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LUCIO HERNÁNDEZ-LOBATO*, MARIA MAGDALENA SOLIS-RADILLA*, MIGUEL ANGEL MOLINER-TENA[†], & JAVIER SÁNCHEZ-GARCÍA[†]

*Facultad de Turismo, Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, México
[†]Departamento de Administración de Empresas y Marketing, Universitat Jaume I de Castellón, Spain

ABSTRACT   *The aim of this paper is to analyse the causal relationships among three key variables in tourism marketing: image, satisfaction and loyalty. It analyses the specific case of a tourism destination, approaching it not only from a cognitive perspective but also from an emotional one. It thus attempts to incorporate the experiential view into a construct such as the image of the tourism destination. Some hypotheses are put forward and tested in an empirical study of 140 American tourists visiting Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo (Mexico). Four dimensions of the tourism destination image are identified: natural resources, service quality, entertainment and affective image. The study demonstrates that the affective image is the main antecedent of loyalty.*

KEY WORDS: Tourism destination image, satisfaction, loyalty, experiential view

Introduction

The tourist destination concept is tied strongly to the geographical conditions of a place. The attraction of a tourist destination significantly depends on the natural resources and the climatic conditions of the geographical place in which it is located. These environmental factors are perceived by the tourist and help him/her to form a certain image of the tourist destination. From the tourist point of view, the transmitted image is a fundamental element in the final decision taken.

Research carried out during the last two decades has shown that the image is a valuable concept for understanding the process of selection of a destination by

tourists (Echtner *et al*. 1991; Baloglu and McCleary 1999; Jenkins 1999; Gallarza *et al*. 2002; Pike 2002). According to Bigné and Andreu (2000),

> the competitive advantages will no longer lie in the quality of the visible attributes of products, but in those that are not easy to imitate, in intangible resources rather than tangible ones and in particular, a large part of these intangible resources are centred on service and image.

Tourists, on their first visit to a destination, or on a repeat visit, will perceive a primary image of the place (Beerli *et al*. 2002), which will enable them to have a more general perception, as the number of visits made and the time spent there substantially influence the formation of the image of the destination (Baloglu and Mangaloglu 2001). The key objective in generating and commercializing a successful destination image is that tourists' perception of the destination should correspond to the one that the marketing managers have tried to project (Andreu *et al*. 2000).

Tourism destination image is important because it is presumed to have direct consequences for variables such as the satisfaction felt by the tourist or loyalty to the tourism destination. Loyalty is a concept related closely to customer satisfaction, and there is even a consensus that a high degree of satisfaction results in loyal customers. This makes loyalty the central concept of marketing and any discussion of it must take into account the elements involved in the process of its formation, such as customer satisfaction (Petrick and Backman 2002; Baker and Crompton 2000) and brand image (Bigné *et al*. 2001).

The objective of this paper is to analyse the relationship between the image of the tourism destination, the satisfaction experienced by tourists and their loyalty to the destination. The influence of the cognitive and affective image on both satisfaction and attitudinal loyalty is studied in the present work. In addition, the relationship between satisfaction and attitudinal loyalty is analysed. Finally, the classic attitude model allows us to study the relationship between attitudinal loyalty and comportamental loyalty. To achieve this objective, the literature on image, satisfaction and loyalty was reviewed first, together with where the hypotheses appear. Secondly, an empirical study was carried out in Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo, one of the tourism destinations integrally planned by the federal government of Mexico. Finally, some conclusions and recommendations are proposed.

Literature Review

The Image of the Tourism Destination

Tourism destinations must know the image that they project in order to have elements allowing them to make strategic and marketing decisions. The image may be defined as a mental schema developed by a tourist on the basis of a few impressions selected from among a flood of all impressions (Fakeye and Crompton 1991). The image of the tourism destination is a complex construct. A tourism destination is formed

by a variety of elements, which makes it more difficult to measure. The literature review shows that the principal components of the measurement of this construct are natural and scenic resources, accessibility, cultural resources, security, night life and entertainment, and quality/price ratio (Andreu *et al*. 2000; Bigné and Andreu 2000; Kandampully and Suartanto 2000; Bigné *et al*. 2001; Chen 2001; Leisen 2001; O'Leary and Deegan 2003).

