Article

Tourist Attribution toward Destination Brands: What Do We Know? What We Do Not Know? Where Should We Be Heading?

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Abstract: Although tourists' judgments and interpretations are pivotal to fathom the essence behind their behavior toward tourism destination brands, there is a lack of investigation into theories that deal with tourists' decisions and interpretations. To address this issue, this study investigates two critical theories in the tourism marketing literature: attribution and locus of control theories in the destination branding context. These theories heavily influence tourists' perceptions and interpretations of the destination brands. Thus, using the PRISMA methodology (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), we inductively evaluated and synthesized the literature on attribution theory and destination branding from highly indexed journals in the ABDC list index. The research encompasses the issues of "What we know?", "What we do not know?", and "Where should we be heading?". This study will better grasp the implications of attribution and locus of control theories in the literature on tourism marketing. The study would also explore how this hypothesis affects travelers' assessment and interpretation of destination brands. The study found the potential to assess the implications of attribution and locus of control theories in the tourism marketing literature. The research would provide insights into how these ideas affect tourists' evaluation and interpretation of destination brands. It would also offer other techniques that marketers may employ to influence consumer behavior.

Keywords: attribution theory; locus of control theory; tourist behavior; tourism destination; tourist intention; destination attachment

1. Introduction

Tourist numbers markedly increased to reach 1.4 billion tourists in 2018; tourism exports grew by 4% (export earnings have gained USD 1.7 trillion), outpacing the growth of commodity exports (3%) [1]. With this rapid pace of tourism movement growth, experts predict that by 2030 international arrivals will reach 1.8 billion tourists owing to transportation technology increment [2]. Hence, tourism is pivotal in providing thousands of jobs, enhancing countries' economies (e.g., reducing trade deficits), and encouraging

innovation and entrepreneurship [1]. As a result, the research on tourist behaviors substantially increased, and it became imperative to track tourists' behaviors during their holidays [3]. Studying tourists' behavior helps determine the tourism demand at the destinations. Significantly, predicting tourist behavior increases the accurate predictions of tourists' destination attachments in the destinations. Destination attachment reflects the strong connection between self and destination, leading to gaining more revenues from the destinations [4]. Tourist behavior is not a target per se, but it needs a deeper investigation into the stimulates that lead to such behaviors. Attribution theory is one of the crucial theories that help investigate behavioral antecedents deeply. Attribution theory studies individual interpretations and judgments toward events and outcomes in daily life [5]. It clarifies how individuals shape their behaviors and attitudes before their final judgments. Individuals have two types of attribution. The first one is dispositional attribution, where they attribute the event outcomes to internal causes such as their desires or others' internal motivations [6]. The second one is situational attribution, where they attribute the outcome of the events to external causes such as weather or service providers' initiatives toward the customers [7].

Attribution theory has three dimensions, namely locus of control, stability, and controllability. The tourists make their judgments giving due consideration to these dimensions. Locus of control is how individuals assign responsibility for events, whether to internal or external causes (same as dispositional vs. situational). Stability refers to whether the event outcome is stable and could be repeatable. Controllability refers to whether the responsibility for events can control it or not [5,8]. Locus of control considers the most effective dimension as it is the reason to stimulate individuals' retrospective beliefs (e.g., experiences, prior convictions, customs, attitudes, etc.) that affect individuals' decision-making toward services [9–11].

In the locus of control theory, individuals consider more reason than the results of events or causes [12–14]. Therefore, the locus of control reflects individuals' beliefs and interpretations of events in different situations [15,16]. According to the locus of control theory, people are more likely to ascribe positive events to their effort and self-achievement with an internal locus of control [5,6]. In contrast, the external locus of control refers to individuals' beliefs that events occur according to factors out of one's control, such as fortune and chance [9,17,18]. Attributing events to internal causes has different behavioral outcomes than attributing them to external causes. This raises some concerns about predicting these differences to predict tourists' behavior. Attribution theory, especially the locus of control dimension, is important in predicting satisfaction [19] or dissatisfaction [20] about services [21] and word-of-mouth [5]. However, to date, no study has investigated attribution theory and the locus of control theory's role in the tourism marketing literature and its role in building destination attachment. This article provides a pioneering approach to cover a literature review about the attribution and locus of control theory development. The study then clarifies, "what do we know?", "what we do not know?", and "where should we be heading?" as parts to provide holistic ideas about these theories' implications in the tourism field. In addition, the study provides both the tourism and marketing literature with future directions and methodologies that could be beneficial for both theoretical and practical implications in both fields.

Attribution theory is a psychological theory that explicates how people attach causes to occurrences they witness. It is linked to learning and decision-making processes because it entails studying how people create assumptions about the causes of events and use them to explain their actions. In tourism, attribution theory can be used to examine how people decide where to visit and where to spend their holiday. Destination branding is a sort of branding that aims to improve a destination's profile in addition to making it more appealing to potential tourists. It entails giving a destination a distinct identity as well as generating a brand message that appeals to potential tourists. Place branding is frequently used to establish a positive perception of a destination to attract more tourists as well as to increase the destination's economic benefits. The study thoroughly examines the two

notions to comprehend their impact on tourism. The study answers the question, "What we know?", "What we do not know?", and "Where should we go?" on the attribution theory and tourism destination branding. It is advised that a field study be conducted to comprehend how these notions work and how they influence tourism decisions. Furthermore, the study suggests that future research should concentrate on many components of attribution theory and destination branding, such as tourist perceptions of their attribution and LOC, to comprehend how they influence visitors' travel behavior.

This research is critical to the tourism industry. We can increase our ability to promote tourism destinations effectively, attract more visitors, and generate economic advantages by enhancing our understanding of the mechanics and implications of attribution theory and destination branding. Prospective tourists can also benefit from more relevant and memorable travel experiences. Ultimately, this will result in more delighted customers and contribute to our destinations' excellent reputation.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Why Attribution Theory?

When scholars start treating destinations as brands, they begin to study the connections between tourists' mindsets and behaviors in order to preserve tourists' attachment to these destinations [8], because attachment to destination brands promises sustainability in revenue increasing in addition to spreading positive word-of-mouth about the destinations [4].

The difficulty in interpreting destination brands considers that destination brands differ from product brands; a destination brand is a much broader concept than a product brand [4] because marketers can control the product, such as manufactured products, whereas it is hard to control place features such as the sea and geographical locations [22]. Places are also multifunctional [23]; place visitors can decide, which contributes to the placement services they wish to utilize. So, visitors can share the same consumption of place simultaneously by many groups with different purposes [24]. This may simultaneously cause a significant variation in opinions about the same destination [22]. Additionally, visitors at destination brands are affected by many elements that may confuse their interpretation of destinations, such as residents' attitudes [4], word of mouth about destinations [8], infrastructures and superstructures of destination [25], quality and quantity of services [5], expectations matching the destination brands [26], cultural distances, and tourist destination prescriptions [27].

