

THE IMPACT OF SECONDARY INFORMATION SOURCES ON THE FORMATION OF THE TOURIST IMAGE

The case of rural tourism in Galicia

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ABSTRACT: In a context of intense competition among tourist destinations, the perceived image is key and plays, in turn, a key role in the choice of destination, as the values associated to it represent a decisive factor in the purchase decision process by potential tourists. In this context, many researchers agree that the image is usually formed by two main forces: stimulus or external factors and internal personal factors. The former refer to the number and nature of sources of information to which individuals are exposed. The latter include motivations, demographic characteristics and the geographical and cultural background of tourists. The aim of this paper is, therefore, to identify the set of cognitive-affective components forming the a priori perceived image of the destination and, moreover, the study of the main factors influencing stimulus formation. In particular, we analyze the effects of secondary sources of information (autonomous, organic and induced) on the perceived destination image. **Keywords:** tourist destination image, rural tourism, external or stimulus factors, sources of information.

RESUMEN: En un contexto de intensa competitividad entre los destinos turísticos, la imagen percibida es un elemento clave y desempeña, a su vez, un papel fundamental en la elección del destino puesto que los valores que se asocian a ésta, representan un factor determinante en el proceso de decisión de compra de los potenciales turistas. En este contexto, numerosos investigadores coinciden en que la imagen es generalmente formada por dos fuerzas primordiales: los factores estímulo o externos y los factores personales o internos. Los primeros se refieren a la cantidad y la naturaleza de fuentes de información a las cuales los individuos están expuestos. Entre los segundos, cabe destacar las motivaciones, las características socio-demográficas y la procedencia geográfica-cultural de los turistas. El objetivo de este trabajo reside, por consiguiente, en la identificación del conjunto de componentes cognitivo-afectivos conformadores de la imagen percibida a priori del destino y, por otra parte, en el estudio de los principales factores estímulo que influyen en su formación. En concreto, se analizarán los efectos de las fuentes de información secundaria (autónomas, orgánicas e inducidas) en la imagen percibida del destino. **Palabras clave:** imagen turística, turismo rural, factores estímulo, fuentes de información.

RESUMO: Num contexto de intensa competitividade entre destinos turísticos, a imagem percebida é um elemento-chave que, por sua vez, desempenha um papel fundamental na escolha do destino, já que os valores que se lhe associam constituem um factor determinante no processo de decisão de compra dos potenciais turistas. Neste contexto, numerosos investigadores

consideram que a imagem é geralmente formada por duas forças primordiais: os factores de estímulo ou externos e os factores pessoais ou internos. Os primeiros referem-se à quantidade e à natureza das fontes de informação a que os indivíduos estão expostos. Entre os segundos, destacam-se as motivações, as características sócio-demográfica e a origem geográfica e cultural dos turistas. São vários os trabalhos que demonstram empiricamente que tanto a variedade como a tipologia das fontes de informação têm um efeito significativo sobre a imagem de um destino turístico. O objectivo deste trabalho reside, por conseguinte, na identificação do conjunto de dimensões cognitivas e afectivas que contribuem para a formação da imagem percebida *a priori* do destino e, por outro lado, no estudo dos principais factores estímulo que influenciam a sua formação. Em concreto, são analisados os efeitos das fontes de informação secundárias (autónomas, orgânicas e induzidas) na imagem percebida do destino. **Palavras-chave:** imagem turística, turismo rural, factores de estímulo, fontes de informação.

INTRODUCTION

There is now widespread agreement on the recognition of tourism as one of the sectors with the greatest ability to influence the social and economic development of countries. In this sense, what is especially remarkable is the importance of image as an element of differentiation and as the core and engine of that development.

Among all the definitions of image, there is one which should be highlighted: the one proposed by Baloglu and McCleary (1999a), who consider image as the “mental representation of the beliefs, feelings and overall impression of the individual on a destination”, which will be referred to in this article as perceived image. This definition reflects the different dimensions which, according to the literature, must integrate this concept. Specifically, it includes both cognitive assessments (beliefs or knowledge of an individual about the characteristics of a destination) and affective ones, represented by the feelings about him or herself.

In this context, many researchers agree that the image is usually formed by two main forces: stimulus or external factors and internal personal factors (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a). The former refers to the number and nature of sources of information to which individuals are exposed, including the destination information acquired as a result of having visited the destination. The latter includes motivations, demographic characteristics and the geographical and cultural background of tourists. In this regard, several studies show that both the variety and the types of information sources (Gartner & Hunt, 1987; Um & Crompton, 1990; Bojanic, 1991, Gartner, 1993; Font, 1997; Baloglu, 1999; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a) have significant effects on the image of a destination. Thus, Moutinho (1987) believes that one of the most influential factors in the purchasing decisions of tourists is the information on tourist facilities and services.

