

Potential tourists' image of a tourist destination: The case of Brazil

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ABSTRACT

This research deals with the image, which potential tourists may have about a tourist destination. Using a quantitative approach and a marketing and communication perspective, we tried to investigate how Brazil is seen by potential tourists who happened to be European students studying at the Halmstad University, Sweden. The research highlighted six categories, upon which the tourists' image of Brazil is based, namely hospitality of the population, sexuality, tourism infra-structure, environment, economy, protection and safety. The results show that the image held by the studied target group about Brazil as a tourist destination, is an exotic country with a friendly population with an exuberant nature; the main identity icons are football and carnival events. Entertainment and fun are some other positive attributes mentioned by the respondents. However, violence and fragile security are the main concerns for the respondents

Key words: marketing, communication, image, tourism, Brazil.

Introduction

The importance of tourism and tourists' image of tourism destinations have been stressed in a number of studies (Pike, S, 2010; McCartney, Butler, and Bennett, 2010; Ortega and Gonzalez, 2007; World Tourism Association, 2007). As reported in the World Tourism Association (2007), in the year 2006, the demand for tourism increased by 4, 5% compared to the previous year; this is said to position this activity among the ones with the higher growth rates on the planet. According to Ortega and Gonzalez (2007), the tourism industry has turned out to be an important industry. It has contributed to make most local, as well as national, economies stronger. Choosing a tourist destination to visit can be likened to evaluating any product/service before its purchase (e.g. Wiang and Gao, 2010; Bilkey and Nies, 1982). The image, which a tourist has of a tourist destination, particularly a country, can influence the decision to choose the destination. A tourist' image of a destination, particularly a country, for tourism is important to investigate (see also Pike, 2011; Gallarza, Saura, and García, 2002), something which has been very scanty in the extant literature. Our study will complement the existing literature by studying the kind of image a potential tourist may hold of a country.

In this study we adopt the definition of an image of a country proposed by Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993). Thus, an image of a country will be the sum of all those emotional and aesthetic qualities such as experience, beliefs, ideas, recollections, and impressions that a person has of a country (p. 56). By adopting this definition of a country's image, we posit that a tourist's image of a country will be a function of the various sources of information, which will form his/her personal frame of reference (see also Kim, Letho and Morrison (Wang and Gao, 2010; 2007). When it comes to tourism, Kim et al. (2007), maintain that a customer's

search for information is a dynamic process, in which the customer makes use of different sources of different information with the main objective to facilitate the planning of his/her trip. Kim et al. (2007) distinguish between two sources of information, namely marketing-dominated and non-marketing-dominated information. The marketing-dominated information comes from sources such as advertising in the mass media, brochures, tourist guides, portals and more recently the Internet. The non-marketing-dominated information can be obtained through the daily contacts with friends, family and through personal experiences.

For example, media shows and advice or information from friends, may contribute to the image formation that people construct about products, services, organizations and tourist destinations. As Aaker (2002) mentions, an association and an image represent the perception that can, or not, reflect the objective reality. With regards to a tourist destination, Kotler et al. (1993) consider that an image is constructed based in believes, ideas and impressions that a person possesses about a place. In view of the above, the main objective of this study is to identify the image, which potential tourists may have before visiting a tourist destination, which in this study is a country. Consequently, the results of this study may help stakeholders such as government tourism organizations, state tourism organizations, and private firms engaged in tourism activities to carefully consider country image when marketing their destinations strategically to tourists (existing and potential ones).

The rest of the chapter will proceed as follows: In the next section, we present our frame of references and analytical framework, followed by the methodology employed in this study. Thereafter, the results and the analysis of the study are presented. Then, the conclusion of the study is presented, followed by some implications of the study and suggestions for future studies.

