

# **The Antecedents of Destination Imagery – Exploring the “Shadow Effect” of Place Brand Associations**

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## *Abstract*

*Tourists imagery regarding destinations comprise associations held towards destinations from which images of destinations are formed. These images of destinations are generally linked to tourists' behavioral outcomes. Therefore, knowledge regarding the antecedents of tourists' imagery formation process is valuable to achieve effective destination marketing. Prior research implies that three constructs are linked to this process: personal factors, internal information sources, and external information sources. By applying a deductive research design, the present study examines the influence of the most prominent variables that comprise these three constructs on the imagery formation process, and their interrelations among one another. By utilizing linear regression analyses, it was found that interrelations exist among these variables and that the variables apply different levels of influence on the imagery formation process of tourists. The findings of this research propose that the imagery formation process of tourists is individualistic and dynamic by nature, which points out to a variety of managerial implications.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Several fields and disciplines of academia have been interested in the concept of image since the works of Boulding (1956) and Martineau (1958) who argued that image drives human behavior rather than objective reality (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Similarly, the knowledge of how individuals form, store, and apply mental representations of destinations has been of great interest of tourism managers and researchers during the last four decades (Crompton, 1979a; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Kock et al., 2016). One possible cause for such broad interest in the topic could be that the initial image formation phase is the most important step of a tourists' destination selection process (Gunn, 1972; Mercer, 1971).

Although of great interest, various authors argue for the need of more research on the topic (e.g. Goodall, 1990; Kock et al., 2016; Ramkisson & Uysal, 2011; Tasci, 2007). For example, Ramkisson and Uysal (2011) argue that there is a need to enhance knowledge about destination image and its influence on tourists' travel behavior. While Tasci (2007) argues for the lack of research measuring the relative magnitude of the influence that is posed by various factors in the creation of destination image. Moreover, Martín-Santana, Beerli-Palacio, and Nazzareno (2017) argue that only a few studies have developed models that aim to elaborate the relationship between the image and its shaping factors (e.g. Beerli & Martín, 2004a, 2004b; Ryan & Cave, 2005; Tasci, 2007; Tasci & Gartner, 2007), and more specifically, how primary and secondary sources of information and tourists personal characteristics impact the image formation process. Similarly, Kock et al. (2016) propose future research to increase knowledge about the mental processes that exist in

regard to destination image formation, its outcome variables, and potential antecedents.

Information as such would be valuable in the field of tourism and destination marketing as for example the knowledge of what factors influence image would help to target marketing efforts (Goodall, 1990).

Inspired by personal interests towards the topic and driven by the above discussion, the authors of this thesis answer specifically to the call of Kock et al. (2016) and aim to create new knowledge regarding the antecedents of destination image and how they influence image formation.

Subsequently, the purpose of this thesis is to study the formation of place brand associations in consumers' minds. More specifically, the authors aim to research the "shadow effect" of place brand associations and how it influences destination image. By the "shadow effect" the authors describe a situation in which consumers hold associations towards a certain destination that vary in strength and thus cause individually distinct images to be formed towards the destination which leads to diverse outcomes and impacts on future behavior. In situations like these, some place brand associations outweigh the importance of others and thus, have more power when influencing the formation of destination image.

The structure of this thesis will be as follows. After the introduction (above) a problem formulation will take place, where the research question will be presented. This will be followed by a literature review on the most relevant theories and findings on the topic. Then, a variety of hypotheses will be generated based on the literature review, and a theoretical model will be elaborated. This will be followed by a discussion on the research methodology and method, leading to the unveiling of

results. The results will then be discussed, and managerial implications will be brought forward along with any possible limitations that concern our study. After this, the thesis will reach its conclusion.

*Note: A list of references and appendices will be found after the conclusion.*

## PROBLEM FORMULATION

In order to find out how the “shadow effect” of place brand associations influences destination image formation it is necessary to understand how images are formed in consumers’ minds and what are the antecedents that drive this process. Therefore, the following research question along with two sub-research questions were formulated:

- RQ: How does the “shadow effect” of place brand associations influence the formation of destination image in consumers’ minds?
- SubRQ1: What variables influence the formation of place brand associations in consumers’ minds?
- SubRQ2: What is the nature of the relationships between these variables in the formation of these associations in consumers’ minds?

The formulation of the sub research questions was seen as necessary to answer the main research question. As by gaining knowledge on the variables that influence the formation of place brand associations and their interrelationships, a higher level of understanding can be reached regarding how the “shadow effect” of place brand associations actually influences the formation of destination image. Thus, the main research question can be answered by answering the sub-research questions. The formulated research questions will drive the direction of the following review of the literature.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

### IMAGE

The term “image” imposes a definition problem (Grosspietsch, 2004). Thus, it could be interesting for the sake of the thesis topic to discuss what the concept stands for.

Research on the concept of image has led to the development of “image theory” which proposes that the world exists and resides in the individual’s mind as a psychological or distorted representation of objective reality (Myers, 1968). According to Makin (1974), an image is “our own personalized, internalized and conceptualizing understanding of what we know” (p.58). Whereas, almost ten years earlier, Reynolds (1965) argued that “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” (p.69). Similarly, Fakeye and Crompton (1991) argued that “image is the mental construct developed by a potential visitor on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions” (p. 10). Moreover, Ditcher (1985) points out that “the concept of “image” can be applied to a political candidate, a product, a country. It describes not individual traits or qualities, but the total impression an entity makes on the minds of others” (p.75). Whereas, Embacher and Buttle (1989) argued that an image is “comprised of the ideas or conceptions held individually or collectively of the destinations under investigation. Image may comprise both cognitive and evaluative components” (p. 3).

Crompton (1979a) points out that there are two schools of thought in regard to image formation. The first one argues that images are largely person-determined. Which means that considerable images variance will always exist, due to the different experiences that people have had. Whereas, the second approach suggests that image is destination determined. Whilst, according to Gallaraza et al. (2002), an image has a “multiple nature”. When considering this construct, the argument for its multiple nature lies in two factors: “The first one coincide to its nature (attribute-based or holistic), whereas the second to its formation process (both static and dynamic consideration)” (Gallaraza et al., 2002, p. 70). The first factor of multiplicity can be found in the fact that any product or service image can be understood as a multi-item construct (Reynolds & Guttman, 1984). However, when the product is a destination, the multiple attributes are the elements of the final composite image (Ahmed, 1991; 1996). Therefore, the internal perceptions are the drivers of an assessment that a consumer makes. Sometimes this assessment can be unconscious, which means that it is not exclusively based on physical or functional attributes, but rather on more holistic attributes (Echtner & Ritchie 1991; 1993). On the other hand, the second factor that influences the multiple nature of a destination’s image is the formation process (Gallarza et al., 2002).

In the formation process, the image is an overall output and comes from a sequence of stages where several elements and factors influence and interrelate with each other (Gallaraza et al. 2002, p. 70). Even after decades and with different definitions, it seems that the concept of an image, however abstract it may be, its importance is acknowledged among several scholars. As Dichter (1985) described, image has “a most powerful influence in the way people perceive things

and should be a crucial concept in shaping our marketing, advertising, and communications efforts” (p. 75).

## DESTINATION IMAGE

Dolnicar and Grün (2013) argue that “destination image”, which refers to individuals’ destination representations, is across all tourism research the most commonly researched topic. Destination image is seen as a valuable concept in the field of tourism as it is linked to positive behavioral intentions towards destinations such willingness-to-visit, willingness to provide word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations, and willingness-to-pay (Kock et al., 2016). Embacher and Buttle (1989) argued that “the image of a location has been shown to have a significant impact upon its selection as a vacation destination. Measuring and managing this image therefore becomes a major priority for marketing and communications staffs in hotels, resorts, national tourist offices and elsewhere” (p. 3). Similarly, Baloglu (1997) argues that tourism and travel literature propose that “the destination image is a critical component in the destination selection process” (p.221). Though, its usage among scholars has been criticized for lacking theoretical accuracy (Josiassen et al., 2016).

Crompton (1979a, p. 18), defined destination image as “the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination”. Whilst, several other studies suggest that destination image is “an overall impression of a destination” (e.g. Frías, Rodriguez & Castañeda 2008; Gallarza, Saura & Garcia 2002). Yet other scholars focus on the multitude of associations held in the memory of

tourists. For example, Cai (2002, p. 723) views destination image as “perceptions about the place as reflected by the associations held in tourist memory”. Some scholars (e.g., Tasci, Gartner & Cavusgil, 2007) argue that destination image represents an interactive system of thoughts, opinions, visualizations, and intentions towards a destination. Therefore, destination image cannot be categorized as a keeper of different and sort of descriptive associations or attributes relating to the destination, but it is rather an overall impression, sometimes referred to as a sum of impressions (Josiassen et al., 2016). It is a mental shortcut used by individuals to make judgments and decisions efficiently and is thus evaluative (rather than descriptive) in nature (Josiassen et al., 2016). In other words, as Frías, Rodríguez, and Castañeda (2008, p. 167) note, destination image is “an overall evaluation expressing the extent to which a destination is liked or disliked”. Josiassen et al. (2016, p. 791) defined destination image similarly as “an individual’s or a group of individuals’ overall evaluative representation of a destination”.

## DESTINATION IMAGE AS A BRAND FOR PLACES

Increased competition between destinations has generated a great interest in the management of brands representing locations and the implementation of measures that allow for greater differentiation (Bickford-Smith, 2009; Sahin & Baloglu, 2014). Hence, new concepts that are linked to brands applied to territories such as place marketing, place branding, and city branding have arisen (Zenker & Beckmann, 2013). More specifically, city branding refers to the study and management of brands representing cities and enclose the study of several concepts linked to branding. A brand is best described as the attributes that are linked to the name and logo related to the personality of goods and that favor a unique positioning (Aaker, 1996). This concept can be

applied to both products and services and especially to territories (countries, regions, and cities) (Hankinson & Cowking, 1993). The concept that identifies the brand as applied to locations is labeled place marketing or place branding, whereas when it is applied to cities, it is known as city branding (Kavaratzis, 2004; Kotler & Gertner, 2002). City branding arose in the 1990s due to increased competition between destinations (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006).

It can be argued that one of the drivers for the shift towards place branding has been the need of industrial cities to redefine themselves (Hubbard & Hall, 1998) driven by a process of reimagining (Short & Kim, 1999). A part of the early place marketing literature (e.g. Gold and Ward, 1994; Kotler et al., 1993; Ward, 1998) has dealt extensively with this reimagining of cities or 'city makeovers' (Holcomb, 1994). This centrality of the place's image for place marketing was determining in the move towards place branding (Kavaratzis, 2004). Hence, place branding has the aim to redefine an image, to reshape the image of a city/destination through endeavor. The nature of the endeavor is such that the contribution and integration of several areas of study are needed in order to explain the application of branding to places.

A place brand has been defined in several ways (see Braun, 2008) with evident differences between the several definitions. The authors will follow the proposition provided by Zenker and Braun (2017) who propose the following: "A place brand is a network of associations in the place consumers' mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioral expression of a place and its' stakeholders. These associations differ in their influence within the network and in importance for the place consumers' attitude and behavior" (p. 275). This definition acknowledges the complexity

of a place brand while focusing on the contrast among the general and communicated place brand and conveys an enhanced conceptualization of the process of how place brands are built (Zenker & Braun, 2017). Moreover, this definition captures the very essence of how the authors see the “shadow effect” of place brand associations to exist in the image formation process in the minds of consumers.

Similar to the formation of an image, brands are also formed in people’s minds. According to Rosenbaum-Elliott et al. (2010, p. 122), “brands exist in the mind of the market, therefore brand management is the management of perceptions”. A logical comparison is that a place, its landscape, its atmosphere and so forth are stimuli that evoke associations in the minds of people who encounter the place. However, these multitude of associations related to a brand are not always aligned and can be conflicting even in the mind of one individual consumer (Braun, 2008). For example, as it happens with destinations, people generally hold a variety of associations towards them, and those associations can sometimes conflict within one another.

The difference between a brand and a place brand lies in the diversity and complexity of the two. In other words, a brand, for instance, is an image that a company wants to represent (Aaker, 2001). There are synergies inside a company, among different departments, that ensure for instance that the marketing department and the sales department have the same “voice tone” and are thus aligned with the brand image (Kavaratzis, 2004). On the other hand, for a place brand, this is a tricky task to achieve. As pointed out by Zenker and Braun (2010), “due to the complexity of the place as a brand there are several issues that can arise, such as the lack of

control over the branded identity, the conflicting interest of stakeholder groups, and the need for social sensitivity which might lead to inability to follow conventional targeting strategies” (p.5).

With all being said, in the case of place branding, stakeholders play a key role in the process (Hanna & Rowley, 2011; Houghton & Stevens, 2010), and the real essence of place branding is to be seen as an ongoing discussion between various stakeholder groups (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013).

Furthermore, cities are very complex systems, and this will directly influence the way their brand needs to be managed (Florek, Insch & Gnoth, 2006; Zenker & Braun, 2017). Since a city brand is predominantly formed through a network of stakeholders, its management needs a collective approach involving both the public and the private sector (Braun, Kavaratzis, & Zenker, 2013; Klijn, Eshuis & Braun, 2012; Merrilees, Miller & Herington, 2012). As well as urban policies, politics and legislation are developed and implemented in collaboration with a diverse network of actors such as companies, tourism or political actors and have a direct impact on the way a city brand develops (Klijn et al., 2012; Merrilees et al., 2012). Another key aspect is the residents’ attitude and loyalty towards the city they live, work and spend their free time in as they must be aligned with expectations of other stakeholders and predefined urban policies (Hanna & Rowley, 2011; Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015). Hence, city brands are per definition co-constructed by their stakeholders (Braun et al., 2013; Klijn et al., 2012).

## THE DRIVERS OF DESTINATION IMAGE

In order to understand the shadow effect” of place brand associations, we must understand the image formation process and its antecedents. Valuable insight can be gained via attitude research as attitudes are seen as associations that individuals link to attitude objects (Kock et al., 2016) and individuals form overall evaluations of these attitude objects via the beliefs they have formed about the attitude object itself (Eagly et al., 1994). Similarly, Um and Crompton (1990) argue that “the image of a place as a pleasure travel destination is a gestalt. It is an holistic construct which, to a greater or lesser extent, is derived from attitudes towards the destination’s perceived tourism attributes” (p. 432-433). Um and Crompton (1990) argue further that generally, tourists have limited information about a destination that they have not previously visited and therefore “the image and attitude dimensions of a place as a travel destination are likely to be critical elements in the destination choice process, irrespective of whether or not they are true representations of what that place has to offer” (p. 433).

Subsequently, when examining the “shadow effect” of place brand associations, the understanding of how individuals form these associations or attitudes in regard to destinations and how they vary in individual importance is key to understanding the underlying assumptions that drive the image formation process.

Two scholars have extensively focused on conceptual treatments of branding and related issues. First of all, according to Aker (1991, p.133), “brand associations are the category of a brand's



assets and liabilities that include anything “linked” in memory to a brand”. Whilst, Keller (1998, p.351) defines brand associations as “informational nodes linked to the brand node in memory that contain the meaning of the brand for consumers”. Brand associations are crucial to both marketers and consumers, since marketers with the help of associations are able to position, differentiate, and extend brands, in order to create positive feelings and attitudes towards a brand and to depict benefits or attributes of either using or purchasing a specific brand (Low et al., 2000). Whilst, for consumers, brand associations are important, since they allow them to process, organize, and retrieve information in memory when making purchase decisions (Aaker, 1996).

According to Aker (1991, p. 440), “brand associations are anything linked in memory to a brand”. Three related constructs that are by definition “linked in memory to a brand”, and which have been researched conceptually and measured empirically, are, brand image, brand attitude, and perceived quality (Low & Lamb, 2000,). Brand images are the reasoned or emotional perceptions consumers attach to a specific brand (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Whilst, brand attitude is defined as consumers’ overall evaluation of a brand whether good or bad (Mitchell & Olson, 1981). And, finally, perceived quality is defined as consumers’ judgment about a product’s overall excellence or superiority (Zeithaml, 1988; Aaker & Jacobson, 1994). Brand image, brand attitude, and perceived quality have been used independently for many years to measure brand associations (Low et al. 2000). Furthermore, they are the three most frequently cited components in marketing literature and have since established reliable and published measures (Low & Lamb 2000).

The associations that individuals apply to a destination can help to build an overall impression of the destination (Josiassen et al, 2016). Subsequently, these associations that are linked to the destination are part of the imagery of that destination which may have an influence on destination image (Josiassen et al, 2016). Such associations are linked to a host of cognitions and feelings that correlate with previous actions, experiences, opinions, intentions, visualizations, and so forth (Low & Lamb, 2000). They can be applied by individuals who are willing and able to expand more mental resources on their destination decision making by using such diverse imagery associations more when making evaluations and decisions (while also checking the continued veracity of the destination image) than those individuals who expend less resources on their destination decision making (Han, 1989; Josiassen, Lukas, and Whitwell, 2013). On the other hand, less familiar and less involved individuals are more likely to skip the examination of their diverse destination imagery and more likely to rely on the overall destination image that they hold towards the destination (Han, 1989; Josiassen, Lukas, & Whitwell, 2013).

As a consequence of answering the call for research by Kock et al. (2016) (as brought forward in the introduction), the authors see it practical to follow their proposed framework of destination image formation when investigating its antecedents. Kock et al. (2016) argue that by applying the concept of destination image we can understand the mental representations that individuals hold towards destinations. More specifically, they argue in their Destination Content Model (DCM) that tourist behavioral intentions are driven by destination image and destination affect, of which destination affect influences destination image, and that both destination image and destination affect are driven by destination imagery. The three concepts (destination image, destination

affect, and destination imagery) are defined by Kock et al. (2016) as follows: destination image – “an individual’s overall evaluative representation of a destination” (p. 31); destination affect – “an individual’s overall affect attributed to a destination” (p. 33); and, destination imagery – “an individual’s diverse cognitive and affective associations relating to a destination” (p. 32). In future references to the three above-mentioned concepts by the authors, these definitions by Kock et al. (2016) apply.

Subsequently, in coherence with the examination of the “shadow effect” of place brand associations, this thesis aims to investigate the underlying assumptions that drive the formation of destination imagery in order to gain further understanding of the mental representation formation process. As the focus of this thesis is to examine the underlying drivers of destination imagery, destination image, and destination affect, or their interrelations will not be discussed thoroughly but rather the focus will be on the underlying factors that influence destination imagery as described.

## DESTINATION IMAGERY

Kock et al. (2016) describe destination imagery to be a multi-dimensional cognitive component that consists of destination attributes (or associations) such as beliefs, impressions or schemas that are “cognitive and affective descriptors and enable the individual to describe or characterize a destination without necessarily implying a certain evaluation” (p.32). Similarly, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) argue with their expectancy-value model (EVM) that individuals ascribe to and hold a

portfolio of associations towards an attitude object from which an overall evaluative attitude is created from. This line of thought is also supported by Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993) who use the term “image” rather than attitude when arguing that “images represent a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with the place. They are a product of the mind trying to process, categorize, and essentialize huge amounts of data about the place” (p. 141). Although destination imagery consists of cognitive and affective associations, Kock et al. (2016) argue that the affective associations are not to be seen as experiential affective states as “they do not reflect an affective response of the individual towards the destination” (p. 32), and thus destination imagery is to be viewed as cognitive in nature. In relation to the “shadow effect” of place brand associations, these attitudes refer to the associations that individuals hold towards destinations, or in other words, associations that drive the formation of destination image. The underlying drivers of these attitudes are of interest in this thesis.

## WHAT DRIVES IMAGERY DEVELOPMENT

Image formation regarding a destination can be defined as the construction of a mental representation based on informational cues conveyed by image formation agents that are selected by an individual (Alhemoud & Armstrong 1996; Bramwell & Rawding 1996; Court & Lupton 1997; Gartner 1993; Gunn 1972; Young 1999). This definition implies the existence of two major components in the image formation process: the informational cues and the perceiver. Both of these components have been included in the models of multiple authors (e.g. Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Beerli & Martin, 2004a; Fridgren, 1984; Goodall, 1990; Stern & Krakover, 1993; Um &

Crompton, 1990; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Similarly, Gartner (1993) argues that there have been numerous models (e.g. Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Schmoll, 1977; Mouthino, 1987) attempting to apprehend the various factors that affect destination selection, and that all of these models recognize and include “push” and “pull” factors (Dann, 1977). Travel motivations of individuals comprise “push” factors, whereas the desirable features or attributes of travel destinations exert “pull” factors (Gartner, 1993).

Um and Crompton (1990) developed a cognitive model of pleasure travel destination choice in which images and attitudes towards destinations were of focus. Their model was built around three concepts: external inputs, internal inputs, and cognitive constructs. External inputs referred to the sum of information sources and social interactions to which the individual is exposed to, such as actual visitation to the destination (significant stimuli), promotional material via the media (symbolic stimuli), and word-of-mouth (social stimuli). Internal inputs referred to the combination of socio-psychological factors of the traveler, such as values, motivation, and sociodemographic variables. While the cognitive constructs referred to the perceptions of destination specific attributes that the individuals contain both in awareness and evoked set of tourism destination. The authors noted that the perceptions of the destination attributes were created and influenced by external and internal inputs. Therefore, the authors argue that beliefs about destination attributes are created by individuals being exposed to external stimuli, but the internal factors of the individual ultimately decide the nature of those beliefs.

In their general model of traveler destination choice, Woodside and Lyonski (1989) identified major forces influencing image formation in a travel and tourism context and argued that marketing variables such as destination promotion products and traveler variables (e.g. previous destination experience, income, age) influence a traveler's image. Stern and Krakover (1993) reached similar conclusions as they argue that both information and personal attributes influence the formation of urban images. They further noted that the factors did not only influence the mix of the image determinants but also had relative impacts on the emerging image itself. Baloglu and McCleary (1999a) similarly argued that the formation of destination image depends on the various roles that personal factors and stimulus factors play in the image formation process. Stimulus factors are ones that originate from external stimulus, physical objects, and previous experiences, whereas personal factors are social and psychological characteristics of the perceiver (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). The authors noted that the variety (amount) and type of information sources that the individual was exposed to, together with his or her sociodemographic characteristics influence the perceptions and cognitions regarding the destination attributes.

When looking at another context, Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) argue similarly that "product image is a function of the interaction between perceiver and product stimulus. The product's attributes, the sponsoring organization, the marketing mix, the modes through which people tend to perceive, personal values, experience, the types of people associated with use of the brand, and a number of context variables have all been said to be among the factors that contribute to the development of a particular brand's image" (p. 117). Contributing to the same line of thought, Dichter (1985) argued almost 15 years earlier that "an image is not anchored in just objective data

and details. It is the configuration of the whole field of the object, the advertising, and, most important, the customer's disposition and the attitudinal screen through which he observes" (p. 75).

Similar conclusions were reached by Tasci and Gartner (2007) in their study "to investigate the relationship between destination image and its determinants as well as the effects on the receivers of image formation programs" (p. 413). The authors constructed their model (p. 422) based on a qualitative assessment of conceptual and empirical tourism image literature. They describe destination image to be a composite of a broad range of inputs, and similar to others, they also include the two ends of the information transmission, to which they refer to as destination (supply) and perceiver (demand). In their model, the inputs are divided into three groups and referred to as controllable (dynamic), semi-controllable (semi-dynamic), and uncontrollable (static). They elaborate further describing that history, for example, is viewed as uncontrollable or static as it cannot be changed, but as it possesses the possibility of interpretation, it has a semi-controllable feature. Whereas the legal system in their view should be seen as dynamic or controllable as it can be changed. Furthermore, physical landscapes in their view should be seen as static inputs, but on the other hand, man-made landscapes should be seen as semi-controllable. The authors describe that what all these inputs have in common is that, at least in short-term, they give rise to a destinations image capital which refers to historical, social, physical, political, legal, economic, and cultural aspects that can be linked to a destination.

Although, as elaborated by Tasci and Gartner (2007), the image capital is rarely seen “as it is” by a target market since more dynamic and often uncontrollable sources of destination image formation agents (or bias agents) exist which can influence image formation. Therefore, the authors divided these potential bias agents into three categories: supply-side, independent, and demand-side. As described by the authors, destination-oriented marketing activities (supply-side) are as seen dynamic or controllable factors that try to polish and project positive images of a destination. Consequently, the authors describe marketing activities to have a purpose of manipulating uncontrollable or static characteristics of a destination into semi-controllable or semi-dynamic inputs. On the other hand, the authors describe independent sources of image determinants to usually be out from the immediate control of destination marketers and to have the possibility of working for or against the projected induced image, while, similar to supply-side agents, possibly reflecting an objective reality. Finally, the demand-side image formation agent was described as an uncontrollable source of image formation, referring to the potential market acting as an input filter. More specifically, they described that the combination of individual sociodemographic and cultural characteristics, along with individually specific needs and motivations, determine behavior. Furthermore, they argue that this ultimately affects the interpretation of destination characteristics and consequently, destination image formation as these variables define what each individual decides to see, hear, read, think about, and pay attention to.

Adding to the spectrum of inputs that affect destination image, Tasci and Gartner (2007) add researchers as one final image formation determinant as images held by perceivers can be



revealed via research which are based on certain theories, methodologies and interpretations selected by the researcher based on their individual and educational background (Dagostar & Isotalo, 1992; Echtner & Richie, 1993). Tasci and Gartner (2007) conclude that together these determinants construct destination image which (p. 422) “consists of organic (demand), induced (supply), and autonomous elements that become a complex amalgam, in which it becomes most difficult to separate the input (e.g., history) from the filter used both on the supply side (e.g., marketing) and demand side (e.g., culture) to create a destination image”.