These elements lead to a variation of tourists' interpretations in judging diverse events at the destination brands. Therefore, it remains crucial to investigate the determinants behind forming this interpretation and judgments in the tourism service industry to adapt to tourists' behavior [8]. Tourists' interactions, judgments, and psychological interference from the marketing perspective are reliable indicators to evaluate the level of their satisfaction with its impacts on (re)buying products and services [28] or (re)visit intention with revenue growth [29]. Therefore, marketing and tourism scholars have set out to investigate the behavioral antecedents and consequences that influence tourists' psychological interference and interpretations [30], because tourists have unstable and unpredictable judgments while choosing and/or evaluating any tourism destination, and because destination brands are more complex than product brands [23,24]. This affects changing destination brand-related judgments [31]. Thus, in order to understand tourists' judgments and interpretations of different events and their impacts on their attachment, the study uses the privileges of attribution and locus of control theories to comprehend individual judgments and interpretations about events [5]. This will help the tourism managers to fathom the essence behind tourists' behavior antecedents and consequences for tourism destination brands while studying attribution theory.

2.2. Attribution and Locus of Control Theories

Attribution theory suggests that psychological interference and interpretations are essential in judging and evaluating diverse events [14,32]. When individuals contemplate about situations, they investigate the underlying causes [17,33] and the relationship between cause-and-effect chains [5]. Therefore, when individuals internally evaluate a person or action with dispositional attribution, they attribute the event's causes to people's intentions or feel in control of their interpretation thanks to their confidence [34,35]. Conversely, those who explain an external person or event using situational attribution attribute the person's actions or the causes of events to external conditions such as bad weather or feel free to control their interpretation due to a lack of luck and opportunity [12]. The situational predicate and dispositional predicate are not related to each other; they are distinct. Modifications to one do not always require modifications to the other [36]. As a result, these different appraisals greatly influence how an individual responds to different conditions [5]. Therefore, people acknowledge attribution as the reason for their opinions towards events.

Psychology scholars agree that attribution theory includes three causal dimensions identified as the basic features of causes: locus of control (whether the event is internal or external to the person), stability (whether the event is observed as permanent or temporary), and controllability (whether the event can be under control or not) [12,35]. Moreover, they agreed that the locus of control is the most crucial dimension, because it focuses on individual psychological mechanisms while making interpretations.

The locus of control theory (LOC) provides conceptual and empirical support for how consumers' behaviors are expressed toward other individuals or events in their environment [37]. For example, people are more likely to attribute good events to an internal locus of control. They believe that their behavior and confidence level influence their ability and effort [33,38]. However, people are more likely to attribute adverse events to an external locus of control, and believe that other forces, such as social situations, influential people, poor employee behavior, and opportunities, influence their behavior [6,39].

This study divides the locus of control into two models after reading academic publications that consider it a dimension of attribution theory. First, the internal model assumes that over the past 50 years, the internal locus of control has become more acceptable thanks to the increased ability of people to influence their causes (e.g., travel is reasonably accessible to all social groups, and technology provides an infinite number of service options and forms of communication and entertainment) [18,40]. Due to the absence of strict social norms and etiquette, people can live and make their own decisions [12]. In addition, the gender bias decreased [6]. All of these assumptions suggest that people have an internal locus of controlling their opinions all the time, which often contributes to spreading happy feelings through positive word of mouth [5,6].

In contrast, the extrinsic model assumes that the external locus of control becomes increasingly relevant over time due to the tendency to attribute problems or failures to external forces [6]. This model embodies the distrust and alienation of contemporary generations, possibly due to unfavorable social trends [41] caused by more unpleasant news in the media or social media. There are two kinds of external locus of control in the external model. First, chance control is not affected by human action (such as fate, weather, and luck) [14]. Second, strong control enables individuals to exert influence to stimulate other behaviors [9]. As a result, when undesirable outcomes arise, individuals will attribute these events to unfavorable social tendencies [39]. Therefore, the external locus of control primarily influences the development of unfavorable attitudes through unfavorable speech [38]. This study also hypothesizes that subjects' internal and external LOC may elicit, albeit mostly condition dependent. For example, think of a traveler visiting a popular tourist destination. The person cannot control the crowds and long lines at the attractions and the prices of food and souvenirs. As a result, the individual has a low level of internal LOC, because they believe that the situation is beyond their control, and external factors are the cause (tourism service providers) [12]. On the other hand, if people

can choose their activities and attractions, they may decide what they want to do, or how they want to spend their time. As a result, the individual experiences a strong internalized LOC [7].

The locus of control theory can help the destination managers better understand their tourists' motivations and how they perceive their surroundings. Suppose the destination manager finds that tourists are not returning to their destination. In this case, they can use locus of control theory to assess whether tourists believe that they do not influence their experience, or that other forces are responsible. The destination manager may then try to address any issues that may create unhappiness by learning about the customer's impression of being out of control. To better tourists' experiences, promoters may use locus of control theory and attribution theory. For example, suppose a tourism service provider is trying to boost tourists' loyalty in a particular location. In this case, these theories can be used to understand which aspects influence tourists' happiness or dissatisfaction. Promoters may improve tourists' experience, and build loyalty by understanding the customer's impression of control and the attributes that explain why they are dissatisfied with specific components of the experience. Finally, beyond academic research, locus of control theory and attribution theory can be operationalized in various ways by destination managers, promoters, and service providers to comprehend how tourists perceive their surroundings and experiences. Understanding these perspectives and attributes enables these professionals to enhance tourists' happiness.

In this vein, owing to the importance of LOC and attribution theory in determining behaviors, the current study will provide a holistic understanding of tourists' LOC and attribution toward events to predict their behavioral outcomes toward destination brands. The next part will introduce the methodology to achieve the study aim, following it with *"What do we know?"*, *"what we do not know?"*, and *"where should we be heading?"* as parts to discuss and explore the theory utilization in the tourism literature. Then, the study provides both the tourism marketing literature with future recommendations that could be useful for both theoretical and practical implications in the tourism field.