These components are identified by the classical view of the construct, which from our standpoint is only partial. Indeed, it is a cognitive approach, i.e. it focuses on the evaluations of the functional attributes of the destination, which refer to the beliefs and knowledge held by individuals with regard to the object evaluated. The contributions of Holbrook and his colleagues justify the need to incorporate affective elements of the image, i.e. the experiential view (Havlena and Holbrook 1986; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Oliver 1997).

The interaction between cognition and affect has become a major line of research in recent years. The cognitive view of information processing has predominated in studies of consumer behaviour. The model proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) marked a line which the consumer behaviour school has expanded in recent decades. Basically the model posits that the formation of the consumer's attitudes towards an object is cognitive. It is postulated that the formation of an attitude is based on information processing. This information processing occurs through processes like valuations, interpretations, schemas, attributions and strategies and is based on one's the beliefs. So beliefs are the fundamental elements that generate affects and attitudes.

But, leisure activities like tourism need to resort to fantasies, feelings and emotions to explain purchasing behaviour. Many products have symbolic meanings, beyond tangible attributes, perceived quality, or price (Havlena and Holbrook 1986). Affect implies emotions such as love, hate, joy, boredom, anxiety, pride, anger, disgust, stupidity, sympathy, lust, ecstasy, greed, guilt, elation, shame and awe (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Finally, the experiences of purchasing and consumption occur at the level of behaviour.

The tourism destination image is a mental schema developed by a tourist on the basis of impressions. Traditionally, this image has been associated with cognitive impressions. However, it is necessary to bear the affective image in mind to explain the tourism destination image completely. The affective image evaluates the emotions or feelings aroused by the tourism destination. This perspective has been incorporated in some studies, where it has been verified that the affective evaluation of the image is of great use in identifying the value that people give to tourism destinations, not only by manifesting their knowledge of the attributes, but through an emotional response related to the place (Liljander and Strandvick 1997; White 2002; Yu and Dean 2001). Thus, our first research hypothesis is stated as:

H_1: The image of a tourism destination is made up of cognitive and affective dimensions.

Satisfaction With the Tourism Destination

As remarked earlier, satisfaction is a key variable in marketing. Identifying the elements that influence the satisfaction experienced by the tourist is a priority task. According to the disconfirmation paradigm, satisfaction is a comparison between performance and expectations (Oliver 1981). But, according to Oliver (1999), this is a definition based on what the consumer does, and not on its psychological meaning. Oliver has therefore proposed that 'satisfaction is defined as pleasurable fulfilment" (Oliver 1997, 1999). That is, the consumer senses that consumption fulfils some need, desire, goal or so forth and that this fulfilment is pleasurable. This view of satisfaction reflects on the one hand its cognitive nature (exercise in comparing expectations and performance) and, on the other, its affective nature (associated feeling of pleasure). Thus, satisfaction is the tourist's sense that consumption provides outcomes against expectations and a standard of pleasure versus displeasure.

In the case of satisfaction with a destination, tourists value the degree of pleasurable fulfilment of their needs and wishes, including the full range of services and activities offered by the destination. Satisfaction depends on the experience of using the services. Satisfaction has been treated as a one-dimensional construct, which varies along a continuum from dissatisfaction to satisfaction. In this sense it has been found that the image is associated positively with consumer satisfaction in luxury hotels (Mazanec 1995). This indicates that a positive or negative image can affect the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the tourist.

It is difficult to affect the attraction felt for a place for holiday-making, particularly when the tourists are satisfied with the destination (Vogt and Andereck 2003). An aspect related to satisfaction is when an attempt is made to establish an emotional bond with tourists through the image of the destination, projecting 'emotional satisfaction' (Ekinci 2003) and not only through the basic needs, such as food, rest or enjoyment (Chaudhary 2000; Kandampully and Suartanto 2000).