#### PERSONAL FACTORS

Several authors (e.g. Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; San Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008), recognized the importance of personal factors, socio-demographics, motivations, and information sources in tourism activities. Moreover, from a consumer behavior perspective, personal factors relate to the socio-demographic characteristics of the individuals (age, gender, level of education, family life cycle, social class, etc.) as well as to those of psychological nature (motivations, values, personality, lifestyle, etc.) (Beerli & Martin, 2004a).

According to Beerli and Martin (2004a) the personal characteristics of an individual, or what they refer to as “internal factors” influence the formation of an image. Similarly, Um and Crompton (1990) propose that beliefs regarding attributes of a destination are formed when individuals are exposed to external stimuli, but the nature of these beliefs change depending on an individual’s internal factors. Thus, the perceived image will be formed not only through the image projected

by the destination, but by the individual's motivation, own needs, preferences, prior knowledge, and other personal characteristics which will also play a central role in this task (Beerli & Martin, 2004a). In such a way, individuals are able to build their own mental picture of the place, which will allow them to produce their own personal perceived image.

The vast majority of decision process models for destination choice (e.g. Stabler, 1995; Um & Crompton, 1990; Woodside & Lysonsky, 1989) display that personal characteristics, such as gender, age, and education are internal factor inputs that directly influence the perception of places (Beerli & Martin, 2004a). According to Beerli and Martin (2004a), perception is the process in which individuals rely upon to select, organize, and interpret incoming information that will eventually lead to the creation of an image, which will depend on a specific stimulus as well as on the general stimuli related to the environment and the individual's personal characteristics and circumstances (Beerli & Martin, 2004a). Therefore, perceptive processes related to selective attention, distortion, and retention vary from individual to individual (Kotler, Camara, Grande & Cruz, 2000).

#### *SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES*

Mayo and Stabler (1990), studied destination images within the context of consumer behavior and supply theory to identify the key variables and constructs influencing the image of destinations. They suggested an image creation or formation model as a function of tourist demand and supply by integrating consumer behavior and economic theory. According to that integrative model, sociodemographic variables such as age, education, income, and various information sources used

(promotional and social) are some key factors influencing consumers' touristic image (Mayo & Stabler, 1990). Tasci and Gartner (2007) also point out that socioeconomic factors have been studied with respect to influencing destination image. However, the results have been divergent. Since, age, gender, income, marital status, education, and country of residence have all received attention, destination image is not entirely based on the interpretation of visual or verbal information; it includes biases, histories, assumptions, preconceptions, prejudices, and factual stories, especially at the international level (Tasci & Gartner, 2007).

Whilst, according to Walmsley and Jenkins (1993), who studied affective images of several resorts in the North Coast of New South Wales, Australia. They found that a principal component analysis indicated that affective images of a few resorts showed variations due to gender and age (Walmsley & Jenkins 1993). Moreover, Husbands (1989) investigated the relationship between perception of tourism and sociodemographic variables and found that perception among Livingstone, Zambia locals differed significantly based on only age and education variables (Husbands, 1989). Likewise, according to Baloglu and McCleary (1999a), age and education appear to be major determinants of image.

According to Weaver and McCleary (1984), age has also found to be a factor in determining credibility value by various companies and thus further investigation is required since it may show a relationship between age and different types of image formation agents (Weaver & McCleary, 1984). Beerli and Martin (2004a), also found out that the age of tourists significantly influenced the cognitive dimension of the natural and social environment, both for first-time and repeat tourists, with the older tourists being those who made a more positive evaluation of this

dimension of the image. Moreover, Capella and Greco (1987) found out that people over 65 are a perfect market segment since they are likely to be retired and therefore have more free time than the young segment. Furthermore, given their economic stability and positive attitude toward travel, they spend more money than average people on vacation travel, entertainment, and restaurant needs (Capella & Greco, 1987).

Whereas, regarding education, Beerli and Martin (2004a), found that the perceived image of the tourist destination is partially influenced by the level of education since this variable had a significant effect on the affective dimension of image. Moreover, it was found that the higher the level of education was, the lower the evaluation of the affective dimension of image was (Beerli & Martin, 2004a). Whilst, Stern and Krakover (1993) chose an individual's education level as one of the most important consumer characteristics to investigate in regards of its relationship towards the cognitive, affective, and overall components of image. Their path analysis indicated that the strength and direction of causal effects among the three constructs showed variations for different education groups (Stern & Krakover, 1993).

Furthermore, one of the main sociodemographic variables applied to tourism studies is gender as according to Kinnaird et al. (1994), tourism is a process that is composed of gendered societies and all the elements of tourism-related developments and activities embody gender relations. Collins and Tisdell (2002), similarly argue that although it is commonly believed that in modern times the differences between the travel patterns of men and women are much less noticeable than before, gender differences related to travel and tourism still remain substantive. Moreover, Waters (1988) concluded from a US study that even though men still dominated the business travel market,

women appear to take as many and sometimes even more holidays than men. However, only a little amount of research has been elaborated to address gender perspectives within tourism (Kinnaird et al., 1994; Kinnaird & Hall, 1996; Swain, 1995). It is observed that there is a lack of gender-specific concerns, with a prevailing male bias in tourism research where no allowance is made for gender differences in social research (Breathnach et al., 1994). Although some studies have discussed gender differences in tourism, many focused-on aspects of tourism development and consequently limited research has been conducted towards examining the perception and attitude issues related to gendered differences (Harvey et al., 1995). Therefore, to be able to serve to the specific needs and aspirations of both genders, it is important that marketers and promoters understand the origins and psychological differences that males and females hold when it comes to information processing.

Based on earlier cognitive studies, Meyers-Levy (1988) studied gender differences regarding information search behavior in visual-spatial and verbal abilities and found out that males generally did not process all available information but rather relied on their own opinions as a basis for decision making. By doing so, males were found to reach conclusions faster than women. Moreover, males were more likely to focus on concrete objective cues such as physical attributes, while women relied more on various information sources before making judgments. Similarly, Meyers-Levy and Sternthal (1991) and Darley & Smith (1995) agree that the use of gender applied for segmenting the market it was found to be a successful strategy, since the segments were found to be easy to identify, to access and big enough to be profitable (Kim et al., 2007). Moreover, the human brain is divided into two hemispheres. Lateralization refers to the specialization in the functioning of each hemisphere. (Kim et al., 2007). While, the left hemisphere

specializes in verbal abilities and the right hemisphere specializes in spatial perception (Hansen, 1981). Recently, several clinical and experimental research showed that the two hemispheres are more symmetrically organized in females and more specialized in males (Everhart et al., 2001; Saucier & Elias, 2001). Therefore, for male's speech and language are not specific brain skills and they primarily operate on the left side of the brain. Due to this "non-compartmentalizing" of women's brains, talking is necessary for processing information (Kim et al., 2007). Moreover, regarding emotions, men's emotion is located in two areas of the right side of their brain (Gorman, Nash, & Ehrenreich, 1992). Located in only one side, men's emotions can operate separately from the other brain functions (Kim et al., 2007). Based on the above discussion, the brain lateralization differences attributed to the two sexes are also likely to influence product evaluation and judgment (Gorman, Nash, & Ehrenreich, 1992).

It is widely acknowledged that gender is socially constructed since it is based on a person's view of him- or herself as possessing those qualities that society presumes to be masculine, feminine, or both (Kinnaird, 1994). However, sex is a biological classification, and the term alludes to whether an individual is biologically and genetically male or female (Wilson, 2002). The study of gender and gender-related behavior has been and continues to be one of the most important forms of segmentation used by marketing communicators (Darley & Smith, 1995; Holbrook, 1986; Meyers-Levy, 1988; Meyers-Levy & Sternthal, 1991; Putrevu, 2001). For example, Holbrook (1986) found out that gender is a key variable in moderating consumers' evaluative judgments.

The relevant literature on the topic mainly considers various gender differences regarding participation in leisure activities (Jackson & Henderson, 1995; Shaw, 1994; Frew & Shaw, 1999; Carr, 1999), travel patterns (Firestone & Shelton, 1994), preferences for travel experiences

(Mceczkowski, 1990; McCleary et al., 1994; Collins & Tisdell, 2002), perceptions (Harvey et al., 1995), motivations (McGehee et al., 1996) and touristic decision-making processes (Cosenza & Davis, 1981; Fondness, 1992; Mattila et al., 2001; Mottiar & Quinn, 2004). They proposed that situational factors, such as marital, parental and employment status have different impacts on leisure participation by gender and that these may have a greater negative effect on women's activity involvement. Thus, this could be associated to the different role of leisure in women's life and structured gender relations in a masculine society (Freysinger & Ray, 1994; Shaw, 1994; Henderson et al., 1988). Moreover, it has been advised by researchers that gender differences in leisure behavior may be linked to the socio-cultural norms and values associated with people's home environment and social structure (Jackson & Henderson, 1995). Similarly, Henderson (1994) proposed that the interpretation of gender differences in regard of making choices in leisure activities should be associated to women's and/or men's experiences within the context and situation of gender issues.

Historically, Garburn and Jafari (1991) note that "the term tourist for the guest role was coined in Europe by the mid-1700s to describe participants, usually young men, in "tours" or pleasurable educational journeys. The term later came to include the bourgeoisie, large groups, and women" (p.2). Furthermore, for social scientists committed in tourism research, gender is a crucial category useful in human resource studies, economic development projects, marketing strategies, site and infrastructure planning, and policy development (Baretje & Bouteille 1992). As suggested by different researchers, gender differences can be found in factors such as biological factors (Buss, 1995; Everhart, Shucard, Quattrin & Shucard, 2001; Hall, 1984; Saucier & Elias, 2001) gender identity (Bem, 1974; Fischer & Arnold, 1994; Spence & Helmreich, 1978), and gender role attitudes

(Buss & Schaninger, 1987; Douglas, 1976; Eagly, 1987; Fisher & Arnold, 1990, 1994; Schaninger & Buss, 1985). This has led to the fact that gender has been regularly used as a basis for segmentation for a significant proportion of products and services (Putrevu, 2001). The prevailing research question has focused on whether biological make-up or social factors drive these gender differences.

According to Kinnaid et al. (1994), there are three issues that are central to the conceptual framework for understanding gender in tourism: first of all, tourism is a process constructed from gendered societies, ordered by gender relations; second, gender relations over time inform and are informed by the associated economic, political, social, and cultural environmental dimensions of all societies engaged in tourism development; and, third, power, control, and equality issues are expressed through race, class, and gender relations in tourism practices. According to Kinnaid et al. (1994) “tourism involves processes which are constructed out of complex and varied social realities and relations that are often hierarchical and unequal. All parts of the process embody different social relations of which gender relations are on element” (p. 6). Thus, women and men are differently involved in the construction and consumption of tourism. Hence, gendered “realities” shape tourism marketing, guests’ motivations, and hosts’ actions (Kinnaid, 1994).

Another aspect of this gendered society can be found in the predominant tourism brochure representation of men associated with action, power, and ownership, while women are associated with passivity, availability, and being owned (Kinnaid, 1994). From this perspective, uses of women, sexual imagery, and exotic markers in the tourism industry to promote destinations are seen too often to reinforce gender stereotypes and hierarchical divisions of labor (Enloe, 1989).



### *PSYCHOGRAPHIC VARIABLES*

On the other hand, it has been proposed that psychographic variables are more predictive than demographic ones and are able to support such tourism decisions as to the development of destinations and supporting services, positioning, product, advertising, promotions and packaging (Khale & Chiagouris, 1999). Likewise, Lehto et al. (2002) report that psychographics, rather than demographics, may be an effective tool for understanding why certain travelers tend to rather a specific type of vacation destination. Woodside and Pitts (1976) propose similarly as they suggested that lifestyle information might be more useful in predicting foreign and domestic travel behavior than demographic information. Moreover, psychographic variables aim to describe the human characteristics of consumers that may have a bearing on their responses to products, packaging, and advertising (Wells, 1974). Therefore, lifestyle analysis and psychographic research have become significant areas in the analysis of marketing activity due to the increased awareness of their predictive power in consumer behavior (Demby, 1974).

Psychographic factors such as the above-mentioned will influence one's cognitive organization of perceptions, hence influencing the perceptions of the environment and thus, the resulting image (Beerli & Martin, 2004a). Various authors state that motivations influence the image formation process and the choice of a destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Stabler, 1995; Um & Crompton, 1990). According to Baloglu (1997), Dann (1996) and Gartner (1993) motivations apply a direct influence on the affective component of image. As much as affective images refer to the feelings aroused by a place, it is likely that people with different motives may assess a destination

with similar approaches if its perception satisfies their needs (Beerli & Martin, 2004a).

Subsequently, since the affective dimension influences the overall image, motivations might as well influence, either directly or indirectly, the overall image (Beerli & Martin, 2004a).

As pointed out by several authors, motivation is acknowledged as the main concept in comprehending tourism behavior and the destination choice process (Uysal & Hagan, 1993; Weaver, McCleary, Lepisto & Damonte, 1994), since they are the impelling and compelling forces behind all actions (Crompton, 1979b; Iso-Ahola, 1982), and are generally needed as socio-psychological forces that prepare an individual to opt for and take part in a touristic activity (Beard & Raghep, 1983; Crandall, 1980; Iso-Ahola, 1982). Travel motivations have also been linked to Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs by Hudman (1980) who proposed that the need for self-actualization, self-esteem, belonging, recognition, and status are elements of the internal motivation for travel. By the same token, Smith (1983) suggested how socioeconomic variables, interests, attitudes, and opinions influence travel motivations and, hence, decisions. Similarly, Cohen and Taylor (1976) examined push factors and argued that holidays are "culturally sanctioned escape routes for inhabitants of the western world" (p. 34).

Moreover, it has been generally recognized that women have travel needs related to their travel motivations, that are not always homogeneous with the travel needs of men, and as such, this finding is a crucial revelation for the tourism industry (Squire, 1994). Therefore, gender differences in travel motivations will reflect the differences between the genders that are to be found in many other aspects of the lives of both (Squire, 1994). Due to the extensive studies that have examined socio-psychological motives, researchers are just beginning to examine the differences in tourism

motivations between genders and therefore, very limited research has been conducted to investigate this issue (Norris & Wall, 1994). McGehee et al. (1996) investigated the differences in the push and pull motivational factors of Australian leisure travelers from a gendered perspective. The study reported that male and female tourists have given different importance on some push and pull motivational factors. Women were more likely to be motivated by culture, opportunities for family bonding, and prestige. While men gave more importance to sports and adventure when engaging in the pleasure travel experience. Similar research outcomes were indicated when researchers investigated the preferences for travel experiences between genders. Commonly, males were more likely to seek action and adventure and were not scared of taking risks, while women tended to search for cultural and educational experiences, with security as a priority (Mieczkowski, 1990). Mitchell and Vassos (1997) examined risk and risk reduction perceptions in the context of culture and gender in package holiday purchasing. Interestingly, they found that these factors were directly influenced by cultures and genders. Carr (2001) also found numerous gendered similarities and differences related to young tourists' perceptions of danger and its influence on the use of leisure spaces and times. It was detected that men were more likely than women not to perceive danger or to perceive lower levels of danger in public spaces.

Finally, depending on their sociodemographic and cultural characteristics, it has been acknowledged that people have different inclinations, needs, interests, and motivations which consequently determine what individuals select to hear, read, see, think about, and pay attention to (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). These differences will affect how they decipher destination characteristics and subsequently, destination image (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Hence, it is assumed that the personal interests that individuals have would also play a part in shaping the imagery that

individuals hold towards a certain destination, thus also influencing the destination image of that particular place.

*Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses were formulated:*

Personal Factors affect Destination Imagery. Namely,

- H1: Age significantly affects Destination Imagery
- H2: Education significantly affects Destination Imagery
- H3: Gender significantly affects Destination Imagery
- H4: Personal Interests significantly affect Destination Imagery
- H5: Travel Motivations significantly affect Destination Imagery

## INFORMATION SOURCES

Studies regarding the relationship between various information sources and destination image have received a relatively small amount of interest from researchers (Yacout & Hefny, 2014).

Information sources (Beerli & Martín, 2004a), also known as stimulus factors (Baloglu & McCleary 1999a), or image forming agents (Gartner 1993) are the forces, which influence the forming of perceptions and evaluations in consumers' minds. They indicate the amount and diverse nature of information sources to which individuals are exposed to (Beerli & Martín, 2004a). For example, Tasci (2009) and Lee (2011) empirically proved that the information that various visual and verbal media provides, may have an impact on and have an influential part when it comes to the image formation of a destination.

Various authors (e.g. Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gartner, 1993; Mansfeld, 1992; Um & Crompton, 1990; Woodside & Lyonsky, 1989) from the perspective of behavior in the choice of a destination have proposed models that attempt to explain this behavior. They argue that the information sources to which individuals are exposed to determine that certain destinations are considered possible alternative travel choices, together with a number of other factors. Similar thoughts have been proposed by Sparks and Pan (2009) as they argue that tourists mainly draw upon information sources such as television programs, friends, magazines, and travel books for input in their tourist decision making. While Walmsley and Lewis (1984) propose that individuals gather information via various sources to form images of places and environments that have recreational potential. These cognitive images, not objective realities, that are held by these individuals then become the foundation for recreational behavior (Aldskogius, 1977). Moreover, there seems to be broad consensus amongst researchers (e.g. Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Gartner, 1993; Holbrook, 1978; Um & Crompton, 1990; Woodside & Lyonski, 1989) that information sources to which individuals are exposed to directly influence the cognitive/perceptual evaluations/components of image formation but not the affective part. This view is also in concert with the Destination Content Model of Kock et al. (2016), as discussed previously.

The information sources individuals are exposed to have been received various typologies from authors. For example, Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (1995) propose the division as commercial or non-commercial, and whether the information comes from personal or impersonal sources. In another approach, Um and Crompton (1990) divide information sources into symbolic stimuli

(destination marketers' promotional efforts) and social stimuli (word-of-mouth recommendations of friends and relatives). While, Gitelson and Crompton (1983) grouped them into internal and external information sources and argued that both types influence the images of tourists. Internal information sources referred to an individual's previous experiences, whereas external sources consist of formal (travel agents and tourism offices) and informal sources (friends and relatives). Raitz and Dakhil (1989) argue that information gathered via informal sources is typically unstructured or unorganized and that it may only be obtained upon request. Furthermore, they propose that the quality and accuracy of this type of information depends on the teller's observational skills and may be subject to bias. On the other hand, they propose that formal sources differ substantially by character as they are purposefully designed to deliver consistent messages regarding the qualities of a destination. Additionally, they also propose that formal information is often "manufactured" by advertising firms with the aim to create positive images that lure in visitors and that it can exist in various forms ranging from print and electronic media to professional consultants and travel agents acting as middlemen who promote destinations and convey images.

Another approach can be found from the research of Molina et al. (2017) in which they study the differences in the city branding of European capitals based on online versus offline sources of information. While a more classical approach was proposed by Phelps (1986) as she divided information sources somewhat differently into primary and secondary sources. She describes primary images to derive from experiences of a place gathered via actual visitation, whereas secondary images refer to images created without actual visitation but rather constructed via

various external information sources. She also argued that the nature of images will vary based on the individual as for example, primary images of tourists may dramatically differ from ones of local residents although both are formed via “real” experiences.

Probably one of the most cited typologies of information sources comes from Gartner (1993).

According to him, the image forming process should be seen as a continuum of various information sources or agents that independently act with the purpose of forming a single image in the mind of the individual. These agents he classified broadly as induced, autonomous, and organic. The basis for these agents was originally developed by Gunn (1972) on which Gartner (1993) elaborated further over 20 years later. They contend that organic images result as a function of noncommercial information sources (e.g. word-of-mouth or actual visitation) that are presumed as information sources which are not controlled by destination marketers. Induced images were described as a function of marketing efforts of destination promoters (e.g. promotional materials). Whilst, autonomous image formation agents were described to comprise of independent information sources (e.g. documentaries, movies, mass media) that influence the image formation process of the perceiver.

However, as pointed out by Gartner (1993) and Shelby and Morgan (1996), due to clever development of media relations by destination marketers, organic, induced, and autonomous image formation agents rarely exist in mutual exclusivity but rather co-exist in some form.

Therefore, Gartner (1993) divided these agents further into eight categories, elaborating on the different degrees of control by destination marketers, their ability to penetrate the market, and

how credible they were seen as by the receivers of the information. He divided induced agents into overt induced 1 and 2, and covert induced 1 and 2. Organic agents were split into unsolicited organic, solicited organic, and organic. While autonomous image formation agents stayed unaltered.

According to Gartner (1993), overt induced 1 referred to traditional forms of advertising such as brochures, tv, radio and print, while overt induced 2 referred to information that was received from tour operators, wholesalers and other tourism related organizations. Covert induced 1 referred to traditional forms of advertising that used second-party endorsements such as celebrities in promotional materials, while covert induced 2 differed in the way that the delivered information seemed to originate from apparently unbiased sources (second-party endorsement) as it was not clear that the information actually originated from destination marketers. Unsolicited organic images were described to derive from unrequested information that individuals (e.g. friends, relatives) who had been to a destination would deliver in casual discussion. Whereas solicited organic images derived from traditional word-of-mouth information that was delivered upon request. And finally, organic images were created via actual visitation on previous travels to a destination. Gartner (1993) argued that these image formation agents had varying levels of influence on destination image formation and should thus be applied in various combinations when pursuing effective destination image promotion.



*EXTERNAL INFORMATION SOURCES*

A variety of studies have pointed out that the primary purpose of the information search is to support decision-making by reducing risk and uncertainty and to support the choice of product which is strengthened by the information search behavior (Bettman, 1979; Bloch et al., 1986; Moorthy et al., 1997). This process of acquiring information is somewhat necessary for tourists in regard of destination selection and for various on-site purchase decisions such as accommodation, transportation, activities, and tours (Fodness & Murray, 1998; Gursoy & Chen, 2000; Snepenger et al., 1990). The ways tourists process information is in many ways different than from how other consumers process information and this is mainly caused by structural reasons (Schertler et al., 1995). The consumption of tourist products occurs in geographically distant places to which tourists have to travel by leaving their daily environment. As a result, it is rare that a tourism-product can be tested and controlled prior to the purchase decision (Werthner & Klein, 1999). Thus, a distance between time and space separates the purchase and consumption processes, which can only be conquered by gathering available information regarding the product prior to the purchase decision (Werthner & Klein, 1999).

As a result, external information sources play a critical role in destination image formation since travel products are intangible in nature and therefore external information sources represent the product in the absence of actual visitation (MacKay & Fesenmaier 1997; Sirakaya & Sonmez 2000). This environmental information that influences image formation comes, to a large degree, from various media sources and personal communication (Golledge & Stimson, 1987). The pre-taste of a

destination that external information sources portray leads to higher levels of familiarity with a destination which influences destination image formation (Baloglu, 2001; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). For example, Lepp et al. (2011) found that after experiment groups were exposed to information, they displayed positive feelings towards destinations with reduced perceptions of risk.

One of the most typical external information sources in regard to destinations is promotional materials (induced image formation agents). Their aim is to alter, fortify, and for starters, establish the image of a destination (Goodrich, 1977; Gunn, 1972; Human, 1999; Hunt, 1975; Iwashita, 2003; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997, 2000; Reilly, 1990; Young, 1999). They create awareness regarding a destination, provoke interest, arouse desire, and finally result in action (Court & Lupton 1997; Selby & Morgan 1996). After all, when considering the nature of advertising, their goal is to inform individuals about the existence of products and services, to depict them favorably, and to change the opinions of individuals, their attitudes, and behavior so that they would want to consume a specific product or service (Uzzell, 1984).

More attention has been given to visual aspects of promotional materials since they embody the actuality of the destination and present destination dimensions (Day et al., 2002; Hanefors & Mossberg, 2002; Smith & MacKay, 2001). In lack of actual visitation, destination image relies upon visuals rather than actual features of the destination (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 2000). This implies that external image is based mainly on cues that these visual messages convey. Thus, the type and amount of these visuals are of extreme importance and the inclusion or exclusion of certain

aspects determines the type of an image that a destination is trying to create in the mind of the consumer (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). For example, Tasci (2009, p. 502) found that “the presence of visual information, as in promotional movies, can improve the image of a destination’s attractions, increase its desirability, increase the intention to visit, and bridge social distances between people”.

On the other hand, as was previously discussed, the projected images by destinations do not act alone but coexist with other factors in the image formation process. These autonomous and organic image formation agents (Gartner, 1993) act as intermediates between destinations and the information receivers that can change, enhance, and diminish the transmitted information cues (Tasci & Gartner, 2007).

Various autonomous image formation agents have been studied in relation to destination image and found influential in image formation. For example, Gartner and Shen (1992) found that autonomous media sources had influenced U.S. residents’ images of China negatively after the Tiananmen Square incident. Similarly, Jalilvand (2017) argues that mass media sources are important factors affecting tourists’ destination perceptions as he proposes that they can have a positive impact on destination image, tourists’ attitudes towards destinations, and future travel intentions.

On a different approach, non-visitors could also be influenced by tv-drama series, documentaries, and movies (Kim, 2012; Pan & Tsang, 2014; Terzidou et al., 2017). For example, Kim and Richardson (2003) found significant positive impacts from a movie related to Vienna on the city's image and on respondents' future intentions to visit the city. They propose further that the impact of news coverage and popular tv programs stems from them being deeply rooted in people's everyday lives and that they can convey substantial information regarding a place in a rather short period. Moreover, images of religious tourists (similar to other tourists) were found to be influenced by representational methods such as myths and narratives (Badone, 2007; Bell, 2003; Selwyn, 1996).

