

# Image Measure and Formation in Rural-Cultural Tourism: Measuring the Emotional Dimension Based on Emotional Response *In Situ*

MARCELO ROYO VELA \* [ marcelo.royo@uv.es ]

CHRISTIAN SERAROLS TARRÉS \*\* [ christian.serarols@uab.es ]

**Abstract** | The concept and the measure of the Image of Tourist Destinations (ITD) have two different dimensions, the cognitive and affective component that can be measured using different techniques. This work offers a new approach regarding the image's formation of rural-cultural destinations and its measure. The main result observed in this empirical research, both qualitative and quantitative, is the convenience of adopting a more analytical and integrated approach when we consider and measure the emotional component of the image. Furthermore, the results of the exploratory and factorial analysis show the factors that integrate cognitive variables and emotional response in the same factor, besides, the emotional aggregated component of the image has very low variance and reliability. Finally, we discuss some implications of the formation's model and the development of a reliable and valid scale of measuring image.

**Keywords** | Image Measure and Formation, Rural-Cultural Tourism, Emotional Response.

**Resumo** | O conceito e a avaliação da imagem dos destinos turísticos possuem duas dimensões diferentes: as componentes cognitiva e afectiva que podem ser medidas utilizando diferentes técnicas. Este trabalho apresenta uma nova abordagem relativamente à formação da imagem de destinos rurais-culturais e à sua medição. O resultado principal observado nesta pesquisa empírica, tanto qualitativa, como quantitativa, é a vantagem de adoptar uma abordagem mais analítica e integrada quando se considera e se mede a componente emocional da imagem. Além disso, os resultados da análise exploratória e factorial identificam os factores que integram as variáveis cognitivas e a resposta emocional no mesmo factor. Adicionalmente, a componente agregada emocional da imagem apresenta uma variância e fiabilidade muito baixas. Finalmente, discutem-se algumas implicações do modelo de formação e de desenvolvimento de uma escala válida e fiável para medição da imagem.

**Palavras-chave** | Formação e Avaliação da Imagem, Turismo Rural-Cultural, Resposta Emocional.

\* **PhD in Business Sciences** at the University of Valencia (Spain). **Associate Professor** of Marketing in the Department of Commercialization and Market Research at the Economics School, University of Valencia.

\*\* **PhD in Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management** at the University Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain) and Växjö University (Sweden). **Senior Lecturer** in the Business Economics Department at the University Autònoma de Barcelona and Coordinator of the Research Group in "Rural and high-tech entrepreneurs in Catalonia".

## 1. Introduction: topic and purpose of the research

In the last decades, studies related to tourist's image, including its conceptualization, dimensionality, measures, modeling, variables that influence its formation, stress the importance of the ITD for marketing purposes (Chon, 1990; Morgan and Pritchard, 1998; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a, Gallarza, Gil and Calderon, 2002). Morgan and Pritchard (1998) examines the need to study the ITD and find out that this image may: a) condition the election of the destination and its attributes value; b) condition the purchasing process; c) explain client satisfaction, and further, the final image; d) contribute to the formation process of the dynamic image of the destination, its changes and modifications; e) promote certain tourist development; f) permit the development of instruments for measuring its usage in the marketing of the destination.

Echtner and Richie (1991, 1993), consider that it is necessary to establish conceptual framework and methodologies better adapted to the task of measuring the ITD, because of the diversity and heterogeneity that exists in tourist offer. In that sense, it is necessary to think about the concept of cultural tourism due to the existing trend to identify cultural or urban tourism with the heritage, while rural tourism is not generally considered. In this context, our principal contributions are defining what could be understood as rural-cultural tourism and/or excursionism and propose a model of ITD formation of such destinations applying a more analytical approach than the general models offered in the literature, including the emotional dimension of the image. After defining the model of formation, we develop a reliable and valid instrument of ITD measurement that could be applied in the marketing of such destinations.

The importance of this type of tourism and excursionism in countries, who own certain natural wealth and important historical and hereditary

legacy spread all over their geography, may not be ignored (i.e. countries like Portugal, Spain, France or Italy). However, it is very difficult to obtain data that permits calculating, at least approximately, the number of excursionists, tourists, trips or excursions and its economic importance. Therefore, according to Familitur (Familitur, 2004), the volume of Spanish cultural tourism rose to 6,355 millions trips but the excursionists, either rural or cultural, are excluded from this study.

