Perceived Image of Spain and Germany as a Tourist Destination for Dutch Travelers

Hasan Ayyildiz and Gulcin Bilgin Turna

Abstract—**In this study, questionnaire was conducted in the Netherlands in order to measure how Dutch people perceive tourism destination image (TDI) of Germany and Spain. Significant differences were identified with Wilcoxon T test between the countries. Cognitive and affective country image factors on destination beliefs were measured by correlation analysis. It was found that affective country image has more effect on destination beliefs than cognitive country image. Confirmatory factor and multiple regression analysis results were shown. Participants were also asked some open ended questions about tourism image of the mentioned countries and how/where they gathered information about them. Media and experiences were found to be important sources of information of a country.**

Index Terms—**Country image, destination image, Germany, international tourism, Spain.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of ''image'' that has been studied for several decades in such disciplines as social and environmental psychology, marketing, and consumer behavior, was introduced into tourism studies in the early 1970s by Hunt [1], Mayo [2], and Gunn [3] and has since become one of the most researched topics in the field [4]. Image is the sum of beliefs, attitudes and impressions that a person or group has of an object. The object may be a company, product, brand, place or person. The impression may be true or false, real or imagined. Right or wrong, images guide and shape behavior. [5] Countries are also subject to comsumption like products. Country image is the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a country [6]. It has been investigated in two relatively independent research streams, namely product-country image (PCI) and tourism destination image (TDI). The impact of country image on the response of consumers to products from a country has been termed the country of origin (COO) or product-country image (PCI) effect. [7] Tourism destination image is the expression of all objective knowledge, impressions, prejudice, imaginations and emotional thoughts an individual or group might have of a particular place. [8]

In this study, a questionnaire was conducted with Dutch people to analyze the tourism destination image of Spain and Germany.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

About destination image the first study is Hunt's study [1]

about the importance of image on travel behavior. He concluded that place of residence is a significant factor in determining people's perceived image of a destination. Tourism is an industry that gains strength with image and tourism destination image have been studied for 35 years. Many researchers have investigated the image's effect on travelers [9]-[10], measurement of the image [11]-[12], and how it is formed [13]. It was accepted by many researchers [9], [12], [14]-[16] that the experiences of the visitors have significant effect on revisits. Pearce [9] found that the most important factors on TDI are shopping, people, culture, scene and beaches whereas Therkelsen [17] mentioned that the people's backgrounds also have a significant effect on the ideas of a country. Baloglu [18] found that the more destination familiarity, the better the image of a country. So in order to improve the familiarity, advertising, public relations and sales promotions should be used together in the marketing mix.

A great number of researchers [13], [15], [19]-[25] support the view that image is a multidimensional construct comprising of two primary dimensions: cognitive and affective. Cognitive evaluation refers to beliefs and knowledge about an object whereas affective evaluation refers to feelings about the object [21], [26]-[28]. In other words, cognitive element of destination image describes the beliefs and information that people have about a place. Affective element describes what people feel about a place; it is about loving or not loving somewhere [29]. Social and environmental psychological tradition regards cognition and affect as interrelated elements, where affect is largely dependent on cognition. However, Russell and Snodgrass [30] argued that behavior may be influenced by the (estimated, perceived, or remembered) affective quality of an environment rather than by its objective properties directly. The affective component of destination image expresses feelings toward a destination, which can be favorable, unfavorable, or neutral [4]. Gartner [21] suggested that the affective component comes into play at the stage when different travel alternatives are evaluated.

III. METHOLODOLOGY WITH FINDINGS

In this study, cognitive image constructs (quality of life, wealth, technology level, education) were adapted from Orbaiz ve Papadopoulos [31] and affective image constructs from Beerli and Martin [32] (pleasant), Echtner and Ritchie [11] (safety), Heslop and Papadopoulos [33] (trustworthy), Orbaiz and Papadopoulos [31] (friendly). Destination beliefs constructs were adapted from Elliot [34] (appealing scenery, suitable accommodation, quality attractions, lots to see and do, value for money, good overall destination) and

correlations were made to understand how cognitive and affective image affect destination beliefs. The target population for this study consisted of university students (between 18-30) in the Netherlands who had expressed an interest in taking a vacation in a foreign country. In addition to the questions about cognitive, affective image constructs and destination beliefs, respondents were asked about their information sources about the countries and the things come to their minds when they think of Spain and Germany.

