



FACTORS INFLUENCING DESTINATION IMAGE

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to develop and empirically validate a model which explains the different factors which form the post-visit image of a destination. Based on a literature review, this will involve analyzing the relationship between the different components of the perceived image and the factors which influence its formation. These include both sources of information (primary and secondary) and stimuli influencing the forming of perceptions and evaluations of destinations pre- and post-visit, respectively, and motivation, accumulated touristic experiences and sociodemographic characteristics. **Keywords:** marketing, destination image, process of destination image formation. © 2004 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Résumé: Les facteurs qui influencent l'image des destinations. Le propos de cet article est de développer et de valider empiriquement un modèle qui explique les différents facteurs qui forment l'image d'une destination après la visite. En se basant sur un bilan de la littérature, on analyse la relation entre les différents éléments de l'image perçue et les facteurs qui influencent sa formation. Ces facteurs comprennent les sources d'information (de nature primaire ou secondaire) et les impulsions qui influencent la formation des perceptions et des évaluations des destinations avant et après la visite, respectivement, et les caractéristiques sociodémographiques et celles de la motivation et des expériences touristiques accumulées. **Mots-clés:** marketing, image de destination, processus de formation de l'image de destination. © 2004 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

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. Hunt (1975) was among the first to demonstrate its importance in increasing the number of tourists visiting destinations. Today there exists a general consensus about the significance of the role played by image in the process of decision making, and, by extension, choice (Baloglu and McCleary 1999a; Chen and Kerstetter 1999; Goodrich 1978; Hunt 1975; Milman and Pizan 1995; Pearce 1982; Woodside

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and Lysonsky 1989). However, despite this increasing interest in destination image, many agree that the majority of studies carried out to date are insufficiently theory-based, resulting in a lack of framework or solid conceptualization.

Many studies frequently use the term "destination image", but they tend not to conceptualize this term precisely. Various authors point out that while the concept is widely used in the empirical context, it is loosely defined and lacks a solid conceptual structure (Fakeye and Crompton 1991; Mazanec and Schweiger 1981). The study by Gallarza, Gil Saura and Calderón Garcia (2002) featured an exhaustive review of the literature dealing with this concept, proposing a theoretical model defining image in terms of four characteristics: complex, multiple, relativistic, and dynamic.

The most recent studies (Baloglu and Brinberg 1997; Baloglu and McCleary 1999a, 1999b; Gartner 1993; Walmsley and Young 1998) tend to consider image as a concept formed by the consumer's reasoned and emotional interpretation as the consequence of two closely interrelated components: perceptive/cognitive evaluations referring to the individual's own knowledge and beliefs about the object (an evaluation of the perceived attributes of the object), and affective appraisals relating to an individual's feelings towards the object.

From a theoretical point of view, there is general agreement that the cognitive component is an antecedent of the affective component and that the evaluative responses of consumers stem from their knowledge of the objects (Anand, Holbrook and Stephens 1988; Holbrook 1978; Russel and Pratt 1980; Stern and Krakover 1993). In addition, the combination of these two factors produces an overall, or compound, image relating to the positive, or negative, evaluation of the product or brand. In the context of tourism, Baloglu and McCleary (1999a, 1999b) and Stern and Krakover (1993) show empirically that these perceptual/cognitive and affective evaluations have a direct influence on the overall image, and also that the former, through the latter, has an indirect influence on that image.

Related professional and academic papers have proposed a number of scales to determine the different attributes relevant to measuring perceived image. An analysis of the principal scales (Baloglu and McCleary 1999a, 1999b; Calantone, Di Benetton, Hakam and Bojanic 1989; Chon, Weaver and Kim 1991; Echtner and Ritchie 1993; Fakeye and Crompton 1991; Gartner 1989; Gartner and Hunt 1987; Gartner and Shen 1992; Goodrich 1978; Hu and Ritchie 1993; Hunt 1975; Phelps 1986; Walmsley and Jenkins 1993) reveals a lack of homogeneity with respect to the attributes which define an individual's perceptions. Similarly, it is evident that most studies have failed to establish the validity and reliability of the scales, casting doubt on their psychometric properties. Indeed, only three of the reviewed works, namely that of Echtner and Ritchie (1993) and those of Baloglu and McCleary (1999a, 1999b), had effectively determined the reliability of the scales used.

This lack of a universally accepted, valid, and reliable scale for the measurement of image led to the proposal of a frame incorporating

every aspect of a destination which could potentially be used as an instrument of measurement. To that end, and following a review of the attractions and attributes included in the existing scales, all factors influencing the image assessments made by individuals were incorporated and classified into nine dimensions (Table 1). The selection of the attributes used in designing a scale will depend largely on the attractions of each destination, on its positioning, and on

Table 1. Dimensions/Attributes Determining the Perceived Destination Image

Natural Resources	General Infrastructure	Tourist Infrastructure
Weather	Development and quality of roads,	Hotel and self-catering
Temperature	airports and ports	accommodation
Rainfall	Private and public transport	Number of beds
Humidity	facilities	Categories
Hours of sunshine	Development of health services	Quality
Beaches	Development of	Restaurants
Quality of seawater	telecommunications	Number
Sandy or rocky beaches	Development of commercial	Categories
Length of the beaches	infrastructures	Quality
Overcrowding of beaches	Extent of building development	Bars, discotheques and clubs
Wealth of countryside		Ease of access to destination
Protected nature reserves		Excursions at the destination
Lakes, mountains, deserts, etc.		Tourist centers
Variety and uniqueness of flora and fauna		Network of tourist information
Tourist Leisure and Recreation	Culture, History and Art	Political and Economic Factors
Theme parks	Museums, historical buildings,	Political stability
Entertainment and sports activities	monuments, etc.	Political tendencies
Golf, fishing, hunting, skiing, scuba diving, etc.	Festival, concerts, etc.	Economic development
Water parks	Handicraft	Safety
Zoos	Gastronomy	Crime rate
Trekking	Folklore	Terrorist attacks
Adventure activities	Religion	Prices
Casinos	Customs and ways of life	
Night life		
Shopping		
Natural Environment	Social Environment	Atmosphere of the Place
Beauty of the scenery	Hospitality and friendliness of the	Luxurious
Attractiveness of the cities and towns	local residents	Fashionable
Cleanliness	Underprivilege and poverty	Place with a good reputation
Overcrowding	Quality of life	Family-oriented destination
Air and noise pollution	Language barriers	Exotic
Traffic congestion		Mystic
		Relaxing
		Stressful
		Fun, enjoyable
		Pleasant
		Boring
		Attractive or interesting

the objectives of the assessment of perceived image, which will also determine whether specific or more general attributes are chosen.

