Exploring the cognitive–affective nature of destination image and the role of psychological factors in its formation

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Abstract

The purpose of this work is to enrich the body of knowledge on destination image by examining in depth the multi-dimensional nature of this concept, as well as analysing the relationship between psychological factors and perceived image of a tourist destination. The research was conducted with 807 tourists visiting a holiday destination. As hypothesized, results found that destination image is a multi-dimensional concept formed by cognitive and affective evaluations of a place. In addition, results provide support for the influence of psychological factors, i.e. motivations and cultural values, on image that individuals have of a tourist destination before visiting it. Finally, several managerial implications concerning the promotion and positioning of tourist destinations are outlined in this study.
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1. Introduction

At the present time, tourism is one of the sectors that provide the largest contribution to the economic development of countries (Kandampully, 2000). It contributes to the income and employment generation in society, as well as to the enrichment of many related industries. Thus, tourism is considered an extremely interesting phenomenon for both academics and practitioners. On the other hand, new demographic, socioeconomic and technological tendencies, as well as high competition among tourist destinations have recently been identified in tourism (Joppe, Martin, & Waalen, 2001). In this sense, it should be emphasized that destinations mainly compete based on their perceived images relative to competitors in the marketplace (Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001). Consequently, it is necessary to develop a positive image of the tourist destination in target markets to achieve a real competitive advantage (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b; Gartner, 1993).

Recognizing the images that tourists have of a tourist destination is necessary to identify its strengths and weaknesses (Chen & Uysal, 2002), to promote it efficiently in the marketplace (Leisen, 2001) and to guarantee its competitive success (Telisman-Kosuta, 1994). Given its relevance, destination image is one of the most explored fields in tourism research (Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). Nevertheless, more effort is required in order to explore the multi-dimensional nature and the formation of destination image. In the past, the cognitive structure of destination image has been extensively examined in tourism literature. Recently, several studies have proposed the cognitive–affective nature of destination image. In this way, this concept is integrated not only by the individuals' cognitive evaluations, but also by their affective evaluations of a tourist destination (Kim & Richardson, 2003; Pike & Ryan, 2004). With regard to the formation, the need for more knowledge on destination image formation has recently been recognized (Gallarza, Gil, & Calderón, 2002). Stimulus factors (information sources and previous experience) and personal factors (social and psychological variables) were included by Baloglu and McCleary (1999a) in their model of destination image formation. Most previous studies have explored the role of stimulus factors

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and social factors in the image formation process (e.g. Baloglu, 2001; Hui & Wan, 2003; Rittichainuwat, Qu, & Brown, 2001). Unfortunately, theoretical and empirical research on the influence of psychological factors on destination image has been limited.

With this in mind, this research attempts to contribute to destination image literature in several ways. Firstly, literature is overflowing with studies that analyse only the cognitive structure of destination image (e.g. Chen & Kerstetter, 1999; Court & Lupton, 1997; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Hui & Wan, 2003; Leisen, 2001). In line with a more recent approach, the cognitive–affective nature of destination image is explored in this research. In particular, the first aim of this study is to identify the cognitive and affective dimensions of perception that individuals use to form their images of tourist destinations in the decision-making processes. Secondly, the influence of psychological factors on destination image is examined to enhance the body of knowledge on destination image formation. More specifically, the second aim of this study is to discover if individuals with different psychological motivations and cultural values have a different image of the tourist destination before visiting it.

2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

The theoretical bases for the nature and formation of destination image are examined in this section. There are many contributions in literature to the destination image concept (see Table 1). Terms such as "impression", "perception" or "mental representation" of a tourist destination are generally used in order to conceptualize destination image in tourism research.[1] Given that image is conceived as a subjective concept (Bigné, Sánchez, & Sánchez, 2001; Gallarza et al., 2002; Leisen, 2001), the reality of the tourist destination can differ significantly from its perceived image (Gartner, 1993). Consequently, it is necessary to understand the dimensions that tourists use to form their destination images, as well as the role of psychological factors (internal factors) in their formation, in order to improve the positioning of tourist destinations in the target markets.

2.1. Nature of destination image

An exploration of the nature of destination image requires examining the two main streams of research on this topic. More concretely, it is necessary to distinguish between the traditional cognitive approach and the recent cognitive–affective approach. In earlier studies, only the cognitive component of destination image was considered. Recently, cognitive and affective dimensions are jointly captured in studies on destination image. The cognitive

Table 1
Definitions of destination image

Author/s	Definition
Lawson and Baud-Bovy (1977)	An expression of knowledge, impressions, prejudices, imaginations and emotional thoughts an individual has of a specific place
Crompton (1979)	Sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination
Assael (1984)	Total perception of the destination that is formed by processing information from various sources over time
Phelps (1986)	Perceptions or impressions of a place
Gartner and Hunt (1987)	Impressions that persons hold about a state in which they do not reside
Moutinho (1987)	An individual's attitude toward the destination attributes based on their knowledge and feelings
Calantone et al. (1989)	Perceptions of potential tourist destinations
Embacher and Buttle (1989)	Ideas or conceptions held individually or collectively of the destination under investigation
Chon (1990)	Result of the interaction of a person's beliefs, ideas, feelings, expectations and impressions about a destination
Echtner and Ritchie (1991)	The perceptions of individual destination attributes and the holistic impression made by the destination
Dadgostar and Isotalo (1992)	Overall impression or attitude that an individual acquires of a place
Milman and Pizam (1995)	Visual or mental impression of a place, a product, or an experience held by the general public
MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997)	A composite of various products (attractions) and attributes woven into a total impression
Pritchard (1998)	An visual or mental impression of a specific place
Baloglu and McCleary (1999a)	An individual's mental representation of knowledge, feelings, and global impressions about a destination
Coshall (2000)	The individual's perceptions of the characteristics of destinations
Murphy, Pritchard and Smith (2000)	A sum of associations and pieces of information connected to a destination, which would include multiple components of the destination and personal perception
Tapachai and Waryszak (2000)	Perceptions or impressions of a destination held by tourists with respect to the expected benefit or consumption values
Bigné, Sánchez and Sánchez (2001)	The subjective interpretation of reality made by the tourist
Kim and Richardson (2003)	Totality of impressions, beliefs, ideas, expectations, and feelings accumulated towards a place over time

component refers to the beliefs or knowledge a person has of the characteristics or attributes of a tourist destination (Baloglu, 1999; Pike & Ryan, 2004), while the affective dimension is represented by the individual's feelings toward the tourist destination (Chen & Uysal, 2002; Kim & Richardson, 2003). According to recent studies, the coexistence of both components may explain in a better way the image a tourist has of a place that is not entirely determined by its physical properties (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997). In this sense, an amalgam of emotional experiences

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[1] In literature, these terms or concepts are employed in an interchangeable way when allusions to destination image are made by previous studies.

such as pleasure or excitement is frequently evoked by tourist destinations (Walmsley & Young, 1998). Finally, the significant influence of cognitive image on affective image has been found in several studies (Baloglu, 1999; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Stern & Krakover, 1993). According to Russell (1980) first, information about the environment is interpreted and then it is used to categorize the individual's emotional states. This would justify the cognitive–affective sequence of destination image.