Previous information and the fact that someone has visited the destination (previous experience) must be taken into consideration because that can cause them to have a different perception from those who have never visited it (Baloglu 2001). It is therefore necessary to generate studies of image and its relation to the satisfaction obtained in order to know the visitors' intentions to return and to recommend the destination (Bigné *et al*. 2001). In this sense the research hypothesis is posited in the following terms:

H_2: The image of the tourism destination influences the satisfaction experienced by the tourist.

By testing this hypothesis it is aimed to study the influence of both the cognitive and the affective images, as some authors consider that affective processes contribute considerably to the explanation and prediction of satisfaction (Oliver 1997; Wirtz and Bateson 1999).

Loyalty to the Tourism Destination

Gaining the loyalty of customers today takes place in both product and services markets and is identified frequently with the retention of customers because both concepts refer to the repetition of the purchase of products or services from a single firm by customers over a prolonged period of time (Petrick 2004; Tsaur *et al.* 2002).

Loyalty can be defined as the future behaviour commitment to purchase a product or service, or the link with a provider on all occasions when other alternatives are possible (Rundle-Thiele and Lockshin 2001). From this perspective, loyalty can be measured directly, through purchasing behaviour, through observation of a higher frequency of purchasing or the concatenation of a number of purchases of a product or service as against others in which this does not occur; and, indirectly, by measuring the attitude or intention to repeat the purchase.

This schema is captured in several studies of tourists' behaviour, which put forward various alternatives for measuring a tourist's loyalty (Oppermann 2000). First, loyalty can be measured through behaviour, by considering repeat purchasing. Secondly, it can be measured through attitude, analysing the tourist's predisposition towards the tourism destination. Finally a composite measure is proposed, which integrates behaviour and attitude, considering that the tourist must have positive attitude and behaviour towards a destination for it to be considered true loyalty (Bowen 2001; Opperman 2000).

Customer loyalty thus involves a positive attitude towards the firm's product or service, followed by favourable behaviour that leads to purchasing it and recommending it to others (Backman and Compton 1991). Customer loyalty is also a stable source of revenue for firms, serving at the same time as an information channel that acts informally by recommending the product or service to family and friends (Reid and Reid 1993).

To justify the causal relationships existing among all the variables included in the model, it is necessary to have a conceptual frame of reference. The model of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) is a classical model in psychology, much referred to in marketing, and constituting the cornerstone on which both marketing and psychology have constructed many of their working hypotheses. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) posited that a particular behaviour is determined by a single attitude. An attitude towards an object may determine different behaviours, such as the repetition of the visit, word of mouth or complaints. The attitude, in turn, is determined by beliefs, which in our causal model are image and satisfaction. All this supposes that attitudinal loyalty is an antecedent of behavioural loyalty, but that image and satisfaction do not influence behavioural loyalty directly, but indirectly through attitudinal loyalty. All this allows us to put forward the hypotheses that complete the overall model:

H_3: The image of the tourism destination directly and positively influences attitudinal loyalty towards the tourism destination.

H_4: The satisfaction experienced by the customer directly and positively influences attitudinal loyalty towards the destination.

H_5: Attitudinal loyalty towards a tourism destination directly and positively influences behavioural loyalty towards that destination.

The causal model to be tested is summarized in Figure 1.
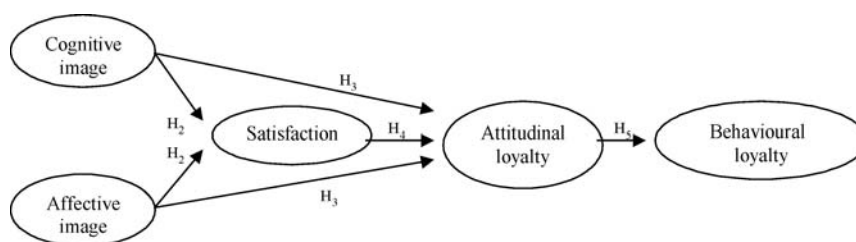
Figure 1. Theoretical causal model.