This research focuses on the process of destination image formation, one of the least studied areas in this field of research. As [Baloglu and McCleary \(1999a\)](#) and [Mackay and Fesenmaier \(1997\)](#) point out, there have been very few empirical studies aimed at analyzing which forces influence an individual's image of a given destination, and there is a little research into those which influence the formation and the structure of this image. In the absence of existing empirical evidence analyzing the determinants of a destination's perceived post-visit image, this work proposes an empirical study aimed at developing and validating a model for defining such factors. To this end, and based on the limited literature base, the starting point of this work is a conceptual model ([Figure 1](#)), to be validated using path models. The model was developed in a way that differentiates between first-time and repeat tourists for several reasons. One, certain differences may exist between the image perceived by each group of individuals that have an effect on the results. Two, the relationship between secondary information sources and perceived image can only be analyzed in the case of first-timers since repeat tourists could have difficulty recalling the sources of information used before visiting the place for the first time. Three, there may be differences between the two groups in terms of their level of knowledge of the destination and in their motivations, depending on whether they had previously vis-

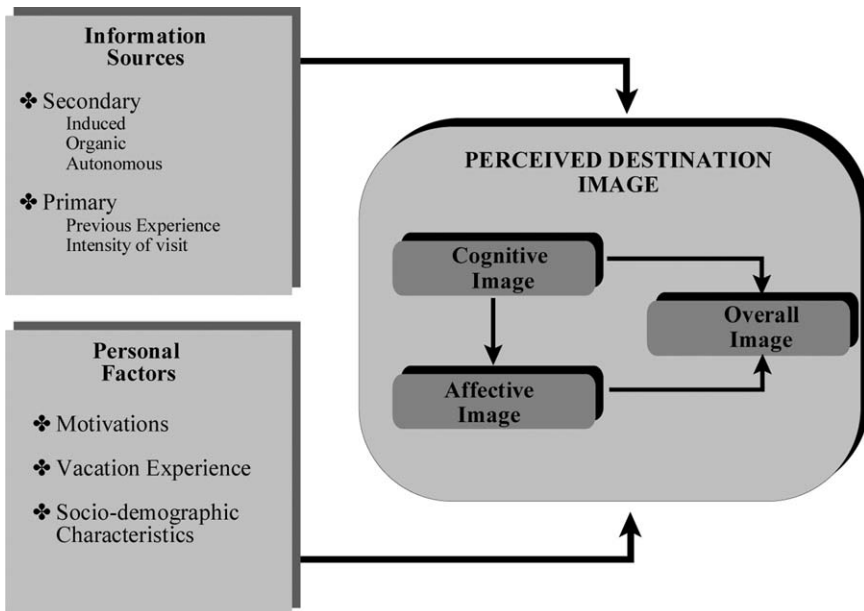


Figure 1. Model of the Formation of Destination Image

ited the place or not. Four, it enabled a validation of the proposed model to be made using two independent samples.

FACTORS INFLUENCING DESTINATION IMAGE FORMATION

A review of the literature reveals the existence of a set of factors that influence image formation which, following the model proposed by Stern and Krakover (1993), involve both information obtained from different sources and the characteristics of the individual. According to this model, the characteristics of both the information and the individual have an effect on the system of interrelationships governing the perceived stimuli of the environment, producing a compound image. This system reflects the cognitive organization that screens the perception. Baloglu and McCleary (1999a) propose a general theoretical model of image-formation factors which differentiates between stimulus factors (information sources, previous experience, and distribution) and personal factors (psychological and social).

Information Sources

Information sources—also known as stimulus factors (Baloglu and McCleary 1999a) or image forming agents (Gartner 1993)—are the forces which influence the forming of perceptions and evaluations. They refer to the amount and diverse nature of information sources to which individuals are exposed, including destination information acquired as a result of having visited the place. From the perspective of behavior in the choice of a destination, various authors (Fakeye and Crompton 1991; Gartner 1993; Mansfeld 1992; Um and Crompton 1990; Woodside and Lysonsky 1989) have proposed models that attempt to explain this behavior. They establish that, together with a number of other factors, the information sources to which the individuals are exposed determine that certain destinations are considered possible alternative choices.

Gartner (1993) believes that the image forming process can be regarded as a continuum of different agents or information sources which act independently to form one single image in the mind of the individual. He classifies the different agents as (a) overt induced, found in conventional advertising in the mass media, from information delivered by the relevant institutions in the destination or by tour operators and wholesalers; (b) covert induced, using celebrities in the destination's promotion activities or destination reports or articles; (c) autonomous, including mass-media broadcasting news, documentaries, films, television programs, etc., about the place; (d) organic, involving such people as friends and relatives, giving information about places, based on their own knowledge or experience, whether the information was requested or volunteered; and (e) a visit to the destination, the end point of the continuum of the forming process.

The image formed by organic, induced, and autonomous sources of information is basically one perceived before experiencing a destination, which Phelps (1986) calls secondary image. In contrast, the primary image is formed by actually visiting the resort in question. Insofar as choice of destination involves a certain risk, the secondary sources of information play a relevant and essential role in forming images of the alternative destinations to be considered in the decision-making process. Mansfeld (1992) demonstrates that there is general agreement, although not based on empirical evidence, that the secondary sources of information fulfill three basic functions in destination choice: to minimize the risk that the decision entails, to create an image of the destinations, and to serve as a mechanism for later justification of the choice.

This paper will first attempt to verify that the secondary information sources used by the individual to choose a destination have an influence on the cognitive dimension. Obviously, the behavior of those in search of external information can vary considerably depending on the number and types of sources used. Similarly, different types of information sources can contribute in different ways to the post-visit image depending on the importance which the tourist attaches to the information provided by the source. As this research was carried out on a sample of tourists to Lanzarote (The Canary Islands, Spain) which included both first-time tourists and repeaters, it was considered advisable to exclude the latter from the analysis because of the difficulties they might have in recalling which sources of information were consulted prior to their initial visit. Based on the above, the following hypotheses are set out:

Hypothesis 1: The importance attached to induced secondary sources of information used by first-time tourists significantly influences the cognitive component of the perceived image.

Hypothesis 2: The importance attached to organic and autonomous secondary sources of information used by first-time tourists significantly influences the cognitive component of the perceived image.

The information acquired through personal experience or by visiting the destination forms the primary image, which may differ from the secondary image. Indeed, some authors, such as Gartner and Hunt (1987), Pearce (1982) and Phelps (1986) point out that when individuals actually visit a place, the image that they form after the visit tends to be more realistic, complex, and different from the one formed through secondary sources of information. Fakeye and Crompton (1991), on the other hand, emphasize that there is a lack of agreement among researchers about the influence or impact of the visit on the image.