3. Materials and Methods

A systematic review based on a theory-based review [42] focuses on analyzing the role of critical theories (namely attribution theory and locus of control theory) in the tourism field to indicate new future research directions in tourism marketing research. To achieve this objective, the study used 61 papers to form a systematic review from A* and A journals listed by the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC). The reason behind the choice of ABDC is that the ABDC list is more inclusive than other journals' ranking lists (e.g., the Association of Business Schools (ABS) and the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) [43,44]. First, Emerald, Scopus, ScienceDirect, Wiley Online Library, and JSTOR databases serve as the basis for the methodology for selecting the articles. Other academic portals, such as Research Gate and Google Scholar, have been used for hard-to-access research papers. Second, the keyword search criteria were as follows: "attribution theory*", "tourist attribution*", "locus of control theory*", "tourist locus of control", "tourism brand*", "tourist behavior*", "destination attachment*", "word of mouth*", "destination attachment*", and "tourism destination*".

Third, the PRISMA approach was used in this study to collect data (see Figure 1). PRISMA is an essential tool for tracking systematic reviews, because it carefully screens publications to see whether they fall within the remit of systematic review research [44]. One thousand five-hundred and forty-one papers contained any of these terms within the keywords after a keyword search. The study then used a sophisticated search across all founded papers to cut through redundant titles, which resulted in, after deleting duplicate articles, a recombination of 746 papers. Subsequently, only 216 records were scanned under the same headings when the original works' abstracts and/or keywords were used. To verify the accuracy of the original research work, 50 publications were excluded. Then, 107 full-text article papers were approved and assessed for their relevance to the main scope

of the investigation. "Tourist attribution toward destination brands: what do we know? What do we not know? Where should we be going?" served as the inclusion and exclusion criteria for screening title/abstract and full paper for finding the information on tourist behavior, marketing, and tourist research. Only empirical studies on consumer attributions and destination brands were considered. We also considered the titles of the studies that looked into the influence and impacts of consumer attributions on tourist development and branding. While reviewing the abstracts and complete studies, we considered whether they offer new insights into tourist attributions to destination brand performance. All article titles were also peer-reviewed, published in English, and included the entire text. Articles without a theoretical psychological basis on the behavioral theories used in the studies were omitted from the study. Afterwards, 46 articles were discarded using journal ratings to select only A* and A-level journals. Finally, 61 studies—37 from journals (A*) and 24 from journals (A)—were included to construct the literature review. Fourth, data from detected authors, titles, keywords, search dimensions, journal names, conclusions, and year of publication were exported to the MS Excel spreadsheet to display the results.
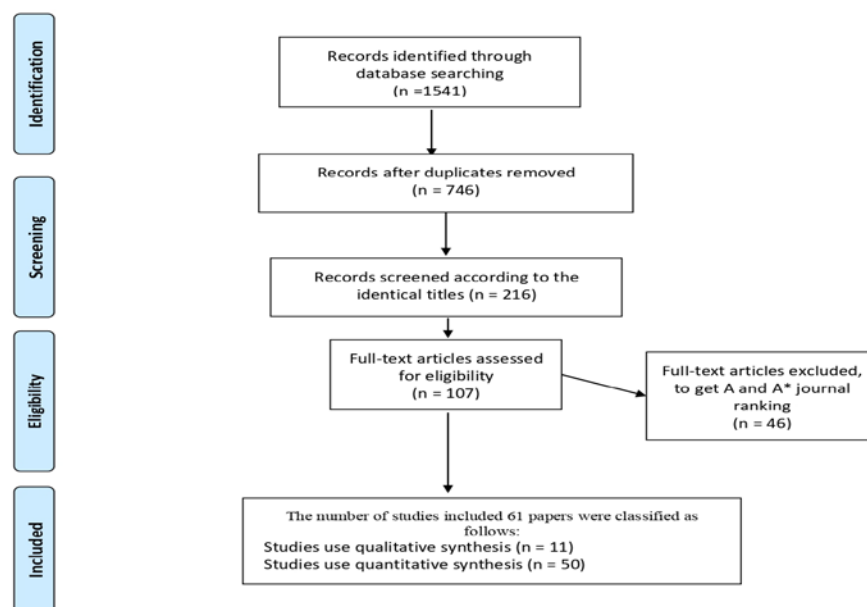

Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram of data collection.

Moreover, the success of the destination branding tactics can be understood by conducting a thorough literature analysis of tourists' perceptions of destination brands. The PICO (Population, Intervention, Comparison, and Outcomes) framework offers a practical framework for conducting a thorough assessment of the relevant research. Tourists who have been to a specific location and have been exposed to its branding efforts would be the population in this scenario. The destination's branding initiatives, such as advertising campaigns or promotional activities, would constitute the intervention. Any other locations that have used comparable branding strategies or control groups that have not been exposed to any branding strategies would be used for comparison. The effects these branding initiatives have had on travelers' attitudes and behavior toward the destination brand would be the outcome.

Researchers can better comprehend what is known about this subject and what is still unknown by using this PICO framework to systematically review the available literature on visitor attribution towards destination brands. For instance, researchers can find data suggesting that some branding initiatives are more successful than others at influencing tourists' views and actions toward a specific destination brand. Researchers might also point out gaps in our current understanding and recommend new research directions. For instance, there may be little data on how visitor types react differently to various

branding initiatives. Hence, further research may delve deeper into this topic. In conclusion, researchers can learn a great deal about how tourists attribute brands associated with destinations to those destinations by performing a systematic literature review utilizing the PICO framework and identifying areas for further investigation. Future destination branding initiatives might be informed by this information to ensure that they successfully change tourists' attitudes and behavior toward a specific brand. This methodology aims to achieve this research and examines the construct of tourist attribution to destination brands. This study will look into what we know and do not know and where we should go to comprehend how tourist attributions affect destination brands. This research will concentrate on tourist attributions to destination brands, such as how tourists form attitudes and perceptions toward these brands, and how these attitudes and perceptions affect behaviors and the success of destination branding campaigns. This research will also look at new trends in destination branding and their implications for destination performance. This research study endeavors to guide future research on visitor attributions to destination brands by examining what is known and unknown and where we should be heading.

