

THE ROLE OF IMAGERY AND EXPERIENCES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A TOURISM DESTINATION IMAGE

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the role of imagery and tourism experiences (TEs) in the construction of tourism destination image (TDI). It highlights the importance of the construct imagery at all stages of consumption, because of the intangibility that characterizes tourism and services in general. This aspect gains importance since it is impossible for tourists to experience the desired holidays prior to visitation, leading the way for imagery to become an essential element to inspire and to influence them during the decision-making process, and consumption before, during and after the experience. A conceptual model resulting from the literature review and the potential theoretical contribution of the model are discussed.

Keywords: Imagery, Destination Image, Tourism Experience, Decision-Making Process

JEL Classification: L80, L83

1. INTRODUCTION

The current market challenges and economic uncertainty around the world mean that stakeholders must strive for new ways, concepts and strategies to promote their tourism destinations (TDs) in a competitive market (Govers and Go, 2005) with consumers' behavior always changing (Cohen, Prayag, and Moital, 2014). As a result, TDs marketers must, according to the different market needs, find differentiation (Bozbay, Ass and Ozen, 2008; Kotler, Bowen and Makens, 2009), so that the TDs brands may be seen by tourists as unique and distinctive (Pike, 2009). In this context, several regions have been trying, in the last decades, to reposition their brands by promoting specific tourism destination images (TDIs) in the main target markets with the purpose of introducing new concepts. Their intention is attain an improved market positioning, by even appealing to tourists' senses and emotions. However, since tourism development has also brought new hotels, food establishments and entertainment companies, and more refined and vigilant consumers of their options and potential opportunities, stronger TDIs are needed if the region intends to be well succeeded in the market.

In this context, some researchers have addressed consumers' attitudes and image perceptions (Lin and Huang, 2009). Others have followed and acknowledged the growing importance of the two constructs, imagery and tourist experiences (TEs). As to imagery is concern, some studies have focused it either directly (Adams, 2004; Andersen, Prentice and Guerin, 1997; Kim, Kim and Bolls, 2014; Lee and Gretzel, 2012; Lin and Huang, 2009; MacInnis and Price, 1987, 1990) video versus high-imagery audio advertisements or indirectly, through the concept of image (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Boorstin, 1962;

Hunt, 1975; Lopes, 2010; Lubbe, 2011; Mackay and Fesenmaier, 1997; Stepchenkova and Morrison, 2008; Tasci and Kozak, 2006). Regarding the TEs, several authors also addressed it directly (Hosany and Gilbert, 2009; Kim, Ritchie and McCormick, 2012; Lehto, Jang, Achana and O'Leary, 2008; Lu, Chi and Liu, 2015; Richards and Wilson, 2006; Tsaur, Chiu and Wang, 2007; Uriely, 2005; Wang, Chen, Fan and Lu, 2012) which are indeed memorable, directly determine a business's ability to generate revenue (Pine and Gilmore 1999 or indirectly through the various influential agents, such as expectations (Chon, 1992), reactions (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1994), emotions (Bigné and Andreu, 2004; Laros and Steenkamp, 2005; Richins, 1997; Yoo and MacInnis, 2005) and senses (Bitner, 1992; Carù and Cova, 2003; Hudson and Ritchie, 2009) that must be awakened by TEs marketing messages (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello, 2009; Esch *et al.*, 2012; Schmitt, 2012). However, the fact remains that despite MacInnis and Price (1987) seminal work, knowledge on the theme remains sparse and improvement is necessary.

The fact is that further research is wanted to understand these variables and other influential factors such as: the mass media (Beeton, Bowen and Santos, 2006; Nielsen, 2001), friends and relatives (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003), travel agencies and brokers (Jennings and Nickerson, 2006), familiarity (Ulrich, 1983), travel purpose (Hankinson, 2005), geographical distance (Crompton, 1979; Hunt, 1975), tourism destination attributes (Tasci and Kozak, 2006), socio-demographic variables (Baloglu, 1997) and also the perception and tourists' individual learning process, resulting from previous experiences (Cohen, 1979; Crompton, 1979; Jenkins, 1999). In simpler terms, images are formed from different information sources and based on subjective criteria, valued differently by each consumer, meaning that the individual's cultural, social and psychographic characteristics impact on the consumers expected benefits. Marketers must therefore, understand with more depth the importance of imagery in stimulating (Lee and Gretzel, 2012; MacInnis and Price, 1987) the right conceptions and images, since they effect, among other dimensions, the positioning, image and brand, which are key factors for any region or destination success. As Kim, Kim and Bolls (2014) remind, the consumers are more likely to choose those destinations that have engaged or stimulated their imagery.