Echtner and Ritchie (1993) believe that those more familiar with the destination have images that are more holistic, psychological, and unique, while those less familiar have images based more on attributes, functional aspects, and common features. A number of empiri-

cal works in academic literature (Baloglu and Mangaloglu 2001; Chon 1991; Fakeye and Crompton 1991; Hu and Ritchie 1993; Milman and Pizan 1995; Phelps 1986) demonstrate that familiarity with, the number of visits to, and the length of stay at a destination all influence the perceived image.

One of the factors related to personal experience is the intensity of the visit, or, in other words, the extent of an individual's interaction with the place. Although no research work has as yet been discovered covering the effect of visit intensity on the image, it would seem only logical to assume that this varies in line with tourists' experiences: they may be exposed to different dimensions of the destination by developing contacts and relationships; when the place is visited, they adopt different behavioral patterns related to the intensity of interaction with the destination; for example, some may devote time to exploring the various attractions on offer in depth, while others may prefer to spend their time relaxing and participating to a lesser extent in the leisure activities available.

Therefore, the primary source of information formed by personal experience or visits will influence the perceived image depending on the number of visits and their duration, or on the degree of involvement with the place during the stay. However, it is necessary to differentiate between first-timers and repeaters since, to measure the latter's degree of experience, the number of previous visits to the destination must be included. On this basis, the following hypotheses are made:

Hypothesis 3: The experience of first-time tourists, depending on the number of places of interest visited during the stay, significantly influences the cognitive component of the perceived image.

Hypothesis 4: The experience of repeat tourists, depending on the number of previous visits and number of places of interest visited, significantly influences the cognitive component of the perceived image.

Personal Factors

An individual's personal characteristics, or internal factors, also affect the formation of an image, since, as Um and Crompton (1990) state, beliefs about the attributes of a destination are formed by individuals being exposed to external stimuli, but the nature of those beliefs will vary depending on the internal factors of the individuals. Therefore, the perceived image will be formed through the image projected by the destination and the individual's own needs, motivations, prior knowledge, preferences, and other personal characteristics. In this way, individuals build their own mental picture of the place, which in turn produces their own, personal perceived images (Ashworth and Voogd 1990; Bramwell and Rawding 1996; Gartner 1993).

From the perspective of consumer behavior, personal factors refer to internal determinants, in other words, the sociodemographic char-

acteristics of the individuals (gender, age, level of education, family lifecycle, social class, place of residence, etc.), as well as those of a psychological nature (motivations, values, personality, lifestyle, etc.). These personal factors affect one's cognitive organization of perceptions, thus also influencing the perceptions of the environment and the resulting image.

Various authors state that motivations influence the image forming process and the choice of destination (Baloglu and McCleary 1999a; Stabler 1995; Um and Crompton 1990). Baloglu (1997), Dann (1996) and Gartner (1993) suggest that motivations exert a direct influence on its affective component. Insofar as affective images refer to the feelings aroused by a place, people with different motives may assess a destination in similar ways if its perception satisfies their needs. In the end, as Gartner points out, the affective component is the value that individuals attach to destinations based on motivations. Moreover, since the affective dimension influences the overall image, motivations may also influence, either directly or indirectly, that overall image.

Experience may also influence the post-visit perceived image of the destination, since, as Schreyer, Lime and Williams (1984) suggest, present situations are interpreted in comparison with past experiences, due to the connection between information coming from past experiences and the subjective interpretation of a leisure trip. In the tourism context, past experience may be more important than information obtained from external sources (Mazursky 1989), since individuals tend to place more weight on the former. This is because, when there is past experience, the criteria for decisions are strengthened, while the need to receive information becomes weaker. Although no empirical evidence was found that directly shows how tourists' levels of past experience influence the perceived image, this variable has attracted great interest among researchers insofar as it is a good indicator of their needs, motivations, and satisfaction, and may be of great use in segmenting the markets.

Most of the decision process models for destination choice (Stabler 1995; Um and Crompton 1990; Woodside and Lysonsky 1989) show that personal characteristics, such as gender, age, occupation, education and, social class, are internal inputs that influence the perceptions of places. A number of empirical works have attempted to identify differences in the perceived image depending on sociodemographic characteristics and such studies have presented contrasting results. Several (Baloglu 1997; Baloglu and McCleary 1999a; Calantone, Di Benetton, Hakam and Bojanic 1989; Chen and Kerstetter 1999; Stern and Krakover 1993; Walmsley and Jenkins 1993) found some differences in the perceived image depending on gender, age, level of education, occupation, income, marital status, and country of origin, while the work of Baloglu (1997) found no such differences in the cases of gender, level of education, and income.

The hypotheses on the influence of personal factors on the perceived image are as follows:

Hypothesis 5: Motivations significantly influence the affective component of the perceived image.

Hypothesis 6: Previous experience of leisure trips significantly influences the cognitive and affective components of the perceived image.

Hypothesis 7: Gender significantly influences the cognitive and affective components of the perceived image.

Hypothesis 8: Age significantly influences the cognitive and affective components of the perceived image.

Hypothesis 9: Level of education significantly influences the cognitive and affective components of the perceived image.

Hypothesis 10: Social class significantly influences the cognitive and affective components of the perceived image.

Hypothesis 11: The country of origin significantly influences the cognitive and affective components of the perceived image.

Research Design

To carry out this research, a personal survey was conducted by means of a structured questionnaire on 616 tourists who visited Lanzarote. The tourists were interviewed on leaving the destination. The sample was taken at random at Lanzarote Airport and a system of quotas relative to the dimensions of gender, age, and nationality was established, with proportional allocation of tourists in each of those dimensions.

To measure the cognitive component of image, a 24-item, 7-point Likert type scale was developed after reviewing other measurement scales (Baloglu and McCleary 1999a, 1999b; Calantone et al 1989; Chon, Weaver, and Kim 1991; Echtner and Ritchie 1993; Fakeye and Crompton 1991; Gartner and Shen 1992; Hu and Ritchie 1993). To check the validity of the content of the scale, eight experts involved either professionally or academically with the tourist industry were interviewed, and in accordance with their expressed opinions, it was possible to ensure that the scale covered the whole of the studied content. The items used can be seen in Table 2, which shows the exploratory factor analysis of the scale. The method used to measure the affective component was a 7-point Likert type scale made up of the two emotional attributes that are needed to adequately represent the affective space of image, on the basis of the empirical works of Hanyu (1993), Russel and Snodgrass (1987), and Walmsley and Jenkins (1993). Finally, the overall image was measured with a 7-point, single-item Likert type scale whose extreme values are very positive/very negative.

