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## Lisbon brand image perception: the perspective of tourists

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### Abstract

Nowadays, digital media allows us to access information about any destination from everywhere. It can be informational content such as news, advertisement content or sharing of experiences and opinions. A strong and unique image is essential to transform a mere place into a destination. The image formed in our mind has the ability to influence our decisions regarding the purchase of products from a particular country, where to travel or where to migrate. Thus, the management of places as brands has brought many competitive advantages. However, the images of the territories are increasingly becoming harder to control, making it essential to regularly ascertain the perception of the image of the place by those who are abroad. Ideally it will be as close to reality as possible. Therefore, this research aims to understand how tourists perceive the image of the brand Lisbon. The research developed is quantitative, using the questionnaire survey as a data collection tool. The sample obtained has a total of 254 individuals. It was concluded that Lisbon is perceived very positively.

**Keywords:** destination marketing; place branding; place brands; destination image; Lisbon

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

With globalization, more and more countries, cities and regions feel the need to stand out worldwide, competing among themselves for tourism revenues, investments, markets and industries, mega-events, projection in social networks and residents. The necessity to make places more attractive and competitive has made those responsible for territories could realize the relevance of creating and managing place brands, resorting to intentional use of marketing and branding techniques in their management.

We often hear that 'Lisbon is the new Berlin', however, each city has its history and culture; its values, customs, and traditions; different forms of management and politics; different locations, different climates and natural resources; different people, that together generate feelings, ideas and associations that stand out in the mind when we think about a particular city. In turn, those feelings, ideas and associations that we create about a certain place are based not only on our own experience but often on the experience of others, the information, and content that we hear and see about the place.

Today, mostly due to digital media, we can access information about any country, city or region. Social networks have amplified the word-of-mouth of experiences and opinions. Nowadays all places are an option, but only those who develop a strong and unique image emerge as destinations.

The image of a territory has the capacity to influence the decisions of individuals regarding the purchase of products, investment, change of residence and travel. It is essential to understand how the image of the territory is perceived by those outside. What is intended is that the image should be as close to reality as possible, fulfilling expectations and avoiding the creation of wrong stereotypes and difficult to solve. If the image does not correspond to reality, it is important that leaders make a decision on what to do to change the perception.

In this context, the main objective of this research is to assess tourists' perception of the Lisbon brand image, defining as a research question: How do tourists perceive the Lisbon brand image? Considering the great prominence and worldwide recognition that Lisbon has suffered these past few years, with tourism reaching record numbers and the significant increase in international awards in the tourism sector, it becomes relevant to understand how tourists perceive the city, if their expectations correspond to the reality and the promise of the location-brand, also identifying the main attributes of the territory.

This research allows the creation of a support tool for professionals in the area of territorial marketing and tourism, based on the study of consumer's behaviour. An updated understanding of the perception of Lisbon, from the perspective of those living abroad, allows marketing and branding strategies to be updated, reducing the differential between brand identity and brand image, promoting outcomes such as satisfaction and loyalty.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This investigation fits into the positivist paradigm, being a deductive research, using the quantitative method. This method and scales were already used and validated in several studies in the research area with reliable results (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Qu, Kim & Im, 2011).

The questionnaire as three groups of questions that aim to analyze: motivations (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999), socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, education and country of origin), sources of information, cognitive image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999), affective image (Beerli & Martín, 2004) and global image of destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). To answer the questions a 5 points likert scale was used.

The study sample consists of 254 individuals of both sexes, aged 18 years or more, of foreign nationality who visited the Lisbon region at the end of the summer of 2019.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.1 DESTINATION MARKETING AND DESTINATION IMAGE FORMATION

In recent years, globalization has been singled out as an enabler of great competitiveness between places. Countries, cities and regions compete with each other for tourists and to become more attractive and competitive in order to increase their market share in a global economy, places have begun to devote efforts to defining a vision, building an identity and shaping their images (Metaxas, 2009). Thus, it is becoming increasingly relevant to create and manage place brands, using strategic marketing and branding management tools to promote the economic, political and cultural development of cities, regions and countries.

The literature highlights the image of destination as one of the fundamental concepts for understanding the tourists' purchasing decision process (Chon, 1990; Pike, 2008).