The aim of this paper is, therefore, to identify the cognitive-affective components of the perceived destination image and, moreover, the study of the main external or stimulus factors that influence the formation of that image. To empirically test the assumptions made and based

on the original proposal by Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) a mixed methodological approach is used, through the combination of structured and unstructured technique. However, in this paper only the results obtained using the structured methodologies are drawn. It should be noted, in another context, that the specific object of study in this investigation is rural tourism in Galicia.

THEORETICAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESIS - INTEGRAL DIMENSIONS OF DESTINATION IMAGE

Cognitive and affective evaluations

While traditionally greater importance has been given to the cognitive component of image (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997, Walmsley & Young, 1998; Baloglu, 1999), there is now a widespread conviction about the presence of both cognitive and affective evaluations in the perception of the tourist destination (Moutinho, 1987; Gartner, 1993; Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997, Walmsley & Young, 1998; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a).

Thus, current studies in the tourism literature (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Yoon & Kim, 2000; Sönmez & Sirakaya, 2002, Kim & Richardson, 2003; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Pike & Ryan, 2004) are inclined to consider that the image is built through the rational and emotional interpretation of subjects and follows, therefore, the incorporation of two dimensions: (1) perceptual/cognitive evaluations, referring to the beliefs and knowledge that tourists have on the attributes of destination (Baloglu, 1999; Pike & Ryan, 2004), and (2) affective evaluations, represented by feelings of tourists about the destination (Chen & Uysal, 2002; Kim & Richardson, 2003). Under this approach, the destination image should be seen as a multidimensional phenomenon.

Also, the combination of these two components of image gives rise to a global or composite image that refers to the positive or negative view that may be held about the tourist product (Leisen, 2001; Milman & Pizam, 1995).

Attribute-holistic, functional-psychological, common-unique continua

Efforts to achieve a more precise definition of image components include the proposal by Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993), which concludes that the tourist image is composed of three bipolar continua:

The attribute-holistic continuum suggests that the image is composed not only of the tourist perception of the various individual attributes of the destination (weather, entertainment and accommodation, among others) but also of its holistic or global impressions of the place.

The functional-psychological continuum contrasts, on the one hand, with the functional characteristics of the destination, tangible and directly observable (e.g., price level, transport infrastructure) and, on the other hand, with psychological impressions, more intangible and abstract characteristics (e.g., friendliness, safety).

The common-unique continuum reveals the distinction between the common features to multiple destinations, whether they are functional (e.g., climate, price level) or psychological (e.g., hospitality, security), and those characteristics that are perceived as singular, specific or unique.

Formation of the destination image: stimulus factors

The model by Baloglu and McCleary (1999a) deserves to be noted as a comprehensive approach to the process of forming the destination image. These authors develop a paradigm that systematizes the main elements that influence the image, grouped into two categories: personal factors and stimulating factors.

The former are the social and psychological characteristics of the tourist consumer and the latter, in turn, stem from an external stimulus and are related to the type and variety of information sources, previous experience of the tourist and distribution factors.

Baloglu and McCleary (1999a) stress that stimulus factors, such as personal factors, contribute to the formation of cognitive and affective perception, which together constitute the global destination image.

The main stimulus variables (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a) or agents of image formation (Gartner, 1993) are forces involved in the formation of the tourist image and are related to the number and variety of sources of information which individuals can be exposed to, including also the information they acquire from a destination as a consequence of having visited it.

The literature considers the former, the number and variety of secondary information sources, as an external variable that contributes significantly to the formation of the destination image (Gartner & Hunt, 1987; Um & Crompton, 1990; Bojanic, 1991; Gartner, 1993; Font, 1997; Baloglu, 1999). Previous experience or familiarity with the place is likewise an important factor in the formation of the image (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Hu & Ritchie, 1993; Baloglu, 2001; Litvin & Ling, 2001).

It should be added that depending on the type of information sources that influence the formation of an image of a destination, Gunn (1988) distinguishes two types of images: (1) the organic image, which is based on non-commercial sources of information, such as news broadcast in the media, the education received or the opinions of friends and family, among others, and (2) the induced image, which

is based on commercial sources of information, such as brochures and travel guides, the information provided by travel agents.

