
BUILDING DESTINATION IMAGE: THE CASE OF MOROCCO

Nicolas Hamelin*, **Park Thaichon****, **Peter Taylor*****,
Hanae Habibi****

**Associate Professor, Marketing, SP Jain School of Global Management, Sydney, Australia. Email: nicolas.hamelin@spjain.edu.au*

***Assistant Professor, Marketing, SP Jain School of Global Management, Sydney, Australia. Email: park.thaichon@spjain.edu.au*

****Director, Amity University London, London, United Kingdom. Email: taylor@london.amity.edu*

*****Alumni, Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane, Morocco.*

ABSTRACT

The aims of this research is to identify, analyse and evaluate the salient features, perceptions, prejudices, perceived country personality, media conveyed images and assessments of Morocco's current destination image. Data was collected using an intercept approach. International tourists were randomly intercepted in the main parking area for tourist buses, at local hotels and local tourist cafés in the Moroccan cities of Fez, Rabat, Agadir, Marrakech, Azrou and Ifrane. 344 surveys were collected. Three groups of characteristics were identified as to being either less than positive, or actual deterrent characteristics that could contribute to tourists changing their mind about choosing, not revisiting, or recommending Morocco. Response strategies are offered for the identified problematic areas some of which, it is argued, could form the basis for a national tourism marketing strategy which is appropriate, pragmatic, viable, unique and competitive reflecting market and indigenous realities.

Keywords: *Tourism, Destination Image, Country Brand, Country Personality, Morocco*

Introduction

The Tourism sector generates \$7.58 trillion globally in revenues (WTTC, 2014) and has experienced a 4.4% growth during the past few years (UNWTO,

2015). Tourism is the main source of income for almost 40% of the world's countries and almost 10% of world GDP (UNWTO, 2015). The industry provides employment for some 266 million people, generates 11% of total world exports, attracts \$745.6 billion of world capital investment (WTTC, 2014). Additionally, 17% of global tourism takes place in a Muslim country and Morocco is one of the 4 major Muslim countries in term of tourism (SESRIC, 2015). This excludes “Halal Tourism” which refers to strictly Muslim tourism catering to unique requirements including halal food, gender specific pools and spas and no alcohol.

On top of that, tourism is more labour intensive than manufacturing. It ranks as the world's largest industry in terms of employment with one of every eleven employees globally (UNWTO, 2015). There is evidence that while there are wide variations between markets, tourism have a disproportionately larger multiplier effect in terms of employment and income (UNWTO, 2015). An ancillary impact comes from the fact that many countries are reliant on the continued employment from the current level of tourism and for the maintenance of the tourism specific infrastructural investment. This significance is further compounded in many countries where there are few alternatives for revenue or foreign hard currency (WTTC, 2014).

WTO forecasts an average 5.5 % annual visitor growth rate for Africa from 1995 to 2020. This exceeds the world average by 1.4 % (WTO, 2009). For Morocco, in particular, tourism makes a direct contribution to GDP of 8.9 % and a total contribution of 18.9 % (WTTC, 2012). The tourism sector employs some 420,000 people and generates 55.4 billion Dirhams in foreign currency (1 Dirham is approximately .0700 £ Sterling). In 2010 tourism investments led to the creation of 8480 jobs (Au Fait Maroc, 2010). Irrespective of global financial challenges and political uncertainties, in 2010 Morocco was the number one tourism destination in Africa attracting 9.29 million visitors (UNWTO, 2015). This reflects a growth rate of 6.5 %. The government of Morocco's recognition of the sector's significance and potential is reflected in strategic initiatives such as Plan Azur 2010 and Vision 2020 with a goal of 10 million annual visitors.

The focus of this paper is to develop a comprehensive analytic platform for Morocco's future tourism marketing strategy of its destination image. A strategy which is appropriate, pragmatic, viable, unique and competitive reflecting market and indigenous realities. The work analyses salient features, characteristics, and idiosyncrasies to profile visitors' impressions, values, and assessment of Morocco's current destination image.

Literature Review of Destination Image

A country destination as a brand is an accepted premise in addition to that of a resort, a city, or a region (Lopes, 2011). The concept is obviously most complex as it must be considered and analysed within a multidisciplinary context ranging from marketing, geographic sociology, anthropology, and semiotics. Gunn (1988) seminal work initiated the link between country as a brand and the importance of image as being as, or more, important than the actual tangible resources. Substantial subsequent empirical studies explored the nature of destination image with a common theme being on its “aggregation” or “composite” nature. This position is firmly supported by Lawson and Baud-Bovey (1977) in the commonly cited definition of destination image being “*an expression of all objective knowledge, impressions, prejudice, imaginations and emotional thoughts an individual or group might have a particular place*”. Further, Hose and Wickens (2004) refer to this composite nature as including “*visual, written and oral communications of destination*” and by Stephenkova and Morrison (2006) as including online communications.

The destination image can result from acquiescence or affirmative marketing strategy (Qu, Kim, and Im, 2011). It is generally agreed that positive images will result in success and that negative images constraint and that these images are difficult to change. Donaldson and Ferreira (2009) state that the destination positioning strategy should be to reinforce positive current positive images and correct the negative or create a new image. The main point is that the destination image forms the basis for destination evaluation and selection and profiles a country’s brand. The complexity of the image results from interrelationships between the attributes (Tasci et al, 2007) variations in gender (Oliveira and Pereira, 2008) other socio-demographic perceptions and priorities and the constantly evolving nature of these consumer values (Tasci and Boylu, 2009).