Similar to induced and autonomous, also organic image formation agents (Gartner, 1993) from external information sources (Gitelson & Crompton, 1983) have been found to affect the images of tourist. More specifically, multiple studies (e.g. Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Isaac & Eid, 2018; Jalilvand, 2017; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Morgan et al., 2003) have found word-of-mouth (WOM) to be influential in creating images of destinations in the minds of consumers. For example, Morgan et al. (2003) found negative WOM to have an overwhelming effect on a destination's image, as dissatisfied tourists spread their experiences. Similarly, Jalilvand (2017) found that WOM had considerable influence on destination image, visitors' attitudes towards destinations, and travel intentions.

Furthermore, although a relatively new development in communication and information exchange, the internet and its' various websites continue to expand as an impactful source for

travelers (Heung, 2003) and it has been found to influence destination image by various researchers (e.g. Beerli & Martin, 2004a; Biswas, 2004; Isaac & Eid, 2018; Li et al., 2009; Llodrà-Riera et al., 2015). Thus, it is no surprise that online information search behavior has attracted major interests from researchers (Kim et al., 2007). For example, research has shown that the internet acts as an important source of information for travel planning (Choi et al., 2007; Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006; Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2006), especially due to its convenience and speed (Cheung & Law, 2009), and for the perceived trustworthiness of information gathered via internet sources (Pan & Fesenmaier 2006).

Tseng et al. (2015) propose that the increased usage of the internet has facilitated virtual interactions among consumers and providers of tourism service and experiences. Moreover, they propose that via features such as social network services and travel review sites, the internet is becoming an increasingly impactful venue for communications and knowledge exchange, and thus, having a large impact on tourism products, destination image, and tourists' travel intentions. Therefore, in today's world, WOM does not only travel via traditional discussion, but as proposed by Rice (2001) new electronic media, and especially the internet and all its discussion platforms have facilitated the spreading of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan (2008, p. 461) proposed eWOM to consist of "all informal communications directed at consumers through Internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers".

Various authors have found eWOM to affect image formation (e.g. Abubakar, 2016; Jalilvand et al., 2012; Tseng et al., 2015; Ye et al., 2011). For example, Jalilvand et al. (2012) found in their study of 264 international tourists that destination image, tourists' attitudes, and future travel intentions were positively influenced by eWOM. Similar conclusions were reached by Abubakar (2016) in his research among 216 tourists in Cyprus as he found medical tourists' eWOM to positively relate to future travel intentions and destination trust.

Although some researchers (e.g. Beerli & Martin, 2004a) assume the internet to be an induced image formation agent, Llodrà-Riera et al. (2015) argue it to comprise of multiple types of web platforms that can be classified along Gartner's (1993) typology of traditional offline information sources, namely: induced, organic, and autonomous image formation agents. The authors argue based on a survey of 541 tourists and residents of Mallorca that a multitude of web platforms and sites, displaying both user- and supplier-generated content, exert significant influences and merge to form an information source construct.

#### *INTERNAL INFORMATION SOURCES*

Similar to external information sources, also internal information sources (Gitelson & Crompton 1983), or organic image formation agents (Gartner, 1993) via actual visitation have been found to affect destination image (e.g. Baloglu, 2001; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b; Dann, 1996; MacKay & Fesenmaier 1997; Milman & Pizam 1995; Pearce 1982; Selby & Morgan 1996; Vogt & Andereck 2003). Multiple researchers have examined image modifications due to actual experience. A part

of these studies applied a longitudinal approach in which image modifications were compared between tourists' pre- and post-trip destination image (Pearce, 1982; Phelps, 1986; Dann, 1996), whereas other studies focused on image differences between individuals who had visited a destination (visitors) to those who had not (non-visitors) (Ahmed, 1991; Chon, 1991; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Fridgen, 1987; Hu & Ritchie, 1993; Milman & Pizam, 1995).

In addition to influencing destination image, multiple studies have found the images of visitors to differ from images held by non-visitors (e.g. Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Konecnik & Ruzzier, 2006; Stylidis & Cherifi, 2018; Tasci, 2006). While, some researchers have found prior visitation to result in more improved affective responses (Baloglu, 2001; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b; Dann, 1996; George & George, 2004). Similarly, it has been proposed that visitation often leads to higher levels of involvement and place attachment (Gross & Brown, 2008). Moreover, other studies have concluded that actual visitation creates more accurate and positive images compared to images of non-visitors (e.g. Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b; Chon, 1991; Pearce, 1982; Richards, 2001; Stylidis & Cherifi, 2018). On the other hand, Fakeye and Crompton (1991) and Hu and Ritchie (1993) found mixed results, while some researchers did not find prior visitation to result in significant changes between the two groups (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999; Hunt, 1975; Young, 1999).

Although some variance within results, it is generally agreed amongst researchers that first-hand experiences via actual visitation lead to more realistic images of destinations (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). For example, when an individual experiences a place the preconceptions towards that place

are reduced which leads to an alteration of the perceived image, in which the initial simpler perception transforms into a more defined and comprehensive image (Beerli & Martín, 2004a, 2004b). Fakeye and Crompton (1991) describe this type of image as “complex” because it gives possibility to a more differentiated outlook with more accurate comprehension of the destination in comparison to simple stereotyping, especially if tourists’ spend an adequate amount of time at the destination to be exposed to a multitude of dimensions through developing contacts and relationships. Styliadis and Cherifi (2018) reached a similar conclusion regarding visitors’ and non-visitors’ images of London as they found non-visitors images to be less specific, more vague and simple, and even inaccurate or unreal at times, while the images of visitors were more specific and less stereotypical. Baloglu and McCleary (1999b) argue for these image differences not to be surprising as “non visitors must form their perceptions on the basis of secondary information such as brochures, movies, word of mouth, and other media, while visitors can incorporate direct impressions gathered during time spent at the tourist destination” (p. 151). Moreover, Papadimitriou et al. (2015) found that experiences regarding a destination affected how individuals arrived at WOM communications. They propose that past experiences make it possible for more attribute-based processing based on cognitive and affective images, while for individuals without specific destination experience all fragments of destination image may independently affect WOM communications or transform into a holistic image and generate positive WOM communications.

Adding to visitation itself, personal experiences towards a destination have been measured in terms of the number of visits to a destination (Baloglu, 2001; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991;



Rittichainuwat, Qu & Brown, 2001; Schroeder, 1996; Vogt & Andereck, 2003) and length of stay at a destination (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Schroeder 1996; Vogt & Andereck, 2003), which have found to positively influence destination image. Furthermore, these constructs combined with the amount of information that individuals hold towards destinations have also found to positively influence destination image (Baloglu, 2001; Ozretic-Dosen et al., 2018) and conceptualized together under the term familiarity (Baloglu, 2001).

Baloglu (2001) argues that previous visitation alone is not sufficient to define and measure how familiar tourists are with a destination. Furthermore, he proposes that tourists' images regarding a destination after visitation are dependent on a combination of knowledge level gathered prior to visitation and via direct experiences. In his view, especially large-scale settings such as tourist destination countries cannot be experienced fully on first visits and therefore tourists will still hold informational images regarding aspects that were not experienced during these visits.

Moreover, Baloglu (2001) proposed that destination familiarity significantly affects destination image and that higher levels of familiarity are linked to more favorable images of destinations. Thus, the concept has an important role in the destination selection process of tourists (Baloglu, 2001). Baloglu (2001) and Ryan and Cave (2005) propose that increasing amounts of visitations to a destination has a supplementary role in increasing familiarity, also leading to the formation of positive post-visit images. Furthermore, it has been proposed that tourists' affective images become central with increased levels of destination familiarity (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997). Moreover, Baloglu and McCleary (1999b) proposed that higher amounts of time spent by non-

visitors on information search resulted in higher amounts of collected information, which contributed to more complete and specific images prior to visitation.

Additionally, the impact that destination familiarity has on destination image formation has also been studied between images held by tourists in comparison to local residents and they have been shown to differ (Sternquist-Witter 1985; Stylidis et al., 2016; Stylidis et al., 2017). For example, Sternquist-Witter (1985) measured image variations between local retailers and tourists in Michigan and found local retailers to evaluate the place more favorably than tourists. While, Stylidis et al. (2016) found local resident perceptions to be more accurate or to possess higher levels of attachment because of life experiences at the place, compared to visitors.

Another aspect of destination familiarity is that the images tourists hold towards destinations seem to evolve over time, thus implying a dynamic nature for the construct (e.g. Beerli & Martín, 2004a, 2004b; Martín-Santana et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2015; Stylidis & Cherifi, 2018; Tseng et al., 2015). For example, Martín-Santana et al. (2017) propose trip involvement, external information search time, and the number of attractions visited to incur changes in cognitive images. In regards of trip intensity, the authors propose that an increase in the number of tourist attractions visited during a trip results in a larger cognitive image gap as tourists become more aware of various aspects than prior to their trip, and thus creating a gap between the images. Furthermore, the authors note that the cognitive image gap is affected more by trip intensity than by the information tourists hold prior to visitation that resulted from the amount of time spent on information search. Thus, experiences during visitation cause greater positive change in

destination image than external information search prior to visitation (Martín-Santana et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2015). Moreover, it has been proposed that destination image continues to evolve beyond actual visitation (Smith et al., 2015; Styliadis & Cherifi, 2018).

#### *DIFFERENT LEVELS OF INFLUENCE BY VARIOUS INFORMATION SOURCE TYPES*

The different levels of impact on image formation between various information sources have been acknowledged by multiple authors (e.g. Baloglu, 1997; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Burgess, 1978; Jalilvand, 2017). For example, Burgess (1978) proposed over 40 years ago that the type, quality, and amount of information would shape what type of images individuals would develop. Similarly, Baloglu and McCleary (1999a) found that various information sources had different levels of impact on perceptual/cognitive evaluations. These findings support the previously argumentation of Gartner (1993) that different image formation agents have different levels of impact on destination image formation based on their varying levels of credibility. In his view, autonomous and organic sources are generally held more credible than induced sources.

Moreover, some authors have studied the perceived importance of various information sources in regard of recreational environments and found results (similar to others) which indicate that individuals give more importance to some information sources than others. For example, Raitz and Dakhil (1989) surveyed a sample of 999 college-age students regarding their preferences for various formal and informal information sources. The authors found that individuals perceived personal experiences the highest, while various informal information sources such as information

from friends, relatives, and other travelers ranked next. Formal information sources such as television programs and television advertising came next, while print media (travel brochures and travel magazines) came after. Radio advertising was ranked second to last, only before travel agents. Similar findings were presented by Capella and Greco (1987) in their study regarding the use of information sources for vacation decisions by the elderly. Their findings propose that the elderly generally prefer organic information sources (Gartner, 1993) such as family, past experiences, and friends over autonomous and induced sources. Similar to the findings of Raitz and Dakhil (1989), Capella and Greco (1987) also presented findings in which travel agents and radio advertising were ranked as the least important information source. These findings generally support the above-mentioned studies regarding the different levels of importance and impact that various information sources have in image formation.

One of the most important information sources in forming images has been WOM recommendations (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Doosti et al., 2016; Jalilvand, 2017; Nolan, 1976; Trusov et al., 2009). For example, in their general framework of destination image formation, Baloglu and McCleary (1999a) found WOM recommendations from friends and relatives to be the most important information source in touristic image formation. When comparing the contributions of WOM (organic) and mass media (autonomous) to destination image formation, Jalilvand (2017) found the impact of WOM recommendations on destination image, destination attitude, and future travel intentions to be much higher than of mass media. He proposes that the explanations for the phenomenon are complicated and varied. In his view, "WOM is a dynamic social process with key characteristics which distinguish it from other forms of marketing

communication, namely, non-marketing source, face to face exchange, free exchange of information, and two-way flow. Due to these characteristics, WOM can generate higher order beliefs and thus stronger attitudes and more positive image because it comes from an unbiased and more credible source than traditional mass media. It is thus used frequently by travelers as a risk reduction strategy” (p. 159).

Along the same line, Nolan (1976) found that when it came to general information source familiarity, the most frequently consulted source for travel advice was friends and relatives amongst resort and state visitors, while lowest utility and credibility scores were accredited to newspapers and advertisements. Although some inconsistency in results between the utility and credibility associated with various travel information sources, he proposes that the sources individual tourists use the most receive highest perceived credibility. According to him, “the logical conclusion to be drawn from this lack of consistency between attributed credibility and use is that people are likely to select their travel information sources beyond personal communications on the basis of perceived utility, not attributed credibility. In short, a tourist can recognize the bias and promotional distortions in some travel information sources while finding information offered by those sources to be useful” (p. 7). Additionally, regarding the effects of printed media on stimulating travel intentions towards destinations, he argues that the impacts will inevitably diminish with every incongruent experience. Therefore, he proposes that tourist industry managers should rather focus on generating quality services with affordable prices rather than focusing on how more appealing images of destinations can be created. Similar ideas were proposed by Gunn (1972), as he argues for advertising to have its’ place, but the appealing power

of having had a fulfilling experience to be much greater. Thus, as proposed by Nolan (1976) “the cornerstone of travel communications -the advice of friends and relatives- will then convey the news of satisfactory experiences to others who will be choosing more carefully how they expend their precious gasoline and dwindling dollars” (p.8).

Moreover, as discussed above, WOM recommendations can be divided further into online and offline categories. In regard of eWOM, Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) found it to be “one of the most effective factors influencing brand image and purchase intention of brands in consumer markets” (p.460). Its effectiveness may lie behind the argumentation that WOM spreads much faster online than offline (Jalilvand, 2017) and that the easily accessible information via social networks is generally perceived as comparatively reliable (Liu, 2006). Similarly, Mayzlin (2006) proposes that online communications are seen as highly alluring through substantially perceived credibility and trustworthiness.

According to Leung et al. (2012), the arrival of Web 2.0 technology has kickstarted the “Travel 2.0” phenomenon, to which high degrees of social interaction and travel-related content exchange online amongst tourists’ characteristic. This travel-related content that tourists themselves create and upload online is referred to as “tourist-generated content” (TGC) and has drawn growing interest within tourism discourse (e.g. Sun et al., 2015; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

When comparing the perceived and projected destination images between TGC to National Tourism Organization (NTO)-generated content of Eastern Taiwan, Mak (2017) found, although some similarities, several cognitive destination image dimensions that were present in TGC to be under-represented in NTO-generated content (e.g. food and beverages, transportation, information, and accommodation), implying that NTO-generated content may project less meaningful and special destination image attributes as perceived by tourists. Moreover, she found that textual forms of TGC generally outperformed the ones of NTOs in displaying affective dimensions of destination image, while photographic content commonly was more influential in transmitting affective attributes. Generally, TGC originates from tourists who are not paid, and therefore it is seen as impartial (Mak, 2017). Thus, TGC may be considered in Gartner's (1993) terms an organic image formation agent that hold higher credibility compared to induced image formation agents such as content provided by NTOs and other destination marketing organizations.

Travel blogs represent one of the most popular formats of TGC (Pan et al., 2007), which according to Schmallegger and Carson (2008) can be further divided into: C2C – consumer to consumer; B2B – business to business; B2C – business to consumer; and, G2C – government to consumer. When examining the credibility of blogs in comparison to traditional WOM, Mack et al. (2008) found personal blogs (C2C) to be more credible than commercial blogs (B2C & G2C), but their credibility was significantly lower than traditional WOM. While Akehurst (2009) found that user-generated content in blogs was seen as more credible and trustworthy than traditional forms of marketing communications. On the other hand, Tseng et al. (2015) found no proof that blogs of travelers

(C2C) to Mainland China would affect potential visitors or that the conveyed information would be perceived as more credible than traditional marketing sources. Additionally, they found that content within blogs may have differing effects on writers and readers. One major limitation of their study was that the blogs were written in English and thus the findings did not reflect the global image of Mainland China as a tourism destination. Moreover, they argue that the blogs were just one of many information sources as there are multiple other online and offline reviews and comments available regarding travel to Mainland China. Therefore, they propose that the findings might not reflect the attitudes of a wider sample of international tourists to Mainland China.

*Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses were formulated:*

- H6: External Information Sources significantly affect Destination Imagery
- H7: External Information Source Types differently affect Destination Imagery
- H8: Internal Information Sources significantly affect Destination Imagery
  - H8.1: Visitation significantly affects Destination Imagery
  - H8.2: The Number of Visits to a destination significantly affects Destination Imagery
  - H8.3: The Perceived Level of Experience significantly affects Destination imagery

In regard to the concepts “internal information sources” and “external information sources”, the definition by Gitelson and Crompton (1983) applies.



## THE ANTECEDENTS OF EXTERNAL INFORMATION SOURCES

A variety of research regarding consumers' information search activities has found that the information search process of consumers is limited as consumers do not actively use all the information that is provided by marketers (Capella & Greco, 1987). However, multiple factors, such as high prices, variety in offerings, perceived risk, and other situational determinants encourage tourists to engage in external information search (Capella & Greco, 1987). Therefore, it might be advantageous to think about differences among the purchase plans of buyers as a starting point for identifying individual differences (Howard & Sheth, 1969). A multitude of tourism scholars have shown interests in this process of tourists information search and more specifically, the factors that affect tourists' choice of information search strategies (e.g. Bonn et al., 1998; Capella & Greco, 1987; Grønflaten, 2009; Ip et al., 2010; Kim & al., 2007; Luo et al., 2004; Raitz & Dakhil, 1989; Schul & Crompton, 1983; Yacout & Hefny, 2014) as knowledge regarding the search behaviors of potential visitors aids in the development and provision of suitable information content and channels (Cai et al., 2004).

Researchers have proposed that tourists' information search processes are influenced by environmental or situational factors, sociodemographic factors, and psychological factors. Berkman and Gilson (1986) proposed that environmental influence in addition to individual differences are two antecedents of consequent consumer behavior throughout the consumption process that have mutual impacts among a series of consequent behaviors. In their view, environmental influences refer to impacts of consumers external environments such as culture,

social status, and family, while individual differences relate to the individual internal characteristics that consumers possess such as motives, personalities, and attitudes. Other researchers have reached similar conclusions. For example, when it comes to cultures impact on information source usage, Money and Crotts (2003) and Yacout and Hefny (2014) found that culture may influence the use of tourists' information sources. In specific, when examining the role of demographics and the cultural dimensions of Hofstede (1984) in the selection process of tourists' information sources and destination image formation, the findings of Yacout and Hefny (2014) implied that the cultural dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and individualism were predictors for the use of travel agencies, friends, and magazines as information sources. These findings relate to previous literature in which individuals that come from high power distance cultures find the opinions of people in power positions (e.g. travel agency personnel) to be important (Reisinger, 2009) and ground their purchase decisions on feelings and trust in the company (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2011). All the way from the stage of consumer need recognition to the post-purchase stage, culture is thought as one of the dominant forces that influence consumer decision-making (Yacout & Hefny, 2014) as culture acts as the collective programming of the mind through which members of one societal group can be distinguished from another (Hofstede, 1984).

In regard of situational factors, variables such as the purpose trip (Fodness & Murray, 1998, Moutinho, 1987), the planning horizon of the trip (Flognfeldt & Nordgreen, 1999; Gitelson & Crompton 1983; Schul & Crompton 1983), tourists level of involvement (Crotts, 1999; Kerstetter, & Cho, 2004; Lehto, O'Leary, & Morrison, 2004), travel party composition (Fodness & Murray, 1999,

Luo et al., 2004; Snepenger et al., 1990), travel style (Grønflaten, 2009; Bonn, Furr & Susskind, 1998), or previous experiences (Chen & Gursoy, 2000; Dodd, 1998) have been found to influence the information search process of tourists. For example, Snepenger et al. (1990) found that tourists past experiences, the composition of the travel party, the attendance of friends and relatives at the destination, and the level of novelty that is associated to a destination influenced the determinants of information search in a travel purchase situation. While Chen and Gursoy (2000) and Dodd (1998) found differences in the use of information sources between first-time and repeat visitors to a destination. In regard of variance regarding the purpose of the trip, there seems to be consensus that travelers for business tend to rely more on information gathered via travel agents compared to travelers for other purposes (Chen 2000; Gursoy & Chen 2000; Lo et al., 2002), while leisure travelers, on the other hand, are more likely to use online sources for travel information compared to business travelers (Lo et al., 2002; Luo et al., 2004).

Various sociodemographic factors and personal characteristics have been found to influence the use of information sources such as age (Bonn et al., 1998; Grønflaten, 2009; Ip et al., 2012; Kozak & Kozak, 2008; Raitz & Dakhil, 1989; Yacout & Hefny, 2014), gender (Bonn et al., 1998; Grønflaten, 2009; Kim et al., 2007, Luo et al., 2004), education (Gitelson & Crompton, 1983; Eby, Molnar & Cai, 1999; Ip et al., 2010), or income (Fodness & Murray, 1999; Ip et al., 2012; Lo et al., 2002; Luo et al., 2004). For example, Woodside and Ronkainen (1980) found the preferred information source for individuals from a higher social class to be travel agents. Gitelson and Crompton (1983) also found older individuals to prefer travel agents as their source of information and that individuals who had a college education preferred destination specific literature. Information source preference

according to education level was also shown to be influential by Eby, Molnar, and Cai (1999) who found differences in preferences between education level and in-vehicle tourist information systems. More recently, Grønflaten (2009) found age, gender, education, nationality, socioeconomic status, and the personal values of the individual to be influential in consumers' information search behavior. Various other researchers have also studied the influence of nationality on tourists' information search strategies (e.g. Chen & Gursoy, 2000; Gursoy & Chen, 2000; Gursoy & Umbreit, 2004; Uysal et al., 1990). But according to Yacout and Hefny (2014) information regarding nationality and choice of information sources does not provide a thorough understanding of why such differences exist and thus, does not aid in generating effective promotional strategies for tourists. The authors propose that the examination of cultural differences can prove to be more fruitful as discussed above.

Although a variety of findings regarding sociodemographic variables and the use of information sources, there seem to be some inconsistencies among them. For example, regarding age, Gitelson and Crompton (1983) found that individuals over 50 were more likely to choose travel agents as the source of information than other age groups, while Capella and Greco (1987) found that travel agents were not an important source of information for the same age group. There have also been controversial findings related to gender and the use of travel agents as Snepenger et al. (1990) proposed women to prefer this information source, while on the other hand, Luo et al. (2004) suggested for the likelihood of men to prefer travel agents.

Attitudinal differences towards website functionality and scope in addition to online information search behavior have been found to significantly differ among males and females (Kim et al., 2007). Moreover, Kim et al. (2007) found that females placed more value on a broader range of online and offline sources of information when it came to travel destination decision-making. These findings support the previous argumentation (see gender discussion in “Personal Factors”, p. 25-26) in which females were found to be more exhaustive and elaborative in regards of external information search compared to men (Meyers-Levy, 1988).

Another interesting aspect regarding gender differences is that females are generally accepted to excel in verbal skills (Hyde & Linn, 1988), while males have presented superiority when it comes to mathematical ability (Geary, 1996; Hyde et al., 1990) and spatial skills (Linn & Peterson, 1986). Similarly, a not so long-ago released OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) study on 32-nations presented findings which showed female students to be superior in reading abilities compared to male students, while male students presented superior mathematical skills in every country that was surveyed (Sokoloff, 2001). Additionally, as some evidence suggests that men exceed women in the degree of which they are experienced with and motivated by technology (Light et al., 2000; Schumacher & Morahan-Martin, 2001), it could be assumed that these cognitive differences between the two genders could influence the external information source preferences for the information searcher according to their gender.

Adding to the topic of online information search, Pitkow and Kehoe (1996) found that internet users were more likely to be white males with high socioeconomic status. Similarly, Bonn, Furr,

and Susskind (1998) proposed that gender, education, income, race, and occupation are determinants on the internet usage of pleasure travelers. Similar findings have been presented by Ip et al. (2012) as they propose that individuals who are young, well-educated, and come from high-income groups are more likely to use travel websites when planning for their travels. While Luo et al. (2004) also suggest that the internet is more preferable for high-income groups rather than for low-income groups. These findings are also supported by Ratchford, et al. (2003) as they also suggest internet users to be young and highly educated. Yacout and Hefny (2014) also found age to be a significant predictor when it came to internet usage. Controversially, Heung (2003) and Cheung and Law (2009) found no differences amongst age groups when it came to the users and non-users of travel websites. Although contradicting findings, generally it is thought that younger individuals prefer non-traditional, interactive and more customizable media sources, such as the internet (Yacout & Hefny 2014). Interestingly, Grønflaten (2009) found that although age alone was not found to be significantly related to the decision of information source or channel it was found to be one of the most influential search strategy determinants when considered together with other independent variables.

Psychographic variables or tourist motivations have also been found to impact the use of information sources. For example, when examining college students' motivations to use social networking sites in regard to travel information search behavior, Kim et al. (2013) proposed results that indicated motivations of self-expression, commenting, participating in a community forum, and information seeking to be influential. Moreover, when examining information source usage of travelers to newly emerging markets, Dey and Sarma (2010) found significant differences amongst

motive-based segments of travelers. Moreover, in their study regarding the search behaviors of international vacationers, Schul and Crompton (1983) found that tourists external information research behavior was better explained by travel-specific psychographic variables than by sociodemographic variables (regional affiliation, age, gender, and education). Although, in their study regarding the use of information sources of the elderly for vacation decisions, Capella and Greco (1987) proposed that sociodemographic variables were more influential and have greater explanatory power than psychographic variables in regard of information source preferences. Thus, proposing contradicting findings.