However, most empirical studies have exclusively analysed the cognitive component of destination image through the structured technique or multi-attribute approach (e.g. Chon, 1991; Court & Lupton, 1997; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gartner & Shen, 1992). Factors such as "natural environment", "cultural heritage", "tourist infrastructures" or "atmosphere" underlie in the cognitive structure of destination image. Recently, several studies have included cognitive and affective attributes in the measurement of destination image (Baloglu, 2001; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Kim & Richardson, 2003). In line with this new approach, destination image should be considered a multi-dimensional phenomenon that includes not only beliefs or knowledge about the place's attributes, but also the individual's feelings toward the tourist destination. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed in this research:

H1. Destination image is jointly formed by the individual's cognitive and affective evaluations of the tourist destination.

2.2. Formation of destination image

Understanding the image formation process may help to improve the attractiveness and market competitiveness of tourist destinations (Yoon & Kim, 2000, unpublished). According to Reynolds (1965), the image formation process is defined as the development of a mental construct on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions. These impressions are elaborated, embellished and ordered in the individual's mind. In a similar way, Court and Lupton (1997) established that the perception of a tourist destination is based on the information processed from different sources over time. This information is organized into a mental concept that is meaningful to the individual, i.e. destination image (Leisen, 2001).

However, a more overall and dynamic comprehension of this process is required (Jenkins, 1999). In this study, the model from Baloglu and McCleary (1999a) is taken as reference for laying the foundations for the study of destination image formation. According to it, several types of factors can play an important role in the image formation process: stimulus factors and personal factors. Stimulus factors refer to a physical object or previous experience, while personal factors are represented by the

individual's social and psychological characteristics. In relation to stimulus factors, many studies have found that "variety and type of information sources" (Baloglu, 1999; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a) and "previous experience" (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Hsu, Wolfe, & Kang, 2004; Litvin & Ling, 2001; Vogt & Andereck, 2003) have a significant effect on perceived image of a tourist destination. Likewise, the influence of social characteristics (sex, age, education and others) on destination image has been found in tourism literature (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Chen & Kerstetter, 1999; Hui & Wan, 2003; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001).

Unfortunately, past research on the effect of psychological factors on destination image has been limited. According to previous theoretical work, perception is generally integrated by activities of exposure, attention and interpretation of external stimuli. In addition, these activities depend on the stimulus characteristics and the individual's internal factors (Hawkins, Best, & Coney, 2003). In tourism, the representation of a tourist destination in the individual's mind (i.e. destination perception) is generally carried out on the basis of stimuli processing, which may be significantly influenced by psychological factors of the individual. Based on this assumption, the influence of psychological motivations and cultural values on the perceived image of a tourist destination is explored in this study.

2.2.1. The role of psychological motivations

Traditionally, needs have been considered as a vehicle for the study of human motivation (Oliver, 1997). In short, individuals constantly strive to achieve a state of stability or homeostasis. This psychological state is disrupted when they are made aware of a need. Subsequently, need and the desire to satisfy it help to generate the individual's motivations with respect to a specific action (Goossens, 2000). Therefore, motivation can be defined as an internal force originated from a need not satisfied which impels the individuals to be involved in a specific behaviour (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004) or, more concretely, to pursue need-fulfilling activities (Oliver, 1997). In this motivational process, it should be emphasized that the behaviour of individuals satisfying their needs has been explored through different approaches. Under a traditional cognitive approach, this behaviour would be guided by mental activities that involve information processing (cognitions such as beliefs and perceptions of a product or service). According to an affective approach, individuals' emotions or feelings would be a part of their decision-making and behaviour processes (Decrop, 1999).

In tourism research, motivation is generally considered as the main determinant of tourist behaviour (Hudson, 1999). Underlying motivations in tourist behaviour are frequently explained through the push-pull framework (Klenosky, 2002). Push factors are internal forces that lead to the decision to take a vacation. These factors can be

defined as "psycho-social motivations that lead individuals to travel" (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996) or "psychological needs that cause a disequilibrium that can be corrected through tourism experience" (Kim & Lee, 2002). On the other hand, pull factors are external forces that lead an individual to select one destination over another once the decision to travel has been made. These factors have been characterized in terms of the characteristics or attributes of the destination itself (Klenosky, 2002). Finally, people travel because they are pushed by their internal forces and pulled by the external forces of a tourist destination (Cha, McCleary, & Uysal, 1995).

As a result, push factors are more related to internal or emotional aspects of the individual (Yoon & Uysal, 2005) and they express their desires about the trip (Goossens, 2000). Psychological motivations such as escape, relaxation, social interaction, knowledge or entertainment are proposed as push factors in tourism research (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Kim, Lee, & Klenosky, 2003; Kozak, 2002; Oh, Uysal, & Weaver, 1995; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). With respect to the influence of psychological motivations on destination image, Moutinho (1987) postulated that motivations play an important role in destination image formation in a conscious or unconscious way. The cognitive component of destination image is related to the individual's beliefs about a tourist destination, while a relationship between psychological motivations and affective image has been suggested in tourism research (Baloglu, 1997; Dann, 1996; Gartner, 1993). Later on, several studies have only found a weak relationship between these two psychological concepts (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Beerli & Martín, 2004).