This paper reviews the importance of the constructs imagery and tourism experiences in the construction of a destination image. In addition, it provides a conceptual model in which the construct is framed throughout the different stages in which its influence is evident to assist practitioners, either managers or marketers. Therefore, this paper is organized into three main sections: first, a literature review on the constructs is summarized, followed by the presentation of the conceptual model; lastly, the implications of the theoretical framework are discussed.

2. IMAGERY, IMAGE AND EXPERIENCES IN TOURISM CONTEXT

2.1. Imagery

A possible way of gaining a competitive advantage can result from evaluating the tourists' perceptions of the main characteristics and attributes of the destination (Kim *et al.*, 2014) and TDI (Crompton, Fakeye, and Lue, 1992; Selby and Morgan, 1996). The definition and creation of distinctive tourism products, able to increase tourists' satisfaction, must be incorporated into the strategy, product development, and communication actions to create the truthful expectations and proper TDIs. The communication efforts should also be aware that tourists make their decisions according to the value proposition offered by the TDs (Pralhad and Ramaswamy, 2004). These must develop a positive awareness of the

destination among tourists and to raise their freedom to dream and imagine future holidays (Font, 1997).

As referred by Adams (2004), imagery allows consumers to conceive ideas and narratives of the destinations (Adams, 2004). It also facilitates consumers to mentally project themselves at the setting, living their experiences even before having travelled (Dann, 1996). This imagining of anticipated holidays is predominant among consumers (MacInnis and Price, 1990), but it may result in prejudice regarding the probability of the unfolding future events or experiences in which consumers will be engaged to meet the expectations generated or the satisfaction pretended (MacInnis and Price, 1987, 1990). In fact, as MacInnis and Price (1987:486) claim, the imagery processing is "...important in understanding incidental learning, numerous facets of the choice process, the likelihood and timing of purchases, and the nature of many hedonic and symbolic consumption experiences and re-experiences (remembered consumption)". For Lee and Gretzel (2012) imagery can be seen as a mental representation of what was previously experienced or what is believed to be experienced in the future. In table 1, several definitions are presented.

Table 1. Definition of Imagery

Reference	Definition
(Kim et al., 2014:64)	"Mental-imagery processing refers to the psychological process engaged in by listeners during exposure to ads"
(Lee and Gretzel, 2012:1270)	"When travellers engage in mental imagery processing, they experience the destination in their mind's eye"
(Govers, 2005:28)	" A distinct way of processing and storing multisensory information in working memory"
(MacInnis and Price, 1987:473)	" A process (not a structure) by which sensory information is represented in working memory"

Source: Author

As seen in table 1, imagery is mostly considered to be a mental process of assimilating multisensory information and developing conceptions about countries, regions, destinations or places. In spite of the difficulties and complexity associated with defining the construct, an attempt to find some agreement regarding a definition can be established by using a word cloud (from the generating link wordle.net), which analyses texts to find the words that appear more frequently. Drawing on the authors' definitions in table 1, the words more prominently employed to define the topic were represented visually in figure 1. As shown in the figure, the most common words used to define imagery were: **Processing, information, working** and **memory**. If a simple definition was to be suggested from the most common words (despite the reduced number of definitions), imagery would be defined as **a way of processing information on working memory**.

Figure 1. Word cloud generated from imagery definitions



Source: Author using wordle.net

For Echtner and Ritchie (2003), imagery is based and interrelated with image, which is the result of a more holistic way of interpreting reality and information gleaned from different sources. This interpretation and conceptions deriving from imagery may be a significant influence on the choices and decisions that consumers make (Lee and Gretzel, 2012) which, on the other hand, impact on expectations, emotions, experience and satisfaction (MacInnis and Price, 1990). In Gover's (2005) study, words can integrate one, or all of the 5 senses. These images can result from organic (Gunn, 1972) or induced sources (Pan and Li, 2011), and can be disseminated through several ways, such as, webpages, blogs, television, books or brochures. Another relevant aspect of the imagery construct is that it results from consumers' images generated from a previous experience (Adams, 2004). Moreover, consumers' experience may positively or negatively affect the outcomes of the expectations arising from the imaginary process (MacInnis and Price, 1990).

