral responses. Joint brand advertising can be very effective in promoting tourism destinations and tourism destination-oriented products, such as package tours, city breaks or sun, sea and sand tourism. Collaborating with travel intermediary brands not only draws more

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interest in tourism destinations (Riaz and Ahmed 2016). It also creates higher tourist

behavioral responses as well as allowing for limited advertising budgets to go further.

Presenting a travel intermediary in the joint advertisement introduces additional positive

stimulus and facilitates higher conversion to sales, as perspective travelers have an action call

to fulfil their order. Hur, Kim, and Woo (2014) have found that brand associations influence

consumers' motivation to make a positive recommendation in regard to purchasing. When

tourists see a reputable travel intermediary in an advert, they do tend to have a more

favorable response to the advertised product (Wang et al. 2020). If potential tourists are

uncertain about visiting Italy for their holiday, due to the recent coronavirus outbreak,

collaborating with a perceived quality operator, such as TUI, would help them feel more

secure and decrease uncertainty. On top of the statutory regulations of the respective

destination, consumers can also trust comprehensive sets of measures and standards

implemented by reputable organizations, such as TUI (Wen et al. 2020). Hence, a

collaboration between the public and private sector would ensure a more effective response to

a crisis or new market challenges (Armenski, Dwyer and Pavlukovic 2019; McCartney 2020).

Second, free riding, i.e., visiting a website but buying tourism packages from another

provider, has been a problem in destination marketing for a long time (Khalilzadeh and Wang

2018). Promoting a destination may trigger the interest for a trip generally or to a particular

destination, but consumers can decide to buy the advertised product from other companies or

even different destinations (Gretzel et al. 2020). Joint brand advertising should also be

complemented by appropriate search engine marketing to ensure effectiveness (Paraskevas et

al. 2011). DMOs should, therefore, develop omni-channel strategies to enter into

collaborative advertising partnerships with a variety of travel intermediaries. This would

provide opportunities for potential tourists to convert their interest into a purchase through a

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range of market offerings and a plethora of platforms, regardless of the specific distribution

channels (Buhalis 2020).

Limitations and Further Research

This research is not without limitations. While the rich empirical package, which consists

of a field and a lab study, provides robustness, the experiments include Turkey as the only

destination and the sample includes UK customers. Moreover, the findings on the

ineffectiveness of joint brand advertising for stimulating product interest with a lesser-

reputed travel intermediary brand should be interpreted with caution. Whilst the chosen travel

intermediary does not have a mainstream popular reputation, it might well have a high

standing in a niche market.

The current research offers an opportunity for a rich future research agenda. There might

be other pertinent mediators that underlie the relationship between joint brand advertising and

tourists' behavioral responses. In particular, destination image has become a key element in

influencing tourist behavior (Soyeon, Lehto, Kandampully, 2019; Wang, Li, Wu, Wang,

2020, Ekinci 2003; Kladu, Giannopoulos, and Assiouras 2014; Zhang, Wu, and Buhalis

2018). While this research included a lab experiment with different levels of partnering

brands, some boundary conditions, such as brand credibility, may offer new interesting

insights. For example, consumers' association with brands is much stronger with a credible

brand, since brand credibility signals perceived quality (Swait and Erdem 2007). DMOs are

relatively more powerful than travel intermediaries when setting joint brand advertising

activities (Middleton et al. 2009). Thus, the effects of co-advertising, with different

credibility levels of travel intermediaries, need to be explored. It would be alos interesting to

consider different DMOs so as to ascertain the impact of the destination itself on tourist

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behavior response. Presenting two brands in an advert may have other interesting effects, such as altering the recalled advertising (i.e., memory) or influencing attitudes. Finally, co-advertising online, using location and context-based big data in real time (Buhalis and Sinarta 2019), could be addressed in future research.

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APPENDIX 1. INSTRUMENT FOR STUDY 2

PRODUCT INTEREST
Having seen this advertisement, I would be interested in going on holiday to Turkey.
Having seen this advertisement, I like the idea of taking a holiday in Turkey.
Having seen this advertisement, I would like to gain more knowledge about a holiday to Turkey.
Having seen this advertisement, I want to know more about Turkey as a holiday destination.
Having seen this advertisement, I am willing to search for more information about a holiday to Turkey.
INTENTION TO VISIT
How likely is it that you will take a holiday in Turkey in the near future?
How likely is it that you would recommend taking a holiday in Turkey to someone who seeks your advice for his or her holiday?
How likely is it that you would encourage friends and/or relatives to take a holiday in Turkey?
How likely is that you would say positive things about taking a holiday in Turkey?
BRAND REPUTATION
X* is credible.
X has a good reputation.
X is a popular brand.
X is a highly esteemed company.

* Thomas Cook / Right Holidays

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