Fakeye and Crompton (1991) have established a model that illustrates the relationship among the organic, induced and complex images, and describes the process of developing the image associated to the choice of destination by tourists. These authors consider that any potential tourist has an organic image of a set of destinations that are well known to him/her. When there is a motivation to take a trip, he or she undertakes an active process of information search conducted by the reasons which impel them to travel, where the scope and the amount of information sought will depend on the organic (strong or weak) image that the individual has and the experience that he or she has, both directly and indirectly on the site. Thus, the possible alternative destinations considered are evaluated on the basis of the initial organic image and the image projected by those responsible for promoting the destination through different (image-induced) media.

In this context, Gartner (1993), building on the typology proposed by Gunn (1972, 1988), considers that the process of image formation can be understood as a continuum of different agents or sources of information that operate independently to form a single image of a destination. In fact, the author classifies these agents into various categories: induced, autonomous and functional information sources. In turn, induced information sources can be divided into overt and covert, and organic ones into solicited and unsolicited:

- a. Overt-induced sources of information correspond to conventional means of advertising in various media (e.g., TV, radio, Internet). Two types of issuers are differentiated, depending on whether information is transmitted by the institutions that promote the destination or tour operators, wholesalers and other organizations with vested interests in the tourism industry but not directly associated to the destination. Within this type of information sources, advertising plays an important role in the process of creating, strengthening and improving the tourist destination image (Bojanic, 1991). Similarly, tour operators and travel agents intervene in the creation of tourist images, being a source of information that tourists who travel for the first time to a destination especially trust (Bitner & Booms, 1982; Snepenger et al., 1990; Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001). On the other hand, although the overt-induced agents show reduced credibility, they contribute significantly to increase the visibility of the tourist destinations because of its high coverage.
- b. Covert-induced sources of information refer to the use of celebrities and spokespersons recognized by the audience in destination promotion activities, in order to increase the level

of memory and the credibility of the information. Another way to generate covert-induced images is planning familiarization visits. The main drawback of this alternative is the lack of direct control over the images to be projected.

- c. Autonomous sources of information encompass the mass media which broadcast news, documentaries, films, etc. According to Gartner (1993), broadcast news has a significant impact on the development of the tourist image because of its alleged fair presentation.
- d. Organic sources of information refer to friends or relatives that transmit information on the basis of their knowledge and experiences, and are therefore called word of mouth advertising. According to Gartner (1993), the effects on image formation of these agents differ according to whether the information is requested or not. In general, if people receive unrequested information from sites, the retention level is lower and the degree of credibility depends on the source that provides information; however, if the information is requested, credibility is higher. The studies by Nolan (1976) and Gitelson & Crompton (1983) reflect the importance of word of mouth communication in the selection of a destination.

In short, it is important to note that a number of studies demonstrate empirically that both the variety and the types of information sources (Gartner & Hunt, 1987; Um & Crompton, 1990; Bojanic, 1991, Gartner, 1993; Font, 1997; Baloglu, 1999; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a) have a significant effect on the image of a tourist destination.

However, it should be added that, according Baloglu & McCleary (1999c), the variables of “marketing” or sources of information are a force that influences the formation of the cognitive component but not in the affective component of the image. In parallel, Holbrook’s empirical results (1978), Woodside and Lysonski (1989) and Gartner (1993) showed that the type and number of secondary information sources influence the cognitive dimension of the image, but not the affective one. In other words, the cognitive component plays an intervention role between the sources of information and the affective component (Holbrook, 1978).

The theoretical foundations set out above lead to the following hypotheses about the influence of sources of information on perceived image:

Hypothesis 1: The secondary sources of information used by tourists have a significant influence on the cognitive component of the perceived destination image.

- H1a. The importance that the organic sources of information used by tourists may have had, has a significant influ-

ence on the cognitive component of the perceived destination image.

- H1b. The importance that autonomous sources of information used by tourists may have had, has a significant influence on the cognitive component of the perceived destination image.
- H1c. The importance that induced sources of information used by tourists may have had, has a significant influence on the cognitive component of the perceived destination image.

METHODOLOGY

In order to analyze the perceived image of the destination and the influence that sources of information have on the formation of tourist destination image, the data collection instrument used was a structured self-administered questionnaire mailed to managers of rural tourism establishments contacted, so that tourists staying there could answer it. The fieldwork was conducted from December 2008 to March 2009 and finally a total of 391 valid questionnaires were received.

Measurement of the common component of the destination image

In order to characterize the multidimensional nature of the common component of destination image, the structured technique is used, which is based on a list of attributes previously set by the investigator and then subjected to a filtering through the information obtained in the qualitative phase, in this case, through a discussion group. Three different scales were used to measure the common component of the image: (a) from a cognitive perspective, (b) from an emotional or affective perspective, and (c) from an overall approach.

