Towards a Multilevel Theory of Destination Branding Culture: Advancing Theory Building in Tourism Management

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cf.	Compare (Latin: confer)
Ed.	Editor
ed.	Edition
e.g.	For example (Latin: exempli gratia)
et al.	And others (Latin: et alii/alia)
i.e.	That is to say; in other words (Latin: id est)
&	And
Q	Question
Vs.	Versus
CCMLTB	Contextually Constructed Multiple level Theory Building
CCMLTBM	Contextually Constructed Multiple level Theory Building Model
CCMLTT	Contextually Constructed Multiple level Theory Testing
DB	Destination Branding
DBC	Destination Branding Culture
DMO	Destination Management and/or Marketing Organizations
DM	Decision-making

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Zusammenfassung

Aus dem Paradox der Begegnung von Touristik-Stakeholders als physische, biologische, psychologische, kulturelle, soziale sowie historische Wesen mit denjenigen der Reiseziele als historische, wirtschaftliche, soziologische sowie religiöse Wesen (Morin, 1999) ist für Reiseziele das Komplexitätsparadigma (Waldrop, 1994; Walby, 2006; Thrift, 1999; Urry, 2003; Urry, 2005; Taylor, 2003; Rycroft & Kash, 1999; Rescher, 1998) entstanden. Die Standorte wurden dadurch trotz ihrer „zielgerichteten territorialen Wettbewerb“ (Gordon, 2011, p. 33) zur Zusammenarbeit gezwungen, um ihre „Metaprobleme“ (Trist, 1983, p. 247) zu lösen und für die Organisationen und Personen mit Sitz in ihren jeweiligen Gebieten den Wettbewerbserfolg zu sichern.

Bei dem Paradox, dass für die einzelnen Partnern wie auch für die Kollektiven aus der vielschichtigen Phänomen des Destination-Brandings entsteht, wurde trotz der aufschlussreichen Sichtweisen der klassischen Forschungsansätze zum Komplexitätsparadigma im Bereich des Destination-Brandings und aufgrund einer engen, linearen Denkweise, die auf der Makroebene die Dysfunktionen der Stakeholder und auf der Mikroebene deren geistigen Funktionen und Verhaltensweise ausschließt und übersieht, zu kurz gegriffen.

Wegen eben dieser Wissenslücke wird in der aktuellen Forschung versucht, für den Bereich des Touristik-Managements ein neues Begriffsmodell zu konzipieren, indem eine mehrschichtige Theorie auf Basis eines meso- (House, Rousseau, & Thomas-Hunt, 1995) kulturellen Ansatzes entwickelt wird (Schroeder, 2009; Schroeder & Salzer-Mörling, 2006; Hatch & Schultz, 1997). Dabei wird ein komplexes Denksystem

geschaffen (Pondy & Mitroff, 1979; Morin, 1999; Byrne, 1998), dass die Entstehung einer hybriden, (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000) dritten Kulturperspektive (Casmir, 1993) und eines auf Gruppen basierenden Denkmodells (Klimoski & Mohammed, 1994) gegenüber Destination-Branding-Phänomenen einräumt. Diese Perspektive und dieses Modell können die von der gemeinsamen gesellschaftlichen Wirkung erbrachte Leistung (Elron, Shamir, & Ben-Ari, 1999) des Destination-Brandings nutzen. Die mehrschichtige Theorie, die bei dieser Forschung entwickelt wird, ist dann die Brücke, die die Kluft zwischen den makrokontextuellen und den mikroverhaltensbezogenen, Destination-Branding-Phänomenen im kulturellen Rahmen überbrückt.

Schlüsselwörter: Komplexitätsparadigma, kollaboratives Destination-Branding, mehrschichtige Theoriebildung

ABSTRACT

The paradox of confrontation of tourism stakeholders as physical, biological, psychological, cultural, social, and historical beings, with those of destinations as historical, economic, sociological, religious beings (Morin, 1999) has given rise to emergence of the complexity paradigm (Waldrop, 1994; Walby, 2006; Thrift, 1999; Urry, 2003; Urry, 2005; Taylor, 2003; Rycroft & Kash, 1999; Rescher, 1998) for tourism destinations, which has forced them to play a collaborative role despite their "purposive territorial competition" (Gordon, 2011, p. 33) to solve their "meta problems" (Trist, 1983, p. 247) and to secure the competitive success for organizations and individuals based in their area.

Nonetheless, to date, despite the insightful perspectives that the classical research approaches towards destination branding provide for addressing the complexity paradigm, due to the narrow and linear thinking mechanism that locks away and ignores the dysfunctions of stakeholders at the macro level and their mental and behavioral functions at the micro level, they fall short of addressing the paradox that the multilevel nature of destination branding phenomenon creates for individual partners as well as collectives.

As a result of this very gap, the current research is an attempt to provide a new conceptual paradigm for the tourism management domain, by developing a multilevel theory based on a meso (House, Rousseau, & Thomas-Hunt, 1995) cultural approach (Schroeder, 2009; Schroeder & Salzer-Mörling, 2006; Hatch & Schultz, 1997); and in so doing, it develops a complex thinking system (Pondy & Mitroff, 1979; Morin, 1999;

Byrne, 1998) that can allow for emergence of a hybrid, (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000) third culture perspective (Casmir, 1993) and a group-based mental model (Klimoski & Mohammed, 1994) towards destination branding phenomenon, that can leverage the performance of the social collective action (Elron, Shamir, & Ben-Ari, 1999) of the destination branding. In so doing, the developed multilevel theory in this research provides a bridge to connect the macro contextual and the micro behavioral divide of the destination branding phenomenon within a cultural framework.

Keywords: complexity paradigm, collaborative destination branding, multilevel theory building

Saying

There always is another way to say it…
As when you come to a dusty hill and say,
"This is not the hill I meant to climb.
That one I've perhaps climbed already-see,
there it looms. behind me, green with trees."
And then climb as you can the present hill.

Or when you walk through a great childhood forest
latticed with sun, carpeted in brown pine,
knowing the one you were and the one you are.
and think, "I shall not speak this forest's name
but let it densely live in what I am ..."

The saying changes what you have to say
so that it all must be begun again
in newer reconcilings of the heart.

Frederick Morgan (1977, p.105)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> From a very early age, we are taught to break apart problems, to fragment the world. This apparently makes complex tasks and subjects more manageable, but we pay a hidden, enormous price... we lose our intrinsic sense of connection to a larger whole.
>
> (Senge, 2006)

1.1 Research Problem and Necessity

Over the past few decades the social and cultural sciences have faced "a whole array of incursions" (Urry, 2005, p. 1). The emergence of neovitalism and neoliberalism as some examples of complex structures of thought and feeling have been some of the transformative paradigms that have challenged the concept of social phenomena in recent years. Nonetheless, the impacts of these and other transformations have given rise to new complex and "meta problems" (Trist, 1983, p. 247), solutions of which are beyond the power of individual organizations. As a result, the development of new forms of collaborative governance structures (Lado, Boyd, & Hanlon, 1997) amongst various tourism destinations in recent years represents the efforts that the destinations have made in order to jointly cope with the discontinuities that are created by the multidimensional global economy (Savage, Bunn, Gray, Xiao, Wang, Wilson, & Williamsi, 2011; Borys & Jemison, 1989).

All in all, along with the proliferation of the popularity of the branding paradigm as a potentially value-creating mechanism for tourism destinations, several empirical studies recognize this fact that, due to the complex nature of tourism product, collaborative branding efforts in destinations fail to perform and deliver their expected results (Marzano, 2007; Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott, 2002).

Nonetheless, despite the vital need for development of an improved and specific branding paradigm that can amalgamate the shared contextual dimensions of tourism destinations that create the underlying meanings of the brand identity, with the unique organizational patterns that form the social collective behavior of branding in destinations, the nature and dimensions of a complex thinking paradigm towards the

destination branding has remained an under researched phenomenon in tourism domain (Currall & Inkpen, 2002; Zaheer, McEvily, & Perrone, 1998; Drazin, 1999; Drazin & Schoonhoven, 1996; Gersick, 1991).

While trying to explore the underlying reasons behind this drawback in the tourism domain, Pritchard and Morgan (2007) observe that, the research in the tourism domain, by merely focusing on "positivist discourses" that contain "a commitment to empiricism, quantification, neutrality, objectivity, distance, validity, and reliability" as "the appropriate markers of the authoritative voice" (p. 18), has remained rather affirmative and reproductive, and, hence, has failed to explore new conceptual, ethical or epistemological grounds and aspects of different phenomena (Pritchard & Morgan, 2007). Jamal and Everett (2007), in a similar vein confirm that, the applied and functionalist approach has dominated tourism studies and the "economics-externalities camp" (industry-oriented approach) has somewhat overshadowed the "impacts-internalities camp" (social and cultural approach) (p. 58). As a consequence, despite the emphasis of several authors (e.g. Urry, 2005; Hankinson, 2004, Marzano, 2007; Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott, 2003) on recognition of a new paradigm that can provide a complex thinking system in the tourism domain, the results of studies reveal that, the many so called single-level, partially focused objective approaches of tourism studies fail to address this gap (Framke, 2001; Pike, 2004; Jenkins & Hall, 1997; Marzano, 2007; Urry, 2005).

Stemming from the word Complexus, which means woven together, the notion of complexity manifests as soon as a number of distinct yet interrelated elements (e.g. economic, political, sociological, emotional, mythological, etc.) within a certain context

connect together to create an interdependent whole that cannot exist without its components (Morin, 1999; Rajagopalan, Rasheed, & Datta, 1993). In this sense, complexity is a paradoxical notion of confrontation with the "bond between unity and multiplicity" (Morin, 1999, p. 15).

While explaining the notion of complexity of the human beings as "physical, biological, psychological, cultural, social, and historical beings" (Morin, 1999, p. 2), Morin argues that societies as well as human beings have various "historical, economic, sociologic, religious dimensions…" (p. 14), which further add to the notion of complexity. As a consequence, he urges the importance of this fact that, as multidimensional entities, social phenomena should be studied in relation to their nature as a whole and their components as parts, and the interconnections between these two domains together with the context within which they are located (Morin, 1999).

While explaining the underlying grounds for humans' linear-systems thinking mechanisms, in studying the real world phenomena, Byrne (1998) argues that, although "the search for linearly-founded laws is a search for predictive ability" that can enable us to "engineer the world and make it work in the ways we want it to" in order to "turn [it] from reflection to engagement" (p.19), the linear-systems thinking, most probably, fails to depict the non-linear nature of real world phenomena, locking away and ignoring their complex nature that needs to be investigated. Pondy and Mitroff (1979) also confirm that, the conventional linear open-systems perspective directs "our attention away from dysfunctions at the macro level and from mental functions of human behavior" (p.3), and respectively suggest that, in order to enable the organizations to deal with the discontinuities of today's complex world, and to better unfold the different macro and

micro aspects of social phenomena, there is a need for development of multidimensional thinking by means of "multi-cephalous" or "multi-brain" systems (p.9). Consequently, Pondy and Mitroff (1979) ask the field of management to theorize beyond mechanistic and organic systems towards more language-based and symbol-processing models that can think, communicate and interrelate beyond the conventional linear models.

In addressing this need for a more complex thinking, the literature reveals that "cultural models" due to their multilevel socially constructed nature (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996; Schein, 1996; Cameron & Ettington, 1988; Mohan, 1993) can provide appropriate mechanisms for the complex thinking (Schroeder, 2009; Schroeder & Salzer-Mörling, 2006; Hatch & Schultz, 1997; Pondy & Mitroff, 1979), required for unraveling the nature of complex social phenomena; since the different aspects of culture can allow for integration of various individual and collective levels that need a more abstract conceptualization, and in so doing it can provide a meaningful relationship between the covert underlying values and behavior patterns, and the overt collective actions of the social partners in order to create shared symbolic meanings that can justify and guide their collective cognitive and structural direction towards greater success (Siguaw, Simpson, & Enz , 2006; Schein, 1992; Dandridge, Mitroff, & Joyce, 1980).

Thereupon, the cultural perspective, according to the above-mentioned discussions can provide a distinct hermeneutic approach (von Wright, 1971; Sherratt, 2006; Outhwaite, 2007) towards understanding of the complex nature of human-oriented phenomena in the tourism domain and specifically in the destination branding domain, which is formed by the underlying values, decision-making patterns and decision-making

processes of the participating social partners, who aim to develop the brand of their destination through this social dynamics.

Based on this discussion, the current dissertation, in order to address the above discussed gap found in the literature i.e. the lack of a multilevel and comprehensive paradigm in the tourism domain towards understanding of the nature of destination branding, intends to take a cultural perspective in line with authors who call for a paradigm shift from "open systems models" towards "cultural models" (e.g. Pondy & Mitroff, 1979), in order to address this very gap. The selection of the cultural approach would, therefore, provide the researcher with a multilevel mechanism to distinguish the different micro behavioral dimensions of the destination branding phenomenon within their underlying social context.

To this aim, interpretivism (Bevir & Rhodes, 2002; Schultz & Hatch, 1996; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2000) is selected as the leading paradigm to guide the multilevel and contextually constructed process of this research. The underlying premise of this perspective for the DBC domain is that, the complex nature of collaborative social efforts cannot be understood properly without grasping the underlying meanings that are given to them by the collectives who are responsible to undertake them. Accordingly, the interpretive approach for the purpose of this study, deals with the beliefs, ideas and discourses as important components of stakeholders' meaning creation, and bases itself on the premise that individual stakeholders act on their values, and thought patterns, and hence it is not possible to understand their preferences and choices only from objective facts and external evidences.

Nonetheless, as Hall (2005) observes, the nature of tourism as a discipline is a "significant source of debate" (p. 126). While acknowledging the still ongoing debate on the nature of tourism as a discipline (Franklin & Crang, 2001; Echtner & Jamal, 1997; Tribe, 1997, 2006) this study, in line with authors who believe that the tourism domain lacks its inclusive and self-owned theories (Jafari & Ritchie, 1981; Farrell & Twining-Ward, 2004; Dann, Nash & Pearce, 1988; Marzano, 2007) intends to utilize theories from disciplines outside tourism, and establish its theoretical basis upon them. As a consequence, sociology and anthropology are particularly selected as the disciplines that support this research with their central theoretical pillars i.e. culture, collaboration, and strategic decision-making.

To sum up, the multifold purposes of this dissertation can be defined as: (1) addressing the shortcoming of multilevel and complex thinking perspective in the tourism domain (Pritchard & Morgan, 2007; Jamal & Everett, 2007) and developing an improved approach towards understanding the complex nature of destination branding beyond conventional perspectives, (2) developing a self-owned theory for the tourism domain in order to fill in the gap of theory building found in the tourism studies (Jafari & Ritchie, 1981), (3) contributing to meaningful convergence of the culture, collaboration and strategic decision-making theories into an integrated multilevel theory of destination branding collaborative decision-making culture, (4) and facilitating a cross-disciplinary communication that can allow for exchange of diverse point-of-views that otherwise segments scholars into "enemy" camps within disciplines that share common interests (Upton, 2006; Wilhelms et al., 2009).

1.2 The Multilevel Theory Building Model

As mentioned in the previous section, the very nature of destination branding as a complex socially constructed strategic decision-making effort, calls for multilevel and dynamic paradigms (Currall & Inkpen, 2002; Zaheer et al., 1998; Drazin, 1999; Drazin & Schoonhoven, 1996; Gersick, 1991) that can allow for better understanding of its nature and mechanisms.

As a consequence, due to the necessity of this issue, the current study intends to develop a multilevel theory for the tourism domain, in line with the authors (Pondy & Mitroff, 1979; Morin, 1999) who call for development of a dynamic and multilevel approach towards the study of complex social phenomena, and respectively builds its methodological foundations on the multilevel theory development paradigm (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Morgeson & Hoffman, 1999; Fisher, 2000; Upton, 2006; Fischer, 2008;) to fill the gap of a multilevel theory in the collective decision-making context of the destination branding, as a platform to bridge "the micro-macro divide" (Klein, Tosi, & Cannella, 1999, p. 243) found in the previous single-level studies in the tourism domain. By so doing, this research attempts to create an unequalled view of the complex phenomenon of destination branding in the tourism management domain.

However, whereas old, deductive, and reductionist methods of isolating phenomena and limiting variables and relationships to create a predictable environment of investigation, offer limited insights into many complex real-world scenarios, that are dynamic and "cannot be understood or resolved in isolation" (Hammond, 2002, p. 430), the multilevel theory building (MLTB) as a theory development methodology, provides a

mechanism to study the different cognitively-driven constructs (Knight & Cross, 2012) of this research within their underlying context.

While describing theorizing as a "disciplined imagination", Weick (1989) argues that the methodological processes of theory building by mere emphasis on validation "diminish the importance of alternative theorizing activities such as mapping, conceptual development, and speculative thought" (p. 516). He further adds that, the methodological processes "weaken theorizing" and "de-emphasize the contribution that imagination, representation, and selection make to the process" of research.

As a consequence, the need to address this shortcoming in the methodological considerations of a research allows the current study to propose an improved approach towards theory building that can develop an "inherent, informing, and affectual relationship" (Knight & Cross, 2012, p. 40) between the multiple aspects of the phenomenon of interest and the methodological structure of the research. In so doing, the MLTB methodology (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Fischer, 2008; Fisher, 2000; Morgeson & Hoffman, 1999; Upton, 2006) in this research is accompanied with the contextual constructs model (CCM) of research development methodology (Knight & Cross, 2012), in a combined fashion to provide a novel model i.e. contextually constructed multilevel theory building model (CCMLTBM) that can view the whole process of a research as a journey that evolves through different complementary phases. Such an approach will, nevertheless, allow for simultaneous recognition of the research phenomenon of interest as well as the construction of a theory within multiple interrelated level relationships (Knight & Cross, 2012).

The CCMLTB model, furthermore, allows for fulfilling the need to contemplate philosophical issues in the tourism domain acknowledged by Hollinshead (2004) who calls for "more situationally sympathetic and more contextually pertinent thinking about the issues of being, seeing, experiencing, knowing and becoming" (p. 68).

As a consequence, the conglomeration between MLTB and contextually constructed research process, makes the CCMLTB an ideal methodology that directs the gradual design of research constructs within their embedded research and theory contexts (Knight & Cross, 2012; Eisenhardt, 1989) and in so doing it allows for the emergence of a novel, dynamic and multidimensional research model to ponder the research phenomenon of interest from various theoretical angles.

The CCMLTB model in this research, however, develops through three dynamic phases. The Conceptual phase of this model contains the research point-of-view and involves the researchers' attempts to identify the phenomenon of interest and the context in which she wants it to be studied. Respectively, three components will be addressed in this stage of research:

- The research: Including the dimensions of the phenomenon of interest and research problem; research topic and questions (Trauth, 2001; Ellis & Levy, 2009; Remenyi et al., 1998; Knight & Cross, 2012);
- The research discipline: Including the academic politics and researcher's theoretical lens (Trauth, 2001; Knight & Cross, 2012) and body of knowledge (Ellis & Levy, 2009; Knight & Cross, 2012);
- The researcher: Including the researcher skills as well as personal and ideological lens (Trauth, 2001; Knight & Cross, 2012).

However, the development of this phase is critical for the establishment of the conceptual validity of this research (Knight & Cross, 2012). The second phase of the CCMLTB model i.e. Philosophical phase, contains the underlying paradigm of research and describes the assumptions that the researcher makes about her knowledge of reality and the way she intends to obtain or understand that knowledge. The philosophical assumptions as the outcomes of this stage, then, determine if the research purpose and questions can be best addressed through deductive theory testing, inductive theory building, or a combination of both (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). The last phase of the CCMLTB model i.e. Methodological phase, which is rooted in the thought experiment of the researcher, is based on the intuitive approach as a means for investigating the laws of interaction amongst the different components of the research phenomenon of interest. From this perspective, the analysis of the research findings and elements "takes place throughout the entire research process" (Knight & Cross, 2012, p. 52) and by so doing, it allows for the different contextual constructs and units to gradually transform into a holistic multilevel theory. This intuitive, gradual and analytical (Eisenhardt, 1989) approach of the CCMLTB, then, makes the whole research as a process that completes piecemeal without the need for the researcher to feel pressured to develop the findings per se, allowing her to represent adequate evidence of phenomena, select appropriate strategy for interpretation of the findings, and demonstrate the reasonableness or validity of these findings or conclusions (Amaratunga, Baldry, Sarshar, & Newton, 2002).

1.3 Research Question and Issues

This research seeks to find the answer to the main question of "What are the contextual and behavioral elements of the cultural paradigm of destination branding?

This research question per se embodies four sub-categories in order to unravel its complex nature (Figure 1).

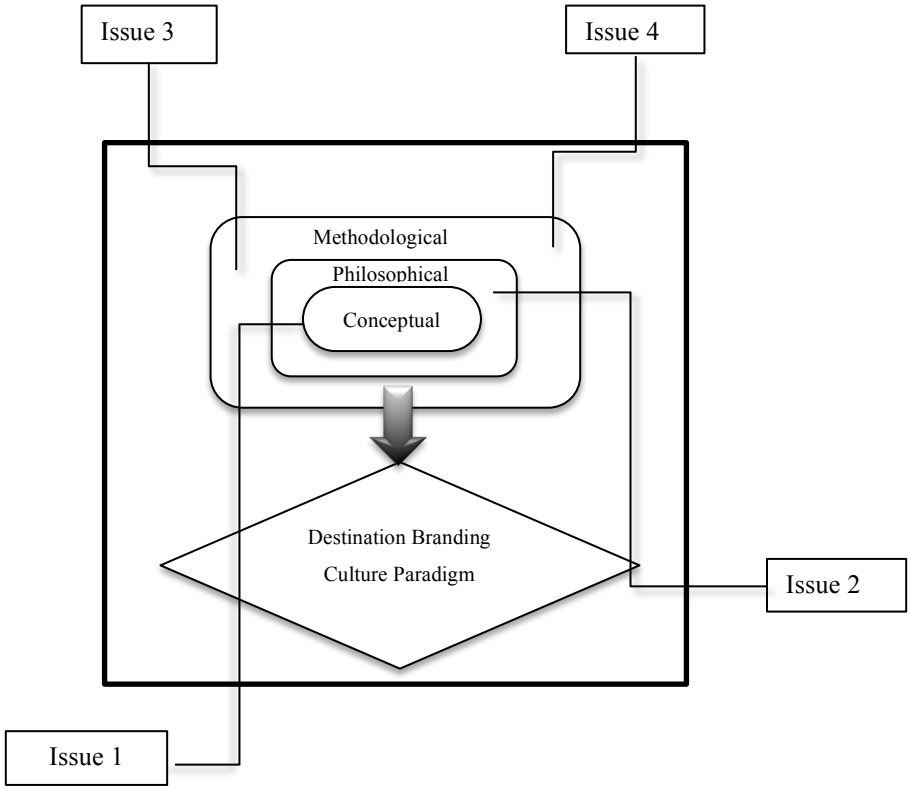

Figure 1. Dimensions of the Research Question and Issues

Research Issue 1: What are the underlying contextual constructs and units of the destination branding culture theory?

The purpose of the first Research Issue is to provide a novel and improved understanding of the notion of complexity and the way it can be defined and unfolded in the context of destination branding. As a consequence, the underlying conceptual perspectives and body of knowledge together with the researcher's own evolving lenses will allow to identify the different macro, micro, and contextual components, interactions

of which will constitute the phenomenon of interest in this research (Dubin, 1978) i.e. the destination branding culture phenomenon.

After identifying the contextual constructs as the first components in developing the multi level theory of DBC, Research Issue 1, aims to recognize the pertinent units and their conceptual notions and boundaries that form the basic building blocks (Lynham, 2002) of the DBC theory. However, it is these units that later will provide the criteria against which the validity of the current research process can be determined (Dubin, 1978), and will guide the kinds of studies that can later be used to verify and refine the emerging DBC theory (Lynham, 2002).

After recognizing and discussing the contextual constructs, units and their pertinent boundaries, Research Issue 1 intends to describe the research object or phenomenon of interest in this research.

Respectively, the theoretical considerations about tourism destinations and the complexity of marketing and branding of tourism destinations (Bramwell & Rawding, 1996) will allow an understanding of the emergent paradigm needed for conceptualizing the destination branding culture as the emergent phenomenon of interest in this research.

Research Issue 1, furthermore, aims to describe the underlying mechanisms, motivations and processes that different stakeholders utilize to develop a shared system of meaning creation to collectively solve their complex problems in the context of destination branding. This will provide evidence to describe the interlock between the three theories of culture, collaboration, and strategic decision-making proposed as the main underlying theories in this research.

In brief, Research Issue 1 in addition to confirmation of destination branding as a collaborative process (Blain, 2001; Deslandes, 2003; Im, 2003; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003; Morgan et al., 2002, 2003; Morrison & Anderson, 2002; Marzano, 2007) intends to develop the concept of destination branding phenomenon to a higher level as a complex and multidimensional culture that not only represents the overt collective decision-making processes that stakeholders go through, but also explains the underlying covert shared values, and decision-making patterns that stakeholders try to share in order to make sense of their collaborative decision-making actions. In a sense, Research Issue 1 intends to provide the underlying components, required for the new conceptualization of the destination branding phenomenon as a hybrid decision-making culture.

Research Issue 2: What are the underlying philosophical assumptions of the DBC theory?

The purpose of the second Research Issue is to provide the leading paradigm and assumptions that determine the appropriateness of selecting a theory-to-research strategy and a contextually constructed multilevel theory building model in this research.

Consequently, Research Issue 2 will allow for specifying the paradigm positioning of this research i.e. interpretivism that manifests the researcher's history, background, personal values and beliefs within the current research (D'Cruz, 2001) in order to position herself within a discourse community (Ross, 1991) with which she shares a common language (Marzano, 2007).

In summary, Research Issue 2 in line with the MLTB (Upton, 2006; Fischer, 2008; Fisher, 2000; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Morgeson & Hoffman, 1999) and CCM (Knight & Cross, 2012) intends to provide the underlying assumptions of this research, in

order to fill the gap between theory building and research design, acknowledged by Weick (1989) (Section 1.2).

Research Issue 3: What are the different within-level issues of the DBC theory?

The purpose of the third Research Issue is to specify the level of theory, as well as the pertinent levels of measurement and analysis. As a consequence, Research Issue 2 intends to specify the predictions regarding the level of the contextual constructs, their emergence direction, their level of origin and current level, their function, and finally their unit type (Upton, 2006). These specifications will, then, allow the researcher to determine the level of measurement of each construct (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000) and provide a consistent theoretical body that avoids the "fallacy of the wrong level" (Klein, Dansereau, & Hall, 1994, p. 198) for the future research operationalization.

Research issue 4: What are the different between-level issues of the DBC theory?

The last Research Issue intends to provide the underlying laws of interaction amongst the different constructs and units of the DBC theory in order to make sense of the whole picture of the destination branding culture theory, by means of the elements provided by culture, collaboration, and strategic decision-making theories. In so doing, the Research Issue 4 aims to depict how the different components of a complex system like destination branding function together as a culture that is composed of a set of shared values and decision-making patterns and that transform into a complex decision-making process. In so doing, the last research issue will identify the way collective decision-making process of the destination branding acts as a channel to transform and transfer the impacts of the different underlying components of the stakeholders to the outcomes of this collective phenomenon.

All in all, the research question and the research issues that derive from it in this research draw on the theory of culture, collaboration, and strategic decision-making with the objective of addressing the gap found in the literature identified in Section (1.1)

1.4 Research Contributions

From a theoretical perspective the main contribution of this research in contributing to the body of knowledge (Dubin, 1978) i.e. C2K, lies in its power in creating a complex thinking system i.e. cultural paradigm towards the study of social phenomenon of destination branding, and the way it unfolds through a complex thinking system in the domain of tourism.

The need to use a cultural perspective as an alternative paradigm towards complex and nonlinear thinking, has been acknowledged by different authors (Pondy & Mitroff, 1979; Morin, 1999; Schroeder, 2009) and affirmed by Yanow (2000) who suggests using culture in its "root metaphor sense" (Smircich, 1983) to unravel the complex nature of social phenomena; a perspective that the linear system thinking fails to approach.

The centrality of the concept of culture to this research, in fact, is an attempt by the researcher to highlight this fact that the current research intends to add to the knowledge of how culture theory can be applied in the strategic and collaborative decision-making domains such as tourism destination branding context.

However, in addition to this novel contribution, further distinct contributions to some aspects of culture, strategic decision-making, and collaboration theory have been distinguished.

As a consequence, the contributions of this research are either specifically related to culture or to identifying the way different dimensions of culture, unfolded as a

collaborative decision-making effort amongst the participating stakeholders, can relate together in order to affect the outcome and performance of that collaborative action as a whole.

Nonetheless, the ability of this dissertation to produce novel and specific explanations about culture, based on the different elements of the research context, the previous research studies and the researcher's knowledge and experience, in a context such as destination branding is a distinct contribution per se.

In fact, this study will point out, while the concept of culture has been extensively used in social sciences, few authors have scrutinized the essence of culture and the way it manifests in different social contexts (Burns, 1999) and particularly in different collaborative contexts.

The detail of the contributions of this research are discussed in Sections (5.2, 5.3, & 5.4). Whereas previous research have described the promotion and marketing of places as a complex (Bramwell & Rawding, 1996; Currall & Inkpen, 2002; Zaheer et al., 1998; Drazin, 1999; Drazin & Schoonhoven, 1996; Gersick, 1991) and collaborative effort (Blain, 2001; Deslandes, 2003; Im, 2003; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003; Morgan et al., 2002, 2003; Morrison & Anderson, 2002; Marzano, 2007), this study by developing an improved model (Section 1.2), contributes to better understanding of the DBC as a complex phenomenon, complexity of which is due to the existence of multiple cultural elements of the stakeholders involved in the collective development of this phenomenon . In fact, the results of the current study acknowledge that the complexity in the destination branding phenomenon is rooted in the amalgamation of the underlying macro contextual, and micro cognitive and behavioral dimensions of the multiple stakeholders i.e. their

national values and organizational decision-making patterns that manifest in form of a collaborative decision-making process in the context of destination branding.

The conceptualization of complexity in the destination branding domain, hence, sets the ground for further contribution of this research study to the development of an improved theory for the tourism domain i.e. the contextually constructed multilevel theory of destination branding culture.

This study, in fact, confirms that, destination branding is a complex, collaborative decision-making process by revealing the multiple levels that establish and attach meanings to this phenomenon in form of stakeholders' decision-making culture. Whereas, authors such as Fyall and Garrod (2005) describe tourism marketing in terms of collaboration as a pre-existing agreement, this study suggests that destination branding might only result in success if all the participating members agree upon a hybrid (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000) or third culture (Casmir, 1993) and a group-based mental model (Klimoski & Mohammed, 1994), and respectively commit themselves to act upon the agreed and shared values and patterns of this culture that guide them towards effective implementation of this process. Otherwise, the formation of the destination branding process does not necessarily guarantee its success.

The next contribution of this research is the recognition of the dimensions of stakeholders' culture, which are applicable to the complex decision-making contexts such as destination branding. The significance of these dimensions is in that they provide a set of initial attributes that can be tested, and modified in future research.

A further contribution of this study is its novel perspective towards research methodology and theory development. Whereas Weick (1989) suggests that the research

methodology and theory building process should be separated from each other, this research argues that the integration of the research context to the process of theory building can allow for recognition of the research phenomenon of interest from multiple aspects and through a gradual process. In fact this improved and integrated perspective towards convergence of the research context and theory building process shows that the inclusion of the research elements do not only weaken the theory building process, but they also complement the linear perspectives towards theory building by emphasizing on context as an important factor in developing a multilevel perspective towards research development.

By using the tourism as the context of this study, this contribution does not only add to the body of destination branding knowledge, and more generally the tourism domain, but it also adds a contribution to the other domains of culture, strategic decision-making, and collaboration. In a sense, by converging these three theories this research has the ability to feed its findings back into the sociology and anthropology disciplines in order to question the validity of the research and theory building models proposed by their literature.

Last but not least, this research also contributes to the tourism policy and practice domain by highlighting the necessity of distinguishing the significant role of stakeholders' decision-making culture as an important element in the success of destination branding efforts. By evaluating the stakeholders' branding culture, destination managers will not only be able to understand where threat and support to destination branding strategy come from, but they will also recognize the different covert dimensions that can facilitate or debilitate the destination branding collective efforts from reaching its

potentials. The contributions of the current research further provide insights for collaboration managers to create a platform for collaborative advantage through development of a unique cultural intelligence. Furthermore, the DBC theory will allow the managers to scrutinize and revitalize their cultural mindsets based on the learning, social, economic, and strategic mechanisms that the collaborative DBC efforts and context provide for them.

By so doing, this research provides a distinct model for evaluation of the effectiveness of a complex thinking system in leveraging the brand of a destination. In fact, this study confirms that collaborative decision-making phenomena such as destination branding are great sources of both contributing and profit seeking. Consequently, failing to recognize the underlying cultural values and behavior patterns of the participating stakeholders within destination branding domain might result in failure of the destination branding efforts.

As a consequence, the utilization of a cultural perspective towards the study of the social phenomenon of destination branding collective decision-making will offer a nuance understanding of this phenomenon that does not only contribute to meaningful convergence and integration amongst the disciplines of sociology and anthropology by combining the existing culture, collaboration, and strategic decision-making theories, but it also provides explanations on their relevance within the specific context of tourism destination management. Furthermore, the integration of "research context" as a component that gradually complements the process of multilevel theory construction (Knight & Cross, 2012) provides an unequalled perspective to explore the different aspects of the research phenomenon of interest.

Finally, by proposing issues regarding operationalization of the multilevel theory of DBC, this dissertation sets the stage for further future empirical and qualitative testing of this theory, in order to make the appropriate theory refinements that lead into a more profound understanding of complex, interrelated phenomena (Morin, 1999). By so doing the current research contributes to cross-disciplinary communication and exchange of diverse point-of-views within disciplines that share common interests (Upton, 2006; Wilhelms, Shaki, & Hsiao, 2009) in order to continue the dialogue about theory building in complex and multidimensional domain of tourism.

1.5 Research Scope and Limitations

As discussed in Section (1.2), the focus of this study is limited to development of a contextually constructed multilevel theory of destination branding culture by means of an innovative perspective towards unfolding the complex and multilevel phenomena. The intended result, therefore, is a parsimonious theoretical contribution to complex culture of destination branding and a refined theory process that is not only an improvement on earlier studies of DBC phenomenon, but is also a platform for further future research, both in theory development and research operationalization in the tourism domain.

However, although the empirical and qualitative testing of the resulting theory is beyond the scope of this study, the results of this study will include an improved theory building process and an integrated contextually constructed theory, which is the result of the convergence amongst the three culture, collaboration, and strategic decision-making theories in form of the novel theory of stakeholders' collaborative decision-making culture of destination branding, which can be tested and refined in future research.

However despite the insightful outcomes that the current research has contributed to (Section 1.4, Sections 5.2, 5.3, & 5.4), the theoretical nature of this research might set some limitations on achieving its results through the empirical testing. Furthermore, due to the distinct paradigms utilized by the researcher to reflect her ideological and experimental view points, the varying conceptualizations and meanings provided to describe the different aspects of phenomena in this research are bounded to the specific context developed in this research. As a result, the generalizability of the current DBC theory might be limited to certain domains with similar characteristics. Although contextual issues are a potential factor in the development of the multilevel theory, nonetheless, the issues faced with are similar in the development of any theory. Finally, as mentioned in Section (1.1), the complexity of the theoretical studies due to the nature of the field of tourism which lacks its self-owned theories, might provide complications for utilizing an approach like multilevel thinking which itself is still relatively young in its evolution. The result is that its self-justifying argument requires additional research project applications before it can be considered as a cohesive, theoretically sustainable research model in the tourism domain.

