

DETERMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DESTINATION BRAND IMAGE  
AND ITS COMPONENTS WITH INTENTION TO VISIT

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A Thesis Submitted to the  
University of North Carolina Wilmington in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Masters of Business Administration

Cameron School of Business  
University of North Carolina Wilmington

2008

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## ABSTRACT

Tourism, considered one of the fastest growing industries, is characterized as having a high level of competitiveness. In attempts to attract tourists, destinations have relatively recently begun taking strides to engage in and improve their destination marketing efforts, making the subject significantly relevant. Creating a positive brand image is especially important in the tourism industry, as it is necessary for destinations, many of which tout the same benefits and attributes, to set themselves apart from the competition.

Previous studies have shown that destination brand image, or the way people perceive a specific destination, effects consumer behavior. This paper sought to further examine the relationship between brand image and intention to visit. In order to gain a better understanding of this relationship, a group of relatively homogenous Americans that had never visited Spain were interviewed about their currently held brand images of Spain as well as the information sources, which assumedly influenced their perception, that they had been exposed to. The answers of participants were then assessed in order to discern if there is a relationship between perceived destination image and its components with intention to visit.

Results from the interviews reaffirmed previous studies that indicated a relationship between intention to visit a destination and a positive brand image. In addition, many components of destination brand image also demonstrated a positive relationship. As respondents demonstrated greater familiarity with the place, for instance, they had a greater intention of visiting.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become a tremendous industry, noted for its constant growth and increasing competitiveness. In 2007 alone, tourism expenditures worldwide reached \$856 billion. The potential such a lucrative industry creates for destinations has not gone unnoticed. As tourists choose where to visit according to the images they hold of destinations, it is important to understand exactly how tourists perceive these places, as well as how their images influence their final choice. Many destinations have recognized the significance of pursuing marketing endeavors in order to attract tourists, and have recently begun to engage in what is termed destination marketing.

The topic of destination marketing has gained a lot of recognition in the marketing field over the last quarter century, evidenced by the number of articles and publications written on the subject. Under this line of thought is the idea of destination branding, which, unlike the broader topic of destination marketing, has not been as thoroughly investigated. By applying methods of brand development used for consumer goods and services, marketers have attempted build brand equity for tourist destinations via brand image. Creating a positive brand image is especially important in the tourism industry, as it is necessary for destinations, many of which tout the same benefits and attributes, to set themselves apart from the competition.

This paper will focus on one aspect of branding, in particular, brand image. The relationship between perceived brand image and visit (purchase) intention will be examined. According to previous research, image can be described in relation to how a destination is perceived on three different continua: functional-psychological, common-unique, and attribute-holistic. Additionally, both personal factors and information sources contribute to destination image. It has been posited that once an overall, or global, image is formed, a tourist is able to make a destination vacation choice. These suppositions suggest that destination image directly affects tourists' intention to visit.

In order to gain a better understanding of the relationships that exist between image and intention, a specific case study was used as the focus of research. A group of

relatively homogenous Americans that had never visited Spain were interviewed about their currently held brand images of Spain. The answers of participants were assessed in order to discern if there is a relationship between perceived destination image and its components with intention to visit.

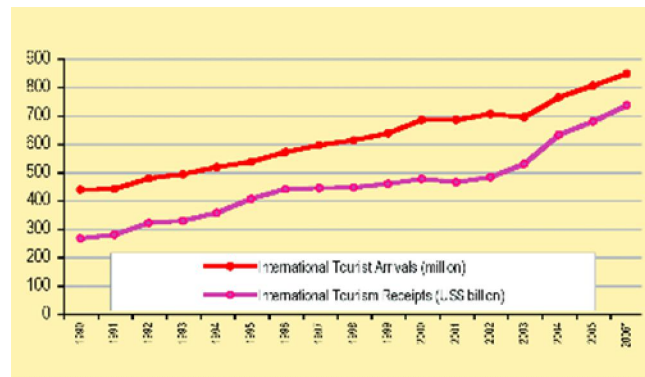
In efforts to clarify and reaffirm the relationship between destination image and its components with tourists' intention to visit, this paper will first describe previous studies and research in an in-depth literature review. Once a foundation on the subject matter has been established, research aims and hypotheses will be stated, followed by the methodological and data collection endeavors used in this study. An evaluation of the results will then discuss the findings of the interviews conducted. Finally, the conclusion will describe relevant findings and potential future avenues for research.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Tourism Marketing

Marketing, in its most simplistic, could be thought of as finding a customer need and filling it. According to the American Marketing Association (2008), marketing is “an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders.” Tourism marketing, then, involves marketing the tourism product.

Figure 1: Inbound International Tourism



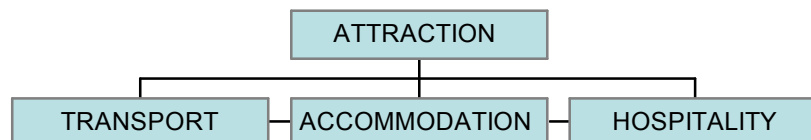
UNWTO, 2007, p. 2

The travel and tourism industry is considered to be one of the fastest, if not the fastest, growing industry in the world (Caldwell & Freire, 2004). “The World Tourism Organization in Madrid, Spain, defines tourism as the activity of people who are leaving their home for more than 24 hours to stay at a destination for leisure or recreation before they return home” (Gnoth, 2002, p. 264). According to the World Tourism Organization (2008), in 2007, there were 903 million international tourist arrivals and worldwide receipts from international tourism were \$856 billion USD. The industry has experienced tremendous growth, in both the number of tourists and the money spent (international tourist receipts), as illustrated in Figure 1. Additionally, the UNWTO (2007) found that

over half of all international tourists were motivated by leisure, recreation, and holidays. It is no wonder that marketing the tourism product has gained so much recent attention.

Similar to the service offering, the tourism product has a number of characteristics that differentiate it from the traditional manufactured product to which marketing usually refers. Intangibility, perishability, inelasticity of supply, elasticity of demand for tourist products, complementarity, inseparability, heterogeneity, high fixed costs, and labor intensity are features that distinguish the tourism product (Vellas & Bécherel, 1999). According to Gnoth (2002, p. 265), “the tourism product is the holiday experience.” This “product” presents an attraction, or the reason that impels a tourist to visit. Although attractions can manifest in a number of forms, including landscapes, man-made structures, and activities, Gnoth (2002) posited that no matter the form, attractions have the same essential elements. These include transport, accommodation, and hospitality, as depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The Essential Elements of the Tourism System



Gnoth, 2002, p. 267

In addition, tourism marketing implies attracting visitors, or potential tourists. While tourists may be solely domestically based, often times there is a mix of both domestic and international visitors. Because of this, tourism marketing can be considered an international activity (Vellas & Bécherel, 1999). This is important as characteristics associated with the destination being international, such as distance and cultural disparities, may influence tourist perceptions. Tourism also provides an opportunity for

countries to expose foreign visitors to their achievements and possibly benefit from a potential future increase in exports due to heightened interest (Gnoth, 2002).

In his book of the same name, Lumsdon (1997, quoted in Vellas & Bécherel, 1999, p.5) defined tourism marketing as being:

“The managerial process of anticipating and satisfying existing and potential visitor wants more effectively than competitive suppliers or destinations. The management of exchange is driven by profit, community gain, or both; either way long-term success depends on an interaction between customer and supplier. It also means securing environmental and societal needs as well as core consumer satisfaction. They can no longer be regarded as mutually exclusive.”

Within tourism and international marketing, destination marketing plays an important role. As there is increased competition between places, marketing enables destinations to differentiate themselves in the mind of consumers (potential tourists) in order to attract visitors.

## 2.2 Destination Marketing

First, it is important to understand the concept of a “destination.” While the American Heritage Dictionary (2006) defines a destination as being “a place to which one is going or directed,” a destination can also be subjectively identified by consumers. For example, while Valencia might be the destination for a tourist interested in sampling Spanish cuisine, the Mediterranean may be the destination of a leisure traveler who plans on stopping at a number of cities throughout their vacation (Buhalis, 2000). Generally speaking, and for the purposes of this study, a “destination” is regarded as a city, region, country, or other well-defined geographic area. In the arena of destination marketing, a destination may further be described as being “the fundamental unit on which all the many complex dimensions of tourism are based; basic unit of analysis in tourism; a focal point in the development and delivery of tourism products and the implementation of tourism policy” (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2004, p. 2).

It is important to assess the environment in which destination marketing has been developed. As globalization is becoming more and more realized every day, there has been increased competition among places with regards to attracting resources, foreign investment, and visitors, or tourists (Kavaratzis, 2005). Other researches, including Kerr (2006), have asserted that technological advances, including those related to transportation, have allowed for greater mobility and access to new places. Because this allows tourists the ability to travel further and increase their destination consideration sets, there is need for destinations to compete for both local and distant tourists.

It has been recognized that many of today's leading destinations have very similar offerings (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005). In fact, a tourist would likely be surprised if a destination was lacking high quality services, accommodations, or attractions. In addition, most destinations also tout a unique heritage and culture. For these reasons, it is now, more than ever, important for destinations to differentiate themselves from their competition, and destination marketing provides a platform for these places to do so. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2004, p.10), destination marketing:

“...covers all the activities and processes to bring buyers and sellers together; focuses on responding to consumer demands and competitive positioning; is a continuous coordinated set of activities associated with efficient distribution of products to high potential markets; and involves making decisions about the product, branding, price, market segmentation, promotion and distribution.”

The UNWTO further suggests that incorporated in the fundamentals of destination marketing are destination image, brand, positioning, and vision (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2004, p.12).

While destination brand and image will be discussed in more depth, it is important to also understand what is meant by destination positioning and destination vision within this context. Like the positioning of manufactured products, destinations are positioned within the minds of consumers, relative to their competition. In order to have an effective positioning strategy, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) suggest establishing a

distinctive place in the minds of consumers. This can be accomplished by, in comparison to its competition, pinpointing a destination's strengths, weaknesses, competencies, and competitive advantages and leveraging such as needed. Positioning is also increasingly important as many destinations boast the same attributes, making it difficult for consumers to distinguish between them. As Morgan and Pritchard (2005, p.18) have emphasized, "...too much tourism destination promotion remains advertisements depicting blue seas, cloudless skies and endless golden beaches with a less than memorable tagline... rendering all seaside destinations indistinguishable from one another."

Destination vision, on the other hand, is more of the end goal. The United Nations World Trade Organization (2004, p.16) describes destination vision as being "a created portrait or an overall picture of the desired future of the destination; an essential component of tourism policy; should integrate all the elements necessary for destination competitiveness." According to a manual produced by the United Nations, "A destination vision portrays a desired future, the hopes and aspirations for its future and often displays the community's values as well" (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2003, p.53).

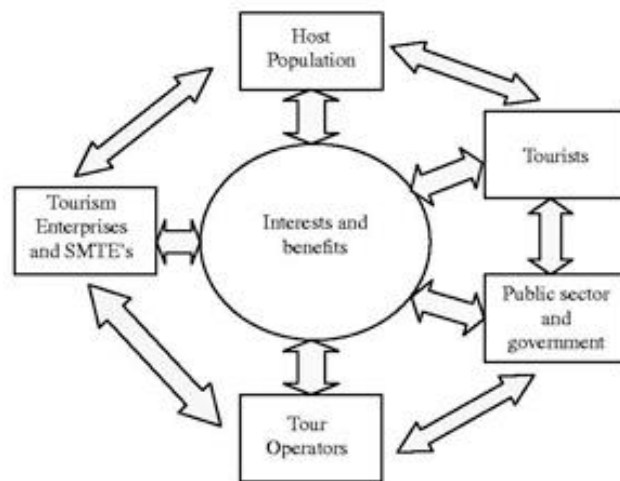
#### 2.2.1. Destination Marketing Challenges

Although destination marketing has had several success stories, the field faces a number of difficulties. A number of researchers, including Baker and Cameron (2008) and Gnoth (2002), recognize that these challenges involve the intricacies associated with the tourism product as well as the number of stakeholders that need to be taken into account. The issue of "destination politics," which deals with the complexities of the product and relationships between stakeholders, is also important to consider.

The tourism product is very different from a traditionally marketed manufactured product. Whereas with manufactured products, one producer has total control, there is a fragmentation of ownership with regards to destinations. Gnoth (2002) has reflected on this view by claiming that the tourism product relates to an experience, made possible by a varying number of suppliers. The destination product is actually a combination of

products, services, and experiences, out of the control of any one organization (Baker & Cameron, 2008).

Figure 3: The Dynamic Wheel of Tourism Stakeholders



Buhalis, 2000, p.99

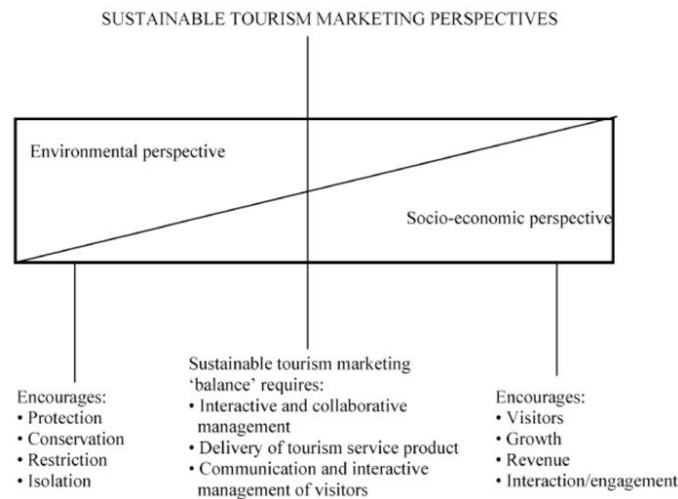
Marketers must also keep the interests of the stakeholders involved in mind, in order to attempt to accomplish their objectives in the long-run. According to a report by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2003, p.52), destination stakeholders include:

“local communities, especially the poor; key local business organizations; local government politicians and officials; key government ministries on other levels; key tourist organizations in the community or area; economic development bodies; religious leaders/ other community leaders; recreational organizations and boards; service clubs/ youth groups, women’s groups/cooperatives; environmental groups; heritage agencies; historic and cultural societies; relevant non-governmental organizations; hotel/guest house operators; events organizers.”

Stakeholders can also be divided by sector, whether public or private. According to Hankinson (2007), private sector stakeholders include those involved with hotels,

restaurants, retailing, and entertainment. On the other hand, public sector stakeholders include services such as public spaces, conference centers, and infrastructure. The wheel of tourism stakeholders, created by Buhalis (2000), as shown in Figure 3, also illustrates the variety of those involved and the need to consider their interests and beliefs in the marketing effort. These lists clearly indicate just how many individuals and groups need to be considered when making marketing decisions for a given destination.

Figure 4: Sustainable Tourism Marketing Perspectives



Gilmore, Carson & Ascenção, 2007, p. 257

The objectives of a tourist destination in the long-run are related to the idea of sustainability. In the past few decades, subsequent to the idea of sustainable development, the concept of sustainable tourism has developed. Sustainable tourism necessitates taking the multiple interests of the previously mentioned groups, as well as the destinations or attractions themselves, into mind. Due to the nature of tourism, many posit that it can have a negative impact on both the cultures and environment of destinations (Gilmore, Carson & Ascenção, 2007). Within the idea of marketing sustainable tourism, tourism can be seen as having two competing foci, or what have

been termed the environmental and socio-economic perspectives. As illustrated in Figure 4, the socio-economic perspective reflects the more traditional view of encouraging and promoting tourism to benefit from increased revenues. Conversely, the environmental view is focused on conserving both the local culture and environment (Gilmore, Carson & Ascensão, 2007).