Following the outline proposed by Gartner (1993), nine secondary sources of information are included and classified into induced sour-

Table 2. Factor Analysis of Cognitive Image

Variables	Factors ^a					Cronbach's Alpha
	COG1	COG2	COG3	COG4	COG5	
Great variety of fauna and flora	.7294	.1227	.1492	.0468	.1914	
Places of historical or cultural interest	.7162	.2385	.0386	.2123	-.0160	
Wealth and beauty of landscape	.6300	.0095	.0409	-.0087	.4797	.7802
Unusual ways of life and customs	.6186	.2372	.1928	.1644	.0035	
Interesting cultural activities	.5968	.4143	.2509	.0478	-.0989	
Shopping facilities	.0977	.7328	.2041	.0674	.1957	
Good night-life	.0425	.7070	.2744	-.0490	.1556	
Varied gastronomy	.2785	.5844	.0642	.2254	.0472	.7455
Opportunities for sports activities	.2633	.5432	.1243	.1874	.0656	
Well-developed general infrastructures	.2653	.5132	.0206	.2284	.2766	
Luxury	.0479	.2349	.7526	.2555	.1576	
Fashionable	.1538	.3774	.7063	.0377	-.0692	
Exotic	.3958	-.0177	.6781	.0022	.0771	.7656
A good name and reputation	.1620	.1858	.5001	.3495	.2800	
A good quality of life	.0139	.1386	.4780	.4125	.1583	
Offers personal safety	.0478	.2256	.1174	.6716	.0946	
Clean	.0394	.1244	.1033	.6588	.1302	.5636
Hospitable, friendly people	.3303	-.0737	.1174	.6393	.0272	
Good beaches	.1147	.1345	.2417	-.0075	.7401	
Good weather	-.0019	.1614	-.0141	.2510	.6364	.5803
Good infrastructure of hotels and apartments	.1254	.3546	.1192	.3615	.4777	
Cronbach's alpha of the total scale						.8842
% variance explained	55.736					
KMO	.908					
Bartlett	3835.082					
Significance	.0000					

^a COG1: natural and cultural resources; COG2: general, tourist and leisure infrastructures; COG3: atmosphere; COG4, social setting and environment; and COG5, sun and sand.

ces (tourist brochures issued by the destination's public authorities, tour operator brochures, mass-media advertising campaigns, travel agency staff, and Internet); organic sources (friends and family members who were either requested or who volunteered to give information about the destination); and autonomous sources (guidebooks, news, articles, reports, documentaries and programs about the destination in the media). The importance of each source in the formation of the pre-visit image was assessed using a 7-point Likert type scale. Covert induced sources of information were not included because the destination did not employ this form of advertising. With respect to the primary information sources, in order to discover one's degree of experience of the destination through visiting it, there was an assessment of the degree of interaction of the individual with the destination by the number of places of interest that were known personally. At the same time, the survey instrument also included a question about the frequency of visits to the place, as measured by the number of previous trips to Lanzarote.

Based on the typology of basic functions proposed by Fodness (1994), a 19-item 7-point Likert type scale was developed to measure the motivations (Table 4). A 7-point, single-item Likert type scale that ranged from "great experience" to "no experience" was used to measure vacation experience. Further, those sociodemographic characteristics which, according to the review of the literature, can affect image formation were included. These variables refer to gender, age, level of education, social class, and country of origin.

Study Results

Before checking the hypotheses set out in this work, an exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation was applied to the scales referring to the perceived cognitive and affective images, and to motivations, with the aim of reducing their dimensions and identifying the determinant factors. At the same time, the reliability of the scales was analyzed by means of Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The results of

Table 3. Factor Analysis of Affective Image

Variables	Factors	
	AFF	Cronbach's Alpha
Pleasant/unpleasant place	.889	.7293
Exciting/boring place	.889	
Cronbach's alpha of the total scale		.7293
% variance explained	78.992	
KMO	.500	
Bartlett	251.415	
Significance	.0000	

these analyses are shown in Tables 2–4. The factor scores were computed as regression.

Six partial path models were developed to verify the hypotheses regarding the degree of influence of secondary information sources (induced, as well as organic and autonomous) on the cognitive image of first-time tourists; the degree of influence of the primary information sources on the cognitive image of the two groups of tourists; and the influence of individual motivations and experience on each group's image. In order to analyze the influence of the sociodemographic characteristics on perceived image, a *t*-test/ANOVA was carried out.

Table 4. Factor Analysis of Motivations

Variables	Factors ^a				Cronbach's Alpha
	MOT1	MOT2	MOT3	MOT4	
To discover new cultures/ ways of life	.8442	-.0029	.0706	.0406	.7923
Intellectual improvement	.8016	-.0836	.0588	.2260	
To discover different new places	.7121	.2527	.0995	.0502	.7944
To attend cultural events	.6784	-.0677	.1825	.3146	
Rest and relaxation	-.0142	.8423	.0288	.0232	.7944
To alleviate stress and tension	.0399	.8272	.0883	.0510	
To escape daily routine	.0414	.8167	.1911	.0130	.7908
To seek adventure and pleasure	.1522	.1097	.8368	.1316	
To seek recreation and entertainment	.0126	.1001	.8253	.0950	.7908
To do exciting things	.1876	.1229	.7585	.2160	
To go to places that friends have not visited	.1538	.0323	.0695	.8418	.7493
To be able to tell friends about vacation experiences	.1997	.1974	.1197	.8008	
To go to fashionable places	.1225	-.1151	.2870	.6910	.8068
Cronbach's alpha of the total scale					
% variance explained	68.483				
KMO	.797				
Bartlett	2779.118				
Significance	.0000				

^a MOT1, knowledge; MOT2, relaxation; MOT3, entertainment; and MOT4, prestige.

To analyze the influence of secondary sources of information on perceived image, two complementary models are defined, differentiating between the induced sources controlled by the public authorities responsible for promoting the destination, and organic and autonomous sources, where the information is not provided by these organizations. This partial modeling attempts to address the problems of saturation arising from the high number of relationships in the model when all the information sources are jointly considered.

Regarding induced sources of information, the results referring to the fit of path model reveal that almost all the measures reach the recommended limits, except for the significance of the chi-squared statistic, which may be affected by the size of the sample, and permits the goodness of fit to be considered acceptable (Table 5). The regression weight estimates of the different causal relationships between the induced sources and the cognitive dimensions of image are not significant except for the relationship between travel agency staff and the cognitive factor of sun and sand. Therefore, it can only be stated that the greater the role of travel agency staff in providing