These challenges are exacerbated by the overarching influence of subjectivity. Much empirical discussion focuses on the involvement of such a high level of feelings and emotions (Garcia and Varela, 2008). Various prejudices including vestiges of “*colonial stereotypes ... replicated and reinforced through narrative, fiction, art, and films*” (Sturma, 1999, pg.713). Lopes (2011) cites the “*ambiguous, subjective and immaterial nature*” of the destination image. Furthermore, Lopes offer the elucidating suggestion that the image is the consumer’s subjective perception of reality” (2011). Therefore, the “objective” portion of the destination image would include: climate, ecology, the quality, and service from restaurants and hotels, ground transport, tours, sports amenities, entertainment, historic and traditional architecture. All

make contributions to both the image and the visitor's experience (Qu, Kim and Im, 2011).

Nature of Destination Image

The basic dichotomy of subjective versus objective is simplistic. There is ample agreement with the view that the destination image has at least two basic components: cognitive and affective. Cognitive elements described as "objective" above are based on the consumer's own knowledge, beliefs, and appraisals. The affective components derive from the emotions and feelings provoked by the actual objective components and other prejudices and romanticisms. Other researchers differentiate the destination image environment with additional nomenclature. Social factors such as familiarity with visitor language and general attitude towards visitors. Economic factors including various prices and possibly the visibility of poverty. Culture, which would include indigenous uniqueness and authenticity and approachability. Political and safety perceptions which could take the form of sense of government stability to the degree it may affect visitors, levels of crime and probability terrorism activity (Simpson and Siguaw, 2008).

At this juncture, it should again be noted that the ultimate goal of this research, beyond generic academic interest, is to provide Morocco an analytic platform for the determination of a tourist destination's optimal differentiation, positioning and resultant marketing strategy. Marketers can only try to intervene, influence and manipulate a country destination image in the context of the global macroeconomic environment (Bigne et al., 2001; Beerli and Martin, 2004).

Destination Image Measurement

One fairly contemporary approach to destination image measurement and assessment has arguably been driven first by the interest in product brand symbolism, where objects and brands are seen by consumers as extensions of themselves. It is argued that this interest provided the catalyst for focus on Aaker's (1997) research interrelating human personality traits ("Big 5") to brands. Further, with the general acceptance that a country was a product, the concept was later applied to a destination image (Qu, Kim and Im, 2011).

An extension of the application of personality to destination images is offered by D'Astous and Boujbel (2007). They developed a country personality scale reflecting an amalgam of both psychology and marketing theory. Based on interviews and personality trait scales: six dimensions are

identified and expressed in human trait related adjectives, which can be applied to a country/destination. These six country personality dimensions are agreeableness, wickedness, snobbism, assiduousness, conformity and unobtrusiveness. From the six factors (personality dimensions) a total of 27 adjectives were developed.

A differing view is expressed by Gertner (2011) who states that *“Marketing managers can exploit the overlap of destination image and destination personality in order to communicate the unique features of a destination to potential customers”*. Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) and Austin et al. (2003) question the validity of analysis based on a series of personality dimensions. They suggest that there are changes in the individual factors and hence do not lend themselves to a valid indicative structure. Similarly, Echtner and Ritchie (2003) state an additional caveat is that researchers are conceptualising and assessing in terms of *“lists of attributes”* in lieu of (or perhaps more indicative) holistic impressions. Further, Echtner and Ritchie (2013) suggest that many attribute list types of research do not, or do not sufficiently, reflect the contributing psychological element. Further that the psychological components are either simplistic or vague.

In response, or based on the arguments they posted, Echtner and Ritchie (2003) offer a “master list” of attributes, drawn from 14 studies. Arranged on a continuum from functional (scenery/natural attractions) to psychological (fame/reputation), it identifies 34 destination attributes. They argue that their list reflects both individual components and recognises a holistic frame, not represented in other studies. Similarly, the list is suggested to ameliorate the alleged weakness of other studies which do not acknowledge or reflect the significant psychological components.

Conceptual Framework

The D’Astous and Boujbel (200) framework was selected for this research on the basis that it asserts that it is a useful tool to assess a country’s image on human traits and *“To orient marketing actions aimed at changing attitudes towards countries as travel destinations”*. The authors also contend *“the scale has good psychometric properties behaves as predicted and may be “used to estimate the impact of each personality dimensions on attitudes (towards) countries as travel destinations”*. Additionally, Morocco was one of the initial 7 countries chosen in their research to represent a global perspective and specifically included in the generated 24 country personality profiles.

A caveat to the framework would be a lexicography which includes words which in English are not commonly used or have ambiguous meanings. It is

argued that both *assiduous* and *unobtrusive* are not common terms or readily used. “Assiduous” is defined as “*marked by careful unremitting attention or persistent application*” (merriam-webster) however the associated adjectives include: flourishing, important, and firm”. Similarly, “unobtrusive” is defined as “*not obtrusive: not blatant, arresting, or aggressive*” (merriam-webster) the associated adjectives are “wimpy, cowardly, dependent, neutral and self-contained”. Other dimensions such as *wickedness* and *snobbism* are subject to a high degree of subjectivity in the definition. It should also be noted that the first adjectives in reference to agreeableness yield the adjective “Bon-vivant”, basic in French, but arguably not to Anglophones.

