

A destination imagery processing model: Structural differences between dream and favourite destinations

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ABSTRACT

The present paper aims at understanding how destination imagery is processed in tourists' working memory. The research focuses on two highly desirable, but contrasting, destination brand categories: Favourite Destination, which involves retrospective memory of positive experiences *in situ*; and Dream Destination, based on tourists' prospective memory. Through an online multilingual survey, 23,446 responses consisting of perceptions, evoked by way of free-recall, associated to Dream and Favourite Destinations, were collected. Findings point to clear structural differences between the imagery of Dream and Favourite Destinations. Additionally, a theoretical destination imagery model that offers a basis for future studies is proposed, and some managerial implications of significant relevance to destination marketing are discussed.

Introduction

The way a destination is perceived by tourists is a critical success factor in the framework of global competitiveness (Kozak & Rimmington, 1999; Leung & Baloglu, 2013; Woodside & Lysons, 1989). In this context, Um and Crompton (1990) argue that “the image and attitude dimensions of a place as a travel destination are likely to be critical elements in the destination choice process, irrespective of whether or not they are true representations of what that place has to offer” (Um & Crompton, 1990, p. 433). Consequently, places with stronger brands and more positive images are more likely to be chosen by tourists (Beerli & Martín, 2004; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). Therefore, destinations employ various resources to induce positive images (Lee & Lockshin, 2011; Önder & Marchiori, 2017) in order to differentiate from competitors and place themselves at consumers' top of mind (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008). Image emerges, then, as a boosting agent of tourism destination competitiveness (Stepchenkova & Li, 2014), and a relevant component of consumers' destination choice (Bianchi, Pike, & Lings, 2014; Chen & Phou, 2013; Gallarza, Saura, & García, 2002; Önder & Marchiori, 2017).

Considering the importance of destination image, Echtner and Ritchie (1993) state that in order to be successfully promoted to its target markets, a tourist destination must make an effort to be favourably differentiated from its competitors, which can be achieved through creating a distinctive and appealing destination brand image. Therefore, the tourist industry seeks differentiation by stimulating individuals' expectations, beliefs, dreams and fantasies (Martins, 2015) through elements that feed their imaginary (Kim,

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Kim, & Bolls, 2014). Such elements are processed in tourists' minds form the general image they have of a destination. In this context, a concept of highlighted importance is that of destination imagery, which refers to the processing of information coming from various stimuli in individuals' working memory (MacInnis & Price, 1987). As Josiassen, Assaf, Woo, and Kock (2016) argue, destination imagery is thought to drive the place's image, and therefore, ultimately influence consumers' decisions (MacInnis & Price, 1987). Considering those contributions, it becomes clear that understanding destination imagery is vital for making more informed decisions concerning tourism advertising, as well as increasing destinations' competitiveness.

The present paper analyses tourists' imagery perceptions triggered by destinations categorised in two distinct positions on the destination choice flowchart: Dream Destination and Favourite Destination. "Dream Destination" refers to a place the tourist has never visited, but intends or desires to visit in the future. In the context of destination images of non-visitors, Dream Destinations are imaginary places built on discourse (Cherifi, Smith, Maitland, & Stevenson, 2014). Therefore, the idea is heavily based on tourists' prospective memory. "Favourite Destination", in turn, refers to a place the tourist has already visited and considers the best destination for a specific type of travel (Dias & Cardoso, 2017), which is clearly based on the tourist's retrospective memory.

In face of this theoretical background, the aim of this paper is twofold: to propose a Destination Imagery Processing Model, contributing to a better understanding of how destination imagery is processed in tourists' working memory; and to highlight the structural differences between Dream and Favourite Destinations' imagery. To achieve those goals, the present study relied on data provided by travellers worldwide, collected through an online multilingual platform, which allowed for the collection of perceptions associated, by way of free recall, to their Dream and Favourite Destinations. Through a categorical content analysis, using frequency as the enumeration rule for coding, perceptions were categorised within Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) dimensions, and analysed against imagery theories and multi-store models of memory.

Findings are in line with recent theories on destination imagery as a mental process, which conceptualize it as a holistic concept (Josiassen et al., 2016). Moreover, results point to clear differences between the imagery structure of Dream and Favourite Destinations. The theoretical contributions resulted in the proposition of a Destination Imagery Processing (DYP) model, which is expected to help researchers undertaking future studies on the topic, especially those concerning the role of destination brand equity in the destination choice process. Finally, results bring about relevant implications for destination managers, namely, concerning decisions related to destination marketing and branding strategies.

Literature review

Destination choice theory overview

In tourism literature, several scholars describe consumers' choices as a flowchart based on a funnel selection (Decrop, 2010; Um & Crompton, 1990; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Within this conceptualisation, the way tourism destinations are represented in consumers' memories is of utmost importance to their decision-making processes. Consequently, it is a primary issue for destination management organisations, hence the vast bibliography on destination branding and customer-based brand equity (Cai, 2002; Keller, 1993, 2008, 2016; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Although the studies on destination image and destination branding have evolved as independent lines of research for decades, there has recently been an integration of these two concepts in the last decades. For instance, Qu, Kim, and Im (2011) state that the overall image of a destination (i.e., brand image) is a mediator between its brand associations (i.e., cognitive, affective and unique image components) and tourists' future behaviour (i.e., intentions to revisit and recommend). Accordingly, based on Keller (1993, 2008), Konecnik and Gartner (2007) propose the construct of Customer-Based Brand Equity for Tourism Destinations (CBBE-TD), which includes four interrelated components: *destination brand awareness*, *destination image*, *perceived quality*, and *destination loyalty*.

Within this conceptualisation, *destination brand awareness* reflects the salience of a destination brand name in the tourist's mind (Aaker, 1996), and is assessed through recognition or free recall. Destination image embraces all the mental associations to a given destination name, and includes three sub-dimensions: (1) *attributes* - descriptive features that characterise a brand (what a tourist thinks the destination is or has to offer); (2) *benefits* - personal values consumers associate to the brand attributes (what they think the destination can do for them, which encompasses both functional and non-functional – symbolic – attributes and experiential attachments); and (3) *brand attitudes* - tourists' overall evaluations of the destination brand, which serves as the basis for tourists' behaviour (i.e., destination choice) (Keller, 1993). In turn, *perceived quality* refers to the overall perception of customers about the brilliance and quality of products or services in comparison to competing offers (Aaker, 1991). Since tourist experience is mostly based on intangible attributes, the quality assessment of destinations depends almost exclusively on *perceived quality* (Dias & Cardoso, 2017). Finally, *destination loyalty* consists of the attachment a customer has to a destination brand. It includes four different levels: *cognitive*, *affective*, *conative* and *action loyalty* (Blut, Evanschitzky, Vogel, & Ahlert, 2007; Oliver, 1997, 1999).