Table 5. Regression Weight Estimates of the Path Model of Induced Sources^a

Variables	Standardized Estimates	Critical Ratio (CR)	Variables	Standardized Estimates	Critical Ratio (CR)
COG1 ← IND1	.023	.436	COG4 ← IND4	-.081	-1.529
COG2 ← IND1	.009	.169	COG5 ← IND4	.158	3.002
COG3 ← IND1	.042	.796	COG1 ← IND5	-.003	-.060
COG4 ← IND1	.005	.103	COG2 ← IND5	.065	1.212
COG5 ← IND1	.012	.223	COG3 ← IND5	.040	.759
COG1 ← IND2	.025	.462	COG4 ← IND5	.018	.332
COG2 ← IND2	.018	.340	COG5 ← IND5	-.042	-.806
COG3 ← IND2	-.070	-1.315	AFF ← COG1	.241	5.425
COG4 ← IND2	.085	1.601	AFF ← COG2	.255	5.752
COG5 ← IND2	-.044	-.844	AFF ← COG3	.188	4.224
COG1 ← IND3	-.026	-.480	AFF ← COG4	.214	4.815
COG2 ← IND3	.009	-.175	AFF ← COG5	.332	7.490
COG3 ← IND3	.075	1.410	OI ← COG1	.120	2.855
COG4 ← IND3	-.049	-.921	OI ← COG2	.050	1.181
COG5 ← IND3	-.071	-1.354	OI ← COG3	.056	1.338
COG1 ← IND4	-.004	-.082	OI ← COG4	.074	1.768
COG2 ← IND4	.012	.229	OI ← COG5	.233	5.351
COG3 ← IND4	.054	1.016	OI ← AFF	.463	9.481

Results of Fit Measures of Model

CMIN = 74.834 ($p = .000$), GFI = .961, RMSEA = .065

NFI = .816, AGFI = .900

PGFI = .370, CMINDF = 2.494, PNFI = .371

^a COG1, natural and cultural resources; COG2, general, tourist and leisure infrastructures; COG3, atmosphere; COG4, social setting and environment; COG5, sun and sand; AFF, affective image; OI, overall image; IND1, public authorities brochures; IND2, tour operators brochures; IND3, advertising campaigns; IND4, travel agencies staff; and IND5, Internet.

information about Lanzarote, the better the image that tourists have of the “sun and sand” dimension. The other induced sources of information make no significant contribution to the formation of the post-visit image, which may be due to the fact that induced sources are considered less truthful and less believable than organic or autonomous sources. On the basis of these results, it is possible to conclude that induced sources have little influence on the post-visit image formed by tourists, except in the case of travel agency staff. Therefore, Hypothesis 1, that induced sources significantly influence the cognitive component, can only be partially accepted.

The results of the path model of the causal relationships between secondary autonomous and organic information sources and the cognitive formation of image show that the measures of absolute and incremental fit are similar to those of the previous model, and thus the goodness of fit can be considered acceptable (Table 6). All the organic and autonomous sources have a statistically significant causal relationship with one or two of the factors of cognitive image, which demonstrates that there are differences in the information provided by these different sources regarding the attributes of image that they project. Therefore, the greater the use made of guidebooks, the better the image of the natural and cultural resources of the island is

Table 6. Regression Weight Estimates: Path Model of Autonomous/Organic Sources^a

Variables	Standardized Estimates	Critical Ratio (CR)	Variables	Standardized Estimates	Critical Ratio (CR)
COG1 ← AUT1	.237	4.592	COG2 ← ORG2	-.064	-1.213
COG2 ← AUT1	-.058	-1.092	COG3 ← ORG2	.074	1.428
COG3 ← AUT1	-.201	-3.886	COG4 ← ORG2	-.104	-1.968
COG4 ← AUT1	-.047	-.893	COG5 ← ORG2	.019	.357
COG5 ← AUT1	-.056	-1.051	AFF ← COG1	.240	5.413
COG1 ← AUT2	.074	1.440	AFF ← COG2	.255	5.752
COG2 ← AUT2	.131	2.489	AFF ← COG3	.187	4.204
COG3 ← AUT2	.052	1.008	AFF ← COG4	.213	4.811
COG4 ← AUT2	.055	1.028	AFF ← COG5	.331	7.465
COG5 ← AUT2	-.057	-1.072	OI ← COG1	.120	2.849
COG1 ← ORG1	.082	1.581	OI ← COG2	.050	1.181
COG2 ← ORG1	.081	1.531	OI ← COG3	.055	1.332
COG3 ← ORG1	.133	2.572	OI ← COG4	.074	1.767
COG4 ← ORG1	.040	.763	OI ← COG5	.233	5.335
COG1 ← ORG2	.021	.400	OI ← AFF	.464	9.481

Results of Fit Measures of Model

CMIN = 49.187 ($p = .002$), GFI = .975, RMSEA = .055

NFI = .886, AGFI = .932

PGFI = .355, CMINDF = 2.049, PNFI = .386

^a COG1, natural and cultural resources; COG2, general, tourist and leisure infrastructures; COG3, atmosphere; COG4, social setting and environment; COG5, sun and sand; AFF, affective image; OI, overall image; AUT1, tourist guidebooks; AUT2, news and popular culture; ORG1, solicited organic; and ORG2, unsolicited organic.

and the worse the image of the island's atmosphere, which could be a result of the non-fulfillment of the expectations generated by the source. The autonomous agents mainly influence, in a positive way, the formation of the image of the general and touristic infrastructures. The organic source (friends and family asked for information) acts mainly on the beliefs about the atmosphere of the destination. Friends and family who volunteer information have a negative influence on beliefs about social and environmental aspects, which may mean that they transmit, by word of mouth, a negative image about the cleanliness of the place, personal safety, and the hospitality and friendliness of the local inhabitants. Based on the above, Hypothesis 2—that the organic and autonomous information sources significantly influence the cognitive perceived image—can be confirmed, albeit to a moderate degree.

The regression weight estimates of the causal relationships between the perceived image and the primary information sources, which are determined by the number of visits that tourists make to places of interest in the destination and by the number of actual visits to the destination (the latter variable considered only for repeat tourists), are shown in Table 7. The goodness of fit of both models to the observed data can be considered acceptable since the measures of absolute and incremental fit reached are close to the recommended limits, except for the significance of the chi-squared statistic in the model for repeating tourists.

The results of the estimates of the path model specified for the sample of first-time tourists to Lanzarote (Table 7) indicate that the interaction that these have with the destination is positive and has a statistically significant relationship with the dimension made up of its natural and cultural resources. The critical ratios of the other dimensions of cognitive image do not reach the recommended limit. Therefore, there is partial acceptance of Hypothesis 3, which states that first-time tourists' experience expressed as the number of places of interest visited significantly influences the cognitive component. The results obtained for the repeat tourists regarding the relationships between interaction with the destination and the cognitive dimensions are similar to those for the first-timers, since they still show a statistically significant positive relationship with the dimension of natural and cultural resources (Table 7).

The number of times that individuals have visited Lanzarote only has a significant influence on the dimension of social and environmental aspects, although in this case it is negative, indicating that the more often tourists repeat their vacations in Lanzarote, the lower they rate the aspects of the cleanliness of the island, their personal safety, and the hospitality and friendliness of the local residents. This is a consequence of the progressive deterioration of the island of Lanzarote due to the excessive increase in touristic infrastructures and illegal immigration. These results lead to a partial confirmation of Hypothesis 4, which states that the experience of tourists that have previously visited the destination significantly influences the cognitive component.