Frame of references

In times of global economy, tourism has been sold to consumers as a product, packaged as goods or services that are offered to tourists. In this way, the image of a place has been shown as an important element that influences the selection of vacation destinations (Gallarza et al., 2002; Baloglu, S., McCleary, Ken W, 1999). Research has demonstrated that image is a valuable concept in understanding the destination selection process of tourists. According to Leisen (2001), image influences a traveler's expectation of a destination. For Leisen, a positive image is more likely that the traveler will be rewarded with a good life experience. Consequently, the images held by individuals in the marketplace are crucial to a destination's marketing success (p. 869).

Nowadays, the results of tourism image research are used by marketers to conduct intelligent destination marketing, which means that important decisions regarding planning, development, positioning, and promotion depend on these results (Tasci, Gartner, Cavusgil, 2007).

Beerli, and Martí (2004) highlight that the evaluation and analysis of destination image has been the subject of much attention in related academic literature, and has made a significant contribution to a greater understanding of tourist behavior. According to Tasci, Gartner and Cavusgil (2007), there are some different constructs that create the image a person has regarding a destination. They mention five constructs: the destination attractiveness, destination awareness, destination evaluation, destination perception, destination attributes and destination quality. Liesen (2001) classifies the image of a destination into three dimensions.

First, it is about the socio-cultural amenities such as wonderful cultural traditions, interesting local arts and crafts and Interesting cultural diversity. Second, natural amenities such as: beautiful mountains, outstanding natural wonders, wonderful sightseeing opportunities, and appealing opportunities for exploring wilderness and nature. And third, climate attributes interrelation: appealing winter climate, appealing summer climate.

Pérez-Nebra (2010), uses the ten suggested dimensions by the world Tourism organization: 1- Accommodation services (hotel, hostels); 2- Food and drinking; 3 – Transportation; 4 – Travel agencies, tourist operators; 5 – Cultural services; 6- Entertainment and leisure; 7- Shopping; 8- Scenery; 9- Population hospitality; and 10: others.

Berli, A. and Martí (2004, p. 659) have, from the existing scales of measuring images of a destination, classified all factors influencing the image assessments by individuals into nine dimensions, namely nine dimensions/attributes that determine the perceived destination image of an individual: 1 - Natural Resources (e.g. weather and its variations, beaches and its variations, wealth of countryside such as protected nature reserves and variety and uniqueness of flora and fauna. 2- General infrastructure such as development of telecommunications, development and quality of roads, airports and ports. 3- Tourist Infrastructure such as hotel and self-catering accommodation, restaurants, tourist centers and network of tourist information 4- Tourist Leisure and Recreation such as night life, entertainment and sports activities, and shopping. 5 - Culture, History and Art such as gastronomy, customs and ways of life, Museums, historical buildings, and monuments. 6- Political and Economic Factors such as political stability, economic development, Safety, crime rate and prices. 7- Natural Environment such as beauty of the scenery, cleanliness, attractiveness of the cities and towns and traffic congestion. 8- Social Environment such as, hospitality and friendliness of the local residents, underprivileged and poverty and language barriers. 9- Atmosphere of the Place: such as fun, enjoyable, exotic, attractive or interesting, and place with a good reputation.

Ching-Fu Chen and DungChun (2007) do not refer to the information to be collected as a dimension; they classify it into factors of analysis of the destination image. They classify the factors as: a) Destination brand: offers personal safety, a good quality of life, clean, a good name and reputation, hospitable and friendly people. b) Entertainment: good night life, a good shopping place, varied gastronomy, exotic. c) Nature and culture: great variety of fauna and flora, spectacular landscape, unusual ways of life and customs. d) Sun and sand: good weather, good beaches. On the other hand, Chaudhary (2000) refers to twenty variables. Besides the ones mentioned by the authors above, such as safety, entertainment, hospitality, cleanliness among others, he includes: inexpensive destination, availability of tourist land-marks, less exploited (close to nature), country of cheaters, poor guide services, unsafe drinking water, nuisance caused by beggars and unethical practices existing in travel trade business.

