Current Research Issues on Destination Image – what lies ahead and what is left behind on ISI Current Contents of the Web of Knowledge Platform

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Objectives | This paper aims two broad objectives: i) to present the current research issues on destination image (DI) through scientific papers published in quoted journals in the last ten years on the *ISI Current Contents of the Web of Knowledge Platform*[1], and ii) to discuss the achievements as well as the limitations inherent to the method employed in this systematic approach to the literature review.

Methodology | This kind of systematic approach on literature review, even performed on the context of different other scientific domains, is pioneering the tourism research. Thus, on October 13, 2008, we looked on *ISI Current Contents* for any paper containing the "destination image" expression. The search was performed in Social Sciences database, in title, abstract, topic or keywords, with data collection and analyses performed through *RefViz 2.0.* and *EndNote X1* bibliographic software. Results gave 47 papers, which, from now on, represent our base for analysis. However, as many research works are out of this database, being compiled in conference proceedings materials, indexed in other journals, PhD theses or even country/region reports, other references will be necessary to support the conclusions.

Main results and contributions | Starting with "image", and regardless the importance it has been given in the literature, it is not always clear what various authors, agencies and individuals are referring to when they use this term[2]. Crompton[3] offers an integrative definition of "image" as "the sum of beliefs, ideas and perceptions that people hold of

objects, behaviours and events". That is, the image is referred as a set of meanings by which those objects, behaviours and events are known and through which people describe, remember and relate to them. When DI concept is discussed, a variety of definitions are being suggested, but no consensual overall definition was found. Specific components are highlighted, such as the cognitive and the affective.

Descriptive statistics supported on analysis function available in *ISI Current Contents* were performed. These concern information on most frequent authors, disciplines, universities and journals that most contributed to these papers, as well as the yearly distribution of these papers. Results show that 50 authors contributed for papers on DI, with the great majority from USA; 2 of them contributed with three papers, 5 of them with two and the remaining 43 authors contributed with just a single publication; the authors most published have all their papers belonging to the better quoted journals in the tourism domain: Tourism Management and Annals of Tourism Research. In the second place are authors from Spain, followed by authors from South Korea, Australia, England and Turkey. Portugal registers for just one publication. The main disciplines encompassing issues on DI are "management" and "management & organization". The "environmental studies" and "geography & development" disciplines are also highly represented. Very few papers are published under "business & economics", "economics" and "psychology" disciplines. Among the universities engaged on DI research, Purdue University is assuming the leadership. As we already have mentioned, the journals most published on DI in the last decade on the *ISI Current Contents* are Annals of Tourism Research and the Tourism Management journals, which both sum a bit more than 80%. Concerning the yearly distribution of the 47 papers, generally speaking, we can assist to a certain growth; from 1 or 2 papers in the beginning to 11 papers in 2007. In 2008, due to the fact that research was carried out by middle October, 9 papers have been published.

In order to comprehend the sample of the 47 papers we next analyzed the records with *RefViz* 2.0 bibliographic software. DI-paper collection reveals six different types of research topics, placed into logical groups through conceptual proximity, as follows:

1. *Group 1* (3 papers) focuses on *destination branding*. The research deals with conceptual models, new methodologies to measure a tourism destination brand or empirical studies on brand image;
2. *Group 2* (10 papers) focuses on *image generators*, i.e. the role of visual images on promotion materials, the significance of brochures and the significance of postcards as image generators, the influence of feature films on DI, the impact of imagery in tourism theory, among others;
3. *Group 3* (13 papers) focuses on *DI measurement*. It includes empirical evidence of Rwanda's, Jordan's, Turkey's, Russia's DI, as well as image representations of Macau;
4. *Group 4* (5 papers) focuses on *image formation*. The research in this group deals with conceptual models on DI formation and factors which influence DI formation;
5. *Group 5* (10 papers) focuses on *perceptual assessment of a destination*. Some research examples come from Jeju standing stones, Girona, United States;
6. *Group 6* (4 papers) focuses on *relationships between image and behavioural intentions*.

Limitations | Although the main contribution of this paper relies, precisely, on the systematic review of literature of DI by employing a new method, some limitations are deriving from. First, the literature review was performed only in journals which are indexed in *ISI Current Contents* database and temporally limited by the year of publication. Second, and as many research works on DI were kept away from, being compiled in conference proceedings materials, indexed in journals belonging to other platforms, PhD theses or even country/region reports, the results - far from being exhaustive – must be objected to cautious interpretation. However, since employed on a comprehensive library, and in a research domain in somewhat familiar for the author, this method could reveal itself as a powerful tool on supporting a systematic review of literature.

Conclusions | Literature review on DI performed on *ISI Current Contents* on journals published during the last decade reveals six major current research issues: (i) destination branding, (ii) image generators, (iii) DI measurement, (iv) image formation, (v) perceptual assessment of a destination and (vi) relationships between image and behavioural intentions. This systematic approach of DI literature review, supported by *RefViz 2.0* and *EndNote XI* bibliographic software, represents a pioneer methodology in the tourism field research.