However, as Cai (2002) notes, the mental constructs built and develop by the consumers are largely dependent on what potential destinations or products have to offer to consumers own needs. In some cases, such as time limited experiences (for example, a wedding), imagery may act as one way of enhancing the value of the time bonded experience (MacInnis and Price, 1987). Thus, marketing managers and local stakeholders, must not focus solely on their communication efforts on what consumers know or see about a specific message. Instead, they should seek to offer and deliver new and stimulating information, in which consumers may create and mentally imagine or fantasize about their own images (Pan and Li, 2011). This happens because image and the imagery process do not remain static; instead, they evolve due to the flow of information and experience consumers collect all the time.

2.2 Tourism Destination Image

Lin and Huang (2009) emphasize the importance of TDI as a marketing tool for destinations and countries to be able to compete in the global market. As Pike (2002) demonstrated in his review of the TDI studies, from 1973 to 2000, and Stepchenkova and Mills (2010) in another review from 2000 to 2007, the topic remains important and popular among academics. The reason is that the TDI is based on attributes composed of expected benefits, psychological characteristics and meanings that tourists associate with tourism destinations, at different times and places, e.g., before, during and after the actual travel (Kim and Chen, 2015). As shown in table 2, image can have diverse impacts.

Table 2. TDI impacts

Decision-making process	(Ankomah, Crompton, and Baker, 1996; Fuller, Hanlan, and Wilde, 2005; Gartner, 1989; Goodall, Brian, and Ashworth, 2012; Moutinho, 1987; Pike, 2006; Sirakaya and Woodside, 2005).
Satisfaction	(Alegre and Garau, 2009, 2010; Esu and Arrey, 2009; Kozak and Rimmington, 2000; Oppermann, 1998; Valle, Silva, Mendes, and Guerreiro, 2006; Wang and Hsu, 2010; Yoon and Uysal, 2005).
Return and recommendation intention	(Bosque, Martín, Collado, and Salmones, 2009; Chen and Tsai, 2007; Galí and Donaire, 2005; Hosany and Prayag, 2013; Hosany and Witham, 2009; Hunt, 1975; Selby and Morgan, 1996; Tasci and Gartner, 2007).

Source: Author

Thus, all image representations must be carefully reflected, because the visual and textual images shape the way consumers' make decisions, create images and imagine their experience, which means that tourists will not only consider (mentally or physically) their destination, but also their competitors (Adams, 2004). For this reason, Govers (2005) also postulates that TDI influences destination positioning. For Cai (2002), the battle is for the consumers' perception of the images mentally associated with a destination brand, even if some perceptions or images are not truly representative of what destinations have to offer (Amoamo, 2003; Um and Crompton, 1990, 1991). One of such examples is given by MacInnis and Price (1987), who emphasize that not every decision is made with the full information available.

Regarding the concept of image, it is considered "an abstract concept incorporating the influences of past promotion, reputation and peer evaluation of alternatives" (Dann, 1996:42), in which consumers or potential tourists create and establish subjective beliefs about specific countries, destinations, regions or places (Lin and Huang, 2009). This subjectivity, according to Stepchenkova and Mills (2010), has led to multiple definitions, conceptualizations and measurements, which are inconsistent with the nature and complexity of the construct. Echtner and Ritchie (2003:41) emphasize that one of the reasons for the difficulties mentioned above is the inexistence of a concrete indication of whether the researchers are considering the attribute-based, or the holistic-based components of an image, or even both. Thus, not surprisingly, and despite the long background of the construct (Baloglu and Mangaloglu, 2001; Baloglu, 1997; Bonn, 2005; Boorstin, 1962; Echtner and Ritchie, 2003; Gartner, 1989; Govers, Go, and Kumar, 2007; Hunt, 1975; Kneesel, Baloglu and Millar, 2009; Sanmartin and Rodriguezdelbosque, 2008) it remains ill-defined and complex as suggested by table 3.