However, this approach has thus far been substantiated as the research framework behind numerous published research articles (e.g. Upton, 2006; Upton & Egan, 2010, Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Fisher, 2000; Fischer, 2008; Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999).

1.6 Structure of the Dissertation

In general, the dissertation presented here is divided into five chapters:

Chapter 1: “Introduction”, this chapter includes an overall view towards the essence of this research point-of-view i.e. the underlying problem, research gap,

purposes, methodology, question and issues of concern together with its contributions, limitations, and key concepts that all together contribute to the Conceptual phase of this research process.

Chapter 2: “The Conceptual Perspectives”, this chapter complements the rest of the elements needed for research point-of-view in Chapter 1 and includes a comprehensive inter-disciplinary review of the previous literature on the culture, collaboration, and strategic decision-making theories together with the theoretical and ideological lenses provided by the researcher to gradually develop the research context, the contextual constructs together with their boundaries through a multidimensional perspective. In so doing, Chapter 2 sets the ground for emergence of the next stage i.e. the Philosophical phase.

Chapter 3: “Philosophical Paradigms”, this chapter starts with the research epistemology and the underlying theoretical assumptions that the researcher utilizes to fulfill her research purposes and address the research question and issues. After discussing the research epistemology, the underlying paradigms towards multilevel theory building will be discussed. The framework presented in this section is based on an extent review of the multilevel theory development literature (Knight & Cross, 2012; Upton, 2006; Fischer, 2008; Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Fisher, 2000), which helps to extend this body of research and their related perspectives to the specific context of tourism destination branding.

Chapter 4: “Methodological Perspectives”, this chapter discusses the different theory and levels’ components needed for the development of the CCML theory of DBC. Respectively, the process of theory building in this chapter starts with the detailed

analysis of the within-level methodological components of the theory i.e. the contextual constructs together with their composing units and their related features i.e. boundaries, direction of emergence, and types that together with the specifications of the measurement and analysis levels comprise the body of the DBC theory, and will, lately, end up with an in depth discussion of the between-level methodological components of the theory: i.e. the laws of interaction amongst the different levels of constructs and units in order to provide prediction of the research propositions for future operationalization purposes. Finally, Chapter 4 ends up with some insights towards theory operationalization, and accordingly suggests some propositions based on the related literature analysis.

Chapter 5: "Conclusion", this chapter contains the evaluation phase of the research. In this chapter a brief summary of the significant findings from the previous chapters is presented along with a discussion of the findings in relation to the research question and issues. Implications and future directions for operationalization of the resulting DBC theory, as well as issues regarding its validity are also presented in this chapter. Figure 2 depicts a schematic view of the current research structure and process.

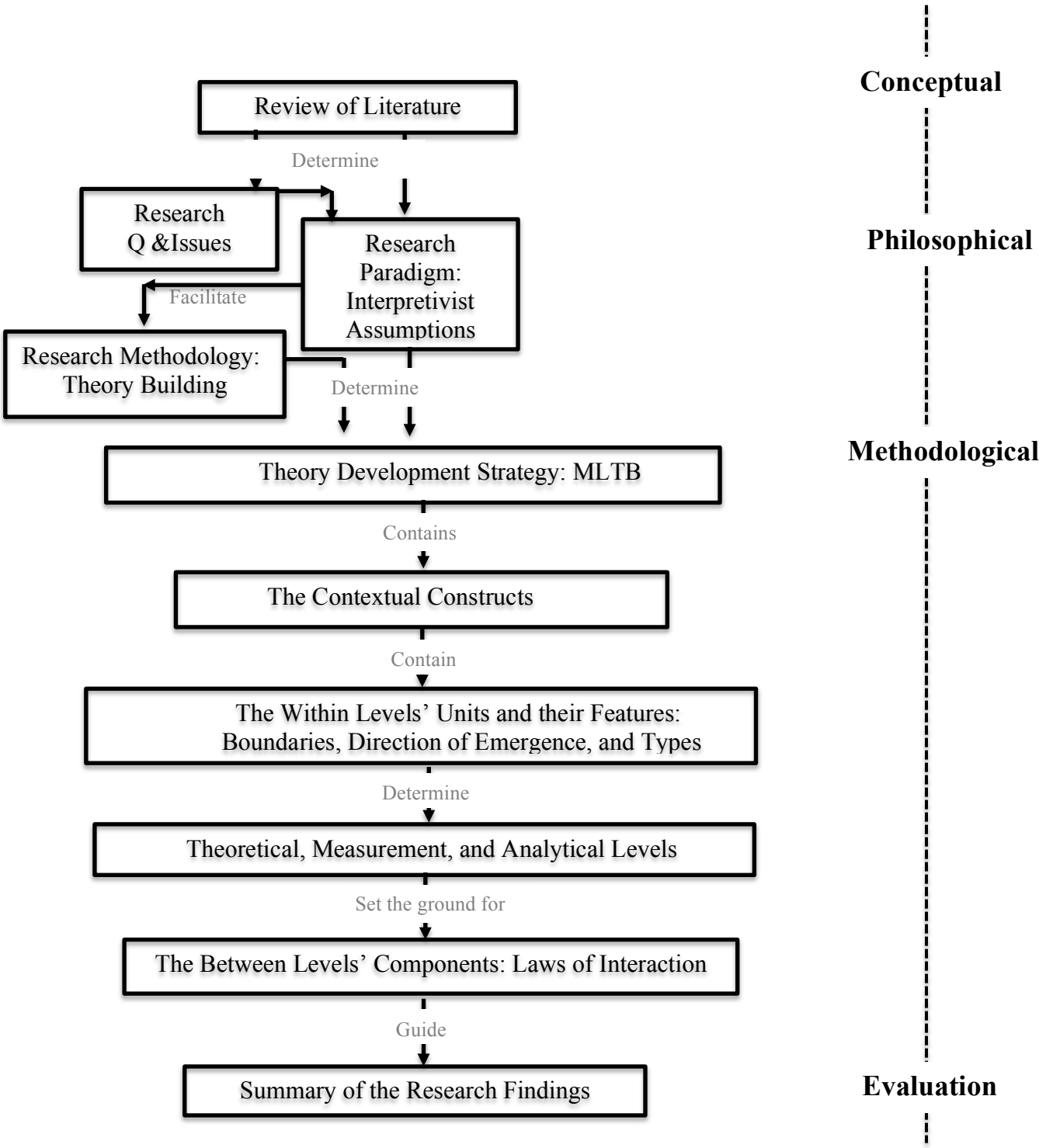

Figure 2. Schematic Overview of the Research Structure and Process

1.7 Definition of the Key Concepts

Defining the concepts is the first step in developing complex and multilevel theories (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Fisher, 2000, Morgesson & Hoffman, 1999). Chimezie & Osigweh (1989) argue that, since different concepts might be defined differently according to their contexts, in order to improve the organizational research and theory building it is important to develop clear definitions for concepts. Wilhelms et al. (2009) in a similar vein, acknowledge that disciplines with a common interest in the study of complex issues need a common vocabulary to facilitate meaningful cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural research cooperation. In this sense, vocabularies are not just words that signify loosely coupled discrete things, yet they are the DNA of organizational life, which provide the building blocks of situated discourses that turn into directives, action and subsequent outcomes (Avital & Boland, 2008).

As a consequence, for a better understanding of the author's viewpoints, this section provides the definitions of the key concepts that are particularly utilized or developed for the purpose of theory development in this research.

Brand: A brand is "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" (Kotler, 2000, p. 404).

Destination brand: A destination brand can be defined as an aggregate of shared symbolically constructed elements such as names, logos, or slogans that are selectively developed to represent and communicate the shared culture of a distinct group of social partners to other global targets, who share the same unique values, and thought patterns,

in order to form a common sense and perception towards problem domains and experience domains[1].

Collaboration: Collaboration can be defined as an interactive process of problem solving amongst a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain who try to act or decide on issues related to that domain by using shared rules, norms and structures (Wood & Gray, 1991).

Collaboration in tourism: Collaboration in tourism can be defined as the manifested and overt part of the destination branding culture, which represents the underlying shared values and decision-making patterns of the social partners in form of their overt decision-making processes[2].

Contextual construct: A contextual construct (Knight & Cross, 2012), also known as theoretical (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000) or collective construct (Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999) can be defined as an abstraction created to explain some apparent phenomena that result from the actions of individuals and/or collectives (Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999). These cognitively-oriented entities, which are gradually recognized and developed through the whole process of the research, are composed of different contextual elements of the research that allow for recognition and development of the underlying meanings that the researcher utilizes to depict her/his research phenomenon of interest (Knight & Cross, 2012).

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[1] . This definition is based on an aggregate of theoretical perspectives, which allow to conceptualize the destination brand as a globally representing entity (Hatch & Schultz, 1997; Schroeder, 2009) which takes the definition of a brand beyond its conventional identity and image elements to a more comprehensive and encompassing definition that provides a deeper understanding of the brand ontology.

[2] . This definition of collaboration is drawn on the definitions provided by Gray (1989), Jamal and Getz (1995), Thomson and Perry (2006), and Schein (1992.) Yet it is expanded by (1) incorporating key phrases and words from a much broader review of the literature, (2) using commonalities among multiple theoretical perspectives, (3) unraveling the cultural nature of collaboration.

Complexity: Complexity in general can be referred to the number of different elements and their interconnectedness (Rajagopalan et al., 1993).

Complexity in the tourism domain: Complexity in the tourism domain can be related to the cultural aspect of the participating stakeholders, and respectively can be considered as the amalgamation of cultural elements (i.e. contextual, cognitive, and behavioral) of the stakeholders, confronted with the paradox of the bond between "unity and multiplicity" (Morin, 1999) during the collaborative decision-making processes.

Decision-making: By definition, decision-making can be defined as a behavioral process, developed through identifying and choosing alternatives based on the values and preferences of the decision makers (Harris, 1998). It is a conscious process of thought and deliberation, that leads to the selection of an alternative (Qlueck, 1977).

Decision-making in tourism: Decision-making in tourism can be defined as a behavioral process of identifying and choosing alternatives amongst the social partners of the tourism domain, based on the shared values and decision-making patterns that they develop collectively.

Destination branding culture: Destination branding culture can be defined as a complex and hybrid culture that represents the overt collaborative decision-making processes (Blain, 2001; Deslandes, 2003; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003; Morgan et al., 2002, 2003; Morrison & Anderson, 2002; Marzano, 2007) of the social partners within the destination branding problem domain, which is embedded within the macro, contextual values and micro, organizational behavior patterns that they jointly develop and share in order to make sense of their meso, collective behavior of destination branding.

Multilevel theory building (MLTB): MLTB can be defined as "the [process] of identifying principles "to bridge the micro-macro divide" (Klein et al., 1999, p. 243) of the social phenomena, in order to "provide a more integrated understanding of phenomena that unfold across levels" (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000, p. 7).

Stakeholders: Stakeholders are defined as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives" (Freeman, 1984, p. 46).

Stakeholders in tourism: A stakeholder within the tourism domain can be defined as any legitimate social party that is "involved in the production of the "travel experience" and [is] legitimately involved in the destination development and management processes" (Marzano, 2007, p. 33), and has the potential to both threaten and contribute to the collective activities of the tourism destination (Sheehan & Richie, 2005; Savage et al., 1991).

Theory: Theory is defined as "a set of interrelated constructs (concepts or units), definitions and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena (Kerlinger, 1986, p. 45).

Theory building: Theory building is defined as the process of creating "viable models of the empirical world that can be comprehended by the human mind. These theoretical models are intensely practical for the predictions derived from them and are the ground on which modern man is increasingly ordering his relationships with the environing universe" (Dubin, 1978, p. 2).

Tourism destination: Tourism destination can be defined as a "a physical space in which a visitor spends at least one overnight. It includes tourism products such as support services and attractions, and tourism resources within one day's return travel time. It has physical and administrative boundaries defining its management, and … [cultural boundaries] defining its market competitiveness. Local destinations incorporate various stakeholders often including a host community, and can nest and network to form larger destinations" (World Tourism Organization, 2004, p. 8).

1.8 Introduction in Brief

As an opening to set the subject scene of this research, the current chapter was an attempt to provide a holistic view towards the main components of this research as the primary conceptual elements of this research.

Respectively, this chapter started with the complexity theory as the underlying challenge behind the formation of the complex thinking paradigm for the study of multidimensional phenomenon of destination branding, which was traditionally studied under objective and linear school of thought (Section 1.1). It was further argued that, due to the interdisciplinary nature of tourism domain, which is still an issue of debate amongst researchers, there is a lack of self-owned theory that can contain and represent the unique characteristics of phenomena in the tourism domain. Respectively, it was proposed that this dissertation aims to address the shortcoming of multilevel and complex thinking perspective in the tourism domain (Pritchard & Morgan, 2007; Jamal & Everett, 2007) by developing an improved approach towards understanding the complex nature of destination branding beyond conventional perspectives, and to develop a self-owned theory for the tourism domain in order to fill in the gap of theory building found in the

tourism studies (Jafari & Ritchie, 1981). It was further discussed that, by selecting culture, collaboration, and strategic-decision-making theories as the main theoretical building blocks of this research, the current dissertations intends to contribute to meaningful convergence of these theories by means of an interpretive paradigm that allows the researcher to better make sense of the relation between these theories in an integrated fashion, and by so doing, this research intends to facilitate the cross-disciplinary communication that can allows for exchange of diverse point-of-views amongst disciplines that share common interests.

After discussing the research gaps, necessity, and purposes Section (1.2) provided the improved methodological framework of this research (CCMLTB) followed by the research question and its sub issues in Section (1.3). In Section (1.4) the contributions of this research were discussed, followed by the limitations of the study (Section 1.5). Later on in Section (1.6) the schematic overview of the structure and process of this dissertation was presented to better depict the holistic portray of the whole research outlook. Finally, this chapter ended up with the definition of the key concepts specifically developed and utilized for the context of this research (Section 1.7).

The following chapter, then, will provide a review of the underlying conceptual elements of this research, by discussing the related theoretical viewpoints, and critically analyzing them by introducing the lenses developed at different stages of the research.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVES

For the first time man has truly realized that he is an inhabitant of the planet, and perhaps he should think and act from a new aspect, not only an individual, family, genre, state or group of states aspect, but also a planetary aspect.

V. I. Vernadski (in Morin, 1999)

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of the current chapter is to provide the underlying conceptual perspectives and body of knowledge, based on the evolving lenses that the researcher utilizes in order to identify the due contextual constructs, theoretical boundaries, and units of composition that altogether create the phenomenon of interest in this research.

Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) note that "to the extent that a variable is abstract and latent rather than concrete and observable, it is called a "construct". Such a variable is literally something that scientists "construct" [based upon their own imaginations] and does not exist as an observable dimension of behavior" (p. 85). Theory constructs, then, are the first components in multilevel theory building process interactions of which constitute the subject matter of attention (Dubin, 1978). Morgeson and Hofmann (1999) utilize the term "collective constructs" to define these components as "abstractions used to explain some apparent phenomenon" that result from the action of "any interdependent and goal-directed combination of individuals, groups, departments, organizations or institutions" (p. 251) and that have an impact on the outcomes or dependent variables of the phenomenon of interest. Knight and Cross (2012) utilize the term "contextual constructs" or "cognitively-oriented constructs" and define them as "the constructed vocabulary of research; words and concepts that have come to represent meaning within specific scientific contexts…developed by the researcher to describe and investigate phenomena in the process of conceptualizing the research"(p. 40).

Known as the "conceptual notions whose existence must be inferred from more observable actions or features of an entity" (Morgeson & Hofmann, p. 250) to form the "basic building blocks from which the researcher-theorist constructs the theory..."

(Lynham, 2002, p. 247), theoretical units provide the criteria against which the validity of the research process can be determined (Dubin, 1978). Dubin (1978) acknowledges that, since the units that a researcher-theorist decides to use defines and influences " the kinds of studies that can later be used to gather and study data on the theory and … verify and refine the theory" (Lynham, 2002, p. 248), the selection of the theoretical units should be done carefully.

All in all, as similar constructs and their related units can have different and various functions according to the context within which they are studied, the context component as discussed in Section (1.2) plays an important role in development of this research phenomenon of interest.

Following this discussion, in order to determine the theoretical constructs and units relevant to the multilevel theory of destination branding culture within the context of tourism destinations, a systematic and explicit review of literature will be undertaken in this chapter to identify, evaluate, and interpret the existing body of recorded work produced by other researchers, scholars, and practitioners (Fink, 1998), to allow the researcher establish her own knowledge of the research phenomenon and context and gradually adapt and refine her theoretical lens. As the researcher cognitively gets involved in the associated academic theories, her knowledge of the research phenomenon and context allows her to simultaneously set the foundation for the construction of the multilevel theory, and contribute further integrity and sophistication (Shulman, 1999) to the prior body of knowledge (Dubin, 1978).

The importance of literature review is also acknowledged by Boote and Beile (2005) who state:

> A substantive, thorough, sophisticated literature review is a precondition for doing substantive, thorough, sophisticated research. "Good" research is good because it advances our collective understanding. To advance our collective understanding, a researcher or scholar needs to understand what has been done before, the strengths and weaknesses of existing studies, and what they might mean. A researcher cannot perform significant research without first understanding the literature in the field (p. 3).

Whereas previous body of literature offers no cues about where to discuss the context of a study, this study explicitly places itself within the School of Tourism, and recognizes tourism as an interdisciplinary domain within which different theories are tested and applied (Morgan et al., 2003; Jafari & Ritchie, 1981; Marzano, 2007). As a consequence, it seemed appropriate to organize this chapter based on its placement within the context of tourism destination (Section 2.2). The introduction to the tourism destinations then allows for discussing the conventional perspectives towards branding in tourism destinations (Section 2.3). After analyzing how the concept of destination branding has been conceptualized, the need for existence of a new paradigm towards conceptualization of destination branding is acknowledged (Section 2.3). Section (2.4) respectively, provides further discussions regarding the proposed cultural perspective towards the destination branding phenomenon. Shared values, decision-making patterns, and decision-making processes are thereupon introduced as the three main components of the destination branding culture (Section 2.4). Pertinently, Section (2.5) further elaborates the different theoretical perspectives towards collectivism, as the shared value of the DBC followed by further discussions on the characteristics of the DBC process and

outcomes (Section 2.6), as well as DBC decision-making patterns' construct and its relating units (Section 2.7).

After discussing the nature and texture of the destination branding culture as a complex and multilayered approach, the concept of tourism stakeholders and their relevance in the context of destination branding (Section 2.8) is discussed as the glue that binds the different elements of the destination branding culture together. Finally, the necessity of existence of destination management and marketing organizations is acknowledged (Section 2.9) as an important factor for the success of the destination branding efforts.

This chapter ends up with the summary of the chapter (Section 2.10) that on the one hand links the literature to the gap and research purposes identified in Section (1.1) and (1.2), and on the other hand connects the conceptual stage of this research to its next stage i.e. Philosophical stage.

2.2 Tourism Destinations

Known as "raison d'etre" of tourism (Buhalis, 2003, 2000), tourism destination is considered as a complex and multidimensional entity (Marzano, 2007; Pike, 2005; Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2004; Hu & Ritchie, 1993; Presenza, Sheehan, & Richie, 2005; Jamal & Getz, 1995) within which the "travel experience" (World Tourism Organization, 2004; Buhalis, 2003) and "travel sense making" (Pernecky, 2010) take place. However, the complex nature of this entity has produced certain challenges for its definition (Marzano, 2007).

In his study, Marzano (2007) observes four distinct, yet complementary perspectives towards conceptualization of tourism destinations i.e. geographical approach, systems approach, promotion approach, and host- guest approach.

According to the geographical approach tourism destinations are physical spaces within which tourism takes place. This viewpoint considers "the tourists as active participants in the production of tourism spaces, actively acting on them and interacting with them with the consequence that tourists' practices "contribute to the ways in which places are constituted" (Shaw & Williams, 2004, p. 13, in Marzano, 2007, p. 22). The tourism destination in this sense is considered as "a place of production and consumption of tourism" (Marzano, 2007, p. 22) and "as a context for tourism [that] has … a two-way relationship with tourists" which on one side, has a pull effect on tourists and, on the other side, is pushed by tourists' special characteristics.

The geographical approach, then, allows for the emergence of the second approach towards tourism destinations as a system consisting of places, tourists and attractions (Lazzeretti & Petrillo, 2006). The systematic approach towards tourism destinations suggests that a tourism destination contains an amalgam of products, facilities and services that all together form the travel experience (Buhalis, 2003). Nonetheless, from this perspective, the coexistence of physical and non-physical elements (Ringer, 1998) together with the nature of interaction between the physical and nonphysical components of the tourism system (Murphy, 1985) create an open system out of tourism.

The third approach, nevertheless, builds its pillars on this premise and suggests that, a tourism destination "can be conceptualized as a sum of symbols and images that

construct and shape its character and personality" "not only as the sum of its physical attributes" (Marzano, 2007, p. 21) but also as an element that further adds to the complexity of the definition of the destination. From this perspective, the complexity of the various elements that build the destination, provide another definition of destination as "a collection of physical and service features together with symbolic associations which are expected to fulfill the needs of the buyer" (Bodlender, Jefferson, Jenkins, & Lickorish, 1991, p. 5).

The last approach, nonetheless, defines a tourism destination as "a place away from home" (Smith, 1989, p. 14). This definition carries the implication that tourism occurs in a host community (Smith, 1989) and the tourist is a guest in a host community. Tourism destinations are therefore spaces of leisure for the guests and spaces of work or home for the hosts (Meethan, 2001; Marzano, 2007). As a result, the different uses of the tourist space and the coexistence between hosts and guests lead some authors to consider tourists almost as intruders in the space of the host community (McLaren, 1998; Marzano, 2007).

Nonetheless, after acknowledging the different perspectives towards definition of tourism destinations the current research utilizes the definition provided by the World Tourism Organization (2004):

> A local tourism destination is a physical space in which a visitor spends at least one overnight. It includes tourism products such as support services and attractions, and tourism resources within one day's return travel time. It has physical and administrative boundaries defining its management, and images and perceptions defining its market competitiveness. Local destinations incorporate

various stakeholders often including a host community, and can nest and network to form larger destinations (p. 8).

This definition incorporates the concept of stakeholders together with physical and non- physical elements of the tourism destination and therefore provides a synthesis of the different perspectives offered by the literature about the concept of the tourism destination.

After discussing the different perspectives towards conceptualization of the tourism destinations, the following section will discuss the conventional perspectives towards the issue of tourism destinations' branding.

2.3 Branding of Tourism Destinations

The definition of tourism destinations provided in the previous section allows for developing the concept of destination branding in the same way as branding of products and other services (Kotler & Gertner, 2002).

Morgan, Pritchard, and Pride (2004) acknowledge that destination branding provides a "powerful marketing weapon" which helps the destinations "confronted by increasing product parity, substitutability, and competition" (p. 20) identify and differentiate themselves from their competitors (Blain, Levy, & Richie, 2005). Richie and Richie (1998), respectively define a destination brand as "a name, symbol, logo, word, mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the place, [and] conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the place" (p. 103). In a sense, destination brand is a promise to the customers; it is a set of values and experiences seared to the hearts and the minds of the visitors. Ritchie and Ritchie (1998) observe that destination image has been the label under which researchers have dealt with

the destination brands. Based on this observation, the objective of destination branding is to create and attach meanings to a destination (Billinge, 2000), through "a packaged, recognizable brand of place: a place image" (Lash & Urry, 1994, p. 138). Defined as "the sum of beliefs and impressions people hold about places, images represent a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with a place. They are a product of the mind trying to process and pick out essential information from huge amounts of data about a place" (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993, p. 141).

Destination image, hence, is a critical factor when developing a destination brand (Henderson, 2007), since it is said to impact on the path of destination selection and purchase decision. This is due to the very nature of the tourism destination product. The intangible nature of tourism product makes it impossible for the consumers to try or test it before making a purchase decision (Ryan & Gu, 2008). As a result, the attitudes and perceptions of the consumers affect their destination choice (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989; Cooper & Hall, 2008; Lee, O'Leary, & Hong, 2002; Pearce, 1982). In addition, Ryan and Gu (2008) argue that "images are strategic and tactical weapons in the competitive battle between destinations" (p. 387). However, due to their highly subjective and multifaceted nature they rely less on marketing communication than traditional brands do (Blichfeldt, 2005; Cooper & Hall, 2008; Daye, 2010; Henderson, 2007; Tasci & Kozak, 2006). This view suggests that, although destinations seek to change or exploit their images according to the consumers' preferences and tastes, it is not guaranteed that consumers will be positively influenced by these marketing efforts (Naidoo, Ramseook-Munhurrun, & Durbarry, 2012). Elaborating on the role of image in destination branding,

Cai (2002) argues that "image formation is not branding, albeit the former constitutes the core of the latter. Image building is one step closer, but there still remains a critical missing link: the brand identity. To advance destination image studies to the level of branding, this link needs to be established" (p. 722).

Konecnik (2007) confirms this perspective by acknowledging the fact that, brand image is just a piece of the overall puzzle of brand and there are other important dimensions for destination brands that should look beyond the generic image management perspective towards the idea of building a specific and distinct image based on the destination brand identity (Daye, 2010).

Based on this point-of-view, brand identity is a critical component for destinations to generalize their desirable values and characteristics, and to explain their expectations about how they should be perceived by their target markets (Aaker, 1996; Konecnik & Go, 2008).

Morgan et al. (2004) concur, suggesting that defining the destinations' brand identity helps establish a relationship between the brand and the customer. In this regard, it is observed that brand identity has multiple roles: It is both a unique set of associations that marketers seek to create and maintain, and a representation of the image that the destination should project to targeted visitors (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Konecnik & Go, 2008). The arguments put forward by these authors appear to be based on Kapferer's (1998) premise that "before knowing how we are perceived, we must know who we are" (p. 71) indicating that the destination, rather than the consumer, should define both its brand and content (Konecnik & Go, 2008). Yet, when people go on holiday, they do not only consume a product from one supplier, they consume a bundle of

products and services as a whole (Morgan et al., 2003; Smith, 1994). As a result, De Chernatony and Riley (1999) suggest that due to the unique characteristics of service brands, namely, inseparability of production and consumption, intangibility, perishability, heterogeneity, as well as the current inconsistency of delivery of services brands, there is a need for a consumer-delighting culture, in order to create a consumer-developer connection.

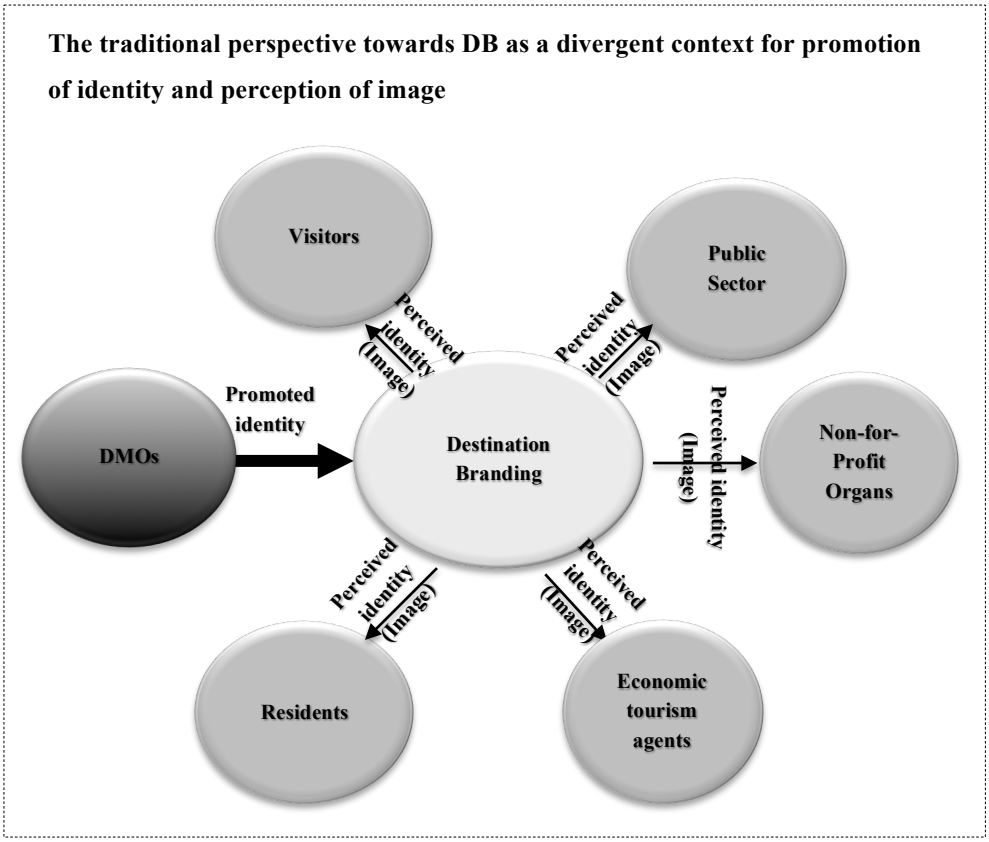

Figure 3. The Conventional Concept of Destination Branding

However, despite the insightful perspective that the two components of the conventional destination branding paradigm provide (Figure 3), there is a debate amongst some authors (Schroeder & Salzer-Mörling, 2006; Schroeder, 2009; Hatch & Schultz, 1997) that the transformational nature of the new economic era (Pine & Gilmore, 1998)

calls for more dynamic, and fast-evolving business strategies that can respond to change and uncertainty in people's lifestyle choices (Grant, 2006). Such a call, then, requires the understanding of brands as global representative systems (Schroeder, 2009; Salzer-Mörling, 2006) that contain a greater awareness beyond the mere associations between the value residing within producer intention, and the value created by individual consumers or brand communities (Cai, 2002). Such an acknowledgement, however, calls for a paradigm shift towards the trajectory of destination brands as inspirational and activating systems of meaning creation that can considerably improve the quality of life of the consumers who collectively participate in creating the underlying meaning that they experience (Brand & Rocchi, 2011). Table 1 presents the evolving nature of different paradigms towards value creation (Brand & Rocchi, 2011) and the need for a movement towards a transformational perspective towards brands.

All in all, the result of the above mentioned discussions highlight this fact that branding in destinations should act as a meaning creation system within which the multiple aspects of sensory, affective, creative, behavioral, and lifestyle dimensions of tourism experience (Schmitt, 1999) can be included.

Table 1.

The Underlying Paradigms towards Value Creation

		Industrial Economy	Experience Economy	Knowledge Economy	Transformation Economy
People Mindset	**Captivating Idea**	**Product Ownership**	**Experience**	**Self Actualization**	**Meaningful living**
	View	Local	Global	Contextual	Systemic
	Quest	Modernizing One's Life	Experience Lifestyle Identities	Individual Empowerment	Address Collective Issues
	Effect	Productivity and Family Life	Work Hard, Play Hard	Develop Your Potential	Meaningful Contribution
	Skills	Specialization	Experimentation	Creativity	Transformative Thinking
	Approach	Follow Cultural Codes	Break Social Taboos	Pursue Aspirations	Empathy and Cooperation
Business Mindset	**Economic Driver**	Mass Production	Marketing and Branding	Knowledge Platforms	Value Networks
	Focus	Product Function	Brand Experience	Enabling Creativity	Enhancing Meaning
	Qualities	Product	Product-Service Mix	Enabling Open Tools	Inclusive Value Networks
	Value Proposition	Commodities	Targeted Experiences	Enable Self-Development	Ethical value Exchange
	Approach	Persuade to Purchase	Promote Brand Lifestyle	Enable to Participation	Leverage Cooperation
	Goal	Profit	Growth	Development	Transformation

Source: Brand and Rocchi (2011, p. 17)

After discussing the classical perspectives towards branding of destinations the next section will introduce a new perspective towards study of the branding concept in the context of tourism destinations.

2.4 The Branding Culture Paradigm in Tourism Destinations

Before discussing the branding culture paradigm in the tourism destinations it is necessary to discuss the underlying approach towards conceptualization of culture in this research.

Many researchers agree on the fact that culture is known as one of the most complicated phenomena constituting many topics and processes (Gad, 2012). However, as different theorists tend to adopt a different perspective towards culture to explain a variety of phenomena (Ronen & Shenkar, 1985; Adler, Doktor & Redding, 1986), there is not a universally accepted definition for culture (Rollinson & Broadfield, 2002).

All in all, two of the main disciplines that have the main contributions to the culture theory are sociology (Barley, Meyer, & Gash, 1988; Gouldner, 1954; Selznick, 1949) and anthropology (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

The review on literature reveals three different paradigms towards the study of culture naming: 1) culture as an external variable, 2) culture as an internal variable, and 3) culture as a root metaphor.

According to the first paradigm, culture can be viewed as a variable exogenous to a collective, influencing the development and reinforcement of core beliefs and values within that collective (Haire, Ghisellie, & Porter, 1966). This functionalist tradition of studying culture (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952; Malinowski, 1961) reconsiders culture as a background factor, an indicative variable, or an umbrella framework (Cummings & Schmidt, 1972) that can affect the beliefs of individuals and groups both from a macro and micro focus and can be inserted into the organization through membership (Smircich,

1983). The existence of culture in this context, then, is observable through patterns of attitudes and actions of the individual members of a collective.

However, despite the undeniable impact of the "whole view of the structure and functioning of social systems on the contemporary study" (Ouchi & Walkins, 1985, p. 460) of collectives' culture, the concept of culture as an external variable to a collective could not gain much consensus (Smircich, 1983; Ouchi & Walkins, 1985) amongst different many pro-management and change-oriented scholars.

The shortcomings of the first paradigm, then, gave rise to the second paradigm towards the study of culture i.e. culture as an internal variable. As a result, unlike the previous approach, culture in its second sense can be seen as an independent variable endogenous to the collective (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952). The perceptions of this group of researcher is based on the belief that organizations themselves are considered as "culture-producing phenomena" (Martin & Powers, 1983; Deal & Kenndy, 1982), consisting of the values and norms based on which individuals act (French & Bell, 1978).

The collectives in this sense are entities embedded into greater social context (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2007), which on the one hand, produce goods and services and, on the other hand, produce different cultural artifacts (Smircich, 1983). Accordingly, a collective's culture in this context acts as an adaptive managerial tool, which tries to integrate individuals into the social structures. In this way, culture as an internal variable acts as a lever that can enable the managers to influence and change the directions of the collectives (Tichy, 1982) through the symbolic utilization of culture in their unique situations and for their particular goals, as the symbolic consideration of shared values and beliefs play an important role in rationalizing and legitimizing the activities, building

commitment, facilitating socialization, and conveying their philosophical perspectives (Smircich, 1983). The culture, from this perspective is, then, considered as a social or normative glue that holds a collective together (Tichy, 1982), and defines the social beliefs and values that the collective's members share.

In general, the conceptualization of culture as shared values and beliefs can act as a "sense-making" device that can affect the behavior of the members of a collective (Sathe, 1985) and in this way, it can create a sense of commitment to something bigger than individuals' mere selves (Peters & Watermann, 1982). Culture, in this sense, can also communicate a common sense amongst the organizational members (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Peters & Watermann, 1982), and further proliferate the stability of the social system (Louis, 1980).