*Based on the above discussion, and in reference to the personal factors that were hypothesized to influence destination imagery formation, the following hypotheses were made:*

Personal Factors significantly affect External Information Sources. Namely,

- H9: Age significantly affects External Information Sources
- H10: Education significantly affects External Information Sources
- H11: Gender significantly affects External Information Sources
- H12: Personal Interests significantly affect External Information Sources
- H13: Travel Motivations significantly affect External Information Sources

Internal Information Sources significantly affect External Information Sources. Namely,

- H14: Visitation significantly affects External Information Sources

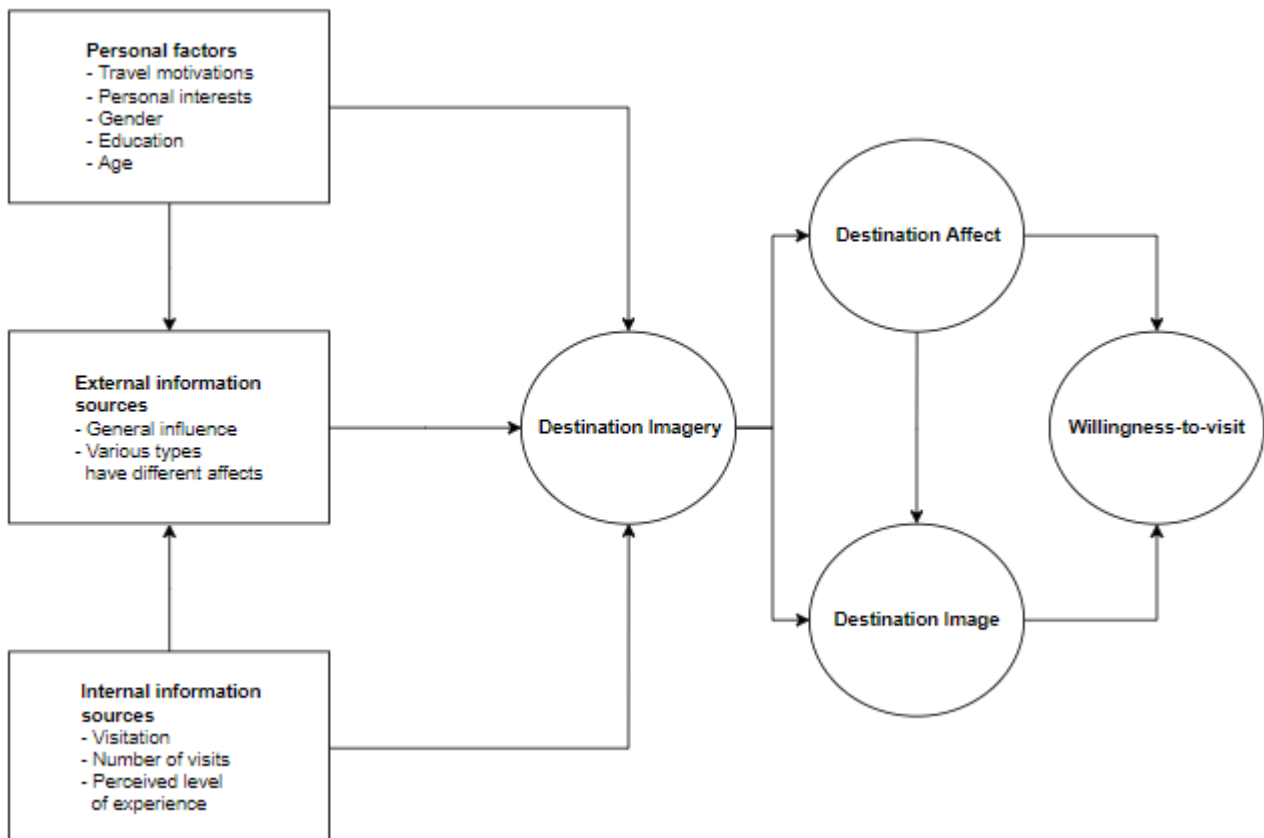
- H15: The Number of Visits to a destination significantly affects External Information Sources
- H16: Perceived level of experience towards a destination significantly affects External Information Sources



## FRAMEWORK

Based on the reviewed literature, a general framework of tourists' destination image formation process was developed (figure 1). This model depicts our general assumptions of the driving forces that influence destination image formation, how we assume their interrelations, and how they influence behavioral outcomes in the form of willingness- to-visit. Although this thesis focuses on the antecedents of destination imagery, the destination image formation process was included in our model to present a full picture of how images of destinations are formed along with their behavioral consequences.

Figure 1. General framework of tourists' image formation process

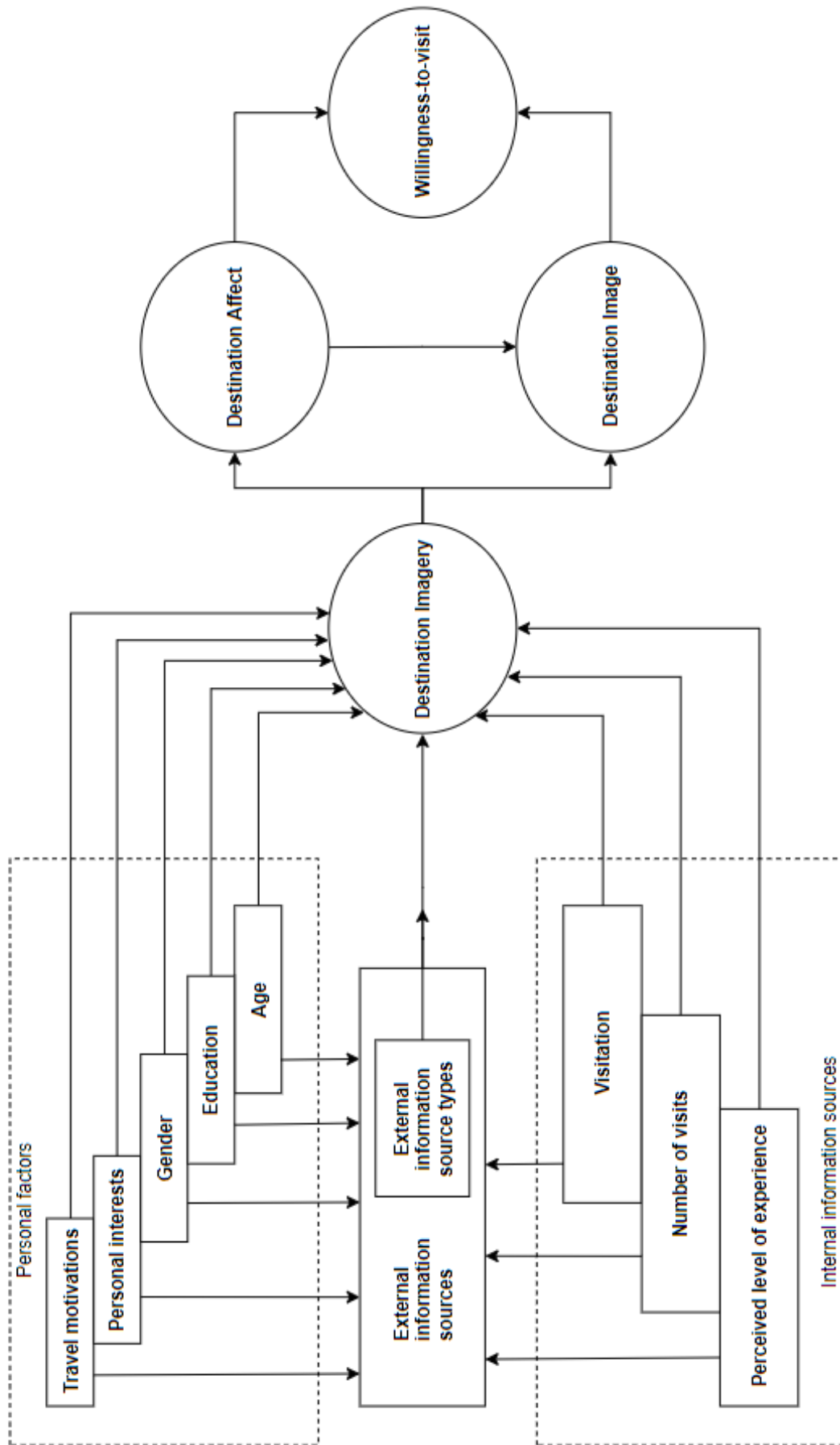


Consequently, as the destination image formation process was included in our model, the present research aims to retest the hypotheses of Kock et al. (2016) to further validate the presented model. Thus, the additional hypotheses below:

- H17: Destination Image positively influences Willingness-To-Visit
- H18: Destination Affect positively influences Willingness-To-Visit
- H19: Destination Affect positively influences Destination Image
- H20: Destination Imagery positively influences Destination Image
- H21: Destination Imagery positively influences Destination Affect

Based on the generated hypotheses, a hypothesized model of tourists' destination image formation process was developed (figure 2). This model displays the hypothesized relationships between the individual variables, and thus serves as the basis for our research.

Figure 2. Hypothesized model of tourists' image formation process



## RESEARCH METHOD

### METHODOLOGY

The epistemological consideration of the research methodology follows the doctrine of positivism which asserts that a single, objective reality exists in the form of theories which can be measured and known, and through which laws can be developed (Bryman, 2012). Moreover, as this research sees the purpose of theory as a mean to generate hypotheses which are to be tested, the principles of deductivism are applied, and thus, the research generally follows a quantitative approach that is conducted value free and is objective in nature (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, from an ontological perspective, the objectivist position applies as social phenomena and its meanings are seen to exist independently of social actors (Bryman, 2012). These considerations apply, although, it is noted that the individual constructs the research aims to measure are of a subjective nature.

### METHOD

#### RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to test the hypothesized model, a destination of interest had to be chosen. The UK was picked for this purpose as it was generally thought to be well-known and for it to hold plenty of variety as a tourist destination. Subsequently, it could facilitate the gathering of a rich spectrum of data and to help uncover variance among the hypothesized image determinants. For the source of

the data, Italian adults (18 years and older) were chosen for mere convenience as both researchers spent time in Italy during the research phase.

As this research builds upon the theoretical framework of Kock et al. (2016) it was seen as a logical continuum for the research design to mimic the DCM (Destination Content Model) as closely as possible. Therefore, similar to Kock et al. (2016), this research applied a two-step research method in which a qualitative phase was followed by a quantitative phase.

As destination imagery is multi-dimensional in nature (Kock et al., 2016) it is necessary to establish the relational direction among the overall construct and its dimensions in order to adequately define and operationalize it (Law et al., 1998). Therefore, it is specified that the indicators (personal factors - age, education, gender, personal interests, travel motivations; internal information sources - visitation, number of visits, perceived level of experience; and, external information sources and external information source types) exist individually from one another and form or cause the latent variable (destination imagery), and as such are to be seen as formative measures (Josiassen et al., 2016). Moreover, although not specifically the direct focus of this research, destination image, destination affect, and willingness-to-visit were included into the model in order to contain a full picture of how images are formed the minds of consumers. Therefore, similar to Kock et al. (2016) destination imagery is defined as a formative measure while destination image, destination affect, and willingness-to-visit are reflective constructs. This is because the measures have high correlation among the indicators, the constructs are available as mental schemas in the minds of individuals from which they can draw upon, and as the measured items are thought to reflect the main construct itself (Josiassen et al., 2016). As such, our model

can be seen as a combination of two. Similar to what was suggested by Josiassen et al. (2016), a formative modeling approach is applied in the first part in which the influence of antecedents on destination imagery is examined. While in the second part that focuses on constructs that reflect actual images held in the minds of individuals a reflective modeling approach is applied.

## QUALITATIVE PHASE

The purpose of the qualitative research phase was to gather destination-specific and significant characteristics in the form of associations related to the UK as a tourist destination. Therefore, and in line with Echtner and Ritchie (1993) and Kock et al. (2016), unstructured methods were utilized to gather diagnostic attributes related the UK as a tourist destination that are unique (*sui generis*) and representative, rather than utilizing common attributes as their comprehensive inclusion in the destination imagery of the UK as a travel destination is questionable (Kock et al., 2016). Thus, 20 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted mid-March 2019 in peaceful settings. While doing so, it was possible to account for association variations amongst respondents and to ensure that the collected associations were representable of the UK as a travel destination (Beerli & Martin, 2004a; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 2000).

In regard to the respondents, they were equally divided by gender (50% male and 50% female) and coming from varying backgrounds. The mean age was 39 years old, while the division between age groups was 40% (18-29 years old), 20% (30-39 years old), 15% (40-49 years old), and 25% (50+ years old). The interviews lasted between 15-25 minutes depending on the flow of the discussion. The language of the interviews was English or Italian depending on the personal preference of the

interviewee. Interviews conducted in Italian were directly translated into English in the form of a list of general associations similar to the ones that were conducted in English. The structure of the interviews followed the guide of Echtner and Ritchie (1993) which allowed respondents to freely think and describe their top of the mind associations regarding the UK as a travel destination while ensuring that functional holistic, psychological, and unique components of images were addressed. See Appendices 1 (English) and 2 (Italian) for interview questions and Appendix 3 for interview data.

In regard to the destination attributes, descriptive rather than evaluative indicators were favored. While doing so, a shortcoming of multiple existing studies could be avoided in which evaluative meaning was intrinsically linked to the destination attributes (Kock et al., 2016). Therefore, it could be ensured that associations related to the UK as a travel destination and their evaluation process could remain as separate mental phenomena. During the interviews, if and when respondents used generic descriptive language such as “nice” or “busy” the interviewee was asked to describe the generic associations more thoroughly to reveal more descriptive expressions. Synonymous expressions of language were gathered together under one label according to what best represented the underlying message and/or based on most often referred to terminology (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008). Associations that were mentioned in at least 25% of the interviews (a total of 20) were chosen to be part of the quantitative phase of the study as attributes describing the UK as a travel destination. See Appendices 4 (English) and 5 (Italian) for a full list of attributes.

## QUANTITATIVE PHASE

In the second research phase, quantitative methods were utilized in the form of an online survey which included items to measure all variables included in the hypothesized model (figure 2). These variables comprise personal factors, external information sources, internal information sources, destination imagery, destination affect, destination image, and willingness-to-visit. The survey and its items will be discussed more thoroughly below. The hypothesized model along with all its hypotheses was tested with the linear regression analysis, which is one of the most commonly used models in statistics (Miller, 2013). The level of significance  $p < 0.05$  was accepted as proof of significance, while  $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.001$  were considered to be more significant (the smaller, the better) (Bryman, 2012).

The survey was first conducted in English (Appendix 6) and then translated to Italian (Appendix 7). This was thought to be necessary in order to avoid misunderstandings by the respondents, and thus to increase the reliability of the method. Moreover, by having the survey in Italian it was possible to limit the number of unwanted responses from non-Italians as the survey was mainly spread online during April 2019. The translation of the survey was done by one of the researchers who is a native Italian speaker. The translation was later double-checked to verify accurate usage of language by another native Italian speaker who is fluent in English. Other translated items that were used in the survey went through similar scrutiny. The quantitative phase resulted in a total of 194 responses from which 70 surveys were left uncompleted, leaving us with a completion rate of 64%. Thus, 124 fully completed and usable surveys were considered in further analysis.



Respondents personal factors were probed by asking respondents about their background information, their travel motivations, and personal interests. Background information was probed by gathering data regarding respondents age, level of education, and gender. These sociodemographic variables were chosen on the basis of the literature and the generated hypothesis. Among the survey respondents, 46% were male, 54% female, while 0,8% identified as the third gender. Third gender responses were eliminated from further analysis as the number of respondents that identified as such was so low (1 respondent) in order to limit possible distortion of data. In reference to age, the division was as follows: 18-29 years old (55,6%), 30-39 years old (15,3%), 40-49 years old (12,9%), over 50 years old (16,1%). While the education levels varied as follows: compulsory school (16,1%), high school (2,9%), vocational training (5,6%), undergraduate (15,3%), graduate (36,7%), post-graduate (21%), professor (2,4%).

Travel motivations of respondents were measured based on the typology of basic functions proposed by Fodness (1994). Thus, a 20-item 7-point Likert type scale ranging from “not at all” to “very much” was developed. See Appendices 6 (English) or 7 (Italian) and Question 4 (travel motivations) for a list of measured variables for travel motivations.

In order to measure personal interests and their influence on destination imagery, the destination attributes that were uncovered in the qualitative phase were modified to fit higher categories if necessary. Most often, it was enough to remove descriptive adjectives (e.g. vibrant nightlife → nightlife) to make this happen. For a more detailed view on these changes, please see Appendices 8 (English) and 9 (Italian). To gather the data, respondents were asked: “For you personally, how

closely do you relate the following attributes to your personal interests?” Responses varied along a 7-point Likert scale between “not at all” to “very much”.

Destination imagery was measured by asking respondents to evaluate the pre-identified destination attributes in “association strength” and “association valence”, and calculated as such (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Kock et al., 2016):

$$DY = \sum \text{Strenght}_i \times \text{Valence}_i$$

Similar to Kock et al. (2016, p. 36), to measure association strength and valence, respondents were asked: “In your opinion, how much do you relate the following attributes to the UK as a tourist destination?” and “For you as a tourist in the UK, would the following attributes be negative or positive?”. While answers ranged between (0) not at all to (6) very much and (-3) extremely negative to (3) extremely positive. See Table 1 for thorough details regarding the association strength and valence analysis.

**Table 1**  
**Association Strenghth and Valence Analysis for the UK**

Attributes	STRENGTH (mean)	VALENCE (mean)	VALENCE (std)	VIF S*V
Lots of parks, gardens & green areas	4,01	2,45	0,97	1,81
London (areas of the city, tourist attractions)	4,69	2,12	1,20	1,61
A variety of historical monuments	4,12	2,14	1,14	2,34
Diverse architecture	3,85	1,80	1,21	1,87
Rich and wealthy nation (high expenses)	4,31	-0,19	1,47	1,43
Soccer (premier league, stadiums)	2,66	0,03	1,62	1,35
The Queen (royal family, the monarchy)	3,77	0,67	1,44	1,40
British food (fish and chips)	2,69	-0,42	1,55	1,31
Busy lifestyle	3,15	-0,06	1,63	1,73
Multicultural (diverse, ethnic)	4,94	2,02	1,32	1,74
Unfriendly people (unwelcoming)	2,64	-1,23	1,22	1,53
Traditional culture (formal)	3,02	-0,31	1,30	1,51
Lots of variety between different areas of the country (people, nature, lifestyle)	4,28	1,77	1,21	2,27
Various cities and regions to visit	4,37	2,15	1,06	3,10
Pubs & bars (vibrant drinking culture)	4,61	1,67	1,25	1,99
Rainy and gray weather	4,54	-1,35	1,32	1,55
Universities & colleges (Oxford, Cambridge)	4,64	1,45	1,33	1,58
Versatile landscapes (cliffs, rivers)	4,29	2,14	1,11	2,31
A variety of museums (Wax Museum, Natural History Museum)	4,58	2,03	1,08	1,99
Vibrant nightlife (events)	4,05	1,23	1,95	1,71

Association valence reveals the subjective degree of positivity or negativity (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000) that an individual holds towards an association, while association strength refers to the subjective probability of a linkage between the association and the destination (Kock et al., 2016). As discussed, by measuring association valence at this point and not assuming it prior (descriptive vs evaluative indicators) limits the possibility of a “double-denial” as attributes can possess ambiguous meaning (Kock et al., 2016). Furthermore, association valence adds to destination imagery in direct capacity to the individual’s subjective belief that the destination holds the specific attribute (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). On the other hand, higher rated association strength indicates that for a particular destination an association is stronger, more accessible, and diagnostic for the individual (Kock et al., 2016), which research shows to be more impactful on behavior (Bargh et al., 1996). For example, respondents evaluated the attribute “Multicultural” very high in strength with a mean value of 4,94 while it was also evaluated relatively positively with a mean valence of 2.02. This means that respondents make a strong associative link towards the UK as a travel destination to be multicultural and to generally perceive it as a positive thing. On the other hand, respondents are likely to make a relatively weaker associative link towards the British being unfriendly or unwelcoming (mean strength 2.64), which is seen as a negative thing (mean valence -1.23). The standard deviation of association valence (valence std) indicates the dispersion of association valence among survey respondents. The higher the number, the more variety was found between answers. For example, the attribute “Vibrant nightlife (events)” received the higher standard deviation of valence (1,95) which implies that some respondents perceived the attribute to be more negative while others saw it as more positive. This finding fortifies previous argumentation that attributes should not be evaluated prior but rather individually measured (Kock et al., 2016).

Generally speaking, all but three attributes received relatively high evaluations in regard to association strength, while the three least strongly evaluated attributes were only minorly below the average of the scale (3). This indicates that the qualitative research phase performed satisfactorily in identifying germane beliefs. An interesting observation can be pointed out regarding the findings. When comparing the current research method to the one of Kock et al. (2016) two minor differences can be found: 1) five qualitative interviews were conducted less in this research (20 vs 25); while 2) attributes that were mentioned in at least 25% (compared to 20%) of the interviews were chosen to the quantitative phase. By choosing attributes that were mentioned in proportionally more interviews, it was expected that the mean association strength levels would generally be higher, while on the contrast they were at least partly found to be lower. This could imply that there was some homogeneity in the sample and that it did not fully represent the beliefs of a wider population (survey respondents) as well as the sample that was used by Kock et al., (2016). Although, as noted, the levels were still satisfactory. In regard of unwanted multicollinearity, all attributes received relatively low variance inflation factors (VIF) (highest was 3.1 for “Various cities and regions to visit”), and thus no harmful multicollinearity was detected (Belsley et al., 1980; Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006).

The influence of external information sources towards destination imagery was measured by asking respondents to rate the perceived importance of various external information sources in regard to creating an image of the UK as a travel destination. In line with Beerli and Martin (2004a), to measure the importance of each external information source the respondents were asked: “For you personally, do you consider the following information sources to be

important/effective when forming an image of the UK as a tourist destination?”. Responses ranged on a 7-point Likert scale between (1) “strongly disagree” to (7) “strongly agree”.

Table 2 presents a list according to how important/impactful survey respondents perceive individual external information sources. Some additional information that was included in the survey after singular items was left away from Table 2 items in order to keep it simpler. See Appendix 6 (English) or 7 (Italian), question 11 for survey items. Although an internal information source, “information acquired on previous travels to the area” was included in this list to see how its perceived importance ranked in relation to others. Moreover, we decided to include “Independently produced reports, documentaries, movies, and news articles” and “Traditional forms of advertising (brochures, tv, radio, print, billboards, etc.)” as items even though they are not individual sources but rather they represent a variety of autonomous and induced sources as single items in the list. By having these sources in the list of evaluated external information source items together and separately we hoped to gather more accurate data in the linear regression analyses with categories as the items could then be grouped together. By doing so, the measured variables would consist of more items which was hoped to give more depth to the data.

Interestingly, in regard of autonomous information sources, the item “Independently produced reports, documentaries, movies, and news articles” which was the categorial item received a mean score of 5.54, while the singular autonomous information sources together (see Appendix 10) received a mean score of 5.17. Therefore, individuals rated the single items lower than the item which was supposed to represent them as a category. While in regard to induces information sources, the categorial item and the singular items together received an almost exact mean evaluation (categorial: 4.36; singular items: 4.40).

**TABLE 2 - THE PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION SOURCES**

<b>INFORMATION SOURCE</b>	<b>MEAN</b>
Information received from friends and relatives when asked for (Word-of-mouth)	5,984
Websites	5,790
Unrequested information that is received from individuals who have been to the area	5,774
Documentaries	5,742
Information acquired on previous travels to the area	5,589
Independently produced reports, documentaries, movies, and news articles	5,540
Social media platforms (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, etc.)	5,500
Travel programs	5,444
Books	5,323
Movies	5,274
Online content generated by real users	5,129
News articles and reports	5,065
Personal blogs	4,887
Newspapers	4,839
Educational materials	4,839
TV	4,798
Drama series	4,677
Tourist attraction personnel	4,508
Information received from tour operators, wholesalers, and other tourism related organizations	4,492
Online content generated by destination promoters	4,395
Online advertising (e.g. on websites or social media platforms)	4,371
Traditional forms of advertising (brochures, tv, radio, print, billboards, etc.)	4,363
Travel agency personnel	4,274
Second-party endorsement through apparently unbiased reports	4,202
Commercial blogs	4,169
Offline advertising (e.g. tv, radio, newspaper or billboards)	4,129
Billboards	4,121
Brochures	4,073
Radio	4,065
Second-party endorsement of a destination via traditional forms of advertising	4,008

**Scale: Very important (7) Not very important (1)**

As can be found, respondents perceive “Information received from friends and relatives when asked for (Word-of-mouth)” as the most impactful information source (mean 5.98) when it comes to creating an image of the UK as a travel destination, while the second most impactful was found to be “Websites” (mean 5.79). Respondents found “Second-party endorsement of a destination via traditional forms of advertising” (mean 4.01) as the least important/impactful while “Radio”

(mean 4.07) was rated the second least important/impactful. Based on the results, organic information sources seem to be perceived as the most important/impactful information sources when it comes to creating an image of the UK as a travel destination, while induced image formation agents were perceived as the least important/impactful. These findings support the arguments of Gartner (1993) who proposed that organic image formation agents and autonomous image formation agents are generally perceived as more credible than induced image formation agents. The implications of these findings will be discussed more thoroughly in the discussion part.