Table 3. Definitions of destination image

Reference	Definition
60's	
(Reynolds, 1965a:69)	"An image is actually the result of a more complex process. It is the mental construct developed by the consumer on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions; it comes into being through a creative process in which these selected impressions are elaborated, embellished, and ordered".
70's	
(Hunt, 1975:1)	"Perceptions held by potential visitors about an area".
(Crompton, 1979:18)	"Sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination".
80's	
(Phelps, 1986:168)	"Perceptions or impressions of a place".
(Gartner and Hunt, 1987:15)	"Impressions that a person...holds about a state in which they do not reside".
(Gartner, 1989:16)	"A complex combination of various products and associated attributes".
(Calantone, Di Benedetto, Hakam, and Bojanic, 1989:25)	"Perceptions of potential tourist destinations".
90's	
(Reilly, 1990:21)	"Not individual traits...but the total impression an entity makes".
(Fakeye and Crompton, 1991:10)	"Representation of an area into the potential tourist's mind".
(Echtner and Ritchie, 1993:3)	"Composed of perceptions of individual attributes (such as climate, accommodation facilities, and friendliness of the people) as well as more holistic impressions (mental pictures or imagery) of the place".
Font (1997:124)	"Set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that the public holds of the named product, and to some extent it is part of the product".
(Mackay and Fesenmaier, 1997:538)	"A destination's image is a composite of various products (attractions) and attributes woven into a total impression".
00's	
(Bigné, Sánchez and Sánchez, 2001:607)	"The image of a destination consists, therefore, of the subjective interpretation of reality made by the tourist".
(Echtner and Ritchie, 2003:43)	"Destination image consists of functional characteristics, concerning the more tangible aspects of the destination, and psychological characteristics, concerning the more intangible aspects".
(Alcañiz, García, and Blas, 2009:716)	"It consists of all that the destination evokes in the individual; any idea, belief, feeling or attitude that tourists associate with the place".

Source: Author

Now, by using the word cloud generating link wordle.net to assess the most cited words to define the construct, it can be seen in figure 2 that the words more prominently employed to describe it were: **Impressions, perceptions, complex, attributes, potential** and **selected**.

Figure 2. Word cloud generated from TDI definitions

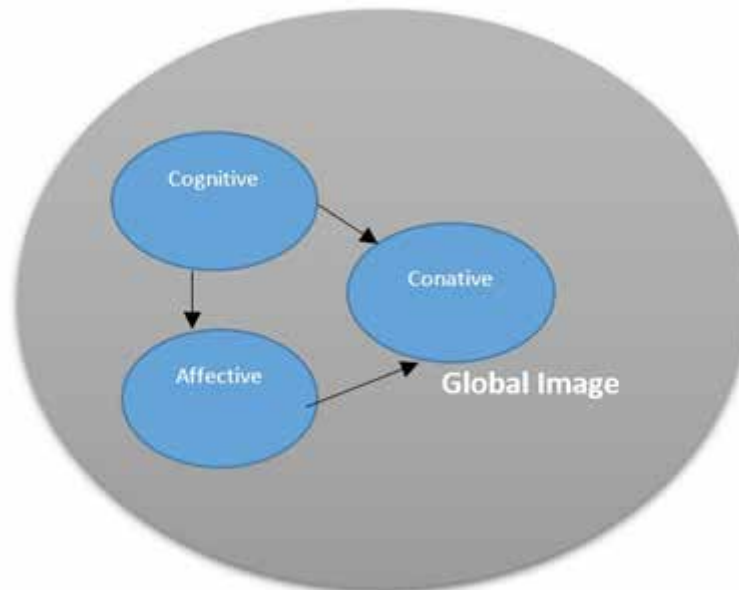


Source: Author using wordle.net

From these words with most prominence, a suggestion of definition can be proposed that images are a **complex set of selected impressions, perceptions that persons have of potential destinations attributes**. These impressions, include both cognitive (beliefs) and affective aspects (feelings) (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Castro, Armario and Ruiz, 2007; MacKay and Fesenmaier, 2000). Other authors however (Bigné, García and Blas, 2009; Konecnik and Gartner, 2007; Pike and Ryan, 2004), also proposed a third component, conative or behavioural, which is related to the probability of tourists' revisiting the destination or even of recommending it. The conative component "is the action component which builds on the cognitive and affective stages" (Dann, 1996:49). As Gartner (1993) suggests, this component is related to the action or probability of visiting friends, relatives or a specific tourism destinations, since it results from initial image developed in the cognitive stage and of the subsequent assessment during the affective stage.