Although the studies on destination choice sets, on one hand, and the studies on the CBBE-TD, on the other hand, have evolved throughout separate lines of research, it seems evident that both issues can be integrated into one common conceptual framework. According to the Destination Brand Choice Integrative (DBCI) model (Fig. 1), proposed by Dias and Cardoso (2017), each one of the four CBBE-TD components plays a specific role along the destination choice flowchart, as originally proposed by Decrop (2010). According to this framework, the *consideration stage* is a function of *destination brand awareness*, the *evaluation stage* is based on the interaction between destination image and *perceived quality*, and the stages of *constraints* and *choice* are mostly a result of *destination loyalty*, which, however, is influenced by the other CBBE-TD components.

The sequence proposed by Decrop (2010) (*consideration* → *evaluation* → *constraints* → *choice*), however, ignores the after choice feedback, that is, tourists' experiences at the destination. This is why the DBCI model includes a fifth stage: *post-visit re-evaluation*.

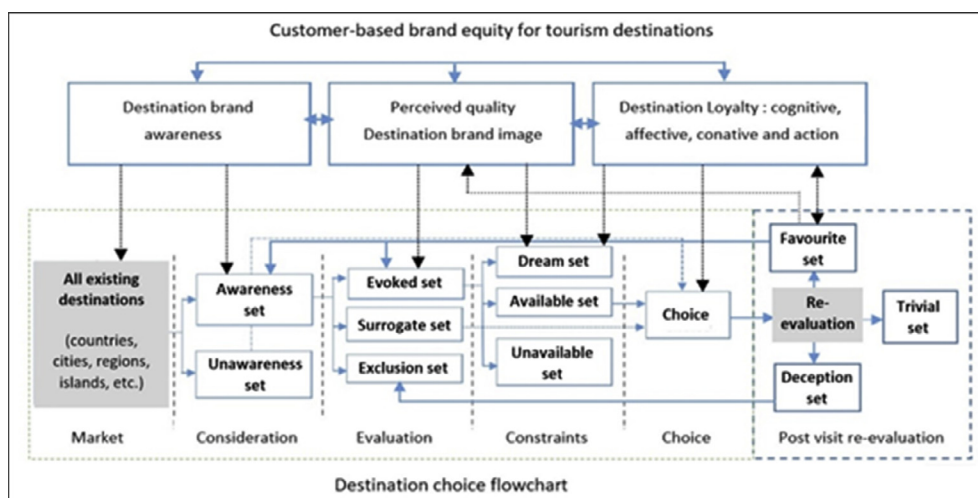


Fig. 1. Destination Brand Choice Integrative (DBCI) model. Source: adapted from Dias and Cardoso (2017), based on Decrop (2010) and Keller (1993).

After a given choice, the quality of the experience can influence future travel decisions, as the destination is re-evaluated. In this context, Dias and Cardoso (2017) propose three destinations sets as the basis of feedback: *favourite set*, if the experience *in situ* was enjoyable; *deception set*, if the experience in the chosen destination is frustrating; and *trivial set*, if the experience *in situ* generates neutral or ambivalent feelings.

Both *dream set* and *favourite set* include destinations with high CBBE-TD ratings, that is, top-of-mind awareness, high perceived quality, positive image and strong loyalty. However, they are distinct in one crucial aspect: the existence of personal experience at the destination. Consequently, Favourite Destinations are deeply grounded on the autobiographical (retrospective) memory, as they are related to previous behaviours (March & Woodside, 2005) and associated with memorable experiences (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). More precisely, they are associated with the semantic memory system, which is broadly defined as our knowledge of the word (Atance & O'Neill, 2001). In turn, Dream Destinations refer to highly desirable destinations that are elaborated in the framework of the prospective memory (Atance & O'Neill, 2001; Graf & Utzl, 2011; McFarland & Glisky, 2012), as they correspond to behavioural intentions of future experiences. In other words, they are connected to the episodic system of memory, to which Atance and O'Neill (2001) added the concept of episodic future thinking – an ability to project the self forward in time to pre-experience an event.

Such comparative analysis of Dream and Favourite Destinations has the specific merit of focusing on an important, but never examined, issue in tourism studies: the dynamics of auto-noetic consciousness during the destination choice process. The auto-noetic consciousness was defined by Tulving (1985, p.1) as “the kind of consciousness that mediates an individual’s awareness of his or her existence and identity in subjective time extending from the personal past through the present to the personal future”. In order to develop intentions for future actions (e.g., “where to go on the next holidays”), tourists have to make trade-offs between their retrospective and prospective memories. The latter, also known as “memory of the future” (McDaniel & Einstein, 2000), embraces all cognitive processes involved in the formation and execution of future intentions (McFarland & Glisky, 2012).

The adequacy of the proposed model still needs empirical corroboration; however, previous studies offer abundant evidence. For instance, Chen and Tsai (2007) validated the path *destination image* → *trip quality* → *perceived value* → *satisfaction* → *behavioural intentions*.

Destination image and destination imagery

Within the image-imagery duality model proposed by Josiassen et al. (2016), the concepts of destination image and imagery are distinct. There is a consensus about destination image being the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions one has of a place (Beerli & Martín, 2004; Crompton, 1979; Hallmann, Zehrer, & Muller, 2015), which results from individual perception and encompasses a cognitive and an affective evaluation (Beerli & Martín, 2004). In this context, authors attempt to assess destination image through different approaches. A recent example is provided by Stephenkova and Shichkova (2017), who propose a framework to numerically describe and compare destination image through variables such as ease of recall and richness and diversity of associations. Moreover, some authors agree that destination image components are hierarchically related and form a general impression of the tourist destination (Pan & Li, 2011), which is registered as a global composite in the long term memory (Agapito, Pinto, & Mendes, 2017; Agapito, Valle, & Mendes, 2013; Gartner, 1986; Mak, 2017; Pan & Li, 2011; Martín, Beerli, & Nazareno, 2017). The idea of a global composite is also advocated by Echtner and Ritchie (1993), through their tri-dimensional model, which is considered a reference for destination image and imagery studies (Goossens, 2000). The three axes have two opposite poles and the items that compose the image of tourist destinations can be located along the three dimensions: (1) *attributes-holistic*, (2) *functional-psychological* and (3) *common-unique*. In this context, Echtner and Ritchie (1993), argue that imagery is intrinsically related to image, being the result of a

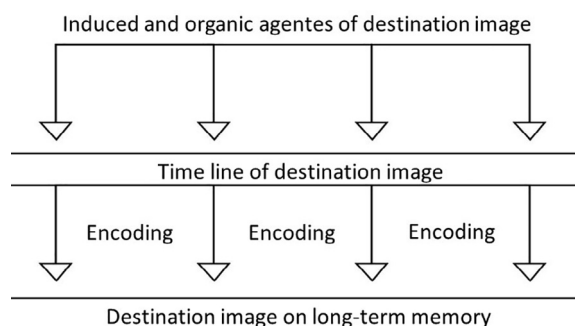


Fig. 2. Destination image formation on time line in memory. Source: adapted from Gartner (1994).

more holistic way to interpret reality.