Sustainable tourism takes both the environmental and socio-economic perspectives into account. According to Gilmore, Carson & Ascensão (2007, p.254), “delivering a sustainable tourism service product will depend on interactive management, planning and decision-making and the implementation of a consistent service product to large groups of people in a well-managed way.”

### 2.3 Branding

Although it was not until relatively recently that the topic of branding first appeared in literature, the strategy has been practiced around the world for several centuries (Gardner & Levy, 1955). The American Marketing Association (2008) defines a brand as “A name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers.” Brands serve as promises and in doing so, allow customers to set expectations, thus lowering perceived monetary, safety, or social risk (Berry, 2000). This is particularly important in services, due to the difficulties associated with evaluation prior to purchase.

One need not look further than the shelves of the nearest convenience store to see the significance of branding in today’s world. Customers are sure to find brands like Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Red Bull, and Evian in the drink coolers, and would even likely be surprised if they were absent. These are just a few of the many examples of companies that enjoy the benefits from successful branding strategies. According to Dawar and Boulakia (1999), brands can also own “mental real estate” in the minds of consumers. Consumers choose to purchase certain brands because they know what to expect and can make assumptions about the quality they will receive. This simplifies consumers’ decision-making processes, as they do not need to relearn the market each time they

make a purchase. An example of this can be illustrated in the world of automobiles. Each time a particular consumer is in the market to purchase a vehicle, they likely already associate certain brands with specific characteristics. Volvo, for example, is known for producing safe vehicles, while Toyota may be considered a provider of good value.

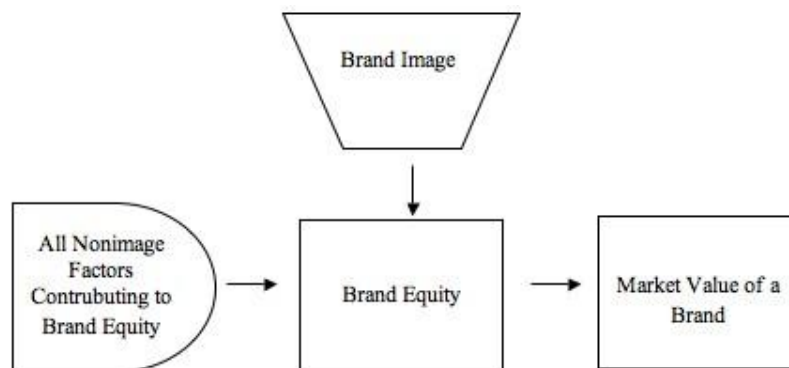
A consumer may also choose to purchase certain brands to portray something about him or herself, or what they would like to be, to others. Luxury goods, such as Louis Vuitton handbags, Rolex watches, and even a Starbucks coffee may be purchased to showcase wealth and success. While these products may arguably be better quality, consumers must pay a huge price premium to become the owners of products belonging to such well-known, distinguished brands. The overall objectives of branding emphasize improving brand equity. An improved brand equity can translate to: a form of differentiation relative to competitors, increased brand loyalty, greater market share, and the ability to charge price premiums (Shimp, 2007).

Past research has explored a number of branding principles that can be applied to a variety of products or services for sale. Kerr (2006) addresses three of these concepts, brand architecture, brand portfolio, and the corporate brand. Brand architecture refers to the “way in which companies organise, manage, and go to market with their brands” (Kerr, 2006, p.278). Companies may be categorized into a “branded house,” in which a master brand dominates an array of offerings with sub-brand names, or a “house of brands,” where a number of stand-alone brands operate independently to maximize profit. The brand portfolio not only involves the brands included, but also the structure, scope, associations, and relationships between those brands. Corporate branding allows marketing to incorporate the company’s vision and culture into its selling proposition. It is also important to note that the corporate brand affects the “images held of the organisation by all its stakeholders, including employees, customers, investors, suppliers, partners, regulators, special interest groups, and local communities” (Kerr, 2006, p.279).

## 2.4 Brand Image

There has been much debate on the relationship between brand and image (Tasci & Kozak, 2006), however, one way in which to classify brand image is, being a form of consumer-based brand equity (Pike, 2004). In this sense, brand image can be defined as being “The perception of a brand in the minds of persons. The brand image is a mirror reflection (though perhaps inaccurate) of the brand personality or product being. It is what people believe about a brand- their thoughts, feelings, expectations” (American Marketing Association, 2008). These beliefs, or perceptions, are developed from the associations or attributes that come to a consumer’s mind when contemplating a particular brand (Shimp, 2007).

Figure 5: Brand Image/Brand Equity Relationship



Adapted from Biel 1992: p.RC-7

Branding is an interesting topic, noted for the value, or brand equity, it can potentially create. Financially speaking, brand equity can be equated to the additional cash flow a product or service can achieve due to its association with a brand (Biel, 1992). In other words, the extra, or premium, a consumer is willing to pay for a branded product, as opposed to the identical un-branded version, can be thought of as a brand’s equity (Biel, 1992). The market value of a brand, then, is determined by brand equity. This is illustrated in Figure 5. According to the marketing framework of brand equity,

the concept is threefold: “the brand creates value for both the consumer and the firm; the brand provides value to the firm by generating value for the consumers; and consumers’ brand associations are a key element in brand equity formation and management” (Del Río, Vázquez & Iglesias, 2001). Because of this, consumers’ brand images drive brand equity.

Brand image can be thought of as being a cluster of associations consumers relate to a given brand. These associations have been classified by some researchers as attributes, benefits, and attitudes (Keller, 1993). Attributes are distinct characteristics consumers associate with a brand, as well as what is involved in its purchase or consumption. Benefits are specific to each consumer, as they represent what one thinks a brand can do for them. Attitudes toward a brand signify consumers’ overall evaluations of that brand (Keller 1993, Del Río, Vázquez & Iglesias 2001). Associations have also been linked to product and brand functions.

Product functions are more tangible, related to features in products, regardless of if they are branded or not. On the other hand, brand functions are intangible in nature, related to the image a consumer conjures up when thinking of a brand. Because of this, brand functions are benefits consumers can only realize from products or services belonging to a brand (Del Río, Vázquez & Iglesias, 2001). The importance of brand functions has been demonstrated through a number of studies which have shown that products are often purchased, not for the utilitarian qualities they provide, but rather for their symbolic meaning and effect on consumers’ self-esteem (Ballantyne, Warren & Nobbs, 2006). Brand functions can be further divided into a number of dimensions including guarantee, personal identification, social identification, and status (Del Río, Vázquez & Iglesias, 2001).

According to Ambler (1997), the guarantee dimension involves a brand representing a promise or guarantee of a certain level of quality. This evokes expectations of a brand’s reliability and ability to carry out its performance qualities. The guarantee dimension links brands to products performing at an adequate level and pushes

for innovation and variety in order to satisfy consumer needs (Sheth, Newman & Gross 1991, Del Río, Vázquez & Iglesias 2001).

The personal identification function is associated with the idea that consumers can relate to and identify themselves with brands, and in doing so, develop positive feelings toward those brands. Researchers have found that consumers strive to reach a consistency between their self-image, product-image, and own behavior (Del Río, Vázquez & Iglesias, 2001). This idea is closely related to the concept of self-image congruency (Graeff 1996, Del Río, Vázquez & Iglesias 2001, Ballantyne, Warren & Nobbs 2006). The theory of self-image congruency posits that consumers can use brands to express who they are (actual) and who they would like to be (ideal). In addition, the greater congruency between the brand image and a consumer's self-image, the more positive a consumer will evaluate that brand (Graeff, 1996).

The social identification dimension is used to communicate something about the consumer using the brand to others. What that brand expresses about the consumer is used to either associate or disassociate that person from the societal groups to which they want to or do not want to belong, respectively (Del Río, Vázquez & Iglesias, 2001). This is especially relevant for brands that enjoy a good reputation among the groups to which a consumer aspires to belong.

The status function is similar to the social identification function as both are used to communicate something about the consumer to others. The difference exists, however, in that the status function is used to develop feelings related to admiration and prestige. Vigneron and Johnson (1999) and Del Río, Vázquez & Iglesias (2001, p.412) asserted that the status dimension is based on five characteristics of a brand: "(1) symbol of the individual's power and social status; (2) reflection of social approval; (3) exclusivity or limitation of the offer to a small number of people; (4) contribution of emotional experiences; and (5) technical superiority."

Brand functions, derived from consumers' brand images, allow brands to enjoy a number of competitive advantages. Brands with a positive image can potentially enjoy: higher margins, a more inelastic demand, greater marketing communications

effectiveness, increased brand loyalty, as well as future growth potential (Del Río, Vázquez & Iglesias, 2001). Studies have shown that brand image has a positive effect on: consumer preferences, choice, behavioral intentions, willingness to pay premiums, acceptance of brand extensions, and likelihood they will recommend the brand to others (Cobb-Walgren, Ruble & Donthu, 1995, Del Río, Vázquez & Iglesias 2001). Because of all the benefits branding can offer, there has been a notable trend towards branding in the destination marketing arena (Kavaratzis 2005, Hankinson 2006).

## 2.5 Destination Branding

The potential the tourism market offers has not gone unnoticed, and thus the benefits of branding have become more attractive to, and popular among, destinations. Much like the instances of Coca-Cola, Microsoft, and IBM, there are clear success stories of destination brands, such as Las Vegas, New Zealand, Wales, and Western Australia (Pike 2004, Morgan & Pritchard 2005). These destinations have been able to carve out a name in the tourism industry, an increasingly competitive, yet extremely lucrative, market. In such a competitive market, it is important, if not necessary, to distinguish oneself from the competition.

Destination branding is a relatively new phenomenon, as it did not begin to receive significant attention in the travel industry until the late 1990's (Tasci & Kozak, 2006). Although there has been considerable literature written on the topic, definitions of destination branding are sparse and are more descriptions of what it aims to achieve, as opposed to what it actually is. More in line with the traditional definition of a brand, the UNWTO (2004, p.15) described a destination brand as being "...the abstract of the destination's identity, the way the destination wants to project itself in the market and be recognized (known). Brand is a promise, an anticipation, an expectation." One very holistic definition was created by Blain, Levy & Ritchie (2005, p.337), upon doing research that involved insights from Destination Management Organizations. They described destination branding as being

“...the set of marketing activities that (1) support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that readily identifies and differentiates a destination; that (2) consistently convey the expectation of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; that (3) serve to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination; and (4) reduce customer search costs and perceived risk.

Collectively, these activities serve to create a destination image that positively influences consumer destination choice.”

Morgan and Pritchard (2001, p.214) captured the importance of destination branding in the statement, “The battle for customers in tomorrow’s leisure and tourism industries will be fought not over price but over the hearts and minds – in essence, branding (in conjunction with creative communications) will be key to success.”

A destination brand, much like that of a consumer product brand, can offer customers many benefits, including “providing potential tourists with pretrip information that allows them to identify a destination, differentiate it from its competitors, and build expectations about the likely holiday experience offered by a destination” (Murphy, Moscardo & Benckendorff, 2007, p.5). Even post-trip perceptions of experience can be influenced by having a destination brand (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1998). According to a survey conducted on persons-in-charge of destination branding (Directors of Tourism), the main reason cited for practicing destination branding was similar across the board: to differentiate and position one’s destination in order to attract higher spending tourists, to increase the standard of living via increased economic contribution of tourism, to manage image, and to attract tourists by building a desirable image (Park & Petrick, 2006).

Brands are often chosen because of what they say about the consumer’s lifestyle or status. Similar to how expensive cars, perfumes, and accessories are used to “communicate, reflect, and reinforce associations, statements, and group memberships” (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005, p.19), tourists use “their trips as expressive devices to communicate messages about themselves to peers and observers” (Clarke, 2000, p.330). This phenomenon is demonstrated by the “props,” or souvenirs, visitors bring back from

their trips to prove and show something about their lifestyle, to others. It is for these reasons that tourists often choose destinations that reflect something about themselves or what they would like to be associated with. In a presentation at the 1998 International Travel and Tourism Awards, Luhrman stated, "...the next century will mark the emergence of tourism destinations as a fashion accessory. The choice of holiday destination will help define the identity of the traveler and, in an increasingly homogenous world, set him apart from the hordes of other tourists."

## 2.6 Destination Image

"Destination image" is a frequently used term in the tourism field; however, an exact definition is often not specified. A comprehensive literature review has revealed a number of commonly used definitions, provided in Table 1. While the definitions suggest an evolution in the concept of destination image, most are still quite vague. Many of the earlier definitions, after review of the studies to which they were paired, portray image as being comprised of perceptions about attributes, as opposed to holistic impressions (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). It is now more accepted, as indicated by the measurements attempted by recent studies, that image is based on a combination of both singular attributes and an overall impression. The concept of destination brand image is vital in the context of tourism marketing because, as is characteristic of service industries, images heavily influence consumer purchase behavior.

Table 1: Definitions of Destination Image

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Reynolds	1965	"A mental construct developed by the consumer on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions; it comes into being through a creative process in which these selected impressions are elaborated, embellished, and ordered"
Hunt	1975	"Perceptions held by potential visitors about an area"
Crompton	1977	"Organized representations of a destination in a cognitive system"
Crompton	1979	"An attitudinal concept consisting of the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a tourist holds of a destination"
Phelps	1986	"Perceptions or impressions of a place"
Tourism Canada	1987	"How a country is perceived relative to others"

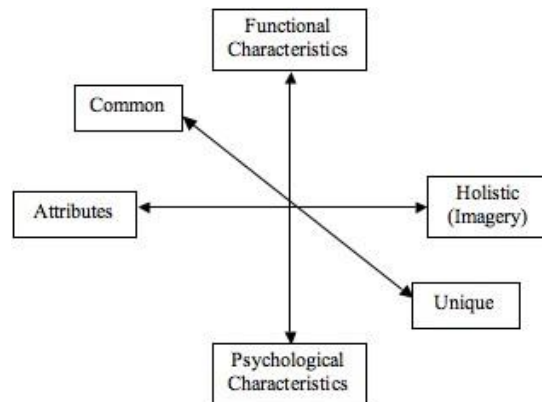
Table 1 cont.

Gartner & Hunt	1987	"Impressions that a person... holds about a state in which they do not reside"
Richardson & Crompton	1988	"Perceptions of vacation attributes"
Gartner	1989	"A complex combination of various products and associated attributes"
Cantalone, et al.	1989	"Perceptions of potential tourist destinations"
Reilly	1990	"Not individual traits... but the total impression an entity makes"
Kotler & Rein	1993	"The sum of beliefs and impressions people hold about places... represent a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with a place. They are a product of the mind trying to process and pick out essential information from huge amounts of data about a place"
Biel	1993	"A cluster of attributes and associations that consumers connect to a brand"
Askegaard & Ger	1998	"A schema, or a network of interrelated elements that define a country, a knowledge structure that synthesises what we know of a country, together with its evaluative significance or schema-triggered affect"
Coshall	2000	"The individual's perceptions of the characteristics of destinations"
Tapachai & Waryszak	2000	"Mental portrayal or prototype"
Cai	2002	"Perceptions about the place as reflected by the associations held in tourist memory"
UNWTO	2004	"The cluster of all perceptions the customer holds for that destination"

### 2.6.1 Destination Image Components: Three Continua

Perhaps one of the most commonly cited conceptual frameworks regarding destination image is Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) three continua, as illustrated in Figure 6. These three spectrums each have a pair of bi-polar extremes to make up six components of destination image, functional-psychological, common-unique, and attribute-holistic. Functional characteristics refer to the more measurable, observable characteristics, like price levels and types of accommodation, while psychological characteristics represent more intangible features like safety and friendliness. The common-unique continuum is based on the idea that perceptions about the various characteristics of a destination can range from being considered common or differentiated. Finally, the attribute-holistic continuum suggests that a destination's image involves both specific attributes, which will be discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs, as well as a bigger, more inclusive picture or impression of the destination along with its atmosphere (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993).