Table 7. Regression Weight Estimates of the Path Model of Primary Sources^a

Variables	First-time Tourists		Repeat Tourists	
	Standardized Estimates	Critical Ratio (CR)	Standardized Estimates	Critical Ratio (CR)
COG1 ← PLACES	.315	6.195	.373	6.540
COG2 ← PLACES	-.070	-1.308	-.015	-.237
COG3 ← PLACES	-.097	-1.813	-.058	-.953
COG4 ← PLACES	.018	.327	.062	1.019
COG5 ← PLACES	-.092	-1.733	-.060	-.987
COG1 ← TIMES	-	-	.028	.494
COG2 ← TIMES	-	-	.044	-.709
COG3 ← TIMES	-	-	.073	1.200
COG4 ← TIMES	-	-	-.165	-2.731
COG5 ← TIMES	-	-	.105	1.725
AFF ← COG1	.241	5.418	.179	3.337
AFF ← COG2	.256	5.751	.327	6.087
AFF ← COG3	.188	4.221	.157	2.925
AFF ← COG4	.214	4.807	.202	3.762
AFF ← COG5	.332	7.465	.190	3.530
OI ← COG1	.121	2.852	.123	2.409
OI ← COG2	.050	1.181	.138	2.573
OI ← COG3	.056	1.337	-.029	-.575
OI ← COG4	.074	1.765	.031	.608
OI ← COG5	.233	5.335	.030	.593
OI ← AFF	.463	9.481	.478	8.334
Results of Fit Measures of Model	Results of Fit Measures of Model		Results of Fit Measures of Model	
First-time Tourists	Repeat Tourists		Repeat Tourists	
CMIN = 7.143 ($p = .848$),	CMIN = 50.421 ($p = .000$),		CMIN = 50.421 ($p = .000$),	
GFI = .995, RMSEA = .000	GFI = .962, RMSEA = .094		GFI = .962, RMSEA = .094	
NFI = .980, AGFI = .984	NFI = .827, AGFI = .885		NFI = .827, AGFI = .885	
PGFI = .332, CMINDF = .595,	PGFI = .321, CMINDF = 3.361,		PGFI = .321, CMINDF = 3.361,	
PNFI = .420	PNFI = .345		PNFI = .345	

^a COG1, natural and cultural resources; COG2, general, tourist and leisure infrastructures; COG3, atmosphere; COG4, social setting and environment; COG5, sun and sand; AFF, affective image, OI, overall image; PLACES, number of places of interest visited; and TIMES, number of visits to tourist destination.

Table 8 shows the results of the path model that specifies the relationships between the motivations and the degree of experience and perceived image. As in the previous cases, it can be considered that both the model for first-timers and that for repeaters show acceptable fit to the data according to the measures of absolute and incremental fit. With reference to the former, the table shows that the motivations that have a statistically significant relationship with the affective dimension center on the utilitarian function of relaxation and on knowledge. The other two motivation factors related to entertainment and prestige have no significant relation-

ship with this dimension. This could stem from the fact that the motivations related to rest, escape from routine, and the alleviation of stress and getting to know different new places are the most relevant for tourists visiting Lanzarote.

In the case of repeaters, only the motivations linked to knowledge had a statistically significant negative relationship with the affective dimension (Table 8). This may be due to the fact that when tourists have a desire to discover different new places but make a repeat visit to a destination, that need is not satisfied and this has a negative

Table 8. Regression Weight Estimates: Path Model of the Motivations/Experience^a

Variables	First-time Tourists		Repeat Tourists	
	Standardized Estimates	Critical Ratio (CR)	Standardized Estimates	Critical Ratio (CR)
COG1 ← EXP	.042	.777	.114	1.861
COG2 ← EXP	.080	1.506	.094	1.541
COG3 ← EXP	.076	1.419	.043	.693
COG4 ← EXP	.203	3.872	.086	1.410
COG5 ← EXP	.077	1.434	.001	.014
AFF ← COG1	.195	4.377	.213	4.208
AFF ← COG2	.246	5.511	.346	6.830
AFF ← COG3	.193	4.322	.191	3.785
AFF ← COG4	.175	3.853	.198	3.914
AFF ← COG5	.290	6.526	.170	3.366
AFF ← MOT1	.141	3.181	-.105	-2.091
AFF ← MOT2	.164	3.700	.035	.690
AFF ← MOT3	.024	.545	-.072	-1.419
AFF ← MOT4	-.010	-.232	-.091	-1.797
AFF ← EXP	.042	.915	.103	2.009
OI ← COG1	.122	2.898	.122	2.386
OI ← COG2	.051	1.187	.135	2.53
OI ← COG3	.056	1.337	-.029	-.568
OI ← COG4	.075	1.782	.031	.605
OI ← COG5	.236	5.447	.030	.594
OI ← AFF	.455	9.522	.490	8.374
Results of Fit Measures of Model	First-time Tourists		Results of Fit Measures of Model	
	First-time Tourists		Repeat Tourists	
	CMIN = 210.067 ($p = .000$),		CMIN = 197.602 ($p = .000$),	
	GFI = .921, RMSEA = .101		GFI = .895, RMSEA = .112	
	NFI = .625, AGFI = .866		NFI = .513, AGFI = .822	
	PGFI = .543, CMINDF = 4.567,		PGFI = .528, CMINF = 4.296,	
	PNFI = .436		PNFI = .357	

^a COG1, natural and cultural resources; COG2, general, tourist and leisure infrastructures; COG3, atmosphere; COG4, social setting and environment; COG5, sun and sand; AFF, affective image; OI, overall image; EXP, tourist experience; MOT1, knowledge; MOT2, relaxation; MOT3, entertainment; and MOT4, prestige.

effect on the affective appraisal of that destination. These results lead to the confirmation, to a moderate extent, of Hypothesis 5, which states that motivations significantly influence the affective component.

As Table 8 shows, the degree of experience has a statistically significant relationship with the environmental and social dimension of cognitive image in the case of first-timers, and with the affective dimension in the case of repeaters. Therefore, it can be said that there is a certain connection between previous experience and the subjective interpretation of the present experience. This permits the confirmation, to a moderate extent, of Hypothesis 6, which states that previous experience significantly influences the cognitive and affective components of the perceived image.

The possible influence of sociodemographic characteristics on the cognitive and affective components was analyzed using a *t*-test/ANOVA. A distinction was made in this analysis between first-time and repeat tourists (Table 9). With respect to the relationship between gender and perceived image, for the first-time tourists, there is a statistically significant relationship between gender and the factors of the cognitive image related to the general and touristic infrastructures, and to natural and cultural resources, although the significance level for the latter dimension was 6%. At the same time, there is a significant relationship with the affective dimension, insofar as women tend to assess the destination more favorably than men do. In the case of repeaters, there is a significant relationship only with the factor referring to sun and sand, with women once again assessing this dimension of image more positively. Therefore, Hypothesis 7, which states that gender significantly influences the perceived image, is confirmed, albeit partially.