Moreover, in this study, bibliometric analysis was used to investigate the relationships among the selected articles' keywords as another evidence of its connection. Bibliometric analysis is an essential tool in attribution theory and destination brands. It is a quantitative method used to measure the impact of research publications, such as books, articles, and other documents. Bibliometric analysis can measure the impact of research on a particular topic or field of study as well as the effect of a specific author or institution [45]. Moreover, bibliometric analysis is a helpful method for conducting thorough literature reviews. It enables academics to examine scholarly trends, pinpoint research gaps, and locate relevant studies with speed and accuracy. Identifying influential writers, journals, and subjects in a particular field is another application of bibliometric analysis. Additionally, by calculating citation counts and other metrics such as the journal impact factor, bibliometric analysis can be used to assess the significance of the research. Researchers can better comprehend the present level of knowledge in their field and pinpoint topics for future research by conducting systematic literature reviews utilizing bibliometric analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Article Contexts

According to Figure 2, the contexts of the 61 chosen articles are: tourism context: 24 (39%); marketing context: 15 (26%); psychology context: 11 (18%); business context: 9 (14%); and consumer behavior context: 2 (3%).
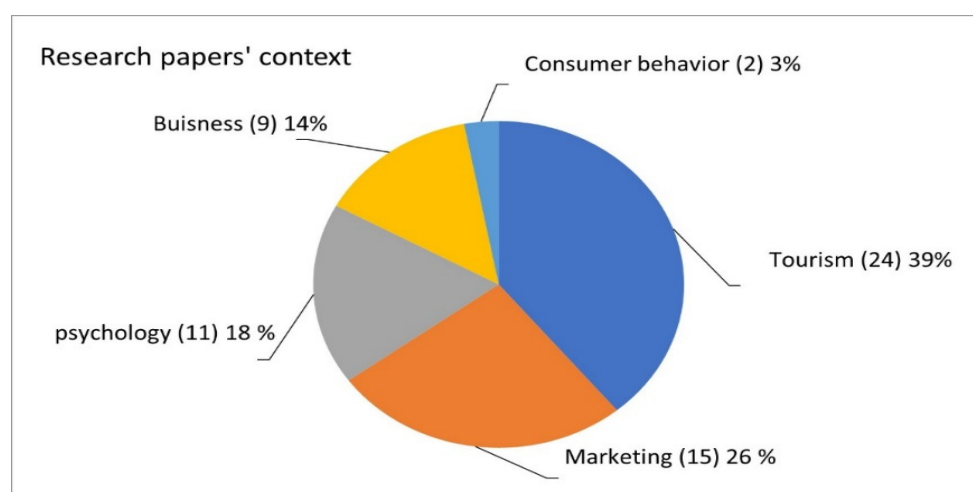

Figure 2. Article contexts.

Results indicate that most studies were conducted on tourism and marketing contexts. In contrast, there are fewer studies on psychology and the business side, and the most inferior context is consumer behavior. These results are controversial, because this study supposed psychological context to be the most significant portion as attribution and locus of control theories have been investigated as a psychology theory per se. After all, attribution and LOC theories mainly refer to psychological contexts [9,20]. This reflects the considerable shortage of these theories' usage in utilized contexts. In other words, using these theories in another science branch, especially the tourism marketing literature, is marginal. The discussion will clarify why and how these contexts include a significant shortage of these theories in the tourism marketing literature.

4.2. Article Methodologies

According to Figure 3, the methodologies of the 61 chosen articles are surveys: 33 (54%); experimental studies: 13 (21%); meta-analysis: 4 (6.75%); reviews: 4 (6.75%); interviews: 3 (5%); content analysis: 3 (5%); and photo analysis: 1(1.5%). Results indicate that most studies use surveys and experimental studies rather than interviews. These results also show that articles are more dominated by quantitative techniques. However, most psychologists recommend interviews when examining psychological or attribution reactions. It allows scholars to notice non-verbal data. Non-verbal cues such as lack of eye contact, jittery characteristics, or protective posturing can present proper contexts [5,6]. In Section 5, the study proposes future research questions with new methodologies that will probably fill the gap in methods in this study context.
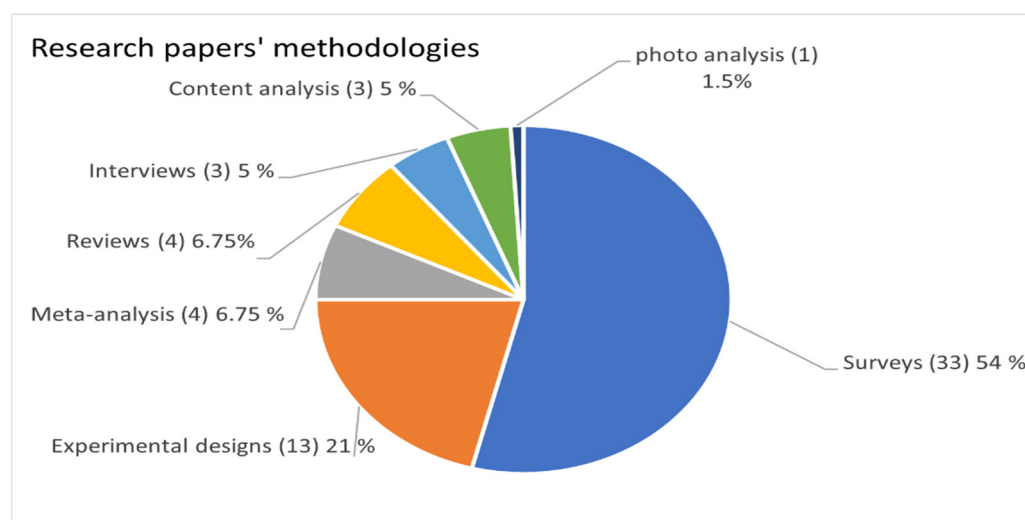

Figure 3. Articles' research methodologies.

4.3. Article Sources

According to the journal's name in which the study collects papers, the percentage of A* and A journals is (34) 55.7% for A* journals, and (27) 44.3% for A journals (see Table 1): *Journal of business research*: 9 (15%); *Annals of tourism research*: 9 (15%); *Tourism management*: 8 (13%); *European journal of marketing*: 5 (8.2%); *Journal of hospitality and tourism management*: 3 (5%); *Journal of consumer research, Journal of marketing research, Journal of experimental social psychology, International journal of research in marketing*, and *Journal of Travel Research, Psychology and Marketing*: 2 (3.3%) for each journal; *Journal of retailing and consumer services, Journal of consumer marketing, Journal of destination marketing & management, Journal of personality and social psychology, Decision support systems, Educational and psychological measurement, International journal of hospitality management, Journal of hospitality marketing and management, personality, and individual differences, Personality and social psychology review, Annals review*

of psychology, Journal of Research in Personality, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Psychological Reports, and *Psychological Review*: 1 (1.6%) for each journal.

Table 1. Article sources.

Journal Source	Percentage
Journal of business research	9 (15%)
Annals of tourism research	9 (15%)
Tourism management	8 (13%)
European journal of marketing	5 (8.2%)
Journal of hospitality and tourism management	3 (5%)
Journal of consumer research, Journal of marketing research, Journal of experimental social psychology, international journal of research in marketing, and Journal of travel research, Psychology and marketing	2 (3.3%) for each journal, all 23.1%
Journal of retailing and consumer services, Journal of consumer marketing, Journal of destination marketing & management, Journal of personality and social psychology, Decision support systems, Educational and psychological measurement, International journal of hospitality management, Journal of hospitality marketing and management, personality, and individual differences, Personality and social psychology review, Annals review of psychology, Journal of research in personality, Journal of the academy of marketing science, Psychological reports, and Psychological review	1 (1.6%) for each journal, all 20.7%
Total	100% ((34) 55.7% for A* journals and (27) 44.3% for A journals)

* means that the journals have high ranking than others.