Figure 6: The Components of Destination Image



Adapted from Echtner & Ritchie, 2003, p. 43

Some researchers suppose that consumers perceive destinations as having, or lacking, a number of attributes, which directly influence purchase intentions. These attributes, or brand associations, can be described as “anything linked in memory to the destination” and because “destination attractiveness is a function of the benefits desired by a traveler and the ability of the destination to provide them... associations need to be measured in terms of attributes deemed determinant for a given travel context” (Pike, 2007, p.54). According to Gnoth (2007), attributes used or chosen to describe a destination can be categorized into three different levels: functional, experiential, and symbolic. Others, such as Caldwell and Freire (2004, p.52), describe attributes as being “representational (attributes linked to the individual’s self-expression) and functional (utilitarian aspects of the destinations – sun, reefs, sky, culture, and so on).”

According to Gnoth’s (2007) three categories, the functional level defines the core capabilities, or essential service provision, of the destination, which is demonstrated through attributes such as reliability and accessibility. Functional attributes, according to Obenour, Lengfelder & Groves (2005, p.108), “are based on physical or measurable perceptions such as scenery, attractions, accommodations, and price levels.” The experiential, or hedonic, level relates to the affective characteristics of the destination brand, for instance, the benefits associated with learning. Finally, the symbolic level

represents what the destination means to the tourist, and can be linked with attributes like celebrity affiliation (Gnoth, 2007). Obenour, Lengfelder & Groves (2005, p.108) group these last two levels together, calling these attributes psychological, which they describe as having “more abstract and intangible characteristics such as friendliness, safety, fame, and atmosphere.”

In their journal article entitled “Deconstructing Destination Image,” Govers and Go (2003) compared twenty-five previous studies regarding attributes addressed related to destination image. The attributes compared were: various activities, landscape and surroundings, nature, cultural attractions, nightlife and entertainment, shopping facilities, information available, sport facilities, transportation, accommodation, gastronomy, price, value, and cost, climate, relaxation versus massific, accessibility, safety, social interaction, resident’s receptiveness, originality, and service quality. Table 2 illustrates the chart Govers and Go used to compare previous research with the addition of more recent studies (conducted since 1999), not addressed in the “Deconstructing Destination Image” article.

This table (Table 2) illustrates the extensive number of attributes that can be considered when evaluating destination image. Ranging from “various activities” to “service quality,” the attributes are listed in order from that being described as the most functional, or tangible, to the most psychological, or intangible. Although it wasn’t until 1993 that Echtner and Ritchie developed this complete list, a number of studies, beginning with Crompton in 1979, have attempted to measure destination image by assessing perceptions regarding individual attributes. Even after the framework was designed, most studies, with the exception of Yew and Malek (2006) have limited the number of attributes examined.

Table 2: The Most Common Attributes used in Tourism Destination Image Studies

	Various Activities	Landscape & Surroundings	Nature	Cultural Attractions	Nightlife & Entertainment	Shopping Facilities	Information Available	Sport Facilities	Transportation	Accommodation
<b>Authors</b>										
Crompton (1979)									X	
Goodrich (1982)		X		X		X		X		X
Stemquist (1985)		X		X	X	X		X		X
Haathi (1986)		X	X	X	X			X		
Gartner and Hunt (1987)		X	X					X		X
Calantone et al. (1989)	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	
Gartner (1989)		X	X	X	X			X		
Embacher and Buttle (1989)	X	X		X						
Guthrie and Gale (1991)	X			X	X		X	X		X
Ahmed (1991)		X	X	X	X	X		X		
Chon (1991)		X	X	X		X			X	X
Fakeye and Crompton (1991)	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Crompton et al. (1992)	X		X		X					
Carmichael (1992)	X									
Chon (1992)	X	X		X		X		X		X
Echtner and Ritchie (1993)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Driscoll et al. (1994)	X	X		X	X	X				
Dadgostar and Isotalo (1995)			X	X	X	X		X		X
Muller (1995)		X		X	X	X			X	X
Eizaquirre and Laka (1996)						X			X	X
Schroeder (1996)		X	X	X	X	X		X		X
Ahmed (1996)		X	X	X	X	X		X		
Oppermann (1996a, 1996b)		X		X	X					X
Baloglu (1997)		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Baloglu and McCleary (1999)		X		X	X			X	X	X
Chen and Hsu (2000)			X				X			X
Hanlan and Kelly (2005)		X	X		X		X			
Yew and Malek (2006)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pike (2007)	X	X	X							X

Table 2 cont.

	Gastronomy	Price, Value, Cost	Climate	Relaxation vs. Massific	Accessibility	Safety	Social Interaction	Resident's Receptiveness	Originality	Service Quality
<b>Authors</b>										
Crompton (1979)		X	X	X		X			X	
Goodrich (1982)	X			X				X		
Stemquist (1985)	X			X				X		
Haahti (1986)		X		X	X			X	X	
Gartner and Hunt (1987)			X					X		
Calantone et al. (1989)		X		X		X		X		
Gartner (1989)								X		
Embacher and Buttle (1989)	X	X	X		X		X			
Guthrie and Gale (1991)	X	X		X	X		X	X		X
Ahmed (1991)			X				X			
Chon (1991)	X	X			X	X		X	X	
Fakeye and Crompton (1991)	X	X	X	X	X			X		
Crompton et al. (1992)		X	X		X		X	X	X	
Carmichael (1992)		X			X			X		
Chon (1992)	X			X	X			X		X
Echtner and Ritchie (1993)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Driscoll et al. (1994)		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Dadgostar and Isotalo (1995)	X			X			X			
Muller (1995)	X	X	X	X	X		X			
Eizaquirre and Laka (1996)	X		X		X	X		X		
Schroeder (1996)	X	X		X			X	X		
Ahmed (1996)								X		
Oppermann (1996a, 1996b)	X	X	X			X				X
Baloglu (1997)	X	X			X		X	X		
Baloglu and McCleary (1999)	X	X	X			X		X		
Chen and Hsu (2000)	X	X	X	X		X		X		
Hanlan and Kelly (2005)		X	X	X						
Yew and Malek (2006)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pike (2007)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X

Adapted from Govers and Go, 2003

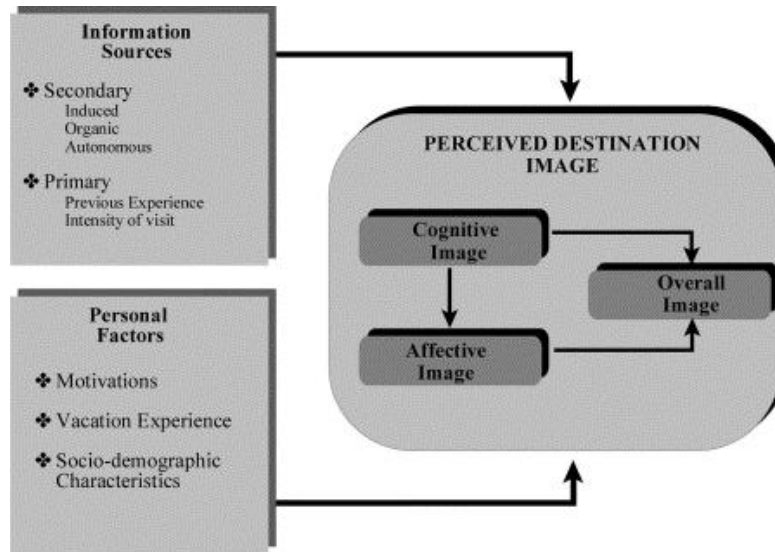
## 2.7 Image Formation

As destination brand image plays such a significant role in consumer purchase decisions, it is necessary to understand the development process as well as where the information that contributes to the perceptions is derived from. Perceptions can be thought of as being formed through three stages; “a priori,” “in situ,” and “a posteriori” (Di Marino, 2008). Before a tourist actually visits, they form a perception of a destination “a priori.” This involves an image being formed from a number of sources in lieu of the personal experience of having been to the destination themselves. The perception “in situ” is what is referred to in services marketing as “the moment of truth.” At this point, when the tourists are actually at the destination, they are able to contrast their expectations to actual experience. Finally, perceptions “a posteriori” refer to the idea that perceptions continue to evolve even after the actual visit. An example of this could be the effect on image, of reviewing photographs upon return from a destination (Di Marino, 2008).

The formation of a destination image was described as a “mental construct developed by the consumer on the basis of a few selected impressions among a flood of total impressions; it comes into being through a creative process in which these selected impressions are elaborated, embellished and ordered” (Reynolds, 1965, p.69). This “flood of information” includes numerous information sources, as well as personal factors. From these sources, a tourist forms both a cognitive and affective image, which contribute to the overall destination image, as illustrated in Figure 7.

Information sources, as referred to by Beerli and Martín (2004, p.661), can be considered “the amount and diverse nature of information sources to which individuals are exposed, including destination information acquired as a result of having visited the place.” These stimulus factors (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999), or image formation agents, influence tourists’ perceptions and evaluations of destinations, and a number of studies have been conducted to determine their effect on destination choice (Fakeye & Crompton 1991, Beerli & Martín 2004).

Figure 7: Model of the Formation of Destination Image



Beerli and Martín, 2004, p.660

### 2.7.1 Information Sources: Secondary

One way these sources have been classified is through stages of formation that include the destination image evolving from an organic image, through an induced image, and finally into a complex image. A traveler obtains and processes information about a destination over a period of time, which is then organized in some way that is meaningful to the individual. This being said, “the stage of an individual’s image depends on his or her experience with the destination” (Leisen, 2001, p.50). Awairitefe (2004, p.265) agreed with this notion, as he stated, “...destination images among prospective and actual tourists evolve through three stages, organic, induced, and complex, with tourists in each stage requiring different types of promotional messages.”

Examples of organic sources include word-of-mouth, word-of-mouse, and actual visitation (Pike 2004, Govers, Go & Kumar 2007). These sources, particularly word-of-mouth, are especially influential on first-time tourists, due to the difficulty associated

with evaluating the tourism product before purchase (Tasci & Kozak, 2006). Previous studies have found that the majority of tourists actually receive pre-trip information via word-of-mouth from friends and families as opposed to induced sources (Klenosky & Gitelson 1998, Tasci & Kozak 2006).

Induced images, on the other hand, are those that are influenced by marketers and tourism promotions. Overt induced sources include traditional marketing attempts, such as advertisements found in print media, newspapers, magazines, and television, as well as travel guides, brochures, billboards, and direct mail (Coltman, 1989). Covert induced agents, which are second party endorsements, can include sources such as newspaper articles that appear as impartial reports (Pike, 2004). Autonomous agents include sources such as the news and popular culture (Pike, 2004).

It is important to be aware of the variety of sources from which customers, both actual and potential, derive information to form their destination image. Rather than assuming tourists perceive what the brand attempts to project as reality, Pike (2004, p.109) states that because “tourism services can only compete via images, it is imperative that marketers understand that ‘perception is reality.’” This is especially relevant for tourists who have no prior experience visiting a destination. Therefore, it is vital to understand how tourists perceive destinations, the sources from which their image is derived, and how that can affect their purchase intentions. As Awaritefe (2004, p.264) stated, “Promotion is particularly invaluable in tourism because of its intangible and immobile nature, and, quite importantly, tourism is an experience that cannot be inspected or tested before purchase.”

#### 2.7.1.1 Communicating the Image

Once a destination has chosen how it would like to be projected, or its desired image, marketers can communicate that image through the use of slogans and visual images. It is important to keep in mind that the use of these tools should be consistent with the overall campaign. In addition, the slogans and visual cues should be meaningful to the destination in order to effectively be used to differentiate the place in the minds of consumers.

Slogans are commonly used by destinations as a way to unify a specific campaign. If successful, slogans can generate excitement, enthusiasm, and momentum (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993). Some examples of current slogans used by destinations are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Destination Campaign Slogans

<b><u>Destination</u></b>	<b><u>Slogan</u></b>
Las Vegas	What Happens Here, Stays Here
New Zealand	100% Pure New Zealand
Spain	Everything Under the Sun
New York	I ♥ NY
Virginia	Virginia is for Lovers
South Africa	It's Possible
Malaysia	Truly Asia

Visual symbols include both landmark sites at the destination and the logo a destination may create for itself. Some examples of famous visual symbols associated with destinations are the Eiffel Tower in Paris, Big Ben in London, and the Great Wall in China. Logos, which are developed as a visual representation of a destination, need to reinforce the image trying to be relayed. Table 4 illustrates some examples of destination logos. Logos play an important part in destination marketing as they are “one of the main vehicles for communicating image, cutting through the clutter to gain attention, and speeding recognition of the product or company” (Henderson & Cote, 1998, p.15). Blain, Levy, and Ritchie (2005), also point out that logos are key to providing another form of differentiation among destinations and are important to brand image.

Table 4: Destination Logos

<u>Destination</u>	<u>Logo</u>	<u>Destination</u>	<u>Logo</u>
Spain		Costa Rica	
Ireland		Singapore	
Turkey		Netherlands	

As previously mentioned, there are a variety of sources from which destinations are promoted and visitors can also proactively obtain information. Different promotional tools can be divided into the following categories: consumer advertising, trade advertising, personal selling to the trade, personal selling to consumers, sales promotion partnerships, publicity and public relations, and direct marketing (Dore & Crouch, 2003). Each of these can be further broken down into a number of specific tools marketers can use to attract visitors, some more common, or popular, than others.

#### 2.7.1.1.1 Advertising & Personal Selling

Advertising, or “any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion by an identified sponsor” (Dore & Crouch, 2003, p.150), is cited as being the most evident form of promotion. Specifically, advertising using vehicles such as print, television, outdoor, radio, and the Internet aimed at end-consumers is the most widespread. However, trade advertising, such as promotion in travel and trade magazines, is also important (Dore & Crouch, 2003).

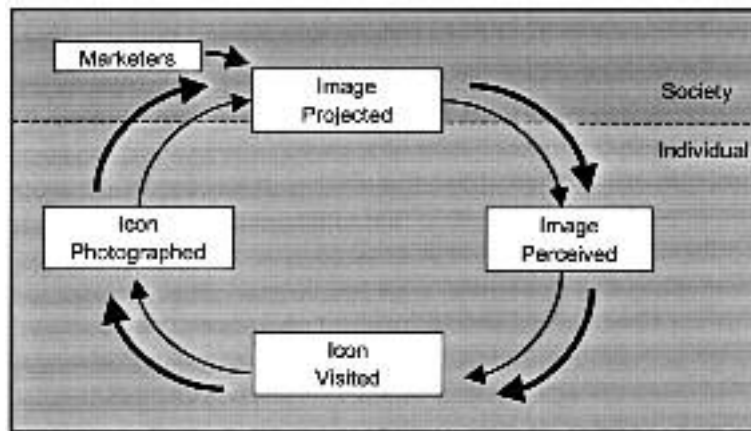
Personal selling can also either be aimed at end-consumers or to the trade. Telephone call centers and tourist information kiosks present opportunities for salespeople to “assist consumers with information and presentations” (Dore & Crouch, 2003, p.150). On the other hand, personal selling to the trade involves “use of salespeople or sales representatives to prospect, target, communicate, sell and service one-on-one with trade consumers” (Dore & Crouch, 2003, p.150). This can be done in a variety of environments including trade shows, specialist travel agency programs, meetings and conventions, and trade familiarization tours (Dore & Crouch, 2003).

Marketers can distribute brochures and travel trade manuals through a number of channels including at tourism and trade fairs, conventions, and tourist information kiosks (Buhalis, 2000). Such brochures and manuals can be used to present information, display activities promote local businesses, and be used as a reference guide. Photography and travel brochures also help potential tourists, especially those that have not yet visited, form an image of a given destination.