So, the conative component is hierarchically interrelated to the cognitive and affective components. This component and its importance to tourists' buying behaviour (intention to recommend, to revisit) has been assessed by several authors (Bigné, Sánchez and Sánchez, 2001; Chi and Qu, 2008; Bosque and Martín, 2008; Pike and Ryan, 2004). Furthermore, a fourth component (figure 3) has been considered by other researchers (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Calantone et al., 1989; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Gartner, 1993; Hunt, 1975; Phelps, 1986) as the result of both components (cognitive and affective) contributing to the formation of an overall image (Agapito, Valle and Mendes, 2013).

Figure 3. TDI Dimensions



Source: Author

According to these authors, this holistic perception (overall image) is greater than the sum of its parts (i.e. the sum of the cognitive, affective, and conative components). The perception is worked by the media in providing a flood of information which is accessed and experienced vividly and intensely by the consumers using traditional and virtual instruments (Govers, 2005). In effect, then, as MacInnis and Price (1987) explain, the search to obtain some satisfaction by using imagery is not present solely at the anticipatory stage, it is present during the full course of the consumption, including the actual experience at the destination.

2.3. Tourism Experiences

Consumers need to create and generate mental narratives and expectations of the TEs at the destinations. Today, like in the 60s, a challenge is to uncover what exactly makes certain TEs special and memorable (Bertella, 2013). This happens because consumers need to build a sense of place when they visit and experience the destination (Lin and Huang, 2009), reflecting their needs to acquire hedonic products and having their feelings, needs, wants and desires satisfied during holidays. Salazar (2012:864) shares this view that “planning a vacation and going on holidays involve the human capacity to imagine or to enter into the imaginings of others”.

Still, despite some agreement (Holbrook and Addis, 2001; Kim, 2011; Weaver, Weber and Mcclary, 2007) regarding the evaluation of tourists’ experiences being a key factor for any organization or any TD success, a common language is lacking in the academic literature regarding an all-encompassing definition of TEs, and the dimensions that constitute this concept. Tung and Ritchie (2011) also express their concern regarding the absence of agreement in the building of a comprehensive definition for the TEs. Not surprisingly, for some researchers, the term has been and remains too ambiguous (Carù and Cova, 2003), whereas for others, it is the complexity of the construct that has proven to be hard to define, identify and operationalize (Volo, 2009). However, despite all the obstacles researchers face when addressing the construct, some definitions have been proposed (table 4).

Table 4. TE concepts

Reference	Definition
00's	
Volo (2010:301)	"The tourist experience is defined as an occurrence experienced by a person outside the 'usual environment' and the 'contracted time' boundaries that is comprised of a 'sequence' of the following events: sensation, perception, interpretation, and learning".
(Bigné and Andreu, 2004:692)	"Experiences can be defined as events that engage individuals in a personal way".
90's	
(Schmitt, 1999:25)	The "result of encountering, undergoing, or living through situations" and "triggered stimulations to the senses, the heart, and the mind".
(Pine and Gilmore, 1998:98)	"An experience occurs when a company intention-ally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event".
(Otto and Ritchie, 1996:166)	"The 'experience' of leisure and tourism can be described as the subjective mental state felt by participants".
(Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982:132)	"A steady flow of fantasies, feelings, and fun".

Source: Author

This conceptualization problem derives from its dynamic and complex nature, which comes from TEs being formed when "a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event" (Pine and Gilmore, 1999:11). As figure 4 shows, by generating word clouds from the definitions presented by Table, the words most used were **engage**, **events** and **way**.