Baloglu et al. (1999), also work with factor of analysis of perceptual/cognitive items. They classify the factors into three. Factor I is Quality of Experience such as standard hygiene and cleanliness, quality of infrastructure, personal safety, good nightlife and entertainment, suitable accommodations, great beaches/water sports, and interesting and friendly people. Factor II is Attractions such as interesting cultural attractions, interesting historical attractions and beautiful scenery/natural attractions. Factor III is Value/Environment such as good value for money, unpolluted/unspoiled environment, and good climate.

Apparently, the above review of the literature have produced very useful frames of reference for the understanding for the factors and/or sources of factors which underlie an individual's perception of an image of a tourism destination before and after the individual's actual visitation of the destination. In studying the image formation and the impact thereof when an individual is confronted with the choice of a tourism destination, certainly, different researchers will concentrate on different dimensions or factors when trying to measure an individual's image of a tourism destination (Pérez-Nebra (2010), Ching-Fu and Dung, 2007; Beerli and Martín, 2004; and Leisen).

Theoretical framework

Building on the contributions made by the numerous researchers in the frame of references reviewed above, the present study has focused on the following six variables, namely hospitality of the local residents, tourism infrastructure, environment, economy, protection, safety, and sexuality to investigate potential tourists' image of a tourist destination. Of all the six variables, used to investigate the phenomenon under study, only sexuality is not mentioned in the extant literature reviewed above. Of importance is to stress the interrelationships between the variables under investigation, namely hospitality of the local residents, tourism infrastructure, environment, economy, protection, safety, and sexuality, all helping to form the basis of a tourist's image of a tourism destination (see for e.g. Pérez-Nebra, 2010; Ching-Fu and Dung Chun, 2007; Beerli and Marti, 2004, all reviewed above). The present authors, however, found the variable, sexuality, to be relevant because some mass media (e.g. T.Vs. and print magazines) discuss how certain tourism destinations are associated with sex adventures. According to Leisen (2001), a person can create an image of a place by processing information from various sources over time. For Chaudhary (2000) the sources of information in tourism image formation could be Newspapers/ T.V., Travel agents/tour operators, Travel offices abroad, Friends and relations, Books/guides, and Others. The six variables, under investigation here, taken together, can strongly make up the perception of a tourist's image of a destination that may or may not reflect the objective reality, using Aaker's (2002) terminology.

The interrelationships between the six variables produce the result that potential tourist to a destination will use that image to evaluate the tourism destination under consideration, just as customers do evaluate some products/services before their purchase (e.g. Wiang and Gao, 2010; Bilkey and Nies, 1982). Hence, it is contended here that the image, which a tourist has of a tourist destination, particularly a country, can influence the decision to choose the destination.

With the six variables identified and used in our study, we try to (1) identify the factors, upon which potential tourists may build their image of a tourism destination and (2) to also find out the different sources, from which the factors underlying their image formation, have been collected. McCartney, Butler and Bennett (2008) mention that Guun's "dimorphic theory" of image suggested that the image of a destination can be formed through either an actual visit (organic) or by externally received (induced) information from sources such as broadcast and print media and word of mouth. They state that development of destination image is a continuous process formed from projection of images (from "official" sources and other sources such as news media, personal visitor experience, and personal contacts) to reception of these images by the intended target travelers, through whatever media are appropriate to reach potential tourists. For them, movies as a form of publicity have been

found to influence both travel behavior and image perceptions. Today, the use of the Internet and Web sites continues to grow as an important source for travelers (p. 185).

Methodology

In order to collect the data, the best methodological procedure must be selected. In this way, the process of selecting the method and the type of research must be carefully thought out in order to guarantee the validity and reliability of the study.

Bryman and Bell (2003) state that for a quantitative method, when collecting and analyzing the data, the emphasis is based on the quantification of the data. Aaker, Kumar and Day (2006) mention that this type of investigation puts together characteristics of the population being measured, determine the frequency in which it happens, and allows the researcher to establish the statistics to clearly present the facts. For Bryman and Bell (2003), one of the advantages of this method is the possibility, in which it allows one to measure the reactions of many people throughout a limited number of questions. It permits a statistical comparison of the data and the results can be generalized to the entire population.