However, Smircich (1983) argues that the external, internal paradigms towards culture tend to be "optimistic" and "messianic" (p. 346-7) (perhaps as a reflection of their structural functionalist nature) and to overlook the likelihood that multiple cultures, subcultures, and especially countercultures are competing to define for their members the nature of situations within collectives' boundaries. She further adds that, although study of culture as external and internal variables are separate from each other in nature, yet they both share the same epistemologies regarding the nature of the world, collectives, and human beings i.e. functionalist paradigm (Burrel & Morgan, 1979), the system-structural paradigm (Van de Ven & Astley, 198), and the social factist paradigm (Ritzer, 1975). According to Smircich (1983), in both of these two perspectives the social world is represented "in terms of general and contingent relationships among its more stable and clear-cut elements, referred to as "variables" " (Smircich, 1983, p. 347), known as

"organism, which exist within an environment that presents imperatives for behavior" (Smircich, 1983, p. 347). And in both perspectives organizations as collectives and cultures are studied through patterns of relationships across and within the boundaries of the organization. And the desired outcomes are predictable mechanisms for management of these collectives (Smircich, 1983). As a result the causality issue is of great importance to the researchers of these two perspectives. In short, these theorists believe that instead of thinking of culture as something that a collective "has", culture should be thought of as something that a collective "is" (Smircich, 1983).

As a result of the above argument, Smircich (1983) proposes a third paradigm that considers the concept of culture as a "root metaphor" that "goes beyond the instrumental view" of open systems "derived from the machine metaphor and beyond the adaptive view derived from organismic metaphor" (Smircich, 1983, p. 347). The root metaphor paradigm, however, proposes a shift from the physical view of culture into a complex social phenomenon, leaving more room for ambiguity for the nonconcrete nature of culture (Pondy & Mitroff, 1979; Smircich, 1983).

Culture as a root metaphor, gives rise to the view of collectives as "manifestations of human consciousness" (Smircich, 1983) and hence, provides a mechanism to study the subjective aspects of the collectives and the patterns that form and affect their actions (Smircich, 1983).

The researchers in this domain focus on multi-sector relationships, dealing with social issues that cut across economic sectors, societal levels, and geographical boundaries (Slesky, 1991; Waddock, 1991; Wood & Gray, 1991; Waddock & Post, 1995; Lewis, 1998; Selsky & Parker, 2005).

Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, and Sanders (1990) observed that several characteristics of collectives' culture constructs consist of the idea that a collective's culture is holistic, in the sense that it explores multiple aspects (i.e. cognitive, symbolic and structural) of a collective context, and contains taken-for-granted values, norms, beliefs, that construct the meanings, and contribute to behaviors that are shared by the members of a collective and can be conveyed to new members of that collective (Schein, 1984; Brown & Starkey, 1994), about how they should act to improve their performance (Schein, 1984; Van Muijen & Koopman, 1994) or solve their problems (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Fedor & Werther, 1996; Trompenaars, 1993) at a given point in time (Pettigrew, 1979).

All in all, this research in line with Yanow (2000) who acknowledges using "culture" in its substantive, anthropological root metaphor sense- as suggested by Smircich (1983)- … draws on the root metaphor paradigm towards destination branding, to address the epistemological-methodological problem of whether … [DB] can be known as a culture, and if so, how to generate such knowing" (p. 250). In this sense, it can be claimed that DBC exists in the way that a physical object does, and its underlying layers can be observed through its overt manifestations.

Nonetheless, as discussed in the previous section, the branding culture in this research is a an improved paradigm towards collaborative decision-making phenomenon in context of destination branding, developed in this research as a respond to the call for a paradigm shift towards complex thinking systems (Pondy & Mitoff, 1979; Morin, 1999; Schroeder, 2009).

However, although authors such as Grant (2006) suggest that amongst different social phenomena that can address complexities of a branding system, culture is the most suitable platform that can meet the paradox of joint external and internal orientations of human beings, the review on the literature reveals that apart from a few notable exceptions (Holt, 2004; Thompson & Arsel, 2004), in general, management scholars have not studied branding in association with cultural theories (Askegaard, 2006).

As a result, since the premise of this research is that understanding of branding as a complex and multilevel phenomenon requires an awareness beyond conventional perceptions, in line with Schroeder, (2009), Salzer-Mörling (2006), and Hatch and Schultz (1997), this research premises the destination branding, in its root metaphor sense (Smircich, 1983, Yanow, 2000), as a hybrid culture that contains the meanings that are created based on the higher shared values and thought patterns of the group of participating stakeholders within the DB problem domain. In so doing, the levels of the DBC can be assumed to "range on a continuum from subjectivity to accessibility" (Mohan, 1993, p. 150 quoted from Rousseu, 1990); the subjective and covert end of this continuum, then, includes the more abstract or intangible aspect of stakeholders' shared values (i.e. collectivism as the underlying national cultural value) that through the channel of thought patterns (i.e. organizational culture decision-making patterns as catalysts of this process i.e. politicality, rationality, flexibility, conflict, and speed) transform into the overt aspect of the stakeholders that create the accessible end of this continuum (i.e. decision-making processes) (Figure 4).

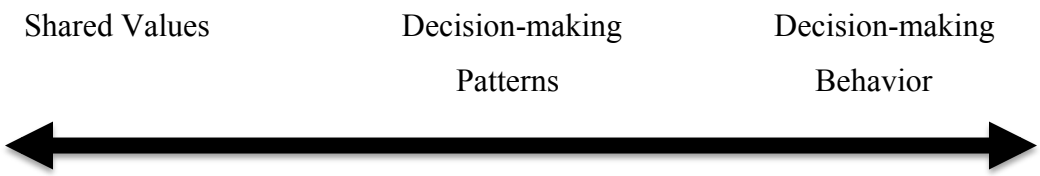

Figure 4. The Destination Branding Culture Continuum

Nonetheless, by bridging the gap between the macroscopic research and microscopic behavioral inquiries (Mohan, 1993) this research intends to integrate and transform the concept of destination branding into a higher level as a hybrid culture that is developed by autonomous stakeholders of the tourism domain. In so doing, the new perspective can provide a hermeneutic approach (von Wright, 1971) towards understanding of the symbolic, contextual, and narrative structures that aggregate the set of values and rules, governing cognitive and affective aspects of stakeholders and translate them into mechanisms that shape their shared meanings, norms and values (Kunda, 1992) that govern their shared, dynamic process of distinguishing, developing, and implementing of alternative(s). By so doing, the destination branding phenomenon as a culture can be equivocally understood to deal with both invisible contextual "beliefs and values" (Goll & Zeitz, 1991) of the stakeholders that form (Mohan, 1993) the cognitive "norms and patterns of thinking" (Gundry & Rousseau, 1994, Hofstede, 1980; Weippert, 2010) in the DB domain, and the visible and behavioral collective actions of these groups (Koberg & Chusmir, 1987; Cotgrove, 1978) that develop through the dynamic processes of decision-making.

The hybrid essence of destination branding culture, however, allows for creation of meaning discourses amongst the different stakeholders, whereby individuals can

simultaneously ascribe their contextual values and organizational decision-making patterns to those of destination as a collective, and create a hybrid, interwoven culture (Hannerz, 1996) of destination branding. In so doing, the co-created branding culture serves as a mechanism to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the stakeholders as individual entities and destination as a collective entity and, respectively, increase stakeholders' trust in the brand promise. In this sense, the branding culture does not only create a mechanism to diminish the risk of selectively appropriated and repackaged social and cultural meanings by the entities which have the most power (Marzano, 2007), but it also provides a solution to the problem of "cultural impoverishment" Anholt (2005) by aggregating all of the social actors in the survival and change of the destination (McCracken, 1990) and its brand.

All in all, to date, the vast majority of tourism destination branding studies have addressed and examined the branding mechanisms primarily from a demand-side perspective by adopting a consumer-perceived-image approach (e.g. Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Anholt, 2005). This research, nonetheless, in line with the researchers who advocate the importance of a supply-side managerial perspective on tourism destination branding (e.g. Cai, 2002; Hankinson, 2007; Blain, Levy, & Ritchie 2005; Balakrishnan, 2008, 2009) will take a supply-side perspective towards DBC as a hybrid culture. The efforts of destination branding, in this sense, are not only concerned with the rational processes through which the brand of a destination can be developed, but also with the contextual and behavioral issues that define the core values and thought patterns of individual actors that try to construct a collective culture to develop their destinations. In this sense, the destination branding culture provides a conscious

dynamism for thinking, acting, interacting, and learning amongst participating stakeholders that try to align their contextual values, and organizational thought patterns, with the collective behavior of destination branding DM in a hybrid fashion.

This transformative perspective towards destination branding, nonetheless, provides a new platform for the destinations to augment their competitive advantage by developing a flexible, dynamic and hybrid decision-making culture that allows them to continuously revitalize their destination's collective capabilities i.e. resources, knowledge, networks of relationships, etc.

As a result, seeing destination branding through a cultural lens enables the tourism managers to develop distinct ways of branding their destinations based on their unique collaborative capabilities, and in so doing, it can provide a more sensitive understanding towards the existence of differences in value, decision-making patterns such as power imbalances, and potential conflicts of interest that arise during the branding process, and is far more realistic about the difficulties of bringing about collective outcomes and setting shared rules and norms that regularly run into trouble (Huxham & Vangen, 2003).

Having introduced the concept of stakeholders' hybrid branding culture in this section, the following sections will provide a deeper understanding of the composing building blocks of the DBC i.e. the shared value, the DM patterns, and the DM behavior.

2.5 Collectivism as the Underlying Context of the DBC

The first component of the destination branding culture that defines the boundary of its covert layer i.e. the underlying contextual values. From a social perspective, values are the least specific element of culture (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991) that

define the standards held by individuals or groups about what is desirable, proper, good or bad and serve as their guideline for social life (Social Science Dictionary, 2013). They reflect the aspired principles of a collective (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996) and are said to consist of "enduring beliefs that a specific mode of conduct is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (Rokeach, 1973, p. 5).

Values refer to relationships "among abstract categories that are characterized by strong affective components and imply a preference for a certain type of action" (Karahanna, Evaristo, & Srite, 2005, p. 5) which are formed through past experiences that provide fundamental assumptions of how things are (Erez & Earley, 1993). Values are highly abstract and barely visible (O'Reilly et al. 1991) phenomena, until they manifest in the verbal and nonverbal behaviors of individuals and groups (Hofstede, 2001). In other words, values are explicit or implicit formulizations of the "desirable" that influence individuals' means and ends of action (Kluckhohn, 1951), and hence, embody personal, trans-situational sets of priorities that differ across individuals and act as guiding principles in people's lives (Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004; Schwartz, 1992).

Nonetheless, when discussing values, it is important to distinguish between personal values and espoused values that are characteristic of the different cultural levels' attributes. Whereas personal values involve stable and deeply embedded structures that exist within individual stakeholders and are not necessarily conscious (Enz, 1988), espoused values are "articulated, publicly announced principles and values that the [stakeholder] claims to be trying to achieve" (Schein, 1992, p. 9). These cultural elements represent the shared perceptions and orientations in the specific domain of problem,

which are relatively dynamic and sensitive to external influences, and should be distinguished from the mere aggregation of stakeholders' trans-situational personal values.

Consequently, when talking about stakeholders' values in this study, the second connotation will be utilized.

The values' construct, acknowledges the norms, rules, and principles that the social actors use in order to "make sense" of the different phenomena. Shared values are the implicit needs or wants of the group and determine which decisions and actions are deemed desirable and which are not. However, this is the level that explains the rational behind the patterns of behaviors, and it is accompanied with justification, and explanations of the group members about their sayings and deeds. This is the level which Sathe (1985) calls the behaviors' justification level.

The tourism literature shows consistency in considering the process of developing a destination brand as a socially constructed collective effort (Blain, 2001; Deslandes, 2003; Im, 2003; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003; Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott, 2002, 2003; Morrison & Anderson, 2002; Marzano, 2007) amongst different social partners (Savage et al., 2011) i.e. stakeholders, that come together to solve the "meta problems" (Trist, 1983, p. 247) that cannot typically be solved by an organization acting on its own. Respectively, collectivism as a social value, can be related to "the integration of individuals into primary groups (Hofstede, 2001, p. 29). It describes "the relationship between the individual and the collectivity that prevails in a given society. It is reflected in the way people live together…and it has many implications for values and behavior"(p. 209). In a sense, collectivism "is the degree to which individuals are

supposed to look after themselves or remain integrated into groups, usually around the family. Collectivism pertains to societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong and cohesive in-groups, which protect each other in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, 2001).

It has been observed that, the weight of values is dominant at the national level (Karahanna et al., 2005), and respectively, national differences of the collectives comprise "the single greatest impact upon [their] cultural value orientations and represent the highest level of cultural aggregation" (Sparrow & Wu, 1998, p. 26).

Such shared values can form from early childhood experiences, education and religion (Derr & Laurent, 1989). Hitt, Harrison, Ireland, and Best (1995) suggest that lack of a basis of shared understanding and national culture differences of members of a collective have the potential to disrupt accurate interpretation and sense making of partners' intentions.

Nonetheless, in 2008, Thomas reviewed five main frameworks that have emerged out of the value studies: Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) value orientation framework, Hofstede's (1980) value dimensions, Schwartz's (1992, 1994) value survey Trompennars's (1993) value dimensions, and GLOBE's (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) (House, et al., 2004) study. Each of these five studies categorized culture in terms of value measurements, deriving a set of four to nine dimensions depending on the framework. However, the only dimension to appear in all five values' studies is the collectivism dimension.

All in all, the implicit idea behind these theories that contribute to the explication of the collectivism as a shared social value is the fact that the existence of several major

types of problems and forces work together towards formation of a collective paradigm amongst independent organizations as potential partners (Bramwell & Lane, 1999).

While acknowledging the diverse usage of collectivism as an important dimension in cultural studies, Markus and Kitayama (1991) observe that, the usefulness of collectivism and its contrary dimensions are limited due to the lack of inclusion of the cognition factor specially in cognitively laden domains. As a consequence, by highlighting this shortcoming, the current research intends to utilize the collectivism dimension as the main underlying cultural value for the stakeholders, in order to further contribute to the application of this dimension within the collective decision-making domain of destination branding.

As a consequence, the coming sections will review the theoretical perspectives that provide an explanation of the underlying motivations that encourage the members of the collectives i.e. stakeholders to structure their mutual actions from a sociological perspective i.e. resource dependency, transaction cost, learning, and network analysis theory. In so doing, they will provide an understanding of the different reasons why destination branding as a socially constructed collective culture occurs (Palmer & Bejou, 1995; Wood & Gray, 1991). For a more detailed overview of these theoretical paradigms and other perspectives, see e.g. Hibbert, Huxham, and Ring (2010); Barringer and Harrison (2000), Gulati (1998), Palmer and Bejou (1995), Wood and Gray (1991), Prahalad and Hamel (1990), Gray (1989), Granovetter (1985), Pfeffer and Salancik, (1978), Williamson (1975).

2.5.1 Resource Dependency

Built upon the open systems model of resource acquisition with an added exchange perspective, the resource dependency perspective explores how formation of collective mindset among different social entities can help each of them to acquire resources they need to reduce their environmental uncertainty and interdependence (Auster, 1994; Harrigan & Newman, 1990; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Thereupon, the main assumption of resource dependency theory is that, due to the scarcity of critical resources and difficulties in obtaining them, organizations as open social systems, depend highly upon their environments for their survival and continuing supply of these resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

According to this perspective, collectivism as a facilitating norm enables the organizations to gain access to the critical resources they need, including: industry and/or geographical information, legal and technical advice, and research and development capabilities (Tsang, 2002; Dyer & Nobeoka, 2000; Larsson, Bengtsson, Hendricksson, & Sparks, 1998; Inkpen & Crossan, 1995; Kogut, 1988; Burt, 1983; Galaskiewicz, 1982; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). In other words, collectivism entails "cooperative relations that join together otherwise autonomous organizations for joint production, provision or allocation of resources or activities" (Akinbode &Clark, 1976, p. 102) and enables them to gain efficiency (Oliver, 1990).

An extensive body of research in this regard suggests that, organizations enter ties with other organizations in response to environmental challenges that require interdependencies (e.g., Burt, 1983; Galaskiewicz, 1982; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Ulrich and Barney (1984) observe that people in organizations get together to leverage on

each other resources with the objective of exerting influence and controlling behavior (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Taking a resource dependence view, Gray (1985) asserts that, collectivism can help the stakeholders to solve their problems by "pooling of resources [...] which neither can solve individually" (p. 912).

In many respects this approach complements the work on competitive advantage, both of which address how organizations engage in collective efforts to deal with uncertain and competitive environments in order to increase the chances of acquiring critical resources.

2.5.2 Transaction Cost

It has been observed (Marzano, 2007) that, the original attempts made to develop the transaction cost perspective is rooted in Williamson's (1975, 1981, 1985, 1991; 1993) studies, which per se was "built upon Coase's (1937) classic article on "The Nature of the Firm" " (Marzano, 2007, p. 48).

Transaction cost theory, however, claims that, "organizations choose their mode of transacting on the basis of how they can best minimize the sum of production and transaction costs" (Walter, 2005, p. 15). Accordingly, collectivism can provide a mechanism for organizations to compensate for market deficiency by means of structuring their transactions (Hennart, 1988; Kogut, 1988; Mitchell & Singh, 1996). As an intermediate form of governance, collectives utilize a transactional reciprocity to minimize the defects leading to market deficiencies by internalizing information exchange into some form of governance structure. In this sense, the shared collectivist attitude can help the organizations to overcome their transaction problems (Williamson, 1991).

Collectivism under the light of transaction cost theory, depends upon three main factors to be developed i.e. 1. asset specificity, 2. uncertainty, and 3. frequency (Marzano, 2007).

Asset specificity is the core of the explanation of transaction cost theory. It suggests that mutual dependence of partners can lead to their collective actions, when parties recognize that their transaction costs can be minimized by exiting barriers to the investment made by the other party and exploiting this situation to their advantage (Marzano, 2007).

Uncertainty, with its internal and external dimensions, is considered as the other factor, which can contribute to collective perceptions and actions amongst parties. However, in an environment characterized by instability, collective attitude can lead to vertical integration amongst different parties (Marzano, 2007).

Frequency, as the last factor, which can contribute to collectivism, is referred to the "amount of reciprocal transactions that the parties make" (Marzano, 2007, p. 49). "The greater this amount, the more likely that collective dynamics, instead of "the invisible hand" of the market, would lead the relationships among the parties" (Marzano, 2007, p. 49).

2.5.3 Learning

According to the learning theory (e.g., Anand & Khanna, 2000; Child, 2001; Dyer & Nobeoka, 2000; Grant & Baden-Fuller, 1995; Gulati, 1999; Inkpen & Crossnan, 1995; Kale, Dyer, & Singh, 2002; Kale, Singh, & Perlmutter, 2000; Larsson et al., 1998) in highly competitive environments, collectivism can empower the parties with learning capabilities they need to survive, developing of which are beyond the financial and

human resources of their single entity (Lei, Slocum, & Pitts, 1997). This interactive learning, however, enables participating partners to understand and utilize not only the observable aspects of each other's capabilities, but also the invisible components (Lofstrom, 2000), such as culture, which "cannot be bought and quickly integrated into the firm" (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990).

Accordingly, an important factor in learning from the tacit dimensions of other organizations is the specific absorptive capacity of both partners (Kumar & Nti, 1998; Dyer & Singh, 1998; Lane & Lubatkin, 1998; Cohen & Levinthal, 1990).

Collectivism under the light of learning theory, hence, describes how collective learning (Koschmann, 1994, 1996) as a byproduct of problem solving of the interrelated partners can help each of their related organizations to elicit new knowledge that can improve their problem solving performance (Dillenbourg, 1999).

2.5.4 Network Analysis

According to the theory of network analysis, the strategic actions of the organizations are embedded in a myriad of social relationships and, hence, are affected by the social context in which they are embedded (Galaskiewicz & Zaheer, 1999; Gulati, 1999).

Consequently, understanding the strategic behavior of the organizations is impossible without understanding the relational context in which they function (Granovetter, 1985).

Researchers in this domain by using sophisticated networks' analysis techniques, try to understand the coordination and integration patterns of organizations' activities with the emphasis on differences in network structures and governance (Provan &

Milward, 1995). The notion of network analysis theory, then, lies in its focus on relational and collective systems as opposed to individual actors.

However, collectivism under the light of network analysis theory is presumed as an attitude undertaken by managers to shape networks, in order to provide a favorable context for future collective actions (cf. Galaskiewicz & Zaheer, 1999). Since the context of networking consists of relationships both within and between the organizational resources (Madhok & Tallman, 1998), the relational dimension of an organization (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Gulati, 1998, 1999; Lane & Lubatkin, 1998) posits that, critical resources and value-creating activities of an organization might be embedded in its inter-organizational relationships (George, Zahra, Wheatley & Khan, 2001). As a result, it is assumed that managers engage in strategic maneuvering to secure key positions in their industry network, such as entering into collective efforts to ensure access to knowledge, key technologies, or other resources. The networks within and between organizations can, hence, be interpreted as strategic resources that managers intentionally design and develop over time to meet their objectives.

2.6 The DBC Decision-making Patterns

The behavior patterns' construct, in this research, defines the boundary of the collective constructs through which the invisible and visible layers of culture construct are connected. The DM patterns can be defined as mental mechanisms that help individuals to make sense of the different phenomena based on their past experience and historical nature. These patterns indicate the habits of thinking in a particular way or making certain positive or negative assumptions. In a sense, DM patterns are unique modes of thought that accompany the design of favorable decisions. They are enacted

patterns of meaning that help the individuals to make sense of the different phenomena. The sense making then begins with equivocal enactments that are encountered in the present moment, and look backward through time to attribute meaning to phenomena and reduce their equivocality (Burstein & Holsapple, 2008).

Inferred from "Groupthink" concept of Janis (1972), DM patterns are "modes of thinking that people within decision-making groups" utilize, "to realistically appraise alternative courses of action…[based on their] moral judgments (p.9). Embedded in individuals' values, DM patterns are, hence, multifaceted dynamic throughputs and componentized sub personal aspect of stakeholders that orchestrate their courses of action (Harré, 1983), and involve "phenomenal consciousness and the purposive use of information and self-regulative means to make desired things happen"(Bandura, 2001, p.3). However, Bandura (2001) acknowledges that it is only through intentional and productive consciousness, forethought, self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness that the whole process of sense making and DM patterns can transfer into desired future actions and behaviors. As a result, DM patterns' construct is an integral component in connecting the constructs of DBC shared value, collective processes and outcomes together.

The following sections, however, will further shed light on the components of the DM patterns' construct of the DBC theory i.e. politicality, rationality, flexibility, conflict, and speed.

2.6.1 Politicality

The phenomenon of destination branding has been described as a "highly complex and politicized activity" (Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott 2003, p. 286) that involves multiple stakeholders.

Arts and Verschuren (1999) define complexity in multi-stakeholder decision-making processes as a construct consisting of four units: "the existence of many stakeholders, the existence of different interests, the evidence of influence in the decision-making process and the existence of plural and multi-level instances in which the decision-making process takes place" (Marzano, 2007, p. 61).

Defined as "the interplay of individuals, organization, and agencies influencing, or trying to influence the direction of [a decision]" (Lyden, Shipman, & Kroll, 1969, p. 6) power appears inherently connected to the complex nature of DBC.

Destination branding decisions, hence, are susceptible to follow the patterns that represent the desires and subsequent choices of the most powerful organizational members (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974) in which "one chooses among values and among policies at one and at the same time" (LinDBClom, 1959, p. 82). Consequently, the structures of power are highly dependent on stakeholders who are engaged in political tactics such as coalition formation, lobbying, co-optation, control of agendas, and strategic use of information (Eisenhardt & Zbaracki, 1992).

Nonetheless, although observable, the political patterns are often indirect and covert, in order to enable the executives enhance their power to influence decision-making (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988). Drawing on political theory of organizations (Putnam, 1988), plural and multi-level decisions are those that occur amongst organizations that are characterized by multiple authorities and interdependence on each other's resources.

Building on this literature (Hickson, Wilson, Cray, Mallory, & Butler, 1986), the complex and multi-party nature of collaborations make them arenas for organizational

actors to compete for the satisfaction of their own interests (Dean & Sharfman, 1993; Drory & Romm, 1990; Narayanan & Fahey, 1982; Tushman, 1977). Politicality, hence, is assumed to be especially conjoined to collective cultures as stakeholders' preferences are mainly reported to be based on individual and firm goals and values, rather than on mutual gain and collaborative goals (Walter, 2005).

Nonetheless, complex decision-making environments, such as tourism, characterized by high uncertainty and ambiguity (Fandt & Ferris, 1990; Papadakis, Lioukas, & Chambers, 1998) in which rules and regulations are not available to govern actions (Drory & Romm, 1990; Fandt & Ferris, 1990) have been found to be particularly susceptible to political influence. Additionally, in destination branding process characterized by task interdependency and sharing of joint resources, decision-making politicality has the most relevance (cf. Tushman, 1977).

For these reasons, politicality is quite a relevant and vital dimension for the study of DM patterns as the underlying patterns of the DM processes in the DBC theory.

2.6.2 Rationality

Rationality as a DM pattern depicts the extent to which the different actors involved in the problem domain explore the relevant internal and/or external information for the purpose of their decision-making and consequently rely upon the analysis (Dean & Sharfman, 1996), systematic scanning (Aguilar, 1967), methodical planning (Mintzberg, 1973), and unification of strategies (Ansoff, 1965) with these information (Cameron & Quinn, 1999**)**. This decision-making attribute is characterized by actors' systematic and comprehensive scanning of information for problems and opportunities,

intensive analysis in decision-making, long-range planning, and formal codification of strategies (Fredrickson, 1986; Miller, 1987).

Organization-level research between information collection and performance in complex environments has produced contradictory outcomes. Fredrickson and his colleagues for instance argue that there is a negative relationship between information processing and performance in a dynamic environment (Fredrickson, 1984; Fredrickson & Iaquinto, 1989; Fredrickson & Mitchell, 1984). Other researchers like Schwenk (1984) note that the high environmental complexity might contribute to cognitive simplification processes such as selective perception, heuristics and biases, and the use of analogies. According to this perspective, managers facing the challenges of a dynamic environment are therefore forced to "perform limited search in their assessment of the environmental situation, develop solutions by taking concrete actions quickly, and attempt less integration of various emergent responses" (Li & Simerly, 1998, p. 171).

In contrast, to the first body of research, another group of researchers have supported a positive relationship between rationality and organizational performance in dynamic environments (Bourgeois & Eisenhardt, 1988; Eisenhardt, 1989; Priem, Rasheed, & Kotulic, 1995) and have confirmed that the relationship between information processing and organizational performance depends upon the degree of environmental stability.

Nonetheless, since information collection patterns of the stakeholders can play an important role in development and success of their collective decision-making process, the inclusion of this dimension of stakeholders' DBC DM patterns is of great importance.

2.6.3 Flexibility

Flexibility as a common theme in a great deal of organizational and strategic literature is the third component of the DM patterns. This dimension, however, indicates the extent that stakeholders try to explore new ideas and assumptions about the DM and its strategic context (Sharfman & Dean, 1997; Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Reynold, 1986; O'Reilly et al., 1991). A growing body of evidence suggests that failure in utilizing different perspectives in strategic processes can have serious negative consequences for organizations. Accordingly, organizations that fail to involve different ideas in developing their strategic choices might enter into organizational decline, which has been described as a "failure to adapt or change to fit external environmental demands" (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989, p. 94). Sharfman and Dean (1997) suggest that flexible patterns of idea generation will lead to novel choices that organizations need in order to allow adaptation and change happen. They further add that, in order to succeed, managers should utilize several viewpoints that are unusual, innovative, or at minimum different from the norm.

Flexibility as a dimension for DM pattern is such an important factor that has been considered as an inseparable characteristic of strategic decision-makings (Nutt 1993; Sharfman & Dean, 1997). Sharfman and Dean (1997, p. 194-195), respectively, have proposed openness as an important attribute for flexibility pattern and have defined it as the extent to which managers are open to new ideas, information sources, and roles, (Sharfman & Dean, 1997). By opening up to new ideas, the DB context can allow for the emergence of the different stakeholders' voice, and by so doing it can provide a

synergistic and trustable context in which stakeholders commit themselves to undertake its effective development and implementation.

All in all, the novel and ambiguous nature of DBC necessitates the inclusion of this dimension as a critical component for the success of DBC DM process and outcomes.

2.6.4 Conflict

The fourth attribute of the DM pattern is conflict. Conflict is an indicative characteristic of strategic decision-makings (e.g. Hickson et al., 1986; Janis, 1982; Mintzberg et al., 1976; Schweiger et al., 1986) and despite the new trends in globalization and the paradigm shifts, which have led to increased cooperation amongst different organizations with diverse needs (Appelbaum, Shapiro, & Elbaz, 1998), the "culturally diverse work environments [that] have become the norm in today's organizations" (Broome, DeTurk, Kristjansdottir, Kanata, & Ganesan, 2002, p. 239) are proven catalysts for conflicts. Defined as a collision of perceived disagreement, incompatibility, or charged energy patterns, which occur due to the differences of interests, beliefs, or values that matter between two or more individuals or parties (De Dreu, Harnick, & Van Vianen, 1999; Masters & Albright, 2002; Wall & Callister, 1995) conflicts are inescapable part of today's highly complex and competitive markets. Given this fact, certain amount of conflict is expected in any multi-party context, the way such conflicts are resolved and managed (Weeks, 1992) by individuals is of great importance for the success of collaborations (Borys & Jemison, 1989; Parkhe, 1993).

Thereupon, the individual's approach and ability towards conflict management, defines the constructive or destructive outcome of conflict situations (Lovelace, Shapiro,

& Weingart, 2001). Friedman, Tidd, Currall, & Tsai (2000) believe that, "depending on how people approach conflict, they can amplify or dampen naturally-emerging disputes, and make the environment one that is supportive or alienating themselves" (p. 35).

Amongst the different conflict resolution styles, the literature on dual concern model (DCM) (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Thomas, 1976) provides insightful outcomes for this research. The prediction of this model is that the weight that different managers give to their individual vs. collaborative interests determines the pattern they utilize in resolving their conflicts. Respectively, when an individual has high concern for one's own interests combined with a high concern for the other person's interests, that individual is most likely to engage in problem solving and use an integrating, collaborating or constructive pattern. Integrating is, then, characterized by a tendency to exchange information openly, to address differences constructively, and to make every effort to find a solution that will be mutually acceptable (Gray, 1989; Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993; Rahim, 1992). The conflict literature suggests that this pattern of handling conflict is preferred over others because it is most likely to yield win-win solutions. Furthermore, high concern for others is most likely to occur when there is an expectation of a long-term dependency on the other party (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993).

As a result of these discussions, conflict is an important indicator of the DBC development success that can contribute to more trust and commitment amongst different partners. Consequently, it is a critical factor for the success of collaborative DB process.

However, whereas most studies about conflict between collaborating partners has examined conflict management techniques (e.g., Kale et al., 2000; Mohr & Spekman,

1994), this research seeks to highlight this component as a dimension of DBC DM patterns that forms and affects the DM process and outcomes.

2.6.5 Speed

The evolving and dynamic nature of tourism environment calls for both high-quality and rapid decisions to survive (Fredrickson & Mitchell, 1984; Janis, 1982; Schweiger et al., 1986). In modern organizations with complex environments, rationality and comprehensiveness might not necessarily require more time (Walter, 2005). That means fast decision-making might not necessarily diminish the quality of the decision (Wally & Baum, 1994).

More than a decade after Bourgeois and Eisenhardt's (1988) initial study, there is still no consensus amongst researchers on the effect of decision-making speed on organizational outcomes. Various studies have found that decision-making speed positively relates to firm performance (e.g. Baum & Wally, 2003; Bourgeois & Eisenhardt, 1988; Eisenhardt, 1989; Judge & Miller, 1991) and subsequent firm growth (Baum & Wally, 2003), at least in dynamic environments. Some studies have found no support for this relationship (Forbes, 2001) and some have even found a negative relationship for low-velocity environments (Judge & Miller, 1991).

However, although the literature on decision-making speed appears to face similar paradoxes as that on decision-making rationality, decision-making speed is considered as an integral DM pattern in organizations. For these reasons, it is considered as a determinant of DBC success.

2.7 The DBC Decision-making Behavior

There is a generally accepted fact that at the core of any collective phenomenon lies an accepted principle that "groups will pass through predictable stages prior to effective performance" (Bailey & Koney, 2000, p. 47).

As a consequence, the classical school of decision-making provides different guidelines for the collective processes and suggests different stages for the development of collective processes. This approach considers decision-making as a task that follows a sequential process (Robbins & Timothy, 2013; Simon, 1959, 1977) and mainly focuses on the structure of decision-making processes, their primary stages, and whether stages follow one another logically and in sequence or varied over time with the type of decision. The goal of this research domain, however, is to create a model of the decision process, replete with flow charts and time lines that map the sequence of steps in decision-making and identified ideal types.

Respectively, several scholars based on the nature of collaborative actions and their related contexts have proposed different stages for the development of collective interlocks that develop through different sequential phases (McCann, 1983; Selin & Chavez, 1995; Gray, 1985; Waddock, 1989; Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977; Gray, 1985; Bailey & Koney, 2000; Gajda, 2004).

Nonetheless, in respond to the shortcomings of the synoptic (LinDBClom, 1959) and rational point-of-view towards DM procedural approach (Miller & Friesen, 1984; Mintzberg, Raising hani, Theoret, 1976; Nutt, 1976) as incomplete description for real-world decision-making phenomena (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Beach, 1993), the neoclassical theories of organization (Simon, 1947, 1977; March & Simon, 1958, 1993;

Cyert & March, 1963, 1992) argue that the DM together with other observable aspects of the organizations are the byproducts of the underlying conducting values and modes of thought that manifest purposive, goal-directed (Einhorn & Hogarth, 1981) actions of individuals and collectives within a certain context. This behavioral approach, then, argues that decision-making contains experience-based mental patterns that happen in a flash, producing an answer without apparent rational thought (Isenberg, 1986), and consequently, considers decision-making as a "behavior" formed or forged to meet undefined or unstructured situations" (Smelser, 1976, p. 9). This approach furthermore considers decision-making as a "compressed way of attacking problems created by strain" in order to amalgamate "several levels of the components of action into a single belief, from which specific operative solutions are expected to flow"(Smelser, 1976, p. 71).

However, within the context of this research, since the DM concept contains the collective and strategic decisions regarding the branding of the destination that are formed based on the shared decision-making patterns which gain their acceptability and priority from the underlying espoused values, this research will be studied under the light of behavioral perspective, which adopts a more focused approach towards identifying the human elements (Hellriegel, Slocum, & Woodman, 1986) that can address the limitations of the cognitive approach, by providing the range of interlinked patterns that underlie the DB collective DM.

In utilizing the stage models in tourism, Wang (2008) argues that, the stage models propose a partial and static perspective towards collective developmental processes in the tourism context. As a result, pertinent to the complex and dynamic nature

of destination branding this research proposes a more inclusive perspective towards the DB DM concept as a behavior that develops through a process that "does not necessarily demonstrate a sequential order, but rather a dynamic and cyclical" (Wang, 2008, p. 162) order, that develops according to the underlying patterns that guide it.

To this end, this research posits an integrated developmental model for the DB behavior development that contains the dimensions, which can describe its complex nature as a hybrid decision-making action that is jointly formed by the participating stakeholders of the tourism domain.

Pertinently, a review of literature on decision-making processes (Table 2) (Simon, 1959; 1977; Carlisle, 1979; Koontz et al., 1986; Baker et al., 2001; Daft & Marcic, 2008) together with the collaborative processes (Table 3) (Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977; McCann, 1983; Waddock, 1989; Gray, 1989; Selin & Chavez, 1995; Bailey & Koney, 2000; Caffyn, 2000; Wang & Xiang, 2007; Wittmann, 2007; Wang, 2008) was carried on to integrate the specific dimensions that can better describe the complex, dynamic and transformative nature of destination branding behavior that is formed by several stakeholders and developed through a cyclical process within the tourism domain. Accordingly, four main stages were selected for the DB behavior developmental process in this study (Figure 5) i.e. initiation, interrelation, implementation and transformation. Table 2 and 3 provide a summary of the different perspectives that the classical DM perspective as well as the collaborative perspective provide for the development of the DB behavior.

