

# A PROPOSED RESEARCH MODEL ON THE RELATIONS BETWEEN DESTINATION IMAGE AND SLOW TRAVEL INTENTIONS OF VISITORS

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**Abstract:** *The impact of destination image on visit intention, return intention, satisfaction, and willingness. to recommend a destination to others. In-depth research on slow travel, slow travel intention, and the relationship between destination image and slow travel is still limited. Therefore, based on the synthesis of documents, related theories, and qualitative research methods, the article proposes a research model and hypotheses about the relationship between destination image and travel intention. slow schedule of tourists; On that basis, suggest research directions and serve as a basis for further research, especially experimental research.*

• Keywords: destination image; slow travel; intentions of visitors.

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## 1. Introduction

In tourism, destination image has become a subject that has drawn more attention and been recognized for its importance to tourists when it comes to choosing a particular destination (Lin, C, Morais et al., 2007); making travel decisions (Hunt, J., 1975; Chon, K. S, 1990); in tourism marketing (Schuster, R., Sullivan et al., 2008; Molina, A., Gomez, M., & Martin Consuegra, D., 2010); and in tourism behavioral intentions (Echtner, C. & Ritchie, B., 1993; Baloglu, S., & McCleary, K.W., 1999; Lee, C. K, 2009; Qu, H., Kim et al., 2011).

Previous research findings indicate that many factors can affect the behavior of tourists, of which destination image is deemed as a crucial one as it affects the future visit intentions, return intentions, the willingness to recommend the tourism destination to other people and intentions to choose tourism forms of visitors (Chen, C., & Tsai, D., 2007). Destination image helps to draw visitors, increase their spending (Chi & Qu, 2008) and stimulate their decision-making (Bigne & Sanchez, 2001; Chen, C., & Tsai, 2007). Lin et al. (2007) believe that destination image is the perceptions of visitors about a particular destination or place. The studies on destination image in the relations with tourism intentions in general and the intentions to choose a tourism form in particular continue to draw scholars' attention and open new research directions in different contexts and time settings.

In an increasingly competitive business environment, destinations always try to differentiate

their tourism products by creating competitive advantages and positioning in the global market to gain a higher market share (Gomezelj & Mihalič, 2008). However, the increase in competition and development has resulted in a reverse effect in the tourism industry, that is the emergence of "slow travel" - a form of tourism characterized by the trend of tourists travelling and staying in one destination longer (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). Slow travel has emerged as a new tourism form which is considered as a sustainable replacement for mass tourism (Fullagar et al., 2012). Slow travel is predicted to change the hobbies of tourists as they focus on environmental protection with longer stay time and prefer homestay to hotels (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2020). Slow tourism involves more profound and genuine experiences.

Reality has shown that slow travel has become more popular in recent time and is considered as a replacement for mass tourism in order to promote sustainable tourism (Serdane et al., 2020). Slow travel is seen as a solution to sustainable tourism development model (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010; Lipman & Murphy, 2012). Literature review indicates that although the impacts of destination image on tourism intentions in general and intentions to choose a tourism form in particular have drawn attentions of many scholars in recent time, studies have mostly focused on the impacts of destination image on the visit intentions, return intentions,

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satisfaction, willingness to recommend a destination to other people. In-depth research on slow travel, slow travel intentions, factors affecting slow travel behavior, relations between destination image and slow travel remains limited. This research gap calls for further studies on the relations between destination image and slow travel as well as the necessity to build up a research model on the impacts of destination image on slow travel intentions of visitors. The building of this research model is the foundation for further research directions related to destination image and slow travel; it also provides some marketing implications for policy makers, travel agencies, destination management boards, marketers in tourism organization to refer to when they are to build up orientations for developing a comprehensive destination image and facilitating sustainable tourism development.

## 2. Literature review on destination image and slow travel intentions

### 2.1. Tourism destination image

#### 2.1.1. Concept of tourism destination image

Destination image is discussed in many studies with different contents. In tourism, many researchers view that destination image plays an important role to tourists in destination selection, holiday decision-making and tourism behavioral intentions (Lin, C, Morais et al., 2007; Hunt, J., 1975; Chon, K. S, 1990; Echtner, C. & Ritchie, B., 1993; Baloglu, S., & McCleary, K.W., 1999; Lee, C. K, 2009; Qu, H., Kim et al., 2011). In 1975, Hunt became one of the first researchers to introduce the concept of destination image, which refers to the impressions that one or many people have of a destination which is not their residential area. J.L.Crompton (1979) emphasizes individuals impressions when defining destination image: it is the overall belief, ideas and impressions of a person or a tourism destination. The concept of destination image is used in studies in different contexts and time settings but they all underline the terms “impressions”, “perceptions” or “belief” of visitors.