Gil (1994) discusses the relative importance of a descriptive research. For instance, it allows one to describe the characteristics of a population, a phenomenon or establish the relation between variables. The author highlights that this type of research is connected to the technique of collecting the data. The present study builds on the discussions put forth by the authors above; thus, for the present study, the quantitative method and the descriptive type of research were selected.

However, it must be mentioned that before deciding about the method and type of research of the present study, an exploratory type of research to provide the researchers with information about the subject under study, was undertaken. According to Aaker (2001), an exploratory type of research is used when researchers are looking for information to better understand the nature of the studied problem, the possible alternatives of hypotheses and the relevant variables to be considered.

Regarding the technique to collect the data, questionnaire composed of open, closed and multiple choice questions were constructed and given to respondents. The questionnaire dealt with matters related to personal information and issues about the image of Brazil. Barros and Duarte (2005) mention that when applying questionnaire with closed ended question, the instrument must be well constructed, containing the same questions for all the respondents to allow the researcher to establish patterns in the responses. It also permits the comparison among the answers.

In order to select the right respondents (i.e. persons in the chosen sample) to answer the questionnaire, the survey instrument was divided into two parts. The first one was composed of questions related to information about the respondent's background such as sex, age, and traveling information. In this part two filter questions were done in order to get the right person to answer the complete questionnaire. The first filter question, which comes in the very beginning, was related to the status of the person who was handed the questionnaire. The respondents were classified as student, teacher, and staff, visiting or others. Any response other than the respondent being a student was excluded. It meant that the respondent would not be eligible to answer the questionnaire. The second filter question was about the origin of the respondent. Here, it was asked where the respondent comes from. The main point of asking this question was to select only European students to continue to

answer the questionnaire. All the five continents in the world were represented in this question. Questionnaire with the responses from Europeans were taken into account, while the others were invalidated.

The selection of the European students was decided mainly for two reasons. First, Europeans are known as world travelers. Also, South America, after political, economic and safety changes, has been a trend as a tourist destination for the Europeans. In this case, Brazil has been an important tourism destination for them because the country is known, by now, as a place where football world cup in 2014 and the 2016 Olympics games will take place. Second, the majority of students at Halmstad University are Europeans. Therefore, the consistency of the responses, based on cultural elements, for example, (even though they can vary, to some extent, from country to country), can be reached.

For the second part, the collected information was specifically collected about the image of Brazil. The Likert scale was applied in answering the majority of the questions. The questions were composed of answers with 4 levels that varied between very high and very low. The options of “not” and “have no idea” were also included in the responses. Also, all the respondents were asked to give the source (s), from which they got information about Brazil. This question was a multiple choice question with the main objective to know the sources, from where they make up their opinions about a tourism destination. Internet, Tv, guides, family and friends were some of the sources asked.

With regards to how and the location where the respondents were approached to answer the questionnaire, they were selected randomly at the University’s campus such as classrooms, restaurants, corridors, gymnastic halls and so on. Also, in the university’s official dormitories the students were approached. For this study, the questionnaire was self-applied.

For the analysis of the data, the variables investigated were categorized into six groups of information, as can be seen in the Table 1 below.

Category of information	Collected information
Reception from the population	Friendliness, hospitality, education
Sexuality	The level of conservatism or liberalism, and promiscuity.
Tourism infra-structure	Living, food and entertainment.
Environment	Level of concern about nature
Security	Safety and level of violence
Economic situation	Level of richness

Table 1: Variables underlying the formation of an image of a tourism destination

Population and sample

According to Zikmund (2003), a population of a study is composed by individuals that share the same characteristics. In this way, the population of the present study was the entire student body enrolled at Halmstad University, Sweden, at the time of the study, 2009. The sample frame consisted of a random sample of 392 students.