5. Discussion, Implications, and Future Research Agenda

The study aims to implement attribution and locus of control theories in the tourism marketing literature, one of the popular social psychological theories to elucidate human behavior toward events. This will help fill the gap and set future research directions to comprehend tourists' judgments toward tourism destination brands. In this context, the discussion part of the research aims to clarify "What do we know"?, "What do we not know?", and "Where should we be heading?" with suggested research directions and methodologies as follows:

5.1. What Do We Know?

LOC is a psychological theory that initially arose in the late 1950s. It claims that people with an "internal locus of control" accept responsibility for their lives, while people with an "external locus of control" seek external explanations to explain their accomplishments or failures. The idea is directly related to destination brands since their performance depends on how tourists see themselves and their ability to exert some influence. Destination brands provide tourists with a sense of independence and decision-making power. Individuals with a strong internal locus of control are more likely to seek out new experiences, create unforgettable memories, and have a good brand experience. On the other hand, those with an external locus of control fear losing control, and may be less likely to seek out unique experiences or connect with the destination brand. This results in a less favorable brand experience, and may discourage potential visitors from returning to the destination brand or interacting with it [3].

While attracting tourists, destination brands must be aware of the potential consequences of a locus of control. An excellent way is to portray their destination offerings as providing tourists with independence and a sense of control during their vacation. It is also essential to closely monitor customer feedback to determine the overall effectiveness of the service provider's (here, destination brand) activities [46,47]. Those with an internal locus

of control are more likely to accept responsibility for their victories and mistakes, and will appreciate the opportunity to make judgments while exploring a destination. In general, while developing a successful destination brand, the locus of control is crucial. Those with an internal position of control are more likely to be attracted to a brand's offerings as well as to have a favorable brand experience when they visit. To achieve the best level of customer happiness, destination brands must be aware of the potential consequences of a locus of control, and ensure that they promote their services to attract individuals with an internal locus of control (vs. external).

From a psychological perspective, we do know that individuals' attribution and LOC depend mainly on the amount of information [7,9,10], motivation, and beliefs [11,12] while planning to have any experiences [6]. On the one hand, when service providers provide less information about services with no alternatives, this leads to unstable attributes [13,14]. In this case, individuals use external LOC to ascribe that service providers do not provide sufficient information to have various choices [14,17]. This, in turn, leads to negative feelings with negative feedback about the service providers [18,19]. Alternatively, in the case of providing adequate information about services, the individuals tend to ascribe this information to their ability to search for and gain information [8,20]. This, in turn, leads to positive feedback about service providers [11]. Thus, service providers seek to increase individuals' positive attributes with high internal LOC to avoid anger, guilt, pity, despair, pride, and shame [21]. They crave to avoid these angry and destructive feelings, because individuals with internal LOC instead of external LOC tend to positively judge and interpret events with a high level of constructive feedback [4,10].

Moreover, information is not only a crucial factor for forming individual attribution, LOC, and diverse attributes to different events, but the event's stability [21] and controllability [19] also play a prominent role in forming LOC and attribution before decision making [22,23]. Individuals seek stable and controllable events to enhance their pleasure and mood while attributing these events [24]. When the positive event (vs. negative) is controlled and made stable by the service providers, individuals ascribe this controllability to their abilities to choose the correct service providers [25–27]. This leads to positive outcomes, because individuals are more likely to ascribe positive events to their abilities to make the correct decisions by an internal LOC, which leads to positive word of mouth [28–30]. However, when the events are not under control and are unstable, individuals are more likely to ascribe these failures to service providers with external LOC [31] with the negative outcome as well as negative word of mouth [28–30,32].

Searching for stability and controllability events leads the individual to form stable knowledge about events to raise their internal LOC besides avoiding any external LOC that may eliminate their understanding of event causes [18,33], because internal LOC is more stable than external LOC. This occurs because individuals with a high level of knowledge have more chance to internally ascribe events with an internal LOC, as more knowledge increases self-control; self-control lets individuals ascribe events with an internal LOC [22,34] by avoiding destructive attitudes toward events while ascribing events to external causes [25,35]. After forming knowledge with different attribution and LOC, the notion of "salience" comes to mind. Salience information directly affects positive (or negative) personal experiences [20] while making decisions to use services [6]. This involves forming a behavioral response to create a person's experience with an internal or external locus of control [36]. In the same line but from the tourism marketing perspective, we do know that when tourists want to experience a well-organized trip in destination brands, they start to get information about the destinations. This information could be collected through electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) [38] or conventional word of mouth (WOM) [39] (see Figure 4).
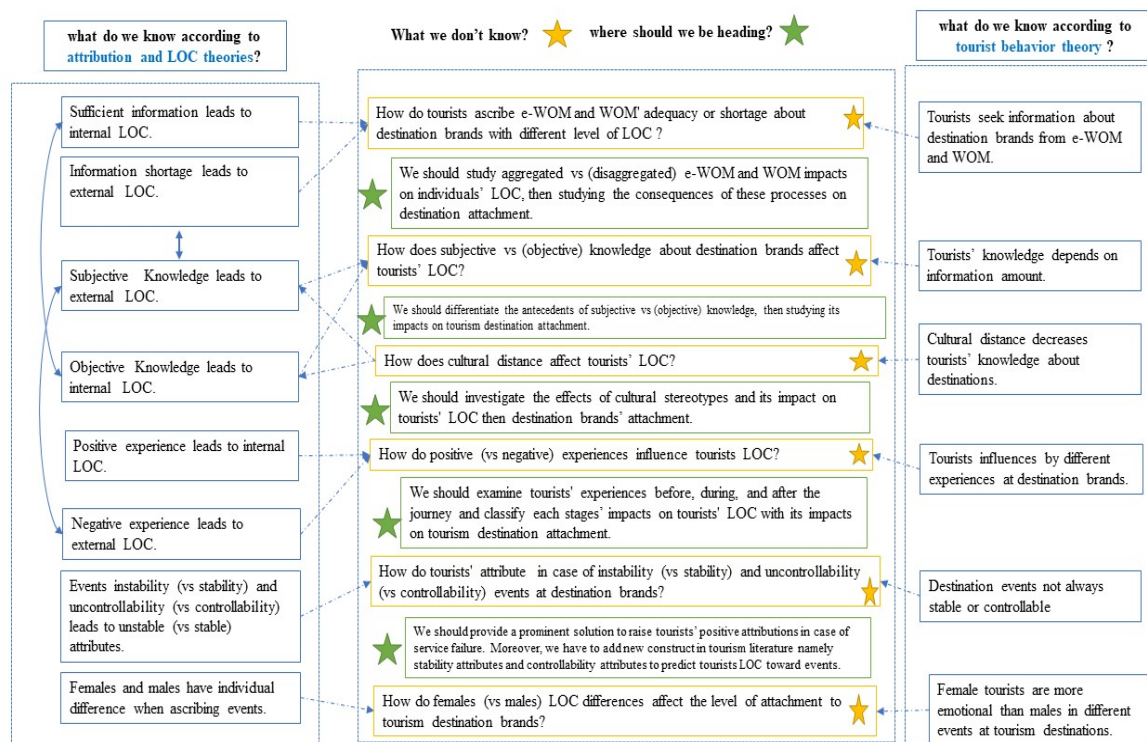
Figure 4. The discussion framework.