In order to measure the perceptual/cognitive component, the attributes most frequently reflected in previous studies have been taken into account (Gartner, 1989; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gartner & Shen, 1992; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993, Hu & Ritchie, 1993; Stabler, 1990; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a, 1999b; Chen & Hsu, 2000; Beerli & Martin, 2004a, b). Specifically, 20 cognitive attributes with different position in the functional-psychological continuum were chosen (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Gallarza, Gil & Calderón, 2002). The opinion of tourists is collected through a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = totally agree).

The evaluation of the affective component was measured on a 7-point scale by four bipolar scales: Arousing-Sleepy, Pleasant-Unpleasant, Exciting-Gloomy and Relaxing-Distressing, as proposed

by Russell and Pratt (1980) and used previously in several studies (Walsmley & Young, 1998; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Baloglu, 2001; Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001; Kim & Richardson, 2003; Beerli & Martin, 2004a, b; Pike & Ryan, 2004).

Variables related to the stimulus factors in the formation of the destination image

Following the scheme proposed by Gartner (1993), nine secondary sources of information are included, classified as (a) induced sources (brochures, catalogues, tour operators, mass media campaigns, travel agents and Internet), (b) organic sources (friends and relatives who were asked or not about the destination), and (c) autonomous sources (e.g., tourist guides, news, articles, reports, documentaries).

According to Stern and Krakover (1993), the variety and quantity of sources of information used is measured by using a variable indicating the number of sources consulted by respondents and, besides, they have to assess each according to the importance it has when forming an impression about the destination on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = not important, 7 = very important).

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Measuring the common component of the destination image

The cognitive-affective nature of the destination image has been obtained by conducting an exploratory factor analysis of principal components with *varimax rotation* (*Eigen value* above 1 and weight of each variable on each factor equal to or higher than 0.40.) Based on the results presented in that respect in Table 1, note that there is evidence of cognitive-affective two-dimensional structure in the common component of the image composed of six factors which explain over 60% of the total cumulative variance. Indeed, the image of rural tourism in Galicia consists of a set of five factors that refer to cognitive perceptions and a factor related to emotional evaluations.

The first dimension, with more weight on the factor structure examined, consists of five attributes and is labelled "Offer of rustic accommodations and socio-economic environment". Factor 2 gathers five items and has been called "Historical and cultural attractions". The third underlying dimension can be named "General infrastructure and tourist and recreational facilities". Factor 4 has been classified as "Destination atmosphere". Factor 5 has been named "Social environment, natural attractions and gastronomy". The sixth and last factor is referred to as "Affective image" because it contains the four attributes that refer to feelings and emotions that characterize the destination.

Table 1. Exploratory factor analysis of the common component of the image

Variables	Factors					
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
- It's a rustic place with quality accommodation	0.795					
- In general, it's good value for money	0.782					
- It's a place with no pollution, clean and well-kept	0.780					
- The residents of rural areas of Galicia are friendly and hospitable	0.777					
- It's a place with good service to tourists and caring about service quality	0.772					
- There are many cultural attractions to visit (e.g., museums, historical monuments)		0.791				
- It's a place with rich history and heritage		0.789				
- Their customs (crafts, folklore, etc.) are worth seeing		0.782				
- It features very interesting cultural activities (e.g., festivals, popular celebrations)		0.766				
- It's a place with many iconic buildings (e.g., churches, towers)		0.743				
- It offers many opportunities for adventure and sport (e.g., hiking, climbing, mountaineering)			0.703			
- It has easy access / transport from other regions			0.674			
- The weather is nice			0.646			
- It's a place where there are areas for recreation and enjoyment for children			0.644			
- It's a place without too many tourists				0.793		
- It's a place where it's easy to walk around the natural and / or historical area.				0.744		

(Continued)

(cont.)

Variables	Factors					
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
- It's a safe place to visit				0.682		
- It's a place with a relaxed and quiet atmosphere					0.701	
-There is a beautiful scenery					0.657	
- It's a place where rich and varied quality local cuisine can be enjoyed					0.637	
- Rural tourism in Galicia is a pleasant-unpleasant destination						0.676
- Rural tourism in Galicia is an exciting-gloomy destination						0.654
- Rural tourism in Galicia is a relaxing-distressing destination						0.625
- Rural tourism in Galicia is an arousing-sleepy destination						0.574
Number of items	5	5	4	3	3	4
Eigen value	7.073	2.229	1.663	1.545	1.383	1.146
% Variance explained	29.472	9.289	6.927	6.439	5.762	4.775
% Cumulative variance	29.472	38.761	45.688	52.127	57.789	62.664
Cronbach's alpha	0.881	0.871	0.707	0.733	0.662	0.530
Correlation Matrix Determinant = 3.58E-005						
Barlett = 3902.510(gl=276; Sig = 0.000)						
KMO index = 0.862						
Cronbach's alpha (24 Ítems) = 0.885						

Note. F1: Offer rustic accommodations and socio-economic environment; F2: Historical and cultural attractions; F3: General infrastructure and tourist and recreational facilities; F4: Destination atmosphere; F5: Social environment, natural attractions and gastronomy; F6: Affective Image.