A new approach is adopted in this study in order to explore the relationship between tourist motivations and destination image. The means-end chain theory, whose objective is to explain consumer motivation, is used to illustrate the relationship between these psychological variables. According to this theory, consumer motivation has to be understood in terms of the linkages between attributes, consequences and values. Products and their attributes represent the means by which individuals attain specific benefits (consequences) and reinforce their personal values (Gutman, 1997). On this assumption, the individual's motivation would originate from the expected benefits to be attained in the product's use and the expectation of achieving personal values (Mort & Rose, 2004). Nevertheless, the value level might not be consciously experienced by the consumer (Claeys, Swinnen, & Abeele, 1995).

Recently, an empirical application of this theory to tourism research has been made by Klenosky (2002). Attributes would be represented by the characteristics of the tourist destination (natural resources or atmosphere); consequences by the benefits associated with the tourist destination (relaxing or know more); and values by the individual's desired states (accomplishment or self esteem). On the basis of the means-end chain theory, it is established

that tourists will be more motivated when the attributes of the destination are capable of fulfilling their benefits sought, and subsequently, their personal values. Therefore, before taking the decision to travel, individuals will have a more positive affective image of the tourist destination when the emotions evoked by the place (affective attributes) coincide with their benefits sought. With this in mind, the second hypothesis would be:

H2. The affective image of a tourist destination is significantly influenced by the tourist's psychological motivations.

2.2.2. The role of cultural values

In literature, perception is generally defined as a process of selecting, organizing and interpreting stimuli by individuals (Solomon, Bamossy, & Askegaard, 2002). These stimuli are represented by any physical, visual or verbal communication that can significantly influence the individual's response (Assael, 1999). In addition, three main features are emphasized in relation to the perception formation process (Hawkins et al., 2003): selective, organized and personal perception. Firstly, stimuli are selected according to the individual's needs and attitudes. Secondly, individuals tend to organize the stimuli in groups on the basis of psychological criteria. Ultimately, stimuli are subjectively interpreted by the individual (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004).

In this field of the subjectivity, social and cultural influences may be one of the most important factors affecting the individual's perceptions (Hawkins et al., 2003). Contributions in social psychology literature explain that individuals are closely connected to their societies. Thus, culture can be considered an element deeply constitutive of the individual (Howarth, 2001). In this field of knowledge it is necessary to emphasize the social representations' theory, which allows us to understand in a better way how human psychology is linked with social and cultural issues (Moscovici, 1984). Social representations,[2] which can be defined as systems of values, ideas and practices in a community establish what is socially accepted as reality. In turn, reality for the individual would be determined by these social creations constructed through mental processes (Moscovici, 1990).

Therefore, culture is a factor that could filter the individual's perception. Culture can be defined as a collection of beliefs, values, habits, ideas and norms of individuals (Sherry, 1986). These cultural values are learned, permanent, dynamic and preserved over time (Assael, 1999). In addition, they influence the individual's behaviour in several contexts such as work, consumption or leisure (Richardson & Crompton, 1988). According to Hirschman and Holbrook (1982), hedonistic behaviours are specially affected by the individual's culture. Therefore,

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[2]A substantial review of social psychology and social representations in tourism is carried out by Pearce, Moscardo, and Ross (1996).

cultural values could play a significant role in tourism, having important effects on the behaviour of tourists in general. In this context, it should be emphasized that an increasing number of studies are interested in understanding how culture influences the preferences and behaviour of tourists (Litvin, Crotts, & Hefner, 2004). Nevertheless, a deeper analysis of the role of cultural values in destination image formation is required in tourism research.

In tourism research, culture has been examined according to the tourist's geographical origin. In other words, a close relationship between country of origin and culture has been proposed in previous studies. Usually, countries are considered to represent different cultural factors, attributing differences in individuals' responses to the distinct cultural values (Crotts, 2004). In this sense, it has been established that tourists from different countries have heterogeneous cultural values, and consequently, a different perception of the same tourist destination. Most previous studies have analysed how the cognitive image of a tourist destination is affected by the individual's country of origin. Chen and Kerstetter (1999) found that Pennsylvania is perceived in a different way by tourists from culturally heterogeneous countries, e.g. Africa, Canada, Europe or Asia. Likewise, Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) showed differences with respect to the perception of Thailand among Asian, European and American tourists. In addition, significant differences in relation to the perception of Singapore by Asian and international tourists were found by Hui and Wan (2003). Finally, an exception is the study completed by Beerli and Martín (2004). They showed that the cognitive and affective components of destination image are influenced by the individual's country of origin.

A new approach is adopted in this research to explore more fully the relationship between cultural values and destination image. More concretely, the cultural distance concept is utilized to explain how culture affects perception of a tourist destination. In the international business context, cultural distance has been conceptualized as the extent to which several cultures are similar or different (Shenkar, 2001). Frequently, terms such as complex, intangible and subtle have been used to describe the nature of this construct (Boyacigiller, Kleinberg, Phillips, & Sackmann, 1996). In a similar way, cultural distance can be defined in tourism as the degree of similarity between the tourist's cultural values and the culture of a tourist destination. In this context, perceived risk associated with a tourist destination could be the key to understanding the relationship between cultural distance and destination image. Perceived risk is generally conceptualized as "the consumer perceptions of the uncertainty and adverse consequences" about a product or service (Dowling & Staelin, 1994). In tourism, different cultures are linked with different levels of risk perception with regard to a particular destination (Fuchs & Reichel, 2004). More concretely, risk perception increases with the degree of

novelty associated with a tourist destination (Elsrud, 2001). With this in mind, it can be emphasized that the shorter the cultural distance, the lower the perceived risk by tourists. Under these circumstances, the destination will be perceived as more familiar and attractive by tourists (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997). Consequently, individuals with a shorter cultural distance could have a higher level of confidence and a more favourable image of the place before visiting it. Thus, the third hypothesis is proposed:

H3. The shorter the cultural distance between destination and tourist, the more favourable the cognitive/affective image of the tourist destination.