Irrespective, by starting with adjectives referring traits, the framework focuses clearly on the impact or perceptions rather than on the garnering of a list of attributes and then seeking their relative importance. The application of human traits to brand personality, “Big 5” (McCrae and Costa, 1987; Goldberg, 1992) is well established in the literature (Aaker, 1997). As is the use of adjectives related to traits to amplify and enrich the respondent’s actual values (Pitt et al, 2007; Leyland et al, 2007). It may also be argued that in their aggregate the profiles reflected on the personality scale constitute a holistic / multi-faceted approach which has been seen essential by many researchers.

It was found that only Agreeableness, Wickedness, and Conformity were statistically significant in terms of attitude towards countries (D’Astous and Boujbel, 2007). However, for this research, all six categories were tested in order to capture as much disparate information as possible. Within this consideration, the previously mentioned “master list” of destination measurements attributes of Echter and Ritchie (2003) will also be used. The measuring and analysis of these functional and psychological elements could provide both a basis for current comparisons to other markets and benchmarks for assessing initiatives and overall performance. In the present study, the country image is viewed as having both a cognitive-based component in accord with Echter and Ritchie (1993) and conceptualization and a personality based component in accord with the views taken by D’Astous and Boujbel (2007).

In addition to the aforementioned D’Astous and Boujbel framework a range of demographic and socio-demographic factors which probably impact on the country image and the intention to visit a destination were investigated and analysed. The factors include those cited by Tasci and Gartner (2007) as being linked to the process of building an image for a destination, namely: age, religion, gender, marital status, education, culture, household status, and distance from the destination.

The model is summarized in Figure 1 below.

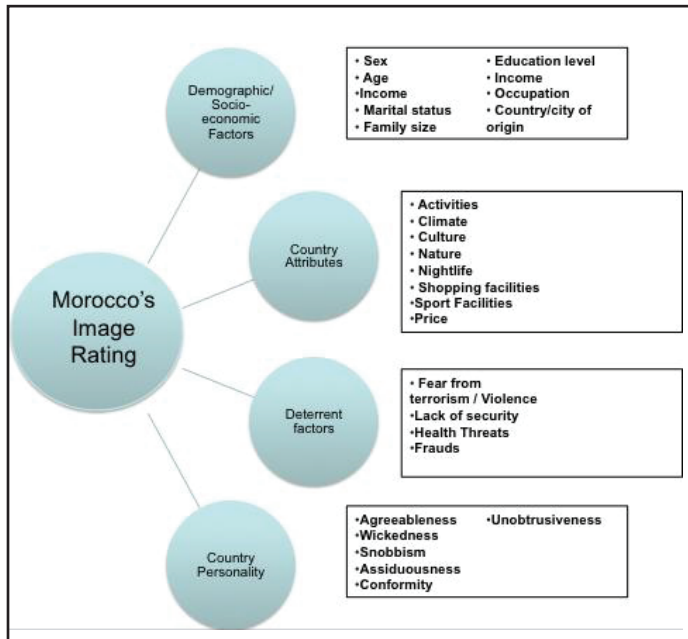


Figure 1: Morocco Image Rating Research Model

Methodology

Questionnaire Design

The first three sections of the questionnaire measured country image perceptions. It includes two cognitive components of the country image and a personality component. Cognitive evaluations of country image related to Morocco's country attributes were measured with 20 items drawn from the scale developed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993). Respondents were asked to rate statements regarding the quality of various Moroccan attributes (such as perceived quality of transport, infrastructure, and accommodation) on a 5-point scale (ranging from 1 *strongly disagree* to 5 *strongly agree*). Scale reliability was good with a Cronbach alpha of 0.82.

Personality evaluations of the country image were measured using items drawn from the scale developed by d'Astous and Boujbel (2007). The scale comprised six personality dimensions (agreeableness, wickedness, snobbism, assiduousness, conformity and unobtrusiveness) with each of the dimensions

being composed of four items, resulting in 24 personality traits. Respondents were asked to rate how well they believed each personality trait described Morocco on a 5-point scale (ranging from 1 *Not at all* to 5 *very much*). Scale reliability was good with a Cronbach Alpha of 0.79 for Agreeableness, 0.85 for Wickedness, 0.75 for Snobbism, 0.72 for Assiduousness, 0.78 for conformity and 0.84 for unobtrusiveness.

The fourth section of the questionnaire contained one question that asked respondents to evaluate Morocco as a travel destination on a 5-point scale (ranging from 1 *very poor* to 5 *excellent*) and one question that asked respondents whether they would recommend Morocco as a tourist destination. The fifth section was aimed at measuring the source of information on which respondents based their decision to travel to Morocco. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of information sources in their decision to come to Morocco. Source included: family and friends, internet, TV, magazine and brochures. For this section, we report a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.80.