This relationship between destination image and imagery is pointed out by several authors, who tend to assume that image is a global composite that includes cognitive and affective evaluations about a destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993, 2003; Kim et al., 2014; Kock, Josiassen, & Assaf, 2016; Lin & Huang, 2009), while imagery is the processing of image in memory (Goossens, 2000; Kumar & Nayak, 2014; Lee, Gretzel & Law, 2010; Lin & Huang, 2009; MacInnis & Price, 1987; Matos, Mendes, & Pinto, 2015). Still regarding destination imagery, Kock et al. (2016) argue that researchers still do not have a sound theoretical framework for the components that could make up mental destination representations. Additionally, scholars disagree on the level of aggregation of these mental representations. While some studies assume that individuals mentally store a destination as a single-dimensional evaluation (e.g., Assaker, Vinzi, & O'Connor, 2011), others view such representation as consisting of several potentially unrelated beliefs, and thus have applied a multi-dimensional approach (e.g., Prayag & Ryan, 2012). In this regard, Kock et al. (2016) characterise destination imagery components as multi-dimensional, cognitive and descriptive responses. Moreover, the main models of tourist destination image formation (Gartner, 1994; Phelps, 1986; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004) suggest that the construct is not static, but gradually formed and consolidated in the long-term memory throughout time (Crompton, 1979; Gallarza et al., 2002). This process is subject to the influence of stimuli from various organic and induced sources or agents (Gartner, 1994) (see Fig. 2), that is, the processing of destination imagery elements.

Concerning the concept of mental imagery processing, Kim, et al., 2014 (2014) argue that it refers to the psychological process engaged in by an individual during exposure to a stimulus. Accordingly, Goossens (2000) conceptualised mental imagery as a mode of processing that includes perceptual or sensory representations in working memory. Regarding destination imagery in particular, MacInnis and Price (1987) describe it as “a process (not a structure) by which sensory information is represented in working memory” (p. 473). In this context, understanding destination imagery is essential for tourism practitioners, as the industry stimulates the imagery of destinations to encourage tourist consumption (Martins, 2015). Thus, imagery works with the symbolic and the real (Martins, 2015), allowing potential tourists to create and retrieve ideas, stories and a whole imaginary regarding the destination and their future experiences in it. Even if a person has never been to a certain destination, the mental imagery of such place fuels his/her dreams of visiting it (Goossens, 2000).

A more detailed description of the mental imagery processing is provided by Kim et al., (2014), who argue that it “refers to the psychological process engaged in by listeners during exposure to ads” (p.64); and by Babin and Burns (2013), who state that mental imagery is voluntary and stimulated by instructions from an external source or even oneself. Those contributions highlight the importance of instructions to imagine (MacInnis & Price, 1987) in the imagery processing. Such instructions may be either general or specific (Miller & Marks, 1997). For instance, the sentence “imagine your Dream Destination and describe it” is a general instruction. On the other hand, the sentence “concerning cultural tourism, please visualise your Favourite Destination” is a specific one, as it restricts the imagination to a specific tourism product. In sum, imagery can be defined, as proposed by Echtner and Ritchie (2003, p.14), as a way to process and store multi-sensory information in the working memory, which is triggered by a instruction (stimulus) to imagine. Such interpretation of destination imagery as a mental process is broadly accepted in recent literature on the subject (Goossens, 2000; Kumar & Nayak, 2014; Lee et al., 2010; Lin & Huang, 2009; Matos et al., 2015).

Destination imagery processing can also provide descriptive associations or evaluations, that is, distinct forms of mental representations, which should, therefore, be treated as distinct constructs. “As a consequence, not distinguishing between descriptive and evaluative mental states results in problematic measurement approaches” (Kock et al., 2016, p.32). Accordingly, Josiassen et al. (2016) argue that tourists draw on destination imagery when forming an overall evaluative judgment, represented by destination image. Reinforcing all these conceptualisations, Echtner and Ritchie (2003) argue that destination imagery can be defined as the “total impressions, auras and feelings (...) or holistic conceptualisations, in describing a product’s image” (p.40). Other authors (Goossens, 2000; MacInnis & Price, 1987; Miller, Hadjimarcou, & Miciak, 2000) corroborate this idea that imagery, as mental process, is composed of holistic impressions.

The mental processes that occur in the working memory are explained by multi-store models of memory (Chein, Ravizza, & Fiez, 2003; Steinmetz, Addis, & Kensinger, 2010), mainly when exposed to external stimuli (Steinmetz, Schmidt, Zucker, & Kensinger, 2012; Zimmermann, Moscovitch, & Alain, 2016). In this context, Fig. 3 represents a Destination Imagery Processing (DYP) model, which incorporates the theoretical contributions of Josiassen et al. (2016), the Multi-Store Model of Memory Processing proposed by

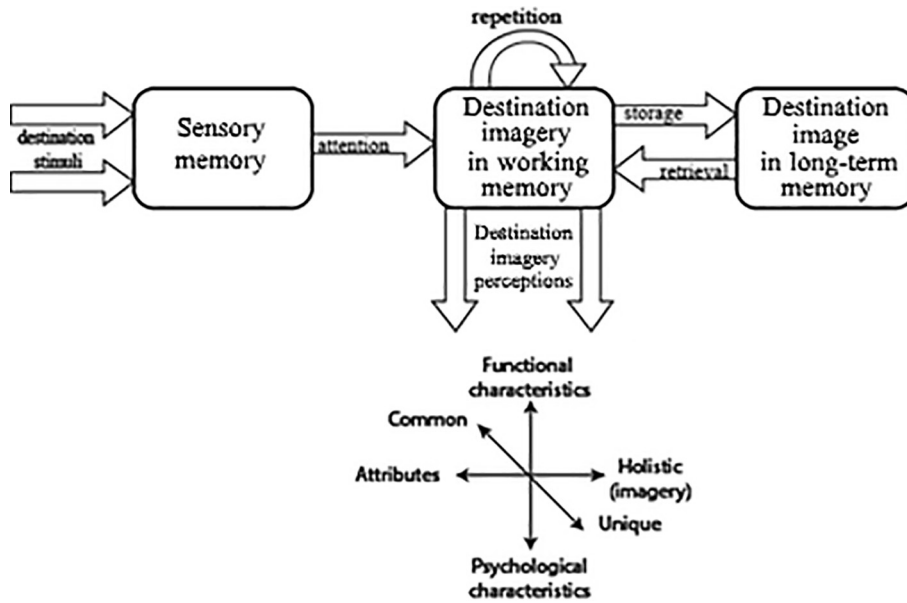


Fig. 3. Destination Imagery Processing (DYP) model. Source: adapted from Josiassen et al. (2016), Echtner and Ritchie (2003) and Zimmermann et al. (2016).