The perceived importance of the various external information source types was measured individually for each type and later categorized according to multiple typologies for the linear regression analyses. See Appendix 10 for in-depth information regarding information source measurement variables according to various categories. External Information sources that were pointed out by the literature review to influence destination image were measured individually rather than solely focusing on categorizations as measurements accordingly could lead to more practical implications beyond the academic world (Baloglu, 1997). Therefore, as some variables were grouped into categories and consequently giving us two samples, we saw it purposeful to conduct two sets of linear regression analyses to test the hypothesized model, one with categories and the other without.

In regard of information sources according to categories (see Appendix 10): First, we categorized the information sources according to Gartner's (1993) typology: induced information sources, autonomous information sources, and organic information sources. "Information received from previous trips to the area" was left away from the organic information sources as it did not



represent an external information source. Second, a grouping regarding of WOM and eWOM was made in order to see whether or not there were differences between the two channels through which WOM could be spread. Third, online content was divided into TGC and NTO-generated content. Fourth, similar to Molina et al. (2017) a division between online and offline sources were made. In relation to the categorizations of online and offline information sources, an assumption was made that traditional forms of advertising (e.g. tv and radio) or induced sources (e.g. movies and travel programs) were considered as offline sources although it is possible to consume these forms of information sources via online channels. This decision was done with an aim to simplify the measurement process.

Respondents internal information sources were also measured. Similar to the measurement of external information sources, internal information sources were measured also with individual items and later grouped together under the label “familiarity” to be used in the linear regression analysis with categories. Internal information sources were measured by probing respondents about their personal experiences towards the UK as a travel destination. In order to give depth to the data and to ascertain the degree of familiarity towards the UK as a travel destination, three variables were measured similar to Beerli & Martin (2004a). First, respondents were asked if they had visited the UK (yes – 1, no – 2). Second, the number of visits was asked (range 0 to 5+). Third, the degree of personal experience in relation to the UK as a travel destination was asked according to a 7-point Likert scale between “no experience” and “great experience”. Out of all respondents, only 19 (~15%) had not visited the UK previously.

The reflective constructs destination image (DI), destination affect (DA), and willingness-to-visit (WTV) were measured with multi-item scales (see discussion below) similar to the DCM to improve measure quality (Kock et al., 2016, p. 36-40) as multi-item scales are more adequate and perform significantly better in comparison to single-item scales in regard to the predictive validity of the measure (Diamantopoulos et al., 2012). The three reflective constructs presented great composite reliability (DI 0.970; DA 0.955; WTV 0.925).

Destination image was measured by asking respondents: “All things considered, taking a holiday to the UK is...?”. Responses were measured on four items (bi-polar 7-point scale): good/bad; positive/negative; favorable/unfavorable; and, worthwhile/not worthwhile. Destination affect was measured by asking respondents: “All things considered; how do you feel about the UK?”. Responses were similarly measured on four items (bi-polar 7-point scale): like/dislike; pleasant/unpleasant; attraction/repulsion; and, comfortable/uncomfortable. The measurement of willingness-to-visit included four statements: “I strongly intend to visit the UK in the future; It is very likely that I would choose the UK as my tourist destination; I would like to take a holiday in the UK; and, I plan to visit the UK as a tourist some point in the future”. Responses to the questions ranged (7-point Likert scale) between (0) strongly disagree to (6) agree very much. Please see Kock et al. (2016) for a more thorough discussion on the measurements regarding destination image, destination affect, and willingness-to-visit.

## RESULTS

The general framework and the proposed hypotheses were tested using linear regression analyses. First, we tested the relationship between reflective constructs, specifically, we tested the hypothesis H17 and H18, namely (H17) destination image and (H18) destination affect positively influence willingness-to-visit. The results are shown in Table 3. The data set for both individual hypotheses showed no significant relationship to confirm our hypothesis ( $DI \rightarrow WTV = 0.21$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ;  $DA \rightarrow WTV = 0.06$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Although the relationships were not significant, the beta coefficient for both relationships was positive, implying that increases in destination image or destination affect would result in better behavioral responses in terms of willingness-to-visit. Thus, presenting a directional relationship similar to what was hypothesized.

**TABLE 3 - IMAGE FORMATION PROCESS**

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	DV	B	P	DV	B	P	DV	B	P
DI	DA	0,807	0,000	WTV	0,213	0,154			
DA	DI	1,021	0,000	WTV	0,058	0,728			
DY	DA	0,109	0,032	DI	0,090	0,118	WTV	0,123	0,003

**DV = DEPENDENT VARIABLE**

**B = BETA COEFFICIENT**

**P = SIGNIFICANCE**

Moreover, even though no significant relationship was found for the variables individually, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) significance level for both independent variables together indicates that a significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) relationship exists between the independent variables (DI and DA) and the dependent variable (WTV). See Table 4. Therefore, it was found that the variables together

significantly influence willingness-to-visit. But, as the relationships were not found individually significant, the hypotheses H17 and H18 must be rejected, although the directional relationship was found positive as hypothesized.

**TABLE 4 - Analysis of Variance ANOVA**

Independet variables	DV	S	DV	S	DV	S	DV	S
DI & DA	WTV	0.000						
PERSONAL FACTORS & INFORMATION SOURCES (LRAC)	DY	0.000	DI	0.633	DA	0.429	WTV	0.035
PERSONAL FACTORS & INFORMATION SOURCES (LRAI)	DY	0.000	DI	0.438	DA	0.247	WTV	0.000
PERSONAL FACTORS & INTERNAL INFORMATION SOURCES	EIS	0.000						
ASSOCIATON STRENGHT AND VALENCE	DI	0.824	DA	0.651	WTV	0.006		

**DV** = DEPENDENT VARIABLE

**EIS** = EXTERNAL INFORMATION SOURCES

**P** = SIGNIFICANCE

Next, we tested the relationship between destination affect and destination image (H19), namely, destination affect positively influences destination image. The data showed that a positive and significant relationship exists between the two variables ( $DA \rightarrow DI = 1.02, p.<0.001$ ). See Table 3. Thus, H19 can be confirmed. Interestingly, although not hypothesized, we tested if destination image had an influence on destination affect and found a positive and significant relationship ( $DI \rightarrow DA = 0.81, p.<0.001$ ). Also shown in Table 3. Therefore, it can be said that destination image positively relates to destination affect.

Then, we tested hypothesis H20 and H21, namely, destination imagery (DY) positively influences destination image (H20) and destination affect (H21). See Table 3 for results. The results showed

significant levels of influence for hypothesis H21; destination imagery positively influences destination affect ( $DY \rightarrow DA = 0.11, p.<0.05$ ). While no significant relationship was found for hypothesis H20; destination imagery positively influences destination image ( $DY \rightarrow DI = 0.09, p.>0.05$ ). The directional relationship for both relationships was found to be positive. Thus, H21 can be confirmed, while H20 is rejected as the relationship was not significant, although positive. As no significant relationship was found between destination imagery and destination image, we thought it would be interesting to see whether or not there was a relationship between destination imagery and willingness-to-visit. As shown in Table 3, the relationship between the two variables exists, it is positive, and significant ( $DY \rightarrow WTV = 0.12, p.<0.01$ ). Therefore, it can be said that there is a significant and positive relationship between destination imagery and tourists' behavioral responses in the form of willingness-to-visit.

Moreover, as we did not find a significant linkage between destination imagery and destination image and thus a gap exists in the linkages between the variables in the hypothesized model, we thought it would be interesting to test the remaining hypothesis beyond the originally hypothesized model. Thus, applying a more exploratory approach for our research than what was originally planned. Therefore, relationships for H1 (age significantly affects destination imagery), H2 (education significantly affects destination imagery), H3 (gender significantly affects destination imagery), H4 (personal interests significantly affect destination imagery), H5 (travel motivations significantly affect destination imagery), H6 (external information sources significantly affect destination imagery), H7 (external information source types differently affect destination imagery), and H8 (internal information sources significantly affect destination imagery, and its sub-

hypothesis H8.1 (visitation significantly affects destination imagery), H8.2 (the number of visits to a destination significantly affects destination imagery), H8.3 (the perceived level of experience significantly affects destination imagery) were tested also for destination image, destination affect, and willingness-to-visit, in addition to testing the relationship towards destination imagery. Also, as mentioned before, in regard to variable groupings into categories, another set of linear regression analysis was performed similarly according to the more exploratory approach. See Table 5 for the results of the linear regression analysis with individual variables, and Table 6 for results with variable categories. For clarification, from now on, the linear regression analysis with individual variables will be referred to as LRAI (Table 5), while the linear regression analysis including item categories will further on be referred to as LRAC (Table 6).

In regard to personal factors, the only variable that was found to significantly influence destination imagery was “personal interests”. This significant and positive relationship was found from both linear regression analyses (LRAC:  $PI \rightarrow DY = 1,67$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; LRAI:  $PI \rightarrow DY = 1,94$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, H4 can be confirmed. Interestingly, although not significant, some negative correlation was found in terms of the relationship between “education” ( $Education \rightarrow DY = -0.29$ ,  $p = 0.06$ ) and destination imagery in LRAC. No information source was found to significantly influence destination imagery in LRAC. While, in regard of the relationships towards the other dependent variables (DI, DA, WTV) in LRAC, a significant negative relationship was found between “word-of-mouth” ( $WOM \rightarrow WTV = -0.22$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and willingness-to-visit, and a significant positive relationship between “electronic word-of-mouth” ( $eWOM \rightarrow DA = 0.76$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and destination affect.

TABLE 5 – LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS WITH INDIVIDUAL VARIABLES – LRAI

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	DV	B	P	DV	B	P	DV	B	P	DV	B	P
Age	DY	0,270	0,257	DI	-0,093	0,633	DA	-0,008	0,964	WTV	-0,065	0,553
Gender	DY	0,507	0,367	DI	-0,271	0,556	DA	-0,182	0,651	WTV	-0,026	0,919
Education	DY	-0,213	0,251	DI	-0,150	0,325	DA	-0,130	0,327	WTV	-0,043	0,618
Travel motivations	DY	0,434	0,387	DI	0,995	0,018	DA	0,903	0,014	WTV	0,085	0,715
Personal interests	DY	1,940	0,000	DI	-0,395	0,292	DA	-0,248	0,447	WTV	0,110	0,602
Traditional forms of advertising (brochures, tv, radio, print, billboards, etc.)	DY	0,339	0,122	DI	0,216	0,230	DA	0,236	0,134	WTV	-0,079	0,436
TV	DY	0,095	0,677	DI	0,180	0,340	DA	0,203	0,217	WTV	0,026	0,805
Newspapers	DY	0,185	0,509	DI	-0,180	0,435	DA	-0,110	0,583	WTV	-0,245	0,062
Radio	DY	0,049	0,831	DI	0,091	0,630	DA	-0,047	0,778	WTV	-0,047	0,663
Brochures	DY	-0,564	0,033	DI	0,144	0,499	DA	0,167	0,372	WTV	0,012	0,919
Billboards	DY	0,461	0,105	DI	-0,316	0,176	DA	-0,219	0,282	WTV	-0,024	0,856
Information received from tour operators, wholesalers, and other tourism related organizations	DY	0,020	0,953	DI	-0,126	0,655	DA	-0,062	0,801	WTV	0,216	0,177
Travel agency personnel	DY	0,085	0,816	DI	-0,169	0,572	DA	-0,110	0,673	WTV	-0,259	0,128
Tourist attraction personnel	DY	-0,096	0,738	DI	0,076	0,748	DA	-0,069	0,738	WTV	-0,081	0,543
Second-party endorsement of a destination via traditional forms of advertising	DY	-0,187	0,497	DI	-0,058	0,797	DA	-0,083	0,675	WTV	0,154	0,228
Second-party endorsement through apparently unbiased reports	DY	0,184	0,444	DI	0,197	0,321	DA	0,269	0,121	WTV	-0,201	0,075
Independently produced reports, documentaries, movies, and news articles	DY	-0,135	0,691	DI	-0,168	0,550	DA	0,184	0,452	WTV	0,148	0,349
News articles and reports	DY	-0,482	0,068	DI	0,128	0,551	DA	0,146	0,436	WTV	-0,121	0,320
Drama series	DY	0,209	0,461	DI	-0,182	0,437	DA	-0,174	0,393	WTV	0,074	0,573
Documentaries	DY	-0,152	0,579	DI	0,347	0,127	DA	0,229	0,247	WTV	0,091	0,474
Travel programs	DY	-0,001	0,997	DI	0,437	0,101	DA	0,455	0,049	WTV	-0,053	0,720
Movies	DY	0,071	0,820	DI	-0,135	0,600	DA	-0,068	0,760	WTV	-0,041	0,776
Books	DY	-0,192	0,522	DI	0,006	0,980	DA	-0,014	0,948	WTV	0,054	0,699
Educational materials	DY	-0,232	0,296	DI	0,183	0,315	DA	0,098	0,538	WTV	-0,138	0,181
Unrequested information that is received from individuals who have been to the area	DY	-0,175	0,639	DI	-0,055	0,858	DA	0,101	0,704	WTV	0,151	0,383
Information received from friends and relatives when asked for (word-of-mouth)	DY	0,639	0,096	DI	-0,226	0,471	DA	-0,031	0,909	WTV	-0,023	0,894
Websites	DY	0,115	0,734	DI	0,060	0,830	DA	0,043	0,860	WTV	0,042	0,788
Social media platforms (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, etc.)	DY	-0,889	0,016	DI	-0,057	0,848	DA	-0,231	0,376	WTV	0,049	0,769
Personal blogs	DY	0,348	0,222	DI	0,326	0,165	DA	0,405	0,048	WTV	0,075	0,569
Commercial blogs	DY	0,131	0,677	DI	-0,127	0,624	DA	0,043	0,847	WTV	-0,113	0,439
Online content generated by real users	DY	0,637	0,054	DI	-0,410	0,129	DA	-0,313	0,184	WTV	-0,068	0,651
Online content generated by destination promoters	DY	-0,055	0,846	DI	-0,114	0,627	DA	0,162	0,431	WTV	0,205	0,126
Online advertising (e.g. on websites or social media platforms)	DY	0,107	0,778	DI	0,068	0,827	DA	-0,015	0,957	WTV	-0,273	0,123
Offline advertising (e.g. tv, radio, newspaper or billboards)	DY	-0,086	0,801	DI	-0,007	0,979	DA	-0,215	0,380	WTV	0,125	0,431
Visitation	DY	-1,939	0,558	DI	2,818	0,302	DA	0,643	0,787	WTV	-4,937	0,002
Number of visits	DY	0,007	0,960	DI	-0,033	0,766	DA	0,024	0,803	WTV	0,069	0,278
Perceived level of experience	DY	0,259	0,313	DI	0,296	0,162	DA	0,320	0,084	WTV	-0,409	0,001

B = BETA COEFFICIENT P = SIGNIFICANCE

DV = DEPENDENT VARIABLE

TABLE 6 - LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS WITH CATEGORY VARIABLES - LRAC

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	DV	B	P	DV	B	P	DV	B	P	DV	B	P
AGE	DY	0,102	0,613	DI	-0,053	0,759	DA	0,007	0,965	WTV	-0,027	0,810
GENDER	DY	0,458	0,328	DI	-0,201	0,614	DA	-0,102	0,773	WTV	-0,113	0,670
EDUCATION	DY	-0,294	0,060	DI	-0,068	0,606	DA	-0,075	0,523	WTV	-0,003	0,969
TRAVEL MOTIVATIONS	DY	0,780	0,077	DI	0,659	0,079	DA	0,584	0,079	WTV	-0,029	0,908
PERSONAL INTERESTS	DY	1,667	0,000	DI	-0,222	0,510	DA	-0,104	0,727	WTV	0,114	0,610
INDUCED INFORMATION SOURCES	DY	2,262	0,646	DI	1,965	0,640	DA	0,677	0,855	WTV	-2,839	0,311
AUTONOMOUS INFORMATION SOURCES	DY	0,434	0,867	DI	1,514	0,494	DA	0,621	0,751	WTV	-1,530	0,301
ORGANIC INFORMATION SOURCES	DY	2,059	0,315	DI	0,295	0,865	DA	0,379	0,806	WTV	-0,642	0,581
WORD-OF-MOUTH	DY	0,746	0,706	DI	-0,087	0,336	DA	0,133	0,140	WTV	-0,222	0,013
ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH	DY	-0,201	0,657	DI	0,677	0,083	DA	0,756	0,029	WTV	-0,109	0,673
ONLINE CONTENT FROM DESTINATION MARKETERS	DY	0,218	0,789	DI	-0,540	0,437	DA	-0,245	0,690	WTV	0,034	0,941
TOURIST GENERATED CONTENT	DY	-0,296	0,714	DI	-0,491	0,476	DA	-0,586	0,337	WTV	0,029	0,949
OFFLINE INFORMATION SOURCES	DY	1,628	0,343	DI	1,221	0,404	DA	0,447	0,729	WTV	-1,450	0,139
ONLINE INFORMATION SOURCES	DY	0,613	0,779	DI	0,955	0,609	DA	-0,003	0,999	WTV	-0,788	0,527
FAMILIARITY	DY	0,462	0,129	DI	0,193	0,454	DA	0,448	0,052	WTV	-0,076	0,660

DV = DEPENDENT VARIABLE

B = BETA COEFFICIENT P = SIGNIFICANCE

In regard of information sources in LRAI, the variables “Brochures” ( $\rightarrow$  DY = -0.56,  $p < 0.05$ ) and “Social media platforms (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, etc.)” ( $\rightarrow$  DY = -0.89,  $p < 0.05$ ) were found to have significant but negative relationships towards destination imagery. Moreover, continuing with LRAI and the relationships towards the other dependent variables (DI, DA, WTV), the independent variables “Travel motivations” were found to have a significant and positive relationship towards destination image (TM  $\rightarrow$  DI = 0.99,  $p < 0.05$ ) and destination affect (TM  $\rightarrow$  DA = 0.90,  $p < 0.05$ ). While, for “Travel programs” ( $\rightarrow$  DA = 0.46,  $p < 0.05$ ) and “Personal blogs” ( $\rightarrow$  DA = 0.41,  $p < 0.05$ ) positive and significant relationships were found towards destination affect. For the variables “Visitation” ( $\rightarrow$  WTV = -4.94,  $p < 0.01$ ) and “Perceived level of experience” ( $\rightarrow$  WTV = -0.41,  $p < 0.001$ ) significant negative relationships were found towards willingness-to-visit.



Furthermore, although the relationships are not significant, there seem to be some positive correlations between other variables. In LRAC: “travel motivations” ( $TM \rightarrow DI = 0.66$ ,  $p. 0.08$ ) and destination image; “electronic word-of-mouth” ( $eWOM \rightarrow DI = 0.68$ ,  $p. 0.08$ ) and destination image; and, “familiarity” ( $Familiarity \rightarrow DA = 0.45$ ,  $p. 0.05$ ) and destination affect. While in the case of LRAI, some positive correlation was found between “online content generated by real users” ( $\rightarrow 0.64$ ,  $p. 0.05$ ) and destination imagery, and “perceived level of experience” ( $\rightarrow DA = 0.32$ ,  $p. 0.08$ ) and destination affect

Based on the above discussion, H6 can only be partially confirmed as some external information sources were found to significantly affect destination imagery, while H7 is confirmed, and H8, H8.1, H8.2, H8.3 are rejected.

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) significance level for both linear regression analyses (LRAI and LRAC) shows a significant relationship towards destination imagery (both:  $p.<0.001$ ) and willingness-to-visit (LRAC =  $p.<0.05$ ; LRAI =  $p.<0.001$ ). See Table 4. Therefore, it was found that personal factors and internal information sources and external information sources together significantly influence destination imagery and willingness-to-visit.

In regard of the influence of personal factors, namely, (H9) age, (H10) education, (H11) gender, (H12) personal interests, and (H13) travel motivations, and internal information sources, namely, (H14) visitation, (H15) the number of visits to a destination, and (H16) the perceived level of

experience on external information sources (EIS), it was found that age (Age  $\rightarrow$  EIS = -0.15,  $p < 0.05$ ), gender (Gender  $\rightarrow$  EIS = 0.57,  $p < 0.001$ ) and personal interests (PI  $\rightarrow$  EIS = 0.45,  $p < 0.01$ ) have a significant relationship towards external information sources. See Table 7. The relationship between gender and personal interests was positive, while in regard to age it was found negative. No significant relationship was found between any variables regarding personal experiences and external information sources. Therefore, H9, H11, and H12 are confirmed, while H10, H13, H14, H15, and H16 are rejected. Although not significant, some positive correlation was found between “perceived level of experience” ( $\rightarrow$  EIS = 0.13,  $p = 0.09$ ) and external information sources.

**TABLE 7 - ANTECEDENTS OF EXTERNAL INFORMATION SOURCES**

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	DV	B	P
AGE	EIS	-0,146	0,044
GENDER	EIS	0,569	0,001
EDUCATION	EIS	-0,057	0,320
TRAVEL MOTIVATIONS	EIS	-0,251	0,120
PERSONAL INTERESTS	EIS	0,446	0,001
VISITATION	EIS	0,154	0,869
NUMBER OF VISITS	EIS	0,042	0,373
PERCEIVED LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE	EIS	0,130	0,085

**DV** = DEPENDENT VARIABLE

**EIS** = EXTERNAL INFORMATION SOURCES

**P** = SIGNIFICANCE

**R** = BETA COEFFICIENT

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that personal factor variables and internal information source variables together had a significant relationship towards external information sources

( $p < 0.001$ ). See Table 4. Therefore, it can be concluded that personal factors and internal information sources together influence external information sources.

A collection of the status of individual hypothesis can be found from Table 8, along with some additional notes regarding unexpected but significant relationships between the variables. While from Table 9 the relationship between individual association strength and valence on destination image, destination affect, and willingness-to-visit can be found. Table 9 was developed as it was thought to yield interesting observations when cross-referencing the findings with Table 1. The observations will be brought forward in the discussion part while significant relationships will be presented below.

Significant relationships were found as follows: a positive relationship between the attribute “A variety of historical monuments” – Valence and destination affect (0.58,  $p < 0.05$ ); a negative relationship between the attribute “Diverse architecture” – Strength and willingness-to-visit (-0.33,  $p < 0.01$ ); a negative relationship between the attribute “The Queen (royal family, the monarchy)” – Strength and willingness-to-visit (-0.21,  $p < 0.05$ ); a positive relationship between the attribute “British food (fish and chips)” – Valence and willingness-to-visit (0.39,  $p < 0.05$ ); a negative relationship between the attribute “Unfriendly people (Unwelcoming)” – Valence and destination image (-0.69,  $p < 0.01$ ), - Valence and destination affect (-0.56,  $p < 0.05$ ), - Strength and willingness-to-visit (-0.22,  $p < 0.05$ ); a positive relationship between the attribute “Lots of variety between different areas of the country (people, nature, lifestyle)” – Valence and willingness-to-visit (0.45,  $p < 0.05$ ); a negative relationship between the attribute “Various cities

and regions to visit” – Valence and willingness-to-visit ( $-0.46$ ,  $p.<0.05$ ), and a positive relationship between the attribute “Universities & colleges (Oxford, Cambridge)” – Valence and willingness-to-visit ( $0.24$ ,  $p.<0.05$ ). Additionally, although not significant, there seems to be some positive correlation between “British food (fish and chips)” – Valence and destination image ( $0.37$ ,  $p. 0.09$ ). In regard to the ANOVA, a significant relationship was only found for all the variables together towards willingness-to-visit ( $p.<0.01$ ). This finding is in line with the previously presented relationship between destination imagery and willingness-to-visit.