Methodology

Having posited the hypotheses, the design of the scales for measuring the variables to be studied and of the empirical study that will permit them to be tested must be undertaken next.

The literature review shows that the constructs 'tourism destination image' and 'loyalty' are complex, whereas satisfaction has been considered a one-dimensional construct measured along a continuum from satisfaction to dissatisfaction. In respect of the tourism destination image construct, a broad set of items was generated on the basis of the literature review, grouped around six blocks of the image: (1) natural resources and scenery, (2) security and accessibility, (3) quality–price, (4) atmosphere and culture, (5) entertainment, shopping and night life and (6) emotions–feelings. Altogether, these six blocks include the attributes that can influence the tourists' perception of the cognitive image (CI) and the affective image (AI), thus covering all aspects of the domain of the construct.

With respect to loyalty to the tourism destination, Likert scales have been used to measure the attitudinal loyalty (three items) and an open question to measure behavioural loyalty ('How many times have you visited the tourism destination?').

Following the initial generation of the scales, a qualitative phase was carried out, which consisted of a consultation with six academics of the universities of Valencia and Jaume I of Castellón (Spain), specialized in marketing and tourism. On the basis of the responses received from the experts, those items with a lower degree of agreement were eliminated and the suggestions received were applied. A pre-test of the resulting questionnaire was carried out with 20 tourists in one destination (Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo, Mexico).

To verify the reliability and the validity of the scales, and to test the hypotheses put forward, an empirical study was carried out.

The reference population consisted of all tourists of North American origin (USA and Canada), over 18 years of age, who were visiting Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo (Mexico). The field work was carried out between April and May 2004, by means of a self-administered questionnaire at different points of the destination. The research was carried out during the guided group visits. The tourists had stayed for several days and boarded a bus after the visit. They filled in the questionnaire during the return trip. Therefore, the unit sample was the groups of tourists who visited the tourist resort. These sample units were selected as a 'simple random'. The final sample size was 140 tourists. This size guarantees an error lesser than 8.45 percent for a significancy level of 95.5 percent ($p = q = 0.5$).

First, the dimensions, reliability and validity of the scale of measurement of the perceived image of the destination of Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo (Mexico) were analysed. Next, the dimensions, reliability and validity of satisfaction and of attitudinal loyalty were determined, since behavioural loyalty is determined through a single item, for which confirmatory factor analyses were perform. Thirdly, the relationships between image, quality, attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty were established. In the latter case a path analysis was performed.

Results

Before analysing the dimensionality, reliability and validity of the scales, the demography of the sample is described: 45.7 percent are men, 54.3 percent are women. Some 62 percent are married. As regards age, 70 percent are between 25 and 54 years old. Their level of education is pre-university/higher, while 48 percent are workers. As for their origin, 98 percent come from the USA and 2 percent from Canada. This profile agrees with the data offered by the Secretary of Tourism of Mexico. In 2001, 10,591 million tourists arrived at Mexico. Of these, 87.2 percent come from the USA and 4.5 percent from Canada – the two main origins of Mexican tourism.

Analysis of Dimensions, Reliability and Validity of the Scale of Image

Table 1 shows that the image is formed by four dimensions, three cognitive and one affective. The three cognitive dimensions capture the following aspects: natural resources, service quality and entertainment. The first of these dimensions is formed by three items and the other two by four. The affective dimension of the image is formed by three items.

Convergent validity exists insofar as all the factor loadings are greater than 0.5, and is further ratified by the fact that each of the items contributes to the formation of only a single dimension and no other (loadings of less than 0.50 on all the other dimensions). The scale is also reliable because the values of the statistics that determine composite reliability are above 0.81. With regard to divergent validity, no confidence interval of the correlations between the factors obtained includes unity. These results ratify