Table 2.

The Procedural Perspectives towards Decision-making

Simon (1959, 1977)	**Carlisle (1979)**	**Koontz et al. (1986)**	**Baker et al. (2001)**	**Daft and Marcic (2008)**
-Define the problem -Identify the possible alternatives, -Evaluate the possible alternatives, -Select an alternative or choice -Implement the chosen alternative -Implement the decision and, -Analyze the results.	-Recognize the current conditions that are unsatisfactory or establish future desired conditions, -Collect and analyze information relative to the difficulty or goals, -Identify the underlying problems that account for the unsatisfactory conditions, -Establish constraints that limit what can be done, -Develop alternatives for solving the problems or attaining the goal, -Collect data to evaluate the alternatives, -Make a choice, -Gain support for decision and implement it -Obtain feedback on progress	-Premise, -Identify alternatives, -Evaluate alternatives based on the goal sought, -Choose the alternative	-Define the problem, -Determine the requirements, -Establish goals, -Identify the alternatives, -Define some criteria, -Select a decision-making tool, -Evaluate alternatives against criteria, -Validate solutions against the problem statement	-Recognize the decision requirement, -Diagnose and analyze causes, -Develop alternatives, -Select the desired alternative -Implement the chosen alternative and, -Evaluate and feedback

Table 3.

The Procedural Perspectives towards Collaboration

Tuckman (1965)	**Tuckman and Jensen (1977)**	**McCann (1983)**	**Waddock (1989)**	**Gray (1989)**	**Selin and Chavez (1995)**
Form Storm Norm Perform	Form; Storm; Norm; Perform Adjourn	Problem-setting Direction-setting Structuring	Issue Crystallization Coalition Building Purpose Formulation	Problem Setting Direction Setting Implementation	Antecedents Problem-setting Direction-setting Structuring Outcome

Wang and Xiang (2007)	Wittmann (2007)	Caffyn (2000)	Bailey and Koney (2000)
Assembling Ordering Implementation Evaluation Transformation	Strategic Planning Partner Identification and Selection Implementation and Management Alliance Termination	Responding to External Environment Problem Definition Development of Identity Full Implementation	Assemble Order Perform Transform

The cyclical development process of DB behavior starts with the initiation stage as its first stage. This stage, however, represents the period when the stakeholders of the DB problem domain get ready to identify the key behavioral issues within the DB problem domain (Gray, 1985), and recognize the similarities between their goals and problems with other participating members (Selin & Chavez, 1995). As a result, the initiation of collaborative relationships is highly dependent on the selection of those partners that can best fit, trust, and interrelate on the shared domain's goals, and issues (Selin & Chavez, 1995). Respectively, stakeholders need for collecting information from internal and external sources at this stage involve those information needed to set the problem (Gray, 1989), clarify the different issues (Waddock, 1989) of the DB problem domain and to recognize those partners that best fit into the frame of collective efforts (Wang & Xiang, 2007). The second stage of the cyclical process of DB behavior is the interrelation stage. This stage represents the period when the stakeholders of the DB problem domain identify and formulate the alternative courses of action (Koontz et al., 1986; Simon (1977, 1959) determine the requirements (Baker et al., 2001) and analyze the alternatives about their respective implications, and evaluate those expectations with respect to their underlying values and DM patterns (Wang & Xiang, 2007, 2005; Bailey

& Koney, 2000). During this phase, the DB stakeholders might recognize the need for additional information, which would cause a return to the initiation phase to satisfy that need before continuing with the interrelation activities (Wang & Xiang, 2007). Evaluations of the alternatives are carried forward until stakeholders exercise their authority to select an alternative or until a consensus is gained amongst all of the stakeholders to select a commonly agreed choice. The difference in coming up with the final choice at this stage is, to a great extent, dependent upon the dominant cultural values that define the patterns stakeholders utilize to make a decision. The third stage of the DB behavior developmental process is the implementation stage that represents the period when the stakeholders of the DBC problem domain based on the power or consensus select an alternative to be implemented (Wang & Xiang, 2007; Bailey & Koney, 2000; Simon, 1977, 1959). In this stage, partners evaluate the costs and benefits of the project and assign the roles and responsibilities of each party accordingly (Bailey & Koney, 2000).

In order to ensure the success of the collective actions, a pertinent structure will be defined (Selin, 1993) to ensure that all stakeholders ascribe to shared meanings and coordinate their individual actions in terms of their roles and responsibilities, and effective means of communication will be settled to ensure the availability of exchange partners and the goodness of fit between the collaborating parties (Selin & Chavez, 1995). It is posited that, as the collaboration moves into the implementation stage, the leaders and members must understand clearly the costs and benefits of membership, their new roles, and how they fit into the larger context, through effective ways of communication. Finally, the transformation stage, as the last chain of the DB behavior

cyclical process represents the period when the stakeholders of the DB problem domain utilize various measures to evaluate the assessment of the predefined goals and objectives against expectations (Borden, 1997; Gray, 1989), in order to draw lessons, and produce recommendations and feedbacks through analyses of the factors affecting the project results and utilize them for improvements in the process.

After evaluating the assessments of the predefined goals, partners in the collective DB behavior determine the future direction of their relationships and determine if and how the collaboration should proceed (Wang & Xiang, 2007). It is conceivable that during the transformation stage, partners will usually revisit the salient issues at each of the previous stages to assess whether the collaborative actions' purpose and activities are still consistent with their own goals and resources. DB stakeholders informally and formally use the evaluation system established earlier to review the effectiveness of their collective deeds as it moves through the transformation stage and make decisions about their next move (Bailey & Koney, 2000). It is suggested that the transformation stage might offer several possibilities for the future direction of the DB collective behavior (George & Zahra, 2001) the collaborative efforts might become stronger; the collaborative efforts might generate more projects; the collaborative efforts might continue unchanged; and the collaborative efforts might formally end (Wittmann, 2007; Wang & Xiang, 2007).

Nonetheless, the stages of the collective DB decision-making do not necessarily proceed in sequences, since at certain situations of conflict and absence of third party intervener (Bailey & Koney, 2000) recycling back to earlier issues is inevitable. As a result, the stages of collaborative efforts should not be considered as separate and distinct

phases in practice (Wang & Xiang, 2007). Otherwise, failure to address a critical issue in a certain stage might severely impede the success of the collaborative actions (Selin & Chavez, 1995).

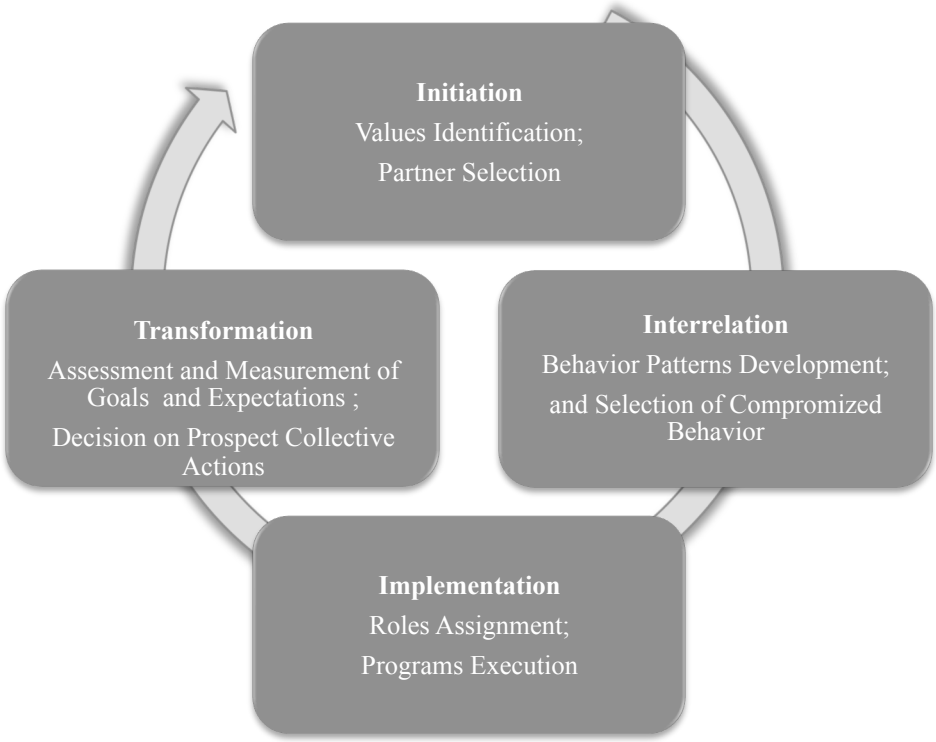

Figure 5. The Dynamic and Transformational Process of Destination Branding

All in all, since collaborative decision-making behaviors are often interwoven and integrated with one another, existence of certain factors such as commitment (Yukl, 2012; Mathieu & Rapp, 2009; Pearce & Ensley, 2004; Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997; Kale & Singh, 2009) generally has repercussions far beyond its impact on the success of that decision alone (Bourgeois, 1979; Eisenhardt, 1989).

Accordingly, the literature reveals that even the best conceived programs are unlikely to succeed if the people designing and implementing them are not motivated and committed to undertake them (Lado & Wilson, 1994). As a consequence, no matter how

proactive by design, decision-making efforts within a collective context might not succeed unless they are implemented with intelligence and dedication to collaboration objectives.

Respectively, the extent to which members of a collective accept and intend to cooperate in carrying out the strategic decision making process (Korsgaard, Schweiger, & Sapienza, 1995) determines the success of strategic decisions implementation (Hitt & Tyler, 1991; Dess & Origer, 1987; Woolridge & Floyd, 1990).

As Ghoshal and Bartlett (1994) also indicate, the most competitive and responsive organizations are those that are best able to pull their managers and workers together, commit them to the organization, and help them go beyond their narrow personal interests.

Another determinant of collaborations' success is trust (Kale & Singh, 2009). Many studies find that trust between partners is critical to collaboration success, because it both facilitates the governance of collaborations and helps partners work with more commitment. However, trust comprises two parts: a structural component (Bradach & Eccles, 1989) and a behavioral component. While the structural component of trust refers to the extent of confidence that an organization has in its partner's reliability and integrity (Madhok, 1995), the behavioral component of trust can refer to the use of governance dynamics such as shared equity or contractual agreements (Gulati, 1995) to create a knowledge-based trust, which gradually emerges as different partners interact and develop norms of reciprocity (Zaheer, McEvily, & Perrone, 1998) and fairness. However, for the purpose of this research the behavioral component of trust has the most relevance since its existence has been reported as particularly critical for effective functioning of

the collaborative efforts (Kale & Singh, 2009), which can be developed through a cyclical process of bargaining, interaction, commitment, and execution amongst the participating organizations (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994).

This section reviewed and discussed the nature of DB decision-making behavior and explained the importance and relevance of commitment, and trust as two determinants of DB success.

The next section, however, will provide further insights regarding the outcomes of the DB DM behavior.

2.8 The Outcomes of the Destination Branding Culture

The prime motivations behind development of different collective phenomena vary substantially amongst different authors (Bramwell & Rawding, 1994). However, the important fact that cannot be overlooked is that, the collective phenomena cannot form, develop, and succeed if their advantages do not exceed their disadvantages. As a consequence, the collectively developed and shared culture of DB inevitably should also lead to competitive (Poon, 1993) and collaborative (Huxham, 1996) advantages for tourism destinations as a whole and for tourism stakeholders as its components.

Nonetheless, due to the multifaceted and contingent nature of collective DBC phenomenon, the measurement of outcomes of such a phenomenon can be a very complex and challenging.

Bramwell and Rawding (1994) observe that the outcomes of collaborative actions can range from economic, strategic, social, and learning. Kogut (1988) suggests three categories of outcomes for the collective actions naming: strategy, transaction cost, and learning oriented.

Built on the strategic behavior approach (Bleeke & Ernst, 1993; Ohmae, 1989) the strategic outcomes of the DBC can include: enhanced competitive advantages of the organizations involved in the development of the DBC that can contribute to increased destination competitiveness, image building, and improved product portfolio (Gunn, 2002; Jamal & Getz, 1995; Pearce, 1992; Selin, 1993; Selin & Chavez, 1995; Hagedoorn & Schakenraad, 1994; Hamel, 1991; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

According to the social approach (Granovetter, 1985), the collective mindsets and efforts that benefit from the relationships and trust established amongst various sectors of the tourism domain as well as individual organizations forming the hybrid behavior of destination branding can contribute to building of a social capital that enables the participating partners to create value, get things done, and achieve their individual and collective goals and missions. As a result, the certain social outcomes such as high quality information, ideas, business opportunities, power and influence, emotional support, good will, and trust (Burt, 1997; Granovetter, 1985) can only be gained through networks of relationships and collective.

According to the economic approach, the collaborative culture of DB can have two main economic advantages for organizations 1) economies of scale, that means, in order to remain competitive organizations have to increase their size, and 2) economies of scope, that means organizations can only gain competitive advantage from joint production or marketing of their products and services together (Jones & Kalmi, 2012) with the transaction costs that suggests seek for efficient transactions and economized transaction costs through collaboration (Williamson, 1975, 1985).

Nonetheless, some authors (Pearce, 1989; Walter, 2005) argue that these approaches might emphasize only the instrumental and rational aspects of collective phenomena outcomes, which are usually articulated in advance and organizations can best achieve them when the activities of multiple participants work within a formal structure.

As a result, Badaracco (1990) and Hamel (1991) through a more dynamic lens propose that acquiring and absorbing new types of organization-specific knowledge and skills that can protect core competences from competitors (Baum, Calabrese, & Silverman, 2000; Dredge, 2006; Hamel, 1991; Hamel, Doz, & Prahalad, 1989; Hennart, 1988; Parkhe, 1993; Saxena, 2005) is the main outcome of the collective actions.

In a similar vein, Hagedoorn (1993) observes that, the goal of most inter-organizational collaborations is to gain access to new and complementary knowledge that can speed up learning processes and gain internationalization, globalization, entry to foreign markets, and expansion of the product range. Other authors have also highlighted the critical role that knowledge acquisition (Walter, 2005), and learning outcomes (Doz, 1988; Kogut, 1988; Hagedoorn, 1993) play in the success of inter-organizational collaborations.

All in all, based on the above discussions, for the purpose of this research the outcomes of the destination branding culture will be categorized into four main groups for both individual organizations and collective levels i.e. the economic outcomes, the strategic outcomes, the social outcomes, and the learning outcomes. Respectively, two different perspectives have been proposed by the literature towards measurement of these outcomes i.e. qualitative approaches (based on the supply side perspective) and

quantitative approaches (based on demand side perspective). For qualitative measurement of DBC outcomes a subjective method can be utilized to assess managerial perspectives of the long-term DBC outcomes, that means, the extent to which destination managers as well as individual organizations believe that their destinations and organizations have achieved their stated individual and collective objectives (Geringer & Hebert, 1991; Saxton, 1997; Lane & Lubatkin, 1998; Dyer, Kale, & Singh, 2001). For quantitative measurement of DBC outcomes an objective method can be utilized to measure the effectiveness of destination branding through demand side i.e. consumer-based brand equity (CBBE). The CBBE is a method that has been used in recent years by different academics and practitioners (Keller, 1993; Pike, 2005, 2008; Pike & Constanza, 2013) and is defined as "the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand, and is comprised of four underlying attributes: brand awareness, brand associations, brand resonance, and brand loyalty (Pike, 2008; Pike & Constanza, 2013). Nonetheless, as discussed in Section (2.4), since this research intends to take a supply side perspective towards destination branding issues, the qualitative perspective will be more appropriate to fulfill this purpose.

Further discussions regarding the future operationalization and measure of the outcomes will be discussed in Section (4.3).

Figure 6, in an inclusive fashion, depicts the conceptual framework of this research, constructs and components of which were discussed in the previous sections. All in all, since the meanings and the relevance of these dimensions can only be understood in combination with the agents i.e. stakeholders, who utilize and apply them, the following section will further discuss the nature of stakeholders as a critical factor in

facilitating or debilitating the development of the collective culture of destination branding in whole.

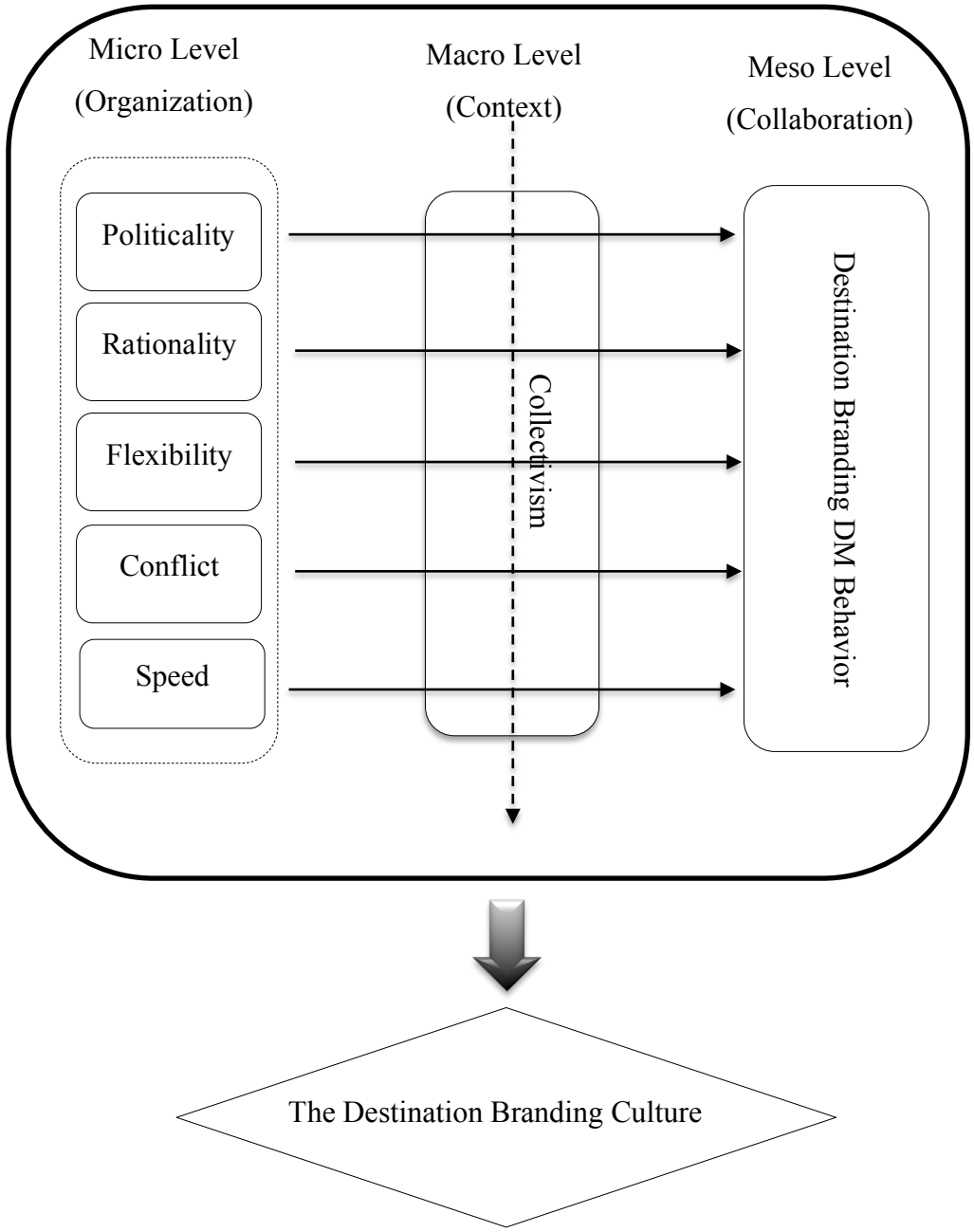

Figure 6. The Conceptual Framework of the DBC

2.9 The Stakeholders of the Tourism Destination

Marzano (2007) observes that, the pioneering works on conceptualization of stakeholders' concept was made by Freeman (1984) who defined a stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives (p.46). However, to date, several definitions have been proposed to unravel the nature of stakeholders. Starik (1994) in this regard indicates:

> ...there may be numerous levels of specificity as to what the term ''stakeholder'' means, depending on what the user is referring to. The range appears to be bounded in this case, on one end, by those entities which can and are making their actual stakes known (sometimes called ''voice''), and, on the other end, by those which are or might be influenced by, or are or potentially are influencers of, some organization or another, whether or not this influence is perceived or known (p. 90).

In the tourism domain, different studies have been undertaken by researchers and academics to advance and utilize the stakeholder perspectives in different domains (Aas, Ladkin & Fletcher, 2005; Akama, 2002; Backman, Petrick & Wright, 2001; Bramwell & Sharman, 2000; Hall, 2003; Hardy & Beeton, 2001; Jamal, Stein & Harper, 2002; Morgan & Pritchard, 2002; Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott, 2003; Parker, 1999; Pike, 2005; Prideaux & Cooper, 2002; Sautter & Leisen, 1999; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005; Yoon, 2002). As Marzano (2007) also indicates, these studies suggest two dominant streams of research towards the stakeholder theory. The first stream of research focuses on a macro perspective that is in line with Kant's (1896) school of thought and suggests that, inclusion-or stakeholding- is a moral right that does not need to be justified by any

implicit or explicit interest. This broad view that can encompass virtually the whole society (Shankman, 1999) is based on the tenet that, individuals, per se, are ends and not means to an end. The micro perspective on the other hand, considers stakeholders as means to ends that their importance is due to their benefits for the competitive advantage of an organization. This perspective then, reflects an instrumentalist view that considers direct economic links to the organization. Figure 7 provides the different micro, macro and mixed perspectives towards the issue of stakeholding.

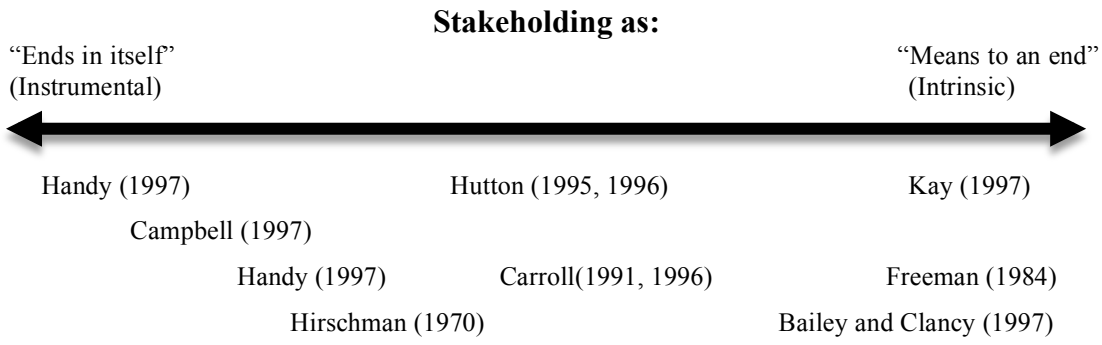

Figure 7. Stakeholders' Continuum A

Source: Adapted from Stoney and Winstanley (2001, p. 620)

In addition to these perspectives, works from the field of collaboration also provide support for the stakeholder approach. Wood and Gray (1991), for instance, describe collaboration as a collective social relationship amongst '' … a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engaged in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain'' (p.146). The notion of stakeholder in this definition states that organizations are autonomous or independent of one another and that they engage in action on an issue-specific basis. Waddock's (1989) earlier view was that collaborators are not completely

autonomous, but rather that collaborative efforts between two organizations are conditional on recognition of interdependence, on an agreement that the issue is important, and on the belief that significant benefits will be derived from addressing it.

The researchers in this domain also fall under two different perspectives. The first stream of researchers (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) believe that organizations are not self-sufficient entities, yet they depend on continued support from other organizations or groups (beyond shareholders) within their environment. They further argue that dependence on another actor is given by the degree to which the actor has a concentration of, and discretionary control over, important resources and this dependency can be considered as a source of power that the actor can maintain, as a potential to threaten the organization by withholding resources. In line with this paradigm different studies have been conducted to show the effect of stakeholders' power on the destination development activities (e.g. Marzano, 2007).

The second stream of researchers in this domain (Levine & White, 1961) believe that when objectives can be aligned, organizations may rationally choose to cooperate or engage in exchanges which include, ''any voluntary activity between two organizations which has consequences, actual or anticipated, for the realization of their respective goals or objectives'' (p. 588). While followers of this paradigm take a more pessimistic view that organizations are simply competing for resources (often a win-lose scenario), the former perspective on the other hand offers a more optimistic view that organizations cooperate for mutual benefit (a win-win approach). Figure 8 represents the two perspectives regarding stakeholders.

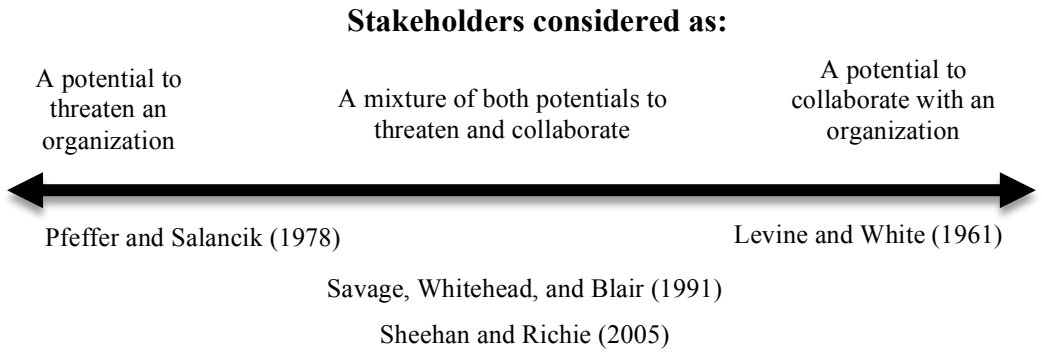

Figure 8. Stakeholders' Continuum B

Nonetheless, the studies in the tourism domain call for a mixed perspective towards the application of stakeholders' theory both in terms of their social equity and long term sustainability of the destination (Aas et al., 2005; Choibamroong, 2002; Hardy & Beeton, 2001).

As a result, this research assumes that a stakeholder within the tourism domain is any party that is "involved in the production of the "travel experience" and [is] legitimately involved in the destination development and management processes" (Marzano, 2007, p. 33) and has the potential to both threaten and contribute to the collective activities of the tourism destination (Sheehan & Richie, 2005; Savage et al., 1991). In this sense, it is posited that it is the stakeholders' underlying cultural values, and DM patterns that specify this potential of stakeholders whether to collaborate and contribute to the DBC development or to gain advantage of the DBC mechanisms through insertion of their power.

However, it should be noted that a process, which is described as collaborative process does not necessarily indicate that it is fully inclusive of all stakeholders (Gray, 1989; Wood & Gray, 1991, Marzano, 2007). Collaboration and stakeholder theory, hence, share the same views in accepting that being a stakeholder is only a potential

quality and does not necessarily imply participation in the collective phenomenon (Evan & Freeman, 1993; Grimble & Wellard, 1997; Mitchell, Agle, Wood, 1997).

In this section the important role of stakeholders as inherent part of destination branding culture development was acknowledged. It was also approved that the support of stakeholders from development of DBC is a key element for sustainability of tourism destinations (Hall, 2000; Jamal & Getz, 1995). Furthermore, it was indicated that since stakeholders are the main players that are responsible for developing the collective culture of destination branding, their contextual and cognitive attributes can affect the development of tourism destination (Jamal & Getz, 1995) branding culture and its performance (Hofstede, 1980).

The next section will, nonetheless, focus on the DMOs as the last component of the DBC theory in this research, who are responsible for recognizing the potentials of stakeholders and coordinating their different values and objectives in the destination branding context.

2.10 The Destination Management and/or Marketing Organizations

The multidimensional nature of destinations characterized by ‘‘interdependence, small size, market fragmentation, and spatial separation” (Pearce, 1992, p.5) in comparison to consumer goods and other types of services, together with the heterogeneous market interests of the diverse groups of active stakeholders, and the multiplicity of stakeholders’ values (Buhalis, 2000) that cause an the imbalance in achieving consensus towards destination brand implementation (Henderson, 2007), together with other pre-determined factors (Morgan et al., 2004; Seaton & Bennett, 2001)

that represent the politics in decision-makings (Morgan et al., 2004) topped by lack of relationship with consumers, and lack of consistent funding and limited resources allocated for destination branding (Pike, 2005; Morgan et al. , 2004) and other factors are amongst the various factors that create certain complexities and challenges for branding of destinations.

As a result, due to the growing competition amongst tourism destinations around the world, the recognition and coordination of these factors call for existence of organizations (Kastenholz, 2004; Cai, 2002; Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Middleton & Hawkins, 1998; LunDBCerg, 1990) that can act as "catalysts and facilitators for the realization of tourism development" elements (Presenza et al., 2005, p. 3) within an integrative and inclusive system.

The World Tourism Organization (2004) proposes destination management and/or marketing organizations (DMOs) as the organizations that can undertake this responsibility and, thereby, categorizes these organizations into national, regional/provincial, and/or local authorities and organizations that are responsible for the management and/or marketing of tourism destinations at any of these three levels.

Ritchie and Crouch (2003) as well as Presenza et al. (2005) observe that the organizational structures of DMOs can consist a range from a government department or a division to quasi-governmental organization, joint public/private agency, not-for-profit membership-based organization, and private organizations.

The literature on DMOs' functions provides diverse roles and functions for the DMOs. Some scholars, for instance, argue that DMOs' activities have to rely almost entirely on promotion or publicity (e.g. Elliot & Papadopoulos, 2008; Henderson, 2000;

Morgan et al., 2003, 2004; Seaton & Bennett, 2001). Blain et al. (2005) furthermore, investigated that DMOs tend to equate the development of destination logos and associated slogans with the more comprehensive process of destination branding (Blain et al., 2005, p. 328). Nonetheless, authors such as Elliot and Papadopoulos (2008) as well as Seaton and Bennett (2001) acknowledge that, the basic principles of destination branding call for DMOs to cohesively manage all product and service elements and to coordinate the complete marketing mix, promote the co-operation and harmonize the objectives within a destination. Heath and Wall (1992), also state that DMOs have acknowledged how significant their non-marketing roles are in developing, enhancing and maintaining destination competitiveness. Respectively, Ritchie and Crouch (2003) acknowledged that, although many DMOs might be more appropriately termed as destination promotion organizations yet as DMOs should attempt to play a more proactive role in fostering and managing the benefits of tourism development, there needs to be a transition of the "M" in the DMO to refer to "management" rather than "marketing".

As a consequence, authors such as Dore & Crouch (2003) propose to consider DMOs as management organizations that focus on marketing efforts as their principal management function. Drawn on this premise, Presenza et al. (2005) suggest two main functions for DMOs in destinations: 1) external destination marketing, including the whole activities in the destination that aim at attracting visitors to the destination, and 2) internal destination development, including all other forms of activity (apart from marketing) undertaken by the DMO to develop and maintain tourism in the destination. Focusing on the management functions of the DMOs, Presenza et al. (2005) highlighted the main internal function of DMOs as coordinators amongst tourism stakeholders.

Gehrisch (2005), in a similar vein states that, DMOs serve as coordinating entities that bring together a diversity of stakeholders to attract visitors to the area. In so doing, they are responsible for the brand culture architecture of the destination, i.e. the way brand culture elements are organized, managed and promoted (Kerr, 2006).

As can be seen in Figure 9 this function appears at the center of the model because it is considered to be the core competency performed by the DMOs in achieving success in the various dimensions of internal destination development (IDD). It is only through securing the cooperation of various stakeholders that the DMOs can mobilize the resources necessary to be effective. Therefore, an important assessment of the DMOs' ability to foster IDD will be directly related to the number and quality of relationships with tourism destination stakeholders.

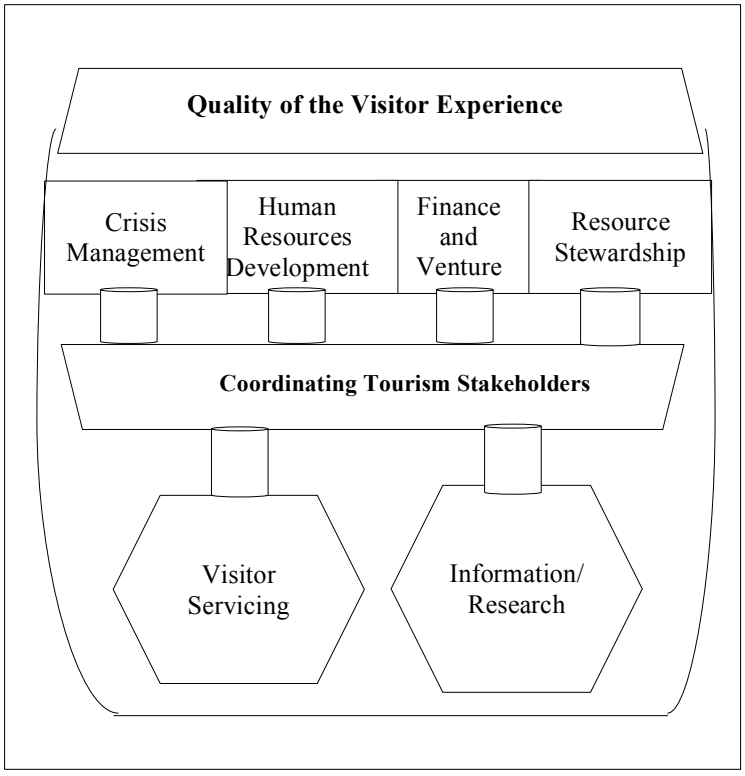

Figure 9. The Internal Destination Management Activities of a DMO

Source: adapted from Presenza et al. (2005, p. 8)

Nonetheless, Henderson (2007) acknowledges that, the "absence of control by destination marketers over all the components of the total tourist service and the numerous public and private bodies which play a part in tourism provision, marketing and development…frustrates coordination and may inhibit the focused targeting of specific markets and the preparation and distribution of consistent messages" (p. 265).

Williams, Gill, and Chura (2004) also argue that the changing market preferences can create certain challenges for DMOs and, hence, hamper the establishment of consistent destination brands.

All in all, the whole challenges discussed above confirm and justify the need for DMOs to utilize a more comprehensive perspective towards understanding of stakeholders within their related cultural context to better recognize their facilitating or debilitating potentials in addressing the different problems of the DBC domain.

2.11 The Conceptual Perspectives in Brief

This chapter provided a novel perspective to view the destination branding culture phenomenon by means of several lenses on the previous literature together with the researcher's own lens for further exploration of the phenomenon of interest for this thesis. Consequently, the building blocks of the destination branding culture theory was based on the argument on the different aspects of the DB phenomenon that explained the complexity of its nature which called for creation of a cultural perspective to integrate and coordinate its different components.

Respectively, in order to set the contextual boundaries of the phenomenon of interest in this research and to provide the basis for understanding the conventional elements of the destination branding i.e. brand identity and image concept (Section 2.3),

this chapter started with the definition of the concept of a tourism destination (Section 2.2). Accordingly, it was argued that, due to the shortcomings of the conventional perspective, the branding of a destination needed a more inclusive perspective that could allow for the study of the behavioral components within their underlying context (Section 2.3). As a result of this argument, the cultural perspective was proposed as the altered paradigm towards study of the destination branding in order to provide a complex and multilevel perspective towards understanding of the DB phenomenon (2.4). The attributes of the branding culture were premised as 1) the contextual shared value of collectivism (Section 2.5), recognition of which was based on the contents of the culture theory, aimed at unraveling the covert contextual dimensions of the DBC, 2) the organizational DM patterns (i.e. politicality, rationality, flexibility, conflict, and speed) recognition of which were based on the strategic decision-making and culture theories, aimed at unfolding the micro organizational dimensions of the DBC (Section 2.6), and 3) the collaborative DM behavior (Section 2.7), recognition of which was based on the strategic decision-making as well as collaboration theories, aimed at unfolding the overt behavioral process of DBC. The behavioral process of DBC was further followed by the resulting outcomes of the DBC (Section 2.8) in order to provide the boundaries of the dependent construct of the DBC.

