

CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON DESTINATION IMAGE LITERATURE: ROLES AND PURPOSES

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ABSTRACT: A tourism destination is reviewed as an amalgamation of places that generating not just experiences, but provide a memorable destination experience to the tourists. The challenge for today's tourism marketers is that tourists have to be enticed since the tourism destination is an intensely competitive and many destination competing with one and another to attract the similar segment of potential tourists, or repeated visitor. Thus, image of the destination is vital to develop appropriate marketing strategy and being used as promotional tools, not only to the operator of the business but also to those responsible in tourism development. In this case, the role of image has been shown to be an important factor in influencing tourists' preferences and selection of vacation destinations. Therefore, this paper attempt to review the pertinent of previous literatures on destination image and the specific variables that has been examined in those literatures. Fundamentally, the paper will focusing the process involve before visitor making a visit, during and after the visitation, as well as the next process in making the second visit to the similar destination. The dominant subject that emerged from the research articles are critically analyzed the implications for destination image management and research.

Keywords: Destination image, cognitive image, affective image, destination perception

1. Introduction

Tourism has been long accepted as an economic activity of attracting tourists and catering to their needs, which has rapidly grown into the world's largest industry and surpassing other important sectors such as automobiles, steel, agriculture and so forth (McIntosh, Goeldner, and Ritchie, 2000). As demand for tourism increased, more and more areas developed for tourism and the choices of destination available to tourists continue to expand. As a result, destinations compete, and this phenomenon would lead to a fierce competition between tourism destinations. In this case, to be successfully promoted in targeted market, a destination must be favourably differentiated from its competition and has strong image to be positioned in the mind of the tourists (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003). Thus, destination image play an important role in making the tourism destination viable for long-term tourism bussiness.

2. The issue of meaning and measurement of destination image

Tourists today have to be enticed since the tourism destination is an intensely competitive and many destinations competing with one and another to attract the same potential tourists. Therefore, a better understanding of destination image is

vital in order to develop appropriate marketing strategies that based on tourists' perception and behaviour so that more competitive destinations' products are delivered to current and potential tourists (Kim and Yoon, 2003; Walmsley and Young, 1989).

The research of destination image can be traced back to the early of 1970s. In this era, images signify a pre-testing of the destination which, can be referred as transpose representation of the destination into potential tourist's mind. Natural environment or beautiful beaches are the images held that likely to detract or contribute to the important role in tourism development and this become the concerns of Hunt (1971; 75) study. His influential work has been expanding and later, several studies also highlighted the aspect of image and travel behaviour such as Mayo (1973), Gunn (1972), which since then and after 30 years, destination image become the most researched topics in the field of tourism.

In tourism literature, most of the attention has been devoted to understanding the formation of image (Gunn, 1972; 1988; Woodside and Sherrell, 1977; Gartner, 1993; Chon, 1991; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999b), the measurement of destination image (Dann, 1996; Echtner and Ritchie, 1991; 1993; 2003), factors influencing it (Walmsley and Jenkins, 1993; Baloglu, 1997; Walmsley and Young, 1998; Beerli and Martín, 2004; Tasci and Gartner, 2007), the relationship between image of and preference for the destinations (Mayo, 1973; Goodrich, 1978; Gartner, 1986; Um and Crompton, 1990), and destination evaluation (Pizam and Milman, 1993; Weber, 1997; Weaver, Weber and McCleary, 2007). However, despite these intensive descriptions of what consisting image, there is less study or empirical research that focused on how image is actually formed, especially in the presence of psychological factors and cultural values on destination image.

Although the concept of destination image has received substantial attention in the tourism literature, the image construct is still elusive and lacking conceptual framework and methodological differences that have detrimentally affected their role in research (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999b; Son and Pearce, 2005; Gallarza, Saura and Garcia, 2002; Gartner 1993). For example, definitions of destination image are varied and the frequent usage of "impressions" or "perception" has been used by researchers to describe the destination or the area. Apparently, these definitions are quite vague and not explicitly indicate whether the researchers are considering to attribute-based (specific attribute) or the

holistic (aura) components of image or even both (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003). Furthermore, this ambiguous definition would affect the methodologies in measuring destination image and which exhibit some shortcomings to the research and failed to capture the meaning and measurement of destination image.