Finally, there are a number of questions related to factors which the respondent would be most likely to dissuade tourists from visiting Morocco. Here again, we found a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.90, confirming the reliability of the questionnaire. Respondents demographic were also recorded. Cronbach Alpha for each section was respectively indicating the good validity of the questionnaire. Cronbach Alpha coefficients for Country attributes was 0.87,

Sampling

Data was collected using an intercept approach. International tourists were randomly intercepted in the main parking area for tourist buses, at local hotels and local tourist cafés in the Moroccan cities of Fez, Rabat, Agadir, Marrakech, Azrou and Ifrane. Data collection via an intercept approach was selected as it enabled the researchers to access potential respondents over a short period of time, screen potential respondents and allowed respondents to seek clarification of questions if needed. 344 surveys were collected.

Findings

Demography Profile

Among the 344 respondents, males comprise 51.75% and females comprise 48.25%. The ages of the tourists are diverse however 64.91% of

tourists questioned are between 21 and 50 years old. There is a majority of married tourists with a percentage of 52.2% versus 38.42% single respondents, and a minority of 9.38% of divorced or widowed people. Regarding education: 70.58% of the respondents have a bachelor degree or higher while 22.06% went to high school. In terms of income, 39.46 % of visitors had incomes between 1501 and 3000 Euros per month, with 23.5% with incomes of between 3001 and 8000 per month. Given that the average spending of tourists in Morocco is between 100 and 150 Euros for these groups of visitors Morocco is an inexpensive venue.

In regards to countries of origin; the highest percentage goes to tourists coming from France with 32.93% of sample, UK (14.07%), USA (13.47%), Spain (8.38%), Netherland (5.69%), Germany and Switzerland (3.89% each), Ireland (3.59%), Austria (1.80%), Italy and Slovenia (1.5% each), and Poland (1.2%). The remaining countries are minorities of less than 1%. On the basis of the cited data, it is argued that a typical (but less than precise), tourist demographic profile would be: married, between the ages of 21 and 50, well educated, middle income, and from France or UK.

Analytical Results

Morocco's Destination Image Vs cognitive based attributes

The relationship between country evaluation and country attributes were tested using ordered logistic regression.

$$\text{Log}(P/1-P) = \alpha + \beta_1(\text{Activities}) + \beta_2(\text{Landscapes}) + \beta_3(\text{Beaches}) + \beta_4(\text{Nature}) + \beta_5(\text{Culture}) + \beta_6(\text{Nightlife}) + \beta_7(\text{Shopping}) + \beta_8(\text{Sports}) + \beta_9(\text{Gastronomy}) + \beta_{10}(\text{Good Price}) + \beta_{11}(\text{Climate}) + \beta_{12}(\text{Relaxation}) + \beta_{13}(\text{Safety}) + \beta_{14}(\text{Social Interactions}) + \beta_{15}(\text{Hospitality}) + \beta_{16}(\text{Originality}) + \beta_{17}(\text{Quality}) + \beta_{18}(\text{Transportation}) + \beta_{19}(\text{Accommodation}) + \varepsilon$$

Where P is the dependent variable country evaluation. Verifying multicollinearity is indeed the first step before analysing the logistic regression coefficients. For this model, the correlation matrix shows no important correlation between the variables. STATA results are given in Table 1 below (sample size n=333):

The model is statistically significant since p-value < 0.05 (Prob > Chi² = 0.0000, which is < 0.05), and there is 95% confident that there are at least one of the variables that contribute to the evaluation of Morocco as a tourist destination. Activities, shopping, price quality, security, and accommodation

are all positively correlated to the evaluation of Morocco as a tourist destination. In other words, as one unit increase the perception of the diversity of activities increases the evaluation of Morocco as a tourist destination increased by 58.8%. Similarly, as the perception of shopping facilities' availability increase, the probability for tourists to rate Morocco as a good travel destination increases by 42.8%. As the price/quality is judged satisfying, tourists will be 53.6% more likely to increase their rating of Morocco as a travel destination. As the feeling of security increases, there is a 58.1% chance that tourists will rate Morocco more highly and finally, as accommodations are perceived of good quality, the more likely tourists will rate the country as excellent by 67.2%.

Table 1: Regression Results Country Evaluation Vs Country Attributes

Rating Morocco	Coef.	Z	B	%	P>z
Activities	0.4625593	3.15	0.46256	58.8	0.002
Landscapes	0.141325	0.79	0.14132	15.2	0.427
Beaches	-0.1632451	-1.34	-0.16325	-15.1	0.18
Nature	-0.1905519	-1.18	-0.19055	-17.3	0.237
Culture	0.064342	0.44	0.06434	6.6	0.658
Nightlife	-0.2025252	-1.51	-0.20253	-18.3	0.13
Shopping	0.3561449	2.81	0.35614	42.8	0.005
Sports	0.1026132	0.86	0.10261	10.8	0.388
Gastronomy	0.0435835	0.33	0.04358	4.5	0.738
Price/quality	0.4288653	2.83	0.42887	53.6	0.005
Climate	-0.23316	-1.33	-0.23316	-20.8	0.183
Relaxation	0.1674072	1.12	0.16741	18.2	0.263
Good security measures	0.4582426	3.19	0.45824	58.1	0.001
Social interactions	0.013872	0.11	0.01387	1.4	0.913
Hospitality	0.1747742	1.03	0.17477	19.1	0.305
Originality	0.0470128	0.3	0.04701	4.8	0.766
Quality	-0.0370234	-0.25	-0.03702	-3.6	0.803
Transportation	0.0183909	0.14	0.01839	1.9	0.887
Accommodation	0.5142798	3.38	0.51428	67.2	0.001

Note: LR $\chi^2(19) = 128.81$; Prob > $\chi^2 = 0.000$; Pseudo R² = 0.1645.