TABLE 8 - STATUS OF HYPOTHESIS

#	INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	HYPOTHESIS	CONFIRMED	OTHER RELATIONSHIPS
H1	Age	significantly affects Destination Imagery	NO	
H2	Education	significantly affects Destination Imagery	NO	
H3	Gender	significantly affects Destination Imagery	NO	
H4	Personal Interests	significantly affect Destination Imagery	YES	
H5	Travel Motivations	significantly affect Destination Imagery	NO	Positive significant relationship towards DI & DA
H6	External Information Sources	significantly affect Destination Imagery	PARTIALLY	
H7	External Information Source Types	differently affect Destination Imagery	YES	
H8	Internal information sources	significantly affect Destination Imagery	NO	
H8.1	Visitation	significantly affects Destination Imagery	NO	Negative significant relationship towards WTV
H8.2	Number of Visits to a destination	significantly affect Destination Imagery	NO	
H8.3	The Perceived Level of Experience	significantly affect Destination Imagery	NO	Negative significant relationship towards WTV
H9	Age	significantly affects External Information Sources	YES	
H10	Education	significantly affects External Information Sources	NO	
H11	Gender	significantly affects External Information Sources	YES	
H12	Personal Interests	significantly affect External Information Sources	YES	
H13	Travel Motivations	significantly affect External Information Sources	NO	
H14	Visitation significantly	significantly affects External Information Sources	NO	
H15	The Number of Visits to a destination	significantly affects External Information Sources	NO	
H16	The Perceived level of Experience	significantly affects External Information Sources	NO	
H17	Destination Image	positively influences Willingness-To-Visit	NO	Positive significant relationship towards DA
H18	Destination Affect	positively influences Willingness-To-Visit	NO	
H19	Destination Affect	positively influences Destination Image	YES	
H20	Destination Imagery	positively influences Destination Image	NO	Positive significant relationship towards WTV
H21	Destination Imagery	positively influences Destination Affect	YES	

Table 9  
Association Strenght and Valence influence on the reflective variables

Attribute	DV	Strenght			Valence			Strenght			Valence			Strenght			Valence		
		B	P	DV	B	P	DV	B	P	DV	B	P	DV	B	P	DV	B	P	DV
Lots of parks, gardens & green areas	DI	-0,171	0,341	DA	0,035	0,868	DA	-0,080	0,610	DA	0,005	0,978	WTV	-0,012	0,912	DA	0,025	0,844	DA
London (areas of the city, tourist attractions)	DI	0,119	0,533	DA	0,083	0,750	DA	0,200	0,229	DA	0,107	0,639	WTV	0,077	0,512	DA	-0,166	0,304	DA
A variety of historical monuments	DI	0,130	0,471	DA	0,514	0,113	DA	-0,007	0,965	DA	0,578	0,042	WTV	0,102	0,363	DA	-0,020	0,920	DA
Diverse architecture	DI	0,078	0,707	DA	-0,069	0,777	DA	0,088	0,623	DA	-0,122	0,564	WTV	-0,334	0,010	DA	0,133	0,374	DA
Rich and wealthy nation (high expenses)	DI	-0,108	0,540	DA	-0,191	0,321	DA	-0,018	0,907	DA	-0,177	0,289	WTV	0,003	0,980	DA	0,015	0,901	DA
Soccer (premier league, stadiums)	DI	0,002	0,985	DA	0,059	0,683	DA	-0,059	0,586	DA	0,036	0,774	WTV	0,026	0,739	DA	0,056	0,531	DA
The Queen (royal family, the monarchy)	DI	0,129	0,394	DA	-0,006	0,974	DA	0,095	0,473	DA	0,079	0,594	WTV	-0,213	0,024	DA	0,034	0,747	DA
British food (fish and chips)	DI	-0,114	0,434	DA	0,368	0,088	DA	-0,041	0,749	DA	0,387	0,040	WTV	0,008	0,929	DA	0,100	0,448	DA
Busy lifestyle	DI	-0,032	0,837	DA	0,146	0,584	DA	-0,023	0,868	DA	0,079	0,734	WTV	-0,002	0,980	DA	0,099	0,548	DA
Multicultural (diverse, ethnic)	DI	0,039	0,854	DA	-0,142	0,576	DA	-0,104	0,573	DA	0,024	0,913	WTV	-0,005	0,972	DA	-0,013	0,932	DA
Unfriendly people (unwelcoming)	DI	-0,124	0,426	DA	-0,692	0,008	DA	-0,161	0,237	DA	-0,561	0,014	WTV	-0,217	0,026	DA	0,241	0,131	DA
Traditional culture (formal)	DI	0,047	0,784	DA	0,460	0,197	DA	0,077	0,608	DA	0,322	0,298	WTV	-0,076	0,471	DA	0,022	0,921	DA
Lots of variety between different areas of the country (people, nature, lifestyle)	DI	0,152	0,373	DA	-0,178	0,616	DA	0,103	0,491	DA	-0,113	0,714	WTV	-0,112	0,287	DA	0,452	0,041	DA
Various cities and regions to visit	DI	0,079	0,704	DA	0,131	0,682	DA	0,090	0,618	DA	0,070	0,801	WTV	-0,003	0,984	DA	-0,455	0,023	DA
Pubs & bars (vibrant drinking culture)	DI	-0,076	0,714	DA	0,017	0,940	DA	-0,080	0,662	DA	0,117	0,558	WTV	-0,005	0,972	DA	-0,121	0,394	DA
Rainy and gray weather	DI	0,078	0,644	DA	0,238	0,271	DA	0,030	0,837	DA	0,235	0,212	WTV	0,077	0,461	DA	0,018	0,891	DA
Universities & colleges (Oxford, Cambridge)	DI	0,108	0,629	DA	0,111	0,560	DA	0,163	0,402	DA	0,081	0,626	WTV	0,116	0,402	DA	0,236	0,047	DA
Versatile landscapes (cliffs, rivers)	DI	0,125	0,534	DA	0,102	0,756	DA	0,039	0,823	DA	0,121	0,672	WTV	-0,174	0,162	DA	0,313	0,124	DA
A variety of museums (Wax Museum, Natural History Museum)	DI	-0,140	0,586	DA	-0,190	0,536	DA	0,091	0,669	DA	-0,320	0,234	WTV	0,098	0,516	DA	-0,184	0,334	DA
Vibrant nightlife (events)	DI	-0,038	0,818	DA	-0,007	0,973	DA	-0,051	0,725	DA	-0,030	0,867	WTV	0,127	0,219	DA	-0,159	0,219	DA

DV = DEPENDENT VARIABLE

B = BETA COEFFICIENT

P = SIGNIFICANCE

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The discussion part will first go through general linkages between the variables in the hypothesized model and then dive into the findings related to individual attributes and what they imply for the UK as a tourist destination. After, we will discuss the limitations that influence our findings as the findings must be viewed with them in mind. Additionally, suggestions for future research will be brought forward.

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

As was previously presented, no significant link was found between destination image and willingness-to-visit ( $DI \rightarrow WTV = 0.21, p.>0.05$ ) and destination affect and willingness-to-visit ( $DA \rightarrow WTV = 0.06, p.>0.05$ ), but together (destination image and destination affect) they were found to have a significant relationship towards willingness-to-visit (ANOVA,  $p.<0.001$ ). Thus, it can be concluded that the overall affect that individuals apply to the UK as a travel destination together with how they perceive its overall evaluation can influence their behavioral responses towards the UK as a travel destination in terms of willingness-to-visit. Additionally, as the linear regression analysis pointed out, the relationship (beta coefficient) for both destination image (0.21) and destination affect (0.06) was positive towards willingness-to-visit, and thus higher levels of overall affect and evaluation can lead to increased behavioral responses, namely, into increased intentions of actually visiting the UK as a tourist. This generally implies that if tourism promoters manage to create more positive images and more positive levels of affect towards the UK as a

travel destination, more individuals will choose it as a tourist destination. Therefore, this relationship can be considered as a good sign for tourism managers as effective marketing campaigns can lead to higher numbers in tourist arrivals, as would generally be expected.

In the case of destination affect influencing destination image, a significant positive relationship was found ( $DA \rightarrow DI = 1.02, p.<0.001$ ). This implies that higher levels of overall affect that individuals accredit to the UK as a travel destination will also improve their overall evaluations of it. Similarly, the relationship was found to be significant the other way around ( $DI \rightarrow DA = 0.81, p.<0.001$ ). Thus, generally higher evaluations of the UK as a tourist destination can result in increased levels of overall affective responses towards the destination. Therefore, if tourism promoters manage to create positive feelings in potential tourists regarding the UK as a travel destination, these feeling can lead to them evaluating the UK better overall as a tourist destination, while similarly, if they manage to create an overall better image of the UK as a tourist destination, the overall affective evaluations will also be increased.

Going forward, destination imagery was found to significantly and positively to relate to destination affect ( $DY \rightarrow DA = 0.19, p.<0.05$ ). This implies that the attributes that were gathered via the qualitative interviews positively influenced the affective overall responses of the survey respondents. Therefore, if tourism promoters manage to strengthen the linkage of these associations for individuals or enhance their affective linkages towards the UK as a tourist destination, this can lead to better results in tourism visits or generally to an enhanced brand image. This is because destination affect and destination image are positively linked together, and



they together positively influence willingness-to-visit. Moreover, this argumentation is supported by the positive relationship that was found between destination imagery and willingness-to-visit ( $DY \rightarrow WTV = 0.12 \text{ } p.<0.01$ ).

In regard of the total influence of personal factor variables and information source variables (internal and external) on destination imagery, a significant relationship was found for all of them together towards destination imagery in both LRAI and LRAC (ANOVA for both:  $p.<0.001$ ). Similarly, in the case of LRAI and LRAC, a significant relationship was found for all the variables together towards willingness-to-visit (ANOVA:  $LRAI \rightarrow WTV = p.<0.001$ ;  $LRAC \rightarrow WTV = p.<0.05$ ). Therefore, it can be said that the examined personal factor and information source (internal and external) variables together can have an influence on the imagery that tourists hold for the UK as a tourist destination. Moreover, in light of the previously presented findings, it can then be proposed that these variables together can also have a direct or an indirect impact on destination image, destination affect, and willingness-to-visit. While, in the cases that these independent variables would influence destination imagery positively, it is assumed that it would result in positive changes in the reflective variables (DI, DA, WTV), also based on the previously presented findings. While, when negative changes occur in the variables influencing destination imagery, it is assumed that negative influences will occur in the reflective variables (DI, DA, WTV). One obvious observation from these findings is that all individuals have unique images of destinations that differ from the ones of others. This finding is similar to the ones of many others (e.g. Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Kock et al., 2016; Tasci & Gartner, 2007).

Interestingly, the two statistical analysis (LRAC & LRAI) that were made showed differences between one another. As more significances were found within LRAI, it further strengthens the argumentation of Baloglu (1997) who proposed that focusing on individual information sources rather than categorized information sources according to various academic typologies can yield more practical implications. Also, by staying with individual variables rather than grouping them into categories, researchers can limit possible result distortion as categorizations might lead to unnoticed mistakes or point out to alternate relationships. Therefore, for future research, we suggest appropriate care if and when grouping items under categories.

Regarding the individual relationships between personal factor and internal and external information source variables on destination imagery, the only significant relationship that was found from both statistical models was the one of personal interest (LRAC:  $PI \rightarrow DY = 1,67$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; LRAI:  $PI \rightarrow DY = 1,94$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .) Therefore, it can be argued that the personal interests of individuals can have a positive influence on the various associations they hold towards a destination, which in this case was the UK. From a practical point of view, this implies that more targeted promotion strategies can lead to better results in terms of brand awareness, thus increasing the perceived depth of the brand as a whole. This is an important finding as it has been proposed that higher levels of destination familiarity (which generally relates to brand awareness) have been found to result in more favorably perceived images of destinations (Baloglu, 2001). Thus, tourism promoters should find more creative approaches and channels from which to reach the potential tourist audience with targeted messages, rather than focusing on marketing tactics with a universal meaning.

Additionally, it was found in LRAI that travel motivations have a positive influence on how individuals overall evaluate the UK as a tourist destination ( $TM \rightarrow DI = 0.99, p.<0.05$ ), and towards their overall levels of affect ( $TM \rightarrow DA = 0.90, p.<0.05$ ) that is accredited to the destination. For practitioners, this would again imply that a more targeted approach in destination marketing would work better than utilizing universal approaches that aim to appeal to the masses. Moreover, in light of these findings we suggest that tourism managers should engage in activities that try to increase knowledge regarding tourist behavior more thoroughly, as by understanding what motivates tourists to visit the UK and how this motivation can be increased could lead to better outcomes in terms of enhanced destination image, destination affect, and willingness-to-visit.

In regard of the relationship between information sources and destination imagery, it was found in LRAI that brochures ( $\rightarrow DY = -0.56, p.<0.05$ ) and social media platforms ( $\rightarrow DY = -0.89, p.<0.05$ ) have a negative influence towards destination imagery. This finding is interesting in the light that social media platforms were found to be the seventh most important/impactful information source in creating an image of the UK as a travel destination by the survey respondents, while brochures were rated the third least important/impactful (Table 2). Therefore, it seems that even though information sources are perceived important, they do not necessarily lead to positive responses in their users in terms of destination imagery. One logical explanation for this could be that the content which is available on these social media platforms actually harms the brand image of the UK as a travel destination rather than enhances it. While in the case of brochures, it is hard to evaluate whether or not the reason is the actual content, or if it relates to the findings that

induced information sources are generally perceived as less credible (Gartner, 1993), thus they would have less impact on the image formation process of consumers. Social media platforms, on the other hand, are composed of organic, autonomous, and induced image formation agents as they include content from for example individual users (organic), various news agencies (autonomous), and advertising (induced), and as such make it possible for virtually anybody to share information on (Llodrà-Riera et al., 2015). Therefore, it is very hard to control what kind of messages or images are delivered via these social media platforms and thus it is possible that consumers generate negative associations towards the UK as a travel destination via this unfavorable content. For practitioners, these findings imply that brochures are not an effective tool to convey information regarding the UK as a travel destination, and as such, their usage should be reconsidered. While, in regard to social media platforms, destination promoters should try to gain more control over what kind of messages are conveyed on these platforms in order to turn the relationship positive.

While in LRAI, Travel programs ( $\rightarrow$  DA = 0.46,  $p < 0.05$ ) and personal blogs ( $\rightarrow$  DA = 0.41,  $p < 0.05$ ), and in LRAC electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM  $\rightarrow$  DA = 0.76,  $p < 0.05$ ) were found to positively relate to destination affect. First of all, it should be noted that one variable under the category of eWOM was personal blogs, which implies that personal blogs have a strong influence in creating affective images of the UK as a travel destination for individuals. The positive impact of these information sources towards destination affect can relate to their mutual ability to share narratives and attributes, which appeal to the emotions of consumers (Connell, 2012). Moreover, travel programs and personal blogs were rated to the more important/impactful portion of the

various information sources, which would provide support for the proposal of Connell (2012) regarding the appeal of narratives to emotions. Personal blogs, for example, are generally written by individual bloggers, and as the content generally relates to their own “personal” experiences, it might be found as more engaging via its aspect of “realness”. This might be why they have a significant impact on destination affect. Mayzlin (2006) proposes similarly as he argues that online communications are thought to be highly attractive due to their extensively perceived credibility and trustworthiness. As these sources have been found to have positive impacts on the overall affective responses’ individuals have towards the UK as a travel destination, it could be a good idea for destination promoters take more advantage of these sources and use co-creation as a tool to increase the image of the UK. For example, it could be wise to collaborate with travel bloggers as travel blogs have been found to influence destination image (Tseng et al., 2015). By engaging in collaborations as such, destination promoters could have more control over the messages that are delivered online, thus adding to the previous suggestion regarding more control over social media platform content.

In regards of information sources (internal and external) impacting willingness-to-visit, it was found that word-of-mouth (WOM  $\rightarrow$  WTV = -0.22,  $p < 0.05$ ), visitation ( $\rightarrow$  WTV = -4.94,  $p < 0.01$ ), and the perceived level of experience ( $\rightarrow$  WTV = -0.41,  $p < 0.001$ ) that individuals hold towards the UK as a travel destination lead to lower behavioral intentions, namely, fewer intentions to visit the UK. The results generally imply that internal information sources have more impact on future behavior than external information sources. When looking closer at the variable “visitation”, it seems that the negative influence of visitation towards willingness-to-visit is very strong (-4.94) as

when the value within the independent variable (visitation) goes up (1 yes → 2 no) the mean of the dependent variable goes down dramatically. When considering that most respondents (~85%) had visited the UK prior, this could imply that the rest of the sample who had not visited hold very unfavorable images towards the UK as a travel destination and thus have strongly decided not to visit it in the future either or that their travel motivations would not be met by visiting the UK. Increasing knowledge regarding this customer segment could aid in understanding the reasons behind this phenomenon and could lead to the development of more effective promotional tactics. For example, such actions could generate knowledge of what kind of unfavorable images exist in the minds of consumers regarding the UK as a travel destination and what kind of factors should be improved to serve a broader range of tourists' travel motivations.

Regarding the influence of perceived level of experience. As the relationship between the variables is negative, there might be more reason for tourism managers take action as higher perceived levels of experience lead to lower behavioral responses. When examining the deeper meaning of the concept "the perceived level of experience", it does not necessarily mean that one has visited the UK, but it also could imply this. If visitation would not be included, it could imply again that the images which are conveyed via various external information sources (such as social media platforms) are not necessarily positive, thus resulting in fewer intentions to visit. While if it would contain visitation, it could imply that either individuals did not enjoy their vacations and wish to not return, or that their travel motivations have been fulfilled and thus, there is no reason to return to the UK for a vacation. Again, be it either way, it is suggested for destination marketers

to increase knowledge regarding their customers and especially, what the factors are that generate this undesired will-to-visit.

What makes us believe that the reason behind the above-discussed phenomenon would be unfavorable images conveyed via external information sources and generally not very favorable experiences during visitation is that increased perceived importance within the variable “word-of-mouth” would similarly result in lower intentions to visit. Therefore, we see that there might be a correlation between these variables as if individuals have visited, or if they otherwise perceive themselves as more experienced towards the UK as a travel destination, they could convey negative word-of-mouth, which then leads to the negative relationship between word-of-mouth and willingness-to-visit. This explanation could make sense, as the categorical variable “word-of-mouth” consists of two variables “Information received from friends and relatives when asked for (Word-of-mouth)” and “Unrequested information that is received from individuals who have been to the area”, that are together rated very important/impactful (first and third most important/impactful) in creating an image of the UK as a travel destination. Therefore, the message that is generally conveyed could be negative by nature, which then leads to fewer intentions to visit. Additionally, these assumptions could explain the negative relationship that was found between social media platforms and destination imagery as social media platforms enable tourists to share their travel experiences and the shared content is generally viewed as impartial (Mak, 2017).

If this were to be true, it could imply that the UK is not generally perceived as a very appealing travel destination for the examined sample group. For practitioners, a situation as such is somewhat problematic. If visitation leads to bad experiences, it would be a good idea to understand the cause of these bad experiences and try to turn them into positive ones. One way would be to ask for feedback from visitors for example at the airports or hotels to get input for further analysis, thus increasing valuable customer knowledge. Generally, turning bad experiences into good ones is not something that is easy to achieve as touristic experiences are somewhat holistic and thus it would imply that a multitude of variables could be the cause of these bad experiences, leading to less control over them. While when considering the possibility that the increased perceived level of experience occurs without visitation it could imply that the information that is projected is not appealing to the recipient, or then, it is not reaching the right target group (which was a previously proposed suggestion for effective destination promotion) and thus leads to fewer intentions to visit. Therefore, similar to what was as previously suggested, destination promoters should focus on generating effective marketing campaigns which reach the right audience, with the right message.

In regard to the influence of personal factors and internal information sources towards external information sources, it was found that age ( $\text{Age} \rightarrow \text{EIS} = -0.15, p < 0.05$ ) negatively influences external information sources, while gender ( $\text{Gender} \rightarrow \text{EIS} = 0.57, p < 0.01$ ) and personal interests ( $\text{PI} \rightarrow \text{EIS} = 0.45, p < 0.01$ ) have a positive relationship towards them. Based on the findings, it can be proposed that the relationship that these variables have among one another is dynamic by nature as they were found to differ according to personal factors, and thus, between individuals.



Moreover, these findings generally imply that personal factors are more influential than internal information sources when it comes to influencing external information sources. Furthermore, as the ANOVA significance level implies, all personal factor variables and internal information source variables together have a significant impact on external information sources. Therefore, it is thought that personal factors and internal information sources moderate the influence of external information sources as the variable is influenced by variables that comprise personal factors and internal information sources, before having an influence on destination imagery. Additionally, it was found that personal factor variables and internal information source variables influence the imagery formation process of the individual by having an impact on not only the external information search behavior of individuals but also what the individual considers as important and worthwhile of remembering. Hence, we assume that based on a variety of factors, especially by an individual's age, gender, and personal interests, the impact of various external information sources in the imagery formation process will differ between individuals.

These findings are coherent with our previously presented findings, and as such, it can be proposed that among the examined variables, an individual's personal interests are the single most impactful variable when it comes to influencing the diverse cognitive and affective associations held towards a destination. Moreover, the findings related to how personal factors and internal information sources influence external information sources is another indicator that tourism promoters should not utilize universal marketing tactics but rather focus on more specific and targeted approaches. Therefore, we suggest more precise segmentation among potential tourists in order to catch their attention and to provide them with the right information via the

right channel. By doing so, it can be possible to effectively influence their image formation process favorably.

When considering today's world, we are constantly bombarded with information from a broad variety of sources, and thus it is not difficult to believe that individuals cannot remember every piece of information they see or hear. Subsequently, the information storage process of individuals can be expected to be rather selective with what information is seen as important and thus stored (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012). Therefore, it can be expected that the information that individuals consider as more important should have more influence on the imagery they hold towards destinations (as was found in this research), and consequently on the images they form.

Some additional direction for future improvements for destination promoters can be found from Table 1 and Table 9. Table 1 exhibits how strong connections individuals make between attributes related to the UK as a travel destination (strength), and also how they perceive their favorability (valence). While Table 9 shows how the strength and valence of each individual attribute relate to destination image, destination affect, and willingness-to-visit. If and when an attribute strength or valence is significantly related to another dependent variable, it can be expected to have a significant influence on that dependent variable. Therefore, in addition to analyzing the strength and valence of attributes, we can actually see their direct impact on the dependent variables.

The perceived favorability (valence) of the attribute “A variety of historical monuments” was found to have a significant and positive relationship towards destination affect (0.58,  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, when individuals felt more favorably towards the attribute, their overall levels of affect towards the UK was also increased. The attribute was linked relatively strongly (mean 4.12) with a high positive valence (mean 2.14), and a relatively low standard deviation of valence (1.14) towards the UK as a travel destination. Based on the findings, it is suggested that destination promoters should focus on creating the associative link for this attribute even stronger. If tourist’s awareness would be raised that the destination is filled with a variety of historical monuments, it could lead to even better affective responses, and subsequently more intentions to visit.

While in regard if the attribute “Diverse architecture” ( $S. = 3.85$ ,  $V. = 1.80$ ,  $Vstd. = 1.21$ ) – Strength, it was found to negatively relate to willingness-to-visit ( $-0.33$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, this implies that the stronger connection individuals made with the attribute and the destination, the less they intended to visit. Therefore, it is suggested for tourism promoters to either try to lessen the strength of the associative linkage or then try to depict it in a more favorable light in a pursuit to enhance its relatively average favorability among respondents. Similar suggestions are proposed in relation to the attribute “The Queen (royal family, the monarchy)” ( $S. = 3.77$ ,  $V. = 0.67$ ,  $Vstd. = 1.44$ ) – Strength, as it was also found to negatively relate to willingness-to-visit ( $-0.21$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Interestingly, as it could be expected that many of the historical monuments in the UK are somehow related to the queen and the monarchy. It could be a wise idea to try to distance these associations from one another, as the associations regarding the queen and the monarchy could downplay the good impacts of the variety of historical monuments.

In regard of the association “British food (fish and chips)” ( $S. = 2.69$ ,  $V. = -0.42$ ,  $Vstd. = 1.55$ ) – Valence, a positive and significant connection was found towards destination affect ( $0.39$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This finding implies that the better respondents perceived British food, the better they felt about the destination in general. The strength of this associative link is relatively weak, and the attribute is generally perceived as a negative thing in relation to the destination. Therefore, it would be a good idea to bring forth positive aspects of the British food culture in order to turn the associations into favorable ones. Moreover, when considering that the attribute “Multicultural (diverse, ethnic)” was strongly and positively linked to the destination ( $S. = 4.94$ ,  $V. = 2.02$ ,  $Vstd. = 1.32$ ), it could be a good idea to use this ethnicity in advancing the associations related to the cuisine in the UK. Meaning that, as it can be difficult to invent a new food culture for the British, they could utilize the foreign and ethnic food cultures more in their advantage with increased promotional materials.

When considering the attribute “unfriendly people (unwelcoming)” ( $S. = 2.64$ ,  $V. = -1.23$ ,  $Vstd. = 1.22$ ), its valence was found to significantly influence destination image ( $-0.69$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and destination affect ( $-0.56$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) negatively, while its strength ( $-0.22$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) was found to negatively influence willingness-to-visit. This means that when individuals generally rated the attribute higher on valence, destination image and destination affect were negatively influenced. While when the associative link was stronger, fewer intentions to visit were detected. This can generally be found as a positive and fairly expected phenomenon as the attribute has a negative connotation attached to it. Thus, when it is perceived less strongly or favorably, it implies that the

direction is towards less friendly, which is generally a positive thing. As the associative link is rated relatively weak, it means that most respondents do not perceive the British to be unfriendly or unwelcoming.

Interestingly, this issue of the British being “unfriendly” or “unwelcoming”, or even “cold” was brought forward relatively broadly by the qualitative interview respondents in many various forms. These findings could then imply that the authors failed to capture the true essence of the meaning that these associations were aimed to convey and translate them inadequately into an overall descriptive attribute that received a low associative link in regards of association strength. But in any case, even if the associative link is rather weak, the association towards local residents being unfriendly or unwelcoming is generally not a good impression to give to tourists. Therefore, it could be suggested for future marketing campaigns to focus on depicting the British as warm and friendly towards outsiders as this could positively impact destination image, destination affect, and willingness-to-visit. Moreover, destination promoters should not only try to depict the locals as warm and friendly but also engage in promotional campaigns that aim to increase the friendliness of locals towards visitors via various means. This is especially important as the importance of local residents for a place brand has been highlighted by many researchers as they have been described as one of the three key stakeholder groups for a place brand (Ashworth & Voogd, 1990; Van den Berg & Braun, 1999; Hanna & Rowley, 2011, Kotler et al., 1993). Moreover, Braun et al. (2013) proposed that local residents are a critical part of the place brand via their characteristics and behavior, and for that, they act as brand ambassadors who can give credibility to any message that is tried to deliver to outsiders. Therefore, it is critical that local residents live

the brand or otherwise the message will not have the power to influence the images of outsiders as local residents can “make or break” a destination’s branding efforts (Braun et al., 2013).

On the other hand, it could be assumed, as the UK is a big country with various cities and regions to visit (attribute strength 4.37) and a place with lots of variety between different areas of the country (people, nature, lifestyle) (attribute strength 4.28), that some areas suffer from this phenomenon of unfriendliness more than others. For example, in the qualitative interviews, London was usually the place and topic of interest when describing associations regarding the UK and it was commonly described as a busy metropole (see Appendix 2 for qualitative interview data). Therefore, it could be assumed that this unfriendliness was meant to describe London as it was the most commonly described and referred to a place, and as it is the most visited city in the country (VisitBritain, 2017). Moreover, as can be assumed, qualitative interviews require more in-depth knowledge from the respondent than quantitative surveys. Thus, when respondents were describing their associations during the interviews, they turned to the images and associations most familiar to them (possibly even from own experiences in London). While in the case of the survey respondents, less in-depth knowledge was required from them (assumption), thus leaving the possibility of staying rather general than forcing them to think deeper into their own experiences. Therefore, the weak but existing associative link could be explained.