Figure 4. Word Cloud generated from TDI definitions



Source: Author using wordle.net

From these words with most prominence, another suggestion of definition can be propose that TEs are a **way of engaging consumers during events**. According to Pine and Gilmore's (1999), these events can have various dimensions (entertainment, education, escapist, aesthetic), differentiated however by the level of involvement (passive or active) and participation (absorption or immersion). However, Ballantyne, Packer and Falk (2011), in their study about visitors' memories of wildlife tourism, assessed tourists' experiences according to their sensory impressions (what they saw and heard), emotional affinity (what

they felt during the experience), reflective response (their thoughts during the events) and behavioral response (how they act or what they did). Brakus *et al.* (2009) taking the experience towards brands, also conceptualized TEs as being composed of sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral dimensions, given that, in addition to feelings and impressions, physical actions are also undertaken by tourists. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) also proposes that experiences have functional (i.e., experience coming from the consumption of the product's function) and enjoyable (sensations generated during the experience) dimensions.

For one hand, the subjective and highly personal nature of the TEs has been the focus of interest by many researchers (Huang and Hsu, 2009; Tung and Ritchie, 2011), since tourists remember their personal experiences differently from one another, even if marketers use the same promotion messages or images (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). As Huang and Hsu (2009) assert, TEs consumption only reflects the nature of the tourism activity when the tourists' active involvement enables them to go through a process of psychological and physical transformation. This leads to different levels of interest (from high to low) and involvement (ranging from high to low) by the tourists during the purchase of tourism products (Laws, 1995). The involvement shows, from an early stage, that the choices tourists make, not only make them more demanding and influential for businesses, but also redefine the TEs interactions between service providers and tourists (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004), as well as between their expectations built on the imagery.

Another aspect to consider is tourists' support to both production and consumption of TEs, through their personal social-psychological state (emotions, thoughts, feelings, characteristics), which are brought to the "stage" (Huang and Hsu, 2009; McIntosh and Siggs, 2005). According to (Baker and Crompton, 2000), no service industry or company can, therefore, sell pre-orchestrated TEs to their tourists. This happens because TEs are influenced by other factors which are beyond the control of the service providers (Huang and Hsu, 2009), such as the vivid imagery. In this regard, some authors have tried to understand the tourism experiences to assist the DMOs managers (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). However, as Laws (1995) points out, the cost of the holidays, the complexity related to the purchase of the holidays and the risk of the experience at the destination does not fulfill the generated expectations, are high. In the same context, Huang and Hsu (2009) agree that the quality of the interactions experienced, and not its volume, is the most important factor for a true rewarding, and emotionally engaging TE to be lived and remembered. One example is tourists search for advance booking, which shows their security and familiarization with TDs (Xinran Y. Lehto, O'Leary and Morrison, 2004), but also, that they actively seek TEs that can provide them with pleasurable experiences (Bigné and Andreu, 2004), coming from fantasies and elaborate imagery (MacInnis and Price, 1987, 1990).

3. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The proposed conceptual model calls practitioners and academics' attention to focus more in imagery since it provides all the necessary inputs to enable tourists to shape their expectations and future experiences in a pleasurable and memorable way. If consumers or tourists leave the destination disappointed, their attractions may have succeeded in their appealing function but not in carrying out their complete function of satisfying tourists. Tourists' future decisions regarding the next holidays, length of stay, season to travel, what to do and where to go start with the imagery, when the initial ideas are formed, conceptions of which TEs are available at the potential destinations and which TEs they would like to engage in. This individual nature of the construct forces managers to acknowledge they

cannot control the personal interpretation and consequent interaction between tourist, service providers, and surrounding environment during the time of the experience. As can be seen in figure 5, the proposed model proposition reinforces and seeks to enhance the role of imagery at all stages of the holiday experience, that is:

Stage 1, pre-visit – The consumers form their images, according to their personal needs and information collected from different sources and origin (organic or induced) (Govers and Go, 2005; Gunn, 1972, 1988; Kim and Chen, 2015). It is at this stage that the imagery plays a stronger part, since the decision-making process by consumers is based on destinations mental pictures (MacInnis and Price, 1987, 1990), but also on the holistic appeal created by the mental “travelling and experiencing” of the destination, in which dreams are built and decisions are made (Lee and Gretzel, 2012). TEs begin at this point, by the dreams and expectations generated from what will be experienced and lived at the destination. At this stage, other factors, such as media, brokers and stakeholders impact on the information sources that consumers seek and have available to process.