Analysis of stimulus factors in the formation of the tourist image. Effects of secondary sources of information

Descriptive analysis of secondary sources of information used and their degree of importance

Table 2 refers to the results of the percentages of various secondary sources that tourists in the sample have used and the degree of importance given to each of them.

The results show that the main way of knowing the destination is through organic information sources, used by almost 70% of the sample. Likewise, independent sources are also significant for tourists when enquiring about the destination (64.15) and, in last place, consulted by 58.88% of the respondents, are the induced information sources. It is appreciated that the Internet is the most used, being consulted by 94.1% of tourists; the high percentage achieved by the following sources should also be noted: friends and relatives who were asked for information (89.3%) and tourist brochures (80.3%).

On the other hand, the travel agency staff (34.1%) and catalogues of tour operators (38.6%) represent the least used sources of information.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis of secondary sources of information

Sources of information	Sources of information used N (%)	Degree of contribution to the destination image Mean (TD)
Sources of organic information	69.5	4.87 (1.435)
Friends and relatives who were asked for information	349 (89.3)	5.60 (1.140)
Friends and relatives who were not asked for information	191(48.8)	4.14 (1.731)
Sources of induced information	58.88	4.49 (1.617)
Tourist brochures	314 (80.3)	5.38 (1.297)
Catalogues of tour operators	151 (38.6)	3.62 (1.889)
Mass media advertising (e.g, press, radio,TV)	185 (47.3)	3.58 (1.786)
Travel agency staff	133 (34.1)	3.69 (2.042)
Internet	368 (94.1)	6.20 (1.072)
Sources of autonomous information	64.15	4.80 (1.638)
Travel Guides	304 (77.7)	5.50 (1.544)
Articles, news, reports, films...	198 (50.6)	4.11 (1.733)

Note. Tourists indicate the degree of contribution of each source of information about the destination image through a Likert scale (1 = very unimportant, 7 = very important).

In parallel, as also shown in Table 2, with a high difference compared to other sources of information, Internet stands out (6.20) as the agent that contributes to the formation of the destination image. “Friends and relatives who were asked for information” ranks as second source (5.60), followed closely by travel guides, which is attributed a value of 5.50. However, it is noted that the induced information sources that refer to: advertising in mass media (3.58), the catalogues of tour operators (3.62) and staff of travel agency (3.69) stand out as sources of information with a smaller impact on shaping the destination image.

Testing, through several ANOVA models, of the degree of influence of secondary sources of information (organic, autonomous and induced) on the cognitive¹ destination image

The ANOVA models for each of the sources of information that has significant² relationship with cognitive image: ORG1: “Friends and relatives who were asked for information”; IND1 “Tourist brochures” IND5: “Internet” and AUT1: “Travel Guides” are shown below.

The cognitive factors of the image are considered as dependent variables, and in turn, the independent variable is classified into three categories³ for each source of information examined: 1) Tourists who attach little value to the source based on its contribution to the formation of the destination image, 2) Tourists give it an average rating and 3) Tourists give it a major role.

The results shown in Table 3 demonstrate that there are significant influences, from a statistical point of view, between the source of organic information ORG1: “Friends and relatives who were asked for information” and the cognitive destination image. This source acts on all the cognitive factors, although more heavily on COG4: “Destination atmosphere” ($F = 37.516$, $Sig = 0.000$) and COG1 “Offer of rustic accommodations and socio-economic environment” ($F = 24.298$, $Sig = 0.000$).

1 To analyze the effect of secondary sources of information on the cognitive dimension of destination image, it builds on the five dimensions previously identified: F1: Offer rustic accommodations and socio-economic environment; F2: Historical and cultural attractions, F3: General infrastructure and tourist and recreational facilities; F4: Destination atmosphere; F5: Social environment, natural attractions and gastronomy.

2 Based on the bivariate correlation analysis conducted to evaluate the influence of secondary information sources on cognitive destination image.

3 With respect to the categorization of the sample from the emphasis on secondary information sources, it was taken into account using the median as the dividing point to segment the respondents into three groups.