A cultural excursionist could be defined as a tourist who, while being on a long term holiday and with or without cultural motivation, moves to a cultural destination because its close to its destination. Moreover, we also consider a cultural excursionist someone who does a cultural visit of short duration, a day or few hours, because his place of residence is close to the cultural place, even though his main motivation is not cultural. The common characteristic of both definitions is their lack of an overnight stay. According to this, it even makes the estimation of the number of cultural-rural trips more difficult. Familitur's report also offers data on the number of excursions made by Spaniards. In 2003, Spaniards did 279,4 millions all over Spain, but this report does not consider what their motivations were to select their excursions. Hence, it is impossible to know the number of excursions that corresponds to cultural or rural-cultural motivation.

## 2. The concept of image destination, its dimensions and measure

The latest literature on tourist marketing review (Moutinho, 1987; Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a, 1999b) tends to consider that the image is a concept made up of emotional and rational consumer's interpretation and is a consequence of the combination of the following interrelated components:

- *Cognitive/perceptual evaluation* refers to the beliefs and knowledge of individuals regarding the object, and
- *Affective evaluation* refers to the evaluation of the attributes of the object. In other words, the feelings towards the object or the emotional response towards the object.

From this point of view, the composed or global image of a small rural village with heritage or historical cultural interests is made of an entwined system of perceptions (perceptual images) and evaluative thoughts and emotional responses (affective images) (Stern and Krakover, 1993). The relation between the cognitive and affective component and global image should be the following: the cognitive component directly influences the global image and indirectly the affective component and, on the other hand, the affective component influences the global image. This ITD model of formation is accepted by the academics and easily located in the literature of tourism marketing. The facts that a cognitive and affective component of the image influences the global estimation lead us to, at least, two latent variables in the image construction.

### 2.1. Cognitive component

Commonly, the literature establishes that the cognitive or perceptual image of tourist destination is created on the basis of a set of attributes that corresponds with their resorts, attractions and tourist offer generally available on destination (Stabler, 1995). Although it is possible to find different classifications of the tourist offer, we use the one proposed by Alhemoud and Armstrong (1996). These authors classify the attractions in four categories: a) natural attractions (woodland zones, rivers, etc.); b) historical attractions (ruins, castles, antique constructions that offer past perspectives, etc.); c) cultural attractions (religion, museum, architecture, fairs, festive, folklore, craftsmanship,

etc.); and d) artificial attractions (funfairs, etc.). After a review of the existing related research, we observe that the measure of the image is basically made up of requesting individual opinions and valuations about a certain destination by applying a list of attributes that already characterize it. Among the major applied techniques to measure image, emphasize: 1) ordinal and interval scales as the ones used in multidimensional scaling (MDS) (Gartner, 1989; Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Mackay and Fesenmaier, 2000); 2) nominal scales for the application of correspondence analysis (Calantone and others, 1989); 3) *Likert* or semantic differential scales (Crompton, 1979; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993); 4) cognitive responses to open questions and proposal of adjectives (Reilly, 1990; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993) and, 5) a technique called "repertory-Grid" (Walmsley and Jenkins, 1993; Coshall, 2000).

### 2.2. The affective component

The affective component of the image of tourist destination is related to the emotional response of the tourist or visitor. The affective response differs from the cognitive, even though it is directly related, forming the emotions or affections from the cognitions in hierarchical order (Russell and Pratt, 1980; Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a).

The conception and the measure of the affective dimension of the image of tourist destination are based on Russell's work and his cognitive structure of the affect (Russell, 1980) and its circumplex space (bi-dimensional and bi-polar) that results in 4 bi-polar dimensions representing 8 possible affective states (stimulating-boring; pleasant-unpleasant; joy-sad; relaxing-anguished) (Russell and Pratt, 1980). Further works only confirmed two dimensions, presented by vertical and horizontal axis of bi-dimensional space, that would be necessary to measure or represent the affective component of the ITD (stimulating-boring; pleasant-unpleasant) (Walmsley and Jenkins, 1993).

### 3. Conceptual approach to the purpose of the research

As it is suggested in literature, the conception and mainly the measure of the affective component of the ITD generate certain doubts regarding their suitability and validity when considering places with high capacity of generating an intensive emotional response by the tourist.

Consequently, if we divide the cognitive component disintegrated into a set of representative attributes of tourist attractions in the destination and these are able to generate certain affective response which is interesting to acknowledge, then, why should the affective response be aggregated to a global measure of the same, which is, on the other hand, so abstract and general? Why don't we include it in a set of affective responses that emerge in correspondence to the set of cognitive variables having them present when measuring this component of the image? In our opinion, it is necessary to take into account the affective response simultaneously with the cognitive stimulation along the measure of both components, avoiding the aggregated measure of the component. To measure this, it is necessary to keep in mind the sufficient particular affective responses to the cognition, which is also particular.