Thus, due to the limitation of destination image studies, more theoretical and creative approaches are needed in measuring destination image (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003; Pearce and Black, 1996). Echtner and Ritchie (1991) suggested that a creative methodology would provide a more reliable and valid measure of destination image. In fact, previous researches have used structured and unstructured approach to measure image. Structured methodology is commonly used with standardised scales. Usually a set of semantic differential or Likert Scale types were used by the researchers (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003). A respondent only rates the product or each of the attributes included in the measure and an 'image profile' is derived from these ratings (Ferber, 1974). Meanwhile, unstructured methodology is a measurement that does not use any form of descriptions to measure image (Boivin, 1986). A respondent under this method is allowed to freely describe based on his or her image of the product. Nevertheless, the arguments both methodologies have been debate by many researchers. The advantages of using structured methodologies are easy to manage, coded and finally statistical analyses can be employed in order to get the results. In contrast, unstructured methodologies more conducive to capture the holistic components of the products. However, disadvantage of this methodology is the nature of the data which is limited in terms of statistical analyses, while comparisons to other product using standardise measurement is less considered (Marks, 1976; Echtner and Ritchie, 2003).

3. Existing literature of destination image formation

The destination-choice process or destination selection process is strongly associated with the destination image (Son and Pearce, 2005). Destination image is basically defined as a mental picture or impression of a place, a product, or an experience held by the general public (Milman and Pizam, 1995), or a compilation of the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination (Crompton, 1979). Although the definitions are interpreted differently, but these lead to the conceptualization of how tourists perceive the destination and evaluate its attractiveness or attributes at the destination (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Kim 1998; Copper et al., 1998).

Destination image has been conceptualized or define in various ways. For instance, Gunn (1972) conceptualized destination image in terms of travel experiences and sources of information that developed organic image. Organic image is referred as tourists' impressions of a destination without physically visiting the place, while induced image is referred as image that formed from actual visitation. Later, Fakeye and Crompton (1991) expanded the theory and come out with complex image which is resulting from the actual contact and experience with the area. In different approach, Dann (1996) and Gartner (1993) delineated destination image in socio-linguistic model which results of three components of images; affective (Internal sources or stimuli), cognitive (external sources or stimuli), and conative image, which was distinguished on the basis of its sources of stimuli and motives (Kim and Yoon, 2003). Gartner (1993), Dann (1996), and Baloglu (1999) agree that the image is formed from two distinct components that interrelated; cognitive and affective. But, Gartner has defined conative that refers to action as the third components which is distinguished cognitive (external stimuli) and affective (internal stimuli). However, this paper attempts to highlight the cognitive-affective components and how these combination can formed an image, without focusing the role of conative aspect as a limitation of the paper.

The cognitive image is derived basically from a wide spectrum of information sources (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991). The information is then selected, organized and interpreted as what the individual is perceived (Solomon, Bamossy and Askegaard, 2002). This process which is called perception is a process of mental development that constructed an image based on several impressions from those information sources. As described by Gunn (1972) in theory of image classification, the organic images are mostly formed through non-touristic information sources such as from a documentary on television program, a travel show or reading a travel novel that might initiate an overview about the destination. Later, with certain level of information, the images of destinations were induced from the promotional activities that most of the marketers used it to make a destination look desirable. The induced images are formed through travel magazine, travel brochure or other touristic information sources. According to Gartner (1993), the key difference between induced and organic image formation agents was the amount of control the destination had over what has presented (Gartner, 1993). Based on this, he concluded that with typology of eight image formation agents; Overt Induced I, Overt Induced II, Covert Induced I, Covert Induced II, Autonomous, Unsolicited Organic,

Solicited Organic, and Organic. Gartner (1993) claims that, the overt induced is basically from conventional advertising in the mass media where the information was produced by relevant agency or institution in the destination while, covert induced using persuasive promotional materials. In addition, the autonomous includes documentaries or mass media broadcasting news as well as organic that, involves direct communication with friends and relatives based on their experience and knowledge. Thus, it can be said that, with some degree of information or stimuli, the beliefs about the product or destination is developed. This is in parallel with what has been discussed by Holbrook (1978; 1981).

In most destination image studies, researchers give more emphasis on the cognitive component and overlooked the affective components (Ecthner and Ritchie, 1991; Walmsley and Young, 1998) However, recent studies shows that, the combination of these two components, actually are strongly related in producing an overall evaluation to the image of the destination (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a, 1999b; Stern and Krakover, 1993). According to O'Neill and Jasper (1992), the cognitive components refer as knowledge of a place or product features, while an affective component represents the emotional response of individuals to a place or product. In environmental psychology perspective, the cognitive is referred to the knowledge about the place's objective attributes; whereas the affective is referred to the knowledge about its affective quality (Genereux, Ward and Russel, 1983). In addition to this, Hanyu (1993) suggested that affective refers to the evaluation of the affective quality of environment but the cognitive quality refers to the evaluation of the physical features of environment.