The age factor only had a significant influence on the cognitive dimension of natural and social environment, both for first-timers and repeaters, with older tourists generally making a more positive evaluation of this dimension of image. The other dimensions, both of cognitive and affective image, displayed no significant differences from one age group to the next, and thus Hypothesis 8 can be partially confirmed.

The perceived image of the destination is only partially influenced by education level, since this variable only has a significant effect on the affective dimension with higher levels of education being reflected by lower evaluations of this dimension of image. However, in the case of first-time tourists, the degree of significance in the relationship between level of education and affective image is 9.4%. On the basis of such results, Hypothesis 9 can be only partially confirmed.

The social class of first-time tourists has a significant relationship with the factor of cognitive image defined as natural and cultural resources; the higher the social class, the lower the score given to the natural and cultural resources of the destination. However, the relationship between the dimension of atmosphere and social class shows a significance level of 7.6%. The social class of this group does not influence the other dimensions of the cognitive and affective ima-

Table 9. Influence of Sociodemographic Characteristics on Destination Image

	Factors of Cognitive Image											
	Natural/ Cultural Resources		General/Tour- ist Leisure Infrastructures		Atmosphere		Social Setting/ Environment		Sun and Sand		Affective Image	
	First time	Repeat	First time	Repeat	First time	Repeat	First time	Repeat	First time	Repeat	First time	Repeat
Gender												
Male	-.180	.176	-.184	.061	-.076	.031	-.006	.018	-.122	-.005	-.312	.093
Female	.018	.000	.017	-.129	-.045	.126	.057	-.099	-.055	.234	.111	.104
<i>t</i>	-1.889	1.413	-1.931	-.540	-.303	-.758	-.597	.939	-.597	-2.094	-3.859	-.098
<i>Sig.</i>	.060	.159	.054	.590	.762	.449	.551	.349	.551	.037	.000	.922
<i>Eta</i>	.101	.087	.103	.033	.016	.047	.032	.058	.032	.128	.203	.006
Age												
16-24 yrs	-.036	.157	.050	-.072	.103	.440	-.280	-.599	-.005	-.110	-.084	.111
25-34 yrs	-.132	-.141	-.078	.167	.018	.104	-.110	.095	-.100	.132	-.111	-.051
35-44 yrs	-.054	.055	-.315	.015	-.145	.033	.187	-.174	-.065	.065	-.091	.177
45-54 yrs	-.147	.159	.062	.233	-.114	.040	.141	.036	-.071	.128	-.138	.077
55-64 yrs	-.022	.161	.097	.017	-.158	.066	.383	-.036	-.267	.178	.148	.190
65 yrs	.697	.297	-.228	-.093	-.340	-.064	.023	.387	.040	.207	.205	.065
<i>F</i>	1.573	.747	1.618	.652	.821	.574	2.848	2.202	.298	.326	.538	.418
<i>Sig.</i>	.167	.589	.155	.660	.536	.720	.016	.054	.914	.897	.748	.836
<i>Eta</i>	.150	.119	.152	.111	.109	.104	.199	.202	.066	.079	.088	.089
Level of Education												
No education	-.306	.461	.177	.714	-.454	-.015	.696	.256	-.284	.261	-.301	.705
Grade school	.079	.326	-.149	.091	-.104	-.118	-.033	-.142	-.154	.101	.129	-.038
High school	-.051	.069	.024	.217	.027	.187	.084	.031	.025	.058	-.066	.337
Lower university degree	-.157	-.103	-.150	-.062	-.152	-.014	-.092	-.031	-.193	.043	-.311	-.148
Higher university degree	-.183	-.047	-.133	-.122	-.014	.261	.085	-.114	-.077	.340	.014	-.069
<i>F</i>	.869	1.781	.751	1.749	.803	1.307	1.324	.489	.759	.765	1.998	4.114
<i>Sig.</i>	.482	.133	.558	.140	.524	.268	.261	.744	.553	.549	.094	.003
<i>Eta</i>	.100	.163	.093	.162	.096	.140	.123	.086	.093	.108	.150	.244
Social Class												
High	-.530	-.037	.151	-.135	-.093	.300	.145	.049	-.141	.352	.033	.168
Middle-high	-.151	-.048	-.121	.046	.167	.040	.031	.127	-.113	.172	-.060	.119
Middle	-.045	.111	-.161	.124	-.175	.108	-.011	-.088	-.077	.087	-.191	.030
Low-middle/low	.226	.238	.094	.164	.029	-.043	.069	-.131	-.041	.008	.159	.211
<i>F</i>	5.161	.871	1.859	.528	2.313	.662	.301	.828	.095	.819	1.997	.544
<i>Sig.</i>	.002	.457	.136	.664	.076	.576	.825	.479	.963	.484	.114	.653
<i>Eta</i>	.207	.099	.126	.078	.140	.087	.051	.097	0.29	.096	.130	.079
Country of Origin												
Germany	.209	.392	-.317	-.100	-.408	-.453	-.030	.026	-.435	.060	-.367	-.145
United Kingdom	-.291	-.140	.004	.287	.078	.346	.164	-.068	.183	.144	.064	.203
Ireland	-.130	-.220	.330	.062	.475	.454	.101	.115	.483	.904	.537	.293
Spain	.198	.560	-.308	-1.416	.509	.688	-.185	.338	-.226	.459	.369	.199
Holland	.214	.900	.005	-1.430	-.498	-.101	-.163	-.410	-.076	-.388	-.282	-.742
Scandinavia	-.606	-.087	.295	.356	.015	.067	-.254	.035	-.132	-.013	-.308	.353
Other Countries	.175	.606	.013	.421	.315	.110	.136	-.357	-.200	-.241	.238	.384
<i>F</i>	5.181	4.287	2.643	7.309	6.248	6.112	1.203	.605	4.630	2.266	4.118	2.847
<i>Sig.</i>	.000	.000	.016	.000	.000	.000	.304	.726	.000	.038	.001	.011
<i>Eta</i>	.289	.301	.210	.381	.314	.352	.144	.118	.274	.223	.259	.249

ges. In the case of repeat tourists, no statistically significant relationships are seen in any of the dimensions. Therefore, Hypothesis 10 is partially confirmed.

The country of origin may determine different cultural factors that affect tourists' perceptions on a cognitive and on an affective level. The results reveal that, from a statistical point of view, there are significant relationships between the perceived image and the country of origin. First-time and repeat tourists alike made different evaluations of all the cognitive factors of image except the natural environment factor, depending on their country of origin. The affective image is similarly influenced by this variable. This leads to the confirmation of Hypothesis 10, which states that the country of origin significantly influences the cognitive and affective components of the perceived image.