TABLE I: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS (*N*=363)

Evaluation	Variable	The Netherlands (%)
Gender	Male	55.65
	Female	44.35
Marital Status	Married	3.03
	Single	69.70
	Living together	15.43
	Divorced	0.55
	Other	11.29
Number of children	0	97.24
	1	1.10
	2	1.66
Occupation	Student	84.02
	Teacher	15.98
Age	Less than 20	26.45
	20-24	55.65
	25-29	13.22
	30-34	3.58
	35-39	1.10
Education level	University Student	84.02
	University Graduate	15.98
Annual income of the household	10.000 EUR and less	12.67
	10.001 EUR – 20.000 EUR	8.54
	20.001 EUR - 30.000 EUR	10.19
	30.001 EUR - 50.000 EUR	26.72
	50.001 EUR - 75.000 EUR	19.28
	75.001 EUR - 100.000 EUR	9.37
	100.001 EUR - 150.000 EUR	7.72
	150.001 EUR and more	5.51
Trips to other countries	0 trip	2.20
	1 trip	2.74
	2 trips	5.51
	3 trips	9.63
	4 trips	8.82
	5 and more trips	71.10
Countries visited	Spain (Yes)	72.70
	Spain (No)	27.30
	Germany (Yes)	89.00
	Germany (No)	11.00

Respondents were 363 Dutch university students studying either tourism or marketing and some young faculty members selected from Has Den Bosch University (67) and Rotterdam Erasmus University (296). Most of

them are between 20-24 year old university students who have income between 30.001-50.000 euros. Despite being young, they have traveled a lot and 97.80% of them visited a foreign country and 71.10% of them performed five or more trips to other countries in their lives. With the help of their major of study and travel experience abroad make them knowledgable about other countries. The items on the questionnaire were measured using a 5-point Likert type scale, ranging from "completely disagree" to "completely agree." Mentioned universities were visited for two weeks. Appointments were taken from the faculty members in order to conduct the questionnaire before or after class. With the support of the teachers, questionnaire was filled studiously in English.

40% of the Netherlands' population work part-time making it the first in the European Union. That's why they frequently travel. The Dutch economy is the fifth-largest economy in the euro-zone and is noted for its stable industrial relations, moderate unemployment and inflation, a sizable trade surplus, and an important role as a European transportation hub. It has a developed economy with its $42,700 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (2011 est.) [35].

TABLE II: WORLD TOURISM DATA (2011) [36]

	International Tourist Arrivals (million)		International Tourism Receipts (billion $)	
1	France	79,5	The USA	116,3
2	The USA	62,3	**Spain**	**59,9**
3	China	57,6	France	53,8
4	**Spain**	**56,7**	China	48,5
5	Italy	46,1	Italy	43,0
6	Turkey	29,3	**Germany**	**38,8**
7	The UK	29,2	The UK	35,9
8	**Germany**	**28,4**	Australia	31,4
9	Malaysia	24,7	Macao (China)	-
10	Mexico	23,4	Hong Kong (China)	27,7

Source: World Tourism Organization

In 2011, Spain was the most common tourism destination in the EU for non-residents (people coming from abroad), with 239.4 million nights spent in collective tourist accommodation, or almost a quarter (23.2 %) of the EU-27 total. Across the EU, the top three most popular destinations for non-residents were Spain, Italy (178.0 million nights) and France (123.0 million nights), which together accounted for 52.5 % of the total nights spent by non-residents in the EU-27 [37].

Normality test (Kolmogorov Smirnov) was used to determine whether a data set is well-modeled by a normal distribution or not and it was found that the data set was not normally distributed. For this reason, Wilcoxon T test which is a nonparametric test was used and significant differences between the countries were measured and found that all 18 items are significantly different.