### 4. Research method and results

We carried out our research on the image for the rural-cultural destination in two stages, qualitative and quantitative. First, a qualitative technique was used to identify the characteristics of rural-cultural tourism and variables that potentially influence the formation of the ITD. Qualitative techniques, supported by secondary data and a literature review, helped us to identify this specific type of excursionism and its definition, as well as, the group of variables of the image of cognitive and emotional

nature. As a main technique in the qualitative stage, we employed focus group of tourists and of experts and we also conducted in-depth interviews among the experts. This qualitative stage was preceded by the variable analysis of the ITD measurement, already existing in literature that refers to other destinations. Then we analysed a wide set of studies and the result was the final group of variables which was adapted to our particular study: villages placed in rural environments, with historical-hereditary heritage and/or architectural harmony. Apart from the variables detected in the literature, some new variables representing culture, history, inheritance and management of the tourism have been included.

The main results obtained in the qualitative stage are:

- The rural-cultural tourism is conceptualized, as the one carried out in rural environment or with natural heritage where villages of small dimension that contain certain historic and hereditary heritage and/or architectural harmony exist.
- We observe the existence of a set of emotions that fall into an affective tourist response while visiting destinations of such characteristics. The majority of these emotions are considered typical for this type of rural-cultural destination.
- We identify a group of variables that influence the creation of the image of rural-cultural destination. The 34 detected variables are both cognitive (23) and affective (11 variables), and could be applied together to the potential theoretical model as the basis for the development of a scale to measure the ITD.

Second, in the quantitative stage we conducted a survey among 205 tourists selected at random, using a point transect sampling procedure (Thompson, 1992). Analysis of internal consistence and reliability and factorial exploratory analysis as information and statistical techniques were used respectively.

These techniques helped us to confirm the research questions:

- Whether it is possible to obtain factors composed of cognitive and affective variables in nature, or on the contrary, we may obtain factors of emotional and cognitive nature separately;
- Check the reliability and informative capacity of the common scale for measuring the emotional component of the image.

As the objective of present research is not a comparison between destinations, and despite this, a previous qualitative stage has been carried out to determine the most representative attributes adapted to the object of the study, the possibility to apply multidimensional scaling, open questions with proposals of adjectives or “repertory-grid” were refused. We moved towards the use of the common interval scales. The 34 variables obtained in the qualitative stage were valued by applying *Likert* scales of 7 positions. For measuring the affective component of the image we used a common scale, a semantic differential of 4 items and 7 positions.

The main results obtained in the quantitative stage are:

- The 34 variables of the image present a high internal consistency. *Alpha coefficient* reached a 0,91 value. Among the 34 variables, 11 are of affective or emotional nature.
- The result of the factorial exploratory analysis (KMO=0.9;  $\chi^2=2772.894$ ,  $gl=561$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) applied to the 34 variables offers a factorial structure formed by 8 factors obtained from rotation VARIMAX that explains 60% of the variance. In this structure we identify cognitive and affective attributes in the same factors. The components interpretation is as follows: *the beauty of cultural historical inheritance and emotions generated by its perception (formed by 8 variables, among them 5 variables of emotional response); clean and quiet environment and*

*emotion generated by its perception (formed by 6 variables, among them 2 variables of emotional response); service and treatment offered to tourist and emotions generated by its perception (formed by 6 variables, among them 3 variables of emotional response); integrated and in good condition architecture of the place (formed by 3 variables of cognitive nature); historical heritage and landscape of the place (formed by 3 variables of cognitive nature); shopping and restaurants (formed by 4 variables, among them 1 variable of emotional response); tourist-cultural management (formed by 2 variables of cognitive nature); tourist offer and complementary infrastructure (formed by 2 variables of cognitive nature).* It is necessary to stress the lack of solely emotional nature factor or dimension.

- The results obtained from the analysis of reliability of the scale applied to measure the emotional component of the ITD according to the literature are not completely satisfactory. The value of *Alpha coefficient* reaches 0.5094. The results of factorial analysis (KMO=0.634;  $\chi^2=90.579$ ,  $gl=6$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) show a structure of 4 factors obtained from VARIMAX rotation, but only explain 45,37% of the variance.

## 5. Conclusions and implications for future research

The results obtained indicate that the affective and cognitive dimensions should not be measured independently regarding the model of image formation. One reason relies on the fact that we can consider, from a more analytical approach, that the affective component is the emotional response to cognitive component. From this approach, the image is to be formed as an effect of various latent factors that could aggregate variables of cognitive and affective nature. The affective variables could represent the

affective response to cognitive stimulus. Based on this idea, there should not be cognitive and affective factors; but independent factors, with their meaning formed by associating cognitive and affective variables, forming the latent variables of the construction.

The detected emotions in this research are presented and should be considered inherent to this type of destinations. Moreover, they seem to have strong influence on the formation of the image through the emotions generated *in situ* when visiting the destination. This difference is pointed out in other ITD researches that have considered destinations of greater dimensions or even *sun and beach* and have understood and measured the emotional dimension of the image in an aggregated form.