Table 1. Dimensionality, reliability and validity of the scale of image

Dimensions Items	Cognitive image			Affective image
	Natural resources	Service quality	Entertainment	
It has a pleasant climate	0.80			
It offers much in terms of natural scenic beauty	0.71			
It has beaches of high quality and great beauty	0.82			
It offers sufficient high quality accommodation		0.78		
It offers high quality services		0.91		
It has good restaurants		0.74		
The beaches are well serviced (showers, first-aid posts)		0.78		
It has many tourist attractions to visit in the area			0.95	
It offers lots of open air activities			0.73	
It has good sporting installations			0.65	
It has many shops and shopping centres			0.59	
Pleasant				0.79
Relaxing				0.75
Cheerful				0.75
Composite reliability	0.82	0.88	0.82	0.81

Overall composite reliability = 0.95
FIT OF THE MODEL:
$\chi^2 = 96.74$, df = 80, P-value = 0.09804, RMSEA = 0.039, GFI = 0.91, AGFI=0.88, RMSEA = 0.055
Discriminant validity (correlation between the factors and, in parentheses, the confidence interval of the correlation):
Cognitive image. Natural resources ↔ Cognitive image. Service quality=0.63 (0.51–0.75)
Cognitive image. Natural resources ↔ Cognitive image. Entertainment=0.70 (0.60–0.80)
Cognitive image. Natural resources ↔ Affective image = 0.63 (0.53–0.73)
Cognitive image. Service quality ↔ Cognitive image. Entertainment=0.59 (0.49–0.69)
Cognitive image. Service quality ↔ Affective image = 0.54 (0.44–0.64)
Cognitive image. Entertainment ↔ Affective image = 0.60 (0.50–0.70)

hypothesis 1, which posited that the image of a tourism destination is made up of cognitive and affective dimensions.

Analysis of Dimensions, Reliability and Validity of the Scale of Satisfaction and Attitudinal Loyalty

Table 2 shows that we can differentiate between satisfaction and attitudinal loyalty towards a tourism destination, both dimensions being formed by three items.

**Table 2.** Dimensionality, reliability and validity of the scale of satisfaction and attitudinal loyalty

Dimensions Items	Satisfaction	Attitudinal loyalty
Satisfaction with the stay	0.87	
Satisfaction with the restaurant services	0.95	
Satisfaction with the hotel services	0.89	
I will return to Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo for my next holidays		0.69
I will recommend Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo to my family and friends		0.82
I intend to holiday in Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo within the next three years		0.78
Composite reliability	0.93	0.81

Composite reliability global $= 0.93$

FIT OF THE MODEL:

$\chi^2 = 10.64$, df $= 8$, P-value $= 0.22268$, GFI $= 0.98$, AGFI $= 0.93$, RMSEA $= 0.049$

Discriminant validity (correlation between the factors and, in parentheses, the confidence interval of the correlation):

Satisfaction $\leftrightarrow$ Attitudinal loyalty $= 0.65$ (0.49–0.81)

Convergent validity exists insofar as all the factor loadings are greater than 0.5, and is further ratified by the fact that each of the items contributes to the formation of only a single dimension and no other (loadings of less than 0.50 on all the other dimensions). With regard to divergent validity, no confidence interval of the correlations between satisfaction and attitudinal loyalty includes unity (0.49–0.81). The scale is also reliable because the values of the statistics that determine composite reliability are above 0.81.

Therefore, the two confirmatory factor analyses carried out to measure the dimensions, reliability and validity of the scales analysed are adequate, the probabilities associated with the chi-squared statistics being greater than 0.05, the statistics GFI and AGFI close to unity and the RMSEAs close to zero. Furthermore all the parameters of these models are significant, the associated *t* values exceeding 1.96.