Table 3. ANOVA results according to the sources of organic information requested (F value, significance and mean)

	Cognitive factors of destination image									
	COG1		COG2		COG3		COG4		COG5	
	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
ORG1: Friends and relatives who were asked for information	2428	0.000	17890	0.000	15054	0.000	37516	0.000	9532	0.000
	Eta=0.350		Eta=0.306		Eta=0.283		Eta=0.422		Eta=0.228	
G1: Tourists who appreciate ORG1 (N=142) little	5.81		5.51		4.64		5.75		6.26	
G2: Tourists who value ORG1 (N=95) moderately	5.85		5.91		5.08		6.09		6.37	
G3: Tourist who value ORG1 (N=113) very much	6.12		6.05		5.28		6.41		6.58	

Note. COG1: Offer of rustic accommodations and socio-economic environment; COG2: Historical and cultural attractions; COG3: General infrastructure and tourist and recreational facilities; COG4: Destination atmosphere; COG5: Social environment, natural attractions and gastronomy.

Following, in descending order of significance, it should be noted that this source also has effects on COG2 “Historical and cultural attractions” ($F = 17.890$, $Sig = 0.000$); COG3 “General infrastructure and tourist and recreational facilities” ($F = 15.054$, $Sig = 0.000$) and to a lesser extent, COG5: “Social environment, natural attractions and gastronomy” ($F = 9.532$, $Sig = 0.000$).

In particular, the tourists who give more emphasis to the secondary source of information ORG1: “Friends and relatives who were asked for information” are those who show a more positive assessment of all the attributes that comprise the cognitive dimension of the target study destination image.

Therefore, hypothesis H1a is moderately confirmed, i.e., the importance that organic sources of information used by tourists may have had, has a significant influence on the cognitive component of the perceived destination image.

With regard to the effectiveness of the induced source of information called IND1: “Tourist brochures” on destination image, the data in Table 4 show that it has a statistically significant relationship with all the factors that determine the cognitive destination image.

Table 4. ANOVA results of induced information sources / brochures (F value, significance and means)

	Image cognitive factors									
	COG1		COG2		COG3		COG4		COG5	
	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
IND1: Tourist brochures	32489	0000	7087	0001	8714	0000	10664	0000	12841	0000
	Eta=0.415		Eta=0.208		Eta=0,230		Eta=0,253		Eta=0,276	
G1: Tourists who appreciate IND1 (N=69) little	5.31		5.57		4.66		5.75		6.11	
G2: Tourists who valued IND1 (N=186) moderately	5.89		5.82		5.01		6.09		6.42	
G3: Tourist who valued IND1 (N=60) very much	6.24		6.09		5.37		6.26		6.63	

Note. COG1: Offer of rustic accommodations and socio-economic environment; COG2: Historical and cultural attractions; COG3: General infrastructure and tourist and recreational facilities; COG4: Destination atmosphere; COG5: Social environment, natural attractions and gastronomy.

In this sense, the source IND1 “Tourist brochures” has influenced, in descending order of significance: COG1 “Offer of rustic accommodations and socio-economic environment” ($F = 32.489$, $Sig = 0.000$); COG5: “Social environment, natural attractions and gastronomy” ($F = 12.841$, $Sig = 0.000$); COG4: “Destination atmosphere” ($F = 10.664$, $Sig = 0.000$), and to a lesser extent, COG3: “General infrastructure and tourist and recreation facilities” ($F = 8.714$, $Sig = 0.000$), and COG2 “Historical and cultural attractions” ($F = 7.087$, $Sig = 0.000$). In addition, the tourists who consider this source of information most relevant on the image formation are the ones that report a more favorable perception of the set of attributes that comprise the cognitive destination image.

Table 5. ANOVA results of the sources of information induced / Internet (F value, significance and means)

	Image cognitive factors									
	COG1		COG2		COG3		COG4		COG5	
	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
IND5: Internet	3.092	0.047	2.732	1.066	7.209	0.001	3.007	0.051	7.493	0.001
	Eta=0.129		Eta=0.121		Eta=0.194		Eta=0.127		Eta=0.198	
G1: Tourists who appreciate IND5 (N=67) little	5.77		5.84		4.47		5.91		6.24	
G2: Tour- ists who value IND5(N=119) moderately	5.58		5.63		4.76		5.90		6.25	
G3 : Tour- ists who value IND5 (N=184) very much	5.79		5.84		5.14		6.08		6.49	

Note. COG1: Offer of rustic accommodations and socio-economic environment; COG2: Historical and cultural attractions; COG3: General infrastructure and tourist and recreational facilities; COG4: Destination atmosphere; COG5: Social environment, natural attractions and gastronomy.