According to Jenkins (2003, p.305), “The old cliché of a picture being worth a thousand words has never been more true than for the promotion of places as tourist destinations.” Jenkins (2003) then emphasized the importance of visual images, such as photographs of scenery, landmarks, and icons, in all forms of promotions, including travel brochures. The importance of these visual images tourists receive was demonstrated by the concept of the “circle of representation,” which illustrates how “images of the destination are projected collectively by the mass media... and may inspire travel to the destination... at the destination the tourist will likely visit the main

attractions or tourist icons seen in the projected images and record his or her experience using a camera” (Jenkins, 2003, p.308). This, in turn, causes the cycle to repeat itself once that tourist returns home and shows their pictures to others. Figure 8 illustrates the concept of the circle of representation.

Figure 8: The Circle of Representation for Tourist Destination Images



Hall, 1991, p.1

These, along with other above-the-line promotional activities, while influential, are very expensive (Buhalis, 2000). Although Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) or National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) use a number of promotional tools to attract tourists, their budgets are often restricting. However, other opportunities may present themselves for these organizations to use and leverage their brand, or destination's, image. Some of these below-the-line activities include direct marketing and public relations and publicity.

#### 2.7.1.1.2 Direct Marketing

While there are a few destinations that have the luxury of large marketing budgets, many smaller, lesser-known destinations do not. Morgan and Pritchard (2005,

p.30) emphasize this by stating, “In a world where a handful of major countries attract almost three-quarters of international tourist arrivals, most destinations will at best be niche players competing on the margins.” Constrained by smaller budgets, marketing efforts often need to utilize non-traditional promotional efforts. Direct marketing provides a less expensive approach to reach consumers through telemarketing, direct mail, and electronic commerce.

Interactive marketing via the World Wide Web enables marketers to not only engage visitors pre-trip, but it also provides a platform for building relationships with visitors that can continue on even after their visit (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005). As the Internet is such a popular promotional tool, destinations must compete to match and exceed other destination’s websites. Successful websites allow visitors to experience the destination as much as possible through a variety of extras like web cams, virtual tours, music clips, and weather updates. One destination brand that has been able to successfully capitalize on this promotional tool is New Zealand, who has won awards for its TNZ website (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005). Webpage visitors, who stay for an average of 13 minutes and visit over 20 pages, can even “download and send copies of the New Zealand adverts and photographs of natural environments as e-postcards-adding to New Zealand’s conversational appeal, celebrity, and anticipation value” (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005, p.27).

#### 2.8.1.1.3 Public Relations & Publicity

Public relations are an important tool for maintaining and possibly changing a destination’s image, as well as keeping it relevant in the mind of consumers. Buhalis (2000, p.112) stated that, “...public relations are used to generate news stories, articles and publicity in order to develop the awareness of consumers and persuade them to purchase the products.” Some specific forms of publicity and public relations include visiting journalist programs or media familiarization tours, newsletters and magazines, video and photograph libraries, news releases, trade relations and databases, and information kits (Dore & Crouch, 2003). Another way in which destinations can use publicity is through films and television shows.

In their study on the effects of film tourism, Hudson and Ritchie (2006, p.258) posit that “the exposure a film gives a city, province or country is an advertisement viewed by potentially millions of people, an audience that could not be reached through specifically targeted tourism promotions.” While images portrayed of the destination often cannot be controlled, favorable linkages can, and should be, used to attract visitors. It is for this reason that many destinations court producers to film in their region.

Organizations like VisitBritain and Chicago’s Office of Film and Entertainment Industries have targeted producers to encourage filming in their prospective areas (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006). Philadelphia has also recognized the positive impacts of being associated with the celebrity aspect of being a backdrop for movies. The Greater Philadelphia Film Office (2006), which was created to market the City of Philadelphia and the surrounding region to the film and television industry, offers government incentives, such as tax credits, for film productions shot in the area. The organization has even displayed an exhibition of movie posters depicting films produced in the region, in the Philadelphia International Airport.

Once a film has been released, and if increased tourism does occur, destinations can incorporate an array of activities, or extras, targeted to film tourists. Movie maps, guided tours, and film walks can provide information from which tourists can locate specific places where scenes were shot (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006). One recent example of a destination that enjoyed a boost in tourism due to film fans is Northumberland’s Alnwick Castle, featured in the Harry Potter films. One report, “Stately Attraction – How Film and Television Programmes Promote Tourism in the UK,” said the Harry Potter film led to an increase in tourists of 120% to the castle. According to the chief executive of the UK Film Council, John Woodward, “It is a terrific benefit that, not only are our films successful, but their locations are becoming destinations in their own right and people seek to relive their favourite movie moments” (BBC, 2007).

Television travel shows are another way in which destinations can be promoted. Although there are inherent risks in having a destination shown on travel shows, due to lack of control over the finished product, the images shown are usually directed at

inducing the viewer to travel. “The travel shows help to form images projected to the viewers, irrespective of if they are prospective tourists or just living-room sofa ‘dream travelers’” (Hanefors & Mossberg, 2002, p.235).

#### 2.7.2 Information Sources: Primary

The primary information sources Beerli and Martín (2004) refer to in the Model of the Formation of Destination Image (Figure 7) are the tourist’s previous experience and the intensity of their visit. It has been suggested that the information acquired from actually visiting a place can be quite different from that provided by secondary sources. This being said, the image formed after visitation may be very different than the image formed due to secondary sources (Pearce 1982, Beerli & Martín 2004). A tourist’s previous experience is inherent in the third main stage of image formation, which, as previously referred to by Awairitefe (2004) is termed, “complex.” This last stage only comes from actually visiting the destination and experiencing it first-hand (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991).

The intensity of a past visit refers to the amount of interaction the tourist had with the destination (Beerli & Martín, 2004). While some tourists may choose to spend their time relaxing and not participating in many of the activities offered, others may become more involved, possibly developing relationships and contacts that would affect the intensity of their experience. These different behavioral patterns, it has been assumed, affect the image a tourist forms of a destination (Beerli & Martín, 2004).

#### 2.7.3 Personal Factors

In addition to image formation being influenced by information sources, personal factors also play a large role. While beliefs about a destination’s attributes are affected by external stimuli, or information sources, the nature of those beliefs fluctuate according to the internal factors within the individual (Beerli & Martín, 2004). According to Beerli & Martín (2004, pp.663-64), personal factors, in the field of consumer behavior, refer to

internal determinants, which are made up of “the sociodemographic characteristics of the individuals (gender, age, level of education, family lifecycle, social class, place of residence, etc.), as well as those of a psychological nature (motivations, values, personality, lifestyle, etc.).”

#### 2.7.3.1 Travel Motivation

Travel motivation is significant in understanding tourist behavior and intentions. Many theorists have recognized that motivations are the primary reason for behavior and are essential in understanding the decision-making process of tourists (Snepenger et al., 2006). In the context of tourism, motivation has been defined as being, “a meaningful state of mind which adequately disposes an actor or group of actors to travel, and which is subsequently interpretable by others as a valid explanation for such a decision” (Dann, 1981, p.211). A more scientific explanation was given by Crompton and McKay (1997, p.427), who stated “tourism motivation is conceptualized as a dynamic process of internal psychological factors (needs and wants) that generate a state of tension or disequilibrium within individuals.”

A number of theories and models have been developed and tested regarding travel motivation. Crompton (1979), Dann (1981), and Iso-Ahola (1982) were some of the first researchers to present the idea that motivation was more than a one-dimensional construct (Hanefors & Mossberg, 2002). While Dann (1981) depicted motivation as involving anomie and ego-enhancement, Crompton (1979) imparted another way of looking at motivation, involving push and pull factors. Pull factors are generated by the destination, and are thus, place-specific. Pull motives present the draw and are what attract tourists to a particular destination. While pull motives may only be satisfied by visiting a specific destination, push motives are more general and can be fulfilled by a variety of different activities. Push factors impel a person to act in order to alleviate internal imbalances and reach the optimal level of arousal (Snepenger et al., 2006). From his tests on the subject, Crompton (1979) found that push motives often drive decisions regarding both when and where to travel.

Iso-Ahola (1982) presented another theory on motivation, concerning approach and avoidance components. Avoidance, or escape, motives suggest that tourists are traveling away from something, to get away from everyday life, in other words, a break from the routine environment. On the other hand, approach, or seeking, motives involve intrinsic rewards, or reasons why a tourist may be attracted to a destination (Hanefors & Mossberg, 2002). Tourists may choose a destination based on what is lacking from home, for instance. In this model, the dichotomy of motives is not mutually exclusive. It is supposed that tourists have some combination of escape and seeking motives for taking a vacation that directs them in their travel decisions (Snepenger et al., 2006).

#### 2.7.3.2 Vacation Experience

Past travel experience is an important factor in both image development, as well as behavioral intention. As tourists have more experience traveling, they become more confident, and as a result, are more likely to be willing or desire to travel in the future (Pearce, 1988). In their study to determine factors influencing destination image, Beerli and Martín (2004) found a connection between tourists' previous experience and their subjective interpretations, or image, of a destination during their visit. Related to this is the concept of familiarity.

Familiarity encapsulates both past experience with a place as well as other factors, like geographical distance and overall knowledge a tourist has about a destination (Milman & Pizam, 1995). Milman and Pizam (1995) found that the more familiar tourists are with a destination, the more positive an image they form of it. In addition, as tourists move from the awareness to the familiarity stage, their interest and intention to visit also increases (Milman & Pizam, 1995). Kim and Pennington-Gray (2004) conducted a study about the level of familiarity Florida residents had with Korea and the image they held of it. In line with what Milman and Pizam found, their results revealed that as participants were more familiar with Korea, their image of the country was more positive (Kim & Pennington-Gray, 2004).

A tourist's tolerance for novelty or strangeness in a destination is another factor that has also been theorized to contribute to destination choice. Cohen (1972) used this

concept to create a typology of four tourist roles according to the degree of tolerance a given tourist had for novelty or strangeness. These four roles are comprised of the organized mass tourist, independent mass tourist, explorer, and drifter. The organized mass tourists, who prefer package tours, have the least tolerance towards the unfamiliar. Next are the independent mass tourists, who, while having more control over their schedule and itinerary, still stick to regular tourist routes. The explorers fall somewhere in the middle, preferring a mix of novelty and familiarity, demonstrated by interacting with locals, for instance. Finally, the drifters put a premium on the unfamiliar, immersing themselves in the local culture (Cohen, 1972). This being said, intention to visit is influenced by tourists' travel preferences and perceptions of a destination, including factors, such as degree of novelty, associated with it (Gibson, Qi & Zhang, 2008).

#### 2.7.3.3 Socio-demographic Characteristics

In addition to recognizing the effect of psychological traits, it is also important to appreciate the role of the socio-demographic characteristics associated with the image receiver. The receiver, or potential tourist, filters information presented (projected image) to form a perceived image (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). As each tourist is different, the way in which messages are interpreted varies between people. This being said, many distinctive destination images may be formed from the same projected image. In this sense, socio-demographic characteristics and past travel experience play a role in the image formation process (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Many studies have been conducted regarding the relationship between image formation and tourist-specific characteristics. Some of these traits include age, religion, gender, marital status, education, culture, household status, and distance from the destination (Tasci & Gartner, 2007).

A number of studies have been conducted to determine the effect of a tourist's age on their perceptions of destinations and subsequent behavior. Because they are often retired, and thus have more flexible schedules, older tourists have been found to travel more often, have more disposable income, and utilize travel agents more than their younger counterparts (Rosenfeld 1986, Lee 2006). Upon applying a model of the adult life cycle to tourist preferences, Gibson and Yiannakis (2002) found that younger

travelers in their twenties, who favor exploration and adventure more than older tourists, are more likely to embody the drifter and explorer roles.

The influence of physical distance a tourist is from a destination, on the image formed, has also been given particular attention. A number of researchers have examined the connection between familiarity, knowledge, and propensity to travel to a destination, with how far one resides from that destination (Crompton 1979, Fakeye & Crompton 1991, Tasci & Gartner 2007). Findings have shown that while closer, local destination images are based on more intimate, organic sources, international destination images are more likely to develop based upon promotional materials and other induced agents (Tasci & Gartner 2007). This highlights the importance of international marketing in the destination branding arena.

Cultural differences have also been given special attention. According to Reisinger and Turner (2002, p.347), culture and tourism are related in that “differences and similarities in values, rules of behavior, and perceptions, which influence interpersonal contact between international tourists and hosts and their satisfaction with each other.” Culture, because it is often thought of as the way one views the world around them, effects the impressions, interpretations, and perceptions tourists have about destinations (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Chalip, Green, and Hill (2003) found that nationality also effects destination image and intention. In a study conducted about the destination image tourists had of Australia’s Gold Coast and their intention to visit, discrepancies between Americans and New Zealanders’ preferences were found. While the Americans’ answers revealed a stronger relationship between the image factors of a safe, developed, and natural environment and intention to visit, New Zealanders indicated novelty and convenience as being more important (Chalip, Green & Hill, 2003).

#### 2.7.4 Cognitive, Affective, and Global Image

As illustrated in Figure 7, Beerli and Martín’s (2004) Model of the Formation of Destination Image, both information sources and personal factors combine to form a perceived destination image. This perceived destination image involves the merger of cognitive and affective images, which then go on to form a tourist’s overall, or global,

image. This concept has been widely regarded throughout the field as many researchers agree that potential tourists' destination images are formed through two main components: cognitive and affective elements. The cognitive component refers to the idea that images are formed rationally, on evaluations about the functional attributes of a particular destination (Baloglu & McCleary 1999, Hernández-Lobato et al., 2006). Pike and Ryan (2004) also propose that the cognitive component of destination image is primarily focused on tangible physical attributes.

On the other hand, the affective component is associated with emotions and feelings about a destination (Hernández-Lobato et al., 2006). It has been demonstrated that the affective component can be measured using four semantic-differential scales with the bipolar ends representing, arousing-sleepy, pleasant-unpleasant, exciting-gloomy, and relaxing-distressing dimensions (Pike & Ryan, 2004). This is especially relevant for the tourism product, due to the fact that it is intangible in nature, and symbolic meaning likely plays a significant role.

While it has been suggested that a tourist's attitude toward a destination is principally formed from affective elements, both cognitive and affective components are incorporated in the global image formed. Within this global image, it is important to note that not all attributes have an equal impact on, or significance to, the tourist. This is particularly relevant when comparing different types of destinations. In their study of natural, developed, and theme-park destinations, Lin, et al. (2007) found that tourists felt certain attributes, like amenities, had different levels of importance according to the destination. Due the subjective evaluations involved in image formation, as well as the varying level of importance, or strength, of both cognitive and affective attributes among tourists, each will form a unique image of the destination (Lin et al., 2007).

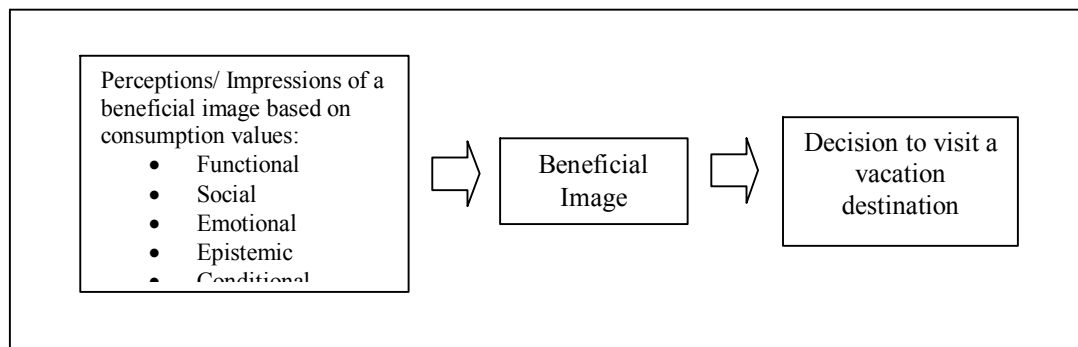
## 2.8 Image and Behavior

Before a potential tourist ever chooses to visit a destination, they form an image of that destination which guides their decision. Fakeye and Crompton (1991, p.10) assert that, "images are of paramount importance because they transpose a representation of an

area into the potential tourist's mind and give him or her a pre-taste of the destination.” For those who have not visited a given destination, perceptions, or image, of that destination are based on assumptions rather than the destination's actual features, as the person has not yet had the experience of being there. Therefore, Tasci and Gartner (2007, p.415) asserted, “the content and amount of visuals are of paramount importance and the inclusion or exclusion of certain dimensions determines what kind of image the destination is attempting to create in the minds of potential markets.”