Gallarza et al. (2002) highlighted four characteristics that identify and describe the nature of the destination image construct: (1) complex, there are several interpretations about its nature; (2) multiple, from individual attributes to holistic impressions, and in the processes of formation, with static and dynamic considerations; (3) relativistic, the image corresponds to the interiorization of perceptions and not all have the same perceptions, so it is subjective and generally comparative; and (4) dynamic, varies according to two dimensions - time and space.

In general, the concept of image is seen as an attitudinal construct consisting of the mental representation and feelings that individuals have such as the overall impression on an object or destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

Different authors consider different components of the destination global image.

For Crompton (1979) the destination global image is formed only by cognitive components; Baloglu & McCleary (1999) consider cognitive and evaluative components; Gartner (1994) supposes three hierarchically interrelated components, cognitive, evaluative and conative.

The cognitive component covers the sum of beliefs and knowledge about the attributes of a destination, while the evaluative (affective) component encompasses feelings and attachment to destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). The first is influenced by the quantity of external stimuli received on a destination while the latter is influenced by the reasons that lead to the selection of destinations (Gartner, 1994).

Both Gartner (1994) and Baloglu & McCleary (1999) agree that affective evaluation depends on the cognitive evaluation of destination, and affective responses are formed according to the cognitive ones. Gartner (1994) also considers the conative component, stating that it has a direct relationship with the other two components, that is, it depends on the images developed during the cognitive stage and evaluated during the affective stage. For the author, the conative component is equivalent to behavior because it is the action component.

Gartner (1994) proposed a typology for the agents of destination image formation that vary in a continuum of eight levels: (1) explicitly induced agents I, conventional mass media advertising; (2) explicitly induced agents II, information provided by DMO's/tourist operators; (3) covertly induced agents I, the use of celebrities in promotional activities; (4) covertly induced agents II, reports/articles; (5) autonomous agents, mass media news, documentaries, films, television programs, among others, about the place; (6) unsolicited organic agents, unsolicited information about places given by acquaintances, friends or relatives, based on their knowledge of the place or their own experience; (7) solicited organic agents, information about destinations given by acquaintances, friends or relatives, based on their knowledge of the destination or their own experience; (8) organic agents, effective travel experience at the destination.

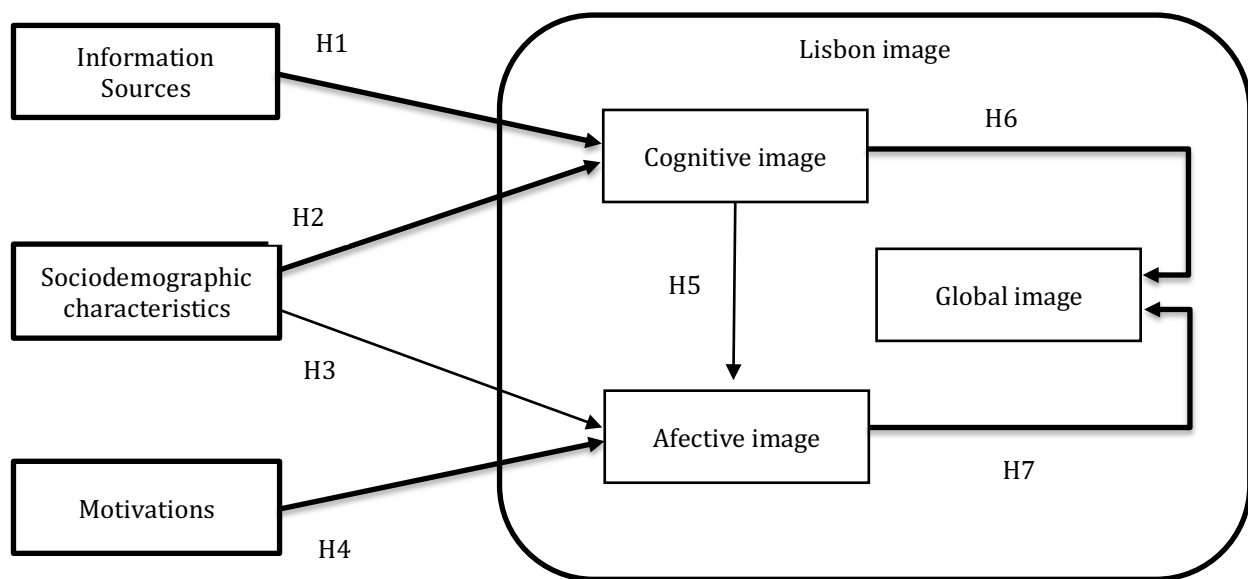
Echtner & Ritchie (1991) highlighted two important points: (1) people can develop images of destinations they have not visited before, (2) the image of the destination can change after the visit. This makes pertinent to separate the images of those who have already visited the destination, from the images of those who have never visited the destination. The differences between those who have already visited and those who have never visited the destination in terms of the level of knowledge of the destination and the motivations for travelling to the destination, as well as the fact that the relationship between the secondary sources of