On the other hand, from the information shown in Table 5, connected to the second source of induced information examined, IND5: "Internet", it follows that the cognitive destination image is only partially influenced by this agent because it has effects significant only on factor COG5: "Social environment, natural attractions and gastronomy" ($F = 7.493$, $Sig = 0.001$) and factor COG3: "General infrastructure, tourist and recreational facilities" ($F = 7.209$, $Sig = 0.001$). It should be noted that tourists who value IND5: "Internet" the most, score cognitive attributes that integrate COG3 and COG5 factors higher.

In summary, we conclude that the sources of induced information (IND1 "Tourist brochures" and IND5: "Internet") have a reasonable influence on the cognitive image that tourists create of the examined destination, except IND2: "Catalogues tour operators"; IND3: "Advertising in mass media" and IND4: "Travel agency staff". Therefore, hypothesis H1b, is partially accepted, i.e., the importance which the

sources of induced information used by tourists may have had, has a significant influence on the cognitive component of the destination image.

Table 6. Results of ANOVA according to independent sources of information / guides (F value, significance and means)

	Image cognitive factors									
	COG1		COG2		COG3		COG4		COG5	
	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
AUT1: Travel Guides	8717	0000	1271	0282	3619	0028	11919	0000	14768	0000
	Eta=0.234		Eta=0.092		Eta=0.153		Eta=0.271		Eta=0.299	
G1: Tourists who appreciate AUT1 (N=120) little	5.49		5.74		4.76		5.83		6.21	
G2: Tourists who value AUT1(N=93) moderately	5.75		5.67		4.85		5.88		6.31	
G3 : Tour- ist who value AUT1 (N=90) very much	5.90		5.86		5.11		6.26		6.65	

Notes. COG1: Offer of rustic accommodations and socio-economic environment; COG2: Historical and cultural attractions; COG3: General infrastructure and tourist and recreational facilities; COG4: Destination atmosphere; COG5: Social environment, natural attractions and gastronomy.

According to the results shown in Table 6, the source of secondary autonomous information AUT1: “Travel guides”, presents only significant and direct influence on COG5: “Social environment, natural attractions and gastronomy” ($F = 14.768$, $Sig = 0.000$); COG4: “Destination atmosphere” ($F = 11.919$, $Sig = 0.000$), and to a lesser extent, COG1 “Offer of rustic accommodations and socio-economic environment” ($F = 14.768$, $Sig = 0.000$). It should be noted that the greater importance tourists attach to AUT1 agent: “Travel guides” in destination image formation, the better is their assessment of the cognitive attributes of the destination image analyzed in this investigation. Therefore, albeit incompletely, hypothesis H1c is supported; i.e., the importance that sources of autonomous information used by tourists may have had, has a significant influence on the cognitive component of destination image.

In short, once the influence of secondary sources on the cognitive destination image is empirically tested, it should be noted that there is a moderate relationship between both variables. More specifically, it is noted that the sources that show a statistically significant influence and greater importance on the cognitive dimension are organic agent ORG1: "Friends and relatives who were asked for information" and induced agent IND1: "Tourist brochures". Both produce positive effects on the five factors that comprise the cognitive destination image.

In this sense, the source ORG1: "Friends and relatives who were asked for information" is set as the one with a most relevant influence on COG1 factors "Offer of rustic accommodations and socio-economic environment" and COG4 "Destination atmosphere". It should be recalled that word of mouth communication can be seen as one of the communication agents which have greater credibility in the formation of the tourist destination image (Gartner, 1993).

As regards the other two agents which have also related to the cognitive image, i.e., the source of induced information IND5: "Internet" and autonomous source of information AUT1: "Travel guides", it is appropriate to highlight the relevance of the latter, since it is the agent that affects most heavily COG5: "Social environment, natural attractions and gastronomy".

In this context, hypothesis H1 is moderately confirmed, i.e., that secondary information sources used by tourists have a significant influence on the cognitive component of destination image.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This work responds to the need expressed by various authors, given the limited empirical evidence on this phenomenon, to study in greater depth the factors that influence the structure and the formation of the destination image.

The methodology used and the results obtained are also of great interest to the travel trade since the measurement of the image of any destination allows promoters to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the minds of their target audiences (Chen & Uysal, 2002) to effectively promote the destination market (Leisen, 2001) and to ensure its competitive success (Telisman-Kosuta, 1994).

It should be emphasized that the review of the literature shows, first, that the cognitive-affective nature of the destination image, the factors involved in its formation and its implications for tourist behaviour are aspects of great academic and professional interest, but still require further research effort.