Similar to the stages associated with perception formation, a vacation can be divided into three categories with regards to travel behavior, before the trip, during the trip, and after the trip. According to Chen and Hsu (2000, p.411), “Before-the-trip behaviors are concerned with destination image, travel motivation, and decision making. During-the-trip behavioral issues include attitude toward service quality. After-the-trip behaviors deal mostly with trip satisfaction.” As tourists move from one phase to the next, their images of a given destination often change. This, in turn, also affects expectations, which determine satisfaction and loyalty.

Figure 9: Beneficial Image Model



Adapted from Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000, p.39

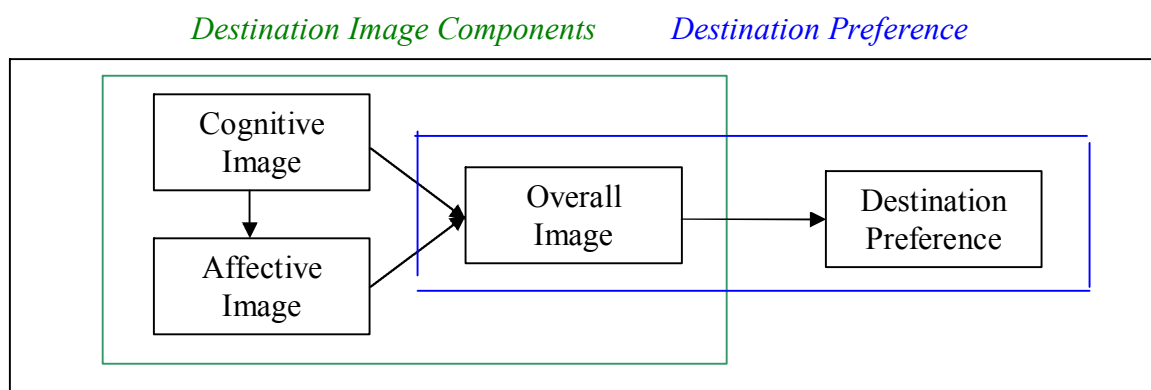
One theory about the link between image and behavior involves the concept of a beneficial image. This idea of beneficial image is based on the premise that individuals form images based on expected benefits or exchange values they assume they will enjoy

from consumption of a product or service (Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). This consumption value is composed of five values: functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional. From the perceptions a consumer, or potential tourist, has about each value, they form what Tapachai and Waryszak (2000, p.38) describe as a beneficial image. They define beneficial image as:

“Perceptions or impressions of a destination held by tourists with respect to the expected benefit or consumption values including functional, social, emotional, epistemic, an conditional benefits of a destination. These perceptions/impressions in turn lead to the decision to visit a country as a vacation destination.”

Illustrated in Figure 9, Tapachai and Waryszak (2000) have asserted that perceptions about the five values that make up consumption value lead to formation of beneficial image, which then leads to a decision or behavioral intention.

Figure 10: Destination Image Components and Preference



Lin et al., 2007, p.184

Destination preference is another theory used to explain travel decision-making. Preference within this context can be described as being an attitude towards a destination, resulting from a comparison between destinations (Lin et al., 2007). Gensch (1978)

found that a tourist's image has a greater affect on preference as attribute measurements become more subjective. Generally supported by current literature, destination image is thought to be an important factor in destination preference and decision-making processes (Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). Lin et al. (2007) suggest that cognitive and affective components affect overall image, which then is used to form destination preference. They illustrated this concept in an integrated model, as shown in Figure 10. The relationship between preference and image has more recently been approached by a number of researchers with regards to tourists' self-image (Sirgy & Su 2000, Lin et al. 2007).

Some researchers have also hypothesized that travel behavior is influenced by functional congruity and self-congruity (Sirgy & Su, 2000). Functional congruity supposes a match between tourist expectations of an attribute and actual utilitarian attributes offered by a destination. Self-congruity, which has been theorized to effect functional congruity, involves a match between the destination visitor image and the tourist's self-image (Sirgy & Su, 2000).

The destination visitor image can be defined as the "stereotypic image of the kind of people who typically visit a given destination" (Sirgy & Su, 2000, p.340). Supposedly, the greater the match between a tourist's self-concept and the image they hold of a given destination's visitor, the more favorable an attitude the tourist will have towards that destination (Sirgy & Su, 2000). Tourists make assumptions about destination visitors through cues provided by the destination environment. The destination environment is made up of a multitude of elements involving the atmosphere, service quality, prices charged, geographic location, and promotions associated with the destination (Sirgy & Su, 2000). In their efforts to further develop a model linking destination image, travel behavior, and the idea of self-congruity, Sirgy and Su (2000) identified four aspects of the self-concept. These aspects, or dimensions, are termed actual, ideal, social, and ideal social self-image.

Tourists' actual self-image refers to how tourists see themselves, or who they think they are. Actual self-congruity corresponds to the match between tourists' actual

self-image and a destination visitor image. Because people are motivated to protect their own personal identities, they may feel a discord if they visit a destination that does not reflect their actual selves (Sirgy & Su, 2000). The ideal self-image is also part of what is referred to as the private-self, or the images one has of oneself. Rather than reflecting whom the tourist thinks they are, the ideal self-image is representative of who they would like to be. Ideal self-congruity, then, is the degree of match between the destination visitor image and tourists' ideal self-image (Sirgy & Su, 2000). An example of how this could affect behavior could concern a tourist who is timid and shy, but would like to be more adventurous and outgoing. Because of this, the tourist may choose to visit a destination, like a ski resort, where the typical visitor may be characterized as how they wish to be, or adventurous and outgoing.

Tourists' social self-image refers to how they feel they are seen by others. Social self-congruity signifies the match between destination visitor image and social self-image (Sirgy & Su, 2000). Along with the social self-image, the ideal social self-image makes up the public self, and may or may not be consistent with the actual and ideal selves. Behavior may be modified as people, in this case, tourists, are motivated to maintain the image they think others have of them (Sirgy & Su, 2000). Ideal social self-image is how people wish to be seen by others. It follows, then, that ideal social self-congruity is the degree of match between ideal social self-image and destination visitor image (Sirgy & Su, 2000). Behavior is affected, in this aspect, by the need for social approval. An example of such motivations affecting behavior would be if an upscale tourist refused to stay at a budget accommodation or bed and breakfast for fear of what others would think of them (Sirgy & Su, 2000).

As demonstrated by the previous theories, much research has been conducted on the relationship between destination image and tourist behavior. As the tourism industry provides so much potential for destinations, it is imperative that marketers understand the reasoning behind intention to visit. A number of studies have been conducted regarding this relationship between image and intention (Woodside & Lyonski 1989, Sirakaya, Sonmez & Choi 2001, Chalip, Green & Hill 2003, Gibson, Qi & Zhang 2008). Many researchers have proposed, and subsequently found, that destination choice is influenced

by image and its components (Milman & Pizam 1995, Chen & Kerstetter 1999, Lin et al. 2007).

After performing a comprehensive literature review about destination image and its functional relationships, Tasci and Gartner (2007:419) asserted, “destination image is strongly believed to influence a tourist’s choice of destination.” Lin et al. (2007: 191) found that, upon assessing the cognitive and affective components of participants’ image of natural, developed, and theme-park destinations, overall image was an important predictor of choice, or intention. Likewise, Chen and Kerstetter (1999) conducted a survey involving students’ images and intention to visit a rural destination. The researchers found that respondents who indicated they intended to visit a rural area within the next twelve months were more likely to have a positive image than those respondents with no intention of visiting. McClellan and Foushee (1983) also emphasized the importance of a positive destination image, contending that only when an image is more positive than negative will the potential tourist make a destination choice.

Parallel to these notions, Woodside and Lyonski (1989) suggested that there is a relationship between destination image and intention to travel. These researchers identified “intention” as being the perceived probability a tourist will travel to a given destination within a particular time period. Similar to the model proposed by Beerli and Martín (2004), Woodside and Lyonski (1989) asserted that intention to visit was a consequence of two separate variables, marketing influences and tourist characteristics, which influence potential tourists’ destination images.

### 3. RESEARCH AIMS & HYPOTHESES

Destination image is a very complex concept worth studying. The literature review has shown that many elements have been found to influence the perceptions tourists hold of a place, and likewise, destination image has been found to sway behavior. The basis of this study was developed using Beerli and Martín's (2004) framework regarding the formation of tourist destination image. The different elements involved in the formation of destination image were evaluated to see if a relationship existed between image and its components, and behavioral intention.

Previous findings have suggested that destination image and intention to visit are directly related (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Researchers have described intention to visit as being the perceived likelihood that a tourist will visit a specific destination within a given period of time (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Other researchers have also noted that only when an image is more positive than negative will the potential traveler, or tourist, make the destination choice decision (McLellan & Foushee 1983, Chen & Kerstetter 1999). As described in the literature review, Beerli and Martín (2004) proposed that destination image is formed by both information sources and personal factors.

Given this conceptual framework, the aims of this study will be to:

- Examine images of Spain as a vacation destination
- Analyze the relationship between personal factors and destination image
- Consider information sources from which tourists derive their destination image
- Investigate the relationship between destination image and intention to visit

Some of these research aims can be transformed into hypotheses, as previous studies have been carried out examining similar relationships. Past studies have been

conducted with regards to the relationship between destination image and intention to visit. In particular, Gibson, Qi, and Zhang (2008) researched the influence of United States university students' destination image of China on their intention of visiting. Upon analyzing their results, the researchers did indeed find a significant relationship between participants' destination image of China and their intention to visit. In view of the above, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

*H1: A positive relationship exists between destination image and intention to visit.*

The information sources to which one is exposed has been demonstrated as affecting the destination image formed. Both primary and secondary information sources may influence image and intention (Beerli & Martín, 2004). Much research has been done regarding the wide variety of these information sources, including slogans, visual symbols, and the multiple vehicles used to communicate image (Dore & Crouch 2003, Jenkins 2003, Blain, Levy & Ritchie 2005, Morgan & Prtichard 2005, Hudson & Ritchie 2006). As past studies have found that information sources affect image and behavior, the following hypothesis is asserted:

*H2: Information sources will influence intention to visit a destination.*

As suggested by Beerli and Martín (2004), both information sources and personal factors influence the destination image one forms. Personal factors have been found to be related to destination image and behavior in a number of studies (Fakeye & Crompton 1991, Baloglu & McCleary 1999, Gibson, Qi, & Zhang 2008). The effects of a variety of aspects, including vacation experience and socio-demographic characteristics, have been studied to determine if a relationship does in fact exist between specific factors, image, and intention (Fakeye & Crompton 1991, Baloglu & McCleary 1999, Gibson, Qi & Zhang 2008). According to previous research conducted, many of these factors are related to image and behavior. The following hypothesis is put forward in line with these assumptions:

*H3: Tourists' individual characteristics will influence intention to visit a destination.*

Although it has been suggested that both information sources and personal characteristics influence image and behavioral intentions, it has been found that they have varying impacts (Beerli & Martín 2004, Tasci & Gartner 2007). Additionally, as most individual tourists are exposed to relatively similar information sources, it can be assumed that differences in tourists' level of intention to visit would not be as recognizable as variations due to personal factors. That being said, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H4: The influence of tourists' individual characteristics on intention to visit will be stronger than the influence of information sources.*

## 4. METHODOLOGY & DATA COLLECTION

In order to address my research aims and hypotheses, a series of methods were utilized.

### 4.1 Analytical Method

Due to the nature of the research required, a case study was the most appropriate form of methodology, and in this case, the questions asked involved understanding how potential tourists perceive Spain. The semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted were a combination of qualitative and quantitative elements, with a greater focus on the qualitative side. Upon determining whether or not participants had any intention or desire to visit Spain, they were asked a number of questions concerning their destination image of Spain. In addition, information was collected to better determine if, and to what extent, relationships existed between various factors of image and intention.

### 4.2 Data Collection Method

In-depth interviews were conducted with a limited number of participants, involving a number of different parts, aimed at measuring and evaluating various aspects of destination image. As Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) three continua (attribute-holistic, functional-psychological, common-unique) are commonly used as a conceptual framework with regards to destination image, each continuum was addressed in the interview. In addition, because a number of both internal, personal factors as well as external, information sources affect image formation (Pike 2004, Govers, Go & Kumar 2007), both aspects were addressed. Finally, because destination images are recognized as being made up of cognitive and affective components (Baloglu & McCleary 1999, Pike & Ryan 2004, Hernández-Lobato et al. 2006, Lin et al. 2007) both aspects were taken into account.

#### 4.2.1 Three Continua

Currently, much of the previous research that has been conducted on destination brand image has focused on measuring consumer perceptions of destination attributes using a quantitative approach. Govers and Go (2003), who acknowledge over fifty other studies conducted on destination image, assert that new research, not done in the traditional way of considering respondents as rational thinkers, but rather, as storytellers, would be valuable. Researchers have emphasized that for future research into destination image, a narrative method may be more beneficial, given the experiential nature of tourism (Padgett and Allen 1997, Govers and Go 2003). The usefulness of a study that uses open-ended questions about destinations to capture tourists' stories has also been suggested.

Due to its perceived functionality, a storytelling approach was used in the interview to capture participants' holistic perceptions of Spain. This involved participants telling a story, and describing in detail, what they felt a trip to the destination would be like. This portion of the interview, which was experiential in nature and included sensory and subjective information, was meant to gain insight into the perceived destination image of tourists who had not yet visited Spain. In his study about the ability to use computerized content analysis to measure destination images of tourists about Dubai, Govers (2005) developed an outline of questions to ask respondents, in a storytelling format. Adapted to focus on Spain, the questions respondents were asked in this study were:

Imagine that next week you will visit Spain for the first time. Tell me your story. What do you think your experience in Spain would be like? What images and thoughts immediately come to mind? What would you expect to see, feel, hear, smell, or taste there?  
Without any research or additional information, kindly be spontaneous and share whatever thoughts come to your mind right now, whether positive or negative. Make your response as detailed or as brief as you like, there are no limits, but try to express in story format; using complete sentences, not just loose words.

If you know little about Spain, your story will probably be short. If you already have clear ideas about Spain, your story might be very long. But remember, there is no right, wrong or best model answer; simply express your own ideas about Spain, and NOT what you think I want to hear.

Please share your ideas about Spain with me right now.

In order to assess the perceptions the participants had about Spain's specific attributes, fourteen perceptual/cognitive attributes were chosen on the basis of a literature review regarding the measurement of destination image. As Spain is often considered a Mediterranean destination, attributes were chosen based on those that Baloglu and McCleary (1999) used in their study of U.S. pleasure travelers' images of Turkey, Italy, Greece, and Egypt, also Mediterranean destinations. Spain guidebooks were also assessed to ensure that the destination attributes used, reflected actual destination offerings, such as "great beaches and water sports."