Taking into consideration the fact that 72,70% (79,30% of them for tourism purposes) of the respondents have visited Spain, 89% (70,80% of them for tourism purposes)

of them have visitied Germany, it is obvious that they have a clear perception of both countries. In terms of cognitive country image, Germany is rated much higher than Spain by Dutch people. As Europe's largest economy and second most populous nation (after Russia), Germany is a key member of the continent's economic, political, and defense organizations with its $38,400 (2011 est.) GDP per capita [38] whereas Spain is facing a severe economic recession that started in mid-2008 and stil in a deep recession with its $31,000 (2011 est.) GDP per capita [39]. When it comes to affective country image, Germany and Spain are rated the same in average but Spain is perceived more pleasant and friendly and Germany is perceived safer and more trustworthy. Spain is more ideal to visit whereas Germany is more ideal to live. When destination belief constructs are considered, it is seen that Spain is rated higher than Germany which means they prefer Spain as a tourist destination for its appealing scenery, quality attractions, and good value for the money. Since Germany is the Netherlands' next door neighbor, it is convenient to visit Germany whereas Spain is more attractive since it is a Mediterranean country and more appealing to the countries in Northern Europe.

TABLE III: MEAN SCORES OF THE VARIABLES (5-POINT LIKERT SCALE)(STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARENTHESES)

Cognitive Country Image	Spain	Germany
1.Quality of life	3,49(±0,763)	3,93(±0,654)
2.Good economy	2,48(±0,868)	4,07(±0,790)
3.Rich people	2,83(±0,718)	3,67(±0,714)
4.Technology level	3,10(±0,729)	4,12(±0,700)
5.Good education	3,04(±0,676)	3,76(±0,697)
6.Modern country	3,40(±0,749)	4,09(±0,629)
Average score	3,06	3,94
Affective Country Image	Spain	Germany
1.Friendly people	3,57(±0,792)	3,44(±0,830)
2.Safe country	3,64(±0,780)	4,05(±0,685)
3.Trustworthy people	3,18(±0,718)	3,49(±0,730)
4.Pleasant people	3,66(±0,747)	3,52(±0,835)
5.Ideal to live	3,18(±0,955)	3,33(±0,969)
6.Ideal to visit	4,10(±0,680)	3,49(±0,932)
Average score	3,55	3,55
Destination Beliefs	Spain	Germany
1.Appealing scenery	4,11(±0,573)	3,62(±0,823)
2.Suitable accommodation	3,42(±0,777)	3,59(±0,854)
3.Quality attractions	3,90(±0,693)	3,71(±0,767)
4.Lots to see and do	4,05(±0,644)	3,81(±0,775)
5.Value for money	3,90(±0,729)	3,68(±0,775)
6.Good overall destination	4,16(±0,707)	3,62(±0,881)
Average score	3,92	3,67

Wilcoxon T test (p>0,05).

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy are 0,823 (for Spain) and 0,900 (for Germany), and Bartlett's tests of sphericity are significant. As a result of explanatory factor analysis results, four items with consistently poor loadings on their respective factors were dropped: good economy, safe country, trustworthy people, and suitable accommodation.

In order to understand how these constructs have impact on each other correlation analysis was made as in Fig. 1 (S represents Spain and G represents Germany). It was found that both for Germany and Spain, affective country image has greater influence than cognitive country image on destination beliefs. Correlations between affective and cognitive country image and between cognitive country image and destination beliefs are relatively higher for

Germany. It is accepted that Germany is a very developed country making its cognitive items very strong, whereas Spain is a desired tourism destination with its high affective image constructs despite its low cognitive items.
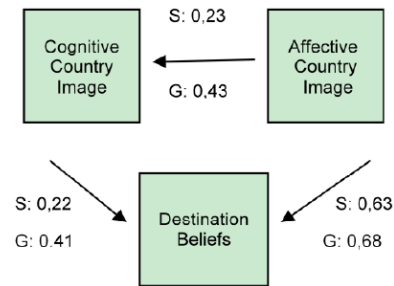

Fig. 1. Correlation analysis.