Word of mouth and locus of control or causation are interrelated. Tourists who attribute positive tourism events to themselves are more likely to have positive word of mouth than those who attribute them externally. It also leads to defensive behavior towards service providers [16]. However, some tourists may have positive word of mouth when they become aware that service providers care about providing them with quality service [37], increasing the likelihood that they will have positive WOM [30,48]. Moreover, information adequacy (the previous visitors' WOM or e-WOM) plays a vital role in shaping tourists' attribution. Information adequacy is dominant for better attribution and avoidance of negative experiences [37,48,49].

After the information-seeking stage, tourists frequently form common knowledge about the destination [40]. Depending on characters and communications, this knowledge is distinct from person to person [41]. Destination knowledge creates a halo effect in the tourists' minds to experience actual journeys to the destinations [5,42]. These experiences at destination brands could be positive or negative [43,44,50,51]. Tourists perceive good (vs. bad) experiences if the destination brands match (vs. not) their expectations [7,52–56]. Consequently, positive experiences (vs. negative) about services lead to high satisfaction (dissatisfaction) [57–59] with destination brands [60–62]. Satisfaction (vs. dissatisfaction) with the brand increases (vs. decreases) the loyalty to the destination brands [63,64] by building an attachment with that destination brand [4,43,51,62,65,66] as well as spreading positive e-WOM (vs. negative) [67,68].

5.2. What We Do Not Know and Where Should We Be Heading?

According to (Figure 4), we do not know how tourists use their interpretations and judgments in the planning stage, the experience stage at destinations, and feedback after the journey. For instance, there is a gap in the tourism marketing literature regarding LOC theory when tourists start to get information from previous destination visitors' reviews. Reviews are classified into two types, aggregated (combination of consumer reviews toward the services) and disaggregated reviews (individual consumer reviews toward the services) [49,69]. Stable aggregation reviews help individuals get stable information [69,70],

but main questions that arise here are: How do tourists ascribe these reviews? Do they ascribe it to their ability to seek information with internal LOC? Do they ascribe it to an external LOC that service providers provide them with this information? What are the impacts of internal (vs. external) LOC in the information-seeking process?

What will happen if these aggregated reviews are not stable? Will tourists read individual reviews about the services such as Qiu et al. [69] recommends? Or do they attribute negatively to external LOC that service providers do not care about these issues? How do tourists attribute these destinations in terms of attribution stability and controllability in case service providers do not justify why disaggregate or negative aggregated reviews occur? Since males and females have different perceived behaviors of different events [8,71,72], are there any differences in the gender perspective in the attribution level or LOC while facing review conflict? What effect does daily use of social media have on changing tourists' locus of control span toward destinations? All these questions, to date, have not been sufficient priorities for tourism marketing scholars to study from an attribution theory perspective.

Moreover, as mentioned in the "what do we know" part, an individual's attribution with a different locus of control to events depends mainly on the information. From this perspective, what will happen in case of information asymmetry about destination brands? How do tourists use their level of LOC and attribution to respond to this information? Will tourists' internally or externally attribute to the tourism providers? Both these questions are controversial, because tourists may not care about the amount of information tourism providers introduce. They may want to be tourism bloggers who provide new information about the destination to potential travelers on social media instead of tourism service providers [68]. So, studying these questions in future research will show the differences in tourist intuition while attributing information asymmetry and its impacts on destination brands' attachment.

Additionally, many crucial questions come to mind while investigating tourist behavior and attribution theory. Tourists establish knowledge after collecting different pieces of information about the destination brands they want to visit [40], but what we do not know is how tourists attribute this knowledge to a different level of LOC. Stereotypes and cultural distances (e.g., differentiation in language, social structure, social norms, religion, and politics) can lead to different attributes for tourists even if there is sufficient information about destination brands [73]. Therefore, some questions could be added to the literature. How does differentiation in the cultural distance affect tourists' LOC levels in forming knowledge about the destination? What are the main factors influencing stable locus of control toward long-haul vs. short-haul visits to the destination brands? These questions could be treated when scholars explore following queries. How many languages could tourism suppliers provide about destination brands to form knowledge about the destinations? How do tourists with non-common languages attribute to different LOC levels when they notice that tourism suppliers care about language issues? How have social norms, religion, and political factors affected tourists' locus of control while choosing destinations? These questions should be investigated as an independent variable in addition to examining the impacts on tourism destination brand attachment.

The tourism marketing literature also has a noticeable gap when reviewing the impacts of positive experiences on destination attachment compared with service failure at destinations. Positive experiences with tourist satisfaction have more priorities than service failure investigation at destinations [4,43,51,57–68]. However, from the attribution theory perspective, experiencing positive services is not always assured [4,8,19]. Thus, in the event of in-service failure, tourism marketing scholars need to consider these questions: What practical approaches can tourism providers learn about unstable events in tourism destinations that can affect tourists' locus of control over a destination facility? What occurs if we treat tourists' LOC as individual difference variables and investigate their impact on destination brands? Do age and education level influence tourists' locus of control while facing negative experiences at destinations? Since residents play a crucial role in destination

brands while interacting with tourists [43], what are the advantages and disadvantages of host country customs regarding the population's central control over tourists' experiences at destinations? How do different customs and traditions affect, positively or negatively, tourists' attribution and LOC?

One of the essential elements that should be considered is that tourism service providers also have their locus of control in the case of service failure. Tourism service providers are more likely to ascribe service success to their ability to control services [18]. They are more likely to ascribe service failure to external outcomes (e.g., increasing their prices to governmental taxes). Surprisingly, successful service providers in industrial services do not ascribe negative things internally; rather, they take responsibility for problems by avoiding ascribing their faults to external causes (tourism suppliers' external locus of control) [74]. In this vein, what will happen if the tourism service provider ascribes this failure to internal causes (vs. external causes) with its impacts on tourists' locus of control? What impacts have these types of ascriptions had on tourism destination attachment?

