

A Conceptual Framework of Erasmus Students as Advocates of a Country Brand: An Abstract



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Abstract In the past 10 years, Portugal has received more than 60,000 Erasmus students. However, little is known about the impacts of their stay, namely, how they can promote Portugal as a destination to visit or study in. Just as an example, a news story about Erasmus students in Portugal reported that Erasmus students' family normally visited them during their stay (Ferreira 2015), which shows one of the many facets on how Erasmus students can have an impact in the country they choose to study.

This study proposes a model to evaluate these impacts based on brand concepts that are normally associated with products and services, which are brand love, brand uniqueness, brand image and brand identification. Several studies have been conducted using these concepts, but not applied to a country. Based on the literature review carried out, 11 hypotheses are proposed.

This conceptual study indicates how the constructs can be measured, using items from several studies (Carroll and Ahuvia 2006; Schouten et al. 2007; Harrison-Walker 2016; Goyette et al. 2010; Maxham III and Netemeyer 2002; Amaro and Duarte 2015; Lam et al. 2010; Netemeyer et al. 2004; Zhang et al. 2017).

This is a conceptual article and, therefore, has not been empirically tested. Nevertheless, the study identifies several possible antecedents and consequences of Erasmus students' love for Portugal. To the best of knowledge, the concept of brand love has never been applied to a country. Yet, it seems pertinent since it provides marketers with important insights. Indeed, on the one hand, the consequences of loving Portugal are important in promoting it as a destination whether to travel, live, study or recommend. On the other hand, a better understanding of the causes that drive Erasmus students' emotional attachment to Portugal is vital to create strategies

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that will develop and increase these feelings. It is anticipated that the quantitative study will highlight the importance of Erasmus students in promoting a destination and that DMOs can enhance strategies to further enhance this promotion.

The framework presented is also a response to the call for more research regarding brand love in other categories and the need to identify other antecedents and outcomes of brand love (Batra et al. 2012; Carroll and Ahuvia 2006).