Zimmermann et al. (2016), and the destination image dimensions proposed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993). The model explains the destination imagery processing in working memory and describes destination imagery perceptions within Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) dimensions. The kind of information processed depends on the sensory stimuli that are received (Goossens, 2000; Kim et al., 2014; Miller & Marks, 1997). As Miller et al. (2000) pointed out, researchers on advertising are particularly interested on the type of cognition that involves the knowledge stored in the long-term memory. Therefore, the DYP model is of interest to such researchers, as it provides a theoretical representation that complements destination image and imagery studies, focusing on how destination image information is processed in memory.

As systematised on the DYP model, and according to Zimmermann et al. (2016), the working memory's representation of received stimuli lasts 10–30 s. Therefore, destination imagery processing involves brief sensory representations of sensory information (Kim et al., 2014). It is also acknowledged that such process varies according to the type of stimulus, i.e., visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory, tactile or a combination of several of those categories (Lee et al., 2010). Such process also includes destination image retrieval, which consists of evoking information from the long-term memory, and is also comprised within the mentioned 10–30 s time frame. In this context, if one has already visited the destination, the evoked information will include sensorial experiences (Lin & Huang, 2009). In the context of destination imagery theories, the processing of imagery involves momentary, perceptive or sensorial representations. According to MacInnis and Price (1987) and Miller and Marks (1997), the processing of imagery is done through the retrieval of information about the tourist destination from the long-term memory. To that, Kumar and Nayak (2014) add that the holistic or gestalt methods of information representation are the two main components of imagery processing.

In light of the addressed theoretical contributions, destination imagery is conceptualised here as destination image processing in working memory (MacInnis & Price, 1987), comprising momentary processes of storage and retrieval of information from memory (Zimmermann et al., 2016) upon receiving destination stimuli, and resulting in holistic perceptions of a destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; MacInnis & Price, 1987). In sum, although tourism has been a subject of academic study for decades, there is no consensus about how to measure destination image (Kock et al., 2016), which is also true for destination imagery, an even more under-explored subject (Matos et al., 2015). Nevertheless, over the last decades, tourism researchers and destination managers have tried to understand how tourists create, store and use the representations of a destination (Kock et al., 2016). In this context, the present work aims at producing some theoretical insights to contribute to a deeper understanding of this complex process.

Research methodology

Data collection

Unlike most studies analysing destination imagery processing, which focus on imagery responses to stimuli from advertising, the present study seeks to understand individuals' imagery responses to specific verbal stimuli, namely, those related to Dream and Favourite Destinations. To this end, the research relied on data provided by travellers from around the world, consisting of perceptions they associate to their Dream and Favourite Destinations (concepts that result from the DBCI theoretical model). Data collection was carried out through the *Tower of Babel* project – <http://favouritedestinations.com/en/> - a purpose developed online

multilingual platform that allows for global, large scale, qualitative surveys. The survey used free recall techniques and was made available in 36 different languages (25 European and 11 Asian languages). For the operationalisation of Dream and Favourite Destinations, the theoretical contributions represented on the Destination Imagery Processing Model were employed. To stimulate mental imagery, verbal statements based on Babin and Burns (2013), Macinnis and Price (1987) and Goossens (2000) were used. Moreover, as suggested by Echtner and Ritchie (1993), open questions were employed to grasp holistic impressions, characteristics, and auras. In this context, Dream Destinations were operationalised through the following questions:

1. Bearing in mind all tourism destinations existing all over the world, please indicate your Dream Destination in general.

This instruction was accompanied by the following note: The expression «Dream Destination» refers to destinations that you did not visit but desire and hope to visit someday.

2. Describe the destination that you have just mentioned using three words.

Concerning Favourite Destinations, the questionnaire included a two-step approach:

- First, each respondent was invited to respond to the following statement: *Indicate the type of tourism you prefer* (the respondent could choose one or more items from a list of 15 tourism products – e.g., seaside, cultural, gastronomic, shopping, etc...).
- Then, the following statement was presented: *Please indicate your Favourite Destination for this type of tourism* (each respondent chose a Favourite Destination for each chosen tourism product).

This was accompanied by the note: *The expression «Favourite Destination» refers to destinations you have already visited and loved the most.*

- Finally, respondents were invited to describe the selected destination using three words.

The exact wording of statements was also based on the extant literature on prospective and retrospective memories (Atance & O'Neill, 2001). In this context, when respondents were asked to evoke their top-of-mind Dream Destinations, they were expected to project themselves forward in time to pre-experience the event of travelling to such place. In turn, when respondents were asked to evoke their top-of-mind Favourite Destinations, their choice was clearly based on their retrospective memory, and they had to invoke previous experiences in those destinations. Moreover, it must be noted that the questionnaire does not restrict the choice of destination to any geographical or administrative category, such as city, region, country, island, etc., which aimed at avoiding influencing respondents' free recall.

Data collection was carried out with the active support of 35 team-mates that cooperate in the framework of the EATSA – Euro-Asia Tourism Studies Association (www.eatsa.pt). Each partner was responsible for carrying out data collection in his/her own native language, so that responses in 36 languages were retrieved. All the team-mates received a tutorial containing guidelines for data collection. The document included specific instructions for sampling and advices about the importance of a one-to-one approach, that is, on how to avoid spreading the questionnaire through social media and how to diversify the sample members, in order to ensure a high level of control. After data collection, the original database in each language containing destination names and associated words was translated into English using *Google Translator*. Then, each network partner checked the automatic translation, doing the necessary corrections. Finally, all the translated databases were integrated into one common database. Table 1 shows the sample's distribution according geographical location and gender.

Data analysis

The collected data was subjected to content analysis, namely, categorisation and systematisation of semantic material (Bardin, 2000). A deductive content analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) was performed, aiming at pursuing the technique's heuristic function, that is, to enrich the exploratory attempt, increasing the likeliness of discovery. Moreover, the content analysis approach adopted was variable-oriented, which typically examines relatively few variables across a large number of cases (Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The analysis process included two main phases: the creation of a categorisation matrix based on the Destination Imagery Processing Model, and the codification of data into the matrix's categories, which were based on Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) framework. To this end, words were adopted as the registry unit, and frequency was the main enumeration rule for coding, as it considers that the registry unit's relevance increases with its frequency of appearance (Bardin, 2000).

The coding structure included five categories: *psychological-holistic*, *functional-holistic*, *psychological-attribute*, *functional-attribute* and *unique*. Regarding the meaning of each category, in line with Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) classification, *functional-holistic* elements consist in words that translate the general mental image one has of a destination; *psychological-holistic* elements refer to descriptions of the general feeling or aura of a place; *functional-attributes* are evaluations of tangible items, such as prices, the weather or local food, through which one destination is comparable to others; *psychological-attributes* are intangible evaluations, such as those related to the courteousness of staff or local people's hospitality; and unique elements describe exclusive features of a destination, such as a particular monument. The category configuration was based on the conclusions reached upon the initial data exploration, that *psychological-holistic*, *functional-holistic*, *psychological-attribute* and *functional-attribute* were mostly mutually exclusive categories,

Table 1
Sample distribution by continents, countries and gender.