Morocco's Destination Image Vs Information Sources

The following model was tested using ordered logistic regression:

$$\text{Log}(P/1-P) = \alpha + \beta_1(\text{Television}) + \beta_2(\text{Specialized magazines/guidebooks}) + \beta_3(\text{Brochures}) + \beta_4(\text{Internet}) + \beta_5(\text{Official website of Morocco}) + \beta_6(\text{Social websites}) + \beta_7(\text{Travel agencies}) + \beta_8(\text{Recommendations from friends/family}) + \varepsilon$$

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2 below (sample size $n=337$). The model is statistically significant, and at 95% confidence level, there is at least one of the variable contributes to the prediction of the evaluation of Morocco as a tourist destination. Information gathered from friends should increase the desirability of Morocco as a tourist destination by 18.9%. The data analysis also revealed a negative relationship between information about Morocco gathered on TV and country evaluation of information. Data suggests that greater reliance on TV as a source of information to lead to a 19% chance of an inferior country rating.

Table 2: Evaluation of Morocco Vs: Information Sources

Rating Morocco	Coef.	Z	B	%	P>z
Television	-0.21106	-2.32	-0.21106	-19	0.02
Specialized magazines	0.128727	1.45	0.12873	13.7	0.147
Brochures	-0.09939	-1.08	-0.09939	-9.5	0.278
Internet	0.079364	0.87	0.07936	8.3	0.383
Official website of Morocco	0.075634	0.9	0.07563	7.9	0.37
Social Networks	0.031736	0.36	0.03174	3.2	0.719
Recommendations from family/ friends	0.180585	2.25	0.18059	19.8	0.024

Note: LR $\chi^2(7) = 15.59$; Prob > $\chi^2 = 0.0291$; Pseudo $R^2 = 0.0197$.

Morocco's Destination Image Evaluation versus Deterrents Factors

A relationship between deterrent factors and country evaluation was tested. For this model correlation test showed a high correlation between the variables "fear from terrorism", "lack of safety and security measures",

and “health threats”. We, therefore, chose to remove “terrorism” and “health threats” from our model. Hence the following model was tested using ordered logistic regression.

$$P = \alpha + \beta_1(\text{Lack of 'Morocco' offers in Travel Agencies}) + \beta_2(\text{Personnel not enough skilled}) + \beta_3(\text{Frauds and cheating}) + \beta_4(\text{Poor touristic activities}) + \beta_5(\text{Lack of safety measures}) + \beta_6(\text{Lack of infrastructure}) + \varepsilon$$

The statistical analysis revealed the following: With $\text{Prob} > \text{Chi}^2 = 0.000 < 0.05$ the overall model is statistically significant. The results are displayed in Table 3 (sample size $n=337$). Personnel being insufficiently qualified and low security is significant factors impacting the evaluation of Morocco as a tourist destination. Lack of sufficiently qualified staff decreases the destination image by 29% and security concerns by 28.8 %

Table 3: Morocco’s Destination Image Evaluation versus Deterrents Factors

Rating Morocco	Coef.	z	B	%	P>z
Lack of ‘Morocco’ offers in travel agencies	-0.1029828	-1.09	-0.10298	-9.8	0.277
Personnel not enough qualified/trained	-0.3431495	-2.63	-0.34315	-29	0.009
Frauds	-0.0166287	-0.17	-0.01663	-1.6	0.866
Poor touristic programs	-0.0824022	-0.72	-0.0824	-7.9	0.475
No security/Safety measures	-0.339151	-3.25	-0.33915	-28.8	0.001
Poor infrastructure	0.0083899	0.08	0.00839	0.8	0.936

Note: LR $\text{chi}^2(6) = 56.59$; $\text{Prob} > \text{chi}^2 = 0.000$; Pseudo $R^2 = 0.0715$.

Personality-based Evaluation

Using regression analysis we tested the potential correlation between country evaluation and country Personality variables. Some significant correlations (>60%) were found between the variables amusing and reveler, immoral and decadent as well as spiritual and religious. The variables “amusing”, “decadent”, and “spiritual” were dropped from the regression equation. The model under analysis was, therefore:

$$P = \alpha + \beta_1(\text{Amusing}) + \beta_2(\text{Reveler}) + \beta_3(\text{Agreeable}) + \beta_4(\text{Immoral}) + \beta_5(\text{Snobbish}) + \beta_6(\text{Mannered}) + \beta_7(\text{Organized}) + \beta_8(\text{Flourishing}) + \beta_9(\text{Hard-to-work}) + \beta_{10}(\text{Traditionalist}) + \beta_{11}(\text{Formalistic}) + \beta_{12}(\text{Dependent}) + \beta_{13}(\text{Neutral}) + \varepsilon$$

With a p-value of 0, the overall model is statistically significant. Results of the regression for this model are shown in Table 4 (sample size n=291). Both variable Amusing and Agreeable contribute positively to the evaluation of Morocco (p-value < 0.05) as a tourist destination. The more the attribute the trait amusing or agreeable the likelihood for his/her evaluation of the country to be positive will increase by 51.6% and 62% respectively. However, Immoral and Mannered are negatively correlated and respondents associating the country with immorality or seeing associating Morocco with Mannerism as a personality will be less likely to have given a positive evaluation and this by 33.4% and 18.8% respectively, holding other variables constant.