When a sample is taken into account, Bryman and Bell (2007) mention that, in quantitative research, the randomly sampled population is commonly used; here, it is expected that all the elements belonging to the population in the sample have the same probability to be part of the study. Regarding the sample size, it was decided for a margin of error of 4,8% for above and below, of the entire student population of about 7000 thousand (at the HamIstad University) at the time of the study, reaching, with it, a confidence level of 95%. The number of students who answered the questionnaire amounted to 392 Europeans students. All the 392 respondents answered the questionnaire; hence, there was no non-response.

Empirical data

The results of the collected data show that, out of 392 responses, 66% of the surveyed students were women and 34% men. Regarding the age of the respondents, the results show that the majority of them were between the ages 22 and 27 years old, 53, 06% and 17 and 21 years old, 32, 4%. A check to find out whether or not the respondents have been traveling to other countries, an indication of their propensity to travel to other places, revealed the following result in Table 2 below.

None	52	13,27%
1 time	99	15,26%
2 times	113	28,83%
3 times	51	13,01%
4 or more times	59	15,05%
No response	18	4,59%

Table 2 Respondent's propensity to travel

In line with the objective of the present study, the image of Brazil as held by the respondents that have never been to Brazil before, was asked based on the following factors: Security, the image about the reception that a tourist can receive from the Brazilian population, sexuality, tourism infrastructure, environment, and the economic situation. The results of the respondents' responses are presented in Table 3 below.

Category of information	Collected information	Perception or image
Security	Safety	Very safe 0,26%, Safe 10,97%, less safe 40,82% Not safe 30,36%, no opinion 17,59%
	Violence	Very violent 16,07%/ Violent 49,49%, less violent 11,73%, not violent 1,28% , no opinion 21,43%
Reception from the population	Friendliness	Very friendly 27,30%, Not friendly 0,51%, Friendly 56,38%, Less friendly 1,53%, no opinion 14,28
	Hospitality	Very hospitable 21,43%, hospitable 48,72%, less hospitable 10,46%, not hospitable 1,28%, no opinion 18,11
	Education	Very educated 0,51%, Educated 31,89%, Less educated 45,66%, Not educated 2,04, no opinion 18,11%
Sexuality	Level of conservatism/liberalism	Highly Conservative 2,55%, conservative 28,83%, low Conservative 17,86%, open mind 21,94%, no opinion 28,82%
	Promiscuity	Very promiscuous 6,12%, promiscuous 32,91%, less promiscuous 15,31%, not promiscuous 3,57%, no opinion 42,09%
Tourism infrastructure	Living	Very good 0,26%, good 14,29, regular 46,17%, bad 22,19, very bad 1,28%, no opinion 15,81%
	Food	Very good 9,44%, good 43,88%, regular 26,28%, bad 3,57%, very bad 0,0%, no opinion 16,83%
	Entertainment/fun	Very fun 32,40%, not fun 0,77%, fun 46,94%, less fun 3,06%, no opinion 16,83%
Environment	People's concern with the environment	Highly concerned 0,51%, concerned 19,13%, less concerned 37,76%, not concerned 12,50%, no opinion 30,1%
	Nature	Very Impressive 47, impressive 37,24%, 19%, not impressive 0,51%, less impressive 1,79%, no opinion 13,27%
Economic Situation	Economic Situation	Very poor 2,55, poor 46,17%, rich 1,02%, average 32,65%, very rich 0,77, no opinion 16,84%

Table 3: Respondents' image held of Brazil

The multiple choice questions required the respondents to mention the sources, from which they constructed their image about Brazil. The results in Table 4 show that TV is the main media mentioned, followed by newspaper, specialized magazine, Internet and friends and family.

	Qty	%
Information from TV	215	54,85
Information from newspaper	73	18,62
Information from specialized magazines	19	4,85
Information from internet	61	15,56
Information from friends and family	114	29,08
I have no image about Brazil/I have no opinion about it.	15	3,83
Other	13	3,32
No response.	170	43,37
Total	680	173,47

Table 4: Source of information in image formation

The other questions were as follows: During the process of choosing a city or country to visit, which of the Sources below do you use to search for information in order to make sure that you are going to the right place? As can be seen in Figures 1 and 2 below, the results show that Internet, family and friends were the main sources, from which the respondents get the information that help them to decide on which destination to select.