CONCLUSION

From an academic point of view, this work has attempted to provide a conceptual framework that permits continued advances in the development of the subject of destination image in order to allow a greater understanding of the image-formation process in individuals' minds. Along these lines, this paper responds to the need expressed by various authors both to study in greater depth the forces that influence the formation of image (given the limited empirical evidence covering this phenomena) and to help fill the gap which exists in academic literature on the factors that influence the structure and formation of this image. With that end in mind, different path models were developed and empirically validated in an attempt to provide greater knowledge of the forces or factors that determine the formation of the post-visit image. More specifically, the influence of the following factors were studied: secondary and primary information sources, motivations, experience of leisure travel, and sociodemographic characteristics related to gender, age, level of education, social class, and country of origin. From a practical point of view, the overall understanding of the process of image formation and the intensity of the relationship between the factors influencing the shaping of the image and that of the destination itself will help the public institutions responsible for sales management to project a suitable image of their markets by means of the best choice of communication mix.

With reference to the secondary information sources, one, it should be emphasized that the induced sources related to brochures provided by the destination's public authorities, tour-operators' brochures, advertising campaigns, and the Internet had no significant influence on the different factors of the cognitive first-time image. On the other hand, travel agency staff proved to be the only induced source which displayed a positive and statistically significant influence on the cognitive factor of sun and sand resources. This indicates that those responsible for promoting such resources must develop a

relationship with this distribution channel and ensure that the messages transmitted coincide with the desired image of the place. Two, the organic and autonomous sources significantly influence some of the factors determining the cognitive image of the destination, with autonomous sources, mainly guidebooks, being the most relevant. Since the messages transmitted by autonomous sources are difficult to control, it is important for the destinations to collaborate more directly with the media and to keep track of the image which is being broadcast. Furthermore, the fact that word of mouth is considered to be the most believable and truthful communication channel, together with the fact that it also significantly influences the cognitive image, means that it is important that the messages transmitted in the markets of origin match the reality of the destination. In this context, the development of the image must be based on reality, otherwise the destination will not succeed in satisfying the tourists, which will in turn have a negative effect on the image that they will transmit by word of mouth.

The influence of primary sources among first-time tourists becomes clear in the relationship between the number of visits made to places of interest in the destination and the cognitive dimension of image of natural and cultural resources. It is thus of primary importance that resorts carry out campaigns to make tourists aware of the places of interest and so increase their visits. This relationship is maintained in the case of repeaters, for whom the number of past visits also exerts a significant, but in this case negative, influence on the cognitive dimension of social and natural environment. Therefore, the more a tourist repeats a visit to this destination, the worse the assessment of the aspects of that dimension is, due to the excessive increase in tourist infrastructures and illegal immigration.

In addition, it is apparent from the results of the empirical research that motivations influence the affective component of image. These results are consistent with the findings of Baloglu and McCleary (1999a) and suggest that, when there is congruence between motivations and the place offer, the affective image is positively influenced. In this paper, it becomes apparent that, in the case of a destination in a competitive position regarding "sun and sand", the motivations favorably affecting first-time tourists' affective image are related to "relaxation" and to a lesser extent with "knowledge". Therefore, it is essential for destinations in a similar position to be directed towards those market segments whose motivations are linked to the utilitarian function of rest, relaxation, stress relief, and escape from daily routine. For repeaters, who in this case comprised some 43.2% of the total, only the motives linked to knowledge negatively influenced the affective dimension, possibly because the island of Lanzarote is small, both in terms of size and offer, and as such is unable to satisfy that need. Therefore, in destinations with these characteristics, but with high levels of customer loyalty, it would seem advisable to make an effort to vary the offer of attractions.

The level of experience has a positive and significant relationship with the cognitive dimension among first-timers and with the affective

dimension among repeaters. This leads to the conclusion that the experience accumulated by traveling results in tourists being more tolerant when assessing the destination because they know other realities of tourism that serve as points of comparison. Since no other empirical evidence was found to confirm this hypothesis, it would be advisable to make a detailed study of this variable, which could be of great use as a criterion for market segmentation and selection.

Finally, a significant, albeit moderate, relationship was found between the affective and cognitive components of image and the sociodemographic characteristics related to gender, age, level of education, and social class, since statistically significant differences were observed with respect to certain factors that explained the image. On the other hand, the country of origin is the sociodemographic characteristic which exerts the greatest influence on the cognitive and affective components, both in the case of first-time and repeat tourists. Therefore, it is desirable to follow different communication strategies depending on the tourists' country of origin. These results are in line with those of most empirical works that have analyzed, by means of the countries of origin, the differences in perceived image depending on cultural factors. However, it should be emphasized that nationalities must not be considered synonymous with societies, which develop their own forms of social organization, and that the concept of culture refers more to societies than to states or countries of origin. Therefore, given the absence of evidence in this line of research, it would be advisable to carry out an in-depth study of the influence of cultural values on the perceived image.

Although strict scientific criteria were adhered to throughout this research work, it clearly has its limitations, from both the conceptual and methodological perspectives. From a conceptual point of view, the research is limited to the context of its own objectives. While the study attempts to develop and validate several of the factors which influence perceived image, other factors which are known to exist and which affect the image forming process (such as several other psychographic variables, such as values, life styles) were not included in the research. The use of a questionnaire as an information-gathering instrument also entails some limitations regarding the number of variables and scales to be included if the resulting questionnaire is to avoid being discouragingly long. Therefore, it would be interesting to undertake further research that includes those types of variables in order to study their influence on the formation of image.

From a methodological perspective, this study, like all empirical research work, has certain limitations which affect the evaluation and generalization of its results. First, its transversal nature made it impossible to measure the pre-visit image of the destination, which would have made it feasible to measure the extent to which secondary information sources influence the formation of the pre-visit image and the way in which primary information sources could alter this image. Therefore, it would seem desirable to carry out longitudinal studies that deal with the process of the formation and changes in the image. Second, and with respect to the transversal design of this

research, the causal relationships revealed in the study should be interpreted with caution, since the design does not allow for rigid compliance with the conditions for causality, and it is thus impossible to absolutely confirm that changes in the cause mean changes in the effect. In many structural models, causality must be understood in terms of statistical association and not under the conditions of an experimental design. However, this work has attempted to establish causal relationships theoretically substantiated by the theoretical foundations set out in this paper. It was also taken into account that structural equation models involve linearity in the causal relationships, which means a further limitation in cases where such relationships are not linear.

Finally, the generalization of the results is yet another limitation, since the area of research only permits the results to be generalized for the sample population and the destination of Lanzarote, making it advisable both to replicate this research in other settings and to analyze the factors that influence the perceived image in other destinations. ■

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