Respondents were asked to rate Spain as a vacation destination on each of the fourteen attributes using a five point scale ranging from 1, representing "offers very little," to 5 "offers very much." Participants were also asked to ascribe the importance of each attribute when making a vacation destination choice, on a scale of 1, representing "not at all important," to 5 "extremely important." The importance of each attribute was asked in order to gain a better understanding of why, when evaluated with their perception of Spain's offering of the individual attributes, the participant identified with a given level of intention. For example, if a respondent rated Spain as offering very much of a specific attribute, but it had no bearing (was not at all important) in their destination choice, the influence would be much different than if the participant considered that attribute as extremely important. The actual attributes and formatting used in the survey can be seen in Appendix A, on page 88.

The affective, more psychological, component of image was evaluated using four bi-polar scales: arousing-sleepy, pleasant-unpleasant, exciting-gloomy, and relaxing-distressing. Respondents were asked to indicate where they felt Spain fell on each scale. It is generally accepted that the cognitive and affective components of image make up the overall, or global, image of a destination (Beerli & Martín 2004, Lin et al. 2007). In order to gauge their overall image of Spain, the respondents were asked to rate Spain on a scale of 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive), according to their overall impression of the country as a vacation destination.

The common-unique continuum was addressed by evaluating perceptions about, or knowledge of, unique elements. Morgan and Pritchard (2005) have asserted that most destinations today tout a “unique” culture and heritage. Because of this, there is a need for destinations to find and leverage truly unique attractions or offerings. Such attractions or visual symbols that are famous and known throughout the world include the Eiffel Tower, Big Ben, and the Great Wall. In order to assess if participants felt Spain offered any unique attractions as such, they were asked, if possible, to name any attractions, such as monuments, museums, symbols, or events found in, and specific to, Spain.

#### 4.2.2 Print Advertisement Comparison

Participants were shown a series of twelve print advertisements and asked to rank the advertisements according to how much they felt each reflected the meaning of the destination, in this study, Spain. Respondents were also asked to rate each advertisement according to how representative it was of Spain on a scale of 1 (not at all representative) to 5 (very representative). Any and all wording that served as a cue to the destination being promoted was blacked out, leaving no indication of where the advertisement was from<sup>1</sup>. The advertisements shown included four advertisements actually used in the España campaign, as well as advertisements for other destinations both relatively similar to and different from Spain.

The advertisements from the España campaign were chosen because each reflected a different aspect of Spain, including gastronomy, monuments, beaches, and traditional Spanish culture (in the form of a flamenco dancer). Portugal and Peru were chosen as destinations that may have images relatively similar to Spain. The advertisements for Portugal each portrayed a face of a famous Portuguese native as well as a beach/aquatic aspect of the country. Peru’s advertisements depicted (1) a young girl

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<sup>1</sup> All of the advertisements used can be seen in the appendix, on pages 94-97. The reader should note that the versions of the advertisements in the appendix have not been blacked out, so unlike the advertisements shown to the respondents, the destination being promoted is still visible.

dancing in local costume, and (2) the cathedral and Main Square in Lima, with an architectural style similar to that of Spain's.

New Zealand and Wilmington, North Carolina were chosen to represent destinations relatively different from Spain. The advertisements from New Zealand's 100% Pure campaign depicted (1) hikers in the mountains, crossing over a picturesque landscape, and (2) a beach scene, reminiscent of relaxation. The Wilmington, North Carolina advertisements were chosen because not only was it the location where the interviews were held, but also all participants currently resided there at the time of the interviews. Because of their familiarity with Wilmington, it was assumed that respondents would be able to identify that the advertisements were not for, or significantly representative of, Spain. The first advertisement was of a horse drawn carriage in front of a colonial-type home, and the second portrayed a surfer on the beach. Upon assessing which advertisement they felt most accurately depicted Spain, probing questions were asked to better understand what attributes the participant felt the advertisement portrayed that contributed to its being the most representative of Spain.

#### 4.2.3 Factors Influencing Destination Image

The literature review revealed that a number of sources are responsible for image formation, and can be divided into information sources and personal factors. The input from different external sources and characteristics of individual tourists influence the perceived stimuli and affect the perceived destination image (Baloglu & McCleary 1999, Beerli & Martín 2004). Both elements were addressed in the interview.

##### 4.2.3.1 Information Sources

One aspect of the interview included gaining insight into the information sources participants used to form their images of the destination. Literature revealed a number of sources are used to disseminate information about destinations. Some of these include consumer advertising, trade advertising, personal selling to the trade, personal selling to consumers, sales promotion partnerships, publicity and public relations, and direct

marketing (Dore & Crouch, 2003). As those being interviewed were not trade personnel, they were asked about information sources to which the general public may have at some time been exposed. The particular sources respondents were inquired about can be seen in the Appendix, on page 90. For some of the sources, such as “television,” if the respondents indicated they had been exposed to Spain through that vehicle, they were asked to name the specific television show, commercial, or movie they had seen.

#### 4.2.3.2 Personal factors

A number of characteristics specific to the individual can affect the image they form about a given destination. Some of these factors, as identified by previous research, include perceived self-congruency, past travel experience, level of familiarity, tolerance of or value for novelty, affinity for traveling, physical distance, culture/nationality, and age (Cohen 1972, Milman & Pizam 1995, Sirgy & Su 2000, Sirakaya, Sonmez & Choi 2001, Gibson & Yiannakis 2002, Chalip, Green & Hill 2003, Tasci & Gartner 2007).

Perceived self-congruency was evaluated in the interview using the method proposed by Sirgy et al. (1997), which involved asking participants to describe the type of tourist they thought normally visited the destination. As Sirgy et al. (1997) suggested, four questions were then posed to assess congruency between the destination visitor image and actual, ideal, social, and ideal social-self image using a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The questions and formatting used can be referred to in the interview, found in the Appendix, on page 91.

Past travel experience, familiarity, and tolerance for novelty were all evaluated using general questions posed to participants. Respondents were asked about the number of countries they had visited, where they had traveled before, and how often they normally traveled, to assess past travel experience. The other three aspects, familiarity, tolerance for novelty, and affinity for traveling were asked directly, using four and five-point scales. Other social-demographic questions captured personal characteristics related to culture, nationality, and age. All questions regarding these aspects can be referred to in the Appendix, on pages 92-93.

### 4.3 Sampling

Due to the nature of the study, a relatively homogenous group was focused on in order to isolate certain variables in the results. In addition, the destination of Spain was chosen because it is generally recognized as a major tourist destination and is of interest to the researcher. Due to time and location restrictions, as well as the detail required for in-depth interviews, the sample size was small, limited to six adults (18 years of age or older).

These participants were conveniently chosen according to the following criteria:

- Although many previous studies have failed to control for familiarity in the form of previous visitation of the destination, it is important to do so as the actual experience of having already visited a destination strongly influences the image one forms (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). There have been a number of studies that have actually addressed this phenomenon, comparing images of a destination between tourists that had visited and non-visitors (Fakeye & Crompton 1991, Milman & Pizam 1995). It was found that after tourists had visited a destination, their image was modified, and significant differences existed between the perceptions of visitors and non-visitors (Fakeye & Crompton 1991, Milman & Pizam 1995, Baloglu & McCleary 1999). For these reasons, this study was controlled for experience in that only non-visitors (those that had never before visited Spain) were interviewed.
- In order to assess differences among participants according to their intention or desire to visit Spain, participants were chosen that represented different levels of intention of visiting for the first time.
- For reasons of simplicity regarding evaluation of results, a quota was used in conjunction with the varying levels of intention. For each level, two participants were sought out. Although this is a very small sample, using at least two participants for each level of intention eliminated some error related

to comparing and depending on one individual's opinions to represent an entire level of intention.

- As all interviews were held in the United States, the sample was limited to those residing in the U.S.
- In order to minimize differences that could be ascribed to different age groups, the chosen participants were characterized as belonging to "Generation Y." Generally speaking, most experts refer to those belonging to Generation Y as having been born between 1981 and 1995 (Reynolds, 2005). In addition, Generation Y'ers share some common characteristics, and are described as being independent, hopeful, optimistic, techno-savvy, global-minded, diverse, service oriented, and perhaps most importantly to this study, lifestyle centered (Reynolds, 2005).
- In order to account for differences that may exist because of gender, one male and one female was interviewed for each of the three levels of intention.

The participants involved in the study were a convenience sample. While some were acquaintances with the researcher, others were found through mutual acquaintances. All respondents used were willing to participate in the interview without monetary, or any other, reward. The researcher made the interview process as easy on participants as possible, meeting wherever was convenient (in Wilmington, North Carolina) for the participants. While some interviews were conducted in local cafes, others were held at participants' homes.

The majority of the interview was guided and directed by the researcher. This involved the questions being asked aloud to participants, and repeated or asked in another way if confusion occurred regarding the meaning. The researcher took notes and wrote out answers, in order to make the process as effortless for the participants as possible. This was done in order to get as detailed answers as possible from respondents. If they were forced to write out each answer themselves, the participants may have

chosen to omit some information, so as not to have to spend so long writing each thought out. The one exception to the interview being guided by the researcher was the individual attribute scores and importance. For this part of the survey, respondents were asked to rate their perception of Spain's offering of each attribute, as well as the importance of each when making a vacation destination choice. The researcher felt it would be easier for respondents to see the individual attributes written out, and have some time to reflect on each, before writing out a score of 1 to 5. As recording answers to this part of the interview involved much less effort than writing out answers to other parts, the researcher felt that letting participants respond to this particular section on their own was acceptable.

## 5. EVALUATION OF RESULTS

The demographic profile of respondents is presented in Table 5. While the table depicts the percentage of respondents belonging to each division, one must keep in mind that the number of participants was very limited. As is evidenced by the table, respondents were relatively young, and ranged from twenty to twenty-seven years old, with an equal number of males and females. As far as education is concerned, all respondents had completed high school, two are current undergraduate students, two have graduated with undergraduate degrees, and one is currently pursuing a graduate degree. Finally, while most respondents make less than \$20,000 per year, the oldest respondent, a college graduate, indicated that they earn between \$50,000 and \$60,000 per year.

Table 5: Demographic Profile of Respondents

	Number	%
<b>Age</b>		
18-20	2	33.3
21-23	2	33.3
24-27	2	33.3
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	3	50
Female	3	50
<b>Education</b>		
High School	1	16.7
College	4	66.7
Graduate School	1	16.7
<b>Income</b>		
Less than \$10,000	3	50
\$10,000 - \$20,000	2	33.3
\$20,000 - \$40,000	-	-
\$40,000 - \$60,000	1	16.7

As the focus of this study was to assess the relationship between image and intention, it is important to address participants' level of intention to visit before concentrating on the various components of destination image. Before the interviews were conducted, the researcher approached participants and asked what their level of intention was for visiting Spain in the future. Although in the interview there were four options available for level of intention to visit (very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, not at all likely), participants were divided into only three groups. While discussing the option of visiting Spain in the future, no participant indicated that they were not at all likely to visit, because, as one respondent stated, "you never know." For this reason, the last level of intention, not at all likely to visit, was eliminated, leaving two participants for each of the remaining three groups, very likely, somewhat likely, and not very likely. Because of the way the interview was formatted, no changes were necessary to the questions or content due to the exclusion of the "not at all likely" level of intention.

### 5.1 Three Continua

When participants were asked to provide a story of what they would expect from visiting Spain, their holistic image was captured. Even the participants that indicated they were not very likely to ever visit Spain portrayed a story involving cultural aspects such as going to a soccer game, visiting cafes and restaurants, and attending a bullfight. One of these participants with the lower level of intention to visit also mentioned some relatively negative assumptions they had about Spain, involving "water at room temperature" and the locals being unfriendly toward American tourists.

The stories of those participants that stated they were somewhat likely to visit in the future also encapsulated activities such as soccer games and bullfights. These participants were more descriptive, incorporating architectural aspects into their narratives. Specifically, "older, bigger buildings" and "brick buildings" were mentioned. Interestingly, while one participant in this category had an image of Spain involving big cities, the other thought of the country as being less urbanized, and rather, focused on a beach environment. This particular respondent also said they thought the people would

be very nice and friendly and there would be “good food, similar to Mexican, but better, higher class.”

The respondents that indicated they were very likely to visit Spain had the most detailed stories of what they expected out of a vacation to the destination. While architectural aspects were mentioned, the participants incorporated both visiting big cities and participating in beach activities into their visit. In addition, specific attractions, such as the Prado Museum and La Sagrada Familia, were mentioned. Once again, food and drink were brought up, however, more in-depth knowledge and familiarity were demonstrated with the mention of Spanish wine, sangria, Jamón Serrano, and tapas.

Unlike the encouraging, well-defined stories provided by participants with the highest level of intention to visit, the other respondents were much more vague. Those participants with very little or no intention of visiting Spain even voiced some negative perceptions (room temperature drinks, unfriendly locals), which likely influenced their intention not to visit. The participants that were somewhat likely to visit, while not indicating any negative perceptions, had a somewhat unclear image of Spain as was evident because of their lack of description. That being said, those with the highest level of intention to visit had the clearest, most positive, image of Spain, indicating increased knowledge about, and familiarity with, the country. These results confirm the first hypothesis because as participants had a more positive image of Spain, they had a higher level of intention to visit.

The other, opposite end of the holistic (imagery) continuum is represented by individual attributes. Respondents were asked to rate Spain according to their perceptions of how much the country offered fourteen different attributes. There was some general consistency among responses with regards to relatively higher scores assigned for Spain offering beautiful scenery/natural attractions, good climate, interesting cultural attractions, appealing local food, great beaches/water sports, and interesting historical attractions. It was interesting to note, however, that for some other attributes, there was a significant amount of variance in scores. The interesting and friendly people attribute, for instance, was assigned scores ranging from 2 to 5. Similarly, a number of

other attributes, such as good value for money and standard hygiene and cleanliness, were assigned scores ranging from 3 to 5. The ranges for all scores are illustrated in Table 6. From the table, it is clear that while no one attribute was assigned a universal score, participants had a relatively general consensus on most, as indicated by a small range of one.

Table 6: Attribute Score Ranges

<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Low Score</b>	<b>High Score</b>	<b>Range</b>
<b>Good value for money</b>	3	5	2
<b>Beautiful scenery/natural attractions</b>	4	5	1
<b>Good climate</b>	4	5	1
<b>Interesting cultural attractions</b>	4	5	1
<b>Suitable accommodations</b>	3	5	2
<b>Appealing local food (cuisine)</b>	4	5	1
<b>Great beaches/water sports</b>	4	5	1
<b>Quality of infrastructure</b>	3	5	2
<b>Personal Safety</b>	3	4	1
<b>Interesting historical attractions</b>	4	5	1
<b>Unpolluted/unspoiled environment</b>	3	4	1
<b>Good nightlife and entertainment</b>	3	5	2
<b>Standard hygiene and cleanliness</b>	3	5	2
<b>Interesting and friendly people</b>	2	5	3

Similar to the responses given by participants of different intention levels for the holistic image, the scores assigned to the fourteen attributes were also diverging. In the first column of Table 7, the mean of all attribute scores, according to level of intention to visit, is illustrated. Participants assigned scores ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 representing the perception that Spain offered very little of a given attribute, and 5 representing Spain offering very much. As the wording in the survey allowed for all attributes to be relatively desirable, it can be assumed that the higher the score allocated, the more positive the participants' image of Spain. The second column lists the average score, in relation to intention level, assigned by the participants, of their overall impression of Spain as a vacation destination. Like the first column, the higher the score, the more positive an image the participants had of Spain.