information and the perceived image can only be analysed in visitors to the destination for the first time (Beerli & Martín, 2004).

Recently, Kislali et al. (2016) found the need to investigate the formation of the image of destiny, considering the technological changes and the perceived credibility of the information received through social networks, since these have changed the way travelers seek information and their purchasing behaviors. The authors state that in the past, it was the DMO's who controlled the messages in the media, promoting the image of the desired destination through their campaigns. However, today, social networks facilitate and encourage rapid interactions between consumers without any control by DMO's, and can include the exchange of both positive and negative comments about the destination. Baloglu & McCleary (1999) stated that the word-of-mouth of friends and family is the most important source for tourist images. However, when it comes to e-word-of-mouth the origin of the commentary is unknown, causing some skepticism about the credibility and reliability of online comments (Kislali et al., 2016).

Based on the literature review we propose the following theoretical model of analysis (figure 1) which allows to visualize in a simple and intuitive way the relationships between the different variables under study: sources of information, sociodemographic characteristics, motivations, cognitive image, affective image and global image. By applying the model we intend to confirm if there is a positive relationship between the constructs associated with the formation of the image of a destination and the perception that tourists have of the Lisbon image.

Figure 1 – Theoretical analysis model



H1: There is a positive relationship between the sources of information used by tourists and the cognitive image of Lisbon.

H2: There is a positive relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics of tourists and the cognitive image of Lisbon.

H3: There is a positive relationship between tourists' socio-demographic characteristics and the affective image of Lisbon.

H4: There is a positive relationship between tourists' motivations for visiting Lisbon and the affective image of Lisbon.

H5: There is a positive relationship between the cognitive image and the affective image of Lisbon.

H6: There is a positive relationship between the cognitive image and the overall image of Lisbon.

H7: There is a positive relationship between the affective image and the global image of Lisbon.

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## 4. EMPIRICAL COMPONENT

Table 1 – Cognitive, affective and global destination image

	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
Cognitive	3,88	0,53
Affective	5,99	0,87
Global	4,56	0,55

Table 2 – Sources of information

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Friends and family recommendations	137	30,4%
Social media	63	14,0%
Trip blogs	77	17,1%
Books/movies	32	7,1%
DMO	11	2,4%
Travel agencies	7	1,6%
Travek guide	48	10,6%
Brochures	16	3,5%
tv/ radio/ press advertising	7	1,6%
Online advertising	21	4,7%
Articles in magazines/ newspaper/ Tv shows	32	7,1%

Table 3 - Motivations

	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
Stress relieve	3,08	0,80
Get away from demands of everyday	3,12	0,83
Relax physically and mentally	2,81	0,85
Get away from the crowds	2,03	0,82
Escape from routine	3,27	0,81
Do exciting things	3,02	0,83
Descobrir emoções e excitação	2,67	0,87
Be adventurous	2,49	0,95
Have fun	3,23	0,77
Learn new things	3,27	0,77
Experience different cultures	3,34	0,72
Enrich myself intellectually	3,08	0,81
Experience new places	3,46	0,69
Meet people with similar interests	2,46	0,98
develop close friendships	2,19	0,98
Visiting places my friends haven't visited	2,04	1,04
Tell my friends about the trip	2,23	1,03

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**Table 4 - Theoretical analysis model: correlation and significance**