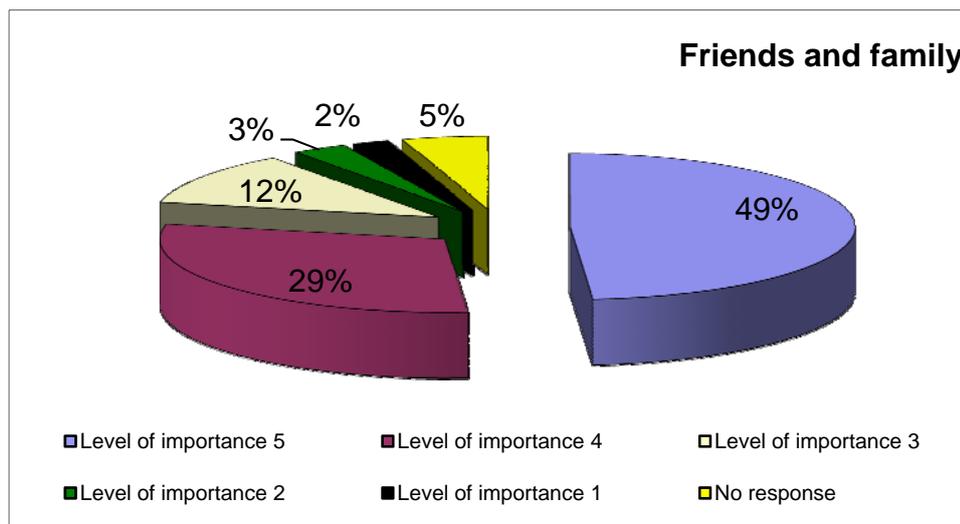


Figure 1: Source to decide a tourism destination – Friends and family

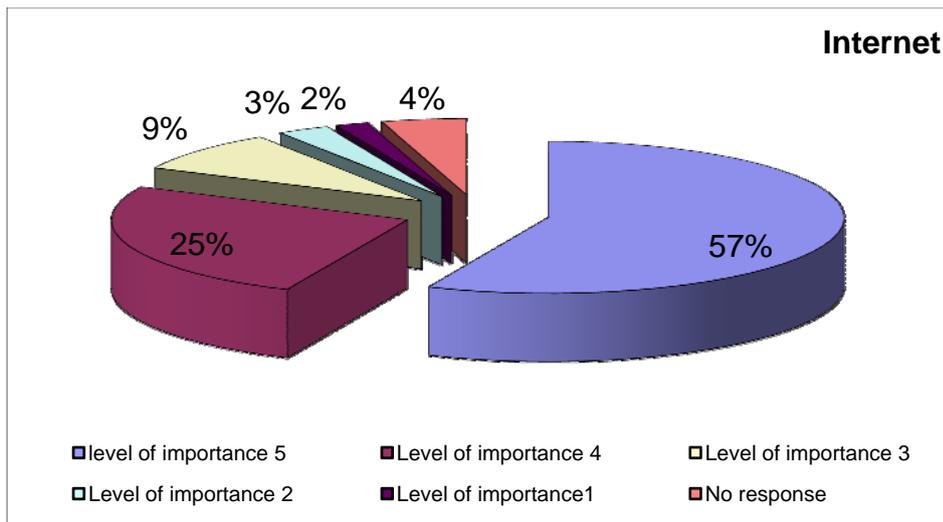


Figure 2: Source to decide a tourism destination - Internet

Finally, the respondents were asked to write a word which would better describe Brazil; the following were the main adjectives used.

	Qty	%
Football	41	10,46
Carnival	35	8,93
Beautiful	16	4,08
Sun	15	3,83
Forest/ nature	14	3,57
Beaches	11	2,81

Table 6: Adjectives qualifying Brazil

172 respondents did not know what to say about it.