Table 7: Relationship Between Intention and Destination Image

	Mean Score of Attribute Ratings	Overall Impression of Spain as a Vacation Destination
<b>Intention to visit in the future</b>		
<b>Very likely (High)</b>	<b>4.57</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Somewhat likely (Mid)</b>	<b>4.07</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Not very likely (Low)</b>	<b>3.71</b>	<b>3.5</b>

It is clear from these results that the participants with the highest level of intention to visit had the most positive image of Spain, once again confirming the first hypothesis. Out of the fourteen total attributes listed, the participants with a highest intention level both indicated the best score, 5, for nine of the attributes. The participants that were somewhat likely to visit Spain in the future assigned much fewer scores of 5, with one indicating they felt two attributes were offered very much in Spain, and the other, five attributes. Finally, both participants with little or no intention of visiting Spain only assigned one score of 5. It is interesting to note that one of the participants who indicated they were not very likely to ever visit Spain still indicated a score of 4 for their overall impression of the country as a vacation destination. This is surprising as it was expected that all scores would decrease as level of intention to visit diminished.

Once scores were recorded, they were divided by level of intention to assess if discrepancies existed between levels (High, Mid, and Low), as illustrated in Table 8. Columns I and II represent the scores assigned by participants with the highest level of intention to visit Spain with regards to the importance of each attribute when making a vacation destination (column I) and their perception of Spain's offering of that attribute (column II). Similarly, columns III and IV reflect the mid-level of intention group, V and VI the low level of intention group, and VII and VII the average of all scores. As evident by the average scores, Spain enjoys a relatively positive image by the group as a whole. As expected, those with the lowest intention of visiting consistently assigned lower scores to Spain's offering of the attributes. In fact, while for three of the attributes, the group with the lowest level of intention assigned the lowest score along with at least one other level of intention group, for ten of the fourteen attributes, the average of the scores

provided by this group was the lowest score assigned. Conversely, those with the highest level of intention consistently, assigned higher scores. The average scores of this group represent the highest scores assigned to all fourteen attributes with the exceptions of for good climate (same score as mid-level), great beaches/water sports, personal safety, and unpolluted/unspoiled environment (same across all three groups).

Table 8: Attribute Scores by Level of Intention to Visit

	<b><u>I</u></b>	<b><u>II</u></b>	<b><u>III</u></b>	<b><u>IV</u></b>	<b><u>V</u></b>	<b><u>VI</u></b>	<b><u>VII</u></b>	<b><u>VIII</u></b>
	<b><u>Importance</u></b>	<b><u>Spain</u></b>	<b><u>Importance</u></b>	<b><u>Spain</u></b>	<b><u>Importance</u></b>	<b><u>Spain</u></b>	<b><u>Importance</u></b>	<b><u>Spain</u></b>
	<b>(High)</b>	<b>(High)</b>	<b>(Mid)</b>	<b>(Mid)</b>	<b>(Low)</b>	<b>(Low)</b>	<b>(Avg.)</b>	<b>(Avg.)</b>
<b>Attribute</b>								
Good value for money	5	4.5	4	4	4.5	3.5	4.50	4.00
Beautiful scenery/natural attractions	5	5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4	4.67	4.50
Good climate	5	4.5	4	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.50	4.50
Interesting cultural attractions	5	5	3	4.5	4	4	4.00	4.50
Suitable accommodations	3.5	4.5	4	4	3.5	3.5	3.67	4.00
Appealing local food (cuisine)	4.5	5	4	4.5	3	4	3.83	4.50
Great beaches/water sports	4.5	4.5	4	5	5	4	4.50	4.50
Quality of infrastructure	3	4.5	4	3.5	3.5	3	3.50	3.67
Personal Safety	4	3.5	3	4	4	3.5	3.67	3.67
Interesting historical attractions	4.5	5	3	4.5	3.5	4	3.67	4.50
Unpolluted/unspoiled environment	4	3.5	3.5	3.5	3	3.5	3.67	3.50
Good nightlife and entertainment	4.5	5	4	4	5	4.5	4.50	4.50
Standard hygiene and cleanliness	4	4.5	4.5	3.5	4	3	4.17	3.67
Interesting and friendly people	4.5	5	4	3	4.5	3	4.33	3.67

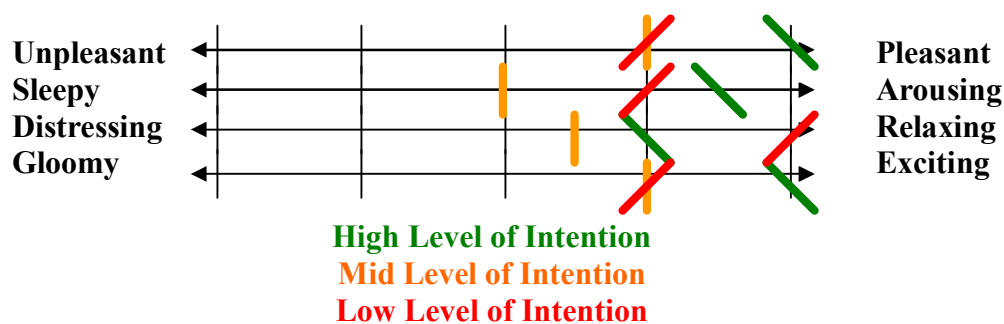
On the actual questionnaires, respondents were also asked to record how important each of the fourteen individual attributes are to them when choosing a vacation destination. The average “importance” scores assigned to each attribute by high, mid, and low intention levels are illustrated in Table 8 in columns I, III, V, respectively.

Column VII corresponds to the average importance of each attribute according to all

participants. The relevance of this was to assess which attributes (regardless of Spain's perceived offerings) were really significant to respondents. For example, one of the respondents who indicated they were very unlikely to visit Spain rated four attributes, beautiful scenery/natural attractions, great beaches/water sports, good nightlife and entertainment, and interesting and friendly people, as being very important (score of 5) in determining a vacation destination. This same respondent felt that Spain only offered very much of one of those, good nightlife and entertainment. In fact, for the interesting and friendly attribute, that particular respondent only rated Spain as a 3.

As the attributes were listed in order from being most functional to most psychological, scores were assessed to see if any notable differences existed. Answers, however, were pretty much consistent, with neither those attributes deemed more functional or more psychological representing noticeably higher scores. Related to the functional-psychological continuum, the cognitive and affective components of image were also addressed. While the list of attributes dealt with the cognitive component, the four bi-polar scales were used to evaluate the affective element. Figure 11 illustrates the average score assigned to each scale, according to level of intention.

Figure 11: Relationship Between Intention and Affective Components



Somewhat surprising in the evaluation of the affective bi-polar scales was, although the participants with the highest level of intention generally assigned the highest scores (relatively closer to pleasant, arousing, relaxing, and exciting), the second highest

scores were provided by those with the lowest level of intention. The participants with a mid level of intention to visit Spain assigned the lowest scores for both the sleep-arousing and distressing-relaxing scales. Although these scores were significantly lower than those given by the other intention groups (high and low), no scores assigned by any individual were negative. The lowest ratings fell directly in the middle between the bipolar points. This further indicates a generally positive image of Spain.

The third, common-unique, continua was assessed by the ability of participants to name any attractions, symbols, events, and the like, unique to Spain. As expected, the participants with the highest level of intention of visiting were able to identify many more of these unique aspects. Some of the attractions mentioned by participants in this group were the Prado Museum in Madrid and the Sagrada Família in Barcelona. Events like Tomatina and the Running of the Bulls, and specific food and drinks, such as Jamón Serrano, paella, tapas, and sangria, as well as cultural symbols like flamenco were referenced by respondents in this group with the highest level of intention to visit. Those respondents that indicated they were somewhat likely and not very likely to visit Spain were able to name far fewer unique symbols. Some that were mentioned, however, were the Running of the Bulls, soccer (F.C. Barcelona team), and the tradition of siesta.

The increased level of knowledge about Spain demonstrated by those belonging to the highest level of intention group confirmed the first and third hypotheses. The first hypothesis was validated because as respondents had a clearer, more definite image of Spain, they had a higher intention to visit. The second hypothesis was authenticated in that, as participants were more educated on Spain, reflecting tourists' individual characteristics, they had a higher level of intention to visit.

## 5.2 Print Advertisement Comparison

The print advertisement comparison was used to both measure knowledge about, and familiarity with, Spain, as well as to define a clearer image of the destination. As both information sources and personal factors have been linked to image formation, the print advertisement comparison was meant to further understand the image participants

had of Spain, as indicated by the way in which they ordered the advertisements' representation of Spain. Because projected and perceived images often differ, the ability for participants to correctly identify Spanish advertisements would have suggested a clearer, more accurate image in line with the España campaign. If variance occurred, with regards to the ability to correctly identify advertisements, between the different levels of intention, assumptions could be made about relationships involving perceived image. Thus, the print advertisement comparison meant to fulfill the research aim of examining Spain's image in order to analyze the relationship between image and intention.

It was interesting to note that most respondents perceived the same advertisements as being more representative of Spain, regardless of level of intention of visiting. In fact, every respondent indicated they felt the advertisement for Andalucía in the España campaign, depicting a flamenco dancer and guitarist, was the most representative of Spain. Most of the respondents also felt that some combination of the remaining España campaign advertisements were also relatively more representative of Spain. Every respondent also mistakenly identified at least one of the advertisements for Peru, depicting the young girl dancer, as being in the top three most representative advertisements of Spain. Finally, there was a general consensus concerning those advertisements least significant of Spain's image. As Wilmington, North Carolina and New Zealand were chosen to denote destinations being very different from Spain, all respondents correctly identified both Wilmington advertisements and at least one New Zealand advertisement as being least representative of Spain.

Although participants that indicated they are more likely to visit Spain did not necessarily identify the advertisements in a more correct manner, the comparison conducted by all participants helped better define an overall image of Spain. Once respondents chose the advertisements they felt most accurately depicted Spain, they were asked to describe their reasoning in doing so. According to their answers, participants' image of Spain included common themes regarding traditional cultural elements, such as the flamenco dancer, guitar player, and Spanish architecture. In addition, both metropolitan and beach landscapes were identified as being representative of Spain.

### 5.3 Factors Influencing Destination Image

#### 5.3.1 Information Sources

Similar information sources were identified by most participants as having contributed to their destination image of Spain. It was expected that a number of information sources would not be acknowledged as providing information because tourism agencies and destination marketing organizations (DMO's) do not usually attempt to attract individuals in many of the forms addressed. In fact, all of the participants indicated they had received no information via personal selling, tourist information kiosks or centers, trade fairs, or direct mail. Table 9 displays a breakdown of the sources that were acknowledged by participants. The most common sources of information recognized by participants were word-of-mouth, the news, and travel planning brochures. All participants indicated they had heard about Spain from at least one friend that had visited before. All participants also said that what they had heard via word-of-mouth was positive.

Movies and television were other information sources mentioned by most participants. It was interesting, however, that although many participants indicated they had seen something about Spain in a movie, only two participants were actually able to name one. Both of these respondents were those that said they were very likely to visit Spain in the future. These same two participants named the recently released movie *Volver*, and one also named some of Spanish director Pedro Almodovar's movies, including *Todo Sobre Mi Madre*. A variety of television sources were mentioned by participants, regardless of level of intention to visit. The news was cited, specifically depicting events like the Running of the Bulls and soccer games. One of the participants with very little intention of visiting said they regularly watched Spanish soccer teams on sports channels (recorded in Table 9 as "Television: T.V. Show (Other)"), such as Fox Sports World. A few respondents said they saw information about Spain on travel programs. One participant in the mid-level of intention group mentioned watching a show on Food Network where the host traveled around the world trying different cuisines.

Table 9: Information Sources Acknowledged by Intention Level

Level of Intention to Visit	Not Very Likely (Low)	Somewhat Likely (Mid)	Very Likely (High)	Number Exposed (of 6)
<b><u>Information Sources:</u></b>				
Television: News	X	XX	XX	5
Television: Travel Show(s)	X	X	XX	4
Television: T.V. Show (Other)	X	X	X	3
Movie(s)	X	X	XX	4
Internet: Travel Sales Website	-	XX	X	3
Print (Magazine) Advertisement	-	X	XX	3
Travel Planning Brochures	X	XX	XX	5
Word-of-Mouth: Visitors	XX	XX	XX	6
Total Number of Info. Sources Either Participant Exposed To:	6	8	8	-
Total Number of Info. Sources Both Participants Exposed To:	1	4	6	-

The Internet was not mentioned by many participants as influencing their image of Spain. Only a few of the respondents said they saw anything about Spain on the Internet, all of which only mentioned travel sales websites, such as Expedia or Travelocity via pop-ups or advertisements. This suggests that none of the participants used the Internet to actively do any research or search for information about Spain.

A few of the participants indicated they had seen information about Spain in magazines. One respondent, who indicated they had a medium level of intention, said they had seen something about Spain in *Vogue* magazine. Both respondents that were very likely to visit Spain said they had also encountered information in magazines. One specifically mentioned seeing articles about Spanish bullfights in a national magazine in Ecuador (the participant's country-of-origin). The other participant said they had seen

information about Spanish wine in *Wine Spectator* and had also seen an article about Spanish destinations in *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine.

Given the age of the participants, many of which are currently enrolled, or just recently graduated from university, it is not too surprising that a number indicated they had received information from school. One participant had taken a class that covered some of Spain's history. Others, including all participants with medium and high intention of visiting, mentioned that they had seen travel planning guides or brochures for study abroad programs provided by the university they (had) attended.

While participants of the three levels of intention indicated having been exposed to different information sources, a trend can be identified. Those participants with the lowest level of intention indicated having been exposed to the fewest information sources, both individually, and as a group, as depicted in the last two rows of Table 9. On the other hand, at least one respondent in each of the mid and high level of intention groups mentioned having seen something about Spain on each of the eight information sources listed in Table 9. However, it was those in the highest level of intention group that had recognized the most information sources, with both participants having been exposed to six of the eight information sources. This having been said, a link can be made between information sources and their influence on intention to visit, confirming the third hypothesis.

### 5.3.2 Personal Factors

A number of personal factors have been identified as affecting travel intentions and choice. This study attempted to address a number of these tourist-specific factors including perceived self-congruency, past travel experience, level of familiarity, tolerance of, or value for, novelty, affinity for traveling, physical distance, and culture/nationality. Although some of these seemed to have little or no relationship to level of intention to visit, others appear to be very reflective of willingness or desire to visit the destination as well as contributing to the image formed of Spain.

Perceived self-congruency was determined by asking respondents to indicate what they thought the typical visitor to Spain was like. Somewhat surprisingly, all respondents described their destination visitor image in a similar manner. Specifically, all respondents mentioned they thought the person would be younger, in their twenties, with one respondent providing a slightly larger range of twenties to thirties. Other common personal characteristics mentioned were “adventurous,” “outgoing,” “classy,” “likes to try new things,” and “likes sports/athletic.” No answers deviated much from this set. It was also interesting to note that all participants indicated that they at least somewhat agreed with every element (actual, ideal, social, social-ideal) of self-congruency, indicating they identified with their image of the typical visitor.