Table 4: Personality-based Evaluation

Rating Morocco	Coef.	Z	B	%	P>z
Amusing	0.4159839	3.219	0.41598	51.6	0.001
Reveler	-0.1330744	-1.069	-0.13307	-12.5	0.285
Agreeable	0.4826077	3.621	0.48261	62	0.000
Immoral	-0.4061866	-3.533	-0.40619	-33.4	0.000
Snobbish	0.1673043	1.279	0.1673	18.2	0.201
Mannered	-0.2079334	-1.991	-0.20793	-18.8	0.046
Organized	-0.0418603	-0.421	-0.04186	-4.1	0.674
Flourishing	0.0015567	0.013	0.00156	0.2	0.99
Hard-to-work	0.2127676	1.928	0.21277	23.7	0.054
Traditionalist	-0.2066141	-1.479	-0.20661	-18.7	0.139
Formalistic	-0.0013291	-0.012	-0.00133	-0.1	0.991
Dependent	-0.1219457	-1.181	-0.12195	-11.5	0.238
Neutral	0.0615433	0.585	0.06154	6.3	0.559

Note: LR $\chi^2(13) = 69.5$; Prob > $\chi^2 = 0.000$; Pseudo R² = 0.1028.

Morocco's Destination Image Vs Socio-demographic Factors

The following relationship was tested using ordered logistic regression (Evaluation of Morocco = $\alpha + \beta_1(\text{sex}) + \beta_2(\text{Age}) + \beta_3(\text{marital status}) +$

$\beta_4(\text{education}) + \beta_5(\text{occupation}) + \beta_6(\text{revenue}) + \beta_7(\text{household}) + \beta_8(\text{country of origin}) + \epsilon$), but was found not statistically significant ($p \text{ value} = 0.3515 > 0.05$).

Discussion and Recommendations

Results have been summarized in Figure 2. Tourists’ rating of Morocco was found to be correlated with country attributes, information sources, as well as personality based evaluation. Attributes such as accommodation, tourist activities, shopping facilities, price quality ratio, security, have a direct impact on their evaluation of Morocco as a tourist destination.

The quality of Accommodation, for example, was shown to be a predominant factor in the evaluation of a tourist destination by research groups such as Dominici and Guzzo (2010). In the same vein availability and diversity of touristic activities’, was also found to be an important factor affecting tourist evaluation of Morocco. In Figure 2 three main categories of factors are identified as being less than positive or negatively impacting on Morocco’s destination image. Within product attribute “shopping”, under deterrent “personal skills” and “safety measures” and under country personality “immoral” and “manner” concerns; are identified as areas which would benefit from special concern and action.

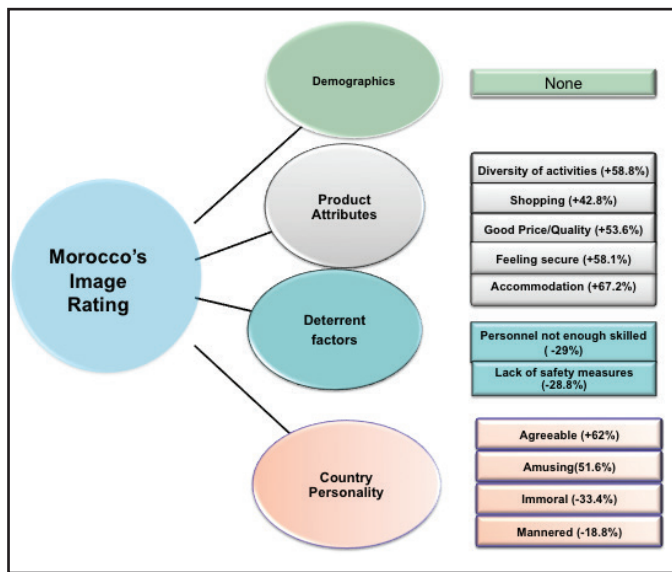


Figure 2: Summary of Results

Recommendations - Shopping Facilities

Seeking ways to address and enhance the current offerings is a challenge. Human (1994, p 15) notes that is usually not the case that there is sufficient recognition of the specific needs of the tourism industry in urban development and planning. Further, this “alignment” / “reflection” of the tourism industry needs are complex as it has social, economic and environmental implications and ramifications. The planning, therefore, requires cooperation and multi-tier interaction between the tourism sector, urban planning and its disparate considerations and government support.

Recommendations - Personnel Skills

It is suggested that this deterrent, pragmatically refers to enhancing customer relations skills. Further, since it may be argued that most tourists’ contact is within the tourism service sector; hospitality service skills (usually staff qualification and skills) would be of benefit. Staff skills and customer care have been found to be important factors in a number of hospitality studies (Zhang et al, 2014). In the UK a Skills Task Force commissioned report found that major skill gaps existed amongst the workforce affecting the tourism sectors in its whole. Skills such as entrepreneurial skills, IT skills and customer care skills were greatly lacking (Keep and Mayhew, 1999).