Many scholars stress out that, affective image is largely dependent on the cognitive evaluation. In this case, affective evaluation depend on cognitive assessment of objects and the affective responses is formed as a function of the cognitive one (Lynch, 1960; Burgess, 1978; Holbrook, 1978;, Lovelock and Dobson, 1980; Russel and Pratt, 1980; Anand, Holbrook, and Stephens, 1988; Stern and Krakover, 1993; Gartner, 1993; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Chen & Uysal, 2002; Kim and Richardson, 2003). In other words, tourists may develop a favourable attitude towards the destination when they have an adequate level of positive attributes of the destination. In contrary, when tourists perceive unfavourable attributes, they develop negative attitudes toward the destination. However, when it comes to the feeling, the shortcoming is that, a person might have a number of positive beliefs but yet still have negative feelings toward the destinations (Nael, Quester, and Hawkin,

1999; Bigné, Sánchez, and Sánchez, 2001). Tourists might evaluate the same belief differently and yet the potential tourists' affective responses are unpredictable. As suggested by Baloglu and Brinberg (1997), to overcome these limitations, cognitive and affective should be measured separately. Nevertheless, current studies have included cognitive and affective attributes in the measurement of destination image even though, these two components are distinct but it is interrelated (Gartner, 1986; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Baloglu, 2001; Kim & Richardson, 2003; Beerli & Martí'n, 2004). In line of this new approach, destination image should be considered as a multi-dimensional phenomenon which includes not only beliefs or knowledge about the place's attributes, but also the individual's feelings or attachment toward the destination (San Martí'n and Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008).

4. Factors that influencing the destination image formation

The understanding of image formation is a one way to develop a competitive image or good impression of tourist destinations to the market. A positive image of tourist destination is considered as pulling factors among the flood of total impression that attract visitors to the destination. However, there are several types of factors that vital in the destination image formation which is pushing the tourists to the destination. Previous section has explained the importance of variety and types of information sources in image formation. Thus, this section attempts to highlight personal factors which refer to individual's personal characteristics, as well as psychological characteristics which influence destination image formation. On top of that, the differences in tourists' cultural values and past travel experiences are also important factor to be included.

Past travel experience

Previous studies have shown a significant effect on what tourist has perceived and acted based on previous experiences (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999b; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Hsu, Wolfe, and Kang, 2004; Litvin And Ling, 2001; Vogt and Andereck, 2003). According to Perdue (1985), past travel experience explain the reason why repeat visitors only visit several or specific destination. It is because of specific intention or certain level of knowledge that pulled them to the destination again. On the other hand, first time visitors travelled to more destination and visited more attractions than repeat visitors (Oppermann, 1997). This was supported by Fakeye and Crompton (1999) study that shows repeat visitors rated attraction-based images significantly higher than first-timer or even the potential tourists. Potential tourists have limited knowledge about the attributes of a particular

destination and they have no previous experience, while previous visits affect familiarity with the destination. For instance, Millman and Pizam (1995) found that individuals with past experience at a destination had a more positive image of the destination, and is more likely to revisit compared with individuals who were aware of, but had never experienced in the destination. They also found that individuals with no awareness of a destination were similar in their intention to visit compared with individuals with some level of destination awareness. This has enlightened that past experience reduces the risk of unfamiliarity of the environment and unsatisfactory experience which in turn result in accepting or rejecting a destination in a choice set (Crompton, 1992; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989).

Destination awareness is about knowledge or how much the tourist knows about the destination product. This term of awareness was used in purchasing and consumption behaviour which reveals whether the consumer has experienced or familiar with the product, and followed by repeat purchase (Ehrenberg and Goodhart, 1989; Russ and Kirkpatrick, 1982; Cunningham and Cunningham, 1981). In this case, for repeat visitation to be occurred there must lead to a first trial or first visit. Nevertheless, the awareness may not always lead to purchasing behaviour. In other words, information collected by tourists is not necessarily influence their travel behaviour perhaps there are many situational factors that may affect tourists travel behaviour. If satisfaction occurs as the result from the first visit, repeat visitation will follow (Milman and Pizam, 1995).