Indeed, the image of rural tourism in Galicia consists of a set of five factors that refer to cognitive perceptions and a factor related to emotional or affective evaluations. A cognitive-affective two-dimensional

structure in the common component of the destination image is therefore identified.

Consequently, when the travelling motivation arises, tourists will use the different dimensions of the image to compare the evoked set of destinations in mind and, ultimately, to select the destination to visit.

The results show that, in general, the a priori perceived image is very positive, especially in the case of the social atmosphere, natural attractions and gastronomy, and with regard to the emotional image, the destination is perceived primarily as a relaxing and pleasant place. However, the least valued attributes are the general infrastructure (ease of access and transport), tourist and recreational infrastructure and climate.

Therefore, to effectively communicate and promote a tourist destination, not only the natural, cultural or human resources of the place should be emphasized, but also the emotions or feelings it can evoke. Only this way, the destination may position itself in all the tourist sites considered in the selection process.

Most of the tourist resources are objective and tangible, but the perceived image can be diverse, due to the subjective nature it manifests (Bigné et al, 2001; Leisen, 2001; Gallarza et al, 2002) and therefore, the reality of the destination may vary significantly from the perceived image (Gartner, 1993). Such subjectivity is considered conclusive for the tourist experience, which analytically involves placing in the foreground, not tourist objects and services available, but the way tourists perceive such objects. In fact, the destination image influences greatly its attraction potential, as it singles it out and sets it symbolically apart from others (Antón & González, 1997: 153).

Ultimately, it is necessary to understand the images held by tourists as well as the role of internal and external factors that influence their formation to improve attractiveness, competitiveness and positioning of tourist destinations in target markets.

Several studies claim that the formation of the destination image is a mental concept that is developed on the basis of a series of impressions from “the processing of information from various sources over a period of time” (Assael, 1995; Court & Lupton, 1997), and that this information is then organized in a “mental concept full of meaning for the individual” (Leisen, 2001).

According to the Echtner and Ritchie’s (1991) approach, individuals can obtain a destination image even without having visited it or having been exposed to various business information sources, as people throughout their life, hoard information related to various historical, political, economical and social factors that shape their image on a specific destination. This information will be processed internally, according to their personal characteristics, their system of values and their own experience.

Similarly, in the model of tourist destination choice proposed by Um and Crompton (1990) and Um (1993), the perceptual-cognitive evaluation of the attributes is shaped by external factors, including various sources of information, such as symbolic stimuli (promotional efforts of a destination through the media) and social stimuli (recommendations or word of mouth communications from friends and/or relatives).

Thus, in regard to major stimulus variables (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a) or agents of image formation (Gartner, 1993), these are the forces involved in shaping perceptions of the tourist destination and they are related to the number and variety of sources of information that individuals may be exposed to, including also the information of a destination they acquire as a consequence of having visited it.

After empirically analyzing the influence of secondary sources on the cognitive tourist destination image in question, the existence of a moderate relationship between both variables should be underlined. More specifically, the sources of information that show a significant influence of major importance are the Organic agent "Friends and relatives who were asked for information", and the Induced agent "Tourist brochures".

Both produce positive effects on the five factors that comprise the cognitive dimension of perceived image. As regards the other two agents relating to cognitive image, i.e., the Induced agent "Internet" and the Autonomous agent "Tourist guides", it is appropriate to highlight the relevance of the latter, since it is the agent which most heavily influences the "Social environment, natural attractions and gastronomy" of the destination.

At this point the added value of information for the tourist image should be stressed, as both quality and quantity of sources of information are essential for tourists to perceive destination in the right way because, otherwise, tourists may be guided by stereotypes.

In this regard, it should be pointed out that the tourist image is a key element of marketing in devising the policies of communicative action of destinations, as it is an element that can decisively influence the expectations of potential and actual tourists.

Firstly, tourist image plays an important role in the extent to which the destinations with a strong and positive image are more likely to be chosen by tourists (Hunt, 1975; Goodrich, 1978a; Pearce, 1982; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989; Ross, 1993). Secondly, the perceived destination image after the visit also influences tourists' satisfaction and their intentions to return to the place in the future, according to the ability of the place to provide visitors an experience that matches their needs and fits the image they had of the destination (Chon, 1990; Court & Lupton, 1997; Bigné, Sánchez & Sánchez, 2001; Joppe, Martin & de Waallen, 2001).

In this context, it should be noted that tourist destinations compete primarily on the basis of their perceived image in relation to competing destinations (Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001), and accordingly, achieving a strong competitive position means developing a positive image in the target markets (Gartner, 1993; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a).

Given these assumptions, the strategic management of the image is more appropriate and efficient once the attributes that shape it and the importance that each has for the tourist, are known.

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