	R	sig
Sources of Information*, Natural, Social and Cultural Environment	0,247	0,68
Sources of Information*Quality of Experience	0,348	0,093
Information Sources*Infrastructure	0,211	0,881
Information Sources*Landscape	0,349	0,090
Information Sources*Gastronomy	0,953	0,470
Information Sources*Sports	0,893	0,014
Sources of Information*Habits	0,917	0,241
Sociodemographic*, Natural, Social and Cultural Environment	0,146	0,978
Sociodemographic*Quality of Experience	0,310	0,138
Sociodemographic * Infrastructure	0,241	0,550
Sociodemographic *Landscape	0,277	0,306
Sociodemographic *Gastronomy	0,369	0,018
Sociodemographic *Sports	0,241	0,548
Sociodemographic *Habits	0,330	0,076
Sociodemographic *Affective Image	0,247	0,510
Motivations*Affective Image	0,311	0,019
Cognitive Image*Affective Image	0,371	0,003
Cognitive Image*Global Image	0,373	0,002
Affective Image*Global Image	0,390	0,000

## 5. DISCUSSION

This investigation was applied to a sample of 254 individuals. The sample is mainly composed by female (51.95%), belonging to the 25 to 34 age group (35.05%) and with bachelor degree (77.27%). Respondents are from France (20.78%), Italy (14.94%), United States of America (11.0%), Germany (10.39%) and Spain (6.49%). The majority visited Lisbon for the first time (59.09%), for leisure and pleasure (88.96%).

The main motivation for respondents to visit Lisbon was knowledge (average = 3.29), and the main sources of information used were recommendations from family and friends (30.4%), travel blogs (17.1%) and recommendations on social networks (14.0%). This trend of information sources reflects what has been stated in the literature, that is, that the word-of-mouth is the most important source of information in the formation of the image of the destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004).

Respondents consider that Lisbon offers the common attributes essential to destinations, such as those related to the natural, social and cultural environment (average = 4.30). In contrast, opportunities for sports activities (average = 3.15) were considered the worst offer in Lisbon. Since the marketing of tourist destinations should not only promote the optimization of tourism impacts, but also the maximization of benefits for the region (Buhalis, 2000), the weaknesses identified by the scale of attributes of the cognitive image have implications for the strategic plan for regional development (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). Improving issues such as opportunities for sports activities, rather than fostering the perception of the Lisbon brand image for those visiting, benefits city residents by promoting their health.

Besides a positive perception of Lisbon cognitive image (mean = 3.88), the sample shows a positive perception of the Lisbon affective image (mean = 5.99). Finally, it is possible to measure that the respondents have a rather positive overall image of Lisbon. These results indicate that tourists are satisfied and that the actual experience at the destination corresponded to the image accumulated before the trip, that is, their expectations were met (Chon, 1990).

The associations that best stereotype Lisbon global image are gastronomy (14.3%), history and culture (14.0%), monuments and architecture (14.0%), climate and luminosity (10.6%) and the river, sea, beaches and nature (8.2%); while on a psychological level are the relaxed, calm and slow environment (22.8%), good, pleasant and positive (20.3%), friendly, hospitable and open (15.0%), exciting, lively and fun (9.8%) and festive and happy (8.9%). These impressions allow to create positive and realistic images to promote the positioning of the city. However, sometimes the images evoked are a little negative, as in the case of the respondents who considered the environment in Lisbon tense and dangerous (2.0%). In strategic marketing plans it is necessary to consider both positive and negative images, as stereotypes, regardless of whether they are positive, negative, true or false, affect our behaviour towards other places, their people and their products (Anholt, 2007), never forgetting that advertising and marketing are ineffective in altering the negative image without any real improvement (Anholt, 2006).

As for the associations, the ones that most differentiate Lisbon's global image are Belém, Torre de Belém and Mosteiro dos Jerónimos (16.1%), electric and elevators (12.6%), gastronomy, restaurants and bars (9.4%), monuments and museums (8.0%), Tejo and Ponte 25 de Abril (7.7%). Although the vast majority of the referred characteristics are really unique to Lisbon, others like the climate, the beaches and the parks, are common characteristics to other destinations, but they serve to distinguish and differentiate Lisbon as a tourist destination.

Regarding the theoretical model of analysis, which based on Baloglu & McCleary (1999) and Beerli & Martín (2004), the influence of personal factors (motivations and socio-demographic characteristics) and information sources on the perception of the Lisbon image were sought, the results show that there is an influence of information sources on the formation of the cognitive image of Lisbon.