Causal Link Between Image, Satisfaction and Loyalty

Finally, a test was made of the overall model that establishes the causal relationships among affective and cognitive image, satisfaction and attitudinal and behavioural loyalty for a tourism destination (Figure 2). To develop this model a path analysis was performed, taking the weighted average values of the previous variables, except in the case of behavioural loyalty which is measured with a single item (number of previous visits). The weighting was done according to the factor loadings obtained in the previous confirmatory factor analysis.
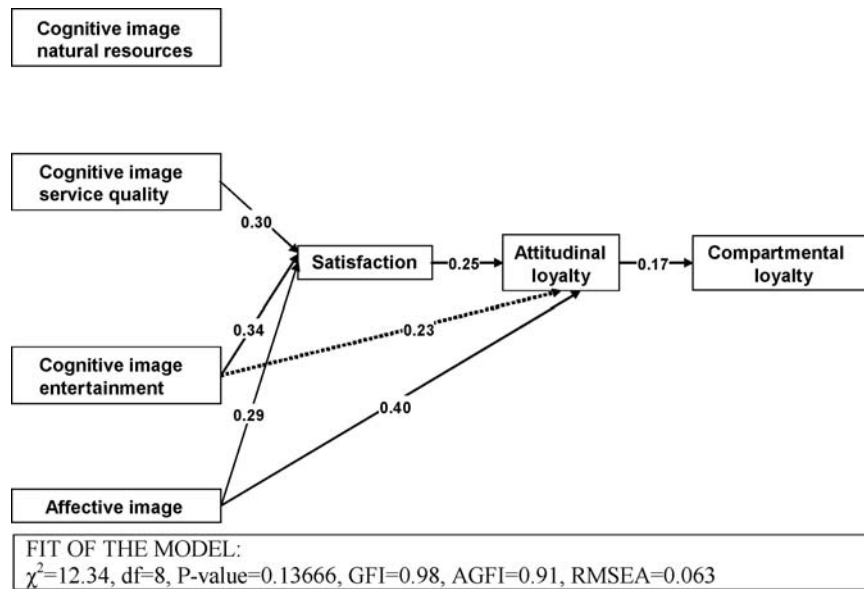
Figure 2. Causal relationships.

As shown in Figure 2, the satisfaction experienced by the tourist is determined by two of the three cognitive dimensions of the image: service quality (0.30) and entertainment (0.34); and also by the affective image (0.29). These results permit affirmation that hypothesis 2, which posited the influence of the image on satisfaction, is fulfilled.

With respect to the variables that influence attitudinal loyalty, on the one hand are found two of the dimensions of the image – the cognitive image entertainment (0.23) and the affective image (0.40) – and, on the other hand, is satisfaction (0.25). The influence of the image on attitudinal loyalty allows acceptance of the third hypothesis; and the effect of satisfaction on attitudinal loyalty ratifies the fourth hypothesis.

As observed in Figure 2, neither image nor satisfaction exercise any significant influence on behavioural loyalty, which is determined only by attitudinal loyalty (0.17). The latter relationship permits hypothesis 5 to be tested positive.

Together with the direct effects analysed above, it is also appropriate to consider the indirect ones, which determine the total influence of one variable on another (Table 3). For example, cognitive image entertainment influences attitudinal loyalty both directly (0.23) and indirectly through satisfaction ($0.34 \times 0.25 = 0.09$). This generates a total effect of cognitive image entertainment on attitudinal loyalty of 0.32 ($0.23 + 0.09$).

From the analysis of the intensity of the total effects it is determined that the affective image is the variable that exercises strongest influence on the rest of the

Table 3. Total and indirect effects

Effects Antecedents	Satisfaction	Attitudinal loyalty	Behavioural loyalty
Cognitive image natural resources	—	—	—
Cognitive image service quality	0.30	0.07 (0.07)	0.01 (0.01)
Cognitive image entertainment	0.34	0.32 (0.09)	0.05 (0.05)
Affective image	0.29	0.47 (0.07)	0.08 (0.08)
Satisfaction	—	0.25	0.04 (0.04)
Attitudinal loyalty	—	—	0.17

Each cell shows the total effect (direct and indirect) of the causal relationships and, in parentheses, the indirect effects.

variables, followed by the cognitive image entertainment, the cognitive image service quality, satisfaction, attitudinal loyalty and, lastly, the cognitive image natural resources, which exercise no significant influence.

The fact that the cognitive image natural resources exercises no significant influence in the model put forward may be justified/explained by the fact that this dimension is taken for granted when visiting a tourism destination like Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo (Mexico). This implies that differentiating elements must be sought in other dimensions of the image, which in order of importance would be: affective image, cognitive image entertainment and cognitive image quality service, according to the intensity of their total effects on the model.