Finally, this chapter was concluded by discussing the underlying role of DMOs as coordinators of tourism destination stakeholders and as entities that are responsible for development of destination brands through recognition of stakeholders' needs, goals, and potentials to contribute or to threat the DBC (Section 2.10).

All in all, this chapter complemented the conceptual phase of this research that justified and explained the theoretical components needed for development of the multi-level theory of DBC, and in so doing it provided a more comprehensive and integrated understanding of the complex nature of this socially embedded phenomenon.

The concepts discussed throughout this chapter are brought together in a conceptual framework that provides the basis for further development of multilevel theory of DBC in this research (Section 2.8, Figure 6). The next chapter will, respectively, discuss the Philosophical paradigm that determines the methodological strategy of the current study.

CHAPTER 3: PHILOSOPHICAL PARADIGMS

> The alternative to philosophy is not no philosophy, but bad philosophy. The "unphilosophical" person has an unconscious philosophy, which they apply in their practice-whether of science or politics or daily life.
>
> (Collier, 1994, p. 7).

3.1 Introduction

The conceptual perspectives in the previous chapter provided the necessary insights towards understanding of the phenomenon of interest in this research i.e. destination branding culture, together with the theoretical constructs of this research. In line with the contextual perspective utilized for the purpose of this research, the next step in building the multilevel theory of destination branding culture is the identification of the underlying philosophical paradigm that is particularly utilized for the purpose of this research.

Defined as "the strategy or plan of action which lies behind the choice and use of particular methods" (Crotty, 1998, p. 3), research "methodology is concerned with why, what, from where, when and how data is collected and analyzed" (Scotland, 2012, p.9). Guba and Lincon (1994) explain that methodology asks the question: how can the inquirer go about finding out whatever they believe can be known?" (p. 108). In other words, the research methodology is a common language that "enables specialists in the field to communicate and to identify with each other despite their different topic concerns" (Thomas, 2006, p. 14). As a result, the paradigm positioning of this research enables the researcher to manifest her history, background, personal values and beliefs within the current research (D'Cruz, 2001) and hence, position herself within a discourse community (Ross, 1991) with which she shares a common language.

As a consequence, this chapter will explain the reason for selection of interpretivism as the leading research paradigm, and based on that will discuss the properness of selecting theory-to-research as the guiding research strategy. After discussing the research paradigm, the different perspectives towards theory development

will be discussed. Finally, this chapter will end up by describing the concept of root metaphor as the leading paradigm towards conceptualization of the DBC phenomenon in this research.

As mentioned in Section (1.3) the Philosophical phase of this research intends to provide the underlying paradigms of this research, in order to fill the gap between theory building and research design, acknowledged by Weick (1989).

3.2 Interpretivism as the Guiding Paradigm in this Research

The need for definition of research paradigm as a "platform for the development of critical perspectives on the nature of tourism as a social phenomenon" (Franklin & Crang, 2001, p. 6) has been acknowledged as a critical issue in tourism research (Marzano, 2007).

Nonetheless, as the underlying paradigm that a researcher utilizes has a critical impact on the whole process of research, it is necessary to discuss the paradigm and worldview that underlies this research. Respectively, the research paradigm can be defined as:

> "Very basic meta-theoretical assumptions which underwrite the frame of reference, mode of theorizing and modus operandi of the social theorists who operate within them. It is a term which is intended to emphasize the commonality of perspective which binds the work of a group of theorists together in such a way that they can be usefully regarded as approaching social theory within the bounds of the same problematic" (Burrell & Morgan, 1985, p. 23).

It contains a "group of statements which provide a language for talking about [...] a particular topic at a particular historical moment" (Hall, 1997, p. 44) and as a result it

can “provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners” (Kuhn, 1970, p. viii).

Further to this definition, doing research within a certain paradigm can best represent the worldview that places the researcher within “the long-continuing controversy about the nature of science” (Mills, 1959, p. 119). Kearney (1984) defines the worldview as:

> “Culturally-dependent, generally subconscious, fundamental organization of the mind …[that] manifests itself as a set of presuppositions or assumptions, which predispose one to feel, think, and act in predictable patterns”(p. 3). In other words, a researcher’s worldview represents [her/his] “culturally organized macro thought” or “those dynamically inter-related basic assumptions” that “determine much of [her/his] behavior and decision-making, as well as organizing much of [her/his] body of symbolic creations ... and ethno philosophy in general” (p. 1).

All in all, the worldview provides the environment for reasoning, which per se operates through thinking mechanisms, to produce comprehension-an interpretation assessed by apprehension-that can contribute to conceptual change (Cobern, 1993). It is this whole process that gives meaning to the research epistemology and is described as the assumptions that a researcher makes about her/his knowledge of reality and beliefs regarding how s/he intends to gain or understand that knowledge (Knight & Cross, 2012).

Consequently, as the way a researcher perceives the world, to a great extent, determines her/his philosophical assumptions about that world (Myers, 1997) and the constructs and phenomena within it, this research in line with the epistemology of tourism proposed by Jafari and Ritchie (1981) will draw on sociology and anthropology

as the primary disciplines that provide the theoretical foundations and research lenses to decipher the nature of destination branding culture phenomenon in this research. The specific nature of sociology and anthropology schools of thought, consequently, will allow the researcher to select interpretivism as an appropriate paradigm to lead the inductive theory building process in this research as the conducting research strategy, in order to bring into consciousness the hidden social forces and structures that shape the material world and are shaped by humans' "dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world" (Adler 1997, p. 322).

Whereas anthropology school of thought provides the mechanism to unravel the nature of destination branding as a culture, the sociology school of thought in this study provides the "epistemological macrostructure" (Cobern, 1991) that forms the basis for viewing the destination branding as a social reality that is perceived piecemeal. The amalgamation of these two perspectives then, suggests that in order to understand and unravel the multilevel nature and aspects of the destination branding, as a socially constructed phenomenon, there is a need to conceptualize this phenomenon in its anthropological sense as a culture (Smircich, 1983; Yanow, 2000) and by so doing, allow for studying the destination branding phenomenon as a cultural system that contains the underlying contextual, cognitive, and behavioral codes of meanings that allow for sense making and comprehension of the whole phenomenon of destination branding through numerous and competing perspectives that inform the different angles of this phenomenon (Marvasti, 2004).

For a better understanding of the adoption of the research paradigm and research strategy utilized in this research there is a need to define the underlying perspectives towards theory building.

There are two different approaches towards theory building i.e. research-to-theory and theory-to-research (Reynolds, 1971; Lynham, 2002) also known as deductive and inductive (e.g. Black, 1999) approaches towards research. Nonetheless, the theory building literature emphasizes the fundamental role that theory plays in research (Udo-Akang, 2012; Gay & Weaver, 2011; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011; Vogel, 2010; Harlow, 2009; Rindova, 2008; Kilduff, 2006; Smith & Hitt, 2005; Lynham, 2002; Rynes, 2002; Kaplan, 1964). However, despite the importance of this indication, there has been several contradictory opinions towards the way research and theory can enrich each other and hence, contribute to theory development (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Wacker, 1998; Whetten, 1989). As a result, the selection of any of these two approaches or combination of both is dependent on the given researcher's epistemological assumptions about how discovery of new knowledge should occur.

According to the positivist school of thought, regardless of the researcher's beliefs, there is a single, external, and objective reality to any research question (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2001; Hudson & Ozanne, 1988), or in a sense, "there is a "real truth" to be discovered in nature, in the form of discoverable patterns or regularities, and that scientific knowledge should be organized as a set of laws, reflecting the "real truth" (Reynolds, 1971, p. 142). The researchers in this domain utilize a structural approach in conducting a research by initially recognizing a research topic, and appropriate research questions and hypotheses by adopting a suitable research

methodology. By separating facts and values, the research-to-theory approach, then, takes a subject-object position on the relationship to subject matter (Smith, 1999), and by so doing, it allows for the discovery of the true "laws of nature". Gay and Weaver (2011) also agree, "what makes one theory preferred over another is the significant (albeit incremental) progression and advancement of knowledge toward the "truth" " (p. 29).

The interpretivist school of thought, on the contrary, assumes that "there is no "real truth" or "laws of nature" to be discovered, but that science is a process of inventing descriptions of phenomena" (Reynolds, 1971, p. 145), and that the reality is relative and multiple.

Focusing on the concept of "Verstehen" or understanding (Weber 1947), the interpretive epistemological perspective points out that there can be more than one reality and more than a single structured way of understanding and interpreting the realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) and the researcher, in this sense, seeks an understanding of social phenomena by taking a subject-subject position (Smith, 1999) and by perceiving the facts and values as inextricably mixed entities. The interpretivist perspective, hence, focuses on "the development of an explicit theory through a continuous interaction between theory construction and empirical research" (Reynolds, 1971, p. 144); and by so doing, it allows the theory to "become more precise and complete as a description of nature" (Reynols, 1971, p. 145).

In his invaluable poem "an elephant in the dark" (Barks, 2006), Rumi (13th Century), the Persian poet and philosopher, explains this very fact by describing the way some people used their senses in a dark room to realize the reality of an elephant:

…No one here has ever seen an elephant. They bring it at night to a dark room. One by one, we go in the dark and come out, saying how we experience the animal.

However, as each individual perceives the same animal-social phenomenon or reality-by her/his own feelings (perspectives towards being-ontology), s/he describes it from a different perspective (the relativity of assumptions):

One of us happens to touch the trunk. A water-pipe kind of creature. Another, the ear. A very strong, always moving back and forth. Another, the leg. I find it still, like a column on a temple…

Of course not wrong, but due to the fact that "regarding the same phenomenon, different people may construct meaning in different ways" (Crotty, 1998, p. 9), each person has had different perception, of the whole animal. However, the poet concludes at the end that if each of these people had held a candle there, and went in together with other people, they could then perceive the whole animal better:

"Each of us touches one place and understands the whole that way. The palm and the fingers feeling in the dark are how the senses explore the reality of the elephant. If each of us held a candle there, and if we went in together, we could see it all."

The efforts of individual observing-researchers towards understanding of the reality of the "social phenomena"-e.g. destination branding- in the field- i.e. the dark room- is the same as the aggregate of collective actions and interactions of the people, such as evaluation of the object "elephant" and interactions with other members about the same phenomenon of interest. In other words, since "the truth is a consensus formed by co-constructors" (Pring, 2000, p. 251), "knowledge and meaningful reality are constructed in and out of interaction between humans and their world and are developed

and transmitted in a social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Consequently, "the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of individuals who are participating in it" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 19).

Based on Weber's concepts of social action (1981) and Verstehen or understanding (1947) as the main purpose of interpretive social sciences, the understanding of the "social elephant" is the result of different ontological (assumptions of reality-what is) (Scotland, 2012) and epistemological (assumptions of knowledge-what it means to know) (Scotland, 2012) positions that different people take towards the same phenomenon of interest (Grix, 2004).

Taking culture as the "totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions and all other products of human work and thought characteristic of a community and population" (Morris, 1973, p.321), destination branding can be understood as a culture, which is "continually shaped and restructured by actions and symbolic interpretations of the parties involved" in it (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994, p. 96).

All in all, despite the importance of paradigms in reflecting the researchers viewpoints, the studies in tourism domain lack a paradigmatic approach in them (Tribe, 2005; 2006; Pernecky, 2010).

As a result, in order to address this gap within the previous tourism related studies, this study explicitly locates itself within the interpretive school of thought, defined as "an orientation toward social reality that assumes the beliefs and meaning people create and use, fundamentally shape what reality is for them" (Neuman, 2006, p. 89). In so doing, interpretivism not only reflects the researcher's standpoint but it also enables her to integrate and systematize sense perceptions, towards specific aspects of

this research's phenomenon of interest i.e. the destination branding as a culturally-oriented phenomenon. Approaching this study from an interpretive perspective, then, allows both an understanding of the different beliefs and meanings attached to the behavioral process of destination branding and a rich insight towards its cultural nature.

The interpretive approach in this research assumes that reality is socially constructed and the researcher is the vehicle by which this reality is revealed (Cavana, Delahaye, & Sekaran, 2001; Walsham, 1995). This approach is consistent with the construction of the social world characterized by interaction between the researcher and the participants (Mingers, 2001). As a result, the researcher's interpretations play a key role in this study bringing "such subjectivity to the fore, backed with quality arguments rather than statistical exactness" (Garcia & Quek, 1997, p. 459).

All in all, based on the two paradigms discussed above, two different perspectives towards research development strategy can be developed. Where as, research methodology based on positivist school of thought is called research-to-theory (Reynolds, 1971; Lynham, 2002)- or deductive strategy (e.g. Black, 1999), the research methodology, based on the interpretivist school of thought, is called theory-to-research (Reynolds, 1971; Lynham, 2002)- or inductive strategy (e.g. Black, 1999).

In discussing the research-to-theory strategy, Reynolds (1971) points out "two major drawbacks" (p. 142) regarding the application of this approach. The first draw back is the infinite amount of data that can be collected during the process of data collection and the second one is the overwhelming problem of finding substantively interesting patterns among the resulting data. Nevertheless, he argues that for an efficient use of the research-to-theory approach which can contribute to a useful theory these two criteria

should be met, otherwise the use of this approach, if not impossible, might become very difficult in the social sciences.

Nonetheless, researchers such as Holton and Lowe (2007) agree on this fact that the theory-to-research strategy has "the greatest potential for advancing science [since] it often proposes new constructs and relationships that spur other researchers to conduct new empirical research to verify the theory" (p. 304). This fact is further supported by Lynham (2002) that states "theories of this nature are never complete and require continual discourse between the theoretical framework of the theory and the theory in use" (Lynham, 2002, p. 269).

Although it might produce some difficulties for the scholars in staying informed of all the data being generated with regard to the theory, due to the strengths mentioned above, the theory-to-research as the research strategy which is based on interpretive school of thought can provide a more fulfilling platform for studies conducted in social sciences and management which are of a dynamic and complex nature. In line with this viewpoint, the theory-to-research strategy would be utilized as the leading strategy towards theory building in this research.

Since this research aims to represent how the social reality of the destination branding is understood as an attribution of cultural meanings (Flick, Kardorff & Steinke, 2004; Parker, 1999) the use of theory-to-research methodology is, hence, an appropriate choice for this research to fulfill its goal. In other words, having embraced as a paradigm that multiple constructed realities are the essence of the social world (Byrne-Armstrong, Higgs, & Horsfall, 2001), this research adopts the theory-to-research methodology because it provides the researcher with methods and techniques that allow her to get

closer to the "individual's point of view [... and grasp] the actor's perspective" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 10) with the objective of answering questions about how the culture of destination branding, as a social experience, is created and given meaning to.

This section, nonetheless, provided the existence of culture, justified by using the interpretive paradigm, as the paradigm that leads this research, and put forward arguments in favor of the appropriateness of qualitative methodology for this study. The next section, however, provides different perspectives towards the design of theory in this research followed by a justification of the improved contextually-constructed multilevel theory building process adopted in this study.

Based on the selection of a social perspective as the underlying lens that allows for better understanding of the DBC that is being developed by stakeholders, this section has introduced and justified the adoption of interpretivism as the paradigm that leads the strategy of theory development i.e. inductive theory building, in this research. As has been discussed, this study benefits from this paradigmatic approach, since interpretivism allows the researcher to unveil how stakeholders make sense of the destination branding phenomenon as a social collective behavior.

The next section will discuss the different perspectives towards theory building.

3.3 The Theory Development Perspectives

There are differing opinions as to what constitutes a theory (Henderikus, 2010; Harlow, 2009; Henderikus, 2007; Gelso, 2006). However, theory is defined as "a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena (Kerlinger, 1986, p. 45).

All in all, as the "definitions used to define theory range from the simple and succinct to the complex and elaborate (Gay & Weaver, 2011) there is still no consensus on the definition of theory.

Weick (1989), for instance, defines theory as "an ordered set of assertions about a generic behavior or structure assumed to hold throughout a significantly broad range of specific instances" (p. 517). Dubin (1976, 1978) defines theory as "an attempt by man to model some aspects of the empirical world. The underlying motive for this modeling is (a) that the real world is so complex that it needs to be conceptually simplified in order to be understandable, or (b) that observation by itself does not reveal ordered relationships among empirically detected entities. A theory, therefore, "tries to make sense out of the observable world by ordering the relationships among elements that constitute the theorist's focus of attention in the real world" (Holton & Lowe, 2007, p. 297). Torraco (1994, 1997, & 2005) states that theory is a system for explaining a set of phenomena that specifies the key concepts that are operative in the phenomena and the laws that relate the concepts to each other. Heinen (1985) believes that a theory can be defined as "a group of logically organized laws or relationships that constitutes explanation in a discipline" (p. 414). Sutton and Staw (1995) argue that a theory must essentially find the answer to the question of "why" and should describe causal relationships and explain the ordering and timing of events in that relationship as well as reasons why a relationship exists. Wacker (2008) posits that, "theory is an explained set of conceptual relationships" (p. 6), which should contain four components i.e. " definitions (who? and what?), domain (when? and where?), relationships (how? and why?), and predictions (would? should? and could?)"

(p.7). Gelso (2006), defines theory as "a statement of the suspected relationship between and among variables" (p. 2).

Pertinently, theory construction is the concurrent development of concepts and propositions that describe a relationship between at least two properties, and contingent propositions whose truth or falsity can be determined by experience (Homans, 1964). Whereas data describe which empirical patterns were observed, theory explains why empirical patterns are expected to be observed (Kaplan, 1964). Several academics have addressed the question of what constitutes a good theory and cite an extensive list of "virtues and criteria" of "good theory" such as testability, falsification, prediction, explanation, parsimony, internal consistency, uniqueness, generalizability, conservatism, empirical riskiness, fecundity, and abstraction (e.g. Wacker, 2008, 1998; DiMaggio, 1995; Popper, 1989; Whetten, 1989; Quine & Ullian, 1980; Dubin, 1978).

Dubin (1978) believes that theory building is the task of building "viable models of the empirical world that can be comprehended by the human mind. These theoretical models are intensely practical for the predictions derived from them and are the ground on which modern man is increasingly ordering his relationships with the environing universe" (p. 2). He has developed an extensively used theory building methodology consisting of eight building blocks, and provided description of theory components (Dubin, 1976).

In fact, Dubin (1978) divides the theory building research model into two parts: "theory development" (steps 1-4) and "research operation" (steps 5-8)" (Holton & Lowe, 2007). Drawing on the work of Dubin (1978), Lynham (2000) defines theory building as "the purposeful process or recurring cycle by which coherent descriptions, explanations,

and representations of observed or experienced phenomena are generated, verified, and refined" (p. 161).

However, despite the valuable insights that Dubin's (1978) framework provides for the theory building research, his research model is criticized as an inadequate framework due to its positivistic paradigm and limited function in multi-paradigm fields such as sociology. Storberg-Walker (2003) adds that, Dubin's (1978) method "lacks the flexibility to address the complex, multidimensional, contextual, and temporal social phenomena that … theoreticians are often faced with today" (p. 218). In essence, Storberg-Walker's (2003) critique towards Dubin's (1978) model is due to its radical methodical, and positivistic view towards theory building. According to her, theory building should yield new potential beyond absolute positivistic orientations.

In a similar vein, Kozlowski and Klein (2000) argue that, single-level perspectives cannot adequately account for organizational behavior. "The macro perspective neglects the means by which individual behavior, perceptions, effect, and interactions give rise to higher-level phenomena…In contrast, the micro perspective has been guilty of neglecting contextual factors that can significantly constrain the effects of individual differences that lead to collective responses, which ultimately constitute macro phenomena" (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000, p. 8). As a result, they propose a multilevel approach towards the study of organizations as complex systems. Fundamental to the multilevel perspective is "the recognition that micro phenomena are embedded in macro contexts and that macro phenomena often emerge through the interaction and dynamics of lower-level elements" (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000, p. 8). In fact, a multilevel approach towards organizational phenomena "[amalgamates] the micro and macro perspectives

[and] engenders a more integrated science of organizations (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000, p. 9).

Other researchers such as Klein, Dansereau, & Hall (1994) outline some of the advancements in theory development, data aggregation and disaggregation issues that emerged while working with levels' models. Particularly, they indicate the importance of theory (as opposed to analytical concerns) in developing multilevel theories, and, in so doing, they describe different assumptions that determine designation of levels within the organizational sciences. Furthermore, they explain some of the essential measurement and statistical analysis issues that are relevant when working with multilevel phenomena. Following the previous research, House et al. (1995) take a step forward and propose a framework to incorporate the micro and macro organizational behavior research under the title of "meso paradigm". Accordingly, they acknowledged that for a better understanding of social phenomena the micro and macro variables together with social interactions are required and essential:

> " . . .what is needed is a way of coupling theories and research at different levels into a meaningful whole. We need mechanisms that help us conceptualize the complex relations between units at different levels of analysis ... in organizational settings" (House et al., 1995, p. 86).

However, Morgeson and Hofmann (1999) tried to address this issue by "articulating a model of collective structure, which highlights the unique properties of constructs at collective levels" (p. 250), and the way these constructs' structure change across levels. Morgeson and Hofmann (1999), then, define the term collective as "any interdependent and goal-directed combination of individuals, groups, departments,

organizations, or institutions" (p. 251), and indicate that due to the focus of their work on these combinations, their model "is applicable to any set (or grouping) of entities and, thus, represents a general model for developing multilevel theories" (p. 251). Defined as "a series of on goings, events, and event cycles between component parts that enable the collective phenomena to emerge", collective constructs according to Morgeson and Hofmann (1999) can "provide a . . . mechanism for discussing collective phenomena and integrating constructs across levels" (p. 256).

Having emphasized the role of structure and function as two of the important attributes in describing the collective constructs, Morgeson and Hofmann (1999) concluded by providing eleven guidelines (Table 4) for issues to be considered in multilevel theory building i.e. further categories into implications of structure, implications of function, and integration of structure and function.

However, Kozlowski and Klein (2000) as a complementary study later tried to "synthesize and extend existing frameworks, and identify theoretical principles to guide the development and evaluation of multilevel models" (p. 11). They proposed a model containing 21 principles or guidelines for the study of multilevel theory development. Their principles are categorized into two parts. The first set of principles- (1-11) describe the answer to the questions "what, how, where, when, why, and why not" (p. 26) of multilevel theory building and were developed to guide the process of multilevel theory building. The second set of principles- (12-21) are developed to guide the specification and operationalization of the emerging theory "the alignment of research designs and analytical strategies with levels specific to the theory of interest" (Upton & Egan, 2010, p. 339).

Fisher (2000) developed a multilevel theory-building model using insights gathered from "multilevel scholars…synthesized with Dubin's (1978) framework" (p. 55). Her theoretical framework was founded on Dubin's (1978) first five theoretical components, together with additional insights from more recent scholars such as Rousseau (1985), Klein et al. (1994), Chan (1998), and Morgeson and Hofmann (1999). Although similar, in many ways, to Dubin's (1978) model of theory building, Fisher (2000) indicates that the additional work in the multilevel theory-building process comes in defining collective constructs (Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999) and in specifying levels, functional relationships, and sources of variability among levels (Klein et al., 1994), resulting in a total of eight steps (which extend Dubin's original five steps).

Finally, Upton (2006) in a study on the comparison amongst the three models of Kozlowski and Klein (2000), Morgeson and Hofmann (1999), and Fisher (2000), refined and improved the MLTB process of these three models, by systematically analyzing, criticizing and integrating the strengths and specific guiding principles of each approach essential for MLTB. The reason, he mentions, behind his intention for the refinement of the three processes resulted from Kozlowski and Klein's (2000) previously cited assertion that "no single source exists to cut across [the theoretical framework] differences and to guide the interested researcher in the application of multilevel concepts (p. 4)".

In his work, Upton (2006) argues that, in reviewing the work of Kozlowski and Klein (2000), Morgeson and Hofmann (1999), and Fisher (2000) each approach provides important insights regarding theory building in general and MLTB in particular; however,

there is a clear opportunity for refining the theory building methods described in these three studies.

As a means of further support for a refined MLTB approach, he provides the following critiques of the work of Kozlowski and Klein (2000), Morgeson and Hofmann (1999) and Fisher (2000).

According to Upton (2006), Kozlowski and Klein (2000) have offered "the most thorough MLTB process as their purpose was to provide a thorough summary of MLTB process as developed to date. This [was] accomplished by thoroughly detailing the MLTB process from specifying the phenomenon of interest and dependent variables to specifying within and between-level components to outlining guidelines for specifying and operationalizing the resulting theory" (p. 101). However, he argues that, "the primary weakness of their approach is the lack of inclusion of Morgeson and Hofmann's (1999) work concerning collective constructs" (p. 101).

Regarding the work of Morgeson and Hofmann (1999), Upton (2006), states that "the critique of Morgeson and Hofmann's (1999) work is that it focuses almost exclusively on the meso level or interaction of individuals in dyads, triads, teams, etc. Their methodology also stops short of thorough guidelines for theory specification and operationalization, instructing the theorist only to specify whether assessing the structure or function of the identified collective constructs" (p. 102).

Finally, in analyzing Fisher's (2000) framework, Upton (2006) argues that "Fisher provides an integration of seminal theory building (based on Dubin, 1978) and more recent MLTB research based on Morgeson and Hofmann (1999) and Chan (1998)" (p. 102). He further argues "the primary critique of her work is that it relies heavily on

Dubin's (1978) seminal theory building work and only moderately incorporates the MLTB research. Due to the fields each study emerged from, each study is largely aimed at quantitative verification, often overlooking the potential for qualitative evaluation" (p. 102). Table 4 provides a comparison between the different steps proposed by Morgeson and Hofmann (1999), Kozlowski and Klein (2000) and Fisher (2000).

In conclude, attempting to address the shortcomings of the previous frameworks Upton (2006) proposes an integrated multilevel theory development model containing three main components i.e. theory components, levels' components, and theory specification and operationalization components.

However, "multilevel theory is not necessarily one that considers every level within a hierarchical system equally, but rather one that takes into account the effects of levels' subordinate and supra-ordinate to the focal level" (Fisher, 2000, p. 11). Multilevel theory building is an attempt to elevate the theory building potential and provide deeper insight towards interactions that occur within and between individuals, groups, and organizations. In other words the advantage of the multilevel theory building over the single level theory building lies in its potential to congregate further insight and utilize a multidimensional and systematic perspective towards the phenomenon of interest (Upton & Egan, 2010).

Nonetheless, despite the valuable contribution that Upton's (2006) framework provides in integrating the previous multilevel frameworks, his framework, as well as other previous MLTB frameworks fail to address the critical role that the research process, researcher's perspective and research discipline play in gradual development of concepts that form the constructs and define the research context (Knight & Cross, 2012).

Based on this recognized gap, section (4.2) will provide the perspective developed in this research to address this gap.

Table 4.

Comparison of MLTB Principles

Kozlowski and Klein (2000)	**Morgeson and Hofmann (1999)**	**Fisher (2000)**
Designate and define theoretical phenomenon of interest and constructs/ dependent variables	Identify collective phenomena that emerge from collective action of individuals/groups/ departments/organizations/ institutions (collective constructs)	Specify and define theoretical units and collective constructs (from Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999)
Specify how the phenomenon is linked at different levels	Identify systems of on goings and events, which leads to understanding interactions that define and reinforce the collective phenomena	Specify levels of the theory, including boundaries
Specify organizational levels, units, or elements relevant to theory construction; specify whether units are formal or informal	Specify the emergence process of collective constructs recognizing that the context of operation may limit interaction possibilities resulting in influence on emergence of a construct	Establish theoretical boundaries (through logic)
Specify temporal reference points as time may make phenomenon appear top- down, bottom-up, or both at various times	Specify construct function to allow for integration of functionally similar constructs into broader networks	Identify laws of interaction among units or constructs
Take temporal requirements into account Top-down effects on lower levels manifest quickly Bottom-up emergent effects manifest over longer periods of time	Identify the role that outcome of the construct plays in the collective with regard to goal accomplishment to explain why the construct persists/ fails to persist	Specify functional relationships among levels and function of related constructs
Specify time cycles in entrained phenomenon	Identify commonalities of a given construct across levels using a functional analysis of the construct	Specify sources of variability among levels by focusing on the level of the theory
Answer the "why" and "why not" of the model by explaining the assumptions that undergird the model	Specify the structure of a construct at each level to provide an account of the function and identify contextual factors/structural properties that regulate the divergence of outcomes in the theory	Specify system states of the theory in which units take on characteristic values that persist over a given time
Specification and operationalization	Specification and operationalization	Specification and operationalization
Specify the level of each construct in the theory at which it is hypothesized to manifest and	Account for interaction, integration, coordination, and interdependence to gain a fuller understanding of the collective	Specify propositions of the theory; types include:

include the definition of the level with justification of why it is specified at that level	constructs	
For emerging higher level constructs, specify the level of origin and of the construct and the nature of the emergent process	Individual-level data can be collected to inform collective phenomena; must focus on collective phenomena and frame questions in collective terms	About values of a single unit of the theory About continuity of a system state About the oscillation of the system
Specify the level of measurement of each construct using the following guidelines: Global properties—assess/ represent at the unit level Shared properties—assess at the level of origin Configural properties— assess at the level of origin Shared and configural properties—represent the form of emergence in the model of aggregation, combination, and representation	In theory operationalization, specify whether the constructs' structure or function was assessed to facilitate appropriate operationalization	
Sampling in multilevel research	Sampling in multilevel research	Sampling in multilevel research
Data collection/sampling Individuals as informants Sampling within and across Units Sampling across time cycles and entrainment Analytic strategies	Not addressed in this model	Not addressed in this model

Source: Adapted from Upton and Egan (2010, p. 347-8-9)

All in all, as discussed in Section (1.1) the reservation in the conventional linear-system thinking prompts queries for an altered paradigm towards the study of complex phenomena and hence, calls for advances in research, which will permit more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of complex phenomena.

The next section, will thereupon, explain the root metaphor paradigm towards conceptualization of the DBC phenomenon.

3.4 Philosophical Paradigms in Brief

This chapter has explained the strategy utilized for this research, including both the underpinning research philosophy and the specific perspectives that were used to develop a multilevel theory. Interpretivism has been proposed as the paradigm guiding this study (Section 3.2). Afterwards, the objectives of this study, the issues under investigation and the researcher's view that the realities are collectively constructed and, therefore, total objectivity cannot be achieved, supported the adoption of an interpretivist epistemology and theory-to-research strategy. Accordingly, theory-to-research approach was discussed and the appropriateness of selection of theory building and not testing for the purpose of MLTB was justified on a theoretical basis (Section 3.3), and finally, the adoption of a selective approach for theory building in this research was detailed in Section (3.3).

After discussing the underlying paradigm in this research, the next chapter, however, will further contribute to the purpose of this research by providing a methodological perspective towards the developmental process of MLTB in this research.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

> Nonlinear science('s) . . . aim is to provide the concepts and the techniques necessary for a unified description of the particular, yet quite large, class of phenomena whereby simple deterministic systems give rise to complex behaviors with the appearance of unexpected spatial structures or evolutionary events.
>
> (Nicolis 1995, in Byrne, 1998)

4.1 Introduction

As discussed before, the interdisciplinary and scattered nature of the tourism, which lacks well-defined and inclusive theories of its own, calls for particular attention towards investigation of theories, which are specifically developed for the unique nature of this domain.

As a result this chapter aims to develop the multilevel theory of destination branding culture as a generative process that can unravel the meanings and connect the multiple aspects of the DBC through higher-order constructs of stakeholders' culture.

To the author's knowledge, to date there has been no studies in the tourism domain, which have utilized a multilevel perspective towards the study of DB phenomenon. It is worth mentioning that, in addition to the lack of a MLTB paradigm, to date, there has been no study conducted in the same field, which has analyzed the nature of DBC as a hybrid decision-making culture.

As a result, the purpose of this chapter is to develop a multilevel theory of DBC, by means of a review of the existing models that provide the best guideline to recognize and develop the main elements of a multilevel theory building process. Finally, built on the improved model of MLTB conducted in this study i.e. CCMLTB (Section 2.2) a contextually constructed multilevel theory of destination branding culture will be developed.

The developed multilevel theory building process will mainly draw upon the works of Kozlowski and Klein (2000), Upton (2006), Fisher (2000), Morgeson and Hofmann, (1999), and Fischer (2008).

The coming sectors will provide the contextually constructed multilevel theory building framework based on different perspectives and drawn upon the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 of this study, and discuss the step by step development process of multilevel theory of DBC and its comprising components. Finally, this chapter will end up with some ideas regarding the operationalization and specification section that depicts the final target of the MLT of DBC in this research.

4.2 The Process of DBC Theory Building

For the purpose of theory building in this research destination branding phenomenon is posited as a culture that contains the higher contextual values of the stakeholders which through the channel of lower DM patterns and processes relate to the outcomes of this collective effort. As a consequence, the destination branding culture outcomes in this research is considered as the endogenous construct that drives the effects of higher components of DBC culture on the lower process components of this phenomenon.

As discussed in Section (1.2) the process of the DBC theory construction in this research draws on two main theories i.e. the contextual construct theory (CCT) (Knight & Cross, 2012) and the multilevel theory building theory (MLTB) (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999; Fisher, 2000; Upton, 2006; anf Fischer, 2008) that in a combined fashion amalgamate the research development process with the theory building process.

Upton (2006) observed that, in developing a MLT two main components must be considered: (1) theory components and (2) levels components- consisting of constructs'

levels, together with measurement and analysis levels- in line with Kozlowski and Klein (2000), Morgeson and Hofmann (1999), and Fisher (2000).

In defining the theory components Upton (2006) observed that four issues should be addressed: 1) describing the resulting endogenous constructs (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000), 2) specifying the units, or elements that are relevant to theory constructs (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Fisher, 2000), 3) specifying the level of the theory by predicting whether members of the collective are homogeneous, independent, or heterogeneous (Klein et al., 1994; Fisher, 2000), and 4) establishing and/or specifying theoretical boundaries, either open or closed, through logic (Fisher, 2000). After defining the components of the theory, Kozlowski and Klein (2000) indicate that the theorist should specify how these constructs emerge through either top-down contextual factors or bottom-up emergent processes. Furthermore, in specifying the emergence of the constructs, the theorist should recognize the level of the construct's origin, the current level of the construct and the emergence process (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). However, since the type of construct's unit-level drives the form of measurement for analyses, specifying the unit type categories i.e. global unit, shared unit, and configural unit is also of utmost importance. After specifying the issues regarding the levels, the last component of the multilevel theory development process relates to interactions amongst the different components of the theory. Figure 10 depicts the levels and theory components proposed by Upton (2006).

Theory Components

- Describing the theoretical constructs (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000);

-Specifying the units, or elements that are relevant to theory constructs (Kozlowski & Klein; Fisher, 2000);

-Specifying the level of the theory by predicting whether members of the organization are homogeneous, independent, or heterogeneous (Klein et al., 1994; Fisher);

-Specifying theoretical boundaries through logic (Fisher, 2000).