Additionally, a range of possible strategies is appropriate and feasible. Government and encouraged private sector investment in comprehensive skill and training program especially in managerial positions (Nicely, 2009). This could include training trainers, establishing training facilities and co-ordination with various Moroccan and even foreign educational institutions (Nicely, 2009). Foreign franchises might offer the opportunities to bring strong external international experience and systems coupled with local ownership control and indigenous knowledge.

Recommendations - Safety Measures

In regards to the deterrent, factors security was found to be an important factor impacting the evaluation of the country by tourists. Although not yet fully quantified, the impact of the Marrakech terrorist attack on April 28th 2011 where 17 people were killed and 25 injured, which took place after this research took place; adversely affected the Morocco tourist industry. Hotels, booking agents and travel companies reported cancellations within hours of the blast and Morocco’s MADEX Free Float Index (MOSEMDX) immediately slid by 1.6% on the day of the blast (Vantage equity, 2011).

Similarly, the Bali Bombing in 2002 led to a 44% drop in tourism in 2003. According to the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2010), the first precaution measure given to the tourists willing to visit Morocco is that there is a threat of terrorism attacks, the second is about threats of kidnapping, and other precautions involve the personal security and the poor road safety. It could be argued that “any” level of warning has a potential negative impact.

Terrorism (Arana and Leon, 2008), crime (Donaldson and Ferreira, 2009) and general safety concerns (Tasci and Boylu, 2010) have consistently been seen to directly influence tourists’ decisions. Various response strategies have been implemented. Attempting to concealing nefarious information is not feasible or desirable. However, other contingencies and proactive strategies have proven successful. Therefore, Morocco could ameliorate the problem using strategies utilised in other country/markets with a similar problem. In Egypt, after terrorist attacks on tourists, the Egyptian government embarked on a campaign to increase security with highly visible civil police officers placed on buses used by tourists.

Recommendations - Security

The perceptions of relative security are complex including cognitive, affective and behavioural processes and hence there is a high level of subjectivity (Tasci and Boylu, 2010). Additionally, tourism is more prone to risk due to a high reliance on external information, especially from mass media and “generalised” (Tasci and Boylu, 2010) meaning an incident in one country say Egypt or even Kenya can impact on all of North Africa including Morocco). Hence, the Moroccan government should indeed consider such action to re-establish confidence in the Morocco as a travel destination should this factor further deteriorate and gain prominence in tourists’ evaluations.

Recommendations - “Immoral” and “Manner”

The findings of Country Personality revealed that Morocco country evaluation is positively linked to the personality trait ‘Agreeable’ and ‘Amusing’. This is in line with the finding by D’Astous and Boujbel (2007) who found that the most important personality dimension for predicting people’s general country attitudes was agreeableness. Although D’Astous found that assiduousness was the “*personality dimension par excellence to predict product–country attitudes*” our findings showed that ‘assiduousness’ was not found to be a significant factor in Morocco evaluation.

Regarding the deterrent personality traits and in line with the D'Astous study, 'wickedness' was found to be negatively correlated to country evaluation. 'Snobbism' was also found to have a negative impact on country attitude. The recognition and awareness of these negative perceptions must be reflected and addressed in future marketing strategies.

It is argued that marketing campaigns should integrate and build on "agreeable" and "amusing" personality traits. Such traits could be highlighted in the creation of images and slogans integrated into a promotional campaign for Morocco as it was done by Turkey with its "Made in Turkey" campaign (e.g. *Romance made in Turkey, Escape made in Turkey, Blue made in Turkey*) (Zimet, 2009). Concurrently, actions should be taken to try to stress all who interface with visitors their importance and the reality that each individual represents the country.

Conclusion, Limitation and Future Research

The recommendations concern mainly the commercial and institutional dynamics which arguably would be government initiated due to the required high level of cross-sector collaboration. Alternative response strategies have been cited for each of the areas country destination images which were identified as being weak or negative from the visitor's perspective.

Future research should aim at increasing the number of respondents and also include in the survey a measure of the duration of the stay and places visited. Tourists staying longer might build a different perception than tourists on a short stay. Similar data on venue choices would perhaps yield a thicker knowledge of the visitor values and assessments. The study indicated that Morocco scores highly across a range of country attributes; historic sites and centers to beaches and mountains. Similarly, the study indicated the majority of current visitors come from France followed by the UK and small percentages from countries which are actually a relatively short haul flight. Also, there are cultural historic and linguistic links with parts of the Middle East which appear to be unexploited. Therefore further study should identify, analyse and evaluate these potential new geographic and psychographic market segments.

References

- Aaker, J. L. (1997). *Dimensions of brand personality. Journal of marketing research*, 347-356.
- Araña, J. E., & León, C. J. (2008). *The impact of terrorism on tourism demand. Annals of Tourism Research*, 35(2), 299-315.