Stage 2, trip to the destination – During the travel, consumers continue to assess, elaborate and build their imagery as part of their anticipation of what future events will be like at the destination (MacInnis and Price, 1990). This imagery leads the different type of consumers (first-time visitors or repeaters, novice or experienced) to envisage, with diverse degrees of intensity, mainly positive sensory outcomes from their dream holidays.

Stage 3, at the setting – During the visit at the holiday destination, imagery continues to play an important role, by continuing to build and create new mental pictures and images of what has been experienced, but also the path set by the mental experience elaborated by the consumers. At this stage, the TEs originate from a set of complex interactions between the tourist and the service providers (Carù and Cova, 2003; Holbrook and Addis, 2001; LaSalle and Britton, 2003). This means that all interactions tourists live at the destination can be considered to be an experience, despite of its nature (perceptual or emotional) or source (expressed or implied) (Oh, Fiore and Jeoung, 2007). In effect, it may even facilitate tourists in co-creating their own experiences (Pralhad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Prebensen and Foss, 2011). However, not all the contacts between tourists and service providers have the same value. This happens because the TEs occur “inside” the tourist, and are dependent of tourists’ state of mind and of the set of complex and dynamic processes that take place to enable the tourists to see and feel the whole event and not the sum of the parts (Lu *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, since the TEs are produced and consumed simultaneously, it implicates that the tourist and all of those participating actively in an event, create meanings and imagine effects, results during the consumption of the “staged” experiences. From these events or experiences, new images and consequent imagery may or may not be built and reshaped.

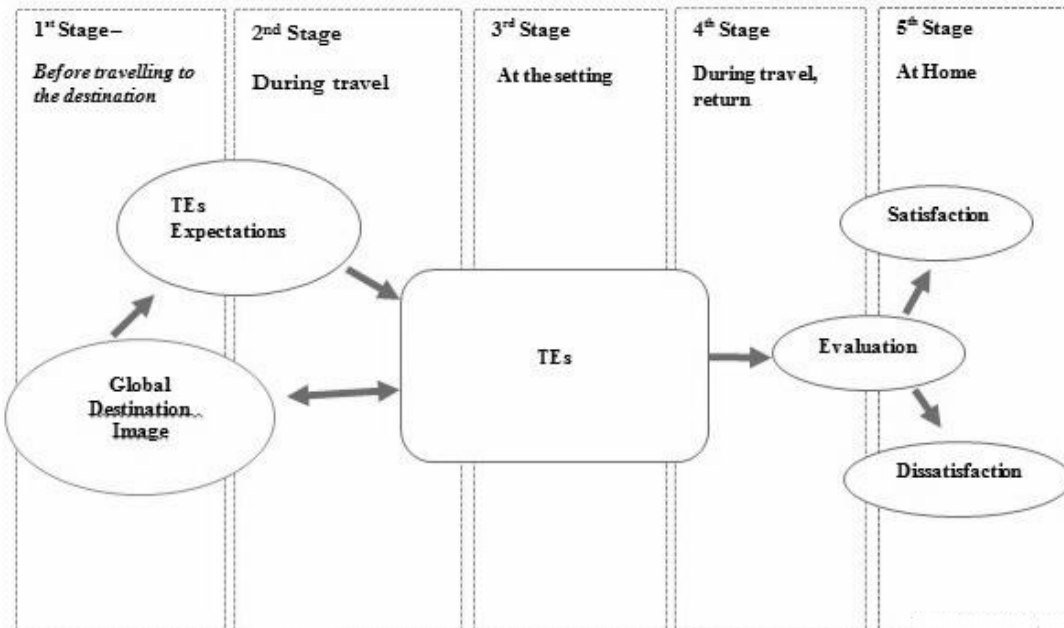
Stage 4, during travel returning home – On their way back home, the new information collected from the actual experience at the setting is mentally stored, and although the holiday experience has not been completed, imagery continues to play its part on the assessment consumers make of what experiences were positive, negative, and which outcomes envisaged were met or not.

Stage 5, at home – Despite the end of the holidays, consumers continue to imagine, to re-live their experiences and the images built, neglecting some aspects (positive or negative), but nevertheless creating their own stories of the holidays.