Considerations about Theory

-Specifying the system state of the theory

-Identifying the contextual factors and structural properties

-Explaining the reason behind assumptions made about the theory

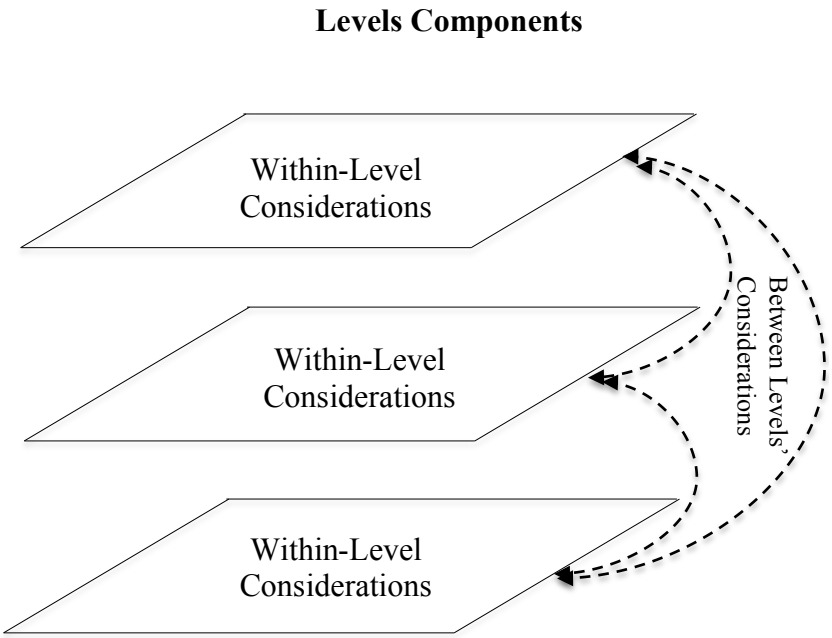

Figure 10. The Components of MLTB

Source: Adapted from Upton (2006, p. 105)

4.2.1 Components of the DBC Theory: Constructs and Units

As mentioned before, the DBC amongst the groups of stakeholders within the tourism destination domain is considered as the theoretical phenomenon of interest for this research. Respectively, destination branding culture in this research has been defined as a complex culture that contains the underlying contextual values and the DBC related DM patterns and behaviors of the stakeholders. Dominant as they are, "value", "decision-making patterns", and "decision-making behavioral process" are at the heart of destination branding concept.

In developing the multilevel frameworks, Kozlowski and Klein (2000) urge the researchers to start their research by thinking about their endogenous constructs of interest. The endogenous construct drives the specification of necessary levels, constructs and processes within a theory. As described in Chapter 2 of this study (Sections 2.7), the DBC outcomes is considered as the endogenous construct in this research and it is defined as the extent of DBC managers' beliefs in achieving their stated (social, economic, learning and strategic) objectives (Geringer & Hebert, 1991; Saxton, 1997; Lane & Lubatkin, 1998; Dyer et al., 2001).

Respectively, based on the extent review of literature made in Chapter 2 of this research, the main attributes were proposed for the destination branding culture (2.4) in terms of a culture that consists of the underlying contextual values, and shared decision-making patterns and behaviors. Accordingly, collectivism (2.5) (Hofstede, 1980) was selected as the main contextual element that moderates the relationship between the dimensions of the DBC related DM patterns i.e. politicality, rationality, flexibility, conflict, and speed and DBC behavior (Sections 2.6.1-2.6.5).

4.2.2 Level of the DBC Theory

In developing a multilevel theory of DBC the next step is to specify and examine levels' components of the theory. The levels' components specified in this theory include both within-levels and between-levels' components. However, before discussing the different within and between levels' issues, the first step is to define the level of theory.

The level of the theory, however, describes the unit (individuals, dyads, groups, subunits, organizations and etc.) that a researcher seeks to explain and about which attributions and generalizations are made to depict and explain" (Klein et al, 1994). In other words, the level of theory is "the level to which generalizations are made" (Rousseau, 1985, p. 4).

However, since DBC is posited as a multilevel theory, spanning both organizational and national levels, the specified levels for the multilevel theory of DBC are logically derived as national level, inter-organizational/collaboration level and the organizational level. For quantitative research purposes, it should be noted that these levels would be considered hierarchical or nested, rather than orthogonal levels.

Within each of these three specified levels (organizational, inter-organizational/ collaboration, and national) there can be any number of units. At the organizational level, the basic unit can be considered as the individual CEO or group of top managers who focus on their organizational goals and seek for their organizational success. At the collaboration level, units might be composed of dyads, triads, or groups of stakeholders who attempt to solve their common problem through collaborative efforts and are responsible for both their organizational and collaborative goals. At the national level the units might again be composed of individual or collective of stakeholders described

above, but the individual stakeholders who make up these units have a particular focus on broader national issues that matter in a global scale.

After defining the constructs' levels and units the next step in specifying the level of a theory is "the explicit or implicit prediction of the independence, heterogeneity or homogeneity of members of a group with respect to the constructs of the theory" (Klein et al., 1994, p. 199)**.** In specifying the homogeneity of members of a group with respect to a theoretical construct, "a theorist predicts that group members' values on a given construct are identical" (Klein et al., 1994, p. 200). In specifying the independence of members of a group with respect to a theoretical construct, "the theorist specifies that … individual members of a group are independent of that group's influence. Thus, the value of a construct for an individual member of a group is independent of the value of the construct for other members of the same group" (Klein et al., 1994, p. 200). Finally, in specifying the heterogeneity of members of a group with respect to a theoretical construct, the theorist focuses on "individual attributes relative to the group average for [that] attribute" and predicts "the effects of an independent variable (X) on a dependent variable (Y) are context dependent" (Klein et al., 1994, p. 200-201). According to these definitions, it can be predicted that the national level as the higher underlying context within which the DBC collective social phenomenon takes place, contains the shared homogeneous values of a destination as a national entity. Furthermore, it can be also predicted that the organizational level that composes the micro level components of the DBC contains the independent decision-making patterns of different stakeholders. Finally, it can be predicted that the inter-organizational/collaboration level that is the level at which the DBC behavior will occur contains the stakeholders which are on the

one hand autonomous (Gray, 1989) and represent their independent organizations and are on the other hand, embedded within the higher national context. As a consequence the inter-organizational/collaboration level can be best predicted by heterogeneous stakeholders, behaviors of which might be dependent on the underlying national context within which they are involved (Klein et al., 1994).

Based on these discussions, the inter-organizational/collaboration level is considered as the most appropriate level that can best represent the dichotomic nature of DBC that amalgamates both shared contextual and individual organizational aspects of the participating stakeholders.

4.2.3 Boundary of the DBC Theory

After defining the theory level the next step is to define the theory boundaries. "The boundaries of a theory…establish the real-world limits of the theory and in so doing distinguish the theoretical domain of the theory from those aspects of the real world not addressed or explained by the theory" (Lynham, 2002, p. 253). With regard to determining boundaries, Lynham (2002) states, "when using a theory-to-research strategy for theory building...the boundaries of a theory are determined not by empirical data but rather through the use of logic" (p. 253). As for types of boundaries, Dubin (1978) suggests two types of boundaries: an open boundary for "exchange over the boundary between the domains" and a closed boundary when "exchange does not take place between the domains" (Torraco, 1994, p. 162).

As a result, due to the interdependent nature of the stakeholders participating in the DBC development, the cultural system boundary established in the theory of DBC is an open boundary as it allows for "some kind of exchange" (Dubin, 1978, p. 126)

amongst the stakeholders. All in all, the theoretical boundary of this research frames the DBC stakeholders' in a large collaboration association within which they are assumed to collaborate with other organizations to create value and fulfill their organizational goals. Nonetheless, it should be added that, despite these shared and open boundaries, stakeholders within DBC domain might face difficulties to interact with each other during the whole process of DBC development.

The last issue regarding the theoretical boundary of the DBC theory is defining the formality and informality of units' interactions (Upton, 2006).

Having specified the boundary of the DBC as an open boundary that contains the shared properties of stakeholders' culture, the formality of the units' boundaries can, pertinently, range depending upon the context within which stakeholders are located. However, as observed in the literature (Walter, 2005), since the destination branding process is considered as a strategic decision-making process, although the existence of informal unit interactions in different cases such as conflict resolution can not be overlooked, it can be predicted that at different levels of the stakeholders' participation most of the interactions amongst units will be formed within formal boundaries. Figure 11 depicts the different levels of constructs, their composing units together with their boundaries.

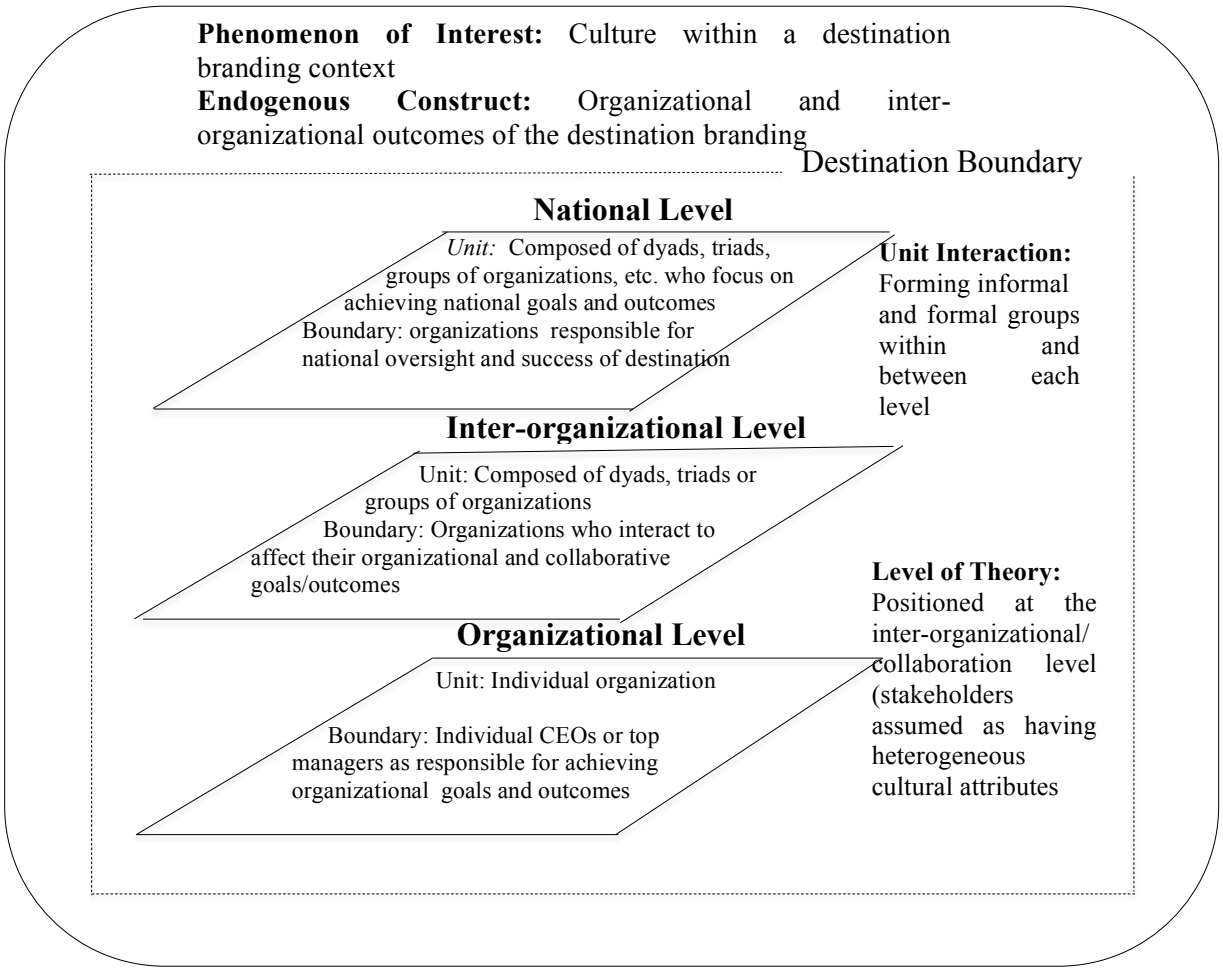

Figure 11. Theoretical Components of the Multilevel Theory of DBC

4.2.4 Within-Level Components

After specifying the level of theory as well as constructs' boundaries and unit interaction mechanisms, the next step in developing the MLT of DBC is to specify the within-level components i.e. the emergence direction of the constructs, their level of origin and current level, their functions, as well as types of constructs' units (Upton, 2006).

In describing the direction of constructs' emergence, Kozlowski and Klein (2000)

state that the emergence of the constructs can occur either through top-down contextual factors or bottom-up perceptual and process factors. The top-down direction of emergence represents the higher-level contextual factors that affect the lower levels and the effects of these factors generally manifest quickly through either direct or indirect effects.

The embeddedness theory (e.g., Hitt, Beamish, Jackson, & Mathieu, 2007; Andersson, Forsgren, & Holm, 2002; Gulati & Gargiulo, 1999; Gulati, Nohria, & Zaheer, 2000; Zukin & DiMaggio, 1990), in a complementary fashion, suggests that different lower levels of individuals, groups, subunits, etc. are embedded in higher organizational, inter-organizational and environmental levels (Figure 12). Based on this theory, it can be inferred that the collective behavior of destination branding is embedded within higher national context of the stakeholders and, therefore, it might be affected by the underlying cultural components of this higher level.

All in all, Karahanna, Evaristo, & Srite (2005) state that the balances of values and practices vary across different levels of collectives' culture. He further adds that, national culture is composed more of differences in values than in practices. Thereupon, the national culture of stakeholders mainly provides the common values and norms regarding the appropriate attitudes and practices (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996) they utilize in different lower domains.

As a result, in line with Karahanna et al. (2005) for the purpose of DBC theory in this research the shared national culture values of stakeholders is selected as the attribute of the macro social context of the DBC stakeholders. Respectively, based on the O'Reilly and Chatman's (1996) proposition, it can be predicted that the national culture value

attribute can have a top-down indirect effect on the DBC outcomes through the practices of the organizational culture DM patterns.

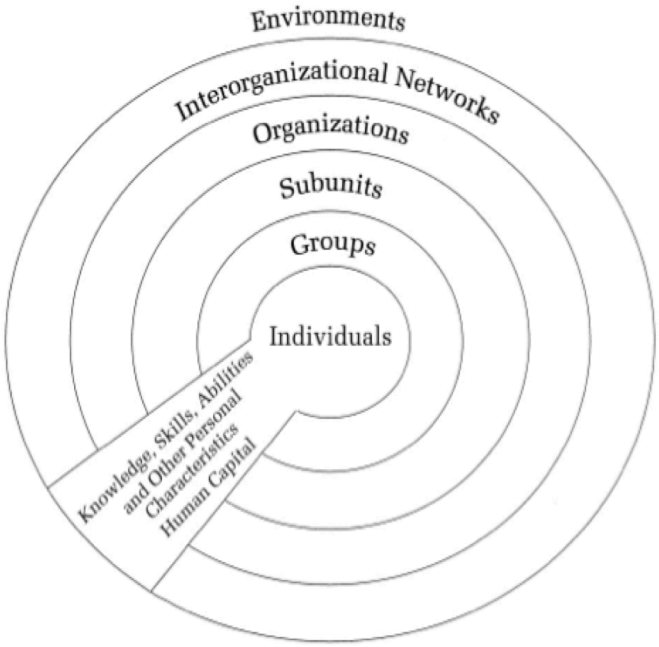

Figure 12. The Levels' Embeddedness Model

Source: Hitt et al (2007, p. 1387)

After specifying the top-down emergence of the contextual attributes, the next step is to determine the lower-level patterns that manifest through either compilation or composition processes (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). Whereas composition patterns represent those patterns that contribute to essentially the same constructs as they emerge upward across levels, the compilation patterns represent those patterns that contribute to constructs that comprise a common yet different domain as they emerge upward (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000).

In specifying the nature of cultural attributes, Karahanna et al. (2005) point out that, the balance of collectives' values and practices changes when applied to their

subcultures, such as organizational culture differences, where attitudes towards behavior might seem to be more dominant. In other words, when put into action and practice through socialization, particularly in workplaces, the national culture of members of collectives translate into their attitudes and practices (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996) in order to provide members of the collectives with facts and ways of doing things (Hofstede, 1991). Accordingly, the action-based and behavioral nature of organizational culture makes it more tangible (Karahanna et al., 2005; Erez & Earley, 1993) and apt towards change throughout its lifecycle.

Based on this discussion, it can be posited that the organizational culture of the DBC stakeholders contains the lower mental patterns that they utilize in order to perform the DM decision-making behavior. As a consequence, it can be predicted that these mental patterns emerge through bottom-up mechanisms. However, due to the independence of the organizational culture of the participating DBC stakeholders, and respectively independent nature of stakeholders' DM patterns, the emergence of these processes are conceived as compilation processes. Table (4.1) summarizes the four aspects of each DBC collective construct listed above followed by additional discussion about the emergence process for each construct.

The last issue regarding the theoretical levels is the specification of the constructs' unit types. Respectively, Kozlowski and Klein (2000) propose three types of properties for constructs units i.e. global, shared, and configural. The global unit properties are those "observable, descriptive characteristics of a unit" that "do not emerge from individual-level experiences, attitudes, values, or characteristic", accordingly, they propose that the level of measurement for these properties should be specified as the individual level"

(Kozlowski & Klein, 2000, p. 22). The shared unit properties are those properties that "emerge from individual members' shared perceptions, affect, and responses" (p. 22), in this regard, "data to assess these constructs should match the level of origin (p. 22). Finally, the configural unit properties are those observable (descriptive) and unobservable (latent) properties that derive from the "characteristics, cognitions, or behaviors of individual members"(p. 22). Accordingly, the data to assess these properties should be measured at the individual level.

Based on this discussion, due to the shared perception of the DBC stakeholders on the national culture value of collectivism, it can be predicted that shared properties can best represent the underlying property of the value construct. Furthermore, the organizational DM patterns that derive from specific cognitive and attitudinal nature of social partners can be best categorized within configural latent properties of the DM patterns construct. Table 5 provides a complete overview of the different within-level issues that were discussed above.

Table 5.

DBC Contextual Constructs: Emergence, Levels, Function, and Unit Properties

	Collective Construct	**Emergence Direction**	**Level of Origin/ Current Level**	**Function of Construct**	**Property of Construct Unit**
Contextual Attributes	Collectivism (Hofstede, 1980)	Top-down Indirect	National/ National	The higher shared cultural value that allows for formation of the underlying DM patterns and behavior.	Shared
Perceptual Attributes	Politicality (Dean & Sharfman, 1993, 1996; Marzano, 2007; Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988)	Bottom-up Compilation Emergence	Organization/ Collaboration	The extent of equal distribution of power amongst the stakeholders of the DBC domain.	Latent Configural
	Rationality (Dean & Sharfman, 1996; Bourgeois & Eisenhardt, 1988; Eisenhardt, 1989; Papadakis et al., 1998; Smith, Gannon, Grimm, & Mitchell, 1988; Mueller, Mone, & Barker, 2000)	Bottom-up Compilation Emergence	Organization/ Collaboration	The extent of internal and/or external information collection and analysis behavior of stakeholders participating in the DBC.	Latent Configural
	Flexibility (Nutt, 1993; Sharfman & Dean, 1997; Anand & Khanna, 2000; Ford & Gioia, 2000)	Bottom-up Compilation Emergence	Organization/ Collaboration	The extent of openness of the stakeholders in generation of new ideas.	Latent Configural
	Conflict (Das & Teng, 2000; Parkhe, 1991 ; Park & Ungson, 1997; Alper, Tjosvold, & Law, 2000; Dymsza, 1988; Kogut, 1988; Bucklin & Sengupta, 1993t	Bottom-up Compilation Emergence	Organization/ Collaboration	The extent of discrepancy amongst stakeholders' perceptions and actions.	Latent Configural
	Speed Bierly & Chakrabarti, 1996; Baum & Wally, 2003; Bourgeois, 1985)	Bottom-up Compilation Emergence	Organization/ Collaboration	The extent of timely and fast reaction of stakeholders towards decisions.	Latent Configural

After discussing the different within-level components regarding the theory levels, the next issue is to specify the levels of measurement and analysis. Rousseau (1985) points out that in developing multilevel theories there needs to exist congruency between the theory, measurement, and statistical analysis levels to avoid committing a "fallacy of the wrong level" (Klein et al., 1994, p. 198).

Respectively, the level of measurement can be defined as "the level of the entities from which data [will be] derived" (Hitt et al., 2007, p. 1389). This level, however, describes the actual source of the data- and "the limit to which data are directly attached" (Rousseau, 1985, p. 4).

In defining the level of measurement Kozlowski and Klein (2000) suggest to determine the level of measurement based on the type of unit-level construct.

As discussed above, the theoretical level of the DBC theory is the inter-organizational/collaboration level and for the purpose of this research it is posited that regarding the different properties of the stakeholders' cultural components there is agreement amongst parties about their shared cultural components.

Nonetheless, there has been some debate in the literature about whether variability between units is necessary if there is agreement within units (e.g., George & James, 1993, Yammarino & Markham, 1992). George and James (1993) for instance, have argued that shared perceptions within a group indicate that a shared construct exists. However, there might not be substantial variability, e.g., all of the collaborating stakeholders have the same perceptions of their shared values, decision-making patterns and collective decision-making behavior. However for referent shift models and consensus models the necessary issue is the agreement (Fischer, 2008). Nonetheless, due to the lack of

variability, this issue might impose limitations on the utility of the shared constructs for multilevel models.

However, since for the practical purposes, reliable mean differences would be necessary for multilevel modeling, it is important to consider the variability between units to yield further informative results.

For the purpose of future measurement of the DBC theory since the theory and sampling strategies have to be aligned (Klein et al., 1994; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000), the following propositions are suggested for the sampling and measurement issues. Respectively, for the measurement of the unit properties it is proposed that regarding the shared value, decision-making patterns as configural constructs of DBC, the data should be assessed at the level of origin. That is, in order to assess that the predicted shared properties are in fact shared amongst all the collaborating stakeholders (since it might be possible that the originality of the collaborating partners might not be the same) the data to measure this property should be determined at the individual level, and its sharedness or distinctiveness within the unit should be evaluated.

Regarding the descriptive and latent configural constructs Kozlowski and Klein (2000) suggest that the descriptive configural constructs can be better measured through objective methods and latent configural constructs can be better measured through subjective methods.

According to this discussion, due to the perceptional nature of DBC constructs, they belong to the latent configural constructs' category and, hence, their measurement should be done subjectively through direct or indirect perception surveys that assess the collaboration managers' perspectives of the long-term DBC outcomes, that means, the

extent to which DBC managers believe that their company has achieved its stated objectives (Geringer & Hebert, 1991; Dyer et al., 2001).

The final point regarding the within-level issues deals with the level of statistical analysis, which like the measurement level is proposed for future analysis of the current theory.

The level of statistical analysis, however, describes the "treatment of the data during statistical procedures" (Klein et al, 1994, p. 198). Hitt et al., (2007) indicate that the level of analysis deals with the testing of the hypotheses, and it "should be aligned with the level of theory for the constructs involved" (p. 1389). Respectively, for the purpose of this research it is suggested that the statistical analysis level should be placed at the inter-organizational/collaboration level. Figure 13 provides a schematic view of the within-level components of the multilevel theory of DBC.

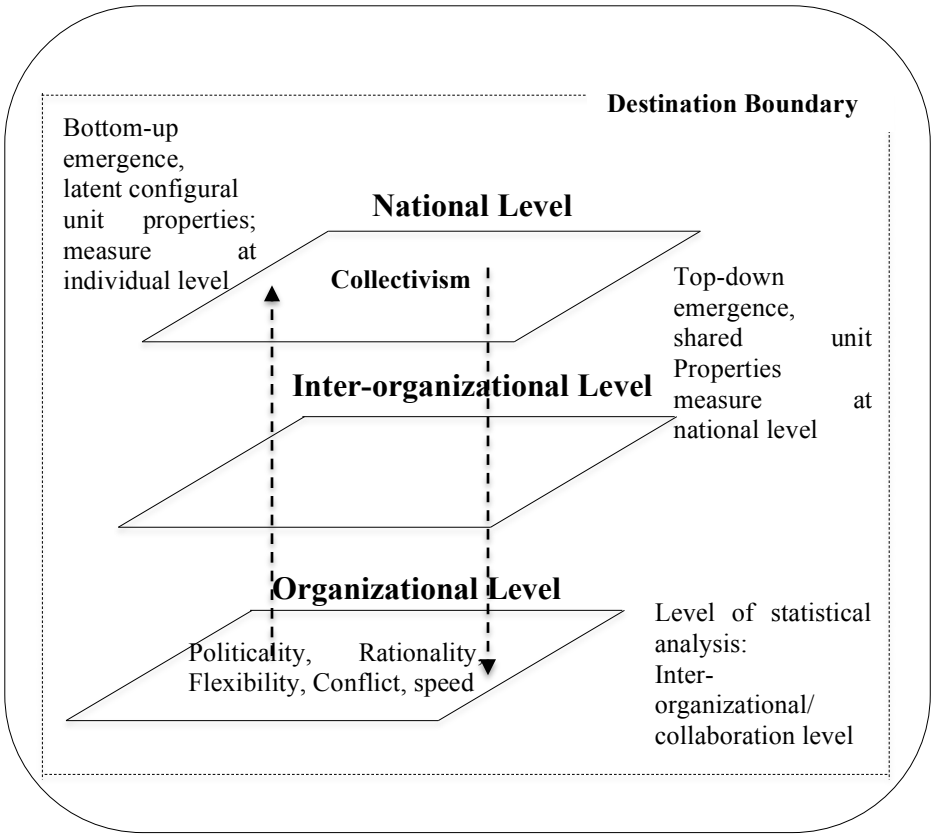

Figure 13. The Within-Level Components of the Multilevel Theory of DBC

4.2.5 Between-Level Components

The final piece of the multilevel theory development process relates to the between-level components of the multilevel theory of the DBC or the laws of interaction. "The laws of interaction describe the interaction amongst the units of the theory...[and] make explicit and specific the manner in which the units of the theory interact with one another" (Lynham, 2002, p. 249).

In specifying between-level components of the multilevel theory of DBC, the theorist must address four issues: (1) specifying how the six identified contextual constructs and DBC for organizations in the socio-cultural context of a destination (the theoretical phenomenon of interest) are linked at different levels of the theory (Kozlowski

& Klein, 2000), (2) articulating the structure of the construct at each level (Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999), (3) specifying the functional relationship among levels and function of the constructs to understand the interaction between the six constructs and three levels (Fisher, 2000), and (4) identifying sources of variability amongst the three levels of the developing theory by focusing on the level of the theory to determine where to look for sources of variability (Fisher, 2000). Each of these components will be addressed in the following section.

The first between-level consideration involves specifying the function of each construct and the way each of them are connected to the theoretical phenomenon of interest at the three levels of the developing theory (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). By examining this linkage, the effect of the constructs on the endogenous construct of DBC outcomes will become clearer (Figure 14).

With the function in mind, the first five collective constructs i.e. politicality, rationality, flexibility, conflict and speed are closely related and the resulting linkages between each of these constructs and DBC for an individual organization in the context of a tourism destination will be discussed in Section (4.3). Taking into account the definition of DBC, namely the collective DM behavioral processes amongst autonomous stakeholders of the tourism domain, and the level of origin for each of these constructs (the organizational level), the linkage between these five constructs and DBC becomes apparent. In other words these constructs, originating at the organizational level, primarily impact the organizational outcomes of DB The inter-organizational level linkage for each construct results from the interaction of collective stakeholders, which might in turn support, motivate, or enhance any of these constructs. Those inter-

organizational level interactions might also have the opposite effect and result in lack of support, motivation, or enhancement for destination branding development and success. Although the linkages between the national level and these constructs are not always evident, the success of DBC efforts at the national level might depend on individual organizations taking responsibility for their own performance, and utilizing mechanisms for leveraging their collective outcomes. When individual organizations fulfill the expectations mentioned above, the DBC development is enhanced at the national level and in so doing, the linkages between these constructs and DBC at the national level will be specified.

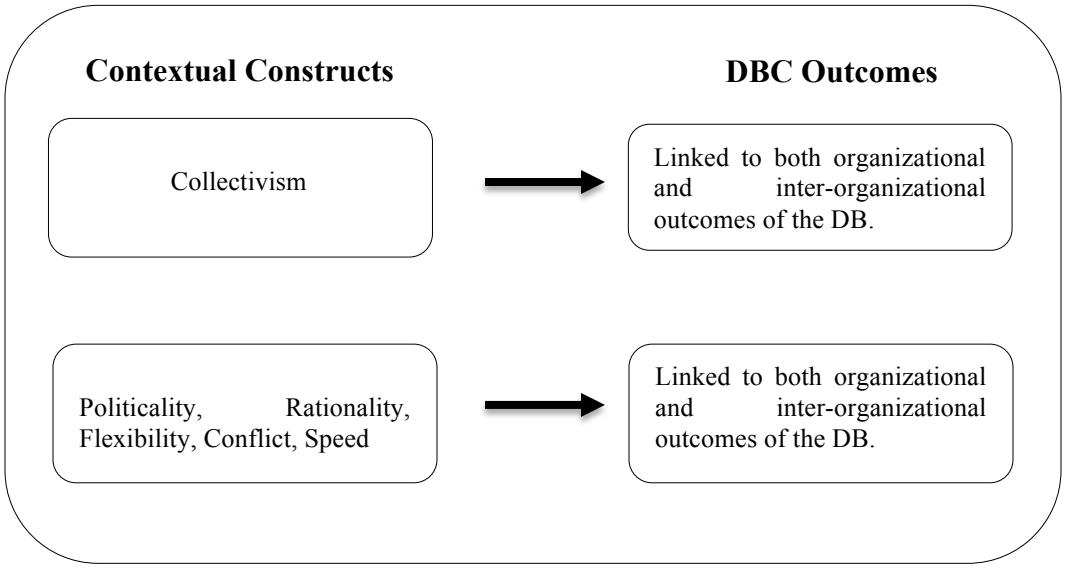

Figure 14. Between-Levels: Constructs' Function and Linkage with Endogenous Construct

Collectivism, as the last collective construct that reflects the contextual level of the DBC theory, while originating from the national level, is linked to DB at the organizational and respectively inter-organizational level. Whether recognized by the

organizations, organizational DM is linked to the phenomenon of DBC at this level because it impacts both organizational and inter-organizational outcomes. With regard to the linkage between organizational DM patterns and DB at the inter-organizational level, the reality of collective DMs might be most apparent during these interactions. The resulting impact of an organization becoming aware of its DM behaviors as determined by the inter-organizational practices, whether at the organizational or inter-organizational level, might have an effect at each theoretical level.

Nonetheless, the functional relationship between levels, while variable in different destinations, is established as a hierarchy. Individual organizations, which compose the organizational level, are grouped together into dyads, triads, and groups at the inter-organizational level. The individual organization's DM outcomes of each stakeholder while important, has additional meaning when in the collaboration context and ultimately impacts the destination at the highest level i.e. the national level. The national level function focuses on achieving the national mission and goals of branding the destination and is highly dependent on the DM outcomes of both organizations and collaborations.

After specifying the function of the constructs and their linkages with the outcome construct, the theorist now turns to the next between-level consideration i.e. identifying commonalities of each construct across levels to articulate the structure of the construct at each level.

The purpose of describing the structure of each of the six DBC contextual constructs at each level is to add to the overall understanding of each construct. In so doing, the unique process and structure of each construct can be better understood. As Morgeson and Hofmann (1999) observe, "collectives are open interaction systems, where actions

and reactions determine the structure of the system" (p. 252). Furthermore, Morgeson and Hofmann (1999) acknowledge that the patterning of actions is a type of collective structures that can form the basis for emergence of "organizational memory" (p. 252). As a consequence, Morgeson and Hofmann (1999) define the structure of collectives as " a series of on goings, events, and event cycles between the component parts (e.g. stakeholders)"(p. 252).

All in all, according to this discussion and based on the discussion made in Section (2.8), three of the identified collective constructs were similar in structure and hence were combined in the explanation of the structure at each level. The politicality and conflict constructs, accordingly, were categorized within one construct and rationality, flexibility, and speed constructs within another.

Accordingly, the structure of collectivism at the national level sets the macro, abstract values and precedents for mental patterns that direct the future actions. The same structure at the collaboration level can contribute to further commitment and trust towards collective actions. Finally the structure of the collectivism at the organizational level reinforces guidelines and patterns for top managers' decision-making behavior.

After discussing the structure of collectivism at different national, collaboration, and organizational level the next construct that needs to be discussed is the politicality and conflict construct, that due to their shared structures are categorized within the same construct. The structure of politicality and conflict at national level describes the DM patterns that impede a destination from achieving its collaborative and competitive goals. Meanwhile, at the collaboration level, this structure debilitates the development of collective actions and equal sharing of mindsets and capability building. Finally at the

organizational level the structure of politicality and conflict sets destructive behavioral patterns that contribute to lower organizational performance.

The last issue regarding the constructs' structure includes the rationality, flexibility and speed constructs. When it comes to the national level the structure of these three constructs facilitates the achievement of the collaborative and competitive goals. At the collaboration level, however, the structure of these constructs contributes to timely, change-oriented, and collective actions that augment the performance of collaboration; and finally, at the organizational level, the structure of the three constructs of rationality, flexibility and speed allows for emergence of innovative and constructive DM behaviors that will augment the level of performance at organizations. The structure of the last construct, however, describes the individual top managers' or CEOs' mental patterns that act as guiding principles for the selection of specific dynamic decision-making strategies (Guess, 2004). Figure 15 provides a brief summary of the constructs' structure at each theoretical level.

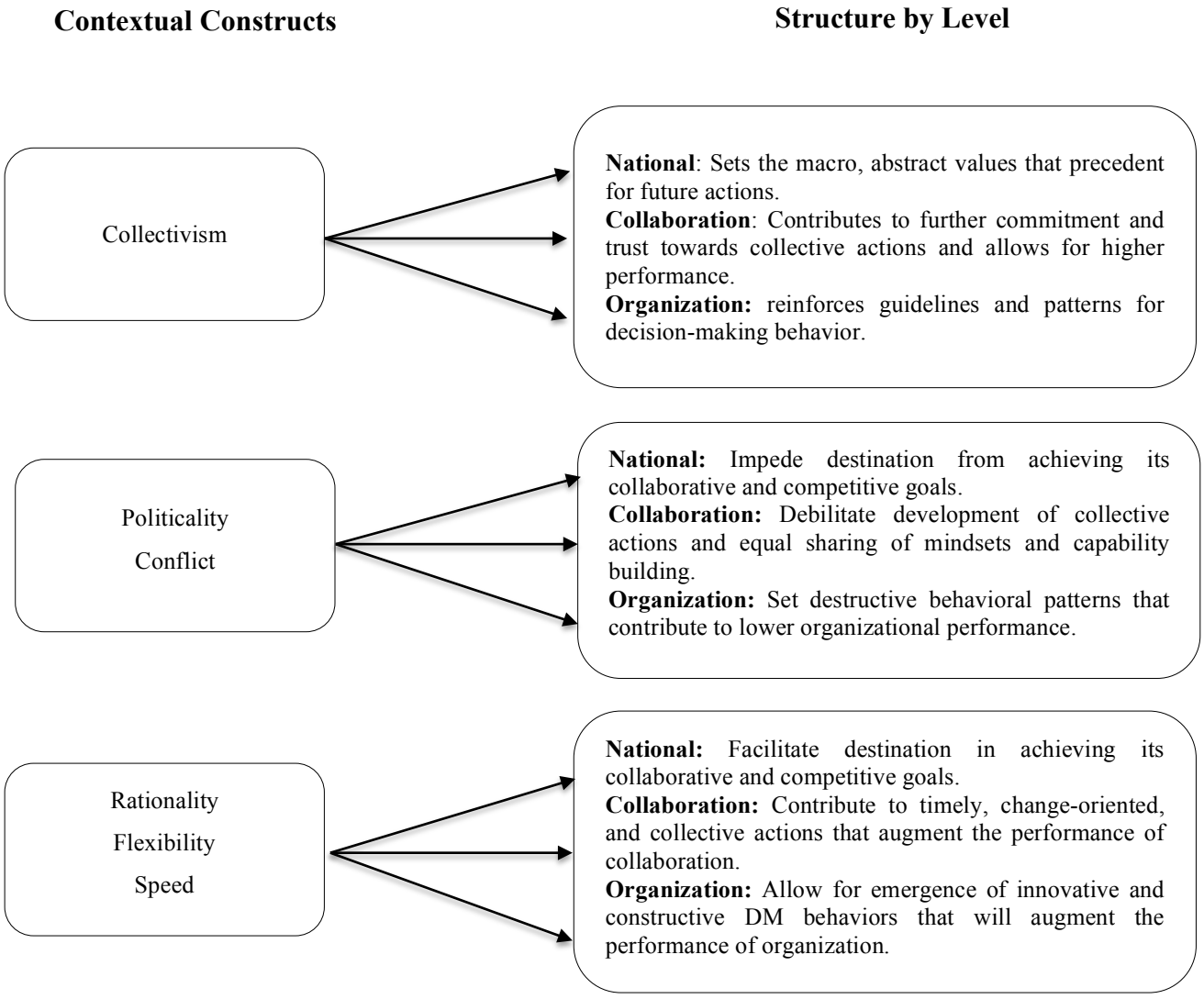

Figure 15. Between Levels: Construct Structure at Each Theoretical Level

The last between-level consideration requires identifying sources of variability (Figure 16) in the developing theory by focusing on the level of the theory (Fisher, 2000). Since the level of the multilevel theory of DBC is considered to be the inter-organizational level, the sources of variability can naturally be posited as individual organizations. Nonetheless, although variability might occur between the organizations, the origin of the variability is the individual organization. Respectively, the factors that

might lead to variability include the decision-making patterns (i.e. the politicality, rationality, flexibility, conflict, and speed) that are distinct from organization to organization. Each of the four between-level considerations addressed above adds to the understanding of the within-levels of the DBC multilevel theory.