In the same way, a relationship is observed between certain cognitive aspects or variables and certain type of sensations or emotions that emerge in the tourist. Because of that, it is reasonable to think that one variable of cognitive-affective nature to consider exists in the accepted model of formation of ITD that could or not replace the aggregated emotional measure. The aforementioned cognitive-affective variable could directly influence the global image and indirectly through the aggregated emotional dimension. The doubt arises when considering the possibility that the mentioned variable could absorb or not the emotional aggregated component in the causal model.

The future lines of research should be directed to empirical contrast of the model of image formation introducing the cognitive-affective variable together with the common aggregated emotional dimension as a previous step to the final proposal and formalization of the model. Another potential and interesting line of research is the development of image measure scales that incorporate the analytic and integrated approach that is exposed in this paper. Their development could permit access to more reliable and valid measurement instruments than the current ones which could be very useful in tourism marketing management.

## References

- Alhemoud, A.M., Armstrong, E.G., 1996, Image of tourism attractions in Kuwait, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 34(4), pp. 76-80.
- Baloglu, S., Brinberg, D., 1997, Affective images of tourism destinations, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 35(4), pp. 11-15.
- Baloglu, S., McCleary, K.W., 1999a, A model of destination image formation, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 26(4), pp. 868-897.
- Baloglu, S., McCleary, K.W., 1999b, U.S. international pleasure travelers' images of four mediterranean destinations: a comparison of visitors and nonvisitors, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 38(2), pp. 144-152.
- Calantone, R.J., Di Benetto, C.A., Hakam, A., Bojanic, D.C., 1989, Multiple multinational tourism positioning using correspondence analysis, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 28(2), pp. 25-32. (Cited in Echtner and Ritchie, 1991, *op. cit.*).
- Chon, K.S., 1990, The role of destination image in tourism: a review and discussion, *The Tourist Review*, Vol. 45(2), pp. 2-9.
- Churchill, G.A., 1979, A paradigm for developing better measures of marketing constructs, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 16, February, pp. 64-73.
- Coshall, J.T., 2000, Measurement of tourist' images: the repertory grid approach, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 39(1), pp. 85-89.
- Crompton, J.L., 1979, An assesment of the image of Mexico as a vacation destination and the influence of the geographical location upon that image, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 17(4), pp. 18-24.
- Cronbach, L.J., 1951, Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of test, *Psychometrika*, Vol. 16, October, pp. 297-334.
- Echtner, C.M., Ritchie, B., 1991, The meaning and measurement of destination image, *The Journal of Tourism Studies*, Vol. 2(2), pp. 2-12.
- Echtner, C.M., Ritchie, B., 1993, The measurement of destinations image: an empirical assessment, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 31(4), pp. 3-13.
- Familitur, 2004, *Movimientos turísticos de los españoles*, Instituto de Estudios Turísticos, Madrid.
- Gallarza, M., Gil, I., Calderon, H., 2002, Destination image. Towards a conceptual framework, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 29(1), pp. 56-78.
- Gartner, W.C., 1989, Tourism image: attribute measurement of state tourism products using multidimensional scaling techniques, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 28(2), pp. 16-20.
- Mackay, K.J., Fesenmaier, D.R., 2000, An exploration of cross-cultural destination image assessment, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 38(4), pp. 417-422.
- Morgan, N., Pritchard, A., 1998, *Tourism promotion and power: creating images, creating identities*, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester.
- Moutinho, L., 1987, Consumer behavior in tourism, *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 21(10), pp. 5-44.

- Poiesz, T.B.C., 1989, Image concept: its place in consumer psychology, *Journal of Economic Psychology*, Vol. 10, pp. 457-472.
- Reilly, M.D., 1990, Free elicitation of descriptive adjectives for tourism image assesement, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 28(4), pp. 21-26.
- Russel, J.A., Pratt, G., 1980, A description of affective quality attributed to environment, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 38, pp. 311-322.
- Stabler, M.J., 1995, The image of destinations regions: theoretical and empirical aspects, in Goodall, B., and Ashworth, G., (eds) *Marketing in Tourism Industry: The promotion of Destination Regions*, pp. 133-159.
- Stern, E., Krakover, S., 1993, The formation of a composite urban image, *Geographycal Analysis*, Vol. 25, pp. 130-146.
- Thompson, S.K., 1992, *Sampling*, John Wiley & Sons, New York.
- Walmsley, D.J., Jenkins, J.M., 1993, Appraisive images of tourist areas: application of personal construct, *Australian Geographer*, Vol. 24(2), pp. 1-13.