Analysis

A tourist's image of a tourism destination has a tremendous effect on the tourist's search for information, evaluation of the information and the decision to choose a final tourism destination, compared with other destinations (Pike, 2010; Wang and Gao, 2010; Ortega and Gonzalez, 2007, and Baloglu et al., 1999). The image, which a tourist may have about a tourism destination, consists, for the most part, of a number of factors and their interrelationship to produce a 'bundle of benefits', which the tourists may be looking for. A number of these factors, forming a coherent image for a tourist, have been identified in the literature (Ching-Fu and DungChun, 2007; Beerli and Marti, 2004). Examples of such factors are: (a) natural resources (e.g. weather and its variations, beaches, wealth of the countryside such as protected forests reserves, and unique flora and fauna). (b) General infrastructure such as development of telecommunications, development and quality of roads, airports and sea-ports. (c) Destination brand, the example of which is personal safety, good quality of life, clean, and good name and reputation, hospitable and friendly people. (d) Entertainment: here, of interest would be a good night life, good shopping places, and varied gastronomies and exoticism. (e) Culture, History, and Art: Customs, ways of life, museums, historical buildings and monuments are of interest to many tourists. (f) Political and Economic Factors: Of

interest are political stability, economic development, safety, crime rates and general price levels in an economy.

The present study surveyed respondents to learn about factors, which may help them to form an image of a tourism destination, here Brazil. Based on the extant literature such as the above, respondents were asked to express their perception or image of Brazil when considering the following interrelated factors: (1) Reception from the population: Specific information collected was friendliness, hospitality, and education. (2) Sexuality (a factor, which the extant literature does not mention at all, but is frequently discussed in the mass media as important motive for some tourists to visit a particular destination). Here, information was collected about the level of conservatism or liberalism, and promiscuity about sexuality. (3) Tourism infrastructure: Information was collected about living, food and entertainment. (4) Environment: Here, information was collected about respondents' concern. Table 3 shows the results of respondents, potential tourists, who have never been to Brazil before.

Tourists draw on various sources of information to build their image (s) of a tourism destination (Wang and Gao, 2010; Kim et al., 2007). For Kim et al. (2007), sources of information can be marketing-dominated and non-marketing-dominated. The marketing-dominated information comes from sources such as advertising in the mass media, brochures, tourist guides, portals and the Internet. The non-marketing-dominated information can be obtained from daily contacts with friends, family members, and personal experiences. The various sources of information will not only form the tourist's personal frame of references, but will also facilitate the choice and the planning of his/her trip to a destination (Wiang and Gao, 2010; Kim et al., 2007; Bilkey and Nies, 1982). In the present study respondents were asked to give the sources, from which they obtained their information about the tourism destination under study, Brazil. The results of the respondents' responses are reported in Table 4, where for, instance, TV as a source of information turned out to be the major source, from which the respondents get their information, followed by information from friends and family members. However, when it comes to the level of importance of the various sources for a tourist to draw on to decide for a tourism destination, Internet turned out to be the major source, 57% (See Figure 1) and friends and family members (see Figure 2) came second, 49%. In both Figures 1 and 2, we are dealing with only sources that were perceived by the respondents to be very significant when it comes to their decision about selecting a destination; and this turned out to be the Internet and the family members. Below, we present the conclusions of our study.

Conclusion

The selection of tourism destination, as stressed in the literature, is influenced by the image that the destination has in the mind of a tourist. Consequently, the images held by individuals in the marketplace are crucial to a destination's marketing success. Tasci, Gartner and Cavusgil (2007) mention that nowadays, the results of tourism image research are used by marketers to conduct intelligent destination marketing, which means that important decisions regarding planning, development, positioning, and promotion depend on these results.