After specifying all the components of the multilevel theory building in this research, the next section will, however, provide further insights towards DBC theory specification and operationalization.

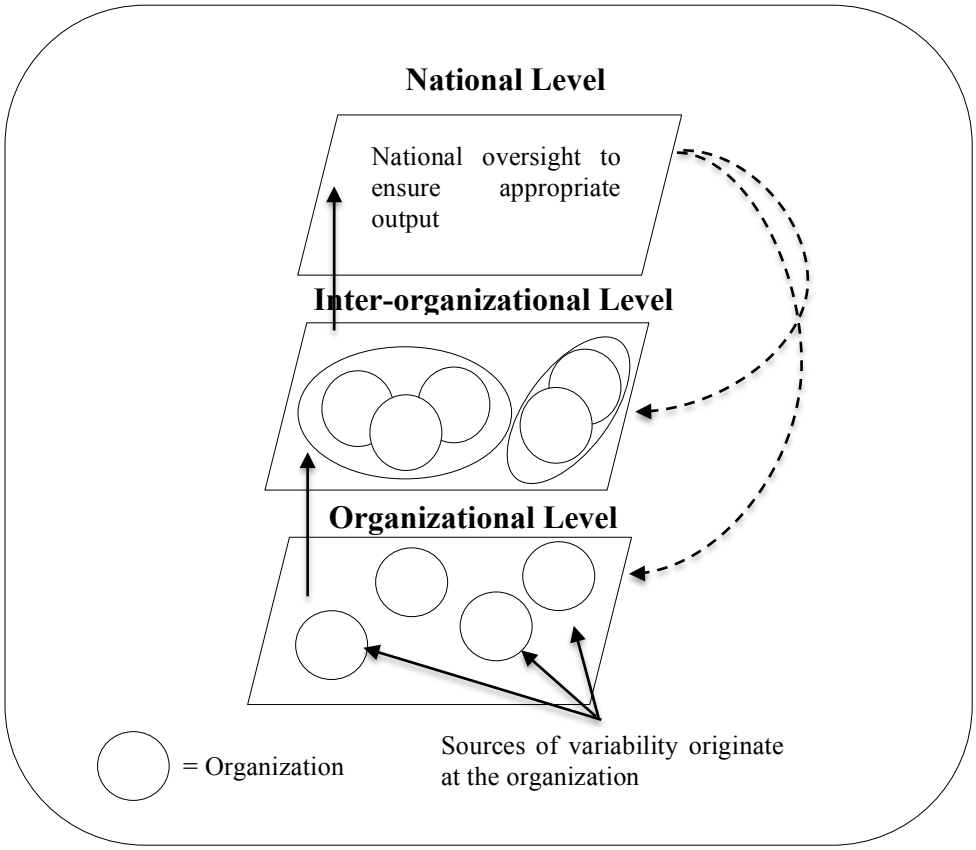

Figure 16. Between Levels: The Sources of Variability

4.3 The Attributes of DBC Theory Operationalization and Specification

Having accomplished the goal of this research in developing a multilevel theory of DBC, this section intends to provide further remarks regarding the operationalization and testing of the DBC theory. As a result, the purpose of specification and operationalization in this research is to ready the resulting theory for measurement, analysis, and refinement, which will be left for the future research.

In specifying the operationalization attributes of a multilevel theory two steps should be taken into consideration: (1) specifying the propositions of the theory, and (2) ensuring the appropriate operationalization by specifying whether the researcher is assessing the constructs structure or function (Upton, 2006; Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999).

However, although assessing both function and structure are important to appropriate operationalization of the multilevel theory, the specification of assessment details is of further importance to this task. That means, mere focusing on the construct's function "may result in loss of some descriptive richness that would be gained by considering the construct's structure" and sole focusing on construct's structure "often entails the loss of generalizability across levels" (Morgeson & Hofmann, 2000, p. 262).

To further elaborate this issue, details about the resulting insights from the two steps to specification and operationalization will follow.

In specifying the theory propositions, this research falls back on the work of Dubin (1978) that is widely recognized due to its positivistic approach towards quantitative measurement and analysis of the resulting multilevel theories.

Nonetheless, since measurement, analysis, and refinement of the DBC theory is a stage that should be conducted in future research and due to the interpretive nature of this research's leading paradigm that might be interpreted differently by other researchers in future, the researcher conducting this study intends not to limit the future refinements of the DBC theory to quantitative measures or a positivistic framework. Therefore, a finite number of propositions are provided in the following section. Defined as "theoretical assertions in need of research evaluation" (Kozlowski, et al., 2000, p. 161), research propositions can assist the future researchers to better analyze and refine the multilevel theory of DBC created in this research.

However, a brief overview of the propositions is provided in Table 6. These propositions are intended to lead to the examination of those aspects of the DBC that was discussed throughout this chapter but are not intended to create an exhaustive list of theoretical propositions offered for validation.

4.3.1 Collectivism

Amongst the different national culture studies (Hall, 1959; 1960; Hofstede, 1980; 1991; Trompenaars, 1993) the typology proposed by Hofstede (1980) is one of the most extensively utilized (Alden, Hoyer, & Lee, 1993; Lynn, Zinkhan, & Harris, 1993; Sondergaard, 1994; Roth, 1995; Nakata & Sivakumar, 1996) and validated (Hofstede & Bond, 1984; Ng, Hossain, Ball, Bond, Hayashi, Lim, O'Driscoll, Sinha, Yang, 1982) national culture typologies in a variety of marketing and management contexts.

In his comprehensive study on national culture values, Hofstede (1980) observed that, the higher echelon cultural values affect the behavior patterns of organizations, as a

consequence each society's cultural values will be reflected in the behavior patterns and collective actions of its individuals.

Based on this fact, it can be posited that the national collectivist value of stakeholders at a destination is reflected in the collective decision-making process of the stakeholders who attempt to brand a destination.

Respectively, it can be predicted that in destinations with shared underlying collective value a tight social framework might be shaped in which organizations share a sense of belonging to the collectives. Consequently, since people tend to take care of each other's welfare and harmony, less formalized control is expected to happen in these organizations. Furthermore, in such contexts management is also more willing to motivate teamwork amongst the members of the groups.

In collectivist contexts, subordinates and superiors in organizations consider each other as existentially equal. Decentralization in these organizations is usually accepted as a norm and information flow tends to take a transparent and free form. Consequently, participative decision-making and consultative management style is more dominant in these types of organizations.

As a result, for the purpose of this research it is premised that collectivism as the underlying national value is considered as a shared value amongst the stakeholders who take part in the branding efforts and hence, affects the outcomes of the DBC indirectly through organizational culture DM patterns. Respectively, it is proposed that collectivism on the one hand is negatively related with politicality and conflict DM patterns at organizational and inter-organizational level, and on the other hand is positively related with rationality, flexibility, and speed at the same level.

4.3.2 Politicality

It has been observed (Walter, 2005) that in dynamic environments (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988) such as tourism, politicality can have negative impacts on the process and outcomes of the decision-making (Dean & Sharfman, 1993, 1996).

A review on the literature suggests four main reasons for the negative impact of politicality on collaborative decision-making.

First of all, politicality is against straightforward influence mechanisms e.g. open discussion and sharing of information. It impedes the flow of information and timely implementation of decisions (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988). As a consequence it forces the collaboration managers to engage in a complicated and time-consuming information-gathering loop to obtain the relevant information for an optimum decision, which is particularly relevant in dynamic environments that require timely and accurate information.

Second, politicality alters time and other resources and deviates decision makers' attention from their main collaboration-related responsibilities, leading the stakeholders to focus on their micro organizational interests and power bases, rather than on the opportunities that the collaboration context provides. As a consequence, getting involved in politics is a time-consuming process that might delay the implementation of the decision process (Bourgeois & Eisenhardt, 1988).

Third, political decision-making patterns affect the commitment to a collaborative decision during its early phases and will, respectively, lead to a conscious or unconscious misrepresentation of information and elimination of choices (Narayanan & Fahey, 1982);

since information, in this way, is only in the hand of the ones who have the power; As a consequence, this mechanism does not allow other mindsets to appear.

Finally and most relevant to collaborative decision making, whereas effective decisions must be based on both organizational and collaborative goals, political decision patterns reflect the self-interests of certain stakeholders, groups, or one collaboration partner only. Therefore, making it less likely for the decision outcomes to meet the different organizational and collaborative interests of all the participating stakeholders (Dean & Sharfman, 1996).

As Drory and Romm (1990) point out, organizational politics should not be restricted to the action of individuals alone. Organizational groups within one collective might behave in a political manner based on some mutual consensus. However, the negative implications of politicality at the organizational level are likely to increase at the collaboration level, where there are even more conflict of interests and preferences between partners (Hamel, 1991). Decision-making politicality, further, creates severe obstacles for communication within and between collaborating partners and by that restricts the range of alternatives needed to be considered (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988). Additionally, Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988) found that due to the lack of information flow and managers' attempts to disguise their intentions, decision makers engaged in politics are often imprecise in perceiving each others' opinions. As a consequence a poor communication exists amongst them, which, per se, limits their ability to form desired coalitions and effective collaborations with other colleagues. Nonetheless, this is particularly destructive for those collaborating parties who often do

not share a common work history and, therefore, face a knowledge asymmetry concerning each others' motives and intentions.

All in all, the opportunistic seek of individual benefits at the organizational level will be even more destructive for collaboration performance when it is confronted with politicality at the collaboration level. Under these circumstances, it will no longer be possible to reach a common agreement on collaborative goals and means. Hence, collaborative decision-making will become an arena of conflicting political interests at the organizational level and collaboration level, and the collaboration will lose its ability to function. Only a cohesive and unified position within the organization that is free of politicality will be able to alleviate the negative influence of high politicality at the collaboration level. Respectively, it can be proposed that politicality at the organizational and inter-organizational levels can be negatively related to the outcomes of the DBC at both of these two levels.

4.3.3 Rationality

Studies on rationality show conflicting results regarding the impact of these patterns on decision-making behavior and outcome effectiveness.

On the one hand, there is a growing empirical support for the idea that managers in dynamic environments accelerate their cognitive processing by using the DM patterns that encourage more information seeking from external environment, considering more alternatives, and seeking greater amounts of advice. Additionally, comprehensive decision makers are apparently more effective in their assessment of which changes should be ignored as transient and which should be addressed (Glick, Miller, & Huber, 1993). Other authors have also found empirical support for the positive relationship

between high information investigation and decision effectiveness (Dean & Sharfman, 1996), creativity in managerial decisions (Ford & Gioia, 2000), organizational performance (Papadakis et al., 1998; Smith, et al., 1988; Mueller et al., 2000), and organizational effectiveness (Jones, Jacobs, & van't Spijker, 1992). Particularly, this view suggests that, in the dynamic and turbulent environments, effective collaboration managers deal with uncertainty and complexity by structuring it, guided by a thorough, analytic process (cf. Bourgeois & Eisenhardt, 1988). A systematic and comprehensive search process will be far-reaching and unbiased by previous experiences and habits, which might be misleading in the novel context of a collaborative relationship. Later studies, based on the degree of environmental stability, have further confirmed the positive relationship between information collection and DM performance. However, in contrast to the first body of research, these studies have supported a positive relationship between information processing and DM performance in dynamic environments (Bourgeois & Eisenhardt, 1988; Eisenhardt, 1989; Glick et al., 1993; Goll & Rasheed, 1997; Judge & Miller, 1991; Miller & Friesen, 1983; Priem et al., 1995). In contrast to incrementalism, a comprehensive search for strategic alternatives involves the generation of options with major variation to the existing strategy (Jones et al., 1992; Walter, 2005) and thus enhances creativity (Ford & Gioia, 2000). The resulting DM patterns generated by perceptions towards rationality, can not only reconcile collaborating organizations with their environmental realities, but also align them with the idiosyncrasies of their collaborative partners (Walter, 2055).

Nonetheless, DM patterns which are based on high amount of information collection from external environment will generate alternative or fallback options in case

the chosen option unexpectedly proves to be impossible or ineffective. However, managers facing the challenges of a dynamic environment are forced to undertake limited search and develop solutions quickly (Li & Simerly, 1998).

As a result, the second body of research argues that, since the necessary data are not available, cause-and-effect relationships are not obvious, and the future is not predictable, that a rational DM pattern in a dynamic or uncertain environment is doomed to failure (Walter, 2005). Fredrickson and his colleagues (Fredrickson, 1984; Fredrickson & Iaquinto, 1989; Fredrickson & Mitchell, 1984) have argued that at the organizational level, there is a negative relationship between information collection and organizational performance in a dynamic environment. According to this approach, high complexity in the environment might lead to cognitively simplified behaviors such as selective perception, heuristics and biases, and the use of analogies (Schwenk, 1984). Rational DM patterns, in this sense, are doomed to failure in a dynamic or uncertain environment, since the necessary data might not be available, cause-and-effect relationships might not be obvious, and hence, the future might not be predictable. As a result, it has been observed that (Walter, 2005) incremental processes are considered more effective in these environments as such processes have greater speed and flexibility.

All in all, the collective and simultaneous analysis of multiple alternatives not only allows quick and intelligent responses to fast-moving environments, but also provides DB managers with options for mutual gains, which are required particularly in the context of DB collective agreements.

In addition to being comprehensive in making individual DB decisions (i.e. analytical comprehensiveness) partners have to integrate these decision-making patterns

into a consistent whole (i.e. integrative comprehensiveness). In order to enable DB managers to "integrate the decisions that compose the overall strategy to insure that they reinforce each other" (Fredrickson & Mitchell, 1984, p. 402), a willingness to collaborate and trust to share information is required from all DB partners if their respective collaboration strategies are to be successfully aligned (Walter, 2005), otherwise, due the existence of an information asymmetry between partners and the lack of knowledge about a partner (Borys & Jemison, 1989; Mohr & Spekman, 1994) the collaboration-level decisions will fail due to the inadequate or even misleading information from the collaborating partner.

As a result, it can be posited that if all of the collaborating partners share decision-making patterns that appreciate the information seeking behavior it will exhibit a positive effect on collaborative DM efforts. Otherwise, the positive effect of high information investigation of some partners will be diminished at the collective DM level (Walter, 2005). Consequently, it can be proposed that, high amount of rationality at organizational and collaboration level are positively related with the outcomes of the DBC at both levels.

4.3.4 Flexibility

There are differing opinions regarding the relationship between flexibility and the effectiveness of the behavior and outcomes of the collaborative decision-making.

The first body of research in this regard argues that, there is a negative relationship between flexibility and the performance of decision-making at organizational level. The followers of this perspective believe that, since such a pattern is open to new ideas, roles, and increased participation to contribute, it might have negative effects that

outweigh its benefits in the specific context of collaboration management (Walter, 2005). Adding that, the permanent re-examination of key assumptions and constant refinement of plans might confront the collaborating partners with the increasingly difficult challenge to align their decisions with these changing guidelines, which in turn would negatively affect the performance of DM actions (Walter, 2005).

Support for a negative influence of flexibility on the performance of DM can also be drawn from the literature on resource accumulation (Dierickx & Cool, 1989), which argues that since inter-organizational collaborations contain decisions on resource aggregation, the permanent reconsideration and evaluation of decisions will be very time consuming and for consistent flow of resources and learning processes. As a consequence, despite the positive effects of flexible decision-making patterns at the organizational level, this body of research argues that, high flexibility in collective decision-making contexts might negatively associate with the performance of the collective DM efforts (Walter, 2005).

The second body of research, on the other hand, argues that there is a positive relationship between idea generation and decision-making outcomes in a variety of areas (Nutt, 1993; Sharfman & Dean, 1997). The followers of this stream of research believe that given the novel and uncertain character of the collective decisions, the open perspective that the flexible patterns provide towards diverse information sources inside and outside the collaboration context, is particularly valuable to encourage the collaborating partners to contribute to the decision-making efforts; because previous experiences of managers might provide only limited guidance for collaborative decision-making in non-routine situations. As a result, the engagement of managers above and

beyond their formal framework is considered as a positive factor in successfully dealing with such situations (Walter, 2005). The researchers in this group further argue that, a high amount of flexibility at collaboration level might further enable collaboration managers to adapt themselves to the transforming situations and also allow them to re-allocate resources to discover new opportunities. Since collaborations are long-term investments that contain changing and evolving goals, and since it is difficult to define the contingencies that arise in collective decision-making in advance (Anand & Khanna, 2000) flexible attitudes can, therefore, have positive impacts on the outcomes of collective efforts, by increasing the creativity in managerial decision-making (Ford & Gioia, 2000) and leading to innovative choices that managers need for adaptation and change (Sharfman & Dean, 1997). Nutt (1993) indicates that, collaboration managers that utilize flexible patterns are more aggressive decision makers and hence can be more immune to the complications arising from uncertain situations. Such managers can, then, encourage greater sharing of information and greater exploration of opportunities to maximize their joint outcomes (Dyer, 1996). As a consequence, this ability of collaboration managers to cycle between formation and transformation can provide a behavioral adaptation mechanism (Bourgeois & Eisenhardt, 1988) for any kind of contingencies arising from one partner's changes. Nonetheless, based on the above arguments it can be posited that, high amount of flexibility at organizational and inter-organizational level are positively related with the outcomes of the DBC at these levels.

4.3.5 Conflict

Das and Teng (2000) observe that, conflict at the collaboration level occurs for two main reasons. First, since collaborating partners have difficulties working together as

they are too different in their organizational cultures and managerial practices (Park & Ungson, 1997), the diversity of collaboration partners creates problems for collective activities (Parkhe, 1991). And second, because collaborating partners' objectives are rarely identical, competing interests between collaborating partners might lead to divergence of goals, disagreements, and opportunistic behaviors.

However, there is a widespread agreement amongst researchers that inter-organizational conflicts affect the performance of collaborations (e.g. Dymsza, 1988; Kogut, 1988). The studies on complex DM situations (Sharfman & Dean, 1997; Reed & DeFillippi, 1990) reveal that, conflict can improve the ability of managers to analyze collaboration issues, engage in deep information assessment and analysis behavior, recognize the different dimensions of an issue and, generate alternative approaches, and by so doing, reduce the ambiguity of their collaborative decisions.

The researchers in this group of study believe that conflict within the organization can help to provide a better understanding of other partner's goals, and behaviors and, respectively, can help to increase commitment to a decision (cf. Amason, 1996). They further believe that the DM patterns that support constructive resolution of conflicts are presumed to lead to the discussion of diverse perspectives and create a culture, where decision-making is based on arguments rather than hierarchy (Burgelman, 1994). As a result, they suggest that constructive resolution of conflicts can contribute to the success of collaborative DM efforts (cf. Fiol, 1994; cf. Sharfman & Dean, 1997), which might increase the performance of collaborations as a whole.

Other studies on inter-organizational DM reveal that conflict at collaboration level can deteriorate trust, increase the potential for opportunistic behavior, and reduce the

likelihood of partners' contributions to the relationship (Cullen, Johnson, & Sakano, 1995). Bucklin & Sengupta (1993), in support of this group of studies found a negative relation between conflict and the effectiveness of collaborative relationships. Moreover, Lyles and Salk (1996) found that conflicts in shared management joint ventures were negatively related to both knowledge acquisition and general assessment of joint venture performance.

The researchers in this group, however, believe that conflict between collaborating partners might lead to perceptual biases and negative images of the partner; an in-group/out-group bias, which is characterized by a tendency to favor one's own firm and a tendency to look unfavorably on the collaboration partner and its managers, procedures, culture, and products. This in turn will have a negative impact on the collaborative DM undertaken by partners and consequently on DM performance. They, furthermore believe that, the inability of collaboration managers to limit the amount of conflict, regardless of its source, represents incompetent leadership that can give rise to power imbalances (Bucklin & Sengupta, 1993).

Based on these discussions it can be inferred that, since the DBC development is a collective action that calls for joint coordination and effective problem solving (e.g. Kale et al., 2000; Mohr & Spekman, 1994) failing to constructively resolve conflicts at the collaboration level is likely to deteriorate the outcomes of the DBC development.

However, for the purpose of this research it can be proposed that depending on the competitive or cooperative perception of the decision makers (Alper et al., 2000), it is the conflict resolution pattern rather than the conflict itself that can negatively or positively

relate to the outcomes of the DBC process at organizational and inter-organizational level.

4.3.6 Speed

There are three main reasons for the importance of high decision-making speed with respect to collaborative agreements between organizations. First, collaboration managers, like any other executives, learn by making decisions, and if they make few decisions, as slow decision makers tend to do, they learn very little. This, in turn, impedes the development of collaboration capability. Second, the opportunities, which inter-organizational collaborations provide move quickly in uncertain and dynamic environments, and change places a premium on rapid decision making (Walter, 2005). As a consequence, slow decision-making is considered inappropriate in tourism markets, as delay does not yield useful information (Baum & Wally, 2003) for the tourists. Fast decision making, in contrast, might enable organizations to anticipate their competitors' moves and keep pace with the environment, which is one of the major reasons for the formation of collaborative agreements in the first place (Bierly & Chakrabarti, 1996). And third, high decision-making speed can facilitate the early adoption of a partners' core values and capabilities, which in turn might yield valuable organizational learning from collaborations and provide subsequent competitive and collaborative advantages (Baum & Wally, 2003; Bourgeois, 1985), since this positive influence of high decision-making speed on collaboration outcomes is equally effective at both the organization and the collaboration level.

However, since multual interdependencies between collaborating partners requires decision inputs from all partners (cf. Jehn, 1995; Tushman & Nadler, 1978), collaborating

partners generally rely on each other to perform and complete their individual duties as specified by their cooperative agreement. As a consequence, slow decision-making processes in one organization might significantly impede progress in other collaborating partner's decision-making (Walter, 2005). All in all, based on these discussions it can be proposed that, high speed of DM processes at both organizational and inter-organizational level can positively relate to the outcomes of DBC at these two levels.

Table 6 provides a summary of the above-discussed propositions.

Table 6.

The Research Propositions for Future Operationalization of the Multilevel Theory of DBC

Collectivism	Proposition1a: The shared value of collectivism is related with the performance of the destination branding at both organizational and inter-organizational level. Proposition 1b: The shared value of collectivism is negatively related with politicality DM pattern at both organizational and inter-organizational level. Proposition 1c: The shared value of collectivism is positively related with rationality DM pattern at both organizational and inter-organizational level. Proposition 1d: The shared value of collectivism is positively related with flexibility DM pattern at both organizational and inter-organizational level. Proposition 1e: The shared value of collectivism is negatively related with conflict DM pattern at both organizational and inter-organizational level.
Politicality	Proposition 2: The politicality DM pattern of stakeholders at organizational and inter-organizational level is negatively related with the outcomes of the DBC at organizational and inter-organizational level.
Rationality	Proposition 3: High amount of rationality in DM patterns at organizational and inter-organizational level is positively related to the outcomes of the DBC at both organizational and inter-organizational level.
Flexibility	Proposition 4: High amount of flexibility at organizational and inter-organizational level is positively related to the outcomes of the DBC at both organizational and inter-organizational level.
Conflict	Proposition 5: High amount of conflict at organizational and inter-organizational level is negatively associated with the outcomes of the DBC at organizational and inter-organizational level.
Speed	Proposition 6: High speed of DM at organizational and inter-organizational level is positively related to the outcomes of the DBC at organizational and inter-organizational level.

After discussing the propositions for the future research operationalization, in specifying whether to assess the structure or function of the constructs of the theory of DBC, the researcher turns to Morgeson and Hofmann (1999). Based on this knowledge, the researcher proposes that, instead of focusing on a structural analysis of the constructs, the future measurement, analysis, and refinement assess the function of the DBC constructs. Function assessment includes determining whether the intended function of the construct and the actual function of the construct are congruent. The intended outcome of focusing on the function of the contextual constructs, rather than the structure, is that researchers will be better able to explain the impact of the contextual constructs on DBC outcomes by explicating the specific collective constructs' functions.

En masse, the discussion provided in this chapter represents the contextually constructed multilevel theory of DBC, created for the purpose of the current dissertation. However, although not undertaken in this study, the measurement, analysis and refinement of the current theory are of paramount importance to fully accomplish the purposes of this research.

4.4 The Methodological Perspectives in Brief

This chapter was an effort to represent the methodological perspectives towards the contextually constructed multilevel theory of destination branding culture. The methodological perspective employed in this research, drawn on the leading interpretive-culture-oriented paradigm of this research allowed the researcher to conceptualize the destination branding phenomenon in terms of a culture, in its "root metaphor sense", in order to unravel the complex and multilevel nature of this phenomenon.

As a consequence, this chapter started by a review on the multilevel process of theory building. Respectively, the theory components and the levels' components were proposed as the two main elements of the MLTB in this research (Section 4.2). As the first element of the theory component, the contextual constructs and their related units as well as endogenous research construct were discussed in Section (4.2.1). Section (4.2.2), then, provided further insights regarding the level of the DBC theory, accompanied by Section (4.2.3)'s discussions on the DBC theoretical boundary. After discussing the theoretical components Sections (4.2.4) and (4.2.5) discussed the different elements of the DBC theory levels' component i.e. within-level components (Section 4.2.4) and between-level components (Section 4.2.5). After completing the process of DBC CCMLTB in this research, this chapter ended up with the discussion of the attributes of DBC theory needed for operationalization and specification in future research, and respectively proposed some propositions for future testing of the emergent CCMLT of DBC (Section 4.3).

Chapter 5 will, nevertheless, provide the conclusions drawn from the process of research and theory building, and discuss the outcomes and contributions made by this study.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

> You are an explorer, and you represent our species, and the greatest good you can do is to bring back a new idea, because our world is endangered by the absence of good ideas. Our world is in crisis because of the absence of consciousness.
>
> Terence McKenna

5.1 Introduction

As discussed in Section (1.1), the multifold purposes of this dissertation were (1) to address the shortcoming of multilevel and complex thinking perspective in the tourism domain (Pritchard & Morgan, 2007; Jamal & Everett, 2007), and to develop an improved approach towards understanding the complex nature of destination branding beyond conventional perspectives, (2) to develop a self-owned theory for the tourism domain in order to fill in the gap of theory building found in the tourism studies (Jafari & Ritchie, 1981), (3) to contribute to meaningful convergence of the culture, collaboration and strategic decision-making theories into an integrated multilevel theory of destination branding collaborative decision-making, (4) and to facilitate cross-disciplinary communication that allows for exchange of diverse point-of-views that otherwise segments scholars into "enemy" camps within disciplines that share common interests (Upton, 2006; Wilhelms et al., 2009). In so doing, this research has attempted to lead into a more profound understanding of complex-interrelated phenomena (Morin, 1999).

The novel insight of this research, hence, enabled the researcher to provide several lenses to view the different aspects of the research phenomenon within its underlying context, provided during the whole process of research. In so doing, the research perspective provided a solid mechanism to make a deeper sense of the connection between the previous research and the researchers view points that allowed for gradual manifestation and development of the different aspects and dimensions of the research phenomenon of interest.

Accordingly, Chapter 1 and 2 of this research consisted of the conceptual components used to inform this study. The Third Chapter consisted of the underlying

philosophical lenses that provided the research paradigm, which led into the description of the multilevel theory building strategy and process in this research. Later on, through analysis of theory building processes (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999; Fisher, 2000) (Section 3.3) and by means of the interpretive lenses that the culture theory provided (Section 3.4) a novel and improved methodological perspective towards development of the DBC theory i.e. CCMLT was developed in Chapter 4, and in so doing, the four purposes of this research study were accomplished during these four research journey capitals.

However, whether the primary purpose outlined in the introduction or one of the secondary purposes is seen as most relevant, will depend largely on the reader and scholars from the field of tourism. To the author's knowledge, all of the four purposes have relevance although the contribution to the advancement of theory building through an improved CCMLTB approach seems to hold the most promise.

The remainder of this chapter, nevertheless, will be a discussion of how the four purposes mentioned above were accomplished, what were the contributions for theory and practitioners, and further recommendations for future research including advancing theory building and validating the resulting contextually-constructed multilevel theory of destination branding culture.

5.2 Research Conclusions and Remarks

5.2.1 Research Issue 1: Conclusion and Remarks: Conceptual Perspective

The purpose of the first research issue in this research was to provide a novel and improved understanding of the notion of complexity and the way it can be defined to unravel the multilevel nature of collaborative decision-makings within the context of destination branding. Thereupon, research issue 1 contained three sub-issues in it to allow for better investigation of the different aspects of the phenomenon of interest. The three sub-issues, then unfolded (1) the nature of complexity in destination branding, (2) the role of stakeholders' culture as a root metaphor in conceptualization of DBC, and (3) the way culture, collaboration and strategic decision-making were related in the destination branding context. These results will be discussed below.

5.2.1.1 Conceptualization of destination branding as a complex phenomenon

As discussed in Section (2.2), the complexity caused by the tourism product derives from its scattered and multidimensional nature that is composed of different tangible and nontangible aspects of the tourism phenomenon, which are produced and consumed within a place out of tourists' access. However, this multi-attribute nature of the tourism product can only be developed through collective marketing and branding efforts of several stakeholders, including the community as the host and tourists as guests together with other public and private stakeholders, who are recognized by DMOs to develop different tourism products and services.

All in all, despite the recognition of destination branding as a complex phenomenon in previous research (Currall & Inkpen, 2002; Zaheer et al., 1998; Drazin, 1999; Drazin & Schoonhoven, 1996; Gersick, 1991), to the author's knowledge to date no study in the tourism domain has provided a multilevel approach towards the study of destination branding phenomenon as a complex cultural system which can connect the macro and micro divide of the DB phenomenon.

As a consequence, drawn on Morin (1999), Pondy and Mitroff (1979) and other authors who call for development of a complex thinking system towards study of multilevel phenomena, the novel approach towards study of complex phenomenon of destination branding in this research, allows for overcoming the paradox of complexity by bonding the unique decision-making patterns of stakeholders, to the shared contextual values of the tourism destinations, within an integrated and collective social action; an original contribution that allows for the identification of complexity (Waldrop, 1994; Walby, 2006; Thrift, 1999; Urry, 2003; Urry, 2005; Taylor, 2003; Rycroft & Kash, 1999; Rescher, 1998) in the tourism domain from a novel perspective. By so doing, the Research Issue 1 fulfills the aim of the Conceptual phase of this research in specifying the nature of phenomenon of interest within this research.

Figure 17 depicts the concept of destination branding in form of a lever, which is composed of three components i.e. the tourism destination, the tourism stakeholders' cultural composition, and the DMOs. The destination branding lever, then, represents that in order to raise the complex tourism destination as the load component of the destination branding lever, there is a need for the DMOs, as the fulcrum component, to act as a coordinator amongst the destination stakeholders, whose hybrid cultural composition is

the effort component needed to develop the tourism destination brand. Furthermore, Figure 17 contains the components of complexity of both tourism destination product and tourism stakeholders' culture to provide a new perspective towards the complexity dimensions in the destination branding context.

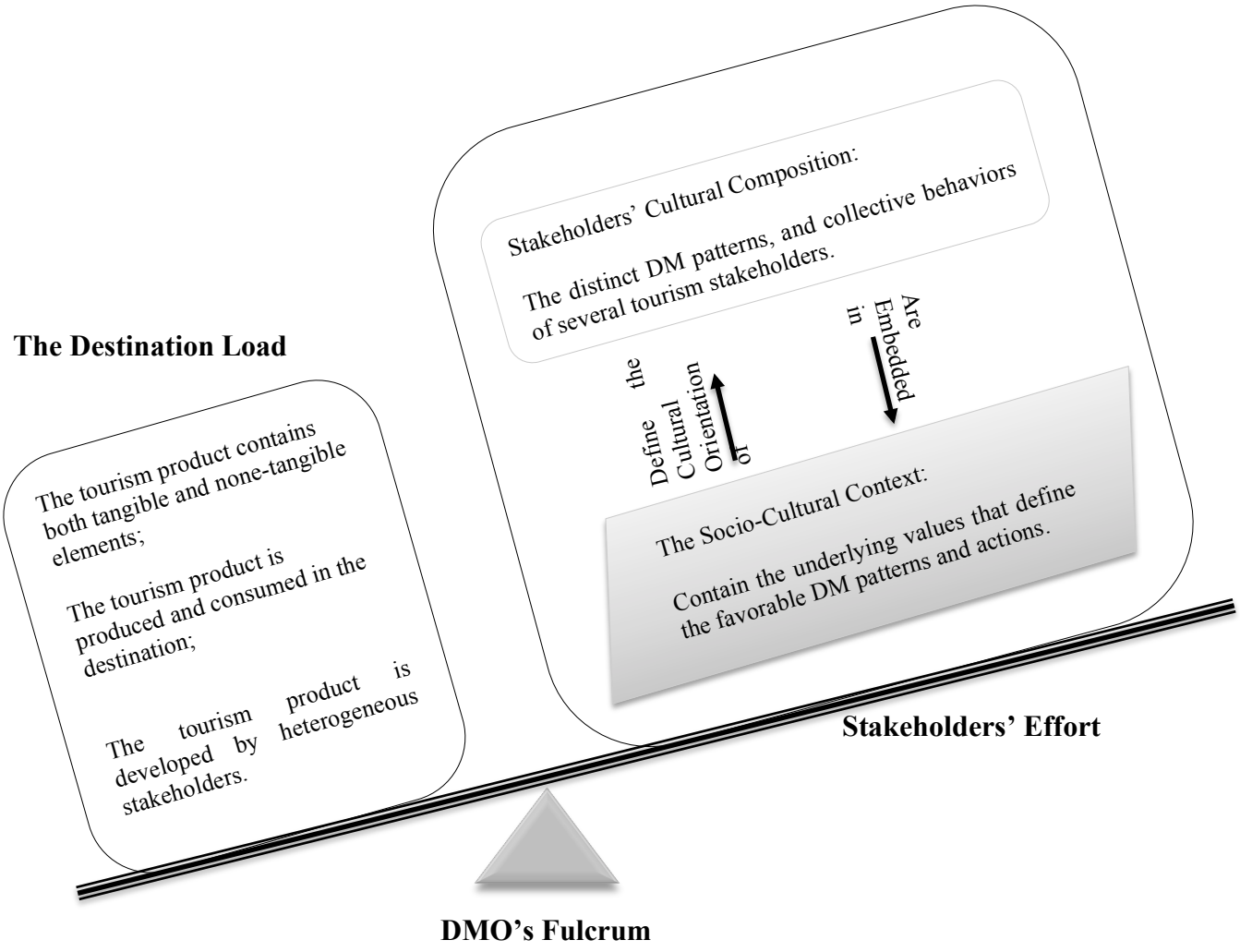

Figure 17. The Lever of Destination Brand Development

5.2.1.2 Conceptualization of destination branding as a culture

As mentioned in Section (1.1) societies as well as human beings are multidimensional and complex entities, that can be best understood in relation to their nature as a whole and their components and the interconnections between these two domains, together with the context within which they are located (Morin, 1999). Respectively, it was discussed that authors such as Pondy and Mitroff (1979) call for a paradigm shift from single level and linear thinking that was proved to underperform in the tourism domain studies (Pritchard & Morgan, 2007; Jamal & Everett, 2007 Framke, 2001; Pike, 2004; Jenkins & Hall, 1997), towards complex and multi-brain thinking system (Section 2.2). It was then argued that culture can provide an appropriate mechanism for development of a complex and multilevel thinking model (Schroeder, 2009; Schroeder & Salzer-Mörling, 2006; Hatch & Schultz, 1997; Pondy & Mitroff, 1979) that can allow for development of the destination brands as global representational systems (Schroeder, 2009). Finally, it was proposed that this research in line with Smircich's (1980) "root metaphor" paradigm will conceptualize the destination branding phenomenon as a culture, in order to recognize the underlying dimensions that allow for the creation of meanings and emergence of this phenomenon (Section 3.4).