All correlations are positive linear relationships. The correlation between information sources and sport is the only one statistically significant ( $R = 0.89$  and  $p = 0.01$ ). Thus, in corroboration with the literature (Gartner, 1994; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004), it is stated that there is an influence of information sources on the formation of the Lisbon cognitive image.

Secondly, the correlation between socio-demographic characteristics and cognitive image was investigated. Except for the correlation between socio-demographic characteristics and the natural, social and cultural environment; all correlations are positive linear relationships. The correlation between socio-demographic characteristics and gastronomy is the only one statistically significant ( $R = 0.37$  and  $p = 0.02$ ).

In third place, the correlation between socio-demographic characteristics and the affective image was verified, with a weak positive linear relationship ( $R = 0.25$ ) and not statistically significant ( $p = 0.51$ ). This being said, it is possible to affirm that there is an influence of socio-demographic characteristics on the cognitive image of Lisbon, but not on the affective image.

In fourth place, the correlation between motivations and the affective image was verified, with a weak ( $R = 0.31$ ) and statistically significant ( $p = 0.02$ ) positive linear relationship. Thus, in corroboration with the



literature (Gartner, 1994; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004), it is stated that there is an influence of motivations in the formation of the Lisbon affective image.

In fifth place, the correlation between the cognitive image and the affective image was verified, with a weak positive linear relationship ( $R= 0.371$ ) and statistically significant ( $p= 0.003$ ). Thus, as stated by Gartner (1994) and Baloglu & McCleary (1999), also in the case of Lisbon it is confirmed that affective evaluation depends on cognitive evaluation.

In sixth place, the correlation between the cognitive image and the overall Lisbon image was verified, with a weak ( $R= 0.37$ ) and statistically significant ( $p= 0.002$ ) positive linear relationship.

In seventh place, was verified the correlation between the affective image and the global image of Lisbon, with a weak ( $R= 0.39$ ) and statistically significant ( $p= 0.0$ ) positive linear relationship. Therefore, it is possible to confirm that as Baloglu & McCleary (1999) found in their work, both the cognitive image and the affective image influence the global image of fate. As a result, all the theoretical hypotheses of work were validated.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research question: "How do tourists perceive the Lisbon brand image? we conclude that tourists' perception of the Lisbon brand image is quite positive. All the components of the image of destination, more specifically the cognitive image, the affective image and the global image, have obtained a positive assessment, especially the global image.

The Lisbon attributes most valued by tourists were the good climate, the places with historical or cultural interest, the cultural activities, the hospitable and friendly people and, finally, the wealth and beauty of the landscape. On the other hand, Belém, the Belém tower, the Jerónimos monastery, the tramway and the lifts, the gastronomy, the restaurants and bars and the Tejo River were nomeated as the best attractions.

From a holistic perspective, tourists recognize the value of the Lisbon-location brand, based on attributes - modernity, diversity, authenticity, light, climate and security. Lisbon is considered a modern city, visible through its contemporary architecture and dynamic and vibrant atmosphere. Likewise, the city is recognized for its great cultural and multicultural diversity. Its residents are friendly and happy people, transmitting a hospitable and open environment.

As for authenticity, gastronomy and its specialties such as codfish, cream pastries and wines; historical and cultural achievements such as the discoveries and fado; architectural aspects such as the Portuguese sidewalk and colored tiles. Lisbon's luminosity has not gone unnoticed either, as well as the warm climate.

Only safety was not mentioned by the respondents, on the contrary, some respondents said they considered Lisbon a bit dangerous.

To evaluate the influence of personal factors (motivations and socio-demographic characteristics) and information sources on the perception of Lisbon image, the theoretical model of analysis was validated, concluding that there is a positive relationship between the sources of information and the Lisbon cognitive image, a positive relationship between the motivations and the Lisbon affective image and a positive relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics and the Lisbon cognitive image

In addition, it was possible to evaluate the influence of the cognitive image on the affective image, the influence of the cognitive image on the global image and the influence of the affective image on the global image, verifying a positive association in all relationships.

This investigation allows us to conclude that the marketing actions carried out by the region are having good results. The number of tourists has increased exponentially, and the tourists have a very good and positive image of the Lisbon brand, meaning that the projected image corresponds to the perceived image.



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