#### 2.1.2. Tourism destination image formation

The process of forming tourism destination image is considered as multi-faceted and closely inter-related. As shown in previous studies, tourism destination image formation comes from (1) information sources, (2) images and (3) the combination of information sources, individuals factors and images.

#### - Tourism destination image formed from information sources

Information sources are the first basis with direct impacts on the perceptions of visitors of a tourism destination; the more positive these perceptions, the more visitors the destination can attract (Mayo, E. J., & Jarvis, L. P. 1981). The formation of destination image is closely linked with information sources (Gartner, W. C., 1993); the received information sources depend on non-commercial information (real images) or commercial information (created images) (Gunn, C. A., 1988). Reality has shown that even when a visitor has not yet accessed any non-commercial information, he can still form a particular tourism image. Based on the view that destination image can be formed by a combination of information from different media and sources, Beerli, A., & Martín, J. (2004) classify information into 5 types: Public information; Coverage information; Self-control information; Organic information, and Visit information. The combination of these 5 kinds of information is the foundation for tourism destination image formation.

As such, information sources and the process of tourism destination image formation are closely related; personal perceptions form the image in the mind of visitors from the information they already have.

#### - Tourism destination image formed from different kinds of images

According to Gunn, C. A. (1972), there are two image levels that affect tourism destination image formation: (1) Organic image, which results from informal information developed from actual experiences and recommendations of friends and relatives as well as information reminded by advertisements and relevant publications; (2) Induced image, which is formed by the promotions and communications that tourism destination managers actively implement such as tourism brochures, posters. In the meantime, Fakeye, P. C. & J.L. Crompton (1991) state that organic image, induced image and complex image are three kinds of images that individuals may receive to form the tourism destination image: (1) Organic image is formed by the recommendations of tourism experiences from friends, relatives and from non-advertising information sources (geography books, television or magazines); Induced image is formed from the published tourism information such as leaflets, websites that introduces the destination, it

is the product of tourism marketing efforts; and (3) Complex image is formed from actual experiences of visitors in the destination.

So it can be seen from these views that it is necessary to impact on these three image levels as they all have direct and indirect effects on intentions of visitors so as to develop impressive destination image in the mind of visitors.

*- Tourism destination image formed from the combination of information sources, individuals factors and images*

Baloglu & McCleary (1999) present the model of tourism destination image formation based on visitors' perceptions and emotions, individuals factors and tourism experiences. Baloglu, S., & McCleary, K.W. (1999) believe that there are two main groups of factors that affect tourism destination image formation: (1) Individual factors, which include psychological factors such as values, motivations and characteristics of visitors, social factors such as ages, education background, marital status and others; and (2) Tourism experiences, which include information sources, tourism experiences and travel frequencies of visitors. The differences in the factors of each individuals lead to different evaluations of a tourism destination image.

### 2.1.3. Components of tourism destination image

Identifying components of image is very necessary to build up tourism image that covers "belief, impressions, emotions and desires" of each visitor. Research has shown that only using "perception" to evaluate destination image has resulted in the inadequacy in "emotions" that visitors have to the destination that they have visited. In most concepts of tourism destination image, the terms "belief", "perception" and "impressions" are used to reflect "image perceptions" of visitors. "Perception" should not be limited to rational aspects but should include emotional ones. The combination of these two aspects is considered the best and most comprehensive explanation for the way visitors form a tourism destination image (Baloglu, S., & Brinberg, D., 1997; Beerli, A., Diza, G. & Perez, P.J., 2002; Lin, C, Morais, D., Kersetter, D. & Hou, J., 2007). In this sense, the model of destination image with two components of perceived destination image and emotional destination image has been used in relevant studies. Perceived image refers to knowledge or belief that an individual has of a particular destination. The perceived attributes may be specific (landscape,

cultural and natural elements, etc.) or perceived (atmosphere, hospitality, etc.) (Walmsley, D. J., & Jenkins, J. M., 1993; Chew, T. E. Y. & Jahari, A. S., 2014). Emotional image refers to the emotions that visitors have of a destination (feeling relaxed, hilarious or bored, etc.), reflecting their personal emotion attachment to that destination (Walmsley, D. J., & Jenkins, J. M., 1993). The difference between these two kinds of image shows that emotional image is a kind of responses in feelings while perceived image is the knowledge related to environmental factors (Baloglu, S., & McCleary, K.W. (1999).