Theoretical and Business Implications

The testing of the hypotheses proposed on the basis of the bibliographical review gives rise to a series of conclusions and business implications. In respect of the image of the tourism destination, the identification of the affective dimension stands out (Liljander and Strandvick 1997; White 2002; Yu and Dean 2001). Following the experiential view, the image, understood as a mental schema developed by a tourist on the basis of a few selected impressions (Fakeye and Crompton 1991), must include not only cognitive or rational aspects, but also experiences, feelings and emotions generated during a stay. Nevertheless, the cognitive dimensions of the image are also identified in the study, taking the specific form of the tourist's perception of the destination's natural resources, of the quality of the services received, and of the entertainment value of the destination. The dimensions identified lend support to the arguments of the experiential view.

Other important conclusions of the study arise from the relationship among the variables. Loyalty behaviour towards a tourism destination is explained by a more or less positive predisposition towards that tourism destination, i.e. by attitudinal loyalty. This aspect is a reflection of the Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) model, which is the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

With respect to the most important variables influencing the formation of attitudinal loyalty towards the tourism destination, the great influence exercised by the affective image stands out. This aspect had not been contrasted in the literature reviewed, although it was postulated that, since tourism is a leisure activity, emotional and hedonic aspects play a fundamental role. One key impression that remains with tourists is the memory of the feelings and emotions generated during their stay in a certain destination. Moreover the affective image has a longer life in the tourist's memory than other dimensions of the cognitive image, which are gradually forgotten (Berkowitz 1993). The recall of enjoying a holiday is a long-term effect that acts as a basic pillar of attitudinal loyalty, another variable with long-term projection. Also, the affective image exercises an indirect effect on attitudinal loyalty through satisfaction, making it the main antecedent of loyalty towards a tourism destination.

Although satisfaction exercises a direct influence on attitudinal loyalty, its importance seems to be secondary. This affirmation is sustained by the fact that both the affective image, and the cognitive image linked to entertainment, exercise a direct influence on attitudinal loyalty, of an intensity at least equal to that of satisfaction with the tourism destination. But these two dimensions of the image, to which is added the cognitive image linked to quality of service, in turn exercise a direct influence on satisfaction with the tourism destination. For this reason, a large part of the influence that satisfaction exercises on attitudinal loyalty is determined by the influence that the image exercises on satisfaction with the tourism destination.

It is curious to observe that the affective image is the main antecedent of attitudinal loyalty, but the cognitive image is the most important antecedent of satisfaction. Satisfaction is of a cognitive (exercise in comparing expectations and performance) and an affective nature (associated feeling of pleasure), although, according to Oliver (1999), it is predominantly affective. This may mean that the principal antecedents of satisfaction are cognitive elements, whereas the attitude towards the tourism destination is formed basically from affective elements. This superiority of the cognitive elements is in line with the attitude model postulations, where the inferred beliefs (satisfaction) are formed from beliefs (cognitive image). This conclusion agrees with other studies, such as that by Lew *et al.* (2003), which show examples of a strong relationship between knowledge and the satisfaction level when visiting the destination.

It is recommended that this study be performed in other tourist destinations so that conclusions may be generalized. The present work has been performed with a very concrete sample (North American visitors to a Mexican tourist destination). Underlying geographical influences may exist. Although the theoretical model is supported by the literature review, it is necessary to strengthen the conclusions by applying them to other situations.

Thus, these conclusions complement the study by Bigné *et al.* (2005), where the domestic tourists (residents) in Valencia visiting Valencia (Spain) demonstrated a strong relationship between perceived quality and satisfaction, and subsequently intention

to return (loyalty). Both studies confirm the strong relationship among the perceived quality or the cognitive image service quality, satisfaction and the intention of loyalty. The contribution of the present study lies in empirically stating the importance of the emotions behind the people's intention to return to a tourist destination.