Personal background characteristic, psychological factors and cultural values

Every individual is different in nature. Personal characteristic, psychological factors and cultural values do affect the formation of image (Um and Crompton, 1990; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). The amount of external stimuli which is being exposed to the tourist determines the level of beliefs toward the attributes of the destination. Nevertheless, the internal factors such as sociodemographic characteristics (gender, age, education level, income class, etc.) perhaps lead to the various developments of mental picture about the destination, which produces their own version of images prior to individual's needs, motivation, knowledge, preferences and other personal characteristics (Chen and Kerstetter, 1999; Beerli and Martín, 2004; Gartner, 1993; Bramwell and Rawding, 1996; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). In addition to sociodemographic characteristics, although these variables are used as antecedent to cognitive processes, only age shows the most significant compare to other sociodemographic variables (Nickel and Wertheimer,

1979; Baloglu, 1997; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). However, Stern and Krakover (1993) chose level of education as the most important variable in relation to investigate the effect of education level towards cognitive, affective and overall image.

The psychological factor is considered an important factor but has been neglected and little empirical research has been done in the destination image study (Beerli and Martín, 2004). Numerous authors state that motivations influence destination image directly and indirectly (Beerli and Martín, 2004; Gartner, 1993; Baloglu, 1997; Dann, 1996). Arguably, the relationship between psychological factors and affective image has been suggested in tourism research, nevertheless, several studies have found that the relationship between these two concepts are rather weak (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Beerli and Martín, 2004). Later on, studies by Klenosky (2002) and Mort and Rose (2004) found that, in order to explore the relationship between tourist motivations and destination image, a new approach was adopted. The theory of means-end chain helps to reveal the relationship. This theory enlightens that motivation perform as a link between attributes, consequences and values. In this case, destinations refer as product and their attributes represent the means by which individuals attain specific benefits which are consequences and reinforce their personal values (Gutman, 1997; San Martín and Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008). It can be said that, when the tourists make a decision to travel, the motivation would initiate from the expected benefits to be attained in the product's use and also expectation of fulfilling personal values (Klenosky, 2002; Mort and Rose, 2004). Although the psychological factors seem a rather weak variables but, previous studies prove that motivations influences destination choice and image formation (Stabler, 1990; Um, 1993; Um and Crompton, 1990). As suggested by Pearce (1995), more research should explore the relationship between psychological factors and destination image so that tourist behaviour will be better understand and motivation theory will be enhanced.

Cultural differences are the other factors that influence destination image formation and can cause significant variations in motivations and perceptions. Kozak (2002) found that, tourists from various countries visit destinations with different types of motive. Their motivation may vary such as seeking new knowledge and entertainment, escapism, relaxation, or social interaction (Kozak, 2002; Oh, Uysal and Weaver, 1995; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a). In terms of cultures, every tourist is representing their own cultures and values which is affected individual's behaviour in context of leisure, work or consumption (Richardson and Crompton,

1988). In this point of view, culture can be defined as a collection of beliefs, values, habits, ideas and norms of individuals (Sherry, 1986). Therefore, culture can be considered as a filter to the individual's perception. In other words, cultural differences attributing to the differences in how individuals' responses to the distinct cultural values and which, describe the differences in perception for the same tourist destination.

5. The need for further inquiries

This paper highlighted most of the main variables in the existing literature and how these influencing tourist destination image. Nevertheless, there are inquiries into how these will provide better explanation on tourism destination image. Thus, several variables require further investigation as well as the process that involve to be focussed as for future research.

A tourist destination can be described as a combination of services, resources and experiences. The destination image is basically measured through the cognitive-affective dimension which tells what images should be promoted based on what tourist has perceived or preferred. On the other hand, the amount of external stimuli which is being exposed to the tourist as well as, the motivational aspects that took place will initiate the action based on the image preferred. The development of mental images will be later modified during the actual contact of the destination. As a result, the outcome of the experience affects the overall perception of the destination. This influences the post-decision for the future selection of holiday or visitation whether re-visited or rejected. The proposed theoretical framework (Figure 1) identified the process as discussed in the literature. The question remains on how this process being examined as a complete cycle of image preference. This involve before the tourist making visit, during and after visitation as well as, the next process in intention to re-visit. Therefore, this paper proposed a theoretical framework that need for further inquiries based on the given phenomenon.