3. Methodology

Empirical research to support the hypotheses was carried out at a tourist destination in the north of Spain, Cantabria.[3] A qualitative and quantitative approach was adopted in this research. Research involving a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies has become increasingly common in recent years (Bryman, 2006). Several justifications for this combination are identified in social research literature. According to Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989), the results from one method can facilitate the development of the other method, as well as the explanation of their findings. In addition, the breadth and range of enquiry is extended by using different methods for diverse inquiry components. In this context, it has been concluded that both qualitative and quantitative findings increase the quality, accuracy, validity and reliability of data (Babbie, 2004). On the other hand, several decisions about the combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies should be made (Bryman, 2006): (1) priority of the two methods; (2) sequencing; and (3) stage(s) in the research process where mixed methodology is included. In this study, the quantitative research is conceived as a priority. The qualitative methods were developed in the first stage of this research; they are considered as preliminary in a basically quantitative study. Lastly, the quantitative methodology was focused on the data collection and data analysis to explore in depth the nature and formation of destination image.

In the qualitative phase, four in-depth interviews were carried out with experts from the tourism industry.[4] In

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[3]Cantabria has a large diversity in terms of cultural heritage, landscape and gastronomy. It also has worldwide famous attractions such as the Altamira Caves or Cabárceno. Its promotion abroad is carried out with the brand name "Green Spain" together with other regions from the north of Spain.

[4]The experts' choice process was carried out according to Kuzel (1992), who established that qualitative sampling strategies are concerned with reflecting the variety within the phenomena being examined. With this in mind, several experts from the main sectors of the tourism industry were selected: Public Administration (experts involved in the management and promotion of the tourist destination), accommodation sector (a hotel manager) and travel agencies sector (the chairman of a national association of travel agencies). The purpose of this qualitative technique

addition, two focus groups were set up, one with travel agents and another with travellers of different groups of gender, age and occupation. Qualitative research contributed to the quantitative work in three ways: (1) by identifying salient variables to be examined; (2) by facilitating the sampling design; and (3) by helping to explain the quantitative findings. Firstly, the qualitative findings contributed to develop the measurement scales which were used in the quantitative research. By considering the tourist destination under investigation, the image attributes and psychological motivations mentioned in the literature were discussed by the participants in the qualitative methods. In particular, the main characteristics of the tourist destination not only in terms of strengths (e.g. landscapes, cultural heritage, or atmosphere) but also in terms of weaknesses (e.g. infrastructures or cultural activities) were identified through these methods. Subsequently, these features (or image attributes) were considered critical and, consequently, necessary to be measured in the quantitative research. On the other hand, participants were asked to give their opinions on the true motivations of individuals to visit this type of destination. Motivations such as relaxation, knowledge, or cultural integration were indicated as the most important reasons to visit the tourist destination.

Secondly, the in-depth interviews with experts from the tourism industry were very useful to design the sampling. More concretely, knowledge about the reality of the destination acquired by these experts over time allowed the researchers to identify the socio-demographic profiles of international and national tourists, the most interesting tourist attractions in order to localize these tourists, as well as the most favourable time period for data collection. Lastly, qualitative research tried to develop a deeper explanation of the quantitative findings. In this sense, it was possible to carry out an inductive analysis and a subjective interpretation of the manifested and latent contents which were collected through the use of qualitative methods. Undoubtedly, it facilitated the development of the conclusions and managerial implications from this research.

(footnote continued)
was to contrast the opinions from individuals with wide knowledge about the reality of the tourist destination. The interviews were semi-structured, the most employed method in qualitative research (Bryman, 2006). A non-economic incentive was used to stimulate the experts' participation in these interviews. More concretely, the experts were informed that they would receive data from the quantitative research, which could be useful in their decision-making processes. In relation to the management of these interviews, it should be emphasized that a scheme guide was used to collect the opinions and impressions of the experts. In these interviews the experts freely expressed their ideas, whereas the researchers tried to avoid evasive responses. Finally, recordings were used as an objective instrument to exhaustively examine the qualitative data.

3.1. Sample design and data collection

The target population of the quantitative research was tourists above 15 years old. The sample was selected by a combination of the convenience and quota methods, distinguishing between national tourists and international tourists. The questionnaire was personally administered to each individual during the stay at the tourist site given the difficulties to localize and interview tourists before and after the holiday experience. This implies that the pre-experience variables, i.e. destination image and psychological motivations were measured retrospectively. In this context, the tourist experience could cause recall inefficiencies in the individual (Oliver & Burke, 1999). Consequently, the image that individuals have of the tourist destination before visiting it, as well as their psychological motivations, may be influenced by their destination experiences. Finally, 807 valid responses were obtained in April 2004, representing a sampling error in the case of an infinite population (the size of the population is not available) of 3.52% for a confidence level of 95.5% ($p = q = .5$). The socio-demographic characteristics of the sample are shown in Table 2.

3.2. Measurements

The structured methodology allows the capture of the common component of destination image. In this methodology, several common image attributes are specified and incorporated into a standardised instrument (Jenkins, 1999). The image attributes' choice process is generally based on the literature review and qualitative research (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). Firstly, a review of literature was conducted to develop a list of attributes which are generally used to measure destination image. According to more recent studies, cognitive and affective image attributes should be incorporated into the measurement of destination image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Kim & Richardson, 2003; Pike & Ryan, 2004). Several cognitive attributes with a different position in the functional-psychological continuum of destination image were initially extracted from previous studies (e.g. Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Gallarza et al., 2002; Jenkins, 1999). Functional characteristics (e.g. accommodation) are defined as measurable, whereas psychological characteristics (e.g. restful) cannot be directly observed (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). Similarly, an initial list of affective image attributes was developed on the basis of literature review (e.g. Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Kim & Richardson, 2003).

However, these lists may be incomplete and might not incorporate all of the salient attributes of the tourist destination, so qualitative research is necessary in order to ensure that the image attributes are appropriate (O'Leary & Deegan, 2003). In this research, the cognitive and affective image attributes initially proposed were discussed in the interviews with experts and focus groups. According to literature review and qualitative findings, a definitive list

Table 2
Socio-demographic characteristics

Variables	%
Gender	
Male	51.2
Female	48.8
Education level	
Without studies	4.2
Primary	14.8
Secondary	31.1
University	49.9
Household size	
One person	7.1
Two people	23.5
Three people	20.6
Four people	31.2
Five people and more	12.5
Don't know/no answer	5.1
Nationality	
National	85.6
International	14.4
Age	
16–24 years	18.7
25–44 years	49.9
45–64 years	24.4
65 years and older	7.0
Occupation	
Employed	65.4
Student	15.5
Housewife	8.9
Unemployed	3.0
Retired	7.2
Monthly income	
0–1.200€ (~£0–800)	14.7
1.201–2.400€ (~£800–1600)	35.6
2.401€ and more (~+£1600)	21.6
Don't know/no answer	28.1
Marital status	
Single	40.1
Married/living as a couple	53.5
Separated/divorcé/widow(er)	6.4

incorporating 18 cognitive attributes and four affective attributes was completed in this study. Finally, individuals were asked to indicate their levels of agreement on each cognitive image attribute on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). On the other hand, a semantic-differential scale consisting of four affective image attributes (sleepy–arousing, distressing–relaxing, gloomy–exciting, unpleasant–pleasant) was used to capture the affective image that individuals have of the place before visiting it. In tourism research, these types of scales are usually used to rate the image attributes (Jenkins, 1999).