Examining these questions raised (see Table 1) will help tourism managers and scholars concede the transformation barriers in tourist behavior. This occurs because tourist behaviors are not stable with the rapid change in communication, technologies, and preferences [8,65].

5.3. Evidence from a Bibliometric Analysis

The current study also provides a bibliometric analysis to shed light on the relationship among the articles'—61 articles used in this study—keywords. Bibliometric analysis is a professional approach to evaluating the progress of assigned methods by distributing data, including author affiliations, citations, and keywords, via advanced statistical techniques [75]. The current study uses only keyword co-occurrence to confirm that attribution and locus theory could be embedded in the tourism literature to study the tourism intentions of destination brands. Keyword co-occurrence analysis generates a network of themes with their relations that describe the conceptual area of any field [76]. Figure 5 shows nodes between the most common keywords used in these articles (e.g., attribution, motivation, tourism, attachment, reviews, attitude emotions, etc.).
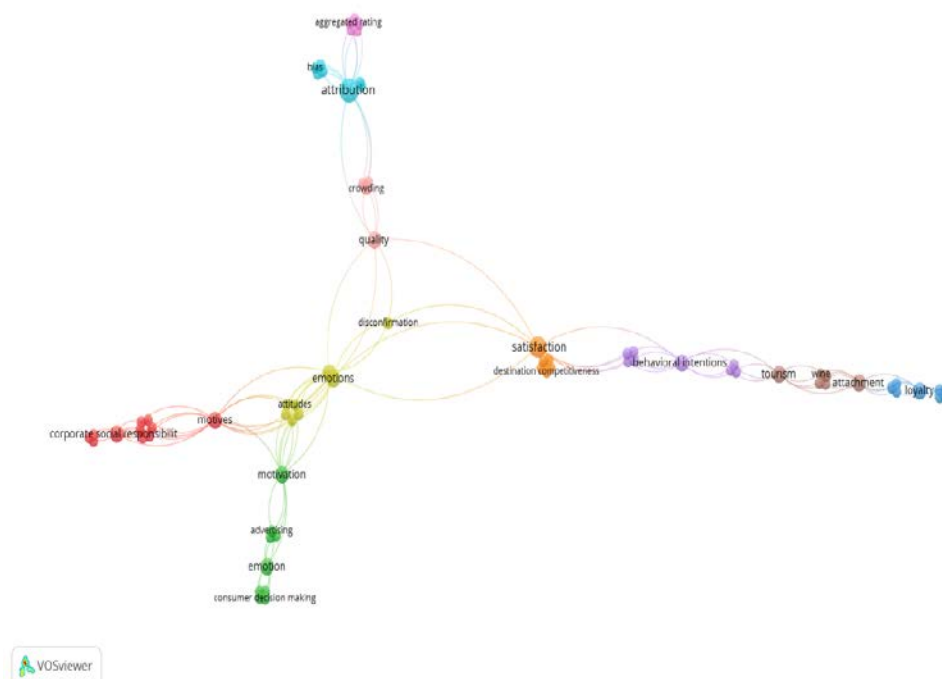

Figure 5. A bibliometric analysis about the current study articles keywords; co-occurrence of index keywords for all keywords threshold; the size of nodes is proportionate to the number of representations of any keyword; colors highlight several connections; figure produced in VOS viewer software.

Table 2 provides a detailed summary of future directions in the literature on tourism marketing, destination branding, attribution theory, information quantity, locus of control theory and proposed approaches. The table summarizes the current state of research on each topic, and suggests future research directions. Tourism marketing is critical to the success of any venue. It entails employing several methods to entice people to a particular site. Destination branding is an essential aspect of this process because it helps in creating an image or identity for a destination that can be used to differentiate it from other areas [48]. In this regard, attribution theory is of particular interest because it explains how individuals perceive and understand information about a location. Another aspect that affects how individuals perceive and interpret information about a place is the amount of information available. More knowledge can lead to more accurate observations. Finally, locus of control theory looks at how people view their potential to influence outcomes. Those with an internal locus of control are more inclined to act on their own decisions and opinions.

Table 2. The future directions in the tourism marketing literature with suggested methodology.

N.	Question	Suggested Methodology
1	How do tourists ascribe aggregative reviews?	Interviews
2	Do tourists ascribe aggregative reviews to their ability to seek information with internal LOC?	
3	Do tourists ascribe aggregative reviews with an external LOC to the service providers?	
4	What will happen if these aggregated reviews are not stable?	
5	How do tourists attribute different level of LOC to tourism service providers in case of disaggregation reviews?	
6	How do tourists contribute to these destinations in terms of attribution stability and attribution controllability if service providers do not reply to these disaggregate reviews?	
7	Are there any differences in the gender perspective in the attribution level or LOC while facing reviews conflict?	Experimental study with cross-sectional data
8	What is the impact of the daily use of social media on changing the state of control of tourists over destinations events?	Regression analysis with panel data
9	How do tourists use their level of LOC and attribution to respond to information asymmetry about destination brands?	Interviews
10	How does differentiation in the cultural distance affect tourists' LOC levels in forming knowledge about the destination?	Experimental study with cross-sectional data
11	What are the differences between long-term visits and short-term visits of LOC tourists for destination brands?	Experimental study with cross-sectional data
12	How many languages could tourism suppliers provide about destination brands to form knowledge about the destinations?	Regression analysis with cross-sectional data
13	How do tourists with non-common languages attribute to different LOC levels when they notice that tourism suppliers care about language issues?	
14	How have social norms, religion, and political factors affect tourists' locus of control levels while choosing destinations?	Interviews/regression analysis with panel data
15	What practical approaches can managers learn about unstable events in tourism destinations that could affect the locus of control of tourists?	
	What will happen if the tourism service provider ascribes this failure to internal causes (vs. external causes) with its impacts on tourist's locus of control? What impacts have these types of ascriptions had on tourism destination attachment?	
16	What occurs if we treat tourists' LOC as individual difference variables and investigate their impact on destination brands?	
17	Do age and education level influence how tourists' locus of control takes shape while facing negative experiences at destinations?	Experimental study with cross-sectional data

Table 2. *Cont.*

N.	Question	Suggested Methodology
18	What effects does the locus of control of the population towards tourism activities have, rather than the tourists themselves have on the LOC of tourists at destinations?	Regression analysis with cross-sectional data
19	How do different customs and traditions affect, positively or negatively, tourists' attribution and LOC?	Regression analysis with cross-sectional data
20	What are tourists' LOC-level impacts on tourism destination attachment?	Regression analysis with cross-sectional data

* Why interviews: They allow scholars to notice non-verbal data as non-verbal cues such as lack of eye contact, jittery characteristics, or protective posturing can present proper contexts while asking deep psychological questions, primarily related to attribution and LOC theories. This will help indicate the interaction when tourists or residents describe their LOC levels.
* Why cross-sectional data: It can measure prevalence for all factors under investigation, and cross-sectional data with regression could treat multiple outcomes and exposures. This will help treat the correlation between the causes of LOC and the effects of LOC levels on interpretation pathways at tourism destination brands.
* Why panel data: Panel data will help scholars identify the tourists' LOC and attribution differences across different countries, social norms, or demographic groups. This will help determine the variation of these elements concerning LOC theory and its impact on tourism destination attachment.
* Why experimental study: The experimental study will help scholars identify the fundamental importance of LOC theory while treating control groups to examine how different LOC could influence attachment to destination brands.