6. Conclusion

This paper attempts to review the pertinent of previous literatures on destination image and the specific variables that has been examined in those literatures. Fundamentally, factors that have been highlighted attempted to provide a conceptual framework that permit further analysis in order to fill the gap which may exists on the factors that influence the destination image research. Thus, the

development of this subject gives a greater understanding of how tourists' perceptions are differed and changed based on their past travel experience, personal background characteristics, psychological needs, as well as from the exposure of information sources and their cultural values. Recognizing the factors that influence the formation of destination image in tourists' minds will help our understand on tourists' needs and behaviours at the destination.

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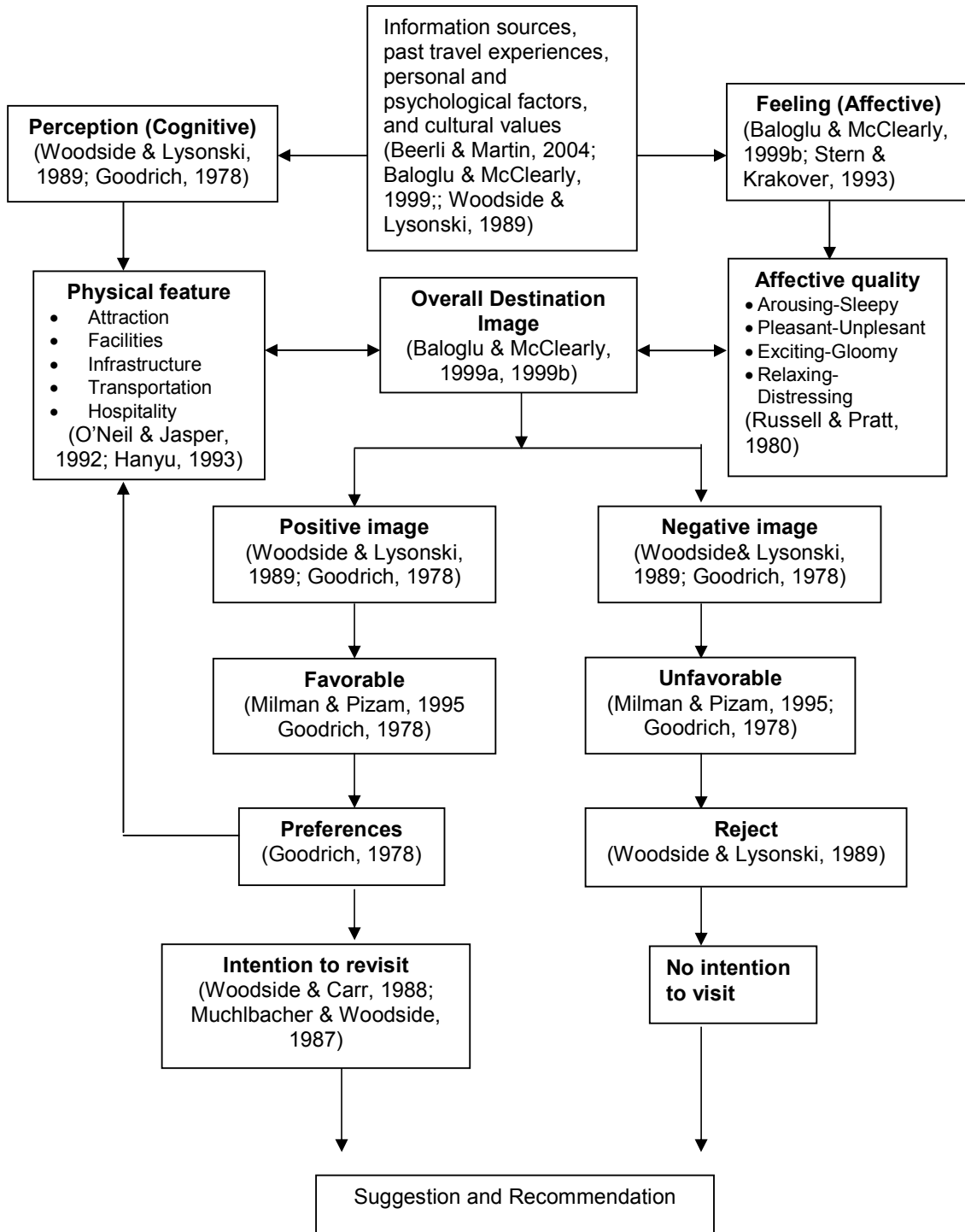


Figure 1: Proposed theoretical framework