The attribute “Lots of variety between different areas of the country (people, nature, lifestyle)” ( $S. = 4.28$ ,  $V. = 1.77$ ,  $Vstd. = 1.21$ ) – Valence was found to positively relate to willingness-to-visit ( $0.45$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This implies that the more favorably respondents perceived the attribute, the more they

are willing to visit the destination. As the associative link with this attribute and the UK as a travel destination was relatively strong, we are subject to believe that individuals see the UK as a destination with variety and lots of possibilities to choose from. Therefore, we suggest that this message should be spread even more in order to guarantee the holistic awareness that comes along with this attribute.

On the other hand, regarding the attribute “Various cities and regions to visit” ( $S. = 4.37$ ,  $V. = 2.15$ ,  $V_{std.} = 1.06$ ) – Valence, the more favorably individuals thought about it, the fewer intentions they had to visit ( $-0.46$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This finding shows an interesting contradiction to the previous. Based on the findings, we assume that the attribute “Lots of variety between different areas of the country (people, nature, lifestyle)” was thought to refer less to geographical characteristics and more towards sociological features, while “Various cities and regions to visit” is more or less clearly referring to alterations caused by geographical differences. This derived assumption of differing underlying meaning behind the attributes is also supported by the lack of multicollinearity between the attributes as presented in table 1. Therefore, such differences could then explain why increased favorable perspective on “Lots of variety between different areas of the country (people, nature, lifestyle)” leads to better behavioral outcomes, while the contrary happens with “Various cities and regions to visit”. If our assumption regarding the underlying meaning behind how respondents considered the attribute “Lots of variety between different areas of the country (people, nature, lifestyle)” would be accurate, it could further enhance the prior argumentation regarding the attribute “unfriendly people (unwelcoming)” as respondents could then consider for example London (and its residents) different from other areas and regions.

The last significant relationship that was found in this statistical analysis was the one between “Universities & colleges (Oxford, Cambridge)” ( $S. = 4.64$ ,  $V. = 1.45$ ,  $Vstd. = 1.33$ ) – Valence and willingness-to-visit ( $0.24$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), which was found positive. Therefore, the more favorably respondents perceived the attribute, the more intentions of visitations did they exhibit. As can be found, the associative link with this attribute towards the destination is relatively strong and it is also perceived rather favorably with some standard deviation in valence. This finding could again take us back to the importance of personal interests, as for the individuals who perceive this attribute as favorable, it could be a potential reason to visit, while for the standard traveler such attribute might have lesser importance. Therefore, as previously mentioned, more targeted promotional campaigns and methods are suggested to attract individuals with more specific needs.

As previously pointed out, table 2 presents how important/impactful survey respondents perceived various information sources in creating an image of the UK as a travel destination. Based on the findings, we propose that not all information sources are perceived as equally important/impactful. Therefore, destination marketers should analyze what the pros and cons of individual sources are and how effective would they be in delivering the desired message, with the assigned budget in mind. Additionally, similarly to what was proposed by Gartner (1993), we suggest that destination marketers should not rely on only one information source to convey messages but rather use a carefully selected combination of a variety of sources for these purposes.



As a more specific suggestion, one plausible way to deliver messages effectively could be to promote the spreading of WOM as it is perceived as the most important/impactful information source by the survey respondents and as similar findings have also been presented by other studies (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Doosti et al., 2016; Trusov et al., 2009). This could be done via online and offline sources to reach maximum effect. Both channels could be utilized as Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) proposed that eWOM is “one of the most effective factors influencing brand image and purchase intention of brands in consumer markets” (p.460). While Jalilvand (2017) argued that the effectiveness of eWOM could be due to the issue that WOM spreads much more rapidly online than offline. A way to achieve this could be done by engaging in viral marketing strategies which have been proposed to encourage the spreading of WOM (Mohr, 2001). Moreover, in light of previous suggestions, it should be noted here that not all information sources work as effectively for all individuals, and thus, careful segmentation and market research is suggested. By doing so, the right target group could be reached with the right message, and thus could lead to cost-efficient marketing practices.

## LIMITATIONS

Just like most, also this research comes with a set of limitations and thus the findings must be considered with them in mind. To start off, we would like again to point out that the sample group from which our findings are derived from comprise a relatively small group of individuals (which is mainly caused by the low completion rate), which left us a relatively small amount of data. This

fact might have influenced our findings and thus, could have had an impact on the relatively small amount of significant relationships that were found. Interestingly, as brought forward when presenting the study results, a variety of correlations between other variables were found, but as the relationships were not significant the implications were left undiscussed. Therefore, we wonder whether or not these relationships would have been found significant if the sample group were to be larger, or if there were other undetected relationships to be found. Despite this, we are extremely excited that the ANOVA significance levels generally supported our general framework and proved it to be valid.

Moreover, it should be noted that as our sample group was Italian, our results should not be generalized beyond this scope. Furthermore, as discussed in the method part of this research, there might have been some homogeneity within respondents. This could be due to the issue that no proven sampling method was used in neither of the research phases (qualitative or quantitative). Therefore, if generalizing the results beyond this sample, this limitation should be kept in mind. Additionally, some respondent groups were overrepresented which might have had an influence on the results. For example, out of all respondents, only 19 individuals (~15%) had not visited the UK previously. Therefore, the sample group of non-visitor respondents was underrepresented. Furthermore, the age group of 18-29-year-olds was overrepresented as they comprise about 56% of all respondents. Also, some education groups were underrepresented (high school - 2,9%; vocational training - 5,6%; professor - 2,4%). Thus, the results must be viewed with these limitations in mind.

Additionally, it must be noted that our choice of destination (the UK) could have had an influence on our results. This is because we assume that the destination is widely known among Italians, also possibly in depth without even visiting it. Therefore, the impact of various information sources in regard to other variables could have been distorted. While if a destination had been chosen that is very unknown, different results might have been found. The reason why we chose this destination was that we hoped to gather a broad variety of associations that would be used to describe the destination and to prove that our general framework is valid and thus generally depict the image formation process of tourists along with its antecedents and behavioral responses accurately.

Another limitation of our research lies within its variable measurement methods. Especially two limitations must be kept in mind. Firstly, the measurement of the method that what was used to measure respondents' personal interests was not a proven method to accurately measure the personal interests of individuals. This method was developed by the authors and was not pre-tested to prove it as a valid method for such purposes. Therefore, it is possible that our results suffer from validity issues in this regard. The reason why this method was developed was that a pre-tested method for such purposes was not encountered during the literature review. Although, we believe that this method was adequate in measuring some aspects of the personal interests of individuals as a variety of 20-items were measured which were correlated to the attributes that described the UK as a travel destination. Secondly, when measuring external information sources, we did not actually measure their absolute impact on destination imagery, but rather we measured their subjectively perceived importance in being important/impactful in creating images

of the UK as a travel destination. This means that even though respondents think that an external information source is very important/impactful, it does not necessarily and objectively mean that it was. It is common that people are mistaken and assume beyond actual reality. Moreover, as aforementioned, we are constantly bombarded with information and thus respondents might not even know what the information source was that ultimately influenced the image formation process. Additionally, information sources were measured only on a single item rather than utilizing a multi-item scale. This could have improved measurement validity (Diamantopoulos et al., 2012). Therefore, asking respondents beyond the importance/effectiveness of various information sources but rather about their utility and credibility could have yielded more valid results. Moreover, we did not measure the impact of various information channels from which these external information sources could be accessed, which could have implications on our findings. As pointed out by Grønflaten (2009), information source channels can have an influence on travelers' predisposition regarding the information search process.

In regard to our hypothesized model, it is possible that other variables exist that could influence the other variables. For example, in regard of personal factors, other variables have been suggested that can have an influence on destination image, such as culture (MacKary and Fesenmaier, 2000), while for example nationality has been proposed to influence travel motivations (Jönsson & Devonish, 2010). Similarly, the perceptions of the environment can be influenced by a broad variety of other personal factors such as family, lifecycle, social class, personality, lifestyle, and so forth (Beerli & Martin, 2004a). Therefore, the variables included in our model should not be considered as exhaustive.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

In light of future research, the first suggestion we have is to re-test our hypothesized model to see whether or not the hypotheses are supported by another sample. Additionally, it could be interesting to compare results within samples of different nationalities as country of origin has been proposed to be the strongest sociodemographic variable in affecting the cognitive and affective components of destination image (Beerli & Martin, 2004b). Secondly, it would be interesting to see if there would be differences in the influences of the antecedents of destination imagery when the destination of interest would be a relatively unknown destination. For example, would personal experiences (internal information sources) have more impact on the image that is created compared to external information sources in cases when destination familiarity is low. Thirdly, as discussed above, it could be interesting to measure variables beyond our scope. This could generate more thorough knowledge of the complete image formation process and its antecedents. Fourth, we suggest future researchers to either scientifically test our method of measuring personal interests, or then if the literature points to another direction, to develop a new method for such purposes. Fifth, it could be interesting for researchers to measure more in-depth how external information sources are influenced when the channel from which they are consumed changes, and would this have an impact on the imagery that is subsequently formed.

Additionally, a general suggestion that we have for future researchers relates to our low survey completion rate. Based on our experiences, it is suggested that surveys consisting of lesser items should be favored compared to ones with more items as respondents tend to leave relatively long

surveys unfinished. If it is necessary to have a relatively large number of measured items included, then a longer data gathering timespan is recommended, along with incentives for completion.

These factors could aid in generating a higher completion rate.

## CONCLUSION

The presented thesis examined the underlying structures that influence the formation of place brand associations in the minds of consumers. As previously discussed, the research followed in the footsteps of Kock et al. (2016) and thus built knowledge on top of their presented Destination Content Model (DCM). Therefore, we focused on the antecedents of destination imagery. More specifically, we focused on examining how they influence destination imagery and what are their interrelations among one another.

As presented, it was found that a multitude of variables which represent an individual's personal factors, internal information sources, and external information sources together influence the formation of cognitive and affective associations that individuals hold towards the UK as a travel destination. Especially, it was found that an individual's personal interests, and brochures and social media platforms as information sources have significant relationships towards destination imagery. Thus, these variables are to be considered as the most influential individual variables in the process of destination imagery formation. Additionally, it was found that a variety of personal factor and internal information source variables together influence external information sources. Therefore, they are to be seen as moderating variables in regard to the influence of external information sources towards destination imagery. More specifically, it was found that age, gender, and an individual's personal interests have significant relationships towards external information sources.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that a variety of variables that comprise personal factors, internal information sources, and external information sources co-exist in a mutual relationship and cause individually distinct images to be formed in the minds of consumers that exist in the form of associations. Subsequently, due to the dynamic interplay between these variables, the associations that individuals hold towards destinations vary in strength and perceived favorability, and therefore lead to diverse behavioral outcomes.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 – Interview questions – English

#### Questions:

1. What images or characteristics come to mind when you think of the UK as a vacation destination? (functional holistic component)
2. How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience while visiting the UK? (psychological holistic component)
3. Please list any distinctive or unique tourist attractions that you can think of in the UK.  
(unique component)

### Appendix 2 – Interview questions – Italian

#### Domande:

1. Quali sono le immagini o le caratteristiche che ti vengono in mente quando pensi al Regno Unito come destinazione di vacanza? (componente olistico funzionale)

2. Come descriveresti l'atmosfera o l'umore che ti aspetteresti di sperimentare mentre visiti il Regno Unito? (componente olistica psicologica)
  
3. Si prega di elencare tutte le attrazioni turistiche distintive o uniche che facciano pensare al Regno Unito. (componente unico)

### Appendix 3 – Interview data

#### Interview 1 – 11.3.2019

Age: 23

Gender: Female

#### Q1

- the big ben
- the queen
- fish and chips
- London
- Dynamic city
  - lots of events, any topics, diversity, parties
- the queens Corgis
- the royals
- the British accent
- the high presence of Italian people living in London



- not a vacation destination
  - not first choice when deciding where to go
  - not peculiarly beautiful
    - besides London, in England no other places of interest
    - not good food
- when thinking about UK I think of England, not the other places that are included (Wales, Scotland, Ireland)
  - would like to visit Edinburgh
- nice place to work
  - fairly high salaries, good starting positions, nice city for people to work in
  - Brexit

## Q2

- diverse
  - lots of people coming from different places, living together well integrated
- formal
  - traditional
  - British accent
  - people are formal

## Q3

- the big ben
- Buckingham palace
- Loch ness lake
- Edinburgh castle

- Regents park
  - o parks and gardens
- Camden market
- Trafalgar square
- London

Interview 2 – 12.3.2019

Age: 26

Gender: Female

Q1

- big ben
- initial negative thoughts but when continuing to think nice things come up too
  - o little town near London, a bit boring
  - o bad personal memories
  - o Scotland related to own good personal experiences
    - fun, people are social, not nervous like in London
    - London people are too serious, a big metropole
    - Edinburgh is not a metropole but a big town, people are more fun, not as stiff, more outgoing, more confidence with people, good Guinness
    - Very British people, Bishop Stotford
- London bridge
- ex-boyfriend in England

- lives with new girlfriend
- cold
- London
  - the city center, the Thames, bank capital of the world, money town
- bagels
- brick lane
- prefers Highlands (Scotland and Ireland) over England
  - Ireland is better, personal experiences, alone, Ireland is more wild, nature, green fields, more adventurous, history of migration
  - England is more protected, Ireland is more southern (more poor than England)
    - More Southern, less organized, less precise, people more their hands more, touchy, less work oriented
    - England, people are stiffer, stick to their roles, more polite, stick to characters, industrial, more money

## Q2

- drunk English people with a belly but happy
- beer
- Scotland
  - more beautiful
  - happy, nice people

## Q3

- London
- London eye

- Camden Town
- Loch Ness
- Cambridge
- Glasgow
- Edinburgh

Interview 3 – 12.3.2019

Age: 23

Gender: Male

Q1

- Big Ben
- Tower Bridge
- Houses made of bricks
- Clouds and rain
- Green grass
- Very nicely taken care of gardens
- Premier league
- Expensive life as a tourist
- London
- Scotland
- Universities, Cambridge
- Beer

Q2

- Multicultural people
- British don't like to bond with tourists
  - o treat them with indifference

Q3

- Big Ben
- London
- Universities
  - o Cambridge, Oxford
- Edinburgh
- Hadrian's wall

Interview 4 – 13.3.2019

Age: 27

Gender: Male

Q1

- the queen
- rain
- grey sky
- London Eye
- Beer
- Fish and chips

- Westminster
- Essex
- Snow
- Nightclubs
- Elite clubs
- Ug Clubs
- techno music
- Landscapes
  - the coast of England
  - Cliffs
  - The guards of Westminster, black hats and don't more
- tea and biscuits
- Piccadilly
- M&M's store
- London

## Q2

- different than expected
- During the day its very individual, people run around, not very friendly atmosphere
  - especially if you don't talk good English
- Sometimes stressful
  - people run around and they are very focused on what they are doing and where they are going, no eye contact, pushy people, especially in the metro or bus, people

are in a rush, especially in the city center, stressful mood, people live their daily life and you interrupt it as a tourist

- during the weekend people are more friendly, more relaxed, trouble can happen as people tend to drink much and it can escalate into fights, pub fights

- International
- Cosmopolitan
- unsafe

### Q3

- The London eye
- London history museum
- The royal palace
- the London bridge

### Interview 5 – 13.3.2019

Age: 40

Gender: Male

### Q1

- A bit grey and rainy for most of the time
- Its like going back to the past as there is an image of Britain being old fashioned
  - narrow road, not big cities, smaller cities
- London is a huge city

- Never been to the UK
- not a summer destination
  - o holiday vacation to visit historical monuments
- queen, monarchy, historical monuments

## Q2

- not very welcoming
- people are reserved
- not that warm people as in the South of Europe
- language problems as people have strict dialects
- fast moving people, especially in London

## Q3

- The eye wheel, London eye
- Buckingham palace
- London tower
- the Thames

Interview 6 – 13.3.2019

Age: 30

Gender: Male

## Q1

- the big ben



- the guards of the queen with the black hat
- London
- metro
- underground symbol of the metro
- tea drinking
- sherlock holmes
- museum
- the river, the Thames

## Q2

- english people are cold
  - o not cold like Danish or Nordic people
  - o they feel like they are noble, better than you
  - o like they are the queen or king
- London, mainly, busy life of the city
- drinking atmosphere, English people like to drink a lot of beer
- football, drinking, hooligans
- cold, elegant
- bad food
- low expectations when eating out, they cannot cook
- fried things, potatoes
- not very clean restaurants, floor maybe but not the kitchen, less than Italy

## Q3

- the big ben
- Buckingham palace
- stonehenge
- Harry Potter
- Scotland
- mountains, castles
- Piccadilly Circus

Interview 7 – 16.3.2019

Age: 65

Gender: Female

Q1

- Rain and humidity
- Stunning landscapes
- Scottish castles
- British's parks
- Thames river
- Tea and biscuits
- Old English women
- British Novels
- British bus
- Telephone boots

- The queen
- London
- The Beatles
- Economic power
- Mostly democratic
- Multi-ethnicity
- Cozy

## Q2

- Well organized places, such as museum and tourists' places
- Not very friendly people, especially if you do not speak a good English
- Flawless organization of info point, tourist guides in hotels,
- Will not travel alone, since do not speak a good English
- Not open minded regarding speaking other languages

## Q3

- Westminster
- Big bang
- Thames boat tour
- Scottish' castles
- Irish hills
- Cliffs of dover
- London

- Liverpool
- Piccadilly
- Portobello market
- Wax museum
- Edinburgh
- Dublin

Interview 8 – 16.3.2019

Age: 30

Gender: Female

Q1

- Harrods
- Buckingham place
- Parks and squirrels
- 

Q2

- Surreal
- Magic
- Ruined by the weather
- Suggestive

Q3

- Buckingham palace
- Big ben
- The London wheels
- Hyde park
- Tower bridge
- Wax museum

Interview 9 – 16.3.2019

Age: 27

Gender: Male

Q1

- Rain
- Architectures
- Pubs

Q2

- Mechanic
- Very focus, selfish to some extent
- People are to focus on their lives, it feels like a mechanism, very educated but I feel like they are repressed and too much materialistic
- Intellectual, very into the daily routine to some extent, loneliness

- People from the north are more emotional and genuine compared to the south to some extent

Q3

- Big Ben
- Tate modern museum
- National gallery
- The oldest pub in Manchester
- Tower bridge
- Natural historical museum (Ldn)
- Old Trafford
- Millwall station
- West Ham stadium
- Soho
- Thames river
- Notting hill
- Camden town
- Chelsea
- Lewisham architecture
- Manchester river
- Manchester architecture

Interview 10 – 16.3.2019

Age: 71

Gender: Female

Q1

- Oxford
- Cambridge
- London
- Colleges
- Rivers
- Parks, very green country
- The changing of the guard
- Buckingham palace
- Big ben
- Tower bridge
- Westminster cathedral

Q2

- Efficiency population, tidy, civil,
- Not friendly if do not speak a good English
- Very young, vibrant environment, multiethnicity

Q3

- Beautiful Scottish Castles with ghosts, landscapes, rivers

- Wax museum, science museum, sightseeing's, streets
- Sea

Interview 11 – 16.3.2019

Age: 64

Gender: Female

Q1

- The queen
- Monarchy
- Patriotism
- Change of guard Buckingham palace
- Stunning landscapes, parks
- Scottish castles
- Green of Dublin
- Bicycle
- Scarce food creativity or tradition/ingredients
- Not very good sea, I would not swim there
- Shakespeare
- First industry revolution
- Brexit
  - Splendid isolation (in the second half of the nineteenth century, during which Britain's foreign policy was aimed at avoiding any involvement in European conflicts)



to devote himself to the development of the colonial and commercial power of the Empire)

- Protestant religious
- Novels of Charles Dickens

Q2

- Not very friendly
- Traditional besides certain zone such as Carnaby street due to more presence of young people
- It is varying, there are places of culture, of leisure and so on
- Most of them tend to look for trouble
- London hostile if you do not speak a good English
- London not very cozy
- Due to the not very coziness of the place, my humor will tend to be the same

Q3

- Buckingham place
- Tower bridge
- Metro/underground
- Hills of Dover
- Scottish castles with ghosts
- The green (landscapes) of Dublin
- Wax museum

Interview 12 – 17.3.2019

Age: 31

Gender: Female

Q1

- Wales
- Green

Q2

- International environment

Q3

- Museum
- Historic places
- Fun
- Folklore

Interview 13 – 17.3.2019

Age: 44

Gender: Male

Q1

- Cornwall Lands End extreme west of the peninsula
- Scottish Islands, Inverness North of Edinburgh
- Landscapes
- Mountains
- London
- Soho
- Ireland
- West Cork
- Green landscapes

## Q2

- Total freedom, thinking movement, behavior
- open minded mentally, people mind their own business and do not judge others,
- multi-ethnicity culture
- Practical approach to life

## Q3

- Scottish Islands
- Castles, lakes, mountains
- North Scotland
- Midnight sun
- Close to north pole

- Ireland, green landscapes, different degree of green, stunning sea color
- Cornwall
- London, not very beautiful architecture

Interview 14 - 23.3.2019

Age: 24

Gender: female

Q1

- Lights, big screens
- London
- Tea
- Subway
- Green grass
- parties
  - o fun parties, a good time
- expensive
- the queen
- royal palace
- shops close early, not a good thing
  - o also restaurants

Q2

- peculiar people
- interesting to watch, the way they dress, what they do, different than Italians
- unfriendly
- different humour
- not favorite vacation destination

Q3

- Diagon Alley (Harry Potter)
- London
- Big Ben
- London Bridge
- Wax museum
- Universities

Interview 15 - 24.3.2017

Age: 24

Gender: male

Q1

- London
- Inner city
- Trafalgar Square
- London eye

- tower bridge
- big ben
- many spots in London
- red buses
- green areas
- rain, cloudy weather
- cities mainly, not thinking about nature, London, Manchester, Liverpool
- football
- premier league, matches
- stadiums, pubs
- Food
- not going with good expectations
- Fish and chips
- Multicultural, ethical food
- Universities, Cambridge, Oxford
- what does life as an outsider look like
- famous for intense summer courses, studying, late teenagers
- destination for young guys to learn English

## Q2

- depends where going
- London
- dynamic, ethnic, multi-cultural

- art, music
- huge hub for all trends
- fashion, music, concerts, museums
- lots of variety of in people, business men to punk
- lots of art, street art
- everything is fast, people are less keen to chat, aggressive
- city that always runs, not so relaxed as in south Italy
- outside of London
- more relaxed, very different from London
- strong traditions
- not too open minded
- strong ideas
- young people going out during the weekends and getting drunk
- not that many clubs but mostly pubs

### Q3

- Big Ben, London Eye, Tower Bridge
- Buckingham Palace
- Trafalgar Square
- Stonehenge
- The Street of Beatles, Liverpool
- inner city of London
- Skyscrapers

- skyline
- Universities

Interview 16 – 22.3.2019

Age: 33

Gender: Female

Q1

- English flag
- Royal family
- Big bang
- Tee
- Grey sky
- Cold weather and people are not friendly
- Not good food

Q2

- fast, selfish, very focus
- people mind their own business, cozy but not very human relationship
- individualistic, not very sense of community
- good economy, high salary and satisfaction in jobs

Q3



- Royal family, building monarchy and so on
- Tower bridge
- Big bang
- Nightclubs
- Exclusive shops
- Parks

Interview 17 – 24.3.2019

Age: 31

Gender: Female

Q1

- Shops
- Oxford street
- Piccadilly
- Brunch at Soho
- Carnaby street, walking around

Q2

- Fast environment, very focused, not living the moment, always in a rush, organized but too frenetic

Q3

- Big bang
- London eye
- Tower bridge
- London bridge
- Carnaby neighborhood
- Soho
- Notting Hill on Sunday the market
- Fulham road area
- Harrods

Interview 18 – 24.3.2019

Age: 40

Gender: Male

Q1

- London underground
- big bang
- Oxford
- zebra cross streets
- Beatles
- Liverpool
- Universities, buildings Victorian, Stonehenge

Q2

- Contraposition to formal and not formal, formal extreme in dressing, at five the start drinking lot of beer too much formality drive to too much informality,

Q3

- Stonehenge
- English backyards
- Country side
- Famous stadium
- Liverpool harbor

Interview 19 – 24.3.2019

Age: 70

Gender: Male

Q1

- Solid nation
- Brexit
- Good job opportunities
- Good for vacation

Q2

- Hostile climate due to Brexit

- No violence
- Not good mood due to Brexit

### Q3

- Landscapes
- Green landscapes, hills
- Fox hunting tradition
- London
- Big bang
- Squares
- Streets
- Historic London
- Scottish green landscapes

Interview 20 – 24.3.2019

Age: 56

Gender: Male

### Q1

- Brexit
- Oxford street
- Piccadilly
- Tee

- Grey sky

Q2

- Not very friendly people
- Fast environment
- Drunk people
- Bad weather

Q3

- Scottish green landscapes
- Tower bridge
- London bridge
- Royal family
- Cornwall

#### Appendix 4 - Attributes to describe the UK as a tourist destination - English

- Lots of parks, gardens & green areas
- London (areas of the city, tourist attractions)
- A variety of historical monuments
- Diverse architecture
- Rich and wealthy nation (high expenses)
- Soccer (premier league, stadiums)
- The Queen (royal family, the monarchy)
- British food (fish and chips)

- Busy lifestyle
- Multicultural (diverse, ethnic)
- Unfriendly people (unwelcoming)
- Traditional culture (formal)
- Lots of variety between different areas of the country (people, nature, lifestyle)
- Various cities and regions to visit
- Pubs & bars (vibrant drinking culture)
- Rainy and gray weather
- Universities & colleges (Oxford, Cambridge)
- Versatile landscapes (cliffs, rivers)
- A variety of museums (wax museum, natural history museum)
- Vibrant nightlife

#### Appendix 5 - Attributes to describe the UK as a tourist destination – Italian

- Tanti parchi, giardini ed aree verdi
- Londra (L'area della città, le attrazioni turistiche)
- La varietà di monumenti storici
- Diversi stili di architettura
- Una nazione ricca (Alto costo della vita)
- Calcio (Premier League, Stadi)
- La Regina (la Famiglia Reale, la Monarchia)
- Cibo Inglese (Pesce fritto e patatine)

- Stile di vita caotico
- Multiculturale (Diverse etnie)
- Persone non amichevoli (Inospitali)
- Cultura tradizionalista (Formale)
- Grande varietà tra le diverse aree del paese (Persone, Natura, Stili di vita)
- Diverse città e regioni da visitare
- I Pub ed i Bar (Vivace cultura del bere)
- Tempo tendenzialmente Piovoso e Grigio
- Diverse Università e College (Oxford, Cambridge)
- Diversi tipi di paesaggi (Scogliere, Fiumi)
- Diverse varietà di Musei (Museo delle Cere, Museo di Storia Naturale)
- Caotica Vita Notturna

#### Appendix 6 – Survey – English

We are two students from Copenhagen Business School currently writing our master's thesis about tourism and destination branding. In our research we focus on the differentiating factors that influence the images individuals form about destinations. The present survey aims to discover this by uncovering image variations regarding the UK as a tourist destination in respect to sociodemographic factors and information sources.