As a consequence, the cultural perspective towards conceptualization of destination branding, proposed in this research, is the second distinct contribution of this research that allows for understanding of the nature of destination branding phenomenon, as a collective decision-making behavior that is embedded within the higher values and is driven by the decision-making patterns of the stakeholders who conduct it. This nuance understanding of the different covert and overt components of the destination branding

phenomenon, however, provided another possibility to converge the two theories of collaboration and decision-making for a more comprehensive insight towards the different complementary and integral elements that are needed for the formation and transformation of the destination branding phenomenon.

Nonetheless, this novel point-of-view is not only relevant for the tourism domain theories, but it is also relevant for the theories in the sociology. In particular, while discussing the collaborative decision-making nature of the destination branding phenomenon, it is important to indicate the flexible mechanism that the cultural perspective provides in transferring the invisible layers of the stakeholders' culture into the actual and measurable collective decision-making process of destination branding, as the overt and manageable side of the stakeholders' culture. As a consequence, the strategic management and collaboration literature can both benefit from the outcomes of this research by considering the strategic decision-making implications as an important lever for the success of their organizational as well as collaborative efforts. In this sense, the current study has not only extended the field of organizational strategic decision-making into the new domain of inter-organizational collaborations, but it has also reinforced the notion that behavioral variables of decision are only a part of the whole cultural composition of stakeholders that are embedded within different socio-cultural contexts, effects of which might vary according to different contexts (e.g. Eisenhardt, 1989; Goll & Rasheed, 1997; Judge & Miller, 1991; Priem et al., 1995).

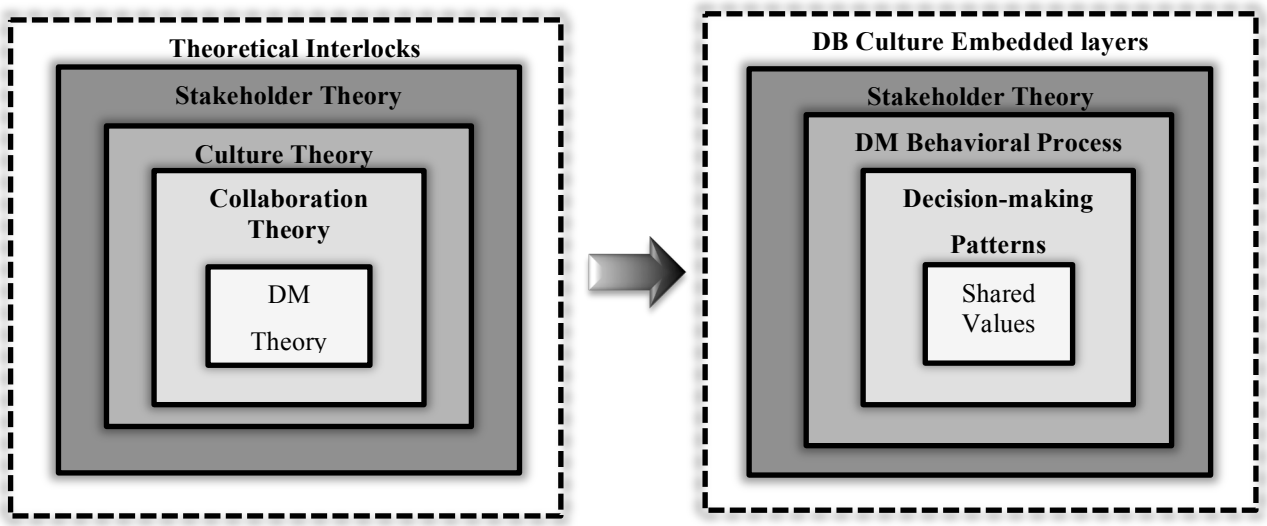

Figure 18. The Theoretical Interlocks and the Embedded Layers of the Destination Branding Theory

The above discussion of Research Issue 1, then, provided four main contributions for the Conceptual phase of CCMLTB, that per se provided a more precise and detailed understanding of the nature of destination branding. The first contribution relates to a new conceptualization of the notion of complexity within the destination branding context. This conceptualization then allowed for the second contribution of this research i.e. conceptualization of destination branding as a culture in its root metaphor sense that contains both overt and covert aspects of stakeholders who are responsible for its development. The conceptualization of destination branding as a culture further allowed this research to converge the theories of collaboration and strategic decision-making as two important components of the culture theory. By so doing, collaborative decision-making behavior of destination branding was described as the overt layer of the stakeholders' culture that manifests their covert shared values and decision-making patterns. The convergence of the culture, collaboration, and strategic decision-making

theories then, allowed for the emergence of the fourth contribution of this research that provides further insights for the sociology theories.

5.2.2 Research Issue 2: Conclusion and Remarks: Philosophical Paradigm

Research Issue 2 aimed to highlight the importance of including the researcher's Philosophical Paradigm as an important element in research development.

As Knight and Cross (2012) acknowledge, the relationship between the research point-of-view and philosophy are of great importance to the conceptual validity of the research, since philosophical assumptions can drive the epistemological framework of research and its whole approach and purpose by determining the direction of research by ending up either as a theory building process, or a theory testing process or a combination of both.

As a consequence, the Research Issue 2 contributed to the research development literature by inclusion of the Philosophical Paradigm as an important aspect that represents the "self-driven" cognitive (Knight & Cross, 2012) dimension of the researcher, who constructs and improves the research point-of-view through her developing "theoretical lens" and "skills" (Trauth, 2001) and knowledge (Janesick, 2000). In so doing, Research Issue 2 was an attempt to contemplate the philosophical issues in the tourism domain acknowledged by Hollinshead (2004) who had called for a "more situationally sympathetic and more contextually pertinent thinking about the issues of being, seeing, experiencing, knowing and becoming" (p. 68).

The adoption of interpretivism as the leading paradigm for this research (Section 3.2) was another contribution of this research, which aimed at overcoming the limitations

of paradigmatic perspectives in tourism studies (Marzano, 2007; Tribe, 2005, 2006) that have prevented tourism from becoming a discipline on its own (Echtner & Jamal, 1997).

The utilization of interpretivism, nonetheless, allowed for discussing the ontology of culture and the reason behind the study of destination as a cultural phenomenon.

As a result, it was argued that although generic theory building methods have their own merits and have served to increase the dialogue about theory building (Lynham, 2002; Dubin, 1978), these methods do little to advance theory building beyond a compressed examination of issues that take into account the influence of various within and between-level components in different contexts, overlooking the widely supported importance of levels' exploration that is needed for complex contexts such as tourism.

This discussion was then followed by the justification of the use of theory-to-research strategy (Reynolds, 1971; Lynham, 2002; Holton & Lowe, 2007) in this research (Section 3.4) and the proposal of the contextually constructed (Knight & Cross, 2012) multilevel theory building model (Upton, 2006; Fischer, 2008; Fisher, 2000; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Morgeson & Hoffman, 1999) that provided a link between the research strategy and the theory building methodology which showed how the selected research strategy and theory building process were consistent with the research question leading this study.

In brief, the contributions of the Second Research Issue for this research were the inclusion of the Philosophical Paradigms as an integral component of the research process to reflect the researchers' underlying perspectives and the adoption of the leading interpretive-culturally-oriented paradigm as an attempt to overcome the limited

positivistic and single level studies in tourism domain (Pritchard & Morgan, 2007; Jamal & Everett, 2007).

5.2.3 Research Issue 3: Conclusion and Remarks: Methodological Perspective: Within-Level Issues

The purpose of the Third Research Issue was to contribute to the Methodological Phase of this research by specifying the issues regarding the within -level components i.e. the level of theory, as well as the pertinent levels of measurement and analysis.

Drawn on Garavan, McGuire, and O'Donnell (2004) who suggest the MLTB research to begin to address levels' issues in order to more fully address individual, group and organizational needs, Research Issue 3 fulfilled this very aspect by predicting the level of the collective constructs, their emergence direction, their level of origin and current level, their function, and finally their unit type (Section 4.2.4). These specifications, then, allowed the researcher to determine the level of measurement of each construct (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000) and provided a consistent theoretical body to avoid the "fallacy of the wrong level" (Klein et al., 1994, p. 198) for the future research operationalization.

As a consequence, while the recognition of destination branding as a behavior that is embedded in the underlying socio-cultural contexts of the stakeholders was a contribution in itself, the exploration of the levels and their within-level relationships was another contribution of this research.

5.2.4 Research Issue 4: Conclusion and Remarks: Methodological Perspective: Between-Level Issues

In line with Research Issue 3, the purpose of the last Research Issue was to contribute to the Methodological phase of this research by providing the complementary issues regarding the interactions between the different levels of the DBC theory and the underlying meanings that these interactions provide for the emerging CCML theory. Respectively, based on the different elements that were gradually developed during the conceptual phase of this research together with the researcher's philosophical lenses Research Issue 4 shed light on the interrelationships between different layers of the DBC as a complex system that provides the meaning to make sense of the whole phenomenon of interest (Section 4.2.5).

Chapter 3 detailed the theory building process aimed for this study and then it was followed by the end result being the contextually-constructed multilevel theory of DBC in Chapter 4 that expanded the notion of culture from an invisible property of stakeholders that, through their connection with the destination branding context, translates into a collective social action and decision-making to address the problems and issues of the destination domain.

As a consequence, based on the discussions made in Sections (2.3, 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6) of this research it is concluded that, the micro perspectives of the stakeholders that stem from their individualistic nature, together with their political DM patterns that limit the information processing, idea generation, and constructive resolution of conflicts would contribute to delayed decision-making behaviors and hence, ineffective outcomes. Thereupon, although there might be examples of success in destinations with stagnant

cultures characterized by individualist contexts which lack collaboration (Marzano, 2007), but the resulting benefits can only represent the interests of those stakeholders who take unilateral actions in order to match their interests by inserting power and influence into the outcomes of the branding efforts in their own favor. As a result, it is proposed that the DM patterns which are in accordance with the underlying shared collectivist values of the stakeholders might contribute to more timely development and implementation of destination branding collective efforts (Blain, 2001; Deslandes, 2003; Im, 2003; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003; Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott, 2002, 2003; Morrison & Anderson, 2002) and consequently the interrelationships between each and all of these components are differently related to the success of the DBC development. However, since the previous single level theories (Gray, 1989; Wood & Gray, 1991) had mainly focused on DB as collaborative process, without considering the underlying contextual factors of the participating stakeholders, this study recognized the paradoxical contextual and organizational cultural elements of the stakeholders' that are relevant for the DB domain in order to understand the mechanisms of the interrelationship amongst these elements to better make sense of the complex nature of the destination branding collaborative decision-making phenomenon.

As a result, an additional contribution of this study towards the building of a multilevel theory of destination branding culture, it is proposed to consider successful destination branding culture development as an emergent characteristic of a destination that represents the shared culture of all of its main actors that stems from their consensus on the shared collectivist value, non-political, flexible, and rational decision-making patterns which facilitate the constructive resolution of conflicts, together with timely

implemented decision-making behavior that are developed based on the commitments of the collaborating partners.

Collaboration theory might, thereupon, benefit from an understanding of the underlying values and decision-making patterns that the stakeholders bring into the collective decision-making context. Furthermore, this study indicates that by understanding the cultural dimensions of the stakeholders, collaboration theory might achieve a better understanding of how a stakeholder might influence the collective decision-making behavior of the destination branding.

The last but not the least contribution of this research, however, was to advance the communication and develop a common shared area of interest for further dialogue between the domains of culture, collaboration, and strategic decision making, which were otherwise considered as distinct domains of research and study. The multilevel contextually-constructed theory of destination branding, developed in this research, hence, was the outgrowth of conjugality amongst these theories, amalgamation of which contributed to creation of a bigger picture that can best portray the characteristics and features of its composing compartments. By so doing, the present study set the ground for developing inter-disciplinary studies that allow the researchers in different disciplines to exchange their perspectives towards multiple aspects and dimensions of their common phenomena of interest to provide a more comprehensive and integrated view towards different “social elephants”.

Table 7 provides a summary of the theoretical contributions of the current research

Table 7.

Summary of the Theoretical Contributions of the Current Dissertation

Part of Research	Domain of Implication	Type of Implication
Conceptual Phase **Methodological Phase**	Implications for Stakeholder Theory Implications for Collaboration Theory	Identification of the Critical Role of Culture in Conceptualizing Destination Branding Culture Identification of the Potential Threat or Opportunity of Stakeholders for the Collaborative Actions
Conceptual Phase **Philosophical Phase** **Methodological Phase**	Implications for DBC Theory	Identification of the Dimensions of Complexity of the Destination Branding Phenomenon Identification of the Effects of the Different Components and Levels of Stakeholders' Culture on Each other and on the Outcomes of Destination Branding Culture phenomenon Identification of the Debilitating or Facilitating Role of Stakeholders' Culture in Destination Branding Contextually Constructed Multi Level Theory of Destination Branding Culture
Conceptual Phase **Methodological Phase**	Implications for Collaboration Theory	Unraveling the Culturally-oriented DM Dimensions of Collaborative Actions
Conceptual Phase **Methodological Phase**	Implications for Strategic Decision-making Theory	DBC DM Patterns: Politicality Rationality Flexibility Conflict Speed
Conceptual Phase **Philosophical Phase** **Methodological Phase**	Implications for Culture Theory	Unfolding the Real World Impacts of the Invisible Aspects of a Culture Unfolding the Complex Nature of a Culture and its Implications for a Collaborative DM Context Connecting the Two Theories of Collaboration and Strategic DM as Important Dimensions of the Culture Theory
Methodological Phase	Implications for Practice	DMOs, Collaboration management, Strategic management, Culture management, Change management
Conceptual Phase **Philosophical Phase** **Methodological Phase**	Implications for Research and Theory Development Methodology	Utilizing the Philosophical lens to Justify the Development of the Theory Building Model Development of the Novel Model of Contextually-Constructed Multilevel methodology of Theory Building

5.3 Managerial Implications for the Tourism DMOs and Practitioners

In addition to its valuable role in propelling ideas that fuel the research, theory should be able to provide a framework for analysis, and facilitate the efficient development of academic field, and its need for the applicability to practical real world problems (Wacker, 1998).

As a result, the implications of the CCML theory of DBC to tourism and tourism practitioners are also important to point out.

Recognition of stakeholders' potential in threatening or contributing to the DB process: The consideration of DB as a phenomenon that consists of several collaborating stakeholders that are embedded in different socio-cultural contexts will enable the destination managers to understand the potentials of these stakeholders in contributing or threatening the destination branding process. Such an insight would, then, allow the destination managers to assess how to incorporate the participative stakeholders who facilitate the process of DB and exclude those stakeholders who seem to be a potential threat to the process of destination branding. The perspectives provided in this research suggest that, in a destination where there is high amount of individualism between stakeholders, the potential of the parties in threatening the destination branding process can be more than a collectivist destination. In such cases, in order to survive within destination branding process, it is critical for destination management organizations to identify and provide the sources of stakeholders' diversity and try to focus on those aspects that can have positive contributions for the destination branding process.

Effective collaboration management: The next significant contribution of this research is for effective management of the strategic decision-making processes as a subgroup of collaboration management (Draulans, deMan, & Volberda, 2003; Kale et al., 2002), by showing that the strategic decision-making patterns of focal organizations have important implications for the success of their inter-organizational collaborative decision-making processes. Not only does this perspective enable the tourism managers to relate their organizational patterns of strategic decision-making into domain of inter-organizational collaborative decision-making actions by associating the decision-making process as the overt side of their culture, but it also enables them to understand the specific effects that different underlying contexts have on the attributes of their collective decision-making process (e.g. Baum & Wally, 2003; Eisenhardt, 1989; Goll & Rasheed, 1997; Judge & Miller, 1991; Priem et al., 1995; Walter, 2005).

Creating collaborative advantage through cultural intelligence: The results of this study provide insights for the destination as well as other collaboration managers to develop a unique competitive advantage (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Dierickx & Cool, 1989; Dyer & Singh, 1998; Galaskiewicz & Zaheer, 1999; Lado & Wilson, 1994; Reed & DeFillippi, 1990) and collaborative advantage (Huxham, 1996) by building a unique collaborative capability i.e. cultural intelligence capability that is created and developed throughout the collective actions of destination branding culture development (Draulans, 2003; Kale et al., 2002). Such a capability can thereupon, be configured to achieve inimitable advantage and superior performance for destinations and other collective entities. Nevertheless, it should be considered that, achieving a cultural intelligence amongst collaborating stakeholders is a very sensible issue that requires high levels of

integration and commitment. As a result, conflicting inter-organizational and cross-cultural issues might impede the relational advantages that such a collaborative capability can provide.

Culture revitalization and change management: The final contribution of this study for the tourism practitioners and managers is in providing insights for their organizational culture revitalization and change, as a conscious process of thinking, acting, interacting, and learning that leads to the organizations' gradual integration and alignment with their external environment (Schein, 1990). The cultural perspective towards destination branding process developed in this study, provides valuable opportunities for organizations to align themselves with their external environments by developing a flexible, dynamic and collaborative culture that allows for continuous organizational and collaborative learning through exchange of resources and knowledge within and between organizations. The findings of this research, hence, suggest that the DB related collective decision-making efforts, if adequately designed, can act as crucial sources for reconciling an organization both with its dynamic external environment as well as with its collaborating partner(s), and therefore enhance its learning capacity needed for cultural revitalization and change.

5.4 The Validity Issues for the Current and Future Research

In addition to the contributions that the current dissertation has provided to the knowledge through an original investigation of new ideas (Perry, 1998), this research study provides suggestions about how results of this study can be validated and operationalized in future to continue to advance theory building efforts in tourism and to

examine the role of this multilevel theory of DBC in culture, collaboration, and strategic decision-making theory convergence.

5.4.1 The Validity Issues Regarding the DBC Theory Building

While the term "validity" has most often been associated with more positivist/deductive research, the concept and necessity of validity is central to all research. It is the characteristic by which research can be judged as valid, reliable, and - where appropriate- generalizable.

Depending upon the nature of research, four possible levels of validity might be established in any research study (Dooley, 2002; Pandit, 1996; Rowley, 2002):

(1) Construct validity, that is established through the correct design and use of data collection tools for the specific concepts being studied. This is particularly important when a researcher chooses to construct additional or secondary data from the primary data (Slater & Atuahene-Gima, 2004), such as the creation of "categories" from existent data used to create new "units of analysis" within the original data;

(2) Internal validity, that is required if the researcher wishes to demonstrate any relationships between parts of the phenomena and is also helpful when replicating a study;

(3) External validity, that is required if a researcher wishes to establish a level of generalizability regarding the findings of the research;

(4) Reliability, that is established by using a credible and consistent line of enquiry and data collection, that is, the use of the same data collection would produce the same results in a similar setting.

In addition to subscribing, where appropriate, to the above types of validity, Knight and Cross (2012) present the argument that, proper consideration of the philosophical assumptions of the research needs to be ensured by a fifth level of validity i.e. (5) conceptual validity, that is achieved when both the constructs of investigation and any philosophical assumptions made there-of are acknowledged and understood in the context of their study.

However, not all levels of validity are achievable, or necessary, for all research types (Dooley, 2002; Rowley, 2002). It is the contention of the DBC however, that conceptual validity and construct validity are absolutely essential to all research if the findings are to be considered valid and reliable, even within their own unique context (Knight & Cross, 2012).

Respectively, Chapter 2 and 4 of this research in an integrated and complementary fashion provided an extensive discussion and analysis of the due conceptual and methodological components, needed for the development of the DBC theory.

Furthermore, as Dubin (1978) acknowledges, homogeneity is considered as a main criteria by which validity of a theory can be judged. Defined as the requirement for theory units and interaction laws to meet the same "boundary-determining criteria" (Dubin, 1978, p. 127), the criterion of homogeneity for the DBC theory specifies that the units employed in the DBC theory (Section 4.2.1) and the laws of interaction (Section 4.2.5) satisfy the same boundary (Section 4.2.3) determining criteria and the units fit inside the boundaries of the DBC theory.

As a result of this discussion, the comparison of these elements against the criteria of excellence identified by Dubin (1978), provides the due evidence and support regarding the validity of the DBC theory in this research.

5.4.2 The Validity Issues Regarding the DBC Theory Testing

Having discussed the validation issues regarding the current research, the next step is to provide future research recommendations that can begin the validation process for the resulting multilevel theory of DBC from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives, to continue to advance theory building efforts in the tourism domain and to examine the role of this multilevel theory in bridging the micro-macro designs by means of converging the pertinent culture, collaboration, and strategic decision-making theories.

Whereas most research on multilevel theory building comes from the quantitatively focused realm of sociology, attempts for the future research that aims to validate the developing of DBC should not be limited to quantitative perspectives, since both qualitative and quantitative methods of research are useful and important to research involving national, inter-organizational, and organizational contexts in a field such as tourism. Swanson, Watkins and Marsick (1997) acknowledge that "...laboratory methods [i.e. quantitative methods] alone are not much help in producing practical theoretical knowledge about many challenges today because they ignore the significant, complex influence of the organizational context. Multiple methods [including qualitative methods] and multiple data sources are needed to capture this complexity" (p. 91). Additionally, as quantitative analysis allows for generalizability of data within, between, and across levels, quantitative data might seem to be easier to utilize in multilevel explorations.

Nonetheless, qualitative exploration of multilevel issues provides a deeper insight into the complex nature of inter-organizational and collective decision-making actions.

The process of validating a developing theory is quite daunting to a novice theory builder because the initial thought behind validation is to answer all of the potential questions and concerns about the theory. In his statement regarding theory validation Kaplan (1964) helped alleviate that concern though:

> The problem of validation of a theory is too often discussed in the context of convincing even the most hardened skeptics, as though the problem is that of silencing critics...It is not moral support which is in question here, but concrete help in specific tasks-sharing findings, techniques, ideas. A theory is validated, not by showing it to be invulnerable to criticism, but by putting it to good use, in one's own problems or in those of coworkers. Methodology...should say no more than this about a questionable theory: if you can do anything with it, go ahead (p. 322).

By recognizing that theory validation is about putting the theory to use, the theorists can, then, focus on various approaches to testing the theory in a real world environment.

As a result, research that has already been conducted on the endogenous construct and its variables might serve as partial validation for the multilevel theory of DBC developed in this study.

For the purpose of this study, though, a review of such research was not conducted but is suggested as a first step in the future validation and refinement of this

theory. The following two paragraphs address potential quantitative and qualitative methods that might be useful in theory validation.

As mentioned previously, much of the multilevel literature comes from the quantitative-focused field of sociology. As a result, the literature is much more specific about quantitative techniques that can be used to analyze and measure multilevel data.

However, the options suggested by the literature include: "analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) and contextual analysis using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression...; cross-level and multilevel OLS regression; WABA [within-and-between analysis]...; multilevel random-coefficient models (MRCM), such as hierarchical linear modeling...; and multilevel covariance structure analysis..." (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000, p. 48).

Another option that is not specifically mentioned in the multilevel literature, but which might be helpful is the use of meta-analysis research to evaluate existing multilevel theory building research (Yang, 2002). As with choosing any validation methods, "selection of an analytic strategy should be based on (a) consistency between the type of constructs, the sampling and data, and the research question; and (b) the assumptions, strengths, and limitations of the analytic technique" (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000, p. 51). Specific to the multilevel theory of DBC developed in the previous chapter, ANCOVA and OLS regression for contextual analysis, cross-level and multilevel regression, and within-and-between analysis (WABA) seem well suited to quantitatively validating the theory. Any researcher wanting to further explore the multilevel theory of DBC might develop research questions that would best be answered by any of the aforementioned analytic strategies though.

Specifically, "ANCOVA might be...used to determine whether there is any effect on an individual-level dependent variable that is attributable to the unit, beyond the effect accounted for by individual differences. Essentially, this approach treats the individual-level variables as covariates and then uses unit membership as an independent variable to determine how much variance is attributable to the unit. Unit membership as a variable accounts for all possible remaining differences across units" (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000, p. 49).

The assumptions associated with using ANCOVA might inhibit the use of ANCOVA in future research though. Those assumptions include:

- Randomization;
- Homogeneity of within-group regressions;
- Statistical independence of covariate and treatment;
- Fixed covariate values that are error free;
- Linearity of within-group regressions;
- Normality of conditional Y scores;
- Homogeneity of variance of conditional Y scores;
- Fixed treatment levels (Huitema, 1980, cited in Upton, 2006, p. 153).

Depending on the context in which the research is being conducted and one's familiarity with and understanding of ANCOVA, future research utilizing this tool might not be recommended in all cases. As such, future research utilizing ANCOVA should be approached with great care to address these assumptions.

Similar to using ANCOVA, the "regression approach...typically uses aggregation and/or disaggregation to specify contextual constructs of interest...This approach

generally explains less variance than ANCOVA because the substantive unit variables are usually a subset of the total group composite effect..." (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000, p. 49). "Cross-level and multilevel regression uses OLS regression and treats "aggregation as an issue of construct validity...so that a model of emergence is first evaluated before individual-level data are aggregated to the group level...once the measurement model of the higher-level (aggregated) constructs is established, the analysis proceeds to test substantive hypotheses" (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000, p. 49-50).

Finally, within-and-between analysis is used to examine "bivariate relationships, assumes measures at the lowest level of analysis for all constructs, and proceeds in two phases. The first phase, WABA I, establishes the level of the variables. The second phase, WABA II, evaluates the level of relations between all the variables in the analysis..." (Kozlowski & Klein, p. 50). Conducting a WABA would, hence, allow the theorists to verify whether each construct is a homogeneous, independent or heterogeneous construct. This is because WABA I is designed to assess whether measures, treated one at a time, show variability in the following ways: "both within and across units, primarily between units, and primarily within units. WABA II is designed to assess whether two measures covary in the following ways: both within and across units, primarily between units, and primarily within units" (Kozlowski & Klein, p. 50).

Each of these means of quantitatively validating the developed multilevel theory of DBC would require much additional work, but each method represents a feasible means of further exploration of the resulting DBC theory.

Since qualitative research includes a number of research methodologies there is a need to define what is meant by the term "qualitative research". Denzin and Lincoln

(1994) offer the following definition: “qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter...[and] involves the studied use...of...materials: case study, observational, historical, interactive, and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals lives” (p. 2).

Within tourism domain and specially DBC context, qualitative approaches might be most appropriate “(1) for building new theory rather than imposing existing frameworks on existing data and (2) for exploring uncharted territory” (Swanson et al., 1997, p. 92). Furthermore “When combined with quantitative data, qualitative data can help to elaborate on the meaning of statistical findings. They also add depth and detail to findings” (Swanson, et al., 1997 p. 93). In approaching a research from a qualitative perspective, Swanson et al. (1997) suggest using a system of qualitative inquiry developed by Patton (1990), which includes ten potential strategies. Of those ten, six of the strategies seem well-suited to examining the multilevel theory of DBC: naturalistic inquiry to examine real world situations; holistic perspective to examine the phenomenon as a complex system; qualitative data in which detailed description is collected; personal contact and insight where the researcher has personal contact with participants; dynamic systems that views the object of the study as dynamic and changing; and design flexibility that allows the process to be adaptive with the potential to change as the research process is conducted. Specific qualitative data collection methods that can be used in each of these inquiry strategies include individual and group interviews, open-ended questionnaires, observation and organization records including strategic plans, performance appraisals, etc. (Swanson et al., 1997). Validation of the DBC can be

enhanced by utilizing these qualitative methods to gain additional insight into this phenomenon through the identified dependent variables and contextual constructs.

All in all, multilevel theory building is a complex task and simplifying the process into a step-by-step method, while helpful to some, is unlikely to answer all of the resulting theory building questions that arise from researchers. Instead, future research into MLTB in tourism should stay abreast of MLTB advancements in fields such as sociology, organizational psychology, and management and put the processes identified and developed in this study to use in examining additional multilevel phenomena. Tourism scholars must work collectively to improve upon MLTB processes and the development of cogent multilevel theories. Only then will tourism theory building advance beyond the generic and myopic view of complex issues. Whether utilizing the improved CCMLTB model developed in this study or the other abovementioned guidelines offered by Kozlowski and Klein (2000), Fisher (2000), Mogesson and Hofmann (1999), and Fischer (2008) future research into multilevel issues in tourism must continue if we are to avoid the "micro-macro divide" warned against by Wright and Boswell (2002) and begin to address multilevel issues as encouraged by Garavan et al. (2004), Morin (1999), Pondy and Mitroff (1979).

After discussing the different issues regarding building and testing of the DBC theory in this research, the following section, will propose further issues regarding future areas of exploration.

5.5 Issues for Future Research

The research undertaken in this dissertation has revealed the different components of the DB culture and examined the effect of these components on the outcomes of the DB

process. Reflecting on the research process and its results, a number of issues emerge that might stimulate further research. Such opportunities for further research have been identified at different levels.

Future research on destination branding could test the appropriateness of the combined use of culture and collaboration theories to understand multi-stakeholder decision-making processes of destination branding. Furthermore, research could be conducted to explore the effect of multiple levels of stakeholders' culture on their decision regarding formation of destination branding culture that can contain one of the critical topics such as partner selection. Additionally, future research might use the inventory of other dimensions of stakeholders' culture e.g. individual and professional, etc. that have not been identified in this study, to test them in other collective decision-making contexts in tourism. As a final issue for the future research, in addition to a cultural perspective, learning, knowledge and network theories are three other theories that can provide invaluable paradigms to decipher the complexities of collaborative decision-making phenomena like destination branding.

Regarding the theory building issue, future study on the expansion of the CCML theory of DBC could take into account additional levels such as the international level for an examination of organizations within and between specific nations and/or destinations. This study might, then, outline stakeholders' inter-organizational culture as the micro level, the national culture as the meso level and the inter-national/global level as the macro level. Depending on the interest of the scholar or practitioner conducting additional research, the variety of levels to consider in specific fields, industries, or situations is open for specification.

The next area that might be considered for future research is the concept of levels' congruency. Klein et al. (1994) specified that the level of the theory, the level of measurement and the level of statistical analysis must be congruent to avoid a levels' fallacy. For the purpose of this study, the level of the theory was identified as the collaboration level. Respectively, measurement and statistical analysis must also be conducted at the collaboration level. A scholar interested in examining the overall national approach to stakeholders' culture might then, position the level of the theory at the national level and thus, the level of measurement and statistical analysis would need to match the level of the theory.

Another research consideration to make with regard to multilevel theory building is whether the contextual constructs and their relevant units identified in this study are representative of the constructs that emerge in all DB contexts or within a specific destination of interest. Future research might reveal, then, that additional contextual constructs and units might emerge or that some of the constructs and units identified in this study do not emerge in various contexts. As a result, descriptive information on each additional collective construct should be specified to prepare those constructs for verification. Furthermore, the impact of those collective constructs on organizational and inter-organizational outcomes would also need to be specified. Should any of the constructs specified in this study be found to be irrelevant in a certain DB context, the impact they have on DB outcomes would obviously need to be removed from considerations.

The theory developed in this study assumes a stable tourism environment with no major shifts in collaborating organizations during the DBC development. Nevertheless,

tourism domain is recognized as a highly vulnerable (Seddighi, Nuttall, & Theocharous, 2001) and fragile (Clements & Georgiou, 1998) domain that is susceptible to political, environmental and economical turbulences. Consequently, consideration of this issue is very important for future development of contextual constructs in DB domain. Scholars would be wise then, to consider the contextual constraints and patterns of interaction that occur between specific organizations in certain political or turbulent environments.

The last suggestion for future research consideration that can contribute to a better understanding of the link between culture, collaboration, and strategic decision-making theories with tourism is the specification of additional propositions of a CCML of DBC. These propositions can be assessed by examination of the three types of propositions outlined by Dubin (1978) and represent considerations that might be made in explicating a CCML theory of DBC based on specific characteristics of the context and information available.

5.6 Conclusion in Brief

Developing a CCML theory of DBC to strengthen the connection between culture, collaboration, strategic decision-making and tourism, advance theory building in tourism, contribute to the meaningful convergence of the above mentioned theories, and create a an interdisciplinary dialogue required an extensive, although unlikely to be exhaustive, examination of extent theories in different disciplines of sociology, anthropology, organizational and social psychology, management, leadership, marketing and tourism together with the theory building research. Future research will be aimed at verifying the successful accomplishment of each of these research goals, but regardless, the research conducted in this study clearly shows that the DBC theory has both

organizational and collaborative implications as seen in the endogenous and contextual constructs identified in the CCML theory of DBC. Moreover, the improved CCMLTB methodology developed in this study aimed to advance theory building beyond the generic organizational and/or collaborative theory building efforts that pervade tourism. Finally, the DBC theory convergence was aimed at reinvigorating the utility of branding culture perspectives in organizational and collaborative settings; and the CCML theory of DBC does just that by providing a multilevel examination of stakeholders' cultural dimensions within the context of destination branding. Continued progress on the development of multilevel theories can reinforce theory development both within tourism domain and provide a platform for communication amongst scholarly and practical domains that share common issues of concern.

This chapter has provided the concluding remarks and discussions of this study and has identified different contributions towards the development of a contextually constructed multilevel theory of destination branding culture. By linking the results of this study to the conceptual and methodological phases discussed in Chapters 1 to 4, this study was also able to make some contributions also to sociology, with contributions identified within this research possibly informing collaboration, culture and strategic management theory.

Through its contributions, this study criticized an understanding of DB as a socio-cultural context, which forms and affects the different dimensions of collective DM efforts. While this study revealed the nature of DB as a culturally oriented phenomenon, which manifested in form of collective decision-making actions of stakeholders, it has also shown how different underlying cultural dimensions of stakeholders can affect the

behavior and outcomes of the destination branding. From this perspective, this research suggests both to tourism research as well as to collaboration, culture, and strategic decision-making theories, that incorporating an understanding of the stakeholders' covert cultural dimensions are of utmost importance in effective analysis of their overt collective decision-making behavior.

At the close, the author hopes to have contributed to the body of knowledge by disentangling the complexity of the human-oriented collective actions within the context of tourism.

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