



FACTORS INFLUENCING DESTINATION IMAGE

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to develop and empirically validate a model which explains the different factors which form the post-visit image of a destination. Based on a literature review, this will involve analyzing the relationship between the different components of the perceived image and the factors which influence its formation. These include both sources of information (primary and secondary) and stimuli influencing the forming of perceptions and evaluations of destinations pre- and post-visit, respectively, and motivation, accumulated touristic experiences and sociodemographic characteristics. **Keywords:** marketing, destination image, process of destination image formation. © 2004 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Résumé: Les facteurs qui influencent l'image des destinations. Le propos de cet article est de développer et de valider empiriquement un modèle qui explique les différents facteurs qui forment l'image d'une destination après la visite. En se basant sur un bilan de la littérature, on analyse la relation entre les différents éléments de l'image perçue et les facteurs qui influencent sa formation. Ces facteurs comprennent les sources d'information (de nature primaire ou secondaire) et les impulsions qui influencent la formation des perceptions et des évaluations des destinations avant et après la visite, respectivement, et les caractéristiques sociodémographiques et celles de la motivation et des expériences touristiques accumulées. **Mots-clés:** marketing, image de destination, processus de formation de l'image de destination. © 2004 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

The evaluation and analysis of destination image has been the subject of much attention in related academic literature, and has made a significant contribution to a greater understanding of tourist behavior. Hunt (1975) was among the first to demonstrate its importance in increasing the number of tourists visiting destinations. Today there exists a general consensus about the significance of the role played by image in the process of decision making, and, by extension, choice (Baloglu and McCleary 1999a; Chen and Kerstetter 1999; Goodrich 1978; Hunt 1975; Milman and Pizan 1995; Pearce 1982; Woodside

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and Lysonsky 1989). However, despite this increasing interest in destination image, many agree that the majority of studies carried out to date are insufficiently theory-based, resulting in a lack of framework or solid conceptualization.

Many studies frequently use the term "destination image", but they tend not to conceptualize this term precisely. Various authors point out that while the concept is widely used in the empirical context, it is loosely defined and lacks a solid conceptual structure (Fakeye and Crompton 1991; Mazanec and Schweiger 1981). The study by Gallarza, Gil Saura and Calderón Garcia (2002) featured an exhaustive review of the literature dealing with this concept, proposing a theoretical model defining image in terms of four characteristics: complex, multiple, relativistic, and dynamic.

The most recent studies (Baloglu and Brinberg 1997; Baloglu and McCleary 1999a, 1999b; Gartner 1993; Walmsley and Young 1998) tend to consider image as a concept formed by the consumer's reasoned and emotional interpretation as the consequence of two closely interrelated components: perceptive/cognitive evaluations referring to the individual's own knowledge and beliefs about the object (an evaluation of the perceived attributes of the object), and affective appraisals relating to an individual's feelings towards the object.

From a theoretical point of view, there is general agreement that the cognitive component is an antecedent of the affective component and that the evaluative responses of consumers stem from their knowledge of the objects (Anand, Holbrook and Stephens 1988; Holbrook 1978; Russel and Pratt 1980; Stern and Krakover 1993). In addition, the combination of these two factors produces an overall, or compound, image relating to the positive, or negative, evaluation of the product or brand. In the context of tourism, Baloglu and McCleary (1999a, 1999b) and Stern and Krakover (1993) show empirically that these perceptual/cognitive and affective evaluations have a direct influence on the overall image, and also that the former, through the latter, has an indirect influence on that image.

Related professional and academic papers have proposed a number of scales to determine the different attributes relevant to measuring perceived image. An analysis of the principal scales (Baloglu and McCleary 1999a, 1999b; Calantone, Di Benetton, Hakam and Bojanic 1989; Chon, Weaver and Kim 1991; Echtner and Ritchie 1993; Fakeye and Crompton 1991; Gartner 1989; Gartner and Hunt 1987; Gartner and Shen 1992; Goodrich 1978; Hu and Ritchie 1993; Hunt 1975; Phelps 1986; Walmsley and Jenkins 1993) reveals a lack of homogeneity with respect to the attributes which define an individual's perceptions. Similarly, it is evident that most studies have failed to establish the validity and reliability of the scales, casting doubt on their psychometric properties. Indeed, only three of the reviewed works, namely that of Echtner and Ritchie (1993) and those of Baloglu and McCleary (1999a, 1999b), had effectively determined the reliability of the scales used.

This lack of a universally accepted, valid, and reliable scale for the measurement of image led to the proposal of a frame incorporating

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