	N = 9333	%	Male (%)	Female (%)
Europe	5002	53.6	48.7	51.3
France	870	9.3	49.5	50.5
Germany	744	8.0	48.8	51.2
UK	688	7.4	48.2	51.8
Spain	456	4.9	49.1	50.9
Portugal	335	3.6	47.6	52.4
Turkey	329	3.5	50.1	49.9
Poland	305	3.3	47.3	52.7
Italy	489	5.2	48.2	51.8
Netherlands	183	2.0	49.7	50.3
Greece	152	1.6	49.6	50.4
Other 15 countries	451	4.8	47.8	52.2
Asia	2655	28.43	50.1	49.9
India	759	9.2	51.3	48.7
China	641	8.4	50.5	49.5
Indonesia	370	4.0	49.9	50.1
Japan	310	3.3	51.2	48.8
South Korea	210	2.3	50	50
Other 9 countries	131	1.3	49.2	50.8
South America	1392	14.9	50.9	49.1
Brazil	998	9.3	51.6	48.4
Argentina	221	2.4	49.1	50.9
Chile	169	1.7	52.8	47.2
Peru	270	1.5	49.8	50.2
Other regions	284	3.0	50.3	49.7

while the *common/unique* axis was found to be mostly transversal to the other two. In general, words associated with destinations were *common*, and could be classified within one of the four mentioned mutually exclusive categories. The *unique* group, in turn, was formed by a very select group of words, namely those related to specific monuments, landscapes or geographical features. Therefore, for the sake of systematisation, the decision was to exclude the *common* dimension, which is implied in the four mutually exclusive categories.

It should be observed that the classification of words into those categories is far from straight forward. For instance, both real things and mental concepts can be classified into *functional holistic*, as long as they represent one's general image of the place. Such image may be encapsulated, for example, by the place's beaches, or by its diversity (of foods, cultures, products, etc.). In this context, a strict methodology has been adopted in order to avoid bias in the analysis process. First, a frequency count of destinations and their respective associated words was carried out using *QSR NVivo 11 pro*. Next, destination lists and word lists were sequenced in alphabetical order, aiming at standardising the terminology and the use of initials (e.g., "USA" instead of "United States", or "NY" instead of "New York"). In a second step, aiming at ensuring results' trustworthiness, an inter-rater reliability analysis of data codification was carried out using the words spontaneously associated to destinations. To this end, five post-graduate students were invited to act as coders (independent judges), and received the top 400 ranked words sequenced by frequency (the weight value of these 400 words corresponds to 69% of all evoked words, that is, 47,752 references from the total of 70,338 words in the complete database).

In order to automate such process as much as possible, judges often dragged the entire list of occurrences of a specific word into its corresponding node. Some words, however, especially composed or ambiguous terms, required a closer context examination. In these cases, responses including the same word could be assigned to different nodes, or even to more than one node, depending on the secondary terms that accompanied them, or on other context related variables, which could encompass the chosen destination, or even other words the respondent employed to describe it. The word "food(s)", for example, when alone, or in expressions such as "food and wine" or "food culture", was categorised as *functional-holistic*. However, "Chinese food" or "Indian food", when describing China or India, respectively, were classified as *unique*. Moreover, "tasty food" or "delicious food" were considered *functional attributes*, as they qualified an aspect that is comparable among different destinations. The same logic applied to "wine". When alone or accompanied by "culture", it was considered a *functional holistic* element, while "best wines" was considered a *functional attribute*, and "Malaga wine" a *unique* aspect.

The research team member responsible for all the coding procedures also integrated the group of judges. Additionally, all the six judges received instructions about the categorisation model, and specific explanations concerning the coding procedure were provided. After the coders' tasks were completed, the six coded files were integrated in one common file, which was submitted to a reliability analysis, using Krippendorff's Alpha (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007; Krippendorff, 2004), calculated through a macro developed by Hayes, for *IBM SPSS Statistics*. In cases in which a word was consistently classified into a combination of two categories, such classification was also considered in the reliability test. Therefore, some words were reliably classified into a combination of categories. The obtained K'Alpha coefficient was 0.89, which is far above the minimum criterion. After the inter-rated reliability

Table 2

Top 20 Dream Destinations for the whole sample and for the French, Indian and Brazilian samples.

Overall sample	%	French sample	%	Indian sample	%	Brazilian sample	%
Australia	5.0	Australia (1)	7.5	Switzerland (1)	11.1	Europe (1)	9.1
USA	5.0	USA (1)	6.6	USA (1)	9.4	Italy (1)	6.4
New York	3.5	Canada (1)	4.3	Australia (1)	5.1	New York (1)	4.9
Japan	3.1	New Zealand (1)	3.8	Europe (1)	4.4	Paris (1)	4.4
Italy	2.9	Tahiti (1)	3.4	Germany (1)	4.3	USA (1)	4.4
New Zealand	2.8	Thailand (1)	3.1	Japan (1)	4.1	Greece (1)	4.0
Maldives	2.6	New York (1)	2.8	Dubai (1)	3.3	London (1)	3.4
Europe	2.6	Seychelles (1)	2.5	New Zealand (1)	3.2	Germany (1)	3.2
Paris	2.6	India (1)	2.3	Kashmir**	3.2	Caribbean (1)	2.6
Hawaii	2.1	Caribbean (1)	2.2	London (1)	3.1	Thailand (1)	2.6
Thailand	2.1	Brazil (1)	2.1	Paris (1)	3.0	Australia (1)	2.1
Caribbean	1.8	Bali (1)	1.8	Singapore*	2.3	England (1)	2.0
India	1.8	Bora Bora (1)	1.8	Spain (1)	2.3	Japan (1)	1.9
Greece	1.7	Japan (1)	1.8	Brazil (1)	2.0	New Zealand (1)	1.8
Dubai	1.7	Hawaii (1)	1.8	India**	1.9	Hawaii (1)	1.7
Spain	1.5	Maldives (1)	1.8	Italy (1)	1.8	Disneyland (1)	1.5
Canada	1.5	Cuba (1)	1.7	Las Vegas (1)	1.7	Egypt (1)	1.5
France	1.4	Miami (1)	1.6	Egypt (1)	1.1	Spain (1)	1.5
Egypt	1.4	Reunion (1)	1.6	Goa**	1.0	Canada (1)	1.4
Switzerland	1.4	Iceland (1)	1.5	Thailand*	0.9	F. Noronha**	1.4
Weight value	48.4	Weight value	55.9	Weight value	69.0	Weight value	61.7

Legend: (1) long haul flights; *short haul flights; **domestic destinations.

procedures, and using the lists of words previously ranked by frequency, the data analysis moved on to the coding of the full semantic material, also using *QSR NVivo 11 pro*. To this end, a hierarchy of nodes based on [Echtner and Ritchie's \(1993\)](#) framework was created, and the words were inserted in the node to which they are conceptually related, according to the reliability test. The results of such process produced a coding structure from which conclusions regarding the processing of destination imagery for Dream and Favourite Destinations were drawn.