In this study, psychological motivations were measured on the basis of the literature review and qualitative research. For example, tourist motivations can be of a physical, social or cultural nature (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Kozak, 2002; Yoon & Uysal,

2005). In this research, individuals were asked to indicate the importance of 14 reasons to visit the holiday destination (1 = low importance; 7 = high importance). Similar to other studies, cultural values were measured according to the tourists' country of origin (Beerli & Martín, 2004; Chen & Kerstetter, 1999; Hui & Wan, 2003; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001). More concretely, a distinction between national tourists and international tourists was made to capture the cultural distance concept.[5] Given that the tourist destination under investigation is located in the north of Spain, spanish tourists' cultural distance is shorter than the international tourists' cultural distance (i.e. tourists from United Kingdom, France, Germany, and other important countries).

4. Results

4.1. Analyzing the nature of destination image

First, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted with the 22 image items to identify the underlying dimensions in the destination image. An oblique rotation was used to uncover image dimensions (SPSS 11.5. version for Windows). Given that five of the 22 image items (climate, beaches, hospitality, adventure and local food) did not fill the criteria generally accepted in social research literature (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998) and tourism research (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999),[6] they were dropped from further analysis. In spite of this, no special problems in relation to the content validity were identified after analysing the findings from the unstructured methodology (another stage of this research where open-ended survey questions were made to the tourists in order to discover their most important image dimensions).

Five image factors were identified in the ideal solution (KMO = .84; Variance explained = 60.90%; Cronbach's α = .83). The "infrastructures and socioeconomic environment" factor (F1) includes easy accessibility, shopping facilities, accommodation quality, good value for money and safety (Cronbach's α = .67). The "atmosphere" factor (F2) consists of the following items: peaceful/tranquil, appropriate to rest and relaxing destination (Cronbach's α = .78). The "natural environment" factor (F3) is formed by the variety of flora and fauna, beautiful scenery and

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[5]With regard to the diversity and multiculturalism of the tourist destination, insignificant differences are observed in relation to its population's cultural values (therefore, the group "national tourists" is culturally homogeneous). On the other hand, language is considered an important cultural barrier (Basala & Klenosky, 2001). Consequently, language and other cultural factors (e.g. lifestyles) would justify the distinction between national tourists and international tourists to reliably measure cultural distance.

[6]Only those factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were extracted. In addition, other criteria generally accepted were used to determine the viability of each factor. Firstly, only items with factor loadings of at least .40 were retained. Secondly, the difference between the item's loading with its factor and its loadings with other factors should be of at least .10. Thirdly, only factors with Cronbach's α exceeding .60 were accepted.

Table 3
Confirmatory factor analysis of the destination image

Latent factors and items	Standardized coefficient	R^2	Cronbach α	Goodness of fit
F1: Infrastructures and socioeconomic environment			.64	
Shopping facilities	.50	.25		
Quality accommodation	.68	.46		
Good value for money	.58	.34		
Safe place	.57	.33		
F2: Atmosphere			.78	
Peaceful place	.79	.62		
Place to rest	.84	.71		
Relaxing place	.58	.33		$\chi^2(95) = 329.56$
F3: Natural environment			.74	$P = .000$
Variety of fauna and flora	.62	.38		BBNFI = .88
Beautiful landscapes	.72	.52		BBNNFI = .87
Beautiful natural parks	.77	.59		GFI = .93
F4: Affective image			.63	AGFI = .91
Arousing destination	.64	.41		RMSA = .06
Exciting destination	.63	.39		
Pleasant destination	.53	.28		
F5: Cultural environment			.71	
A lot of cultural attractions	.64	.41		
Interesting cultural activities	.67	.45		
Nice to learn about local customs	.68	.46		

Table 4
Discriminant validity

	F1 (infrastructure)	F2 (atmosphere)	F3 (natural)	F4 (affective)
F2 (atmosphere)	.59[a] (.68; .49)[b]			
F3 (natural)	.54 (.63; .44)	.52 (.63; .42)		
F4 (affective)	.53 (.63; .44)	.38 (.48; .28)	.42 (.52; .32)	
F5 (cultural)	.59 (.68; .50)	.43 (.52; .34)	.47 (.56; .38)	.54 (.64; .44)

[a]Correlation.
[b]Confidence interval.

beautiful natural parks (Cronbach's $\alpha = .74$). The "Affective Image" factor (F4) includes three of the four affective attributes proposed in this research, i.e. arousing, exciting and pleasant (Cronbach's $\alpha = .63$). Finally, the "cultural environment" factor (F5) consists of the variety of cultural attractions, interesting cultural activities and appealing local customs (Cronbach's $\alpha = .71$).

Subsequently, a confirmatory factor analysis (EQS 5.7b for Windows) suggested eliminating the accessibility item due to its low standardized coefficient with the first factor (below .5). Once this item was removed, the goodness-of-fit is acceptable (see Table 3). In addition, the standardized coefficients are significant and exceed .5, verifying the convergent validity of the model (Steenkamp & Van Trijp, 1991). Finally, the confidence intervals of the correlation between pairs of image factors did not include 1.0 (see

Table 4). Thus, the discriminant validity of the proposed factor structure is demonstrated (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

A second-order factor analysis is required to achieve a deeper knowledge of destination image. Thus, image is examined as a second-order factor generated on the basis of the relationships between first-order factors, i.e. infrastructures and socioeconomic environment (F1), atmosphere (F2), natural environment (F3), affective image (F4), and cultural environment (F5). Fig. 1 shows the final estimations of the second-order factor model. The goodness-of-fit is acceptable and the structural coefficients for the image factors are positive and significant (t-values >1.96). According to it, four cognitive factors (F1, F2, F3 and F5) and one affective factor (F4) represent the underlying concept, i.e. destination image. Therefore, image includes the individual's cognitive and affective evaluations of the tourist destination before visiting it. Noticeably, it is suggested that cognitive images have stronger impacts on destination image than affective image. Finally, the cognitive–affective nature of destination image is found (H1 is supported).