The table shows that future studies should focus on delving deeper into the link between these five categories. Researchers could, for example, investigate how varying amounts of information affect people's perceptions and interpretations of locations. They may also explore how varying amounts of locus of control influence people's judgments while planning a vacation or leisure activity. Furthermore, researchers can investigate how different types of attribution theories influence people's perceptions and interpretations of destinations. For example, they can check whether people are more likely to attribute positive or negative results to specific destinations based on their past experiences or beliefs about those locations.

In terms of methodology, the table advises that researchers should use qualitative and quantitative methodologies while conducting research in this field. Interviews and focus groups, for example, can provide valuable insights into people's perceptions and interpretations of sites. These approaches can also help researchers understand why certain aspects influence people's judgments while choosing a place for travel or leisure activities. Surveys can, for example, provide essential data for analyzing trends in tourism marketing, destination branding, attribution theory, amount of information, and place control theory literature. This data can then be used to drive future research efforts in this area. Overall, Table 2 summarizes the current study on the interaction between tourism marketing, destination branding, attribution theory, information quantity, and place control theory literature, together with the proposed technique for additional investigation. This table provides essential insights into potential study topics that may help increase our understanding of these topics, and influence the plans for effective tourism marketing campaigns at various locations worldwide.

6. Conclusions, Research Benefits, and Contribution

Current studies depict that understanding the intuition behind forming individuals' attribution to different events will eliminate the destructive judgment barriers while experiencing various events [22]. This occurs to mitigate failure to readjust experiences (before, during, and post-experience) in case of information or knowledge asymmetry [40] or in the case of service failure [74], especially in international tourism destination brands [4]. Additionally, the potential answers to these questions could eliminate the negative perceptions reinforced due to strong-held negative beliefs toward tourism destinations. This occurs while understanding the role of internal and external factors that affect tourists' LOC and

attribution toward interpreting different events at destinations with its impact on tourism destination brand attachment.

Likewise, while positive LOC and attribution toward events have remained mostly beneficial in recognizing consumers' favorable judgments [18], there is also a need to investigate how to preserve these positive attributions toward destinations. Therefore, scholars of tourism marketing have to begin exploring these questions as a future research direction to comprehend how to prevent destructive attributes toward tourism destinations as well as to increase brand attachment to tourism destination brands.

These new questions target tourism and marketing scholars who care about studying and examining the tourist behavior antecedents and consequences at international tourism destinations. Therefore, looking at these questions with the suggested methodology (see Table 1) may help guide new empirical studies that could precisely treat tourist behavior before, during, and after traveling to tourist destinations. This will contribute to [4,7,8] literature by adding a new significant construct, namely locus of control (LOC), to investigate antecedents and consequences of tourist attribution on tourism destination and its impacts on destination attachment. The tourism and marketing industries have long been interested in learning about visitors' behavior before, during, and after they visit overseas places. According to a recent study, the locus of control (LOC) construct may be a valuable tool for investigating the antecedents and implications of visitor attribution on tourism locations and its effects on destination attachment. This article endeavored to add to the body of knowledge by analyzing how LOC might be used to better understand visitor behavior in foreign sites. The study defined LOC and its application to tourism and marketing research [71]. Following that, we will look at how LOC may be utilized to explore the impacts of tourist attribution on destination attachment. Finally, the essay discussed how this research might add to the current literature on this topic. According to the findings of this study, LOC is a crucial component in understanding visitor behavior in overseas sites. Researchers can acquire significant insights into how visitors evaluate their experiences in these areas by including LOC in studies exploring the causes and repercussions of tourist attribution on tourism destinations. Understanding how LOC affects place attachment may inspire marketing efforts to enhance tourist pleasure and commitment. Overall, this research contributes to the current literature by proposing a new significant concept—the locus of control—for studying the antecedents and repercussions of visitor attribution on tourism locations and their effects on destination attachment.

In addition, this study and the suggested questions will contribute to extending Volo's [77] literature by inducting locus of control theory to investigate the link between tourist attachment and tourists' emotions. This contribution is based on studying how tourists utilize their LOC to interpret destination brands' information (sufficient or asymmetry), actual experiences, and knowledge with its impacts on tourism destination attachment. This contribution is a valuable background to answer recent scholars' questions about tourist attitudes. For instance, Lim et al.'s [78] current question of how marketers will understand tourist behavior challenges in sharing a home or tourism destination occurs while understanding how tourists shape their interpretation of different events in terms of internal or external LOC to release negative memories and preserve positive ones.

This research has several limitations. First, we conducted our data using a selected number of articles from the ABDC journal list. Therefore, we recommend using more articles in future research to ensure a coherent argument, as we have primarily focused more on the locus of control dimension in attribution theory. However, there are a couple of dimensions that should be investigated in further research (e.g., controllability and stability). Moreover, we focused more on a theory that motivates tourists to build the brand; however, the destination brand itself, as a particular topic of interest, still needs special analysis. In other words, future research should focus on the destination brand as the core of the research, and explain what theories influence it, not as we did; we focused on a specific theory to test how it shapes destination brands. In addition, the questions raised from the study's arguments needed to be tested by two disciplines (tourism management

and tourism marketing). A significant limitation is that we focused on review rather than bibliometric analysis; we only advertised the bibliometric analyzer as an additional guide to analyze keyword lines of selected articles. However, we suggest future research to conduct a stand-alone study with a pure bibliometric analysis to achieve more concise results.

Despite these limitations, researchers can better understand how these brands and strategies work by examining the tourist attribution of destination brands. Researchers can uncover possibilities for improving existing tactics, enhancing marketing campaigns, and creating new and unique brands with the correct data and research methods. With this insight, destination marketers may develop successful strategies to improve tourist satisfaction as well as to generate long-term loyalty.

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