Results: The structure of destination imagery

The 9,333 respondents ([Table 1](#)) provided 23,446 responses through the *Tower of Babel* project. The sample includes respondents from all over the world: 53.6% from Europe, 28.4% from Asia, 14.9% from South America, and 3.1% from other regions. Concerning the scale of chosen destinations, cities or smaller administrative entities accounted for most of the recalled destinations, with 48.6% of total choices, followed by countries (31.9%), regions within countries (13.8%), regions encompassing several countries (3.8%), and finally, continents (1.7%). According to the range of travel, 38.4% of responses were related to intercontinental destinations,

Table 3

Top 20 Favourite Destinations for the whole sample and for the French, Indian and Brazilian samples.

Overall sample	%	French sample	%	Indian sample	%	Brazilian sample	%
Italy	2.9	Paris**	4.8	Goa**	8.0	São Paulo**	4.7
Paris	2.8	Italy*	3.7	Mumbai**	6.4	New York (1)	3.3
London	2.2	Alps**	3.6	Kerala**	6.0	Florianópolis**	3.2
New York	2.1	Corsica**	2.9	India**	4.1	Gramado**	3.1
Rome	1.4	France**	2.9	Dubai*	3.2	Rio de Janeiro**	3.0
Spain	1.3	New York	2.9	Delhi**	2.7	S. Catarina**	2.7
France	1.2	London*	2.7	Rajastahn**	2.4	Paris (1)	2.4
Barcelona	1.2	Spain*	2.4	Thailand	2.2	Italy (1)	2.3
USA	1.0	Barcelona*	1.6	Ajanta**	2.0	London(1)	2.2
Greece	1.0	Rome*	1.3	Hyderabad**	1.9	Porto Alegre**	2.1
Goa	0.9	Thailand (1)	1.3	Pune**	1.6	Serra Gaúcha**	2.0
Thailand	0.9	Greece*	1.2	Himalaya**	1.4	USA (1)	1.9
Japan	0.9	USA (1)	1.2	Singapore	1.3	Europe (1)	1.8
Alps	0.9	Mediterranean**	1.1	USA (1)	1.2	Miami (1)	1.7
Bali	0.9	Reunion	1.1	Mahabaleshwar**	1.1	Buenos Aires	1.5
Kyoto	0.8	Brittany**	1.1	Maharashtra**	1.1	Br. Northeast**	1.2
Portugal	0.8	Egypt*	1.0	Jammu**	1.1	Caribbean (1)	1.1
India	0.8	India (1)	0.8	Paris (1)	1.1	Portugal (1)	1.1
Caribbean	0.7	Bali (1)	0.8	China*	1.0	F. Noronha**	1.1
São Paulo	0.7	Morocco*	0.8	Kashmir**	1.0	Orlando (1)	1.0
Weight value	25.6	Weight value	39.3	Weight value	50.6	Weight value	43.4

Legend: (1) long haul flights; *short haul flights; **domestic destinations.

Table 4
Top 20 most employed words to describe Dream Destinations.

Word	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words	Category
history	200	3.55	–	Functional-holistic
different	181	3.22	difference, differences	Psychological-holistic
mysterious	176	3.13	Mystery	Psychological-holistic
tranquility	175	3.11	–	Psychological-holistic
heat	169	3.00	–	Functional-attribute
romantic	158	2.81	–	Psychological-holistic
relaxing	156	2.77	relax, relaxation, relaxed	Psychological-attribute
tradition	156	2.77	Traditions	Functional-holistic
clean	148	2.63	–	Functional-attribute/Psychological-attribute
wild	147	2.61	–	Functional-holistic/Psychological holistic
culture	145	2.58	cultural, cultures	Functional-holistic
people	127	2.26	–	Functional-holistic
interesting	126	2.24	Interest	Psychological-holistic
ocean	122	2.17	–	Functional-holistic
amazing	118	2.10	–	Psychological-holistic
beauty	109	1.94	beautiful, beautifully	Functional-holistic/Psychological holistic
nature	109	1.94	natural, naturalness	Functional-holistic
landscapes	106	1.88	landscape, landscaping	Functional-holistic
diversity	105	1.87	Diverse	Functional-holistic
beaches	104	1.85	Beach	Functional-holistic

while 24.9% referred to intracontinental destinations, and 34.7% referred to domestic destinations. Finally, 37.8% of the 23,446 responses regarded Dream Destinations, while the remaining responses regarded Favourite Destinations. Tables 2 and 3 summarise the Top 20 Dream and Favourite Destinations, respectively, for the whole sample, and for three countries with the biggest representation in each of the three most represented continents: France, in Europe; India, in Asia; and Brazil, in South America.

Comparing the top 20 rankings of Dream and Favourite Destinations across the French, Indian and Brazilian samples, one thing becomes evident: Dream Destinations are mostly located far away from home and require long haul flights to be visited, while Favourite Destinations are more familiar places located in neighbouring countries or in the traveller's own country. As previously referred, each respondent should name three words for each chosen destination. Therefore, data amounted to a total of 70,338 words associated with the 23,446 chosen destinations. The words most employed to describe Dream and Favourite Destinations are summarised in Tables 4 and 5, respectively.

The distribution of such words within [Echtner and Ritchie's \(1993\)](#) dimensions suggested that items associated by free recall to both Dream and Favourite Destinations are mostly related to the holistic dimension. *Psychological-holistic* and *functional-holistic* are the categories that most concentrate the coded words for both types of destinations. The structure of Dream and Favourite Destinations' imagery do differ, however, regarding the role of functional and psychological elements within the holistic dimension. In the case of Dream Destinations, their role is relatively balanced, with *psychological-holistic* encompassing slightly more words than *functional-holistic*. On the other hand, in the Favourite Destinations group, functional elements are noticeably dominant, as *functional-*

Table 5
Top 20 most employed words to describe Favourite Destinations.