4.2. Estimating the influence of motivations on destination image

The influence of psychological motivations on affective image is analysed through the analysis of variance (ANOVA). In this analysis, the independent variable (psychological motivations) is distributed in several categories. More specifically, this variable shows different groups of individuals according to their motivations to visit the destination. Therefore, this section is divided into three
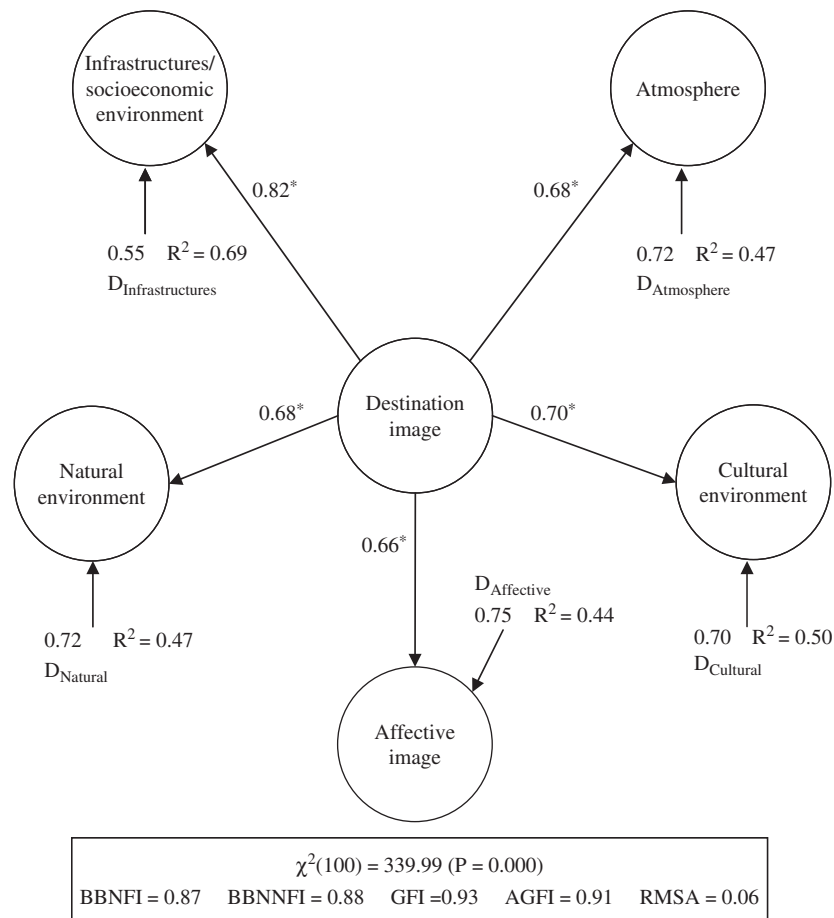
Fig. 1. Second-order factor structure of the destination image.

phases: (1) finding types of psychological motivations, i.e. motivational factors; (2) identifying groups of tourists according to these motivational factors; and (3) estimating the influence of motivations on affective image.

Firstly, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted with the 14 motivation items in order to identify the factor structure underlying the tourist's psychological motivations. An oblique rotation was used to uncover motivational factors (SPSS 11.5. version for Windows). Only those factors with eigenvalues exceeding 1.0 were extracted. The viability of each factor was determined by using the same criteria as with the destination image analysis. Initial analysis suggested that only one motivation (to enjoy with the family and/or friends) should be dropped from further analysis. Four motivational factors were identified in the ideal solution (KMO = .71; variance explained = 66.08%; Cronbach's α = .77). Factor 1 (Cronbach's α = .70) includes "to seek adventure, to contact with nature, to seek diversion and entertainment and to live exciting experiences", i.e. "leisure". Factor 2 (Cronbach's α = .76) consists of the items "to rest, to alleviate stress and to escape", i.e. "physical motivations". Factor 3 (Cronbach's α = .77) is formed by the items "to discover new places, to know the natural environment, to explore the historical and cultural heritage, and to learn about cultures and ways

of life", i.e. "knowledge". Lastly, factor 4 (Cronbach's α = .74) includes "to meet new people and to integrate myself into the life and activities of local people", i.e. "social interaction".

A confirmatory factor analysis (EQS 5.7b for Windows) was used to validate the factor structure. This analysis suggested eliminating the items "to know the natural environment" and "to contact with nature" due to their low standardized coefficients with F3 and F1, respectively. Once these items were removed (see Table 5), the goodness-of-fit is acceptable and standardized coefficients are significant and exceed .5 (convergent validity). On the other hand, the confidence intervals of the correlation between pairs of latent factors did not include 1.0 (discriminant validity). Therefore, four motivational factors were found in this research: leisure, physical motivations, knowledge and social interaction.

Secondly, a combination of hierarchical and non-hierarchical cluster analysis was carried out to identify different groups of tourists depending on their psychological motivations. In this analysis, motivational factors were calculated as the average of their items. The hierarchical cluster analysis was used to identify the optimal cluster solutions which should be employed in the non-hierarchical analysis. The Ward's method was used

Table 5
Confirmatory factor analysis of the psychological motivations

Latent factors and items	Standardized coefficient	R^2	Cronbach α	Goodness of fit
Leisure			.70	
To seek adventures	.56	.31		
To seek diversion and entertainment	.63	.39		
To live exciting experiences	.88	.77		
Physical motivations			.76	
To take a rest/to relax	.92	.86		$\chi^2(39) = 170.45$
To alleviate stress	.79	.62		$P = .000$
To escape	.63	.39		BBNFI = .91
Knowledge			.72	BBNNFI = .89
To discover new places	.58	.34		GFI = .94
To explore historical and cultural heritage	.72	.51		AGFI = .91
To learn about cultures and ways of life	.73	.53		RMSA = .08
Social interaction			.74	
To meet new people	.82	.67		
To integrate myself into the life and activities of local people	.72	.52		

to minimize the differences in the conglomerate and avoid problems with the "chaining" of the observations (Hair et al., 1998). In particular, the hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted with a random subgroup of 254 individuals.[7] Subsequently, exploring the optimal solutions was made on the basis of the coefficients of conglomeration. In this analysis, a great change percentage is produced when two very different conglomerates are linked (Hair et al., 1998). Once the coefficients of conglomeration were calculated, the great change percentages were observed when the solution "2-clusters" was compared with the solution "1-cluster" (34.25%), as well as when the solution "3-clusters" was compared with the solution "2-clusters" (15.91%).