For the present study, the purpose of this study was to analyze the image that respondents hold about a tourism destination, in this case Brazil. The results show that the image of Brazil, which is held by the respondents are as follows: (1) as depicted in Table 3, majority of the respondents do not consider Brazil to be safe; and Brazil is seen to be violent. (2) Majority of

the respondents believe that Brazil is poor, with less educated people, and less concerned with the environment. However, when it comes to sexuality, the results show that the image held about the subject varies in a similar level between conservative and open mind and promiscuous and no opinion. (3) Majority of the respondents hold the image that Brazil is a country of very hospitable people. The majority of the respondents also have the image that Brazil is a country of much fun, with good and regular food; Brazil is also believed to have regular/bad living which means a poor offering regarding to hotels/hostel and restaurant infra-structure. Above all, the majority of the respondents hold the image that Brazil is a place with a very impressive nature.

Finally, a tourist's image of a country will be a function of the various sources of information, which will form his/her personal frame of reference (Kim, Letho and Morrison, 2007; Wang and Gao, 2010). In this study the results show that TV, friends and family, newspaper and internet are the main sources, from which the respondents form their image about a tourism destination. However, in order to make a decision about any destination to visit, the respondents will rely mainly on the opinion of friends, family, and conducting a search in the Internet.

In sum, the findings of the present study can be likened to what is stated elsewhere in the literature. Thus, according to Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993), an image of a country will be the sum of all those emotional and aesthetic qualities such as experience, beliefs, ideas, recollections, and impressions that a person has of a country.

Implication of the study

Attracting tourists into a tourism destination is important, but the ability to convey information in order to form a positive image in the mind of the public, can be a very difficult task. Research has demonstrated that image is a valuable concept in understanding the destination selection process of tourists. Leisen (2001) mentions that a positive image is more likely that the traveler will be rewarded with a good life experience. The author says that the image influences a traveler's expectation of a destination.

As depicted in Table 3, the perception or image of the respondents that have never been in Brazil before is not very positive. In this way, Tasci, Gartner, Cavusgil,(2007) say that it is important to take decisions regarding planning, development, positioning, and promotion in order to change the image. However, the decision must be based on knowledge and understanding of opportunities that the country has. As can be noticed, TV, friends and family, newspaper and Internet are the main sources, from which the respondents form their image about the tourism destination.

By investigating the image that the respondents hold about Brazil, this research revealed interesting data about their image of the country. It is important to highlight that the respondents in the present study have never been to Brazil. The information that they use to construct an image about Brazil, as a tourism destination, is gathered by watching TV, reading newspapers and navigating in the Internet. McCartney, Butler and Bennett (2008), mention that Guun's "dimorphic theory" of image suggested that the image of a destination can be formed through either an actual visit (organic) or by externally received (induced) information from sources such as broadcast and print media and word of mouth. Equally important is to emphasize it that the results of this study may help stakeholders such as government tourism organizations, state tourism organizations, and private firms engaged in tour-

ism activities to carefully consider country image when marketing their destinations strategically to tourists (existing and potential ones).

Limitation and suggestion for future studies

An important limitation of the present study is the sample used, namely, only European students studying at the Halmstad University, Sweden. The focused on the European students was a stark delimitation, although it helped us to explore some of the factors that do compose the underlying information of a potential tourist's image of a tourism destination. Potential tourists that may likely conceive of the idea to visit a tourism destination such as Brazil can, in reality, come from all parts of the world. Hence, future research should aim at a broader population and/or sample size, which will go beyond borders, for tourists to a tourism destination can come from anywhere in the world.

Another limitation, which needs be mentioned here, is about the mere identification of the image held by potential tourists and also the identification of the sources, from which respondents' image formation building of a tourism destination is based. Essentially, the present study highlights the factors, upon which the respondents have expressed their image of Brazil, also indicating the major sources, from which their information for the image building was collected. But, whether or not the respondents will, in reality, base their decision to visit Brazil one day, based on the variables that have depicted their image of the country in the present study, needs to be investigated further. This further study is important because the image, which a tourist may have about a tourism destination, can derive from a number of factors and their interrelationships to produce a 'bundle of benefits', which the tourists may be looking for (Ching-Fu and DungChun, 2007; Beerli and Marti, 2004).

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