Word	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words	Category
history	202	2.90	–	Functional-holistic
tradition	201	2.88	traditional, traditions	Functional-holistic/Psychological holistic
cosmopolitan	200	2.87	cosmopolitanism	Functional-holistic/Psychological holistic
climate	188	2.70	climatic, climatically	Functional-attribute
delicious	186	2.67	–	Functional-attribute
skiing	185	2.65	ski, skis	Functional-attribute
green	183	2.63	–	Functional-holistic
clean	181	2.60	Cleanness	Functional-attribute/Psychological attribute
snow	181	2.60	–	Functional-holistic
heritage	174	2.50	–	Functional-holistic
warm	166	2.38	–	Functional-attribute
ocean	160	2.30	oceanic, oceans	Functional-holistic
quality	158	2.27	–	Functional-attribute
sports	154	2.21	sport, sporting	Functional-attribute
amazing	149	2.14	Amazed	Psychological-holistic
sand	137	1.97	Sands	Functional-holistic
sea	136	1.95	Sea	Functional-holistic
water	126	1.81	Waters	Functional-holistic
culture	123	1.77	Cultural, cultured, cultures	Functional-holistic
beauty	121	1.74	beautiful, beautifully	Functional-holistic/Psychological holistic

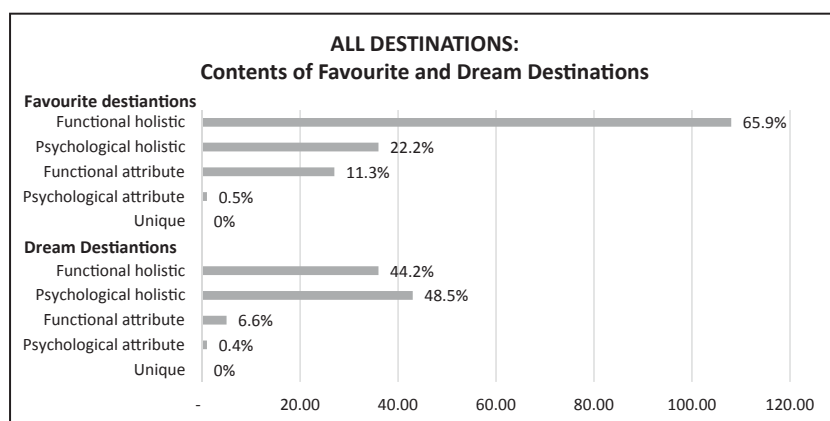


Fig. 4. Distribution of elements associated with Dream and Favourite Destination according to [Echtner and Ritchie's \(1993\)](#) dimensions.

holistic encompassed three times the amount of words coded into *psychological-holistic*, even though the latter was still the second most prominent category. The categorisation of words associated by respondents to their Dream and Favourite Destinations is graphically represented in Fig 4..

To further validate results and provide a more specific example, the same analysis was applied to one particular destination. Such procedure allowed the observation of how the word distribution may differ between a chosen destination and the amalgam of numerous destinations worldwide. Italy was the selected destination, as it was mentioned the most, considering all responses for both Dream and Favourite Destinations. Results showed that word proportion associated to each category remained identical, corroborating the findings obtained with worldwide destinations. Moreover, the list of words most frequently used to describe Italy does not differ significantly from that associated with Dream and Favourite Destinations in general. The main differences are the occurrence of “pizza” within the top 10 words, and a more prominent presence words related to gastronomy and wine. The distribution of words associated with Italy as a Dream Destination and as a Favourite Destination is graphically represented in Fig. 5.

Discussion: A conceptual model of destination imagery processing

Although the present study is supported by a significant body of literature, which clarifies the relationship between destination image and destination imagery, very little research on the processing of destination imagery in tourists' working memory has been carried out, especially regarding perceptions that result from Dream and Favourite Destination (verbal) stimuli. As mentioned in the literature review section, [Echtner and Ritchie \(1993\)](#) argue that destination imagery is intrinsically related to destination image, being the result of a more holistic way to interpret reality. That argument is supported by [MacInnis and Price \(1987\)](#), [Lin and Huang \(2009\)](#), [Kim et al. \(2014\)](#), [Matos et al. \(2015\)](#), and [Kock et al. \(2016\)](#). The present study's results corroborate such reasoning, since the words associated by free recall to both Dream and Favourite Destinations, that is, the imageries of those destinations that respondents process in their working memories ([MacInnis & Price, 1987](#)), are mostly related to the holistic dimension. The holistic aspect is then the common aspect among the imagery of Dream and Favourite Destinations. The word most used to describe both types of destinations is the same: history.

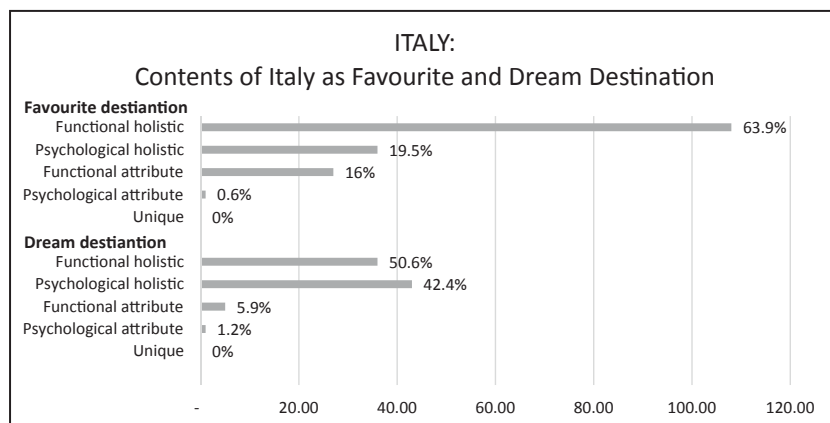


Fig. 5. Distribution of elements associated to Italy as a Dream Destination and as a Favourite Destination according to [Echtner and Ritchie's \(1993\)](#) dimensions.

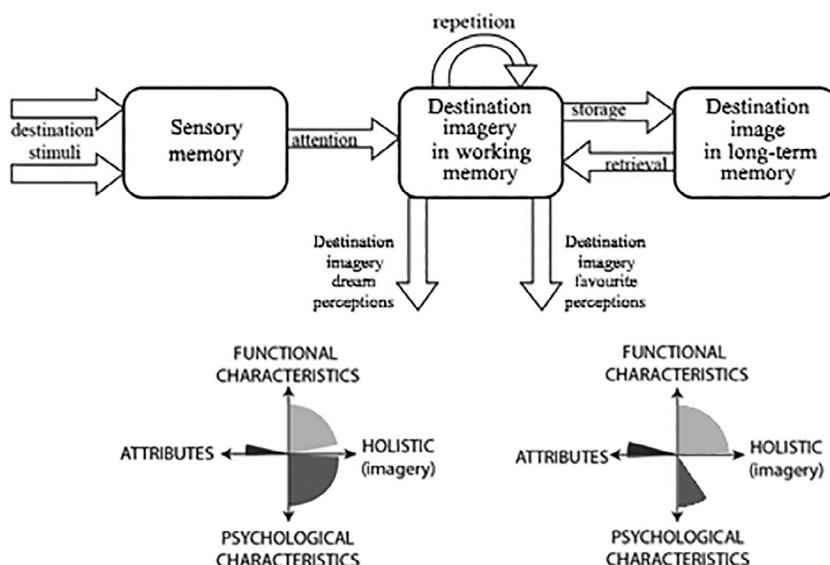


Fig. 6. Destination Imagery Processing Model (DYP model).