Therefore, the non-hierarchical cluster analysis (*K*-averages) was initially conducted with two and three clusters in order to maximize differences between groups of tourists. Average values for each motivational factor (and *F*-values) are shown in Table 6. Significant differences in relation to the importance that groups of individuals give to the psychological motivations are found. In the solution "2-clusters", groups 1 and 2 can be labelled as "more motivated" and "less motivated", respectively. In the solution "3-clusters", leisure and physical motivations are the most important reasons of groups 1 and 3 to visit the tourist destination, respectively. Finally, knowledge and social interaction are the tourist motivations that differentiate group 2.

Table 6
Non-hierarchical cluster analysis

	Tourist motivations			
	Leisure	Physical	Knowledge	Social interaction
Two-cluster solution	358.56***	7.64***	122.88***	1251.55***
Cluster 1 ($n = 503$)	5.43	5.98	5.53	5.30
Cluster 2 ($n = 304$)	3.85	5.76	4.60	2.76
Three-cluster solution	346.83***	30.83***	228.42***	536.86***
Cluster 1 ($n = 185$)	5.45	5.41	4.06	3.89
Cluster 2 ($n = 398$)	5.40	6.13	5.88	5.47
Cluster 3 ($n = 224$)	3.31	5.87	4.87	2.71

***$P < .01$.

Thirdly, solution "3-clusters" was used in the analyses of variance (ANOVA) because it generates more precise information of the tourist's motivations.[8] As a result, the dependent variable is "affective image" (and its three attributes), while the independent variable is "tourist motivations" (this variable is distributed in three groups of tourists). ANOVA results (average values and *F*-values)

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[7]According to Hair et al. (1998), hierarchical methods are extremely sensitive to the sample size. They are not capable of analyzing a sample of a very large size. Under these circumstances, a random sample may be considered by the researcher in order to reduce the original sample size. In this study, a random subgroup of 254 individuals was used to assure that the sample taken for the hierarchical cluster analysis is representative of the main analysis population. This sample size represents approximately an error in the case of a finite population (the size of the main analysis population is available, 807 individuals) of five percent, which is generally accepted in research.

[8]A multiple discriminant analysis was additionally carried out to identify the most important socio-demographic differences between the clusters. In this case, the dependent variable is distributed in three categories or groups of tourists, whereas the independent variables are represented by the socio-demographic characteristics of individuals. The "stepwise" method was followed to estimate the discriminant function. According to the results, the marital status (standardized coefficient = .714), age (s.c. = .402) and nationality (s.c. = .347) are the variables that better discriminate the clusters. More concretely, group 1 (leisure motivations) is basically constituted of young people and singles, whereas group 3 (physical motivations) is more representative of adults and older people, as well as married people. On the other hand, tourists with different marital status (singles and married people) and age (young people, adults and older people) have a similar proportion in the group with motivations of knowledge and social interaction. Finally, it is necessary to emphasize that the benefit sought by most international tourists is knowledge and social interaction. Thus, most of these tourists are included in group 2.

Table 7
Variations in affective images depending on motivations (ANOVA)

	Global affective image	Affective attributes		
		Sleepy–arousing	Gloomy–exciting	Unpleasant–pleasant
Groups	37.58***	26.49***	26.15***	13.98***
Cluster 1 ($n = 185$)	5.64	5.58	5.22	6.11
Cluster 2 ($n = 398$)	5.97	5.86	5.58	6.46
Cluster 3 ($n = 224$)	5.46	5.23	4.98	6.19

***$P < .01$.

Table 8
DHS Tukey test

	Global affective image	Sleepy–arousing	Affective attributes	
			Gloomy–exciting	Unpleasant–pleasant
Comparisons				
Cluster 1−Cluster 2	−.32[a]***	−.28***	−.35***	−.34***
Cluster 1−Cluster 3	.17**	.35***	.24**	−.07
Cluster 2−Cluster 3	.50***	.63***	.60***	.27***

**$P < .05$; ***$P < .01$.
[a]Negative results indicate favourable differences to second group.

are shown in Table 7. The perceptions of the groups are significantly different not only in relation to the overall affective image, but also with regard to its three attributes. Therefore, affective destination image is significantly affected by tourist motivations.

A post hoc analysis (DHS Tukey test) was carried out to identify the comparisons between groups that generate significant perception differences (see Table 8). Tourists with the motivation of knowledge and social interaction (cluster 2) have a more favourable affective image of the destination than tourists interested in leisure (cluster 1) or relaxation (cluster 3). On the other hand, it is necessary to analyse differences for each affective attribute in order to better understand the influence of tourist motivations on destination image. Group 1 (leisure) and group 2 (knowledge and social interaction) have a more positive image of the destination as an entertaining and exciting place than group 3 (physical motivations). In addition, group 2 has a more positive image of the destination as a pleasant place than groups 1 and 3. Consequently, individuals have a more favourable affective image when the emotions evoked by the tourist destination coincide with their motivations to visit it (H2 is supported).

4.3. Estimating the influence of cultural values on destination image

Analysis of variance was performed to examine how cognitive/affective image is affected by cultural values of individuals (cultural distance). In this analysis, the cognitive and affective components of destination image were calculated as the average of their items. Average values for

Table 9
Variations in image depending on cultural values (ANOVA)

	Cognitive image				Affective image
	Infrastructures	Atmosphere	Natural	Cultural	
Nationality	.45	6.55**	21.99***	.10	.15
Spanish	5.63	6.29	6.15	5.13	5.75
International	5.58	6.10	5.80	5.16	5.78

**$P < .05$; ***$P < .01$.

each image factor (and F-values) are shown in Table 9. The perceptions of the cultural groups (national tourists versus international tourists) are significantly different for two cognitive image dimensions: atmosphere and natural environment. In both cases, tourists with similar values to the destination's culture (national tourists) have a more positive image of the place compared with individuals that have a higher cultural distance (international tourists). However, cultural values do not have a significant influence on affective image and two cognitive image dimensions. Consequently, the image that individuals have of a tourist destination before visiting it is partially affected by their cultural distance with the tourist destination (H3 is partially supported).