As such, there is a consensus that perceived image and emotional image are the two components of the destination image.

## 2.2. Slow travel

### 2.2.1. Concept of slow travel

Slow travel is a holiday in which travellers spend more time for holiday and have more flexible plans to experience tourism services in harmony with the local nature, community, people and culture in the destination to a maximum interaction level (Mathiou et al., 2022). This concept is seen as most appropriate with the essence of slow travel and visitor behavior. The idea of "slow" started in Italy in the 1970s when a local organization guided visitors how to enjoy local food. Reality has shown that the philosophy of slowness has been expanded to all other aspects in human life such as slow food, slow eating, slow living. Husemamn & Eckhardt (2019) believe that slowness or declining speed refer to the fact that consumers seek opportunities to escape from hustle and bustle of life and participate in different slow consumption forms. Consumers who seek the "slow" area in geographical, cultural and social environment are not affected by the partial or entire speed acceleration (Berger Remy et al., 2020). This aims to preserve the cultural value of each locality amid the trend of globalization and booming development of science and technology.

A review of related studies indicates the common thing between the concepts of slow travel, that is slow travel brings a slow rather than fast holiday (Husemamn & Eckhardt, 2019; Oh et al., 2016). According to Lumsdon & McGrath (2011), slow travel may involve using slow-moving vehicles, staying longer to discover local food. J.E. Dickinson et al. (2011) affirm that slow travel is a newly emerging concept that offers an alternative to air and car travel as visitors go to the destination more slowly, stay longer and move less during their holiday. As such,



the process of slowing down the holiday brings more opportunities for visitors to interact and connect with local people and destination in a deeper manner (J.E.Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010; J.E.Dickinson et al., 2011).

Some authors identify the differential attributes of Slow Tourism. For example, Bac Paul (2014), draws up a comparative table between Slow Tourism and fast tourism, or mainstream.

**Table 1: Slow travel v. Fast travel comparison**

	Mode of travel	Slowness	Travel Experience	Environmental Consciousness	Sense of place
SLOW TOURISM	Walking/Cycling	Unhurried	Travelling through the landscape	Low consumption of fuels Cultural Exchange (attachment)	Cultural Exchange (attachment)
FAST TOURISM	Airplane	Hurried	Travel corridor	High consumption of fuels	Minimal cultural contact (detachment)

Source: Bac Paul, 2014

In short, it can be seen that slow travel switches the focus from the quantity of experiences gained in the holiday to the quality of these experiences, reflected in the following aspects: (1) slow travel helps visitors have diverse travel experiences; (2) visitors can understand stories that lie behind the objects they are watching in the destination; (3) visitors can flexibly choose their holiday agenda to ensure slow temp in the holiday so that they can relax and recover effectively; (4) visitors spend more time to get to know more about local culture, connect with local people and the destination itself; visitors enjoy the sceneries, harmonize with the nature and become friendly with the environment during their holiday.

### 2.2.2. Slow travel intentions

Intention is a necessary process in the forms of behavioral expressions, it is the intention reflected before an actual behavior is made (Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I., 1975); is the subjective probability of an individual to establish actual behaviors (Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M., 1980). There is a close connection between intentions and actual behavior, so identifying intentions is the best way to predict actual behavior of individuals (Ajzen, 1991). When there is an opportunity for action, intentions will lead to behavior, so if intentions are measured accurately, it will be the best predictor for behavior (Martin Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977). In tourism, intentions of visitors are expressed in 3 stages: before the visit, during the visit and after the visit (Rayan, C., 2002; Williams, C., & Buswell, J., 2003).

In this research, slow travel intention is understood as behavior of a visitor in choosing slow travel in the

future. This level is reflected by the visitor's intention, certainty, readiness, plan-making and efforts to take the visit with slower tempo to fulfill the main objectives of the visit, that is, increasing experiences by visiting and interacting with different objects in the destination, thereby discovering the surrounding environment, exploring himself in a moderate tempo so as to recharge their physical and spiritual well-beings (Serdane et al., 2020; Le Busque et al., 2022).