Regarding the differences in the imagery structure, the concept of Dream Destination is related to tourist's capacity of episodic future thinking (Atance & O'Neill, 2001), more precisely, to project the self forward in future and pre-experience a dream trip. The concept of Favourite Destination, on the other hand, is based on the episodic, retrospective, or autobiographical memory, as it reflects memorable experiences at the visited places. Our data also reinforces such conceptualisations, as the collected Dream Destination perceptions (imagery) lean more to the *Psychological* side of the holistic dimension, while those of Favourite Destinations, lean more to its the *Functional* facet. This is evident, for example, in the use of words such as "mysterious", "tranquillity", and "romantic" within those most used to describe Dream Destinations. Words employed to describe Favourite Destinations, on the other hand, are mostly those that describe or qualify more tangible aspects, which requires personal experience in the destination, e.g., climate, delicious, and skiing (which indicates the place is good for the practice of this sport, as per the tourists' experience). These findings are in line with Matos et al.'s (2015) model of imagery influence on destination image and tourist experience. Results also corroborate previous destination image formation models (Gartner, 1994; Gunn, 1972), according to which destination image is subject to the influence of stimuli from various sources, including one's personal experience at the destination.

Based on such results, a model for the processing of destination imagery triggered by Dream and Favourite Destination stimuli has been proposed (Fig. 6). Those attributes are then processed into imagery perceptions about a certain place which one considers his/her Dream or Favourite Destination, which are then systematised within Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) dimensions.

Besides the contributions for the imagery processing of Dream and Favourite Destinations, the results also shed light on other characteristics, which in turn, add to the definitions of those destination categories, as well as to previous destination choice theories. Considering the distance of travel, for instance, the data shows that Favourite Destinations are mostly domestic or in neighbouring countries, while Dream Destinations often require long haul travels. This corroborates Dias and Cardoso's, (2017) definition of Dream Destination as a distant place that a tourist has never visited, but desires to visit in the future. Moreover, it can be associated with Oppermann's (1989) theory of travel horizon, or more accurately, the travel horizon ladder concept, according to which individuals normally start their travel "career" going to close places, and gradually reach longer and longer destinations, rather than jumping straight to a faraway destination. Considering this conceptualisation, it makes sense that most people's Favourite Destinations are close by, as not everyone reaches the higher levels of the travel horizon ladder. Accordingly, it is also understandable that people dream about going to faraway places, that is, reaching that level of the ladder, while they climb through the lower ones.

Still regarding previous contributions on the concept of destination imagery, the results also corroborate Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) statement about sight not being the only sensory dimension that can be incorporated in imagery processing. This is illustrated by the appearance of perceptions related to weather and temperature among those mostly associated to Dream and Favourite Destinations, such as "heat" and "climate"; as well as by those related to the palate, such as "gastronomy", "delicious", "wine" and, particularly in the case of Italy, "pizza". Moreover, the study corroborated previous destination image formation models (Gartner, 1994; Gunn, 1972), as the role of one's personal experience on his/her destination imagery has been reinforced.

Conclusions

One of the main goals of the present study was to propose a Destination Imagery Processing Model, and thus, contribute to the comprehension of how destination imagery is processed in tourists' working memory, namely, upon receiving Dream and Favourite Destination stimuli. As addressed in the literature review, within the DBCI model, both *dream set* and *favourite set* include destinations with high CBBE-TD ratings, which, however, differ in one fundamental aspect: the existence of personal experience in the place. As

the analysed data suggests, this fundamental difference results in distinct imagery structures for destinations encompassed by the Dream and favourite sets. In this context, in the absence of previous experiences, when receiving a Dream Destination stimulus, prospective tourists evoke mostly psychological evaluations. Meanwhile, their imagery of Favourite Destinations is dominated by functional evaluations, and those are the criteria on which they base their decisions for future trips. In other words, findings suggest that, when a tourist considers re-visiting a destination he/she has already visited and enjoyed – therefore, it integrates his/her favourite set in the DBCI model –, the decision will be mostly based on functional evaluations. On the other hand, a tourists' desire to visit his/her Dream Destination is mostly based on psychological associations.

Regarding more specific contributions to the processing of destination imagery, the interpretation of qualitative data, in accordance with the most relevant theories on the topic, has suggested that Dream and Favourite Destinations' perceptions lead the receiver's brain to evoke destination imagery attributes from the working memory. In this context, the results corroborate Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) view of the construct as a more holistic way to interpret reality. Moreover, the study provides an original contribution to the subject by unveiling a structural difference between Dream and Favourite Destinations' imageries. Such difference regards the relevance of the role played by the elements distinguished by Martineau (1958) – functional and psychological – within the holistic dimension of destination image.

As far as managerial implications are concerned, the study provides a general idea for destination managers and marketers about which aspects to highlight in their campaigns, which will vary according to their goals. Campaigns mainly aiming at promoting the destination to new markets, or to first-time visitors within existing markets, should capitalise on the psychological aspects that compose that market's imagery of the destination, as well as introduce functional aspects to provide them with more tangible elements upon which to base their decision. On the other hand, campaigns aiming at capitalising on repeat visitors should call upon emotional appeals, which in addition to the consciousness of the functional aspects they already have, will increase their likelihood to return.

Despite the originality of the present work, it still has some limitations. First, top-of-mind associations, although being easier to collect in large scale, are not the best type of material to analyse certain constructs related to imagery, which limited the study's analysis possibilities. Second, despite the relatively big number of responses, representativeness cannot be assured, as there are significant discrepancies among the proportions of respondents from different countries and regions. Moreover, due to the exploratory nature of the research, the results must be regarded as initial insights, which need validation through hypothesis verification procedures.

On the other hand, the theoretical and methodological contributions of the study pave the way for future research on some of the addressed topics, which can potentially overcome those limitations. For instance, results can help researchers investigating Tulving's (1993) differentiation between semantic memory and episodic memory, according to which Dream Destinations are more strongly connected to semantic memory (i.e. with abstract or general facts), while Favourite Destinations are mostly based on episodic memory (i.e., personal and specific facts). Such studies must be performed with more qualitative data, instead of top-of-mind associations, as used in the present study. Additionally, future studies must go further and test both proposed models. More specifically they should test the hypotheses regarding relationships among the components of the DBCI model, exploring possible differences between distinct dimensions of destination brand equity and the distinct destination sets along the destination choice flowchart. Moreover, studies must test hypotheses related to cross-cultural differences associated with Dream and Favourite Destinations based on the Destination Imagery Processing Model. In sum, the present work provides theoretical contributions that further studies must validate by formulating and testing specific hypotheses related to the addressed theories.

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Lucília Cardoso: Tourism destination image, imagery and tourist destination brand equity.

Francisco Dias: Tourist destination brand equity, Destination image.

Arthur Filipe Araújo: Film-induced tourism, Slum tourism, Destination Image.

Maria Isabel Andrés Marques: Intangible Culture Heritage, Destination image.