The survey is 100% anonymous and confidential. Answering it will take about 7 minutes.

We are extremely grateful for your time and answers.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us:

pesa17ab@student.cbs.dk

erru17ac@student.cbs.dk

### **Background information**

Please choose the alternative that describes you the best

1. Age

- 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50+

2. gender

- male, female, third gender

3. level of education

- compulsory school, high school, vocational training, undergraduate, graduate, post-graduate, professor

### **Travel motivations**

4. How accurately do the following statements describe your personal travel motivations?

Scale, (0) – not at all, (6) – very much.

- It's important for me to experience different cultures and different ways of life.
- While on vacation, I attend cultural events that I don't have access to at home.
- I like to visit foreign cultures.
- I like to see how other people live.
- On vacation, I like to do the same things that the people there do, you know, "When in Rome . . . "



- Just to cuff up with a good book in the shade sounds like a wonderful vacation to me.
- Just resting and relaxing is vacation enough for me.
- A vacation means being able to do nothing.
- There should be no deadlines while on vacation.
- The main thing for me on vacation is just to slow down.
- While on vacation, I want luxury, nice food, and a comfortable place to stay,
- The availability of good restaurant and good food is important in choosing a vacation spot.
- I think that the kind of accommodations that you get on vacation are real important.
- It's important for me to go someplace fashionable on vacation.
- I like to talk about my vacation when I get home, you know, relive it.
- When I go home, I talk to everybody about my vacation.
- I like to be able to talk about the places I've visited and the things I've seen on vacation.
- I want to see things while on vacation that I don't normally see.
- There are some places I have always wanted to visit
- I just like to travel, to go somewhere and to do something

#### **Attributes related to the UK as a tourist destination**

5. In your opinion, how much do you relate the following attributes to the UK as a tourist destination? Scale, (0) – not at all, (6) – very much.
- Lots of parks, gardens & green areas
  - London (areas of the city, tourist attractions)
  - A variety of historical monuments

- Diverse architecture
  - Rich and wealthy nation (high expenses)
  - Soccer (premier league, stadiums)
  - The Queen (royal family, the monarchy)
  - British food (fish and chips)
  - Busy lifestyle
  - Multicultural (diverse, ethnic)
  - Unfriendly people (unwelcoming)
  - Traditional culture (formal)
  - Lots of variety between different areas of the country (people, nature, lifestyle)
  - Various cities and regions to visit
  - Pubs & bars (vibrant drinking culture)
  - Rainy and gray weather
  - Universities & colleges (Oxford, Cambridge)
  - Versatile landscapes (cliffs, rivers)
  - A variety of museums (wax museum, natural history museum)
  - Vibrant nightlife (events)
6. For you as a tourist in the UK, would the following attributes be negative or positive? Scale, (-3) – extremely negative, (3) – extremely positive.
- Lots of parks, gardens & green areas
  - London (areas of the city, tourist attractions)
  - A variety of historical monuments
  - Diverse architecture

- Rich and wealthy nation (high expenses)
- Soccer (premier league, stadiums)
- The Queen (royal family, the monarchy)
- British food (fish and chips)
- Busy lifestyle
- Multicultural (diverse, ethnic)
- Unfriendly people (unwelcoming)
- Traditional culture (formal)
- Lots of variety between different areas of the country (people, nature, lifestyle)
- Various cities and regions to visit
- Pubs & bars (vibrant drinking culture)
- Rainy and gray weather
- Universities & colleges (Oxford, Cambridge)
- Versatile landscapes (cliffs, rivers)
- A variety of museums (wax museum, natural history museum)
- Vibrant nightlife (events)

#### **Attributes related to personal interests**

7. For you personally, how closely do you relate the following attributes to your personal interests? Scale, (0) – not at all, (6) – very much.

- Parks, gardens & green areas
- Foreign cities and tourist attractions
- History & historical monuments

- Architecture
- Foreign economies
- Soccer
- Foreign political systems
- Foreign cuisine
- Foreign lifestyles
- Multiculturalism
- Interpersonal relationships
- Foreign cultures
- Variety within foreign destinations
- Foreign cities and regions
- Pubs & bars
- Weather, climate
- Universities & colleges
- Landscapes
- Museums
- Nightlife & events

### **Information sources – internal image**

Please choose one alternative.

8. have you visited the UK? (If you are not sure, select no)

- ☐ yes, no

9. How many times have you visited the UK?

- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, more than 5

10. How would you describe your personal experience in relation to the UK as a travel destination? Scale, (0) – no experience, (6) – great experience.

#### **Information sources – external image**

11. For you personally, do you consider the following information sources to be important/effective when forming an image of the UK as a tourist destination? Scale, (0) – strongly disagree, (6) – strongly agree.

- Traditional forms of advertising (brochures, tv, radio, print, billboards, etc.)
- tv
- newspapers
- radio
- brochures
- billboards
- Information received from tour operators, wholesalers, and other tourism related organizations
- travel agency personnel
- tourist attraction personnel
- Second-party endorsement of a destination via traditional forms of advertising (using celebrities in destination advertisements while it is clear who is the source of the information and who paid for it)
- Second-party endorsement through apparently unbiased reports (using influencers without clearly connecting the image to the source. It is unclear if destination

marketers are the source of this information or not – e.g. social media posts from popular pages without clear indication that it was advertising)

- Independently produced reports, documentaries, movies, and news articles (news and popular culture – information that is not originated from destination marketers)
- news articles and reports
- drama series
- documentaries
- travel programs
- movies
- books
- educational materials
- Unrequested information that is received from individuals who have been to the area (e.g. from friends, relatives, business meetings)
- Information received from friends and relatives when asked for (Word-of-mouth)
- Information acquired on previous travels to the area
- websites
- social media platforms (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, etc.)
- personal blogs
- commercial blogs
- Online content generated by real users
- Online content generated by destination promoters
- Online advertising (e.g. on websites or social media platforms)
- Offline advertising (e.g. tv, radio, newspaper or billboards)

**Destination image, destination affect, and tourist future behavior (WTV)**

12. All things considered, taking a holiday to the UK is...?

- 7-point scale
  - good/bad
  - positive/negative
  - favorable/unfavorable
  - worthwhile/not worthwhile

13. All things considered; how do you feel about the UK?

- 7-point scale
  - like/dislike
  - pleasant/unpleasant
  - attraction/repulsion
  - comfortable/uncomfortable

14. I strongly intend to visit the UK in the future.

- 7-point scale, (0) – strongly disagree, (6) – agree very much

15. It is very likely that I would choose the UK as my tourist destination.

- 7-point scale, (0) – strongly disagree, (6) – agree very much

16. I would like to take a holiday in the UK.

- 7-point scale, (0) – strongly disagree, (6) – agree very much

17. I plan to visit the UK as a tourist some point in the future.

- 7-point scale, (0) – strongly disagree, (6) – agree very much

## Appendix 7 – Survey – Italian

Siamo due studenti dell'ultimo anno della Copenhagen Business School e stiamo scrivendo la nostra tesi riguardo il turismo e il branding applicato alle destinazioni di vacanza. Nella nostra ricerca ci concentriamo sui fattori di differenziazione che influenzano le immagini che gli individui formano sulle destinazioni. Il seguente sondaggio ha lo scopo di rivelare le variazioni di immagine rispetto ai fattori sociodemografici e fonti di informazione a proposito del Regno Unito.

Il sondaggio è al 100% anonimo e confidenziale.

Rispondere al questionario richiederà un tempo approssimativo di 7 minuti.

Siamo estremamente grati per il vostro tempo e le vostre risposte.

Se avete domande, non esitate a contattarci:

[pesa17ab@student.cbs.dk](mailto:pesa17ab@student.cbs.dk)

[erru17ac@student.cbs.dk](mailto:erru17ac@student.cbs.dk)

### **Informazioni di base**

Per favore scegli una delle seguenti alternative che ti descrive meglio.

1. Età

- 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50+

2. Sesso

- Maschio, Femmina, Terzo genere

3. Livello di educazione



- Scuola dell'Obbligo, Scuola Superiore, Formazione Professionale, Laureando, Laureato, Post-Laurea, Professore

### **Motivazioni di Viaggio**

4. Quanto accuratamente le seguenti dichiarazioni descrivono le tue personali motivazioni di viaggio? Da una scala da (0) - per niente, a (6) – molto.

- È importante per me provare culture differenti e diversi modi di vivere.
- Quando sono in vacanza, partecipo ad eventi culturali a cui non ho accesso quando sono a casa.
- Mi piace visitare culture straniere.
- Mi piace vedere come altre persone vivono.
- In vacanza, mi piace fare le stesse cose che fanno le persone locali, ad esempio, "Quando sei a Roma.."
- Stare tutt'uno con un buon libro all'ombra sarebbe una meravigliosa vacanza per me.
- Riposarsi e rilassarsi è già un'ottima vacanza per me.
- Una vacanza vuol dire essere in grado di non fare nulla.
- Non ci dovrebbero essere scadenze quando si è in vacanza.
- La cosa più importante per me in vacanza è rallentare prendermela con comodo.
- Quando sono in vacanza, voglio lusso, buon cibo ed un posto confortevole in cui stare.
- La presenza di buoni ristoranti e buon cibo è importante nella scelta di un luogo di vacanza.
- Credo che il tipo di alloggio che si sceglie in vacanza sia molto importante.
- Per me è importante andare in un posto alla moda in vacanza.

- Mi piace raccontare della mia vacanza quando torno a casa, in modo da riviverla.
- Quando ritorno a casa, racconto a tutti della mia vacanza.
- Mi piace poter parlare dei luoghi che ho visitato e delle cose che visto in vacanza.
- In vacanza voglio vedere cose che normalmente non ho possibilità di vedere.
- Ci sono alcuni posti che ho sempre desiderato visitare.
- Mi piace semplicemente viaggiare; andare da qualche parte e fare qualcosa.

**Attributi relative al Regno Unito come destinazione di vacanza.**

5. Secondo la tua opinione, quanto associ questi attributi al Regno Unito come destinazione di vacanza? In una scala da (0) - per niente, a (6) - molto.

- Tanti parchi, giardini ed aree verdi
- Londra (L'area della città, le attrazioni turistiche)
- La varietà di monumenti storici
- Diversi stili di architettura
- Una nazione ricca (Alto costo della vita)
- Calcio (Premier League, Stadi)
- La Regina (la Famiglia Reale, la Monarchia)
- Cibo Inglese (Pesce fritto e patatine – fish & chips)
- Stile di vita caotico
- Multiculturale (Diverse etnie)
- Persone non amichevoli (Inospitali)
- Cultura tradizionalista (Formale)
- Grande varietà tra le diverse aree del paese (Persone, Natura, Stili di vita)

- Diverse città e regioni da visitare
  - I Pub ed i Bar (Vivace cultura del bere)
  - Tempo tendenzialmente Piovoso e Grigio
  - Diverse Università e College (Oxford, Cambridge)
  - Diversi tipi di paesaggi (Scogliere, Fiumi)
  - Diverse varietà di Musei (Museo delle Cere, Museo di Storia Naturale)
  - Caotica Vita Notturna (eventi)
6. Per te come turista nel Regno Unito, le seguenti caratteristiche sarebbero negative o positive? In una scala da (0) – estremamente negativo, a (6) – estremamente positivo
- Tanti parchi, giardini ed aree verdi
  - Londra (L'area della città, le attrazioni turistiche)
  - La varietà di monumenti storici
  - Diversi stili di architettura
  - Una nazione ricca (Alto costo della vita)
  - Calcio (Premier League, Stadi)
  - La Regina (la Famiglia Reale, la Monarchia)
  - Cibo Inglese (Pesce fritto e patatine – fish & chips)
  - Stile di vita caotico
  - Multiculturale (Diverse etnie)
  - Persone non amichevoli (Inospitali)
  - Cultura tradizionalista (Formale)
  - Grande varietà tra le diverse aree del paese (Persone, Natura, Stili di vita)
  - Diverse città e regioni da visitare

- I Pub ed i Bar (Vivace cultura del bere)
- Tempo tendenzialmente Piovoso e Grigio
- Diverse Università e College (Oxford, Cambridge)
- Diversi tipi di paesaggi (Scogliere, Fiumi)
- Diverse varietà di Musei (Museo delle Cere, Museo di Storia Naturale)
- Caotica Vita Notturna (eventi)

### **Attributi relativi ad interessi personali**

7. Secondo la tua opinione, quanto sono importanti i seguenti elementi quando prendi in considerazione i tuoi interessi personali? Da una scala da (0) - per niente, a (6) - molto.

- Parchi, giardini ed aree verdi
- Città straniere ed attrazioni turistiche
- Storia e monumenti storici
- Architettura
- Economie Esterree
- Calcio
- Sistemi Politici Esteri
- Cucina estera
- Stili di Vita Esteri
- Multiculturalismo
- Relazioni interpersonali
- Culture straniere
- Varietà all'interno di destinazioni esteree

- Città e Regioni esteree
- Pub e Bar
- Meteo, Clima
- Università e Scuole
- Paesaggi
- Musei
- Vita Notturna ed eventi

### **Fonti di Informazione – internal image**

Per favore scegli una delle alternative.

8. Hai mai visitato il Regno Unito? (Se non sei sicuro/a, scegli No)

- Si, No

9. Quante volte hai visitato il Regno Unito?

- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, più di 5

10. Come descriveresti la tua esperienza personale in relazione al Regno Unito come destinazione di vacanza? Da una scala da (0) – nessuna esperienza, a (6) – ottima esperienza.

### **Fonti di Informazione – external image**

11. Per te personalmente, quanto ritieni importante/ di impatto le seguenti fonti di informazione nella creazione di un'immagine del Regno Unito come destinazione turistica? Da una scala da (0) – per niente importante o di debole impatto, a (6) – molto importante o di forte impatto.

- Forme tradizionali di pubblicità (opuscoli, tv, radio, stampa, cartelloni pubblicitari, ecc.)

- Tv
- Giornali
- Radio
- Opuscoli
- Cartelloni pubblicitari
- Informazioni ricevute da tour operator, grossisti, e altre organizzazioni legate al turismo.
- Personale delle agenzie di viaggio
- Personale delle attrazioni turistiche
- Approvazione di una destinazione da parte di seconde parti tramite forme tradizionali di pubblicità (utilizzando le celebrità nelle pubblicità di destinazione, quando è chiaro chi è la fonte delle informazioni e chi ha pagato per essa)
- Approvazione di seconde parti attraverso rapporti apparentemente imparziali (utilizzando influencer che non collegano chiaramente l'immagine alla fonte) Non è chiaro se i marketer di destinazione siano la fonte di queste informazioni o meno, ad es. Post sui social media da pagine popolari senza chiara indicazione che si trattava di pubblicità)
- Segnalazioni prodotte indipendentemente, documentari, film e articoli di notizie (notizie e cultura popolare, informazioni che non provengono dai marketer di destinazione)
- Articoli di notizie e segnalazioni
- Serie (tv) di drammi
- Documentari

- Programmi di viaggio
- Film
- Libri
- Materiale didattico
- Informazioni non richieste ricevute da persone che sono state nella zona (ad esempio, da amici, parenti, riunioni di lavoro)
- Informazioni ricevute da amici e parenti quando richieste (Passa Parola)
- Informazioni richieste in viaggi precedenti nella zona in considerazione
- Siti web
- Piattaforme di social media (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, etc.)
- Blog personali
- Blog commerciali
- Contenuti online generati da utenti originali
- Contenuti online generate da promotori di destinazione
- Pubblicità online (ad es. Su siti web o piattaforme di social media)
- Pubblicità offline (ad es. Tv, radio, giornali o cartelloni pubblicitari)

### **Immagine della destinazione, Influenza sulla destinazione e comportamento futuro del turista**

(WTV)

12. Considerando tutto, fare una vacanza nel Regno Unito è...? Scala a 7 punti

- Buono/Cattivo
- Positivo/Negativo
- Favorevole/Sfavorevole

- Ne vale la pena/Non ne vale la pena

13. Considerando tutto, come ti senti riguardo il Regno Unito? Scala a 7 punti

- Mi piace/Non mi piace
- Piacevole/ Spiacevole
- Attrazione/Repulsione
- Confortevole/Sconfortevole

14. Intendo fortemente visitare il Regno Unito in futuro.

- a. Scala a 7 punti, (0) - Fortemente in disaccordo, (6) – Fortemente d'accordo

15. E' molto probabile che io scelga il Regno Unito come destinazione turistica.

- a. Scala a 7 punti, (0) - Fortemente in disaccordo, (6) – Fortemente d'accordo

16. Mi piacerebbe fare una vacanza nel Regno Unito.

- a. Scala a 7 punti, (0) - Fortemente in disaccordo, (6) – Fortemente d'accordo

17. Ho intenzione di visitare il Regno Unito da turista in futuro.

- a. Scala a 7 punti, (0) - Fortemente in disaccordo, (6) – Fortemente d'accordo

#### Appendix 8 – Attribute categorial modifications to measure Personal Interests – English

- Lots of parks, gardens & green areas → Parks, gardens & green areas
- London (areas of the city, tourist attractions) → Foreign cities and tourist attractions
- A variety of historical monuments → History & historical monuments
- Diverse architecture → Architecture
- Rich and wealthy nation (high expenses) → Foreign economies



- Soccer (premier league, stadiums)
- The Queen (royal family, the monarchy) → Foreign political systems
- British food (fish and chips) → Foreign cuisine
- Busy lifestyle → Foreign lifestyles
- Multicultural (diverse, ethnic) → Multiculturalism
- Unfriendly people (unwelcoming) → Interpersonal relationships
- Traditional culture (formal) → Foreign cultures
- Lots of variety between different areas of the country (people, nature, lifestyle) → variety within foreign destinations
- Various cities and regions to visit → Foreign cities and regions
- Pubs & bars (vibrant drinking culture)
- Rainy and gray weather → Weather, climate
- Universities & colleges (Oxford, Cambridge)
- Versatile landscapes (cliffs, rivers) → Landscapes
- A variety of museums (wax museum, natural history museum) → Museums
- Vibrant nightlife → Nightlife

#### Appendix 9 – Attribute categorial modifications to measure Personal Interests – Italian

- Tanti parchi, giardini ed aree verdi → Parchi, giardini ed aree verdi
- Londra (area della città, attrazioni turistiche) → Città straniera ed attrazioni turistiche
- Una varietà di monumenti storici → Storia, monumenti storici
- Diverse forme di architettura → Architetture

- Ricca e benestante nazione (Alto costo della vita o spese elevate) → Economia straniera o estere
- Calcio (premier league, stadi)
- La Regina (la famiglia reale, la monarchia) → Sistemi politici esterei o stranieri
- Cibo inglese (pesce fritto e patatine) → Cucina straniera o estera
- Stile di vita frenetico → Stile di vita straniero o estereo
- Multiculturale (diverse etnie) → Multiculturalismo
- Persone non amichevoli (inospitali) → Relazioni interpersonali
- Cultura tradizionalista (formale) → Culture straniera o estere
- Molta varietà tra le diverse aree del paese (persone, natura, stile di vita) → Varietà tra le destinazioni straniera o estere
- Diverse città e regioni da visitare → Città e regioni straniera o estere
- Pubs & bar (vibrante cultura del bere)
- Pioggia e tempo nuvoloso → Tempo, clima
- Università & Scuole (Oxford, Cambridge)
- Paesaggi versatili (scogliere, fiumi) → Paesaggi
- Varietà di musei (museo delle cere, della storia naturale) → Musei
- Vibrante vita notturna → Vita notturna

Appendix 10 – information sources measurement items according to categories

**Induced information sources:**

- Traditional forms of advertising (brochures, tv, radio, print, billboards, etc.)
- tv
- newspapers
- radio
- brochures
- billboards
- Information received from tour operators, wholesalers, and other tourism related organizations
- travel agency personnel
- tourist attraction personnel
- Second-party endorsement of a destination via traditional forms of advertising (using celebrities in destination advertisements while it is clear who is the source of the information and who paid for it)
- Second-party endorsement through apparently unbiased reports (using influencers without clearly connecting the image to the source. It is unclear if destination marketers are the source of this information or not – e.g. social media posts from popular pages without clear indication that it was advertising)
- commercial blogs

**Autonomous information sources:**

- Independently produced reports, documentaries, movies, and news articles (news and popular culture – information that is not originated from destination marketers)
- news articles and reports

- drama series
- documentaries
- travel programs
- movies
- books
- educational materials

**Organic information sources:**

- Unrequested information that is received from individuals who have been to the area  
(e.g. from friends, relatives, business meetings)
- Information received from friends and relatives when asked for (Word-of-mouth)
- Information acquired on previous travels to the area
- personal blogs

**Word-of-Mouth:**

- Unrequested information that is received from individuals who have been to the area  
(e.g. from friends, relatives, business meetings)
- Information received from friends and relatives when asked for (Word-of-mouth)

**Electronic Word-of-Mouth:**

- personal blogs
- commercial blogs

**Online content from destination marketers:**

- commercial blogs

- Online content generated by destination promoters
- Online advertising (e.g. on websites or social media platforms)

**Tourist generated content:**

- personal blogs
- Online content generated by real users

**Offline information sources:**

- Traditional forms of advertising (brochures, tv, radio, print, billboards, etc.)
- tv
- newspapers
- radio
- brochures
- billboards
- Information received from tour operators, wholesalers, and other tourism related organizations
- travel agency personnel
- tourist attraction personnel
- Second-party endorsement of a destination via traditional forms of advertising (using celebrities in destination advertisements while it is clear who is the source of the information and who paid for it)
- Independently produced reports, documentaries, movies, and news articles (news and popular culture – information that is not originated from destination marketers)
- news articles and reports

- drama series
- documentaries
- travel programs
- movies
- books
- educational materials
- Unrequested information that is received from individuals who have been to the area (e.g. from friends, relatives, business meetings)
- Information received from friends and relatives when asked for (Word-of-mouth)
- Information acquired on previous travels to the area
- Offline advertising (e.g. tv, radio, newspaper or billboards)

**Online information sources:**

- websites
- social media platforms (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, etc.)
- personal blogs
- commercial blogs
- Online content generated by real users
- Online content generated by destination promoters
- Online advertising (e.g. on websites or social media platforms)

**External information sources:**

- Traditional forms of advertising (brochures, tv, radio, print, billboards, etc.)
- tv

- newspapers
- radio
- brochures
- billboards
- Information received from tour operators, wholesalers, and other tourism related organizations
- travel agency personnel
- tourist attraction personnel
- Second-party endorsement of a destination via traditional forms of advertising (using celebrities in destination advertisements while it is clear who is the source of the information and who paid for it)
- Second-party endorsement through apparently unbiased reports (using influencers without clearly connecting the image to the source. It is unclear if destination marketers are the source of this information or not – e.g. social media posts from popular pages without clear indication that it was advertising)
- Independently produced reports, documentaries, movies, and news articles (news and popular culture – information that is not originated from destination marketers)
- news articles and reports
- drama series
- documentaries
- travel programs
- movies
- books

- educational materials
- Unrequested information that is received from individuals who have been to the area (e.g. from friends, relatives, business meetings)
- Information received from friends and relatives when asked for (Word-of-mouth)
- websites
- social media platforms (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, etc.)
- personal blogs
- commercial blogs
- Online content generated by real users
- Online content generated by destination promoters
- Online advertising (e.g. on websites or social media platforms)
- Offline advertising (e.g. tv, radio, newspaper or billboards)

**Familiarity:**

- Visitation
- Number of visits
- Perceived level of experience