### 2.2.3. Relations between destination image and slow travel intentions

Chon, K. S (1990); Echtner, C. & Ritchie, B. (1993) believe that destination image affects visitors' subjective perceptions and travel intentions. Lin et al. (2007) affirm that perceived image and emotional image are two components that create the overall image and this image will determine visitors' preferences of a particular destination in comparison with others. Accordingly, positive destination image can have a positive impact on travel intentions, specifically slow travel intentions in this research. The impacts of destination image on slow travel intentions of visitors are considered under the impacts of many elements and stages; the choice of slow travel reflects the motivations and objectives that visitors want to achieve via the overall image and benefits that slow travel brings forth. As such there is a correlation between destination image and slow travel intentions, the measurement scales for slow travel intentions are inherited from previous study by B.Meng & Choi (2016) which illustrate the levels of willingness and commitments to participate in slow travel in the future.

## 3. Research model and hypotheses

Upon reviewing related studies and theories on the relations between destination image and slow travel intentions, a research model reflecting the correlations between variables and research hypotheses is as follows:

- Perceived image and emotional image are the two most overall components to explain overall image (Baloglu, S., & Brinberg, D., 1997; Beerli, A., & Martin, J., 2004; Lin, C, Morais, D., Kersetter, D. & Hou, J., 2007; Styliadis, D., Shani, A & Belhassen, Y. 2017); each image combination of each component has different impact levels on the formation of the overall image (Qu, H., Kim, L. H., & Im, H., 2011; Styliadis, D., Shani, A & Belhassen, Y., 2017; Styliadis, D., Shani, A & Belhassen, Y. 2017). Accordingly, there are two research hypotheses on the relations between perceived image, emotional image and overall image.

*H1: Perceived image has a positive impact on the overall image of the tourist destination*

*H2: Emotional image has a positive impact on the overall image of the tourist destination*

- Slow travel intentions have an important meaning amid the current fierce competition and sustainable development orientations of destinations; desires for “slow living” in harmony with the nature and higher awareness of visitors about responsible tourism. Previous studies have demonstrated that overall image is one of the most important elements to provoke travel intentions of visitors, the more positive the overall image, the more positive the behavioral intentions of visitors. So this research aims to test the impacts of overall image on slow travel intentions of visitors via hypothesis H3.

*H3: Overall image of the tourist destination has a positive impact on slow travel intentions of visitors*

- The most recent studies tend to see image as a concept that is formed through the perceptions and emotions of visitors; it is the result of two closely-related images: perceived image and emotional image (Beerli, A., Diza, G. & Martin, D.J., 2004). There is a consensus that perceived image and emotional image have positive relations, perceived image is the precondition of emotional image and can directly impact on emotional image of the destination. This research proposes hypothesis H4 to test if perceived image has an impact on emotional image.

*H4: Perceived image has a positive impact on the emotional image of the tourist destination*

- Perceived image and emotional image are two components that contribute to the overall image. Together with considering the impacts of overall image on slow travel intentions of visitors, evaluating the impacts of each afore-mentioned component on visitors' intentions is very important as perceived image will provoke travel intention of visitors while emotions of visitors to a destination will help to motivate that intention. However, the impact level and order of each component on travel intentions of visitors are different in each research context. Therefore, to further clarify the relations of each component of destination image with slow travel intentions of visitors, this research proposes 2 hypotheses on the impacts of perceived image and emotional image on slow travel intentions to a tourist destination.

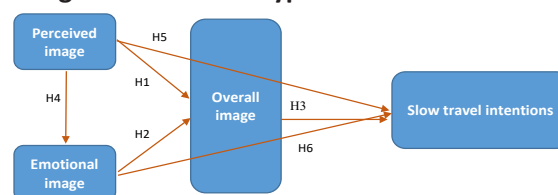
*H5: Perceived image has a positive impact on slow travel intentions of visitors.*

*H6: Emotional image has a positive impact on slow travel intentions of visitors.*

The proposed research model will consider and analyze the differences as affected by demographic characteristics and tourism experience to overall image, slow travel intentions and relations in the research model.

The research model on the relations between destination image and slow travel intentions is shown in the following Figure 1:

**Figure 1. Research hypotheses in the model**



Source: proposed by authors

#### 4. Conclusion and further research directions

The main aims of the article are to build up theoretical model to open to the following research, especially empirical one, the relations between destination image and slow travel intentions. In the coming time, empirical research will be done to test the hypotheses that are developed from the proposed research model. The findings from empirical research will be the foundations to propose solutions and recommendations, they will also provide some marketing implications to help policy-makers, travel agencies, destination management board, marketers in tourism organizations have more grounds to orient the development of overall image and develop tourism sustainably.

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