Table 10: Perceived Self-Congruity by Level of Intention

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This (Spain) is consistent with how I see myself.	XXXXX	XX			
This is consistent with how I would like to see myself.	XXX	XXX			
This is consistent with how I believe others see me.	XXXX	XX			
This is consistent with how I would like others to see me.	XXXX	XX			

**Low Level of Intention**

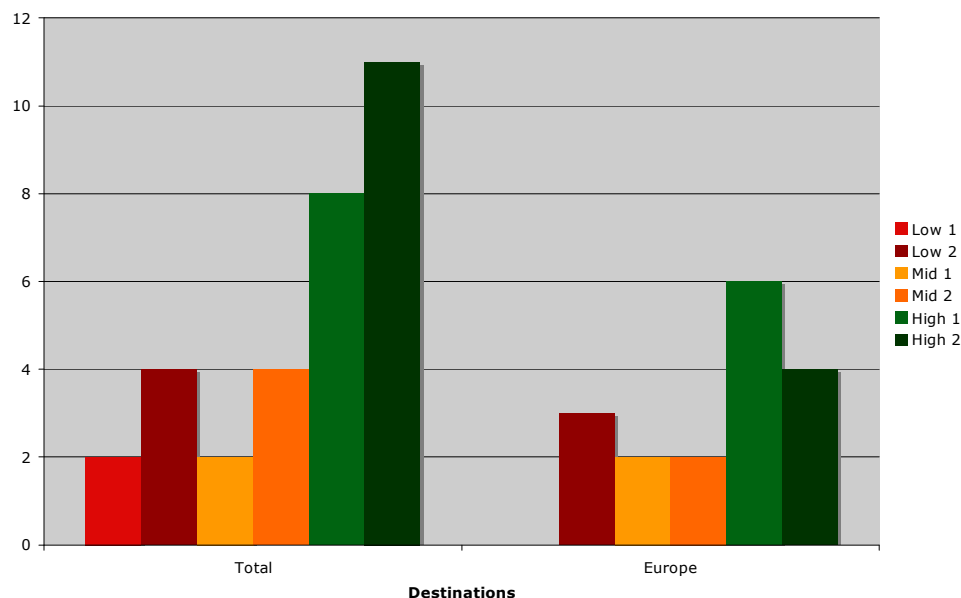
**Mid Level of Intention**

**High Level of Intention**

Perhaps the most noticeable discrepancy in responses was the fact that both participants with the highest level of intention, as indicated by green x's in Figure 12, strongly agreed with every element of self-congruity. The other obvious, though not exceptionally significant, anomaly is the fact that both participants with low levels of intention indicated they only somewhat agreed that their destination visitor image was consistent with how they would like to see themselves. Aside from those two

inconsistencies, answers among the different levels of intention were quite consistent as all participants identified at least somewhat with their perception of what a typical visitor to Spain is like. The results from this part of the interview, which address third hypothesis show a relationship, albeit relatively weak, between tourists' individual characteristics and intention to visit.

Figure 12: Past Travel Experience by Level of Intention



Past travel experience has also been seen to be a significant determinant of future intention and choice. When asked if they had ever traveled outside the country, all participants indicated that they had. The two respondents with the lowest level of intention had been to two and four countries outside the United States, one who had been to Europe. Those with a mid-level of intention (somewhat likely to visit Spain) had also visited two and four countries. However, unlike participants that were not very likely to visit Spain, both had previous experience traveling in Europe. It was the two participants with the highest level of intention that indicated having the most past international travel experience. One respondent listed eleven countries they had traveled to, including four in

Europe. The other recalled having visited eight countries, six of which are in Europe. Figure 12 illustrates this information, with each bar representing an individual respondent. While the respondents belonging to the low and mid level of intention groups have somewhat similar travel experiences, those that indicated the highest level of intention clearly have significantly more past travel experience. These results concerning participants' past travel experience, considered a tourist-specific characteristic (personal factor), confirm the third hypothesis.

It can be assumed that past travel experience affects tolerance for the novel because as tourists become more comfortable with traveling, they are less likely to be overwhelmed or distressed by different, or "strange," experiences. Participants reflected this sentiment in their answers, as there was a link between tolerance for, or value ascribed to, novelty, and intention to visit, as illustrated in Table 11. Each "X" in the table represents an individual participant's answer. As evidenced by the results, those with the higher levels of intention to visit Spain are more open to novel and different destinations than those with lower intentions of visiting. These preferences, considered personal factors because they are individual-specific by nature, substantiate the third hypothesis as a relationship with intention to visit is demonstrated.

Table 11: Relationship Between Intention and Destination Preference

<b>Destination Preference</b>	<b>Very Novel</b>	<b>Somewhat Novel</b>	<b>Somewhat Popular/Common</b>	<b>Very Popular/Common</b>
<b>Intention Level:</b>				
<b>High</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		
<b>Mid</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		
<b>Low</b>			<b>XX</b>	

A relationship was also found between participants' level of familiarity with Spain and intention to visit. Although the answers of the participants who had indicated a lower level of intention of visiting ranged from not at all familiar to fairly familiar, it was those with the highest level of intention that stood out. Both participants in this group

revealed that they felt they were quite familiar with Spain. In addition, a relationship was found between affinity for traveling in general and intention to visit Spain. This was expected because those that enjoy traveling more, are more likely to intend to do so. Although all participants indicated a positive attitude towards traveling, both participants with a low level of intention said they only somewhat liked traveling while all other respondents indicated an extreme like for traveling.

These personal factors, along with those previously focused on, all address the third hypothesis. The findings from the interview further validate the hypothesis as a link is demonstrated between individual characteristics, including familiarity and affinity for traveling, and intention to visit. From the number of connections established in this study between tourists' personal traits and intention to visit Spain, it is clear that a strong relationship between the two factors exists. On the other hand, a relatively weak relationship was revealed concerning information sources and intention to visit. This having been said, the fourth hypothesis, which assumes that personal factors, as opposed to information sources, have more bearing on intention to visit, can reasonably be considered valid.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to examine the images tourists had of a destination in order to assess if a link could be established between the various aspects of destination image and tourists' intention to visit. According to the model developed by Beerli and Martín (2004), depicted in Figure 7, individuals form perceptions about destinations from both information sources and personal factors. This perceived destination image then involves some combination of cognitive and affective components, upon which a global, or overall, image is generated. In addition, several studies have been conducted regarding the relationship between destination image and tourist intentions. Past research has shown that there is, in fact, a link between the two concepts, and the more positive an image, the more likely one will intend to visit (McLellan & Foushee 1983, Woodside & Lysonski 1989, Chen & Kerstetter 1999, Gibson, Qi & Zhang 2008). For the purpose of being able to accurately clarify and identify participants' destination images, Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) three continua were used as a framework for better understanding perceptions. The in-depth interviews conducted involved a print advertisement comparison, which also enabled a more distinguished, clearer image that could be analyzed. A variety of information sources and personal factors, which are both recognized as influencers of destination image, were also explored.

According to the responses of participants, a number of findings can be reported. In line with the first hypothesis, *tourist's individual characteristics will influence destination image*, answers revealed this assumption to be true, although to varying extents. It was also interesting that for some traits, those with the highest level of intention demonstrated the most significant relationship, while for others, it was those with the lowest level of intention stood out. According to the answers of the participants in this study, no relationship existed between self-congruency and intention, as all participants indicated they either somewhat or strongly agreed that their destination visitor image was consistent with their actual, ideal, social, and social-ideal selves. Although self-congruency did not reveal a relationship, past travel experience, level of

familiarity, tolerance of, or value for, novelty, and affinity for traveling all revealed a link with image and intention.

The second hypothesis stated, *information sources will influence destination image, but to a lesser extent*. This hypothesis was more difficult to evaluate as many respondents had indicated they were exposed to similar sources of information. While those with the greatest level of intention to visit revealed having encountered the most information sources, all respondents said they had heard and/or seen information about Spain via word-of-mouth, with several indicating also having obtained information from television, movies, and the Internet. This information is important for destination marketers as it gives a clearer picture of how the average tourist is being reached. It is also interesting because the case used in this study, Spain, has been noted for having a fairly successful campaign. However, none of the participants recalled having encountered any induced sources, or promotions from the España campaign, except for on travel sales websites, which could mean that the promotions may have very well been developed by those websites, rather than the tourism organization.

Similarly, the print advertisement comparison further indicated an unclear image of Spain among respondents. Although all participants correctly identified one of the España campaign advertisements as being the most representative of Spain, there were varying degrees of accuracy with the remaining advertisements. One noticeable concern was that participants generally confused the advertisements for Peru as being Spanish, or more representative of Spain than those advertisements actually generated for the España campaign. Additionally, the advertisement all participants indicated as being the most representative of Spain was specifically for Andalucía, rather than for the country of Spain as a whole.

These perceptions are important because as the tourism industry becomes increasingly competitive, and so many destinations tout the same benefits, places must differentiate themselves in order to attract tourists. However, when destinations use advertisements that tourists do not or cannot identify with the place they are promoting, confusion may transpire and/or advertisements may lose their effectiveness. In the print

advertisement considered most representative of Spain by participants, traditional Spanish culture and heritage were depicted by incorporating a flamenco dancer and guitarist against a backdrop of Spanish architecture. The España campaign, then, may be more influential if those traits that tourists most identify as being “Spanish,” like that in the advertisement considered most representative, are focused on.

The last hypothesis, *a positive relationship exists between destination image and intention to visit*, was more of an overall assumption. According to the images described by participants, as well as their overall assessment of Spain as a vacation destination, this hypothesis was accurate. First, a comparison of holistic images participants had of Spain, as expressed in the stories participants told about what they thought a vacation there would involve, revealed discrepancies with regards to level of intention to visit. There was a positive relationship between the amount of description participants incorporated in their stories and intention. Those participants with the highest level of intention included traditional Spanish symbols, such as tapas and sangria, and cited specific attractions they would visit. On the other hand, one participant in the group characterized as having the lowest intention to visit revealed some negative perceptions, such as unfriendliness towards American tourists. Destination Management Organizations and destination marketers, after determining which tourist segments to focus on, could use this information to depict a positive image of locals, and their acceptance or graciousness towards tourists, to address misconceptions of this nature. Second, as could reasonably be assumed, there was also a clear relationship between how participants assessed Spain both by individual attributes and as an overall vacation destination, with their level of intention.

Although the sample interviewed was very small, it can be seen as beneficial in the sense that participants were able to provide insights into the perceptions of the younger American tourist segment, which represent a lot of potential in the tourism industry. Although only a small fraction of the population travels internationally, in 2006, the United States was only behind Germany as far as tourism expenditures were concerned, which totaled at \$72 billion dollars (UNWTO, 2007). In line with the relationship found between intention to visit with propensity to, and affinity for, traveling

indicated by participants in this study, destination marketers might want to focus on attracting those tourists with a mid-level of intention to visit. This could be a profitable segment as those who participated in the interview suggested they highly enjoy traveling, and are likely to do so. If this group had further, and encouraging, information about Spain, which would enable increased familiarity and formation of a clearer image, it is likely they would have a more positive image of the destination, causing their level of intention to increase.

In an international context, the sample being limited to only those residing in the United States, specifically, Wilmington, North Carolina, can be seen as being inhibitive. Other researchers or marketers, however, could apply the same format of the interview to international samples, and/or for studying other destinations. Due to time and resource restrictions, this research was confined by a number of limitations. As the work was only conducted by one researcher and time was quite limited, the sample size was restricted to six participants. Future research could involve interviewing or surveying a larger sample in order to validate findings using statistical analysis. In addition, the sample was relatively homogenous with regards to age. Future studies could include interviewing participants of varying ages to gain more insight into images held of a destination. Finally, as level of intention and previous travel experience were controlled for in this particular study, other aspects could not be. Researchers could perform studies that controlled for different aspects or components to more accurately determine if relationships exist between specific factors and intention.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Interview Format

#### **Holistic Image of Spain:**

*Imagine that next week you will visit Spain for the first time. Tell me your story. What do you think your experience in Spain would be like? What images and thoughts immediately come to mind? What would you expect to see, or feel, hear, smell, taste there?*

*Without any research or additional information, kindly be spontaneous and share whatever thoughts come to your mind right now, whether positive or negative. Make your response as detailed or as brief as you like, there are no limits, but try to express in story format; using complete sentences, not just loose words.*

*If you know little about Spain, your story will probably be short. If you already have clear ideas about Spain, your story might be very long. But remember, there is no right, wrong or best model answer; simply express your own ideas about Spain, and NOT what you think I want to hear.*

*Please share your ideas about Spain with me right now.*

**Attribute-Based Components:**

In the first column, please identify how important each of the following attributes is in your determination of a vacation destination (1= not at all important, 5 = extremely important).

In the second column, please indicate how well each attribute is offered in Spain (1= offers very little, 5= offers very much)

<b><u>Attribute</u></b>	<b><u>Importance</u></b>	<b><u>Spain</u></b>
Good value for money		
Beautiful scenery/natural attractions		
Good climate		
Interesting cultural attractions		
Suitable accommodations		
Appealing local food (cuisine)		
Great beaches/water sports		
Quality of infrastructure		
Personal Safety		
Interesting historical attractions		
Unpolluted/unspoiled environment		
Good nightlife and entertainment		
Standard hygiene and cleanliness		
Interesting and friendly people		

Please indicate how you perceive Spain by crossing a tic on the lines below:

Unpleasant	←						→	Pleasant
Sleepy	←						→	Arousing
Distressing	←						→	Relaxing
Gloomy	←						→	Exciting

On a scale of 1-5, what is your overall impression of Spain as a vacation destination?  
(1=very negative, 5 = very positive)

Can you name any attractions specific to Spain (monuments, museums, etc.)?

Are there any symbols, events, etc. you specifically identify with Spain?

**Print Ad Comparison:**

In the first column, please rank the following twelve print ads in order of how representative you feel they are of Spain. Write the letter of the advertisement you feel is the most representative in the top spot,

In the second column, indicate how representative you feel each particular ad is of Spain (1=not at all representative, 5= extremely representative).

<b><u>Advertisement Letter</u></b>	<b><u>How Representative (1-5)</u></b>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
12.	

What things stood out about (why) the most representative ad(s)/ what do they portray that most accurately depicts your image of Spain?

**Information sources on which their perception was based:**

***Television:***

- News
- Travel Show
- On a TV show
- Movies

**Radio**

**Outdoor (Billboard)**

***Internet:***

- Travel sales website (Expedia, Delta, etc.)
- Travel website (Fodor's, Tripadvisor, etc.)
- E-mail
- Other

**Print Ad (Magazine, newspaper)**

**Personal Selling (telephone)**

**Tourist Information (kiosks, centers)**

**Travel Planning Guides/ Brochures**

**Trade Fair**

**Mail**

**Word of Mouth**

**Other**

**Self-Congruency**

*Take a moment to think about Spain. Think about the kind of person who typically visits Spain. Imagine this tourist in your mind and then describe this person using one or more personal adjectives such as classy, poor, stylish, masculine, sexy, old, athletic, or whatever personal adjectives you can use to describe the typical visitor of Spain.*

*Please indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:*

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This (Spain) is consistent with how I see myself.					
This is consistent with how I would like to see myself.					
This is consistent with how I believe others see me.					
This is consistent with how I would like others to see me.					

**Additional Questions:**

1. How familiar do you think you are with Spain?
  - a. Very familiar
  - b. Quite familiar
  - c. Fairly familiar
  - d. Slightly familiar
  - e. Not at all familiar
  
2. How would you describe your propensity to travel (in general)?
  - a. Very likely
  - b. Somewhat likely
  - c. Not very likely
  - d. Not at all likely
  
3. How would you describe your affinity to traveling?
  - a. Extremely like
  - b. Somewhat like
  - c. Neither like nor dislike
  - d. Somewhat dislike
  - e. Extremely dislike
  
4. When choosing a destination, what kind of destination do you prefer?
  - a. Very novel/unfamiliar
  - b. Somewhat novel/unfamiliar
  - c. Somewhat common/familiar
  - d. Very common/familiar
  
5. How likely are you to choose Spain as an international vacation destination at any time in the future?
  - a. Very likely
  - b. Somewhat likely
  - c. Not very likely
  - d. Not at all likely
  
6. How likely are you to choose Spain as an international vacation destination in the near future (within two years)?
  - a. Very likely
  - b. Somewhat likely

- c. Not very likely
  - d. Not at all likely
7. What is your attitude towards Spain?
- a. Very positive
  - b. Somewhat positive
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Somewhat negative
  - e. Very negative
8. How often do you travel? (Number of times per year) (Domestic/International)
9. Country of residence/ homeland?
10. Number of countries ever visited? Where?
11. Date of Birth?
12. Family life cycle? (Married/Children)
13. Income? (\$10,000 range)
14. Highest level of education completed?
15. Occupation?
16. Gender?

## Appendix B: Print Advertisements