- Austin, J. R., Sigauw, J. A., & Mattila, A. S. (2003). *A re-examination of the generalizability of the Aaker brand personality measurement framework. Journal of Strategic Marketing, 11(2), 77-92.*
- Azoulay, A., & Kapferer, J. N. (2003). *Do brand personality scales really measure brand personality?. Journal of Brand Management, 11(2), 143-155.*
- Beerli, A., & Martin, J. D. (2004). *Factors influencing destination image. Annals of tourism research, 31(3), 657-681.*
- Bigne, J. E., Sanchez, M. I., & Sanchez, J. (2001). *Tourism image, evaluation variables and after purchase behaviour: Inter-relationship. Tourism management, 22(6), 607-616.*
- D'Astous, A., & Boujbel, L. (2007). *Positioning countries on personality dimensions: Scale development and implications for country marketing. Journal of Business Research, 60(3), 231-239.*
- Donaldson, R., & Ferreira, S. (2009, February). *(Re-) creating urban destination image: Opinions of foreign visitors to South Africa on safety and security?. In Urban Forum (Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 1-18). Springer Netherlands.*
- Dominici, G., & Guzzo, R. (2010). *Customer satisfaction in the hotel industry: A case study from Sicily. International Journal of Marketing Studies, 2(2), 3-12.*
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (1991). *The meaning and measurement of destination image. Journal of tourism studies, 2(2), 2-12.*
- Gertner, R. K. (2011). *Nation brand personality: Student's perceptions of tourism and study abroad destinations. International review of business research papers, 7(6), 115-127.*
- Goldberg, L. R. (1992). *The development of markers for the Big-Five factor structure. Psychological assessment, 4(1), 26.*
- Gunn, C. A. (1988). *Vacationscape: Designing tourist regions. Van Nostrand Reinhold.*
- Hose, T. A., Wickens, E., & Weber, S. (2004). *Typologies, tourism locations and images: meeting the real needs of real*

tourists. *Reinventing a tourism destination: Facing the challenge*, 103-114.

- Keep, E., & Mayhew, K. (1999). *The Leisure Sector, Skills Task Force, Research Paper No. 6*, DfEE Publications, Sudbury.
- Lawson, F., & Baud-Bovy, M. (1977). *Tourism and recreation development*. Architectural Press.
- Lopes, S. D. F. (2011). *Destination image: Origins, developments and implications*. PASOS. *Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural*, 9(2), 305-315.
- Pitt, L. F., Opoku, R., Hultman, M., Abratt, R., & Spyropoulou, S. (2007). *What I say about myself: Communication of brand personality by African countries*. *Tourism Management*, 28(3), 835-844.
- McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T. (1987). *Validation of the five-factor model of personality across instruments and observers*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52(1), 81.
- Nicely, A. (2009). *Enhancing hotel learning: The impact of managers' engagement in learning activities on their self-reported work-related learning levels*. Oklahoma State University.
- Oliveira, P., & Telhado Pereira, P. (2008). *Who values what in a tourism destination? The case of Madeira Island*. *Tourism Economics*, 14(1), 155-168.
- Qu, H., Kim, L. H., & Im, H. H. (2011). *A model of destination branding: Integrating the concepts of the branding and destination image*. *Tourism management*, 32(3), 465-476.
- SESRIC - Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries. (2015). *International Tourism in OIC countries*. Retrieved from <http://www.sesrtcic.org/publications-detail.php?id=358>
- Simpson, P. M., & Siguaw, J. A. (2008). *Perceived travel risks: The traveller perspective and manageability*. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 10(4), 315-327.

- Stepchenkova, S., & Morrison, A. M. (2006). *The destination image of Russia: From the online induced perspective*. *Tourism Management*, 27(5), 943-956.
- Sturma, M. (1999). *Packaging polynesia's image*. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26(3), 712-715.
- Tasci, A. D. (2009). *Social distance the missing link in the loop of movies, destination image, and tourist behavior?*. *Journal of Travel Research*, 47(4), 494-507.
- Tasci, A. D., & Boyle, Y. (2010). *Cultural comparison of tourists' safety perception in relation to trip satisfaction*. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 12(2), 179-192.
- Tasci, A. D., & Gartner, W. C. (2007). *Destination image and its functional relationships*. *Journal of travel research*, 45(4), 413-425.
- Tasci, A. D., Gartner, W. C., & Cavusgil, S. T. (2007). *Conceptualization and operationalization of destination image*. *Journal of hospitality & tourism research*, 31(2), 194-223.
- UNWTO World National Tourism Organisation. *World Tourism Barometer April 2015*, accessed Nov 20, 2015.
- *Vantage equity*. (2008). Retrieved from <http://vantageequity.com/archives/Vantage%20Daily%20Review%202011/VE-Daily-Review-28-Apr11.pdf>
- *World Tourism Organization Annual Report*. (2015). Retrieved January 20, 2016. World Tourism Organization. Retrieved from <http://www.unwto.org/aboutwto/why/en/why.php?>
- *World Tourism and Travel Council*. (2014). *Travel and Tourism, Economic Impact*. Retrieved from [http://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic impact research/regional reports/world2014.pdf](http://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic%20impact%20research/regional%20reports/world2014.pdf)
- Zhang, Z., Zhang, Z., & Law, R. (2014). *Relative importance and combined effects of attributes on customer satisfaction*. *The Service Industries Journal*, 34(6), 550-566.
- Zimet, D. (2009). *Branding Turkey as Israel's Number One Tourism Destination*. *Tourism Destination Development and Branding*. Eilat 2009 Conference Proceedings.