At the level of business implications, the study calls attention to the need to study the impressions that tourists take away with them after their stay in a tourism destination. A destination must have adequate infrastructures, services of quality, natural resources and an offer of entertainment, but everything must be adapted to tourists' expectations. To achieve tourists' loyalty to a tourism destination, they must be assured of a pleasant, relaxing and cheerful stay. To manage these emotional elements the traditional tools of creating infrastructures, offering quality service and a varied offer of entertainment is not enough. Together with this, which can be considered a necessary condition, the different agents that make up a tourism destination should co-ordinate and orientate themselves towards the tourists' needs. They should analyse how they can ensure that tourists visiting a certain destination take away with them a very positive affective image. This is the basis on which these tourists will repeat the visit. If a destination achieves a base of loyal tourists who periodically repeat their stay, it will achieve economic and employment stability for its citizens. Likewise it will be laying down solid foundations for its long-term growth.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to be aware of the limitations of this study, which condition its conclusions. First, the empirical study has focused on a particular destination (Itxapa-Zihuatanejo, Mexico) for a particular type of tourism (USA and Canada). In the future the study will have to be extended to other models of tourism destinations and to other typologies of tourists. Secondly, the size of the sample is not very large, posing problems with sample error. Finally, with the aim of overcoming the latter limitation and also to broaden the research, this same study could be carried out in consecutive periods in order to construct temporal series for each variable. This would permit dynamic analyses.

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Notes on Contributors

Lucio Hernández-Lobato and **Maria Magdalena Solis-Radilla** both have a degree in Tourism and Master in Sciences in Tourism Development Area. They teach in the Faculty of Tourism at the Autonomous University of Guerrero, Mexico.

Miguel Angel Moliner-Tena and **Javier Sánchez-García** are both Full Professors at the Universitat Jaume I de Castellón, Spain. They have published papers in the *Journal of Services Marketing* and *Tourism Management*, among others.

Résumé: Image de la destination touristique, satisfaction et loyauté: le cas de Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo, Mexique

Cet article analyse les relations de cause à effet entre trois variables-clé en promotion touristique: l'image, la satisfaction et la loyauté. Les auteurs analysent une destination spécifique à partir d'une perspective non seulement cognitive, mais également émotionnelle. Ils essaient donc d'incorporer un point de vue basé sur l'expérience dans la construction de l'image d'une destination. Les auteurs avancent quelques hypothèses vérifiées lors d'une étude empirique de 140 touristes américains en visite à Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo (Mexique). Ils ont identifié que l'image touristique de cette destination a quatre dimensions: les ressources naturelles, la qualité des services, les délassements et une image affective. L'étude démontre que l'image affective est le principal antécédent de la loyauté.

Mots-clés: Image de la destination touristique, satisfaction, loyauté, point de vue basé sur l'expérience

Zusammenfassung: Touristisches Destinationsimage, Zufriedenheit und Wiederholung: Eine Untersuchung des mexikanischen Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo

Das Ziel dieses Beitrags ist die Untersuchung der Kausalverhältnisse zwischen drei Schlüsselvariablen im Tourismusmarketing: Image, Zufriedenheit und Wiederholung. Untersucht wird dabei der konkrete Fall einer Tourismusdestination, der sich nicht nur aus einer kognitiven Sicht genähert wird, sondern auch von einer emotionalen. Dabei wird versucht, auch einen experimentellen Blickwinkel in ein solches Konstrukt wie das Image einer Tourismusdestination einzubeziehen. Einige Hypothesen werden aufgestellt und anhand einer empirischen Untersuchung von 140 US-amerikanischen Touristen überprüft, welche das mexikanische Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo besuchen. Dabei werden vier Dimensionen des touristischen Destinationsimages festgestellt: Natürliche Ressourcen, Qualität des Service, Unterhaltung und Bindungswirkung. Die Untersuchung demonstriert, dass die Bindungswirkung der Hauptauslöser der Besuchswiederholung ist.

Stichwörter: Touristisches Destinationsimage, Zufriedenheit, Wiederholung, experimenteller Blick