5. Conclusions and implications for managers

The nature and formation of destination image are two extremely interesting aspects for both academics and practitioners in tourism. Recognizing the dimensions of perception that individuals use to represent a tourist

destination in their minds, as well as the factors that significantly condition these mental representations are of great help to understand and manage the decision-making and behaviour processes in tourism. With this in mind, this empirical research has attempted to contribute to the body of knowledge on destination image in two ways: (1) by examining in depth the multi-dimensional nature (cognitive–affective structure) of destination image; and (2) by exploring the role of psychological factors (tourist motivations and cultural values) in destination image formation.

In relation to the nature of destination image, the results indicate that image should be considered a multi-dimensional phenomenon integrated by several cognitive and affective dimensions. In this sense, the mental representation of a tourist destination is formed on the basis of individuals' beliefs about the place (cognitive image), as well as their feelings toward it (affective image). The cognitive component of destination image is related to the tourist destination's attributes, which can be functional/tangible (e.g. landscape, cultural attractions) and psychological/abstract (e.g. hospitality, atmosphere). On the other hand, the affective component is related to the emotions that a tourist destination is able to evoke (e.g. pleasure, excitement). Tourists will use these image dimensions to form their impressions and evaluate the considered destinations in their choice processes. Finally, the individual's preferences derived from these evaluations, as well as contextual variables such as political or social factors may be the main forces determining which tourist destination to visit.

With regard to the destination image formation, this research empirically demonstrates that the perception of a tourist destination is significantly affected by the individual's motivations and cultural values, i.e. psychological factors. Affective image is developed depending on the tourist's psychological motivations. Before taking the decision to travel, individuals have a more favourable affective image of the tourist destination when the emotions related to the place (through their personal experiences or the commercial communications) coincide with their motivations or benefits sought. On the other hand, cultural distance is a factor that influences at least partially the perceived image of a tourist destination before visiting it. In particular, individuals might have more confidence in those tourist destinations with cultures similar to their own cultural values.

Several managerial implications concerning the promotion and positioning of tourist destinations have been outlined. One of the most important challenges in the promotion of a tourist destination is to recognize its strengths and weaknesses in the individual's mind. The structured technique (multi-attribute approach that was used to examine the nature of destination image in this research) is a very useful instrument to obtain information of both aspects. Later on, promoters should develop different actions to maintain the strengths of the tourist destination and improve the attributes where main weak-

nesses were found. Thus, the communication in mass media (TV, press, radio) or improvement strategies of the natural, cultural and tourist resources may be included in these actions. In addition, the structured methodology allows us to recognize if the perceived image of a tourist destination coincides or not with its projected or promoted image. There is an inadequate positioning of the tourist destination if both types of image are very different. In this case, it would be necessary to redefine the tourist destination's communication in order to improve the perceived image in the target markets.

On the other hand, since tourists use cognitive and affective dimensions to form their images of a tourist destination, promoters should emphasize in the destination's positioning not only its physical properties (usual practice up to now), but also the amalgam of emotions or feelings that it is able to evoke in the tourist's mind. In the first case, the individual's beliefs about the tourist destination are reinforced, while in the second one the tourist promotion affects the individual's affective or sentimental component. If this promotion is carried out properly, the tourist destination might have a privileged position among the places considered by the individual during the decision-making process.

Nevertheless, individuals with different motivations and cultural values will perceive the same tourist destination in a different way. Hence, on the basis of an overall positioning of the tourist destination, promoters will have to segment the market and develop a specific communication for each group of tourists. More concretely, it is necessary to develop a communication that does not emphasize all the emotions that the destination is able to evoke, but only those related to the psychological motivations of each group of tourists. As a result, a more favourable affective image of the tourist destination will be achieved for each segment. At the same time, an additional effort is required to increase the confidence of those individuals that have a higher cultural distance (more different cultural values) with the tourist destination. With this in mind, one of the most important purposes of destination communication should be to minimize the tourist's uncertainty before visiting the place. If this objective is achieved, the tourist destination will be perceived as more familiar and attractive in the marketplace.

In this study, the main limitation is related to the geographic area (tourist site) where the research process was carried out. On the one hand, the attributes used to measure destination image in the structured technique are conditioned by the tourist destination under investigation. On the other hand, the tourist destination also significantly influences the characteristics of the sample, of which national tourists are the main constituent. Consequently, this research methodology should be applied to other studies and tourist destinations in order to generalize the findings.

Finally, several additional directions for further research are suggested. Firstly, creating a competitive position in the

marketplace implies examining not only the strengths and weaknesses of the tourist destination under investigation but also those relative to the competitors. By applying the structured technique to a wider group of tourist destinations promoters will identify the cognitive and affective images that tourists have of their destinations compared with the main competitors. The results of this comparison are extremely useful in order to develop a successful strategy concerning the tourist destination's positioning in the target markets.

On the other hand, the relationship between cultural distance and destination image could be influenced by several factors such as uncertainty avoidance or variety seeking. Uncertainty avoidance is one of the value dimensions that may contribute to characterize the culture (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 2000). It can be defined as the level of comfort that individuals of a culture feel in unknown or ambiguous situations (Hofstede, 2001). High uncertainty avoidance cultures are not comfortable with unfamiliar situations, whereas low uncertainty avoidance cultures are supposed to accept risk (Litvin et al., 2004). Consequently, the originally proposed relationship between cultural distance and destination image may be only valid for high uncertainty avoidance cultures. On the other hand, variety seeking (novelty seeking) is a very frequent behaviour in tourism (Basala & Klenosky, 2001). In this context, the reasoning of this study (the shorter the cultural distance, the more favourable the destination image) may be only valid up to a level of familiarity above which the novelty of tourist experience is eliminated. Therefore, a deeper analysis of the influence of cultural values on destination image is needed in tourism research.

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