TABLE IV: CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS (CFA) (STANDARD ERRORS IN PARENTHESES) AND MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Cog. Co. Im.	Spain	R²	Germany	R²	Av.R²
1.Quality	0,42(0,48)	0,17	0,59(0,28)	0,35	0,26
2.Rich	0,75(0,20)	0,33	0,75(0,17)	0,46	0,40
3.Technology	0,58(0,35)	0,42	0,64(0,29)	0,47	0,45
4.Education	0,65(0,31)	0,56	0,68(0,28)	0,41	0,49
5.Modern	0,67(0,31)	0,45	0,69(0,26)	0,56	0,51
Affec. Co. Im.	Spain	R²	Germany	R²	Av.R²
1.Friendly	0,44(0,73)	0,41	0,63(0,41)	0,40	0,41
2.Pleasant	0,76(0,23)	0,58	0,75(0,30)	0,57	0,58
3.Ideal to live	0,48(0,35)	0,20	0,71(0,46)	0,51	0,36
4.Ideal to visit	0,64(0,37)	0,23	0,74(0,39)	0,55	0,39
Destin. Bel.	Spain	R²	Germany	R²	Av.R²
1.Scenery	0,47(0,32)	0,43	0,63(0,48)	0,58	0,51
2.Attractions	0,55(0,33)	0,31	0,66(0,34)	0,68	0,50
3.Lots to see	0,66(0,19)	0,58	0,73(0,37)	0,63	0,61
4.Money	0,69(0,26)	0,50	0,76(0,28)	0,44	0,47
5.Good dest.	0,76(0,17)	0,22	0,83(0,19)	0,40	0,31

Table IV includes the average R^2 values for each item, averaged cross the two CFAs, as a measure of the percentage of variance explained by the variable. For example, *lots to see and do* is strong, accounting for 61% of the variance. *Modern country, good education* and *pleasant* are also strong, accounting for 51%, 49% and 58% of the variances respectively.

TABLE V: TOURISM CHARACTERISTICS COME TO MIND

	Spain (%)	Germany (%)
Geographic places	42,55	50,44
Attractions	10,26	14,57
Activities	5,44	11,09
Nature related	31,03	7,61
Sport related	7,12	3,70
Food/beverage	1,05	3,04
Other	2,55	9,56
Total	100	100

The weather in Spain is much warmer than the Netherlands and Germany, making Spain a desirable destination for travelers especially in summer. That is why nature related items are more in Spain than Germany. The results of the open-ended questions showed that most of the respondents emphasized the nice weather and beaches in Spain mentioning the two famous cities: Barcelona and

Madrid. When it comes to Germany, Berlin, Berlin Wall, Cologne, Munich, beer festival and the mountains were the most written responses.

The application of the Echtner and Ritchie [11] framework provides the opportunity to identify promotional tactics to assist the design of effective destination marketing, which for example can be used for positioning. To connect well-known product categories or brands to a certain tourist destination can be an advantage [40].

TABLE VI: INFORMATION SOURCES

	Spain (%)	Germany (%)
School	43,25	80,99
Media	71,07	76,58
Experiences	64,19	76,03
Immigrants	13,77	21,49
What friends told	52,34	50,96
Family roots	4,68	10,74
Spanish/German friends	20,11	36,64

For both Spain and Germany, media and experiences are the most rated information sources. And since the Netherlands have closer ties with Germany, they learn about Germany and its history at school. What friends told is also important since word-of-mouth communication plays a significant role in choosing a destination for a vacation. Since international tourism activities constitute an important source of foreign exchange earnings and employment, countries started to develop new ways to attract foreign tourists. And it was proved that the image of a country plays an important role on destination choice, image has become an essential part of a country's strategic equity. Images of a travel destination are a mixture of both positive and negative perceptions [41]. If a destination that provides accommodation for the faithful tourists who repeat periodically, it will provide employment opportunities and economic benefits to its citizens. It will also contribute to form a solid foundation in the long-term development of the region [29].

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