To sum up, consumers nowadays, including tourists, seek to be engaged, absorbed, which means that the supply side need to create memorable meanings during the production of experiences (Ali, Hussain, and Ragavan, 2014; Kim and Ritchie, 2014; Kim *et al.*, 2012; Kim, Ritchie, and McCormick, 2010). This level of attachment contradicts previous conceptions seeing tourists solely as rational human beings, neglecting the meanings tourists attach to

service consumption. Moreover, it is important to consider the subjectivity coming from the personal or individual evaluation (affective, cognitive and conative) tourists make regarding their experiences (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Holbrook, O'Saughnessy and Bell, 1990; Matos, Mendes and Valle, 2012; Volo, 2009) before, during and after the experience. This consumption takes tourists to pre-experience their holidays (Lee and Gretzel, 2012; MacInnis and Price, 1987), but also to evaluate, frequently and repeatedly, the different events unfolding before them, at the different times (before, during and after the TE) and locations (at home, during travel and at the holiday destination).

Figure 5 – Imagery influence in the TDI and TE - conceptual model



Source: Author

4. CONCLUSION

The objective of this paper was to analyse and review the role of imagery and tourism experiences in the destination image. For this purpose a conceptual model of the role of both constructs on TDI was presented. The literature review undertaken indicated that the way destination images are constructed has changed immensely from a supply and demand perspectives, e.g., from the way images is projected, to the way these images and projections are perceived (Govers, Go and Kumar, 2007; Govers and Go, 2005). Thus, the relationship between imagery and TE in the construction of TDI is still ill-defined, since the tourists' decision-making process, and the selection of their next holiday destination, starts considerably earlier and ends much after the return home.

Also, the composite nature of the tourism activity creates barriers to any marketer to match the services and products offered, with the consumers' needs and demands. First, neglecting the role of imagery will have consequences regarding the expenses necessary to attract potential tourists to the area, since the costs of "acquiring" new tourists are far greater than the cost of retaining them (Kotler et al., 2009). This means that destinations may be promoting in their target markets the wrong images, or not the best, to engage consumers' imagery of what will be fulfilled or experienced at the destination(s). In effect, imagery is an under-explored theme (Adams, 2004), partially because consumers are asked to rank attributes in standardized surveys (Dann, 1996), neglecting the holistic perspective of what

the images, memories of personal past experiences, ideas, thoughts, imagery and image evokes or nurtures among consumers. Another important aspect requiring more research is the role the brokers and media in their different information and communication tools, such as guidebooks, brochures, websites and newsletters, which may create too much expectations and incorrect images that may elude consumers, by setting the wrong expectations and failing in providing the right information. This would be important to: 1) increase the appeal of natural and man built local resources, by using the correct marketing promotion tools and strategies (Crouch, 2007); 2) to increase the competitiveness of the TD through the use of key factors to appeal, and engage physically and emotionally tourists (Kim, Ritchie and McCormick, 2010; Kim, 2011; Pine and Gilmore, 1998, 2011); and 3) to influence tourists' behaviour (Chen and Tsai, 2007; Tsaur *et al.*, 2007; Urry, 1992; Žabkar, Brenčič and Dmitrović, 2010).

Being the TDI a critical element for the promotion (Andersen *et al.*, 1997) and motivation or stimulus to visit a destination (Cai, 2002), the role and influence of imagery as the cornerstone of the representations, ideas, conceptions or misconceptions that form and shape consumers' perceptions and imaginary at all stage of the consumption experience, should not be neglected. As Amoano (2003:X) reminds "representations of destinations motivate travellers to travel, however, the same representations evoke imagery that may not be confirmed by the actual travel experience...[and] any gap between imagery and experience may impact on the traveller's sense of authenticity". For this matter, it is important to assess the impacts and changes caused by imagery and TEs on the tourists' destination image they take home to share with friends and relatives, personally or using social media. If the tourists' behaviour and experiences are better understood, stakeholders will more easily define and set their marketing strategies. More importantly, they will be able to manage their destinations more efficiently (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003). Moreover, new insights and a greater knowledge about tourists' TEs will be attained, allowing for more competitive advantages in relation to other competitors (Pine and Gilmore, 1988). This way, possible impacts (negative or positive) in the TE and TDI can be more rapidly identified and if necessary revised, enabling the stakeholders and managers to set and promote tourism products of added value for consumers.

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